

WORLD MUSIC SEMINAR: SUMMER 2008

July 27 – August 2 Kit Voorhees, Instructor

This 3 credit seminar will take you on a classroom tour of the world through the exploration of instruments and music of various cultures found in Africa, Australia, Europe, Asia and the western hemisphere. DVDs, videos, live performance, CDs and drum circles will all be part of the seminar. We will make our own hand drums in class and will also explore how native/indigenous peoples construct and play such things as rattles, xylophones, chimes, gongs, and wind & string instruments that are both practical and exotic. Below are some comments from students who have taken this class with particular emphasis on making basic instruments.

For the first time in my life I was actually able to play an instrument. It was an awesome sound and it holds a special place in my heart, which will never go away. (the instrument was a pow-wow drum)

I have also learned how rewarding it is to listen to various types of music with an open mind and to ask questions about why the music is played or sung in a particular manner. The world would be a much better place if people would take the time to appreciate each other by communicating through their art. (the instrument was a bodhran, a celtic hand drum)

I think that the greatest thing that I learned from this is that I have music in me and that it is only a matter of finding the mediums to pull it out – but at the same time, the mediums could be as simple as a piece of wood and a stick. I will never be able to go to the hardware store again and look at PVC pipe the same way – nor will I be able to view ordinary objects without at least questioning if those objects could be used in a musical way. (the instrument was an Australian didgeridoo, a wind instrument)

The shekere was a fun bridge for me to cross in order to get in touch with my personal rhythm as well as the beat of the world. Let the fun begin, because I now have an instrument that the whole family can play! (the instrument was an African gourd rattle)

I would like you to create an instrument from one of the four categories listed below. Extensive time will be taken during the first class meeting to select individual projects based on the types of instruments listed below:

1. Aerophone: wind instrument such as whistle, bamboo flute, etc.;
2. Chordophone: string instrument such as a ukelele, musical bow, etc.;
3. Idiophone: natural instrument such as a gourd rattle, rhythm sticks, etc.;
4. Membranophone: made of stretched membrane over resonators such as drums.

Focus will be placed on instruments of various peoples/cultures of both the western and eastern hemispheres. Please use materials that are reasonably sturdy. We will spend one class period exploring the best materials to use in the construction of the instrument. The internet is a wonderful source of information and there are several shops in Lincoln in which you can find information, including the African shop and in the Helping Hands shop, both in the Lincoln Haymarket area on P Street.

If you are concerned about the construction of these instruments please know that we have had many junior high through college students realize this creative activity with great success. There is an almost endless amount of information on the various traditional instruments to be found on the internet. I recommend starting with GOOGLE by simply typing in the name of the country/culture that you would like to represent or the category of instrument you will be making and then look through the sites and links that come up.

I also would like you to do a bit of research on the visual art and symbolism of the culture whose instrument you will be making. Example: If you are creating Australian aborigine didgeridoo then look up the art (visual) of the aborigine peoples. Use ideas that you find to decorate your instrument either by carving or painting the appropriate symbols or subjects.

You are also expected to write a relatively short paper (4 full pages). The paper should include all of the following:

- 1) the origins of the instrument,
- 2) its uses within the culture,
- 3) its performance practices (how it is played) and
- 4) the process through which you went as you constructed the instrument.

This paper is to be double spaced, typed with no more than one-inch margins on all sides. If you would like to sketch the steps used to create the instrument please feel free to do so and add this to the appendix. There is no need to place your paper in a plastic folder if you choose to hand it in on the final day of class. If you use a title page it does not count as one of the 4 required pages of text. This paper may be emailed to me within one week of the final class meeting.

Finally, I would like you to create a simple musical or rhythmic phrase that you can perform on your instrument. We will go over this part of the assignment when we meet for our first class meeting. Our final class session will include very informal performances on all instruments both solo and ensemble.

GRADING SCALE

You will be given one class evening off in order to construct your chosen instrument. There are places on the internet and in Lincoln where you can actually purchase many of these instruments. However, please be aware that if you purchase your instrument instead of making it you will receive a lesser grade. The grading scale for the creation of your instrument is as follows:

- Grade of **C** if you purchase and learn to perform **competently** on the instrument
- Grade of **B** if you make your instrument without culturally specific decoration
- Grade of **A** if you make a durable instrument and decorate it appropriately.

Your paper will be graded separately from your instrument. It will be graded, as usual, on its thorough coverage of the four areas listed above. Consideration is also given to appropriate grammar, spelling, flow and evidence that you keep your reader in mind. If

you encounter new vocabulary or language as you are working on your instrument, please add a glossary in the appendix at the end of the paper (this does not count as the 4th page).

Your instrument and log/journal will be due the final day of class. You will be given an F if you fail to bring your completed instrument to class and demonstrate your rhythmic patterns on it on the final day of class.

Attendance is a major part of your grade as the class is quite interactive and extremely difficult to make up.

IN CLASS PERFORMANCE

If possible, we will have an informal concert/lecture demonstration by a musician on one of our class meetings, which will serve to demonstrate indigenous instruments of the world. This will be an ensemble performance – no solo work unless you ask to do that.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE:

The schedule for class meetings is outlined below:

SUNDAY, July 27 class begins at 1 PM

Introductions, expectations and introduction instrumental music of indigenous cultures throughout the world. Much time will be devoted to exploring the various possibilities for selecting your instrument to be made. Time will also be given to constructing a small hand drum and the creation of individual drum rolls and patterns. Possible visit by world music performance artist.

MONDAY, July 28, 2008 6 PM – 10:30 PM

A listening tour of music of the indigenous music of the various continents. This will include guided listening and discussion of how diverse the music of the world is and how it is affected by location, tradition and cultural aesthetics.

TUESDAY, July 29, 2008 6 PM – 10:30 PM

Exploration of how instruments are made and played through the world and the importance of music and related arts in various cultures.

WEDNESDAY, July 30, 2008 6 PM – 10:30 PM

Exploration of how instruments can be made in a relatively authentic way using materials that are reasonably easy to obtain: example: if you want to make a wind instrument you can easily accomplish your goal by using either bamboo or PVC pipe.

THURSDAY, July 31, 2008 6 PM – 10:30 PM

Tentative time set aside for the creation of individual instruments and the composition of rhythmic or melodic patterns

FRIDAY, August 1, 2008 6 PM – 10:30 PM

More listening and videos of indigenous cultures performing music, dance and ritual throughout the world. Exploration of rhythmic patterns.

SATURDAY, August 2, 2008 9 AM – 5 PM

Discussion of instrumental music from various parts of the world & listening and viewing videos. Ensemble rehearsals

Presentation of ensembles and performance practices on instruments

Hand in all materials and wrap up class.

N. B. If an opportunity presents during our class meeting times to attend a world music performance, we will indeed take advantage of it. Should this happen I will give you sufficient notice in case you would like to bring someone with you to the concert.

If you have questions please email me at kitvoorhees@comcast.net.