

Experiential Wellness and Interactive Drumming

By Robert Damm

Experiential Wellness and Interactive Drumming sessions at this year's PASIC include the annual Drum Circle Facilitators Workshop, an engaging drumming and movement session demonstrating how to make a difference in the lives of young students and older adults, an introduction to African *kashakas* (shakers), a cultural presentation on hula dance rhythms of Hawai'i, a friendly program on how to build a community-based business, an experiential wellness drum circle based on wisdom traditions from around the world, and a rhythmic mindfulness program integrating movement and hand drumming.

DRUM CIRCLE FACILITATORS WORKSHOP

The annual Drum Circle Facilitators Workshop will be led by Robert Damm on Wed., Nov. 13 from 1:00–6:00 P.M. The five-hour workshop provides facilitators at all levels the opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge. No PASIC registration is required in addition to the \$50 registration fee for the workshop.

Interactive drumming unites all participants through the wonderful potential of in-the-moment activity, the unique enjoyment of music, and the special power of percussion. The drum circle can also provide an opportunity to share cultural information and engagement with world percussion instruments.

Damm's workshop will include foundational rhythms (e.g., universal, culturally specific, and speech), African drumming concepts (e.g., groove, polyrhythms, drum calls, and integration of drumming with songs), exploration of meter, integration of stories and games, drumming affirmations, celebration of themes (e.g., peace, kindness, diversity) through drum circles, and use of homemade/found instruments (e.g., buckets).

Robert Damm is Professor of Music at Mississippi State University, where he teaches classes about world music. Damm has facilitated hundreds of drum circles for thousands of participants since 2009 when he hosted a "Drum-a-ganza Community Drum Circle" celebrating health and wellness, sponsored by PAS and Remo. Damm is co-chair of the PAS Interactive Drumming Committee.

RHYTHM FOR REGULATION AND RESILIENCY

Rhythm for Regulation and Resiliency with Lisa Colleen is an interactive drumming and movement session with a bit of applied educational neuroscience. Colleen will demonstrate how rhythm can make a difference in the lives of young students and older adults. Senior communities seek ways to encourage their residents to stay active and relieve stress or anxiety; drumming can bring wellbeing to both residents and staff. Facilitators can help reset

and bring a sense of calm back to these communities.

Lisa Colleen is the founder of LC Coaching LLC (DBA LC Rhythm Events), a high-energy consultancy that applies rhythm, movement, and neuroscience to the art of reframing perspectives for health, happiness, and wellbeing. She completed the graduate certificate program in Applied Educational Neuroscience with an emphasis on Adversity/Trauma and the Brain at Butler University in 2021. She is recognized as a drum circle facilitator and creator of numerous rhythm-based



ROBERT DAMM

programs for schools and senior living communities.

CLACK CITY KASHAKAS

Tyler Hawes will explore the origins of a fascinating African instrument called *kashakas* (also known as *asalato*, *kaskas*, *televi*, *patica*, *butukata*, and many other names). Hawes will share the potential of *kashakas* in modern music and give participants the tools to begin their own personal clack journey. The *kashakas* are a simple percussion instrument that originated in West Africa. They consist of two dried gourd shells filled with pebbles or seeds that are attached to each other by rope. *Kashakas* are played by keeping one gourd in the hand while the other swings around the outside of the hand until smacking against the other to produce a sandy shake sound interspersed with hollow clacks. This combination of shakes and clacks are what give the *kashakas* their unique rhythmic capabilities.

Traditionally, the *kashakas* were used in Ghana and other West African countries as part of social or religious ceremonies. Musicians would sit in circles playing them together while singing. The *kashakas* made their way across the world over time, eventually landing in Japan where

a famous pop star of the late 1980s/early '90s played them live on a popular music television show. Because the traditional West African gourds were hard to obtain and would often break, the Japanese began making the instrument out of molded plastic. They named this version *patica*. At the time, there was a lot of interest in various hand juggling skills like the yo-yo and pen spinning; these types of elaborate moves made their way into the Japanese *kashaka* playing style. Hawes will demonstrate introductory techniques, discuss various extended uses of the instrument, and share the names of important figures in the worldwide *kashaka* community.

Tyler Hawes is a composer, multi-instrumentalist, and educator from Akron, Ohio. During his undergraduate percussion studies with Josh Ryan at Baldwin Wallace University, he traveled to Ghana to the Dagbe Cultural Institute under Emmanuel Agbeli. Immersed in traditional drum and dance music, he discovered the *kashakas* (known as *televi* in the Volta Region), which became a significant influence. He manufactures *kashakas* from traditional *swawa* gourds imported from West Africa.

SHARING ALOHA IN DRUM CIRCLES

Jeremy Kirk will provide participants with foundational knowledge to incorporate authentic rhythms of Hawai'i into their drum circles. Hula and *mele* (music) of Hawai'i, along with all cultures of Polynesia, are among the most underrepresented cultural art forms in western curricula. Many misconceptions of hula and misinterpretations of Hawaiian music and language are pervasive. Attendees will learn traditional rhythms and dance basic hula *kahiko* (pre-contact hula).

Traditional hula would honor gods and chiefs, provide *mo'olelo* (stories) of victorious battles and brave travel across the Pacific Ocean. It also explained such topics as lava, constellations, and weather patterns. No written language existed prior to Western contact; hula, along with the *mele* and *oli* (chant) used in hula, was a primary source of knowledge passed from generation to generation. After 1778, as Christian missionary influence spread, hula was eventually banned; its practice continued in secret. A new style of hula influenced by western culture began to emerge publicly. This style focused on such topics as beautiful flowers, calming rain, and the Hawaiian monarchy. Dance movements



LISA COLLEEN



TYLER HAWKES



JEREMY KIRK

became more graceful and fluid. *Mele* became influenced by European tonalities and instruments. In 1893, U.S. businessmen staged a coup, and the Hawaiian Kingdom was illegally overthrown. Five years later, Hawai'i was annexed by the United States, and it became a U.S. territory two years later in 1900. In the ensuing decades, Hawaiian language, art forms, and traditions were greatly suppressed and neared extinction. Over the years, as tourism began to grow, an interest in Hawaiian culture also grew. In the early 1970s, a major movement known as the Hawaiian Renaissance helped promote Hawaiian culture, history, and language into widespread availability including public school curricula. These circumstances have shaped hula into two different styles: hula *kahiko* (pre-contact hula) and hula *'auana* (post-contact hula). Each style is equally important to the history and culture of Hawai'i *nei* (beloved).

Jeremy Kirk, a percussionist, educator, composer, and ethnomusicologist, is Associate Professor of Music at Southwestern College (Winfield, Kansas). Highly regarded and in demand for his expertise in the arts and culture of Polynesia, Kirk combines his traditional training in Western percussion with his extensive knowledge in world music to create a unique global perspective in his teaching and performing.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY-BASED DRUM BUSINESS FROM SCRATCH

This session with Frank Thompson is designed to give drummers who aspire to build a drum-based business an overarching perspective on the steps and processes needed for success. Some drummers want a simple side hustle to earn a few bucks to support their drum hobbies. Others want to strategically build a personal services business to support all drum-based events that include everything from community drum circles to signature corporate events. Regardless of the goal, gear needs to be acquired, clients must be found, and marketing must be done.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to building your own business, there are some fundamentals that apply to all. Thompson explores them through his story of how he built his successful drum-based business, *The AZ Rhythm Connection*. The presentation focuses on four key phases: 1. Prepare the Business Owner – A total focus on getting the new business owner physically and mentally prepped for the long-haul of building a local community-based drum business; 2. Establish the Business – The steps needed to transform an idea into an active functioning business; 3. Build the Business – The necessary steps to launch and build a business based on the Service Core of Retired Executives (SCORE) template; 4. Sustain and Grow the Business – Keeping the eye on the big picture, reviewing strategies and tactics that have and have not been successful, and implementing new processes to adapt to the ever-changing marketplace of life and business.

Frank Thompson started out with *One Drum and a Dream* and believes that anyone can do it too. His emphasis is on getting started, not over-thinking it, and being locally focused. He has been a professional drum circle facilitator and educator for over 30 years.



FRANK THOMPSON

ELEMENTS OF RHYTHM

Greg Whitt will lead a wellness drum circle based on wisdom traditions from around the world. This model consistently produces positive outcomes and improved well-being. Indigenous cultures have known for ages that intentional music, specifically intentional drumming, has tremendous ability to alter mind, body, and spirit. Whether in a trance dance, healing ritual, military parade, or a rock concert, drumming moves us. We're predisposed to respond to rhythm.

Modern science has been on a path for more than 25 years to substantiate countless anecdotal claims that drumming is good for us. Peter Scheer's website at www.rhythmresearchresources.net catalogs more than 65 clinical studies and scholarly articles documenting the efforts of researchers to prove the physiological and psychosocial benefits of this music-based wellness modality. Barry Bitman, Christine Stevens, and Simon Faulkner are championing these methodologies and refining protocols to consistently produce positive and measurable benefits from group drumming experiences. The research shows us that through drumming, we stimulate creativity, foster a sense of belonging, and boost the immune



GREG WHITT

system. This is why facilitators are developing systematic approaches to influence biological and social systems using drums. These skillfully facilitated rhythm experiences promote connection, contribution, and vitality – the three components for holistic wellness according to Jonathan Fields’ Good Life Project™.

These ideas influenced Whitt’s design of his Elements of Rhythm (EOR)™ program, which is similar to Bittman’s Health-RHYTHMS and Faulkner’s DRUMBEAT. Each of these wellness drumming protocols teaches that sharing stories of our experiences and feeling understood are key factors in health and wellbeing. In this format, a group takes turns sharing relevant personal experiences. The group then creates a nonverbal expression of those stories that allows participants to show support and engagement. Modern cognitive science is regularly applying these ideas using visualization techniques with athletes, executives, and surgical patients. According to Michelle Bailey, MD, the former Director of Education at the Duke Center for Integrative Medicine, this type of experience is an “excellent opportunity to practice living fully in the present moment in a fun, interactive format.”

Whitt’s program will be an experiential session involving participants in self-disclosure, deep listening, and musical expression on drums and percussion followed by Q&A. Greg Whitt is an in-demand arts facilitator and educator based in Raleigh, N.C. He teaches through rhythm, song, and story. Whitt is a board member of the North Carolina Storytelling Guild and previously served as executive director and president of the Drum Circle Facilitators Guild.

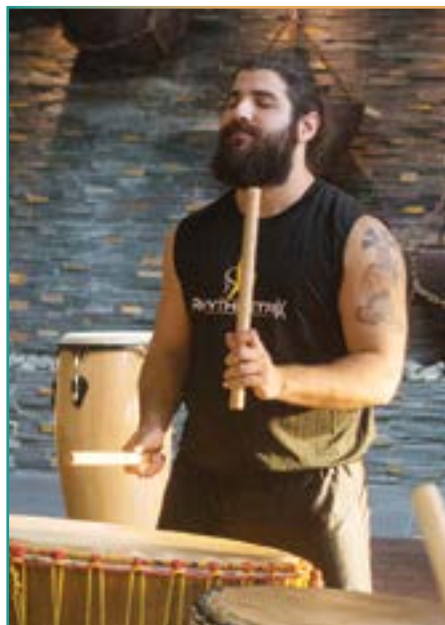
RHYTHMIC MINDFULNESS

Max Young combines music with movement and mindfulness to rewire the brain and regulate the nerves through unique modalities of group drumming. Every human being can harness that rhythm to enhance mental health and overall wellbeing. This session will feature a science-backed protocol that connects the

body to the mind and pulls people into the present moment in a fun and engaging drumming sequence.

Recent research in mental health has taught us that the body plays an integral role when it comes to things like emotions, memory, trauma, and, in this case, attention. Rhythmic Mindfulness happens while standing up and playing big barrel drums – not taiko, not djembe, but something in between. Playing them requires a full body engagement. By utilizing the power of movement to a degree that’s stressful enough to make you feel it, but not too stressful, the protocol uses the body to quiet the mind. Participants are guided through an exercise designed to trick the brain into wanting to entrain (to synchronize various rhythms into the same rhythm). In an “open focus meditation” activity, participants experience a form of improvisation that first honors the space between notes before mindfully and playfully filling that space. The session concludes with a series of interlocking rhythms. Participants are afforded the opportunity to cultivate layers of awareness, choose where to concentrate their focus, and pay attention to the present moment, on purpose, without judgement.

Max Young was playing drumset in the



MAX YOUNG

Penn State jazz ensemble and touring the country in a prog-rock/jazz fusion group until landing in Australia. There, he began studying djembe, taiko, and various other world percussion instruments before beginning to facilitate group sessions. Young combined group drumming with his love of meditation and education in behavioral neuroscience. Young returned to the U.S. and launched his RhythmetriX company.

DRUM CIRCLES AND RHYTHM LOUNGE

On Thursday at 10:00 P.M., Arianna Monge and Frank Thompson will co-facilitate the Late-Night Drum Circle, while Jeremy Kirk and Robert Damm support the Rhythm Lounge (intimate, low-volume option). On Friday at 10:00 P.M., Gary Huber and Eric Swanson will co-facilitate the Late-Night Drum Circle, with Lisa Colleen and Max Young helping in the Rhythm Lounge. The Closing Drum Circle on Saturday at 4:00 P.M. will be facilitated by John Yost and members of the IDC. Flash jams will happen on Thursday at 1:00 P.M., Friday at noon, and Saturday at 11:00 A.M. PN

COMPOSITION

JOHN PSATHAS Composition Clinic

Ioannis (John) Psathas was born in Wellington, New Zealand. From genre-crossing projects with jazz legends Michael Brecker and Joshua Redman, to an e-book scoring collaboration with Salman Rushdie, from a recording session with the Grand Mufti in Paris’s Grand Mosque, to a Billboard classical-chart-topping album with System of a Down front man Serj Tankian, Psathas’s musical journey weaves through myriad of genres, and has moved concert audiences in more than 50 countries on all seven continents. His music emerges from a 21st-century backdrop, where dynamic collaboration with creative masters from all corners of the physical and artistic globe result in outcomes that are visionary, moving, and inspired. John is now developing projects that integrate many strands of his creative journey. Much of his recent work has social and historical commentary at its core. Recently, the epic and experimental *No Man’s Land* project challenged the accepted handling of WWI commemoration.