Summer Camps and Festivals

The 2011 LHS Summer Marimba Seminar
By Jessie Linden

This year at the 32nd annual Leigh Howard Stevens Summer Marimba Seminar, 25 college-aged students benefited from an immense blend of musical and personal gain while nestled in a beautiful, oceanside Victorian inn. The focused environment of the classroom as well as the unique housing experience allowed the students to mix their musical expression and social graces and develop invaluable skills. With students coming from all over the world, participants were all able to positively influence their fellow students from both a musical and social standpoint. The group, spanning the United States, Canada, South Korea, Switzerland, and Belgium, created a warm and supportive environment in which to live, learn, and grow.

Each day, the students had several hours of class time with Leigh, followed by practice time at the inn where one had the opportunity to work independently or to join forces with friends in helping each other master the challenging concepts being presented. With Leigh, the students participated in lecture-based classes with assigned nightly reading pertaining to the discussions of that day. Leigh presented his technical approach to the instrument with daily demonstrations. He also taught lessons on acoustics, practicing, phrasing, dynamics, reading, tone production, and more. All participants had the opportunity to receive feedback on their playing from Leigh in class, as well as from Nora Stevens in her afternoon stroke checks.

The students were surrounded by resources they could go to for help and expertise, whether it was in or out of class. Leigh’s Method of Movement and his assigned readings proved to be valuable resources that the students could use to address their daily thoughts and questions. Living with the other participants also gave students the advantage of using each other as sounding boards, creating an active learning process at home, as well as in the classroom. Each morning, Leigh opened up a discussion for any thoughts or questions pertaining to the reading and corresponding quizzes. In this way, the students were learning both in and out of the classroom every day.

The variety of guest artists also greatly influenced this open-minded group. Gordon Stout and Nathaniel Bartlett both gave incredible concerts and master classes. The students also had the privilege of receiving a master class centered on the African gyil from Valerie Dee Naranjo, a demonstration of Super Marimba by Payton MacDonald, and a highly energized participation-based discussion class with Dennis DeLucia. The variety of expertise that was presented offered the students an opportunity to open their minds to different ways to play and think about percussion. Additionally, the concert series featured Nora Stevens, who played a beautiful program in the lovely Holy Spirit Church in Asbury Park, New Jersey. Leigh Stevens returned to that same venue and concluded the seminar with an incredible program of multiple Bach works, two of his compositions, and a pre-premiere of his newest work-in-progress.

When the students were not in class or practicing, many found time to enjoy the marvelous beach weather just outside the inn. Some spent time exploring Ocean Grove and its surrounding communities, and a few even made a trip or two to New York City. By the final student concert on the last night, a supportive group of individuals sat as a class and shared what was to many an emotional end to a life-changing experience they will treasure forever.

Rosauro and Moore’s Mallet and Percussion Summer Camp

The 2011 Ney Rosauro and Jeff Moore’s Mallet and Percussion Summer Camp took place at the University of Central Florida in Orlando July 17–23. In addition to Rosauro and Moore, other faculty included Dr. John Parks, Kirk Gay, Dr. Thad Anderson, Brian Potts, and graduate assistants Nick Guliano (University of South Carolina) and Luis Alberto Bittencourt (Brazil). The camp is part of the highly successful Yamaha Sounds of Summer Program with additional sponsorship support from Sabian and Vic Firth.

Twenty-one students from the United States plus five international students from Hong Kong, Spain, Portugal, Holland and Equador attended the camp. This was the first time the camp was held in the new percussion facilities at the University of Central Florida, and it exceeded all expectations. The camp provided a well-rounded experience, with students having the opportunity to work in all areas of percussion. Although many camps focus solely on marimba or marching percussion, the Rosauro/Moore camp included vibraphone, marimba, snare drum, multi-percussion, timpani, steel drums, and Latin/Brazilian percussion.

This year the students were introduced to digital notation and playback utilizing Sibelius software in the new state-of-the-art UCF Music Computer Lab. In addition to the presentations and lessons, campers participated in percussion ensemble, culminating in a final closing concert that featured many of Ney’s compositions including both of his marimba concerti as well as his vibraphone concerto.

The camp had a friendly atmosphere and a perfect harmony between students and faculty. It was a rewarding experience for all participants. Next year’s camp is scheduled to take place at UCF from July 15–21, 2012.
where composers can study with the Composer-in-Residence (this year, French composer Tristan Murial).

This year, 50 fellows (including seven percussionists) were selected to participate from around the world. The experience was eight full days of master classes, lessons, colloquia, rehearsals, and concerts, which presented the fellows with an opportunity to experience a large selection of new music from all over the world.

Each year the Institute invites guest composers and performance faculty that work directly with the fellows throughout the week. Fellows rehearse and prepare works alongside faculty as well as with members of the Calithumpian Consort, a chamber ensemble in residence at SICPP. This year’s percussion faculty was comprised of Stuart Gerber and Scott Deal together with Consort percussionists John Andress, Jeffrey Means, and Nick Tolle. The Calithumpian Consort is a mixed ensemble comprised of professional musicians in the Boston area, directed by Stephen Drury. Their repertoire encompasses a large musical spectrum from classic works of the last 50 years to works of the avant-garde, as well as experimental jazz and rock music.

One of the highlights of the week was an afternoon recital of percussion works performed by the fellows. The program included “Ferneyhough Mix” by Mark Applebaum, performed by Christian Smith and Ryan Packard; “Rebonds A and B” by Iannis Xenakis (“A” performed by Cory Bracken, “B” performed by Dave Tarantino); “Omar I,” by Franco Donatoni, performed by Ryan Packard, and “POWER I: CIN(shift)” by Marek Poliks, performed by Christian Smith. Other percussion solos performed either in master classes or concerts included “Phénix” by F.B. Mache, performed by Yu Hsin Chang, “Dreams,” by John Cage, performed on marimba and vibes by Gary Donald, “Raison D’etre” by Arthur Jarvinen, performed by Jeffrey Kolega, “Zyklus” by Karlheinz Stockhausen, performed by faculty member Stuart Gerber, and the marimba solo “Dark N’ Stormy” by SICPP composition fellow Masaki Hasebe, performed by David Tarantino.

Each evening contained a concert presented by the either the Calithumpian Consort or visiting guest artists. The Consort performed numerous works of interest to percussionists, including Giancinto Scelsi’s “Okanagon,” Tristan Murail’s “Le Lac,” and Tamar Diesendruck’s “Still Telling,” which was commissioned for the Consort. One of the evening concerts comprised two works for percussion, piano, and electronics that matched pianist Stephen Drury with percussionists Stuart Gerber and Scott Deal. The first work, “Kontakte” (piano, percussion and electronics) by Karlheinz Stockhausen, is an early and important piece in the repertoire for piano/percussion. The performance was noteworthy in that Gerber is regarded as a Stockhausen expert, having recorded and presented numerous premieres of Stockhausen’s works, and served as faculty for the Stockhausen-Courses since 2005. The second half of the
First Annual World Vibes Congress

By Britton Matthews

In the 90-year history of the vibraphone, there has never been a seminar dedicated solely to the instrument. After all, it’s just like playing marimba with a pedal, right? Leave it to Malletech, Inc. and the Leigh Stevens Marimba Foundation to see the need and fill the void.

The World Vibes Congress, held in Ocean Grove, New Jersey, was the very first of its kind. Participants of all ages, ability levels, and musical backgrounds assembled from around the world for an inspiring week of improvisation and music-making from June 24-29.

After waking up to the soothing sound of the ocean each morning, participants gathered for sessions with Anders Åstrand and Ed Smith. The group split into self-appointed segments for experienced improvisers and novices to work with the appropriate level of literature and better serve the wide ranges of skill sets. Smaller groups also allowed for greater individual attention and numerous playing opportunities.

Åstrand led the group in free improvisation, where you could spontaneously create a musical conversation with a person you’d never met. “A trip to the dentist,” or “riding a bicycle” inspired uninhibited performances and created an outlet for the participants to open up and express themselves. You might not even speak the same language, but the music easily transcended those barriers. Anders went beyond the music to discuss physical concerns with body position, posture, and breathing, as well.

Classes with Ed Smith focused on the more structured side of improvisation, using jazz standards to show how to play melodic lines over changes, find rich chord voicings, and comp for soloists. Participants studied modes, blues scales, chord extensions, and phrasing, and had the opportunity to fill the roles of soloist, accompanist, and bass player. The music selections were targeted to the level of each group, but everyone had the opportunity to work with blues, rhythm changes, Latin styles, and modal works.

The morning sessions created a relaxed, respectful, supportive environment in which participants became increasingly comfortable exploring new techniques and musical ideas. They provided significant hands-on time for all individuals, and encouraged peers to work together and learn from one another.

The conference included daily master classes with one of six all-star clinicians: Dick Sisto, Dave Samuels, Christos Rafalides, Dave Hagendorf, Joe Locke, and Stefon Harris. These sessions covered topics including listening, advanced ear training, technical independence, phrasing, melodic expression, pedagogy, and a broad range of creative tips for developing relevant practice regimens. Each clinician had a unique sound, style, and approach, but they each delivered one mind-blowing performance after another.

The week concluded with a final performance and all-heck-break-loose jam session. WVC participants, led by Åstrand, performed pieces that they developed throughout the week, and Smith gave a stunning performance of “Neptune,” written for the capabilities of Malletech’s Love Vibe. The evening culminated with an energetic duo performance by Locke and Harris that brought the entire audience to its feet.

While theory and technique were emphasized heavily throughout the week, the greater purpose of the World Vibes Congress had little to do with technique, notes, or rhythms. Rather, it was about finding the music inside the player and learning to express that passion through the instrument and communicate with musical colleagues. The overall result was an experience just as important for a beginner as a seasoned pro.

Zeltsman Marimba Festival 2011

By Bailey A. Stewart

The 10th anniversary of the Zeltsman Marimba Festival (ZMF) took place June 26 to July 9 when 20 renowned artists, 38 participants, and 24 marimbas converged on the campus of Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. This year’s “Focus on Great Repertoire” unfolded over nine faculty concerts, three participant concerts, and multiple master classes, lectures, and private and group lessons.

The ZMF 2011 faculty included Nancy Zeltsman (artistic director), Nanae Mimura, Fumito Nunoya, Christos Rafalides, Jack Van Geem, and Dane Richeson (host). For the 10th anniversary, ten past “ZMFers” were featured: Brian Calhoon, Casey Cangelosi, Anne-Julie Caron, Hiroya Honda, Setsuko Kutsuno, and Mike Truesdell as associate faculty; and Jeremy Barnett, Laurel Black, Matt Sharrock, and Xi (Rachel) Zhang as showcase artists. Guest performers/lecturers were Fernando Meza (organizing an international event), bassist Steve Rodby (music technology), pianist Sergio Salvatore (improvisation), and violinist Yuka Sato (Bach’s string music on marimba).

Multiple artists presented solo and chamber works on each concert centered on a common theme. Concert titles included “Marimba Around the World” (showcasing music from different countries), “American Marimba Music,” “Japanese Marimba Music,” “Transcriptions,” and “Explorations” (intriguing mixed-media pieces). This unique juxtaposition of selections enabled audience members to connect and compare repertoire in new ways.

Mike Truesdell guided informational pre-concert talks with several artists featured on most evenings’ concerts. Particularly moving was the talk preceding the Japanese Marimba Music concert (a benefit for the Japan Earthquake Relief Fund). Hiroya Honda recounted his personal experiences with the Japanese earthquake and tsunami that struck near his home last March; Mimura, Nunoya, and Kutsuno relayed the powerful effects felt in other parts of Japan.

First Annual World Vibes Congress clinicians (l to r): Ed Smith, Stefon Harris, Anders Åstrand, Joe Locke and Leigh Howard Stevens
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Performances that received standing ovations included “An Evening of Jazz”—showcasing the virtuosity of vibist Christos Rafaëides in both duo and quartet settings. With Michael Tilson Thomas’s “Island Music,” the astounding musicality of Van Geem, Zeltsman, Zhang, Truesdell, Richeson and Calhoon made the half-hour work seem only minutes long. Also of note was Laurel Black’s stunning performance of “stars, cars, bars” by Adam B. Silverman (for speaking marimbist; text from Nabokov).

The examination of individual sound, personal expression, and musical identity pervaded ZMF 2011. Each participant left with a wealth of new information to add to his or her personal gestalt. Zeltsman placed great emphasis on the importance of musical expression, regardless of the method or grip used. To illustrate the point, she offered a quote: “When we can’t measure what’s important, we make important what we can measure” (Kenji Yoshino). Coupled with Van Geem’s discussion, “What to Teach and Why?,” festival participants gained inspiration to delve deeper into their own musical performing and teaching experiences.

Non-marimba events were scattered through ZMF as well. The first day included an energetic African dancing and drumming session led by Richeson and Truesdell, and a mallet-wrapping clinic by Honda. During the second week, participants were awestruck at the capabilities of the MalletKAT as explained by Barnett. Van Geem led a session on orchestral excerpts, and Cangelosi gave a fantastic presentation on his own compositional process.

Open and friendly communication between faculty and participants and a caring, family atmosphere were matched with absolutely outstanding music making. This 10th anniversary event truly will be cherished by all, and stood as a testament to the great quality and diversity of musicians that exist in our percussive world.

The Zeltsman Marimba Festival will be taking a one-year hiatus, to be followed with ZMF 2013 co-sponsored by Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. More information can be found at www.ZMF.us.

Performers of Michael Tilson Thomas’s “Island Music” at ZMF 2011 (L–R): Dane Richeson, Rachel Zhang, Jack Van Geem, Nancy Zeltsman, Mike Truesdell, Brian Calhoon
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