

# The Facilitator's Skill Set

## Creating connections and expanding opportunities for yourself and your community

By John Fitzgerald

**W**hen I began this article I had no idea I would have such abundant, rich responses from several respected members of the PAS community. As it turns out, I will act more as master of ceremonies rather than author and will let these members speak for themselves.

Note that in these short testimonials the authors speak of being valued by their school administration or organization for their unique abilities *outside* of the ability to teach or perform, and that the outcomes are for the most part *extra-musical*; i.e., not about music for music's sake but for the betterment of the participants, the local community, and society at large—this in addition to their commitment to high professional standards as percussionists. Is it any wonder that they are so valued?

All of our contributors have educated themselves in the art of rhythm-based facilitation techniques and take seriously their role as facilitators. Before proceeding to these compelling stories, I will note that PAS has sponsored

an introductory Facilitation Workshop the Sunday following PASIC every year since 2003. The Workshop is a phenomenal opportunity to learn the basics of the art of drum circle facilitation from well-trained and experienced facilitators.

This year we are especially lucky to have Arthur Hull, founder of Village Music Circles and widely considered to be the father of the facilitated drum circle movement globally, as our trainer. The following video of Hull is a masterful example of the art of facilitation in a large group public setting with 400 people. Here you will see a technique called “Sculpting”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xELAge-3Wio#t=173>

And here is a link to the aforementioned training: <http://www.pas.org/PASIC/drumcircleworkshop.aspx>

And so, without further ado, here are your colleagues sharing their stories and their passion.

You can read an interview with Arthur in the

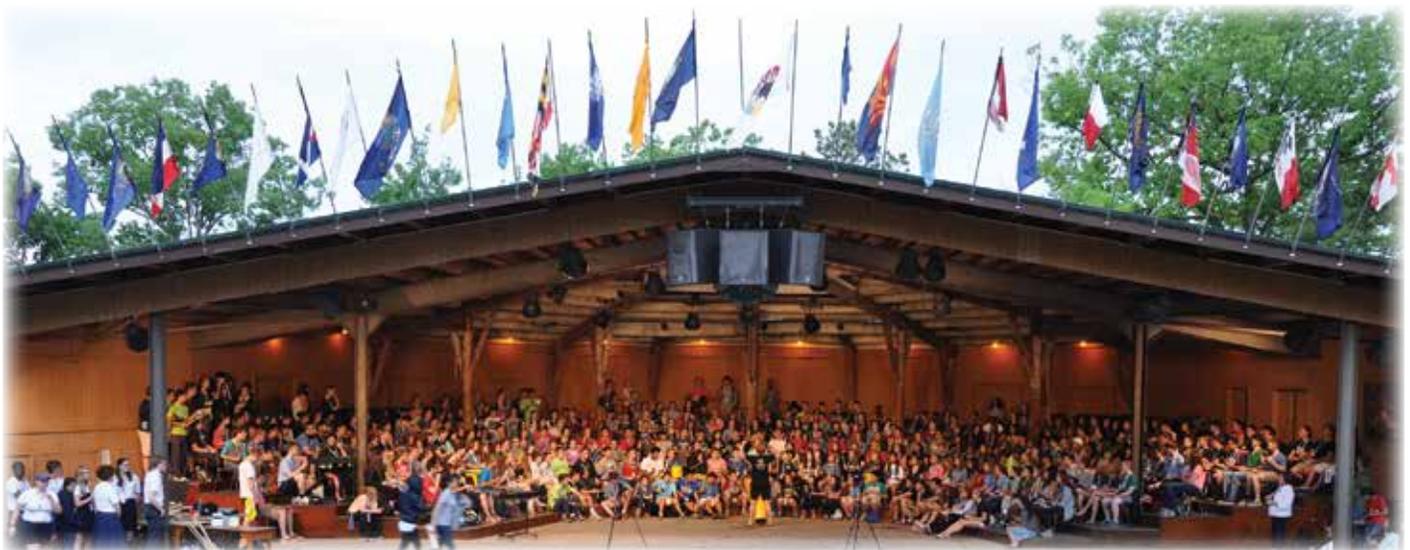
April 2014 issue of *Rhythm! Scene*. <http://pas-digitaledition.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/onlinemags/rhythmsceneapr14/>

### DR. JULIE HILL

**Associate Professor of Percussion at the University of Tennessee-Martin and President-Elect of PAS**

Most of the time when I am asked to facilitate a drum circle, it is at the request of one of my administrators on the University of Tennessee at Martin campus. It's become a “hot seller,” and I have actually had to put a limit on them. In terms of the importance of drumming events and drum circles the “fun” aspect can stand alone, and I make sure that happens.

But I want to emphasize the reason our administration values my abilities as a facilitator. I am brought in to help with team building, communication, and leadership skills, and providing these lessons through the drum circle medium makes it more fun, of course. I do these for programs called West Star Leadership,



*The visibility and willingness to work outside the music department is VERY important for the success of any program. This is a way for me to give back in a global sense and also build trust and visibility across the campus, which is invaluable. —Julie Hill*



which hosts separate workshops for middle school, high school, and recent alumni of UTM, with whom the administration is trying to build a relationship.

I also work with the students at the Governor's School for the Humanities on our campus. On their first day we use the drum circle as an icebreaker. These students know they are going to make friendships that last a lifetime, but in those early days of the program it's hard to know how to engage in those initial conversations. I help them do that by demonstrating good communication skills (both speaking and listening) through the drum circle experience.

The Young Scholars Program targets leaders in high minority and rural areas of West Tennessee and takes place every summer. We bring those students to campus and make sure they know about everything that the university can provide for them.

An additional benefit for me is that my percussion program at UTM has little to no budget, and we raise almost all of our own budget through musical performances. Rather than accept payment for the drum circles I host on campus, I always ask the administration to make a contribution to our percussion studio fund. This usually brings in enough money to at least buy our music for the year, so for me that is a big plus. Just as important, it brings administrators into our percussion facility and

creates a window of access for me to them.

Lastly, my students learn to facilitate drum circles by watching me, and they go out and hold drumming events on their own. Many of them are involved in our Phi Mu Alpha and Sigma Alpha Iota music fraternities, and they all have community service requirements, so it's really a no-brainer for my students to go to local Boys and Girls Clubs, retirement homes, and other venues and get these constituents actively involved in music making through the drum circle activity.

#### **WARREN HYER**

**Executive Director: Central Ohio Symphony**

Facilitation trains you to share music with non-musicians, and in our case, drumming on a one-to-one, or one-to-group basis. You get immediate response from those you are working with, and they are the music. They become almost instant performers, composers, interpreters, and *ambassadors* for music and percussion. The process can also change lives, and if you are a member of an orchestra, concert band, or other group, drumming circles can open a new and accessible dialogue for your organization with diverse audiences young and old—just what every orchestra I know of is looking for.

We have used drumming circles in a therapeutic context in the local court systems for

both juveniles and adults, in particular those with drug or alcohol problems and those with mental health issues. It has been a remarkable program that has allowed us to expand to healthcare and a variety of community impact opportunities. To do this we have had specialized training and a partnership with a local drug/alcohol and mental health treatment provider. If you desire to work with special populations I recommend training, which is held several times a year by Remo Health-RHYTHMS.

WNBS-10TV News article on the juvenile justice drumming program: <http://www.10tv.com/content/stories/2013/01/29/delaware-drumming-program-for-juveniles.html>

The Central Ohio Symphony Acting Up Presentation from the American Orchestras Conference: <http://www.americanorchestras.org/conference2013/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Central-Ohio-Symphony.pdf>

From the standpoint of your career, facilitating can open up new sources of income. Drumming facilitation can be used in many community settings including healthcare, education, recreation, and even church services. Many of these opportunities occur when you are not otherwise rehearsing or performing. I

*The skill set of drum circle facilitation technique is specialized and can open new opportunities to expand your career or opportunities to interact with others as a musician.*

*—Warren Hyer*



See a video interview with Julie Hill in the digital edition of this issue at

[www.pas.org/publications/percussivenotes/notesonline\\_copy1.aspx](http://www.pas.org/publications/percussivenotes/notesonline_copy1.aspx)

have done artist residencies, drum circle concerts, and programs in the courts, healthcare for those with disabilities, recreation, and even working with infant children. The opportunities seem almost endless.

The first step is to experience a well facilitated drum circle, and the Late Night and Closing Drum Circles at PASIC are excellent opportunities. The facilitation workshops offered by PAS on the Sundays following PASIC are a great, easy, and economical way to explore if this is right for you. The one this year with Arthur Hill cannot be surpassed as an introduction to the field! If you want to add drum circle facilitation to your career, Arthur and others offer more intense training all year long.

I encourage you to sign up for Arthur Hill's session on Nov. 23 following PASIC 2014 in Indianapolis. It can change you both as a performer *and* as a person.

### PETER ALAN HUSSEY

Associate Professor of Music and Percussion,  
Lewis and Clark Community College

Whether it's outdoors at our Spring/Fall Fests, or in an OTA lab, at a faculty in-service, or at an area retirement community, smiles on faces abound, people let their guard down, and you see "non-musicians" being able to experience the magic that musicians feel throughout their lives as performers and educators.

Students from my college who have participated come away with words and phrases like "awesome, fun, perfect, relaxed, at peace" and "Can we do this every day on campus?" In my Non-Western Music courses, they consider it one of the highlights of the semester and something that sticks with them.

Nursing and OTA students who experience it as a part of their curriculum not only enjoy and note the stress-relief qualities of it (given their hectic and sometimes overwhelming learning environment) but have kept the memory of it and recommended the experience to care facilities they've gone on to work in after graduation.



Faculty and staff who have experienced it have asked for repeat sessions, worked it into *their* curriculums, and incorporated it into a variety of faculty development events: in-service week, staff appreciation day, KYSS (Keeping Your Students Successful) Conference.

In local retirement and extended-care facilities, I've seen residents with Alzheimer's seemingly come out of "comatose state" to suddenly engage in the activity. Even a resident who, according to the staff, had been basically non-verbal for some time began speaking with me about the experience.

Perhaps most important is the very clear mental and physical relief of stress I see in participants. Body-language shifts, voice patterns and overall tone relax, emotional sharing opens up, laughter abounds. Groups who already

know one another are brought even closer through the shared experience. Groups of individuals who are meeting each other for the first time become connected—entering as strangers, leaving as friends. The instruments become a remarkable vehicle for communication and connection. To see an "at risk teenager" in our YouthBuild program begin a session with arms crossed, furrowed brow, and no eye contact, and then leave the session with a fist bump/handshake and a "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and THANK YOU for coming today. This has meant a lot to me!" speaks *volumes!*

I also work with my percussion and music majors on spontaneous music making and interactive drumming experiences. Moving away from a steady diet of traditional exercises and "reading the page" concepts allows me to include the notion that *all* music making in the world began (or still exists) as an improvised art form. Even our most hallowed of musical history greats—Bach, Mozart, Beethoven—were recognized as amazing improvisers throughout their careers. This skill was well respected at the time but has, unfortunately, been lost in some more traditional/classical circles over the centuries. To relate to, interact with, and create with another musician is one of the most fulfilling experiences music making can offer. To read and be read by fellow musicians is perhaps one of the most fundamental skills for the student musician to learn, and professional musicians to maintain throughout their musical careers.

And to connect and communicate with our fellow beings—is that not also a "life skill" that serves us in every relationship of our lives?

*Interactive drumming events, HealthRHYTHMS session etc. have provided opportunities for our students, staff, faculty and community to connect, spontaneously create, and learn in an entirely new and engaging way.*

—Peter Hussey



# Drum Circle Facilitation Workshop

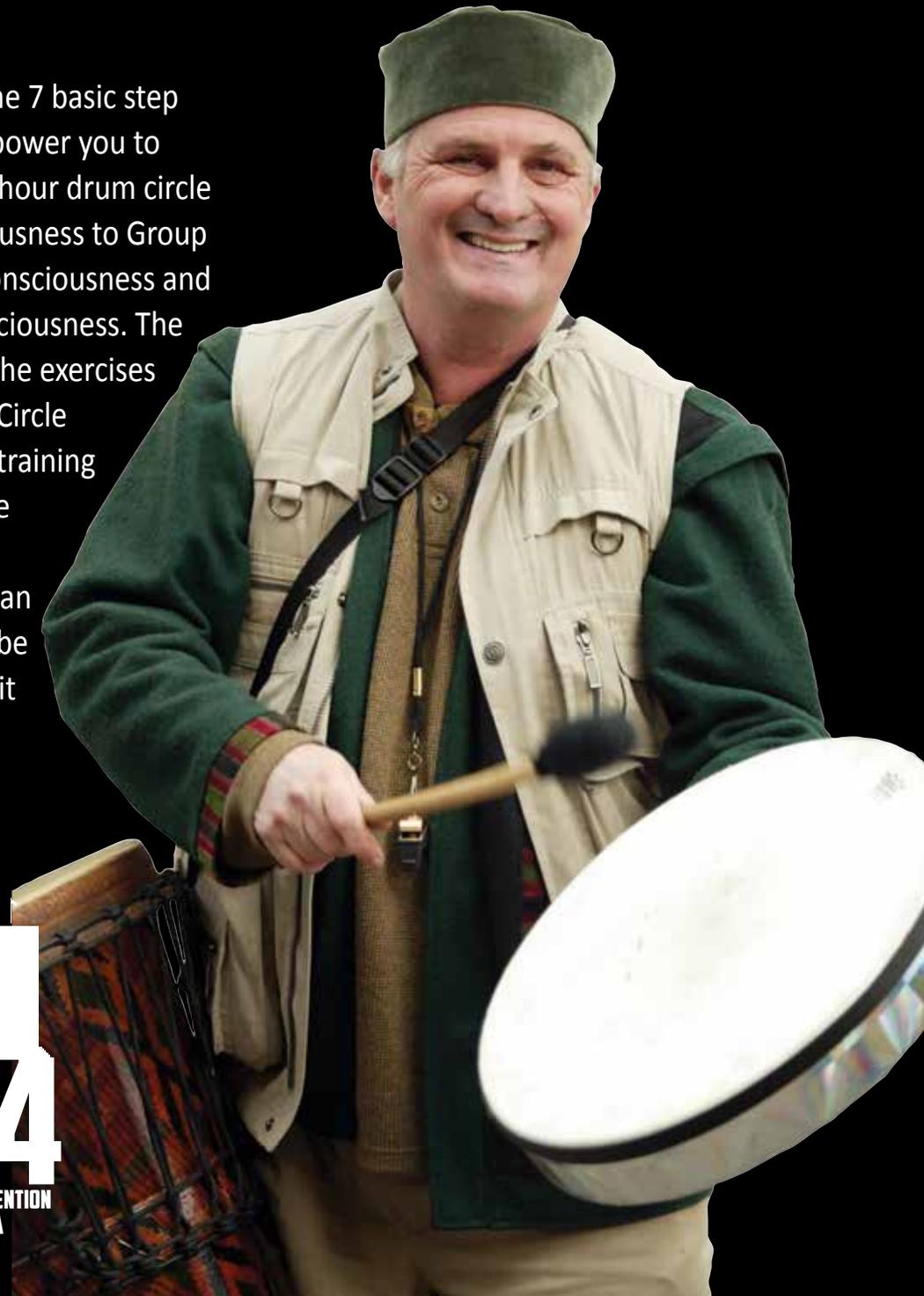
**Arthur Hull, facilitator**

November 23, 2014, 12pm - 5pm

Indianapolis, Indiana

Arthur will take you through the 7 basic step by step protocols that will empower you to guide a group of people in a 1 hour drum circle event, from Individual Consciousness to Group Consciousness to Ensemble Consciousness and finally to Orchestration Consciousness. The program will include many of the exercises used in Arthur's Village Music Circle Drum Circle Facilitators books training Programs. Since this interactive hands on "Playshop" will be presented by Arthur Hull, we can guarantee that it will not only be educational and inspiring, but it will also be a lot of fun.

Register  
Online! [pasic.org](http://pasic.org)  
By phone! 317.974.4488  
On-site!



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## FRANK SHAFFER

Associate Professor of Percussion: Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music, University of Memphis

As a symphonic musician trying to find more ways to reach out to the community, the drum circle facilitator's skill set is a must. One of my first recommendations to those who attend my workshop at PASIC 2014 would be to encourage you to take Arthur Hull's training on Sunday after PASIC. He is the granddaddy of the drum circle movement and completely inspiring.

Getting back to why be a facilitator: Once community leaders see that orchestra musicians want to make the lives of people better through active music participation, the orchestra becomes an organization that fulfills needs other than performances in the concert hall. It allows everyone to experience the power of music through direct participation, that feeling of transcendence that many concert performers feel as they play in the orchestra. It is a win-win!

Maya Angelou's famous quote sums it up: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." This is the essence of the drum circle—something we need to share with everyone.

## AN OPPORTUNITY

Rhythm and the tools of our trade, those things about which we have such a profound understanding and mastery, have the power to create deep meaning for everyone, not just those who pursue a life in music. For music is a defining factor of our very humanity and has power as a lived *experience* for individuals and communities. And rhythm is at its core.

The PAS Interactive Drumming Committee will be hosting many opportunities so that you can experience facilitated drum circles for yourself and sessions presented by skilled and inspired facilitators as well. Here then is an opportunity to find your connection to this global movement.

You do indeed have an intimate understanding of this universal language that speaks to the human soul and therefore an opportunity to utilize your passion and your skill for the well-being of others in a way that is powerful and transformative, and for that you will be valued.

John Fitzgerald is chair of the PAS Interactive Drumming Committee. **PN**

# INTERACTIVE: DRUMMING

## SESSIONS

### FRANK SHAFFER

*Symphonic Percussionists:  
Engage Your Greater Community!*  
Thursday, 11:00 A.M.

### ARTHUR HULL

*Rhythmical Alchemy  
Playshop: Drum Circle Games*  
Friday, 1:00 P.M.

## PANEL

*Increase Attendance at Days  
of Percussion and Connect to Your  
Community Through Interactive  
Drumming*  
Saturday, 12:00 P.M.

## ACTIVITIES

### LATE NIGHT DRUM CIRCLES

Thursday & Friday, 9:30 P.M.

### RHYTHM LOUNGE

Thursday & Friday, 9:30 P.M.

### FLASH JAMS

Throughout the Convention

### CLOSING DRUM CIRCLE

Saturday 6:00 P.M.

*Once community leaders see the positive results of drum circles with different community groups, the value of the local orchestra or the individual percussionist as a sponsor of this increases dramatically. —Frank Shaffer*





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