

DUMPSTA DRAGONS MUSIC STUDY GUIDE

Overview:

What do Japanese monks, Australian Aborigines, Indian classical musicians, African shamans and mad scientists have in common? Absolutely nothing! Except that they have all contributed to the musical inspiration behind the band Dumpsta Dragons! Dumpsta Dragons is a very unique group of 3 musicians who have come together to present their own style of music that draws from musical traditions from around the world. They perform on instruments that range from thousands of years old to recently invented. With these instruments they are able to create a sound that is both very ancient and completely new.



Bios:

Andrew Kim

Andrew Kim's musical experience began at the age of 6 when his parents decided to enroll him in cello lessons. Like most boys his age, Andrew was more drawn to playing hide and go seek with his friends than he was to staying home to practice. This all changed when at the age of 15, Andrew discovered his father's old guitar sitting in the back of the closet. Andrew was immediately drawn to the instrument, and this marked the beginning of a musical journey that has taken Andrew on adventures through many magical places including India, Africa, and China. Along the way, he has picked up numerous instruments such as the Indian sitar and violin.

At the age of 30, Andrew started experimenting with instrument invention. His first attempts were frightening experiences involving taking a hack saw to perfectly good

instruments. At one point, Andrew woke up in the middle of the night to a loud bang. When he looked in the closet he found that his newly invented “cellimba” had exploded in the night! Over time, however, his efforts have been rewarded with some amazing new instruments including the Persian tennis racquet (a bowed instrument with an African kalimba built out of a tennis racquet), the singing spoon, and the Moroccan hockey stick. Andrew is drawn to playing music because it gives him a great sense of satisfaction to be able to create new songs and new forms of music. He is especially drawn to making his own invented instruments for the thrill of exploring entirely new musical frontiers while discovering what sounds he is capable of producing on his instruments.

By studying music from other countries, Andrew has been given the opportunity to experience first hand, aspects of other cultures, especially while traveling to countries such as India to study the music. He sees music as a means of connecting to other people. Recently Andrew spent 7 years touring the world with the popular band Delhi 2 Dublin, an experience that brought him an abundance of musical adventures including performing for the prime minister and British royal couple. He has also played on a Raffi CD.

Alcvin Ryuzen Ramos

Alcvin was born in Japan, but grew up in the States and started playing piano, trumpet, and singing in the choir in elementary school. In high school, Alcvin heard the sound of the Japanese bamboo flute in a film called Ran, directed by Akira Kurosawa and was deeply inspired to study the shakuhachi. After studying Eastern Religions and Philosophy in University Alcvin returned to Japan to study shakuhachi for several years, where he also studied the art of making the instrument, eventually receiving his *dai shihan* (grand master) title in playing and teaching. Alcvin still returns to Japan every other year to harvest bamboo, study with the masters, and pilgrimage to Japan’s sacred places with his students. Through his study of the bamboo flute of Japan, Alcvin has had the opportunity to travel through Asia, Australia (to study yidaki), Europe, Canada, and America learning about various cultures and arts. The shakuhachi continues to lead him to more adventures to fascinating and beautiful places and people through the playing and creation of music.

Alcvin and Andrew are joined by:

Sacha Levin

Sacha started her musical journey at the age of two, when she would often pull out all of her mom’s pots and pans from the cupboard in order to bang on them. Eventually she traveled to Africa where she studied African percussion in Ghana. Sacha has toured BC schools extensively with the incredibly popular percussion ensemble SWARM performing hundreds (perhaps thousands?) of school shows. She also facilitates drumming workshops with the organization Drum Café.

Technical requirements

Dumpsta Dragons is a self-sufficient group with the ability to amplify ourselves through our own portable PA. An option to plug in to the school pa system would be appreciated for improved sound quality, but is not essential to our performance. Set up time is approximately 30 minutes. If we are not performing on a stage but on a gymnasium floor we will require about 15'x10' space. One changing room is fine for us. Two tables, approx 2'x2' and 3'x4' would be required along with two chairs.

The musical instruments:

The sitar is an ancient instrument from India which has 20 strings and is usually made out of a dried pumpkin. It is thousands of years old, and is used to play Indian classical music. Andrew performs on an electric sitar, which is made out of wood and can be plugged in to guitar effects to create amazing modern sounds!



The Shakuhachi is an ancient bamboo flute from Japan which has 5 holes. It was used in the practice of blowing zen by Buddhist Monks and is now a musical instrument that is played in all genres of music and has the greatest dynamic range of any flute in the world!



The didgeridoo is the oldest wind instrument known to mankind...over 40,000 years old! It is used by the Australian aborigines for ceremonies and festive gatherings. A simple pipe made of eucalyptus wood, and hollowed out by termites, the didgeridoo can produce an incredible array of sounds and rhythms just by manipulating the lips, tongue, vocal chords and breath. It is very popular in the fields of sound healing, world beat, and rave music.



The djembe is a traditional drum from Africa that is used in many different contexts ranging from sacred ceremonies to rock bands.



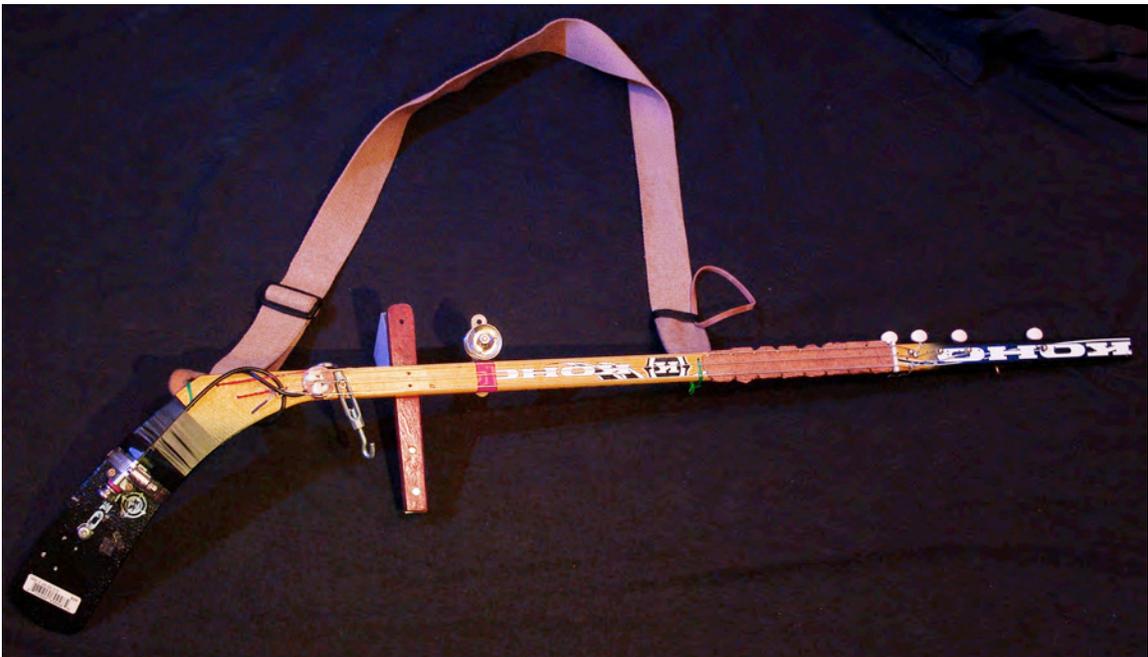
The kalimba/mbira (or thumb piano) is a traditional African instrument that is normally made out of a gourd with small metal bars that are plucked with the thumbs. It is also used for sacred ceremonies as well as folk music.



The Persian Tennis Racquet is one of Andrew's instruments that he created out of a common tennis raquet. It is played with a bow, and also has a kalimba attached to it. This instrument is roughly based on the Persian Kemenche.



The Morroccan Hockey Stick is a homemade instrument built out of a hockey stick with cello strings. It has a low register sound and is roughly based on an African instrument called a Gimri, which is traditionally made from wood, camel skins, and camel intestines.



The singing spoon is another of Andrew's inventions made out of a large wooden spoon and a rubber band. It roughly sounds like a one stringed upright bass. Andrew will assemble this instrument live for the show.



Description of the performance

1) Prelude/ first song:

Alcvin will make a grand entrance in to the room playing the bamboo flute wearing a traditional Japanese sedge hat, approaching from behind the students. He is then joined by Andrew accompanying him on the Persian Tennis Racquet. The song then evolves in to a jam involving Sacha on percussion and Andrew on looped kalimba. Alcvin plays the didgeridoo in the audience while Andrew joins him on Moroccan Hockey Stick.

2) Sitar jam:

Andrew will talk about the origins of his Indian sitar. The band will then launch into a jam that will include the sitar, shakuhachi, and percussion.

3) Didgeridoo demo

Alcvin will give a talk about the didgeridoo and describe how the sounds originate from Australian animal noises. The audience will be asked to participate in the creation of animal noises. Alcvin will then show the students a traditional Australian aboriginal dance that he had previously performed with the didgeridoo.

4) The Singing Spoon

Andrew will talk about the inspiration behind his homemade instruments, referring to his travels in other countries. He will then show the audience how to convert a wooden spoon in to a bass guitar. Then the band will jam and rap over the funky spoon bass line.

5) Modern jam:

The band will now show some of the more modern sounds that can be made with the traditional instruments, playing over looped electronic beats, with sitar, shakuhachi, and percussion.

6) Song Building

This song will feature a looping pedal which takes any musical phrase played into it and causes it to repeat infinitely. Volunteers will be given the opportunity to construct a multi-leveled song by “beat boxing” into the looping device. They will be shown that music can be made using random sounds such as animal calls.

7) Jamming experience

A member of the audience will be invited up on stage to experience “jamming “ with the band on Sacha’s percussion.

8) Kalimba song:

The band will perform a more meditative song improvising over a melody created on Andrew’s kalimba played through modern electronic effects.

9) Question and Answer period:

There will be a question and answer period where the students can ask questions about all the strange instruments that they have seen being played.

Notes for audience

Students are expected to sit quietly as music is being played, but they are also encouraged to get involved in the group activities and to be active in asking questions from the performers.

Song Composition

1. We will need three student volunteers for this activity.
2. Andrew, Al, and Sacha will demonstrate how the sound-looping machine works.
3. Then students will speak into the mic as they compose their own piece.
4. Students will learn the basics of song composition and be inspired to create their own songs.

Alcvin and Andrew will not only amaze you with some pretty cool instruments but they will inspire you to create your own. You will develop a clear understanding of how and why musical instruments work. The children will be left with a sense that "the sky's the limit" when it comes to creating music!

Pre performance activities for teachers and students:

The students/classes are encouraged to watch the internet documentary “Landfill Harmonic” to get a sense of the inspiration behind inventing musical instruments.

Annotated bibliography for students who may wish to learn more about our various musical art forms:

- Christopher Yohmei Blasdel
1994 “Shakuhachi: A Manual for Learning”: Ongaku no Tomo Sha

- Alastair Black
1987 “Digderidoo: A Beginner’s Guide”

- The Diagram Group
1976 “Musical Instruments of the World”: Bantam Books

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