



AFRICAN DRUMMING IN THE CLASSROOM: A 6-PART WORKSHOP SERIES FOR DEDHAM, MA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

#1 – “Feeling the Groove in West African Drumming”: Full-Body Kinesthetic Learning in the Classroom (October 2, 2008):

Jeremy Cohen, Music Director at the Umana Middle School Academy in East Boston and Founder of ThisWorldMusic, will present a workshop on syncopation in African drumming. Emphasis will be on stepping and sticking exercises designed to give students greater comfort with off-beat timing and polyrhythms.

#2 – “Ewe Beat!” (November 4, 2008):

An overview of the music of the *Ewe* (EH-vay) people of Ghana, a West African nation rich in music and dance. Special attention will be paid to *Gahu* (Gah-HOO) - a funky, party genre in 2/4 - and *Atsiagbekor* (aht-CHAHG-beh-kor) - a somewhat more abstract, more polyrhythmic genre in 12/8.

Topics include:

- Precision drum, bell and shaker technique
- Recitation of “drum language” using spoken syllables
- Stepping and sticking exercises to develop off-beat timing
- Traditional *Ewe* songs from Ghana
- Core curriculum alignment

Due to the fact that Dedham teachers will have already attended one session of *African Drumming in the Classroom*, this interdistrict workshop provides an opportunity to demonstrate strategies for differentiated instruction.

#3 – “Speaking in Rhythm”: Using Drum Language to Improve Language Skills and Develop Aural Memory (December 9, 2008):

In this seminar, we will explore the African system of drum “vocables,” the vocalized way of notating pitch, timbre, melody, rhythm, dynamics and the sequence of notes in a given drum phrase. Participants will learn to play breathtakingly beautiful lead drum phrases by first learning to speak them accurately and in time, a great tool for helping kids hone memory and listening/language skills.

#4 – “In the Land of 12/8”: Polyrhythms, Cross Rhythms and Independent Motion in African Drumming (January 13, 2009):

Using the *Ewe* drumming tradition *Atsiagbekor* as our jumping-off point, we will explore the rhythmic-mathematical possibilities of the 12/8 time signature, as well as independent motion exercises that build on the movement and vocalization exercises from previous sessions.

#5 – “I Forgot My Music!”: Running Rehearsals (March 5, 2008):

This workshop will be culmination of the previous four sessions in that we will begin rehearsing for our performance/presentation on May 7, the date of our final workshop. Through preparing concert presentations of both *Gahu* and *Atsiagbekor*, we will deal with rehearsal strategies and classroom management issues head-on, especially as they pertain to teaching in an oral tradition – i.e., little to no written music to go from. And don’t worry about forgetting your music, it’s all in your head!

#6 – Masterworks of the Ewe People of Ghana (May 7, 2009):

Jeremy Cohen and the Dedham Public Schools teachers will present a short concert-lecture on traditional *Ewe* music. Renditions of *Gahu* and *Atsiagbekor* will be interspersed with short explanations/demonstrations of the pedagogical techniques we have learned for teaching these traditions along with the cultural-historical background of the *Ewe* region of Ghana.