

CRAIG WOODSON'S WORLD ORCHESTRA

ART FORM: Music

STYLE: Classical and Folk

CULTURE: Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East and the Americas

MEET THE ARTIST:

Dr. Craig Woodson, an educator, author, musician, and musical instrument maker, holds a doctorate in music from UCLA. His professional career as a musician includes playing drums to back up singers Elvis Presley and Linda Ronstadt. In 1974 he founded the company Ethnomusic, Inc. as an outgrowth of his knowledge and love of African drumming, world music, and his specialization in instrument making. Later, he was invited to spend three years as a researcher in Ghana, West Africa where he had first-hand experiences with the people and their musical traditions. In the 1980s, he began presenting his lively, interactive school assemblies to teach young people and teachers about world music, African drumming and percussion. He facilitates drum circles and leads student and teacher workshops on world drumming, drum set, and simple instrument making. As a consultant to the Remo drum company, he has helped design several products, such as Sound Shapes and flat drums. Dr. Woodson is also the author of "Roots of Rhythm," a K-8 teacher's guide. Presented in two volumes, the guide introduces 16 percussion instruments from around the world through hands-on musical activities and the lens of geography, history, culture, and musical styles. He is the recipient of grants from the Percussion Marketing Council (PMC) and International Music Products Association (NAMM) to teach his "Roots of Rhythm" guide.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

In his upbeat and educational "World Orchestra" assembly, Dr. Craig Woodson leads students and teachers in an exploration of instruments from around the world. His performance style is dynamic and filled with audience participation. Dr. Woodson uses simple tools and common materials to build twelve, easy-to-make musical instruments, based on children's ideas from world cultures. The audience plays 'body music' that represents the musical families -- string, air, drum and idiophone (self sounding). Examples of 'body music' include a cheek drum, lip buzz, musical hair, and clapping. These are ways our ancestors produced sound 20,000 years ago. Dr. Woodson shows how instruments evolved from early sound ideas to sophisticated versions. For example, how a fishing pole became a musical bow, then transformed into a guitar and violin. Using common items like a Styrofoam cup, fishing line, coat hangers, dental floss, and packing tape, he assembles homemade versions of folk instruments. These include: a coat hanger harp, a bobby pin "thumb piano," and a picture frame drum. By the assembly's end, Dr. Woodson has children and teachers on stage, performing as A World Orchestra in a fun-filled improvisation.

PREPARING FOR THE EXPERIENCE:

The music and instruments introduced in Dr. Craig Woodson's performance are part of five broad musical cultures studied by ethnomusicologists. These include: Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas. On each of these continents, there exists music which is based on an oral tradition, that is, music learned by listening and then imitating what is heard. This is a different approach than the one traditionally taken in Western art music. In this tradition, the music is often written down with symbols, and students begin their study by learning the written musical language through symbols.

Music based on an oral tradition is typically passed on from master to student and from one generation to the next. This imitative process provides the student with a clear model to guide his or her own musical development. 'Oral transmission' is found in most countries and includes highly accomplished artistic traditions. Historically the music of the royal court, the high priests and the upper classes was often learned by listening rather than reading a score.

In music passed on orally, rather than in written form, change is common. These subtle evolutions help to make the music a living art. The music also changes when people add their own musical ideas to the traditional melodies and rhythms which may account for the many versions of certain popular songs. This view of music-making, as something everyone can do, is different from our traditional Western idea. That is, Western music is performed by highly skilled professionals for an audience whose only function is to listen.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What most impressed or surprised you about this performance?
- What is the difference between noise and a musical sound? Define what 'noise' is to you. Where might you find it in a musical performance? What might be musical in a noisy sound?
- Can you recall the classification of musical instrument families talked about in the performance? (air, string, drum and self-sounding)
- What is an oral tradition? Can you think of songs, dances, nursery rhymes or stories that have been passed on by the oral tradition in your own family?
- What are things that you learned about making instruments from the performance? What instruments would you chose to make for yourself to enjoy? Why?

FRAMEWORK FOCUS—SCIENCE:

All sounds are vibrations. To see as well as hear a vibration, place a thin wooden ruler on a table so that about nine inches sticks out beyond the edge. Hold it firmly with one hand near the table edge and with the other thumb pull down and quickly release the free end. The vibrations can be seen, heard, and felt. To make a change in the pitch (higher or lower sound), gradually pull the ruler back from the edge, shortening the length that is off of the table. Pull down and release the free end every half- to one-inch. As the free end gets shorter, the pitch will rise.

The sound of the human voice is also a vibration. To feel the vibrations, place the finger gently on the Adam's apple (cartilage at the middle of the throat) and sing. Not only can the vibrations be felt, but also the up and down movement of the cartilage as the pitch is changed. Discuss your experience and what you learned about sound.

California Arts Standards: Artistic Processes

- Cr** Creating
- Pr** Performing/Producing/Presenting
- Re** Responding
- Cn** Connecting

Learn more at:

<https://tinyurl.com/ArtsStandardsCA>

ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE:

Cn Create a 'Word Web' of Musical Instruments. Ask students to name musical instruments they know and write these on the board. When all answers are listed, remind students about the four families of instruments they learned about in the show: *string* - produced by bowing, plucking or strumming; *winds* - produced by blowing into or across a mouthpiece; *drums* - sound produced by striking, shaking or scraping a membrane; *self-sounding*—sounds produced by using the instrument body itself. Then, write these categories on the board and challenge students to relate the instruments from the word web into the four categories. Discuss *self-sounding* ideas that they may not have thought of originally.

Cr Encourage students to list sounds they hear around them. This might include such things as: door bell; phone; clock; dripping water; people laughing; traffic sounds such as horns beeping; and keys jingling. Ask students to think about how they could make an ordinary sound into a musical sound. What could they do to plan and make it sound musical (give it a *rhythm*, organize the sounds into a *composition* or musical idea, clap a *steady, continuous beat* and purposefully add the sounds in chosen or improvised way). Ask students to experiment with ordinary sounds using some of the ideas above. Have one group keep a *steady beat* with snapping or clapping and the other group improvise sounds over the top. Discuss the ideas and what made them work or not.

Cr Create some simple *rhythmic patterns* that can be done in a traditional 'Call and Response' manner. This is one of the ways that music is learned in traditional cultures. Here are a couple of examples to try: **Pattern #1** - Clap hands (counts 1, 2), slap knees (count 3), rest (count 4). Repeat several times moving back and forth between the leader and the group. Then try in unison several times. **Pattern #2** - Clap (count 1), stamp (counts 2, 3), slap knees (count 4). Then, challenge students to create their own original *patterns*. Ask some to be the leader or caller and the group will respond by repeating the presented *pattern*. Then, again try in unison 4-8 times.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Randel, Don Michael, ed. *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Fourth Edition. Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press, 2003.

Craig offers a free 300 page curriculum guide at:

<http://tinyurl.com/craigwoodson>

(registration is required)