



Annex resident drums up passion for world music

By Justin Skinner, Inside Toronto

A passion for world music and a love of working with kids have taken Annex resident Lorne Lampert on the ride of a lifetime. Lampert is the founder of Mystic Drumz, an organization devoted to promoting world music through shows and hands-on demonstrations.

Lampert has been creating and performing Mystic Drumz shows for some 15 years. With degrees in world music and music education as well as a stint working with Scouts Canada, he has found the perfect niche.

Mystic Drumz shows, with such kid-friendly titles as *The Legend of Marshmallow Island* and *The Button People*, are typically enjoyed by more than 100,000 kids at schools, festivals, daycares and camps. By keeping children of all ages entertained throughout the shows, Lampert is able to work in educational elements without losing what can be a fickle crowd.

"If you can get kids hooked by something you're doing, then you can slip in the education part of it," he said.

While Lampert originally intended to use Mystic Drumz to help kids become more enthusiastic about world music, he soon learned there were even more educational opportunities within each storyline. Characters travel to various far-off locales, where they learn not only about percussion and drumming in various cultures, but a bit about the distant nations themselves.

"I started the shows as world music education, but I've expanded the shows to teach kids about different cultures," he said. "It's really about opening the door so kids can see and learn about things they wouldn't normally learn about."

The shows, which feature various instruments in the guise of wooden animals in pursuit of fantastic adventures, also teach kids about the delicate balance of nature.

"We'll teach them, for instance, about frogs, where they live, their environment and how fragile that environment is," Lampert said.



Recently, Mystic Drumz has expanded its scope even further with the advent of the Drumming a Difference program, which provides outreach and support for youngsters in developing nations.

Drumming a Difference has already performed and donated food, clothing and instruments to kids in Mexico and Cambodia, with plans to go to Costa Rica later this year.

"The idea is to bring shows and workshops to places that could never afford something like this," Lampert said. "It's very moving to be able to donate instruments and spend a few days teaching kids to play those instruments. The kids there face challenges, but they're still kids and kids still need to have a creative outlet to have fun."

Mystic Drumz will also add bilingual shows and launch in Ottawa-Hull and the surrounding region this summer.