



Fun, Silly and Cultural

By Kelly Gadzala, Forest Hill Today - Town Crier Article

What do you get when you combine world music and cultures with drums, state-of-the-art screen projections, sound effects, and a wooden frog named Larry? One heck of a show. Annex resident Lorne Lampert, founder and self styled chief drumming officer for the Toronto-based Mystic Drumz, says he teaches kids about music and world culture in a silly, fun and accessible way through his traveling shows.

In business for 15 years, Lampert took what started as a part-time job before university and grew it into a successful educative model, performing over 500 interactive percussion shows a year to over 100,000 people across Canada and the US.

Lampert is fond of saying that he puts the 'edge' in education. The presentations started as interactive music workshops where students learned to play various percussion instruments from around the world, but now they incorporate the history of the instruments and information about the country of origin and culture. "We're trying to broaden student's understanding of the world."

Lampert clearly knows how to make learning appealing to kids. "To hold their attention" he says, "we found we had to attach a fantastical storyline." Hence the 'Legend of the Marshmallow Island', where Lampert uses carved wooden animals as characters that travel to a mythical land and learn about different world cultures and instruments. Lampert also incorporates ecological references through the animal characters in the show. Larry the Frog, for instance, talks about frogs as eco-indicators, which makes learning about the environment all the more accessible. Lampert says "We try to include an eco message without standing on a soap box."

Mystic Drumz also recently launched an outreach program called 'Drumming a Difference', which allows the performers to visit and entertain children in developing countries. The group's first trip was to a Cambodian orphanage, where each child was given an instrument of their own to keep. Lampert says "The show brought to the orphanage an experience that many kids in North America take for granted.

Drumming is such a great community experience and we are delighted to bring programs to children around the world. "I feel like when I look back on my life there's going to be substance, an echo," Lampert says. "Music can lead a person to great things. I think it can really have an amazing ripple effect."