

DUMPSTA DRAGONS – STUDY GUIDE

Overview:

Dumpsta Dragons is a very unique group of 2 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 Takegawa 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 **shihan** (grand master) title in playing and teaching. Alcvin still returns to Japan every 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.

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 'x 10'. One changing room is fine for us. Two tables, approximately 2' x 2' and 3' x 4' 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 a Japanese end-blown flute. It was originally introduced from China into Japan in the 6th century and underwent a resurgence in the early Edo Period. The oldest shakuhachi in Japan is currently stored in Shōsō-in, Nara. The shakuhachi is traditionally made of bamboo, but versions now exist in ABS and hardwoods. It was used by the monks of the Fuke sect of Zen Buddhism in the practice of suizen.



The Didgeridoo is a wind instrument developed by Indigenous Australians of northern Australia potentially within the last 1,500 years and still in widespread use today both in Australia and around the world. It is sometimes described as a natural wooden trumpet or "drone pipe". Musicologists classify it as a brass aerophone.



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



The Kalimba (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 racquet. It is played with a bow, and also has a kalimba attached to it. This instrument is roughly based on a Persian Kemenche (image not available).

The Moroccan Hockey Stick is a home-made 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 (image not available).

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

Prelude/ first song: Alcvin will make a grand entrance in to the room playing the bamboo flute wearing a 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.

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

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.

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 bassline.

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.

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

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

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:

We will need three student volunteers for this activity. Andrew and Al will demonstrate how the sound looping machine works. Then students will speak into the mic as they compose their own piece. 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: Didgeridoo: A Beginner’s Guide
- the Diagram Group, 1976 “Musical Instruments of the World: Bantam Books