

EVOLUTIONARY / REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC
2013 James P. and Shirley J. O'Brien Endowment Awards

Dr. Norman Weinberg
Professor of Music
Director of Percussion Studies

School of Music, Room 124
626-7055
nweinber@email.arizona.edu

Abstract

This proposal involves the commissioning, performing, and recording of interactive media by CrossTalk, and UA Steel. This performance work will combine the oral traditions and techniques of steel drums (UA Steel) with the very newest technologies (CrossTalk). The work will be designed as a showcase for these traditional instruments alongside the electronic instruments.

In addition to the production of three live performances, an essential component of the project is the creation of an audio CD, and a DVD. These disks will contain the sound and video of CrossTalk's portion of the composition to create a virtual version of CrossTalk.

This allows the work to be recreated by other individuals and/or groups. Once completed, the work can be produced with nearly any combination of steel drum instruments interacting with the electronic accompaniment parts performed live, with CD audio, or with a "virtual CrossTalk" projection. By creating a flexible framework that features both traditional and contemporary musical cultures, we plan to make a significant contribution to music making that would be at home in a concert hall, community center, or educational institution.

Project Description

In recent years, the steel drum has experienced a huge increase in popularity. Steel bands have been formed in school programs at all levels (primary school through university) and in community centers around the country. This has resulted in renewed interest in both the indigenous instruments and the oral traditions of music learning and music making. The project is a joint partnership between the University of Arizona Groups, UA Steel and CrossTalk, the University of Arizona Electronic Percussion Group.

This project will impact the School of Music and the University Community in a number of ways. School of Music students involved in this project will have the opportunity to learn about other cultures, and express their own cultural background and identity, in addition to the performance experience and the experience creating a studio recording for CD and a DVD. The University community will benefit from a new interactive media resource designed to assist and encourage the education and performance of new music inside and outside of the concert hall.

Goals, Process, and Expected Results

The project consists of five main components

- 1) Sponsor a composition competition for an interactive media work that features the Steel Band with CrossTalk. This new work will feature the sounds, techniques, and cultural symbolisms of traditional instruments within the framework of a high technology musical accompaniment.

- 2) Rehearse and produce three performances: at the Percussive Arts Society Arizona Day of Percussion (to publicize the piece), at a local grade school or middle school, and at the Tohono O'odam middle school in Sells, AZ (the Percussion Studio has performed there in the past and has the necessary contacts to arrange for another performance).

- 3) Record and produce an Audio CD demonstrating a realization of the composition. This audio CD will be mixed in stereo and the DVD in stereo and in 5.1 multi-channel surround sound. These realizations will serve as models for non-university musicians, community groups, and classroom educators in re-creating their own unique performances.

- 4) Record and produce a video of CrossTalk's portion of the work so that other groups would be able to reproduce the work with a "virtual" version of CrossTalk as the accompanying ensemble. The DVD accompaniment will be an integral part of the project designed for those musicians, schools, and institutions without access to the technology necessary to perform the piece with live accompaniment. The DVD will also serve as a valuable learning tool allowing younger musicians to work and "virtually perform" with a collegiate ensemble.

- 5) Create the CD and DVD and make it available to individual musicians and groups so additional performances can be produced. It is expected that the work will have many future recreations due to the number of steel bands around the country (and around the world) and the constant need for new literature. The piece can be performed in nearly any space where the players (and audience) can get together to share the experience.

Explanation of how the project fulfills the purposes of the endowment

Advance the arts in the lives of general education and music students: The members of CrossTalk are primarily music majors, while the membership of UA Steel consists of both music majors and students from the general population of the University of Arizona. As the composition gains recognition, other recreations of the piece are expected. Since the steel band instruments' parts could be taught without the use of Western music notation, as if part of an oral tradition, the piece would be accessible to musicians of varying skill levels.

Increase attention to the folk arts: The central concept of the work is that it features underrepresented folk instruments from around the world. While the steel drum has been gaining in popularity, it is still a stranger in the “serious concert hall” and in chamber and orchestral music. The foundation providing the interactive media consists of instruments that are not yet standard orchestral percussion or keyboard instruments. In fact, they are some of the newest technologies in MIDI controllers and computer sound-generating software.

Promote the understanding and use of developing technologies in the lives of professionals in the arts through enhanced classroom efficacy: Central to the project is the creation of a CD and DVD that can be used to supply either the accompanying audio and/or a virtual version of CrossTalk. It is our hope that professional educators will find this form of interaction engaging and fun. Grade School and Middle School students would certainly find that interacting with a virtual version of CrossTalk would be a unique experience, and steel drum performers would have an entire ensemble at their disposal for any performance situation.

Promote the joy of hearing and making music in environments other than the traditional concert hall: This project would include three live performances that would include the members of UA Steel and CrossTalk. We are planning for one of the performances to be at a Percussive Arts Society “Arizona Day of Percussion” event held in April 2014. A second performance would take place at a local school (perhaps in conjunction with one of the local schools that has their own steel band ensemble such as Tucson High School or Catalina Foothills High School). The third outreach performance would take place at the Tohono O’odam middle school in Sells, AZ. Future recreations of the interactive media performance could take place in nearly any venue—from a small space with a boom box, to a concert hall with a video projection system and a 5.1 audio system.

Estimated Budget

	The composition competition - \$4,300
\$2,500.00	First Prize
\$1,000.00	Second Prize
\$500.00	Third Prize
\$300.00	Publicity announcing the contest (flyers, advertising, print, etc.)
	Preparations for performances - \$700
\$500.00	Production of the Audio and Video Recordings
\$100.00	Materials for CrossTalk
\$100.00	Materials for UA Steel
\$5,000	TOTAL