

## Arts and Entertainment

# Union organizes for 'sustainable' music

by Adam Eshleman

The Central Pennsylvania Musicians' Association—a local musicians' union—is spearheading an initiative to foster fair relations between local performing musicians and the venues that host them.

Members of the American Federation of Musicians Local 660 are approaching music-friendly bar-owners in the State College area, asking them to pay musicians a minimum wage and sign contracts to cement the terms of their employment, Chris Lee, the union's president, told *Voices*. In exchange for support of this initiative, AMF 660 is promising to designate participating bars "sustainable music venues," which it believes will provide a competitive advantage.

"We want to work with bar owners to facilitate relations with musicians and develop high quality music," said Lee.

The campaign is engineered to benefit all local musicians, not just union members.

"Our interest is in creating better music in general, not creating an environment of insiders and outsiders," he said. "This is an

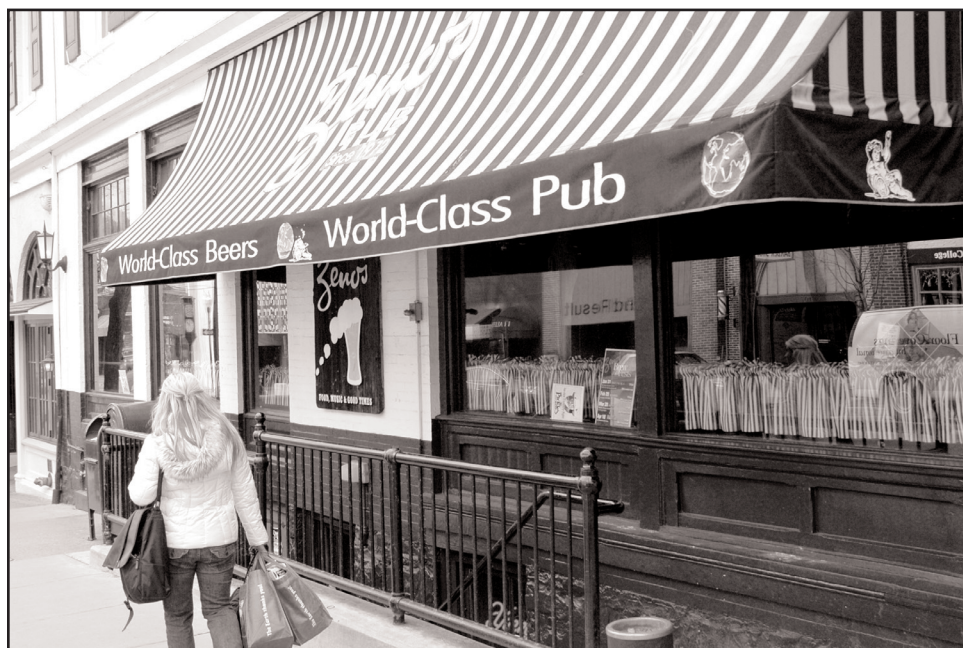


Photo by Adam Eshleman

Zeno's Pub in State College is the first AFM 660 "sustainable music venue," a designation that tells customers that the venue signs a contract and pays an established minimum wage to musicians.

effort for all musicians to create a better environment and community. We want this area to be a destination for audiences seeking high quality music."

Last month, Zeno's Pub in State College was the first to sign on.

"After discussing the proposal and its ramifications, I agreed to operate under the

guidelines simply because they were already being met for the most part," said David Staab, manager of Zeno's. He said signing written contracts is the only change he'll have to make.

"The agreement will not affect cover charges or change payment strategies," he said. "Musicians that are worth having are worth paying."

Although Café 210, another State College bar, hasn't yet agreed to AFM 660's terms, owner J. R. Mangan said he plans to eventually.

"I think it's a good idea," he said. "Most bands in this town play straight for door charges and that can be hit or miss on a slow night. I'm a musician myself, so I'm a little biased."

Lee said the union conducted a survey to establish local musicians' average nightly income and set a widely agreeable minimum wage. In most cases, he said, the price floor they decided on isn't higher than what bars are currently paying musicians.

While a minimum wage is important in

see AFM 660, pg. 22

# Penn State to host Japanese drum ensemble Kodo

by Craig Keener

For Kodo, Japan's premier traditional drum ensemble, a barrage of drums and elegant motions pay homage to storied traditions and bright futures alike.

With 25 performing members and a diverse collection of taiko—Japanese traditional drums—Kodo represents an ancient lifestyle that is often neglected in contemporary Japan.

Part drum ensemble, part choreographed dance, Kodo demonstrates a range of masculine and feminine voices on various tunable drums, the largest of which weighs 800 pounds. The group believes that by sharing their musical heritage on the world stage, they can help promote greater understanding between cultures. This is the motto of the group's One Earth tour that will stop in State College March 18.

Kodo wants its students and its audiences all over the world to be aware of something different from their daily lives. The performers often have their own preferences and styles of drumming, each reflecting

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their personalities or physical characteristics, but most importantly they try to be Kodo, or, "Children of the Drum."

True to its namesake, Kodo has a reverence for the simple joys of childhood.

"Our dream is to hold onto the heart of a child," said group representative Jun Akimoto, referring to what the performers strive to feel onstage.

"When you become an adult it's very difficult to return to a child, to be honest with ourselves," Akimoto told *Voices*. With this goal in mind, Kodo's performers try to be very open and honest, in contrast to the pro-

TECTIVE nature of each of us, especially when we deal with people from other cultures.

"We hope people will learn to be open to more in their lives," Akimoto said. "To keep the hearts of children."

In fact "heartbeat" is another interpretation of the word Kodo.

"The heartbeat is the core of all human beings," said Akimoto. "We've heard our mother's heartbeat in the womb and we try to maintain that experience [with our music]."

Kodo comes from a place with a long history of counter-culture. Members train new

apprentices and incorporate influences from all over the world at a village located on Sado, a small island that was once a home for political exiles during the rule of the emperors.

Akimoto said Sado has become culturally-rich from the collection of progressive minds living there over the generations, along with the island's exposure to international gold trade. Different cultures interacting and adopting practices led to a strong folk and performing arts tradition on the Island, eventually spawning Kodo in 1989.

The group stresses the importance of this long history, which borrows from traditional Japanese art forms, while blending in contemporary Indian, Indonesian and African drumming traditions.

Sometimes the music will take a line from the heavy, bass-drenched drumming of Ivo Shoto, a small island chain not far from

see Kodo, pg. 22

# Boalsburg author pens story of first Memorial Day

by Natalie Ferrigno

Today's K-12 history classes neglect many interesting stories.

One of those stories is the founding of Memorial Day, which first blossomed during the Civil War right here in Centre County—as well as in a few other locations across the country. Boalsburg author Janice Sweet McElhoe chronicled this event in her self-published novel *The Shadows Of War*.

The book is about Emma Hunter and Sophie Keller, the two fourteen-year-old girls who observed the first Memorial Day in Boalsburg. The girls held the first ceremony after Emma's father died in battle. It consisted of walking slowly to his grave, where they left flowers, a wreath, and a cross.

A few years later, the practice had spread throughout Pennsylvania and was declared an official holiday.

McElhoe chose to stick mostly to the facts, but to make the story more vivid, she fictionalized certain aspects.

"When I was growing up, I thought history was really boring because you learned what happened in this year and what happened in that year," she said. "It [was] just a list of years and events that have no meaning. This has a lot of meaning and this really was what happened."

To get the story out, McElhoe first targeted national publishers. But in an era of escapist literature where fantasy series like Harry Potter and Twilight dominate young adult fiction, she found it difficult to find a publisher interested in printing a historical novel for young readers. After gathering a sizable pile of rejection letters, McElhoe took the risk of self-publishing.

Right now, she is sending the books out on her own, but is in the market for a dis-

"When I was growing up, I thought history was really boring. It was just a list of years and events that have no meaning. [My story] has a lot of meaning."  
--Janice Sweet McElhoe

tributor, that will help her get into big books stores, such as Barnes and Noble. She is also working to get her book used in schools as part of the curriculum.

Literature has a lot of competition for young people's attention these days. By targeting them while they are still in school and surrounded by books, McElhoe hopes that *Shadows of War* will kindle a lifetime of reading for students.

"A lot of kids get away from reading and handling books because it's just not required in their lives, she said. "We've got computers and that's where their interest is. So I think while they're still in school, [is] most likely [when] I can have them interested in the story."

McElhoe aims to not only shed light on a little known story, but also to teach middle school children the true meaning of Memorial Day. For the characters Emma and Sophie, the day was not about a three-day weekend or throwing backyard barbecues; it was a far more solemn affair.

"I make it very clear that they observed Memorial Day. We now talk about celebrating [Memorial Day]. They were not celebrating," she said.

The book can also be used to compare the Civil War and the current war overseas.

"Memorial Day came from the grief. We talk about how many people have died in



Janice Sweet McElhoe

the war in Iraq. The total is something over 4,000. In one [Civil War] battle they lost 17,000," said McElhoe. "You could have cousins shooting at each other. You could have brothers shooting against one another. It was grief. I think there was no family that was untouched by the grief."

To help teachers use *Shadows of War* in class, McElhoe has set up a Web site with

lesson ideas. One of these ideas is to have students compare Memorial Day in the 1860s and today's celebration. The goal is to make children see how far the current celebrations are from the original observances.

"I don't think that most kids get into a cemetery on Memorial Day," she said.

The lesson plans also recommend children look at what has not changed, namely the way people perceive war. In the novel, the young Army recruits are excited about the glory of war. As the story progresses, they and the other characters are slowly shown the horrible reality.

McElhoe compares them to her nephew who was once eager to join the Army. After boot camp, she said, "a lot of that shine is gone." She said soldiers from both eras experience the same disillusionment.

In spite of this, she said, as a nation we have forgotten what Memorial Day truly means.

"I suppose it's a lot like Christmas. A lot of people just think about Santa Claus coming and don't think about what it was originally," she said.



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# Voices reporter takes a shot at the spotlight

by Lindsay Chew

For a seasoned actor or actress, the audition process is an easy one.

There is no real preparation other than maybe memorizing a monologue and putting together an outfit. It's a 30-second block of time for them to easily slip out of their own personality and into another.

However, for the average person, 30 seconds becomes a life time and all the preparation in the world can't prevent tripping over words or making awkward movement just to fill the space.

I recently took the opportunity to audition for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which is being hosted this summer by The Nittany Valley Shakespeare Festival, for this story. The experience was unforgettable.

Walking into the small, sparse room, the first thing to catch my attention was the heat of the lights and the space in which I would have to audition. The 20- by 20-foot room I would soon have to fill with my presence suddenly looked like a football field.

In the room was one table where the

Right away intimidation washed over me and I felt my hands beginning to get clammy. Knowing it was now or never, I ruffed up my petite voice, spread my legs farther than usual and began to read.

director, Jason Zanitsch, sat.

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"So who would you like to read for?" asked Zanitsch. With only a high school memory of *The Tempest*, I said the only character that I could recall, "Trinculo."

Handing me an excerpt highlighting Trinculo, I quickly remembered that not only is this character a man, but in this particular scene, he's a drunken man.

Knowing it was now or never, I ruffed up my petite voice, spread my legs a little farther than usual and began to read.

I swayed back and forth a bit and let my words slur, but as hard as I tried, I tripped over a few words and even sometimes my own two feet.

After my attempt at the spot light, I got a

chance to speak with Zanitsch to get his perspective on the audition process.

"The director wants everyone coming through to be perfect," said Zanitsch, a veteran director and high school teacher in New York. "We want the tough choices."

And that's exactly what Zanitsch got. A plethora of local talent, ages ranging from 10 to 65, flooded the audition.

Along with the diverse ages came diverse personalities and interpretations of the characters.

"Everyone brings something different to the table and makes the character their own," said Zanitsch.

Zanitsch recalled a high school expo he had attended, where one girl performed a monologue in which she smeared a HoHo in her face. "You just never know what you are going to get when a person walks into

the audition," he said.

Although there were no baked goods thrown around at this audition, I understood what Zanitsch meant.

When a petite and timid-looking young woman walked through the door of the audition, I assumed she would audition for the role of Miranda, the 15-year-old girl who falls in love with the ship-wrecked prince.

Yet when she opened her mouth, a booming voice rang out and she began to traipse around the room using all of her limbs to emphasize her words. She had not read for Miranda, but for Ariel, a male spirit who, in the scene she was acting, soliloquizes about fire and death.

But the show is not always about the main roles; it also is about the audience.

Susan Riddiford Shedd, the operations manager for The State Theatre and long-time actress, said you can't have a show without an audience and a lot of acting is based on audience reaction.

"The common shared experience you have together is what makes it special," she said.

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from **Kodo**, pg. 19

Tokyo, and other times the music will incorporate fast and intricate drumming techniques from South American origins.

In modern Japan, the musical group is an alternative to growing urbanization and a recent emphasis in Western business culture.

"We don't want to deny other lifestyles, but rather combine contemporary and tradi-

from **AFM 660**, pg. 19

creating a healthier music scene, written contracts are vital to maintaining healthy relationships between management and musicians.

"By getting bar-owners and musicians to agree to terms in black and white upfront, we'll have smoother relations," Lee said. "The bar owners I've talked to actually like written contracts."

He said written contracts would have avoided dissonance last December between the management at The Phyrst, a bar in State College, and the Phyrst Phamily Band, a music group that performed there weekly for the past 22 years.

The manager refused to pay the band their usual amount because one member was absent. The resulting dispute escalated to a physical altercation. Afterwards, the band quit despite being offered more money to stay, said Kathy DiMuccio, a member of the original Phyrst Phamily Band, which replaced the former in the wake of this argument.

"I wish [the former Phyrst Phamily

from **Stimulus**, pg. 15

There are a thousand ways to "stimulate" our humanity and few of them, it seems, have very much to do with giving out money.

I wonder if it is really fear that is our biggest enemy in these times? When fear takes us over, we contract and our hands move from open- to close-fisted. But need we be afraid? By any assessment, isn't there enough to go around for all of us to survive with dignity in our neighborhoods and nation?

Perhaps the real challenge in these times is to shift from the mindset of scarcity to the consciousness of sufficiency. This would mean, at least in part, redefining what constitutes a "successful" life. At present we tend to think of "success" in terms of our individual accomplishments and personal

tional lifestyles," said Akimoto.

The sounds of the drums can inspire an audience to see life differently. But what you get out of it is ultimately up to you. Akimoto said he doesn't think the performers expect their audience to come away with any one feeling.

"We are happy if people come and enjoy a special time," said Akimoto. "I try to separate from regular life; it's our responsibility to make [the audience] feel like that. It's what we do."

Band] would have signed a contract," she said. "I wish all bands would sign contracts; it would be so much easier."

"[This dispute] was a very sad and difficult thing," said Jennifer Hesketh, a member of the former Phyrst Phamily Band. "But any band you talk to can tell you about having to move around to different venues because of arguments with management. We just want to play and have fun, and it's unfortunate things like this have to get in the way."

Hesketh and her band now play at The Brewery, another State College bar, under the name The Family Brew.

Local full-time musician and AFM 660 member Rick Hirsch said he also supports the sustainable music campaign.

"What's good about it is that it's not heavy handed," he said of the initiative. "It's a really thoughtful gesture in terms of being considerate of the venue owners as well. It's not a take-it-or-leave-it; it's not a traditional labor demand."

He said anything to strengthen the local music community is valuable "because State College is an extremely transient town and the music scene fluctuates here."

security. But what if we each understood that our primary purpose in life isn't to take care of ourselves? Instead, what if we understood that our primary job was to make sure that everyone in our community was taken care of?

In this new world we wouldn't have to worry about ourselves precisely because that would be everyone else's job! I'm not promoting utopia. After all utopia" actually derives from the Greek meaning "nowhere." In contrast, inspired by Wendell Berry and others, my interest lies in stimulating "somewheres"—millions and millions of them—places stimulating in their simplicity and sufficiency.

In the end, I suppose my hope resides in a "recovery" of a very different order, beyond markets and economies, toward neighborhood, neighborliness, and neighborhood commons—21st Century citizenship.




Photo provided  
With "the heart of a child," a Kodo performer beats on a booming 800-pound drum. The traditional Japanese drum ensemble will perform at the Eisenhower Auditorium March 18.


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