

Around the World to begin third season in downtown Kent

by Mike Telin



The Standing Rock Cultural Arts' Around the World Music Series kicks off its third season later this week at the North Water Street Gallery, located at 300 North Water Street, Suite H in downtown Kent. "We're so lucky that audiences have turned out in significant numbers during the past two seasons,"

ethnomusicologist and series

curator David Badagnani said during a recent conversation. "It's nice to have a space to present these musicians who people will love, but have never had a chance to hear." All concerts are preceded by a 7:30 pm meet-and-greet featuring light food and drinks. A donation of \$10 at the door is suggested.

On Saturday, September 23, Pittsburgh-based trio, AppalAsia (above) — Mimi Jong, Jeff Berman, and Susan Powers — will explore the intersections between traditional Chinese and American Mountain music, using *erhu* and *zhonghu* (Chinese fiddles), lap dulcimer, clawhammer banjo, and voice. What are the intersections between the two genres? Badagnani said that it's a coincidence, but the pentatonic scale is prominent in both traditions. "In the past ten years there are at least a dozen Chinese music groups that have independently come together with old-time and bluegrass musicians and have performed experimental concerts, but it all began with the Chieftains' trip to China in the mid-1980s."

Master drummer, drum builder, and teacher Baba David Coleman will return to Kent on Saturday, October 14. Joining Coleman will be members of his Iroko Drum and Dance Society. The evening will include songs, stories, and a demonstration of the *batá*, □ a set

of three “talking drums” originating among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The drums’ intricate cross rhythms are used to commune with divinities known as *orishas*.

Celebrate Día de Muertos, “Day of the Dead,” Saturday, October 28 with Mariachi Santa Cecilia, a four-piece mariachi band performing traditional and popular music of Mexico. “This will be Standing Rock Cultural Arts’ fifteenth Día de Muertos celebration. I don’t recall having had a mariachi band in Kent before, and mariachi is one of the major ensemble traditions in the world,” Badagnani said.

Bill Crouse, a member of the Seneca Nation of Indians and a Faithkeeper of the Coldspring Longhouse on the Allegany Territory near Salamanca, New York, will make his first appearance on the series on Saturday, November 11. A singer, drummer, dancer, visual artist, and language educator, Crouse will accompany himself with a traditional water drum and share songs and stories of the Seneca. He’ll also discuss the historical and spiritual significance of music in their traditional circle. “It’s important to present Native American music every year,” Badagnani said, “and November is Native American and Native Heritage Month.” The program is presented in collaboration with Kent State University’s Native American Student Association.

On Saturday, January 13, Oleh Mahlay will present a program featuring songs and history of the 60-string bandura. “It’s a zither-like instrument that has been called ‘The Soul of Ukraine.’ The instrument has a scintillating sound and its songs have a troubadour or bardic tradition,” Badagnani said. “It’s one of the most wonderful instruments in the world. It was featured in the documentary *Music of Survival*, which tells the story of how the tradition was almost lost, but a small group of master performers was able to escape to North America and went on to teach the younger generation, one of whom is Oleh Mahlay.”

One of only a few non-Indians to play the sarangi, a bowed instrument with 39 strings, Samuel Salsbury will present an evening of music from the Hindustani tradition of North India on Saturday, June 23. His program will comprise a full classical raga as well as two bhajans (devotional songs), with tabla accompaniment. “I’ve heard him play many times and he is one of the best improvisers ever,” Badagnani said. “He fell in love with the instrument and decided to go to India to study with a guru — he still goes every year and stays for three months. I think this concert may be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many people in the audience.”

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