



Keith Hall Drum Camp's Five-Year Groove

At Western Michigan University (WMU) in Kalamazoo, Mich., the popularity of the Keith Hall Summer Drum Intensive (KHSDI) is feverish. This year, it was so feverish that Keith Hall had to extend the curriculum from one week to two.

With KHSDI, the WMU drum instructor found a way to connect with drum enthusiasts from as young as 11 to as old as 60. The five-year-old program provides meals and dorm rooms to overnight campers, who participate in a weeklong series of drum-related activities.

Conducted by a staff of past and present Keith Hall drum students, each program is tailored to meet each participant's musical needs, with Week 1 designated for Beginner-Intermediate players and Week 2 for Intermediate-Advanced drummers.

Using the guidance of such pro rhythm sections as Tri-Fi—Hall's New York City trio—and Skype sessions with former Shirley Horn drummer Steve Williams, students conclude their camp experience with a live performance at the Union Cabaret and Grille in downtown Kalamazoo.

Though the camp is geared around drum technique, Hall explained that it also places a special emphasis on musicality as a whole.

"We talk about form, melody, playing with clarity, serving the song, interaction with the rhythm section and soloist, playing with confidence and having fun," Hall said.

With degrees from WMU and Queens College in New York, Hall has studied with Jimmy Cobb, Carl Allen and the late Ed Thigpen. His wealth of experience includes regular session and touring work singer Curtis Stigers. The author of *Jazz Drums Now!* (Keith Hall Music) has also performed with Sir Roland Hanna, Mark Murphy, Wynton Marsalis and Betty Carter. But as Hall's long-time mentor and KHSDI instructor Billy Hart explained, it's his "special spirit" that contributes to his skill as head of the camp.

"His knowledge projects a certain conta-

gious enthusiasm," Hart said. "He's a great teacher, as well as being a helluva drummer."

One of the most memorable—and most demanding—events during camp week is the Drum Choir, a concept Hall adopted from his studying with Hart in the early '90s. During Drum Choir, participants gather together and perform with their respective drum sets in a roughly circular fashion.

"Everyone splits up into drum choirs that consist of five drummers each," Hall explained. "Billy taught us about the importance of learning the melodies around the drums, reflecting the harmony and learning classic jazz drum vocabulary," Hall said. "We also provide master classes each day on different subjects ranging from drum tuning, how to practice, Afro-Cuban and Brazilian rhythms, to New Orleans second line drumming, solo concepts, transcribing, and exposure to the great jazz drummers and brushes."

Barbara Hibiske, a participant from Week 1, decided to take up the drums after playing four other instruments for over three decades. "I was looking for a fun way to accelerate my drumming knowledge and was excited to experience the enthusiasm for percussion that Keith and his team provide," Hibiske said.

For Alex Snyder, a high school junior who's now taken four camps, this year was a real growth experience.

"On Tuesday, the second full day of the camp, I rehearsed with Tri-Fi and basically crashed and burned," Snyder said. "All week, Keith and his staff claimed that I was going to 'get my butt kicked.' And that's what happened. My coaches Jay Sawyer and Ryan Andrews didn't sugarcoat anything. But the next time I sat down at the drums, everybody said that I sounded completely different, but in a good way.

"I needed that brutal honesty," he added. "That's why I'm going back—because they know exactly what each student needs to experience in order to improve." —John Ephland



Head Of The Class: Reginald "Reggie" Thomas joined the Michigan State University faculty as professor of jazz piano. Thomas worked for the Essentially Ellington Program and Band Director Academy at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and taught for 20 years at the University of Southern Illinois—Edwardsville.

Details: msu.edu

Top-Notch Faculty: Flutist Nicole Mitchell has joined the faculty at the University of California at Irvine's Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology (ICIT) program. Beginning this fall, Mitchell will assume the role of assistant professor of music, teaching classes in composition, jazz history, improvisation and contemporary cultural practices.

Details: uci.edu

Piano Prize: The Juilliard School pianist Kris Bowers has won first place in the Thelonious Monk International Piano Jazz Competition. In addition to a \$25,000 prize, Bowers also received a recording contract from Concord Music Group and performed with such jazz greats as Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Dianne Reeves and Kurt Elling.

Details: monkinstitute.org

Special Delivery: The Horns to Havana organization delivered a planeload of 120 instruments to Cuban music academics on Sept. 4–11. The organization, which consists of several professional musicians and repair technicians, sent the instruments to facilitate a greater cultural exchange between the U.S. jazz community and Cuban music students.

Details: hornstohavana.org

Emerging Contest: Vandoren has announced a call for auditions for its Emerging Artist Competition, which aims to jumpstart the careers of young classical and jazz saxophone and clarinet players. Winners of the competition will perform at the Music For All National Festival and work with an all-star roster of Vandoren artists.

Details: whyvandoren.com