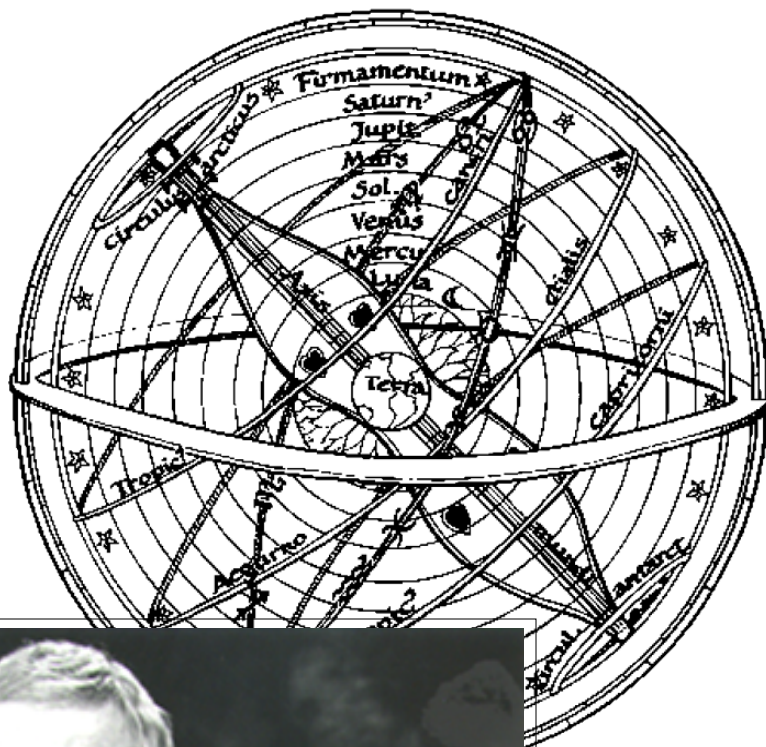


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Musician
Teacher
Artist
Author
Visionary

Robert Force, pioneer of the standing up, overhand style of playing, has been a performer on the Appalachian Mountain Dulcimer for more than thirty-five years. His book on dulcimer techniques and styles, *In Search of the Wild Dulcimer*, published by Random House in 1974 has sold more than 100,000 copies and, in the words of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "helped set the standards for modern dulcimers." *Victory Music Review* of Seattle has noted, "His records, books, festivals and appearances have literally influenced thousands of dulcimer players."

"My passion is teaching people to play and hear the dulcimer in a contemporary manner. To those who are in the process of discovering the dulcimer for themselves, I ask them to take a good long look at the word "folk" because, really, it means who they are and what they do. Whether it is country, rock, reggae, raga, jazz, or folk--all of these styles are music from the people, about the people and for the people. I lead students and audiences through the experience of exploring these many song forms, helping to build an appreciation of the techniques required to master them."

Robert has produced over thirty recordings for other musicians, has more than a half dozen of his own recordings to his credit, written several books, constructed an interactive dulcimer tutorial website, and performed in nearly every state in the Union as well as in parts of Europe. He has co-billed with such diverse headliners as Doc Watson, Norman Blake, the Grisman Quintet, Les Paul and even Zsa Zsa Gabor to name a few. Dr. Susan Porter of The Ohio State University said of him, "He is a technically proficient, disciplined, knowledgeable musician who is sensitive to nuances in a variety of styles, yet who has the creative capability to develop a highly personal style."

Of himself he says, "In my journey, the dulcimer has been my philosopher's stone, teaching and transforming me. Throughout my life, I have found that whatever I touched with joyful music offered up great secrets and yielded to me the very best of its nature. Along with my family, nothing has taught me as much about the world, friendship, love, joy and certainly myself, as has playing the dulcimer."

The *Souder Magazine* of Washington sums up his contribution to musicianship: "A player par excellence, Robert Force combines warmth, wit and musical ability into an experience that leaves the audience uplifted and thoroughly entertained."

Workshop Descriptions

one to two hours long

The following are descriptions of one to two hour-long workshops I currently teach. After thirty-five years of doing this, it makes sense to tailor what it is participants may want in any given venue. I find that promoters are very aware of the sophistication, playing level and need of their festival goers. Consequently, I welcome input and suggestions from them as to what they feel would be well-received, successful and appropriate to each festival.

Improvisation and Lead Lines: This workshop is about how to think outside of the box, analyzing and deconstructing tunes, allowing room for improvisation and appropriate lead line embellishments; recognizing when less is more. This workshop teaches the art of sublime synchronicity, being tasteful, and knowing there is a perfect note which, if played at the right time and with the right inflection, opens the doors to perception for both player and audience. Suggested for Intermediate II-- moderate to advanced level players

Latin Rhythms and Syncopation: Most American folk music-- especially the traditional-- emphasizes the down beat. This workshop addresses how to recognize and play on the off-beat with an additional emphasis on incorporating syncopation. Simple Appalachian folk songs will be recast to become reggaes and calypsos. We will also explore original, contemporary compositions which reinforce this style of playing-- ending up with a raucous Samba in which everyone plays a part. Very fun! All levels from Beginner II and up.

Holding a Rhythm (aka Bootcamp for Dulcimer): This workshop is an introduction to the flatpick and the attendant strumming techniques of strengthening the wrist, voicing strings, angles of attack, tempo, studies in timbre, synchronizing the melody and rhythm hands, and grouping sets of notes which work sequentially toward building songs and mastering tunes. The course follows the first five chapters of "In Search of the Wild Dulcimer." This is a very dynamic foundation course in rhythm, tempo and strumming technique. Especially recommended for Beginners I and II.

Icelandic Tunes of the 12th Century: The Icelandic langspil is one of the instruments in the zither family of its American cousin, the mountain dulcimer. When Europe was going through the Dark Ages, Iceland was experiencing a Renaissance which lasted for more than 500 years! We will learn the tune (and story) of "Rhythum" (rhee-thum) which often accompanies the only traditional folk dance of Iceland, as well as the bard-greeting song, Krummi (krew-mee). These songs are in Aeolian-based tunings with the latter being in a Hyperaolian mode. (What?) Both songs are simple and easy to learn; don't be afraid of the fancy tuning names. Here is a chance to view this haunting mode from the perspective of a millennium! Time allowed, we will also learn to sing a simple Icelandic round about the coming of the Spring. Beginner II and up.

Workshop Descriptions

one to two hours long

The Pythagorean Muse-- Modes and Music: The Ionian mode is the model for the modern scale as is the Aeolian for the modern minor. Most dulcimer players do so in Mixolydian. Why? How do the other modes fit into the historical and musical universe which we are exploring? We will tune to the Dorian, Phrygian and Lydian modes, play tunes and, in passing, discuss the peculiarity of the Locrian's lack of a perfect fifth, the concept of Chromos as it applies to music, the cosmic mystery (revealed!) of the circle of fifths and, in general, the historical and cultural development of the modal, diatonic system of music. Intermediate I and II-- moderate to advanced level players.

Wellyn-- Double Dulcimer Magic: The tune, Wellyn, written thirty years ago, is a marriage of straight-ahead rock alternating with the delicate counterpoint reminiscent of the Baroque era. Uniquely a dulcimer tune, it utilizes strummed, full-barre positions with those of the more usual three-stop, flat-picked chords. It can be done simply-- entirely with strums-- or it can be done in a complex, two-part dulcimer manner which challenges the student to stretch themselves to incorporate the dynamics of varied volumes and timbre. Written on the same day, the tune, Cornwall, will also be taught, time permitting. Also a double dulcimer tune, it is replete with a variety of subtle nuances which make use of delicate minor discordancies and voicing to enhance the tune. Intermediate I and II-- moderate to advanced level players.

The Great American Song is Yours! Does anything really rhyme with orange? What comes first, the melody or the words? What is there to write about? Why write at all? Who is the audience for these tunes? What is the line between mystical, mush, mayhem, mundane, mediocre and magnificent? I will help lay the groundwork for understanding that life is not a metaphor and that the ideas for most great songs are quite often born from simple events. We won't just talk about writing; we will write together! At least one new song will come out of this experience-- guaranteed! What are the qualifications to be a songwriter? Well, even if you are new to your instrument and new to your voice, you are not new to thoughts, words and life. All levels.

Performance/Stagecraft: Discussed and demonstrated will be proper techniques for setting up microphones for instruments and voice, how to talk competently in technical jargon to sound reinforcement people about equalizing, customizing your sound and the use of auxiliary direct boxes. Emphasized will be stage etiquette as it pertains to the sound reinforcement crew. We will define stage and sound nomenclature and especially focus on the do and don'ts of microphone handling, microphone placement and direct box plug ins. You will only sound as good as your rapport with the technicians is sound! This workshop can only be offered when there is access to both a sound technician (as a co-instructor) and to the actual equipment. This is something anyone who is ever going to step on a stage should know. All level players.

Master Classes

for half day and full day

Off Beat and On Time: This class will explore rhythm techniques such as syncopation, the use of descant parts, learning to hear and play on the off-beat and incorporating these rhythms into standard song forms as a method to make melodic lines stand out. Special attention will be placed on incorporating flat-picking and strumming into the same song as a dynamic. We will also work with improving fretting techniques such as hammering on, pulling off, splitting strings, playing without having to strum the strings, tricky chord progressions and the use of (and finding) harmonics. To facilitate playing in a group setting, we will learn how to construct solo lead lines and breaks, and how to hear oneself in an ensemble setting. Multiple handouts will be used to illustrate the material. Additional topics may be proposed by class participants and addressed as time allows. Intermediate to advanced. Limit of 20.

Advanced Songwriting and Performance: This workshop is for the person who performs or wants to perform on the stage. Although it is helpful to have a complete stage set-up with microphones, etc., it is not necessary. Students must come prepared to perform three pieces of music of various moods, content and tempo. Lecture/demonstration will be used to emphasize perceiving understanding and accommodating the comfort zones of both the audience and the performer. If microphones are available, being at ease and able to successfully work with the various kinds will also be addressed with hands-on practicum (see description for Performance/ Stagecraft workshop). Each student's performance will be critiqued and all aspects of the presentation discussed by the group. Special attention will be placed on choice of material appropriate to various venues. Singer-songwriters are encouraged to present their own material to facilitate discussion of what works and why. Suggested participant group size is 6 to 12. Onlookers are welcome to help create the feel of an actual concert.

Unscheduled Workshop Opportunity:

How to Choose (and pay for) a Good College: I work professionally in the field of education as a Cooperative Extension agent for Washington State University. In this capacity I advise students and their families on strategies for getting into top schools and winning the scholarships which makes it possible to afford to attend them. Mysteries of the FAFSA, Admission Director profiles and building good GPAs are revealed. To date, I have helped to generate well over a million dollars in scholarship and grant offers. At any given folk festival I have found this topic is always on somebody's mind and I take great delight in providing informal workshops on this topic after normal music class times are over. I find that if information about this other part of my professional life is made available to the festival attendees, they tend to avail themselves of it. Recommended for anyone of any age who sees some kind of higher education pursuit in the near future. No limit.