

Drumming circles provide release

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — The lights are dimmed and the candles lit. All is quiet.

Slowly, the rhythm of the drum begins and builds, swirling in a circle from drummer to drummer. The beat grows faster and faster until it seems to flow effortlessly.

For two hours or more — every week or once a month — groups of drummers gather in circles in and around Ann Arbor to make music. Drums in hand, they come from as far away as Toledo and Kalamazoo to find like souls interested in creating the drumming magic.

"From the drumming can come dancing, singing and meditating. The music calls people," says Paul Militello, Ann Arbor drum maker and drumming teacher.

Lori Fithian, who runs a women's drum circle, agrees.

"Drums draw you instinctively," she says. "It draws us back to our own selves."

Barry McKay says he isn't a great drummer. But every Friday night, he opens a small meeting room at Gallup Park, where a gathering of drummers fills the dark, silent night outside with the loud and constant heartbeat of music.

"I haven't cultivated my drumming," says McKay. "I'm more into the group thing, the people."

Drumming in the 1990s has become what guitar playing was in the 1960s.

"The medicine of the drum is the calling of people together," says Militello. "It's the calling of people to express themselves."

It's only been in the last two or three years that drum circles have caught real fire, he says.

Drum circles are a growing phenomenon McKay agrees, not just in Ann Arbor or the United States but around the world. There's a void in life that drumming fills, says McKay.

"It's one thing I miss about my hippie days. Middle class people don't jam at parties."

It's not just a guy thing

either. Women of all ages and walks of life have stepped into the Womyn's Drum and Song Circle, says ShuNahSii Rose, one of the facilitators of the group, which meets at Zion Lutheran Church.

"It's not necessarily for women with musical training," she says. "It's for people interested in community."

One of the reasons Gary Brown decided to live in Ann Arbor was because of the prolific number of drum circles in the area. Brown is often found playing drums solo in his basement — sometimes for eight hours at a stretch. But he also likes to play in a circle. He's a regular at the Ann Arbor Drum Circle that meets in Gallup Park.

Drumming, says McKay, is a way to communicate.

"But it's without language; it's without having metaphors clashing."

It's also freeing, he says.

"You can't be self-centered and egotistical or the circle won't work," says McKay. "You need to pay attention to what the community is doing."

Still, drumming has changed from the days when McKay and his hippie friends created a beat on old tofu drums.

"Now, people pay \$300 for their drum," said McKay.

And drum types go in and out of favor. For now, the powerful West African drum, the djembe, is the most popular, said Militello. Made from goat skin, it yields a deep and powerful sound. The bongos and congos, popular a few years ago and made of cow skin, have a softer tone.

The djembe has created more powerful drum circles, says Militello.

"The djembe can be overpowering," he says. "If you don't have a djembe, you may not have a voice in the circle."

While circles mix accomplished drummers with novices, each circle has its own personality.

The Ann Arbor Drum Circle

that meets inside a small building adjacent to the boat livery at Gallup Park is one of the oldest circles open to the public. It's been meeting just about every Friday night since 1991. That it meets far and away from homes of crowds of people is no mistake. Years ago, the drum circle was asked to leave Performance Network near downtown because of the noise level.

"There's no one really to bother at Gallup," says McKay.

There's no leader of the circle, but McKay is in charge of renting and operating the facility.

Only women are allowed at the Womyn's Drum Circle, which meets monthly in the living room-like lounge inside Zion Lutheran Church.

"Women come in here at the end of the week tired," says Rose. "The drum circles wash them clean of all the frenetic energy."

The women's circle, which has been meeting for three years, is also known for its inventive percussion. Pots and pans, chocolate tins, garbage cans and the bottoms of yogurt containers are used for drumming, and women spontaneously break from the circle to dance and chant. Small bells and tambourines, louder cow bells and pounding sticks on plastic bowls create a collection of sounds.

Women can offer a different approach to drumming than men, says Rose. While some men practice thunder drumming — beating their drum hard with hands that become calloused and bruised — women in the circle usually drum more gently.

Women can be shy about joining in the thunder drumming, says Ms. Fithian, who leads the women's circle.

"We're creating a safe space to express yourself," she says. "A lot of our work is about empowering women. We need our own separate space sometimes. When you make that possible, women express themselves freely. It's a circle of safety, of sharing and of expressiveness."

Judge dismisses rap foe's lawsuit

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — A judge has dismissed a defamation lawsuit filed by a rap music critic against two news magazines for their reports on her earlier lawsuit against the estate of slain rapper Tupac Shakur.

U.S. District Judge Ronald Buckwalter threw out C. DeLores Tucker's lawsuit against Time, Newsweek, writers for those publications, and Shakur estate lawyer Richard Fischbein.

Buckwalter ruled that Mrs. Tucker, a former Pennsylvania secretary of state, was a public figure in the eyes of the law. That means she had to prove that Time and Newsweek wrote the stories with "actual malice," knew they were inaccurate and

would "embarrass and humiliate" her and her husband, William.

The Tuckers did not meet that burden of proof, Buckwalter ruled.

"There is a vast difference between being annoyed and/or embarrassed on the one hand, and being disgraced and ridiculed to the extent that one's reputation is harmed in the estimation of the community, on the other," the judge wrote in a ruling issued Tuesday.

The Tuckers' \$10 million lawsuit against Shakur's estate said the rapper's lyrics, in which he rhymed Tucker's name with an obscenity, caused emotional distress that led to "a loss of consortium."

A subsequent article in Time referred to "claims that lewd

remarks made about her ... caused her so much distress that she and her husband have not been able to have sex." A Newsweek article referred to claims that the lyrics "iced their sex life."

Tucker said the "consortium" complaint had nothing to do with sex.

The Tuckers' lawsuits are still pending against dozens of news outlets, including The Associated Press, that carried stories on the initial lawsuit.

Buckwalter last month threw out the lawsuit against Shakur's estate, ruling that the references to Tucker on Shakur's "All Eyes on Me" album were "unpleasant at best and vulgar at worst" but not libelous.

Shakur was shot to death in Las Vegas in 1996.

Robeson

from page C6

actors Ossie Davis and Harry Belafonte, the difficulties of being a black actor in the first half of the 20th century are revealed. The documentary also features interviews with Uta Hagen, the German actress who play "Desdemona" to Robeson's "Othello" both on the stage and off.

The documentary also features the intimate diaries of his wife, anthropologist and author Eslanda Goode — who suffered through years of betrayals by her husband.

Robeson's rise and fall are legendary. The son of an escaped slave who became a respected minister, Robeson spent much of his life deeply involved in African American causes. It was his awareness of his blackness that led him on a

spiritual quest for equality throughout Eastern Europe and Asia.

At the height of his popularity, he was a symbol and a cultural leader in the war against fascism abroad and racism at home. In the end, it was his goal of equality that led to his downfall. During the McCarthy era, every effort was made to discredit him because of his liberal political views and dedication to civil rights for blacks. The persecution reached a climax in the 50s when his passport was revoked. The FBI and State Department effectively ended his career: no more concerts, recordings, theater or travel abroad where he had made a name as one of the century's greatest Shakespearean actors.

"Paul Robeson was the most persecuted, the most ostracized, the most condemned black made in America — then or ever," said

his biographer and longtime friend Lloyd Brown.

His passport was finally reinstated in 1958 and Robeson toured England and Australia. But the government's harassment took its toll. After several bouts with depression, Robeson was admitted to The Priory hospital in London, where he received dozens of shock treatments.

A weary Robeson finally made it home in 1963 and was treated for a dizzying array of illnesses. Realizing he was no longer the powerful orator and singer of his prime, he stepped out of the public eye, dying in relative obscurity 1976.

"Paul Robeson's life is a huge story, a very important story," Lacy said. "The scale of this film is an attempt to compensate for the fact that he had, for so long, been written out of history."



KARAMU

Karamu is a family-friendly celebration which transforms the Greensboro Cultural Center into an African marketplace complete with the sounds, smells and sights that have entranced travelers, writers and intellectuals for centuries. Call 379-2974 for tickets.

AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTS FESTIVAL

For additional KARAMU information please call **336-373-7523**
Produced by the United Arts Council of Greensboro

SPONSORED BY

MILLER BREWING COMPANY

With Additional Support From: News and Record, Wachovia Bank, BB&T, Dudley Products, Lorillard Tobacco Co., Bill Black Cadillac Oldsmobile, Mutual Community Savings Bank, Delta Sigma Theta, NC Arts Council, 97.1 WQMG, 1510AM WEAL



Oh, for the love of leather...

\$1699 Sofa
A. This 89" leather sofa is right at home in a variety of decors, offering a cathedral back, flared rolled arms and nailhead accents. Loveseat **\$1649**. Chair **\$1399**. Ottoman **\$599**. Full sleeper **\$1899**.



\$999 Sofa
B. Offering contemporary style at an especially attractive price, our 88" leather-vinyl match sofa has a shaped pub back, pillow-topped seating and thick saddlebag arms. Loveseat **\$969**. Chair **\$749**. Ottoman **\$299**. Sleeper **\$1199**.



\$1999 Sofa
C. Warm up your decor with this rich russet-colored leather sofa. Measuring 91", it features rolled arms with shirred panels and a high, framed-in back accented with nailhead trim. Loveseat **\$1969**. Chair **\$1699**. Ottoman **\$499**.



NO payment interest until June*

\$1799 Sofa
D. Boasting glazed full-grain leather with a well-worn look, this traditional 88" sofa is styled with thickly padded rolled arms and classic nailhead trim. Loveseat **\$1799**. Chair **\$1599**. Ottoman **\$399**. Queen sleeper **\$1999**.



Monday-Friday 10 to 8 • Saturday 10 to 6 • Sunday 1 to 5
230 Charlois Boulevard • 768-1000
(on the corner of Stratford Rd. and Silos Creek Pkwy. in Stratford Executive Park)

Credit always welcome! Use Havertys' convenient revolving charge plan, or if you prefer:



www.havertys.com

HAVERTYS

MAKES IT HOME

*Make no monthly payments and pay no interest until June 1999, on a Havertys Revolving Charge. \$750 minimum purchase. Down payment required. Interest begins to accrue on any unpaid balance after the deferred period. Any finance charge assessed to your Havertys Revolving Charge is determined by applying a 18% Annual Percentage Rate to your average daily balance. Subject to credit approval. \$35 minimum monthly payment after deferred period. Clearance merchandise excluded. © Copyright 1999 Haverty Furniture Companies, Inc.

For 25 Years, The Choice for African American News and Information

CELEBRATING

25 years

Website: www.netunlimited.net/~wschron
email: wschron@netunlimited.net

THE CHRONICLE
1974 - 1999