

Program Summary (18 October 2012)

At 7:00 p.m., President Wade announced to the members that the unusual geometry of the seating had been altered to make the performance visualization more available to all members. Next month's talk will be a discussion of Rice's Centennial planning and execution. Wade invited nominations from the membership (to be voted on in the Spring).

At 7:57 p.m., President Wade alerted the membership that the evening's presentation would begin shortly. But first, announcements and introductions would take place.

At 8:05 p.m., visitors were introduced by the members. Wade introduced the evening's speaker **Dr. Matthew McClung**, who is an Associate Professor of Music at Texas A&M University Corpus Christi. He is also on the faculty at Arkansas' Hot Spring Music Festival. He is founding member of Strike 3 Percussion, which performs for school children. Dr. McClung earned his doctorate at the Rice Shepherd School in 2005 in percussion.

The title of Dr. McClung's talk was **An American in the African Jungle - A Percussion Experience**. The membership warmly welcomed Dr. McClung. This is the 653rd meeting of the Houston Philosophical Society.



Dr. McClung began his talk with a discussion of how he ended up studying percussion in Ghana during the summer of 2002. He won a scholarship while studying in the Shepherd School, and the scholarship required study abroad. He picked Ghana for several reasons, not the least that as a former British colony, English was widely spoken. In a small village an hour away from Accra (Ghana's capital), Dr. McClung learned native pieces from a master.

(It turned out that Valerie Naranjo was also studying there; she is currently a member of the Saturday Night Live Band.)

Dr. McClung returned from Ghana with eight instruments, which he brought to the Faculty Club for tonight's performance. Current student members of the Shepherd School percussion band joined to play two intricate pieces after a demonstration of each individual instrument. The instruments consisted of an iron bell (the "Atoke"), a gourd rattle (the "Axatse"), and a set of "Ewe" drums, including a master drum (the "Atimevu") as well as the "Kaganu", "Krobota", and "Kidi" instruments. Some are open bottomed, while some have a hole in the side to allow air to escape.



Dr. McClung concluded with a demonstration of the Ghanaian version of a Xylophone (the “Balofon”), which is based on a 5-note scale (rather than our 7-note). The Xylophone uses gourds for amplification and spider webs spun into papers to create a distinctive buzzing tone.

After a short question-and-answer session, the audience warmly thanked Dr. McClung and the Shepherd School Percussion Ensemble at the conclusion.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

David W. Scott
Recording Secretary

Instrument pictures courtesy of
http://www.musiquest.co.uk/pdf/ghana_percussion.pdf