

Many thanks to Broulee Public School P&C for raising funds for this workshop!

Marimba Mayhem

by Jesse Rowan

John Madin's Marimba and Whacky Instrument Workshop Broulee Public School May 2012

Jon Madin has been bringing music to schools and communities around NSW for over 20 years. He is a creative 'shed tinkerer' who enjoys using plumbing pipes and fittings, car parts, exercise bikes and other junkyard finds to devise musical instruments that will call out to be touched and tried out.

Jon makes music a playful experience, and his emphasis is on getting beginners to have fun and experience playing music with others without worrying about technique or musical theory. His aim is to get everyone playing as quickly as possible, before they can put up the resistance of "I can't".

He arrived at the school with his station wagon and trailer jam-packed with marimbas, echocellos and other strange and wonderful percussion instruments that he has devised from recycled bits and pieces over the years.



Jon took every class separately and taught them a tune on the marimbas and another tune using echocellos, which are Jon's invention. They sound like a primitive cello, and with Jon calling out the notes to press, the children were thrilled with the sound they made as an orchestra.



Jon's emphasis in teaching music is to get everyone involved, no matter what their musical talent or expertise. He concentrates on simple patterns that sound great against the melody, with a simple bass line under it all. He roped in other musicians to play more complex melodies or sometimes Jon played the melody on his piano accordion. For some tunes he used a guitar to help the students keep to the beat.

As the students mastered the tunes, Jon organised volunteers to sing, dance or do movements to go with the music. The concert at the end of the workshop was a wonderful community event.

