



Warren Senders

CEB Faculty Think Tank Project

NEC Role: Faculty

Title of Project: Music From The Ground Up

Define: Integrating awareness of environmental responsibility with a holistic, hands-on approach to music-making.

Discover: I believe that the limits we place on our musical creativity are similar to those we experience in our responses to social and environmental issues. When we transform our thinking in one area, it liberates our responses and actions in others.

Dream: Liberation in our musicianship, in our collaborative relationships with one another, and in NEC's institutional response to issues of climate change and environmental degradation.

Design: This project is for a one-day workshop open to all members of the NEC community. I have conducted similar activities for many groups and organizations over the past ten years.

Derive: It has been a human tradition to make musical instruments from readily-available materials for tens of thousands of years. A percussion instrument made from trash – to offer one example – is thus part of a very long human lineage which is perhaps even more deserving of a word like “traditional” than the instruments of the Western canon.

Immersion in this intensively hands-on, bottom-up process (in which both new instruments and music are created in a level-field collaborative environment) leads to a reframing of the interpersonal environment which allows for enormously enhanced diversity and inclusion.

Delivery: I propose a one-day workshop for all members of the NEC community. In two 150-minute sessions, participants will first build an “orchestra” of instruments from trash and recycled materials, then apply simple principles of ensemble organization to create and perform compositions using both their standard instruments and the newly created ones.

Short discussion groups will clarify the relationship between the activity itself and the urgent issues of environmental responsibility.

This will be enormous fun, musically stimulating, and a great team-building activity.

A 5-hour workshop – building instruments from recycled & found materials (first half) and using them in composed & improvised music (second half).

- Workshop leader & 2 assistants
- Materials are "kitted" beforehand to make for easy assembly – pre-drilled holes, pre-fitted wood parts, etc.

This activity can be described/rationalized from two different perspectives:

Environmental & societal responsibility:

Using recycled materials & quick-n-easy construction techniques is a way to call attention to issues of humanity's relationship to our environment and our responsibilities to it.

Turning something into trash is subtracting value from it. Making art from trash is adding value to it again.

In our disposable consumer economy we have commodified music along with the technology of music-making, and this has led to problematic relationships between our society and the world of music itself – all of us as artists are sensitive to the idea that what we do is somehow "not of the world" and a poor fit with a buy/sell model.

Climate chaos is the result of our throw-away economy applied to energy sources: when we're done burning our fossil fuels we just throw them away – into the atmosphere, where they're making everything heat up.

Pollution is again the result of our readiness to throw away the waste & remnants of our activities. Now we discover that there is no "away."

If we do not learn to create value from the raw materials at hand (trash) then we will be overwhelmed with trash as we continue to generate it at ever-accelerating rates.

To conceive of trash as a resource is to reconfigure our economic model from a linear to a circular model. Thus this work encourages discussion of economic inequities and the parallel social inequities that plague and damage our civilization.

Artistic growth of NEC students:

The musical experiences available from making art with fresh-made instruments are very positive and remarkable.

An instrument which did not exist until five minutes ago makes VERY different demands on our thinking with regard to technique, repertoire, training, etc.

This encourages a creative, flexible, improvisatory mindset that gives new strength to Deep Listening (not the sound as it is "supposed to be" but the sound "as it is.").

The actual interpersonal experience of composition and improvisation with these quirky, idiosyncratic instruments – along with the hands-on work of collaborating to make them in the first place! – dissolves boundaries of style, idiom, age, demographics. The collaborative mindset that emerges is very conducive to creative thought.

When the instruments thus made are combined with "traditional" instruments, the results are often spectacular.

Budget:

- \$300 – Workshop leader: Warren Senders. This includes "kitting" of materials so that instruments can be easily assembled on the day of the workshop without requiring multiple phases of construction (too time-consuming for such a short event)
- \$200 - Two assistants. They will assist with construction tasks, trouble-shoot, keep supplies up to date, and document the activities.
- \$100 - parking, transportation, materials and supplies.

From [Collaborative Google Slide](#):

Name	Key Goal	Type	Action Item
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<p>Warren</p>	<p>Robust NEC response to issues of sustainability & environmental justice / climate change</p>	<p>institutional</p>	<p>Workshops, classes, activities that directly engage these issues with experiential music making & discussion.</p>
<p>What is your role in relation to this goal at NEC? Is this in your sphere or responsibility, or will approval/collaboration be needed? By/from whom?</p> <p>I'm a faculty member with very limited on-campus time. This is not really in my defined area of responsibility. So approval has to come from somewhere else.</p> <p>Given our timeline (till June), what specifically would you like to accomplish. Name 1 - 2 specific objectives (attainable).</p> <p>The most I could do in this limited timeframe is to write a provisional prospectus for this project.</p>		<p>What will the end goal/"product" linked to the think tank entail? Will it be a proposal, a report, a syllabus, a plan?</p> <p>I'll write a prospectus. What I REALLY want is an opportunity for NEC students & staff to work together on making instruments and playing them...in a dedicated space. And for this activity/resource to be explicitly connected to issues of sustainability, community, and climate issues.</p> <p>Suggested action-step cycle: Take Stock - Listen - ideate - consolidate - feedback - action plan - implement Given you action item above, what are 2 - 4 steps to get there?</p> <p>Write prospectus, offer to lead workshops.</p>	