

Phil Passen Workshops

Singing With the Dulcimer: The goal of this class is to give students confidence that they can learn a method for arranging, learning, and actually singing a song while accompanying themselves on the dulcimer. Gone will be the common fear that “I can’t even talk while I play, I could never sing.” I use a step-by-step approach to put singing together with playing. Students work on accompanying themselves and each other, so that they also feel comfortable accompanying other singers.

Beginning Hammered Dulcimer: My goal in this class is always to get students excited enough that they continue with the hammered dulcimer instead of sliding it under the bed and leaving it there until the next beginners’ class comes along. In addition to learning the basics – finding the notes, tuning, good hammering technique – each student gets a chance to just hammer away and improvise, with some direction, so they feel comfortable interacting with the dulcimer. Students learn at least one tune, some fun exercises, and, if time allows, the rudiments of learning tunes both by ear and from written music.

Beginning to Jam: This class helps beginners and advanced beginners take the biggest step toward a lifetime of enjoying music – playing with others. I cover basic jam etiquette, and we play a few tunes the students know and a lot they don’t know to help them overcome the fear of being lost. I point out how to determine the key the tune is in if you’re afraid to ask, basic chording and some things to do when you can’t figure out anything but the tune’s key. This workshop replaces fear with fun.

Beginning to Perform: One of the most rewarding aspects of playing music is sharing one’s music with others by playing for them. This class offers a systematic approach to overcoming stage fright, preparing for a performance, and knocking ‘em dead. We review building repertoire and set lists, the differences between practicing tunes and rehearsing for a performance, stage presence and stage patter, basic amplification strategies, and finding places to perform. Each student performs at least once for the whole class.