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5Â QUESTIONS for Robin Truesdale, musician and curator

Daily Camera staff

Posted: 05/11/2009 12:00:00 AM MDT

Robin Truesdale and Bonnie Carol are co-curators of the Zimbabwe Art Show, which is part of ZimFest, a festival that celebrates the culture, music, art and people of Zimbabwe. ZimFest will be in Boulder, this June, for the first time since the annual festival began in Seattle in 1991.

Truesdale, who started playing marimba music in 2002, ended up making a trip to Zimbabwe four years later as a result. She immersed herself in and developed a love of the Zimbabwean culture after her two sons, who are both musicians, introduced her to the music. Truesdale is also part of Pick Up Sticks, a Boulder-based marimba band, and has made two movies on Zimbabwe, one of them sponsored by the National Geographic All Roads Film Project.

The Camera got a chance to talk with Truesdale about music, culture and what Zimbabwe can bring to Boulder.

1. How did you get involved in music?

I got involved just from hearing the music played in Boulder. My kids started playing marimba and they are really good at it so I thought, 'Well, I should give that a try.' And, so, I started playing and it's really addictive and fun.

2. Why Zimbabwean Culture? What's the draw?

Well the music is, kind of, what gets a lot of people here in this area interested in the Zimbabwean culture because the music that we learn on the marimba, it's very ancient rhythms that come out of the old Shona traditions. It's kind of spiritual music -- it's not spiritual in a church sense but -- it has a lot of history. And so the music pulls a lot of people in and then we also have teachers come here from Zimbabwe who we learn the music from so it's authentic, you know.

3. Why did you go to Zimbabwe and what was it like?

I ended up going to Zimbabwe because of the people who I had met who had come here to teach and, then, when I went there, I stayed in their homes and their huts and their villages and stuff. So, that was my connection to get to Zimbabwe. You know, Zimbabwe's having a hard time -- its economic situation is really bad -- and, so, things are really difficult there and it's hard to see people living under those conditions. But the people are so amazing, they're so loving and sweet and just very generous and strong people, you know -- they don't let things beat them down.

4. What is the goal of the art show?

I think there's two goals. The art show's goal is to just showcase the country of Zimbabwe. (There are) so many different elements: culture, art, people, music. It just, sort of, whets the appetite -- if people come and see the show they may want to learn more. The festival, itself, is an intense, working festival where people go to learn specific musical parts and songs and dance. So, it's a workshop festival: people take classes and they learn but there's a lot of concerts. So, I think, even if a person in Boulder isn't interested in participating in the festival per se, they'll walk by and hear the music and enjoy it.

5. How has getting involved with this culture, music and the festival changed your life?

It changed my focus -- I have a much more global mindset. Having now gone to the African continent and experienced different cultures, it's given me a greater awareness of the world. But, also, being with my kids and playing the music it's really affected our relationship. I have two sons -- they're both teenagers now -- and it was a good way for us to connect. As they became teenagers and wanted to do other things, it was a way for us to still do things together.

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