

BENJAMIN HARBERT

Music Workshops

MEET THE ARTIST:

Ben Harbert is a guitarist, Middle-Eastern 'ud player, Indian tabla player, music historian, educator, music documentarian, and composer. He represents a third generation of the Andrés Segovia school of guitar, having studied under three of his protégés. He currently directs the Los Angeles Electric 8, an electric guitar chamber octet. His 'ud teachers include Cinuçen Tanrikorur (Istanbul), Hussein Labib Saber (Cairo) and A. J. Racy (Los Angeles). Recently, he was a music advisor for Marketplace's *Middle East @ Work*, arranging and recording their theme music for a small Arab ensemble. Mr. Harbert is an exponent of the Lucknow tabla gharana, having studied in Calcutta, India and at the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael, California. Mr. Harbert also studied composition at Wesleyan University and in 1997, he was awarded the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship for a yearlong study in Egypt, India and Spain. From 1998 to 2001, he directed the guitar and percussion departments at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music. He has guest-lectured on music internationally. As a writer, he is a contributor to *Acoustic Guitar Magazine*, served as editor of the *Old Town School of Folk Music Songbook*, and written a number of wide-ranging articles on music. Mr. Harbert holds a Master of Arts from UCLA in ethnomusicology. Currently, he is finishing his Ph.D. at UCLA with a focus on music in American prisons and music of the Near East.



MUSIC · CENTER

ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS:

This music workshop series, entitled The Great American Folk Song, features a collage of folk artists who created, performed and preserved this distinct musical genre. The primary focus of the workshop series is to have students learn and sing a collection of folk songs. The secondary emphasis will be on American history, connecting the songs to historical benchmarks and time periods.

Each session will begin with a vocal warm-up and a concentration exercise. The topics in this engaging series include: An Introduction to American Folk Music; The Music of Stephen Foster and the influence of African American spirituals, The Industrial Revolution and the invention of the printing press; Train

Songs of Elizabeth Cotton; Songs of the Western Trail; the Role of Preservationist/ archivist in Folk Music and musical style and its connection to culture; Songs of Woody Guthrie, advocate for the working class; Songs of country star, Merle Travis; Songs of Musical Families, featuring Maybell Carter; Songs of Folk Singer Burl Ives; and concludes with Pete Seeger and the inclusive power of folk music.

Additional topics that can also be considered for inclusion are Gold Rush Songs, Sea Shanties and Mexican Folk Music.

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP:

- Please have the students wear nametags for the workshop. It saves time if they are made beforehand!
- Review the importance of listening and observing. Ask the students what it means to be a good listener. What does it mean to be a good observer? Why is it important in daily life? Why is it important when the artist is here?
- Perhaps talk about the time period and cultures students are studying and the music that defines that time, place and culture. This will help set the stage for seeing the connections between music and the people who lived and worked in a specific place and time.
- Discuss the meaning of folk music and how this type of music and singing is different from other types of music, such as musicals, opera or popular music.

AFTER THE WORKSHOP:

- Review the songs and information presented in the workshop. Discuss what the students remember about the specific historical time and place in which they originated. What parts of the workshop did the students like best? What did they learn about American folk songs, singers and composers? What did they learn about themselves and the times in which they live?
- Review students' ideas about music, underscoring the idea that it is a universal form of expression for most cultures of the world. Discuss the contributions that folk music makes to the people who sing and listen to them. Discuss the importance of working cooperatively together with others. Where can they use this skill in their lives? (E.g. focus, working cooperatively with others, listening to directions, remembering sequences, etc.)
- Encourage the students to use their newly found skills and knowledge to make up new work in partners or small groups. Where can they use collaboration skills in their lives? (E.g. focus, working cooperatively with others, listening to directions, remembering sequences, etc.)