

Free Concerts at the National Music Museum

By Elyse Brightman
The Plain Talk

The National Music Museum will be hosting musician Dr. Will Peebles for a free live concert with his gamelan degung on Friday at 12 noon in the Arne B. Larson Concert Hall. Peebles is coming to the museum from Western Carolina University in North Carolina where he is a music professor and former dean of the school of music. "(Peebles) will be bringing his set of gamelan instruments. He'll actually be traveling with a van full of instruments and we'll be having instruments on display in the middle of the stage," said Dr. Deborah Check Reeves, curator of education and the curator of woodwind instruments at the National Music Museum and director of NMM's all-volunteer gamelan ensemble, Tatag. The gamelan is a percussion orchestra made up of bronze type instruments played with a mallet. Bronze type instruments are gongs, xylophones, pots and similar instruments. More specifically, Peebles will be playing the gamelan degung traditional to the Western Java province of Indonesia. "What makes his gamelan different than the one we have (at the museum) is that his particular gamelan is from Western Java, it is very much made in the Sudanese tradition," Reeves said. The gamelan at the museum is made in Surakarta in Cen-



Will Peebles on the gamelan. Peebles will be playing a free live concert at the National Music Museum Friday at noon. COURTESY PHOTO

tral Java and comes from a different tradition than the western part of the island. "Think about the violin," Reeves says. "We call it a violin if it's used for classical music but if it's used for folk music we call it the fiddle and yet it's the same instrument, it's just a different way of playing and a different kind of music that's played on it." According to Reeves, the instrument from Western Java is

a smaller ensemble and requires less people to play. Peebles will be joined by musicians from Vermillion's own gamelan ensemble. "(Peebles) will be playing on one of the more elaborate instruments, one that uses a lot of notes," Reeves said. "Then to fill in the other parts, it will be volunteers from our gamelan ensemble based here at the museum so several different people will be learning how to play gamelan degung in a couple of hours." Anyone who has seen the museum's gamelan ensemble play will notice some similarities and differences between the two instruments. "At first look, the instruments are going to be similar, they're going to be bronze pots and bars of the xylophone type instruments and they will rest on a wood frame but if you start to look at them more carefully, you'll start to see differences in design," Reeves said. "Some of the pot instruments will be in a different configuration instead of just being a couple rows, they will be in kind of a semi-circular shape." On May 1, the museum's ensemble, Tatag, will hold a concert with the gamelan from Central Java and concert goers will have the chance to hear the differences in the two instruments. "People have to realize it's two different types of gamelan and two different types of music. But they'll be seeing some of the same people," Reeves said.

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