



drumming for success

KATHLEEN COLE

Arvin Scott is in heaven on the Classic Center stage—his head thrown back, his mouth curved into a serene grin, his eyes closed. Scott's hands deliver swift slaps to the goatskin head of his drum, and the rhythms pierce their way through the wall of sound coming from his adopted bandmates in Widespread Panic.

"The sound of the drum gives me a certain feeling, like being more alive," says Scott, a UGA percussion instructor who was asked to sit in with Widespread Panic during each of their three Athens concerts. "The expression you see on my face when I play, that's what I'm feeling."

Widespread Panic was a fun gig for Scott, but his real passion is teaching drumming to students from pre-school to college. That passion was in evidence when Scott's Drumming for Success students performed at this year's Human Rights Festival. Performing on a portable stage in downtown Athens, 30 young faces imitated their mentor's ecstatic countenance. On cue, they beat miniature drums in accompaniment to his lead. Drumming for Success motivates students ages 3-13 to set goals in school and at home. If they succeed, Scott gives them brand-new hand drums.

Drumming for Success attracted the attention of Widespread Panic percussionist Domingo "Sunny" Ortiz, who told Scott he wanted to do whatever he could to support it. Ortiz and Scott joined forces in a Georgia Theatre event called Beat the Drum, and the proceeds went to Drumming for Success.

From that initial connection, Scott became a guest performer with Widespread Panic. He played with the band at their New Year's Eve show in Atlanta, and then again in Athens. "I was happy because I thought I'd play only one set, but I ended up playing every night," Scott recalls. "It was a thrill to play with that band, to be on stage with them."

Scott also teaches a community drumming workshop, is the founding director of the UGA Hand Drumming Ensemble, and works with the UGA Core Concert Dance Company. His first CD, *Spirit of the Drum*, is on store shelves around town.

"My drum courses give people the opportunity to discover percussion for the first time, or the opportunity to expand their knowledge. It's life enriching," says Scott, who teaches a class in African American percussion music. He has also developed a course for music therapy.

"I just do what I do. I believe in making contributions," he says. "I think about what I can do to enhance—whether it's the School of Music, the University, or the community. I'm always happy to do something if I feel that good can come of it."

— Stacie Sutton (ABJ '99, BS '00)