****

**Nines Festival at Devens will sound off on music**

**By Hiroko Sato, hsato@lowellsun.com**

Updated:   06/24/2013 08:00:52 AM EDT

DEVENS -- Ask Thomas Malone how many people could play one music instrument at a time. He will tell you that should depend on how complex you want the tones and melody to be.

Take a xylophone as an example. Once a player starts hitting the bars with a pair of mullets, a second player can jump in. A third player would step in a little while later, adding another layer to the mix of beats. Compounded tones make the tune sound like no other.

It's the magic of musical interactions between multiple players that Malone, professor of music education at UMass Lowell, has seen unfold whenever Moses Buyondo, a Lowell artist originally from Uganda, and other East African musicians play.

Malone wants to help residents from across the region experience the power of such musical collaboration by creating the world's largest xylophone for many visitors to play together at Nines Festival, a multi-art summer festival, to be held in Devens on Aug. 10.

You don't need experience to participate. Malone and other organizers of the festival -- which 3Rivers Arts of Ayer and Great Northeaster Productions of Townsend co-produce -- are encouraging people to just bring their curiosity and enthusiasm.

Make sounds, Malone said. And they will "fit together like a puzzle," he said.

3Rivers Arts, a regional artist collaborative, is teaming up with event production company, Great Northeast Productions to hold a daylong, multiple-stage music and arts festival. The event will take place at Willard Park on Sherman Avenue near the Verbeck Gate. The gate will open at noon, followed by music performances starting at 1 p.m.

The event will feature music performances by Explosions in the Sky, Delta Spirit, Walk Off The Earth, Shuggie Otis and Kid Koala as well as comedy shows curated by Harvard Square's The Comedy Studio and hosted by the Comedy Studio's impresario Rick Jenkins.

"Our mission is to bring attention to the breadth of artistic talent in our region, bring top-tier bands to our area and build on this year after year," Monica Hinojos, executive director of 3Rivers Arts, said in a press release.

With the interactive theme, the festival will include various art exhibits and productions that could speak to many of visitors' senses.

One of such production may involve interaction of light and sound, for example, said Chris Cyr, a graphic artist from Pepperell who serves as the creative director for the festival.

He envisions visitors "draped in colored light" shining through recycled materials as they enter the festival venue. The light may cast interesting patterns on the visitors walking through, though the details are still in the works, Cyr said.

There will also be an unfinished mural that people can help create.

Malone, Buyondo and Mauricio Cordero, the creative project director for 3Rivers Arts, are also leading the world's largest xylophone-making project. Malone didn't know the exact size of the current world's biggest xylophone, but said the one to be displayed at the festival will be up to 30 or 40 feet, allowing as many as 50 people to play it together.

In some other parts of the world, people play music by facing each other rather than looking at the conductor, Malone said. The first player would create a musical "space," which the second player would fill with his or her own music, and the process repeats as more people join them in playing the melody. In East Africa, there are only five tones -- do, re, mi, so and la -- but they can turn into countless new tones depending on how players layer each other's sound, according to Malone.

Interaction and reciprocation is the key. There is no score to look at. Malone hopes festival visitors will take turns playing the xylophone to relay the music throughout the day.

Cordero said festival organizers wanted to present intriguing projects that are "creative, interactive, community-based and has a component of respect for the environment."

Malone and other team members will be recycling old wood to make the extraordinarily long xylophone, which they will then break apart into sections afterwards and donate to local schools. And that fits the festival organizers' vision for "educational philanthropy," Cordero said.

Cyr said art is "everything wonderful that you are experiencing." And he wants festival-goers to take notice of it through all parts of their bodies.

General admission is $49 with the "Patron of the Arts" tickets available for $109.

For more information, visit <http://theninesfestival.com/>.