



Welcome

This is our 3rd edition of Can-Do Musical Notes.

This issue of Can-Do Musical Notes the cover story spotlights an Australian percussion ensemble from Sydney, called The Sylvanbeats.

The featured artist in this issue is a British drummer with Cerebral Palsy, Tom Newnham. Tom is a drum teacher in London, and plays regular gigs with his group Mingus Elastic Band.

The issue also features stories from Can-Do Musos board member Mike Mignogna from Tennessee, a story about Hollow Tree, a duo from Brisbane, Australia, and a clinic story from Matthew Mallardi.

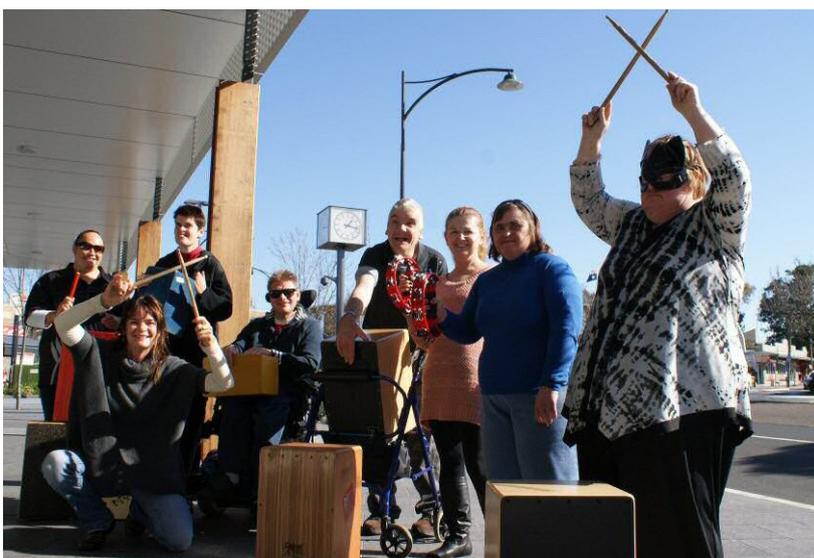
As of the 7th November 2013, our website has 58 musos featured from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela.

As this is our final newsletter for 2013, we would like to wish everyone a happy holiday season, and safe and prosperous new year.

That number continues to grow daily.



**Having a
"Can-Do" attitude
is the first step
toward success!!**



Australian percussion ensemble—The Sylvanbeats are an amazing group of percussionists with mild to moderate disabilities from Sydney

Inside this issue:

Can-Do News	2
Cover Notes: The Sylvanbeats play cajons	2
My Challenges—Hollow Tree	3
First Clinic but definitely not the last—Matthew Mallardi	3
Developing Mental Toughness by Mike Mignogna	3
Can-Do Featured Muso: Tom Newnham	4
Tom's Fast Five	4
What's cool on Can-Do Youtube	5
The Final Note	5

Can-Do Musical Notes

Can-Do News



Can-Do Musos member, drummer [Carlos Guevara](#) was recently interviewed by Venezuelan music magazine [Venezuela Sinfonica](#). The interview was published in Spanish, however, an English version can be read on [candomusos.com](#)



Australian band from Adelaide, Calling Utopia featuring Can-Do Musos member [Sarah Renehan](#) released their new single "The Hero Vs The Villain" on November 1. For more information check out their website [www.callingutopia.com](#)



Congratulations go to Can-Do Musos International Advisory Committee member Canadian Karl Sloman. Karl formed the band [Trainwreck](#), featuring a mix of special needs and able-bodied musicians, which has performed dozens of times over the years to the delight of others amazed at the achievement. Karl was recently interviewed by [London Free Press](#) and was featured on a Canadian show called [Walk the Walk](#) with Neil Peart from Rush. Unfortunately this isn't able to be viewed outside Canada, but we are working on obtaining a viewable version.



Australian didj master [Charlie McMahon](#) recently performed at Global Rhythms World Music festival in Sydney with his band Gondawana. He also recently did a radio interview for Canadian radio show Barefoot Bushcraft Radio. You can hear the interview at the [Barefoot Bushcraft](#) website.



Australians [Hollow Tree](#) are performing at Brisbane's International Day for Persons with a Disability Event at The Edge, State Library Queensland at the revised time of 1:30pm on Sunday 1st December 2013.



Another International Day gig in Australia, [Bearbrass Asylum Orchestra](#) are performing in Melbourne at Federation Square for 3CR's Disability Day Celebrations on Tuesday 3rd December 2013. If people can't make it in to Melbourne, listen in to [www.3cr.org.au](#) who will be playing their song "Welcome" as the theme for the day.

Cover Note: [The Sylvanbeats](#) play cajon

The Sylvanbeats originally formed from a weekly drumming group which started up in 2010 after some of the guys from Sylvanvale Disability Services took part in some drumming workshops at the Spark Creative Arts festival and loved it.

We started off with eleven of us and a stack of Cajon drums and small hand percussion. We experimented with how we could use Cajons with the group - some sitting on the Cajons, some playing them like table tops, some using sticks and mallets. The first year was all about learning to play, learning to listen, connecting with each other, and having fun.

In time as our musical skills got better and better, we started doing small performances for friends and families. In 2012, we applied and were accepted to present at [Arts Activated](#), the international Accessible Arts conference held in Sydney. This was the first time we had performed as a group in a professional theatre - and was a huge buzz. We were then invited to perform at the launch of Hiromi Tango's exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art and for the Culturally Diverse Carer's Expo this year. Upcoming performances include at the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability conference dinner this November in Darling Harbour and co-running some workshops with young people with challenges in primary schools.



More recently [Andrew Hewitt](#) has come in to run some awesome workshops...and he is a big HIT (excuse the pun) with everyone. We're all looking forward to him doing more work with us.

All of our performance pieces are created by the group. The guys come up with beats, tempos, grooves and solos and then together we weave them into a piece. From the start we have explored dynamics, as well as rocking out; we also create super gentle soundscapes and grooves. We're always looking for ways to extend ourselves and each other as far as we can. Some of us have better rhythm than others, some have more mobility than others, but as a group we gel... actually we rock!

With thanks to Marti Travers and Sue Popplewell from Sylvanvale Disability Services for their continued support, to Andrew Hewitt for including us with Can-Do Musos, and to the Sylvanbeats for sharing their grooves and spirits with the world!

Claudia Chambers

Claudia Chambers is one of Can-Do Musos International Advisory Committee members. For more information about Claudia and the Sylvanbeats, check out Claudia's website, [www.learncajon.com](#).

Can-Do Musical Notes

Hollow Tree—Our Challenges By David Rowlands

This musical collaboration came about from an idea from Renee Kelly. Her being blind since birth has not stifled her imagination or her determination. When we first met, two years ago it became immediately apparent that she is an intelligent and incredibly talented young woman. We started this journey only six months ago. We already had collections of our own original songs and the transition to collaboration came easily for us.

Renee expresses her emotions through her songwriting and music. She has a gift of being able to paint a picture and tell a story with words and music. Her latest song which she wrote and composed is the ideal platform for her to start singing as well. Due to her vocal chords being damaged at birth, her voice is very soft. To many, this would be an insurmountable obstacle, but to Renee, it is a challenge that she knows she can overcome. Just as she does with her music, her attitude, focus and dedication will give her the singing skills she needs to be able to perform on stage.

My challenges are the result of my acquired brain injury from an accident. The chronic fatigue that I suffer prevents me from working now. I am blessed that I have been able to return to music after a very long period when I was raising a family and working hard. Writing songs was something that I had not done before but I guess my life-changing experience has given me an insight into emotions that I was not aware of previously.

In our collaboration, a song can grow from a line, phrase or the spark of an idea. Most times that process happens very quickly. Lyrics to a song can be there in ten minutes. The composition is assisted with the use of a keyboard and it can be developed quickly as well. We find that method works very well for us. At times, we have to implement a self-imposed "no songwriting period" so that we can catch up. This means that anything that is created while we are busy rehearsing or performing is saved for us to work at a later date.



First but not last drum clinic by Matthew Mallardi



On the 29th October 2013, Matthew Mallardi held a drum clinic. Matthew says *"Today i conducted my first ever drum clinic it was at a local school in my home town which is in Townsville Qld Australia. I have never been so nervous but as the nerves wore off I was determined to put on a 25 minute show for these high school kids they loved it and after wards it was nice to be answering questions about drumming after that i helped them with their drumming and talked more drums with them what a great DAY "*



Developing Mental Toughness by Mike Mignogna

How many people really take the time to develop their inner game? Being a person with physical challenges I find this is a very important quality to have. It has been said that four years prior to winning a gold medal in the decathlon Bruce Jenner would wake up a half hour before the rest of his family sit on the couch and visualize himself doing a victory lap around the Olympic stadium in Montreal. For me this is a perfect example of mental toughness. Most everything we use in our day to day lives started as a picture in someone's mind The Navy Seals say that while it's important to be physically fit 9 times out of 10 it's mental weakness that gets someone booted from the program. There have been countless books written about golf and mental toughness when playing golf it is essential to prepare correctly to maximize our full potential. Why not use more mental toughness in our own lives? Let's face it being a person with physical Challenges you are going to have days where you just don't have it in you to practice your instrument why not use the theater of the mind? This can also be useful if you're a working musician and just don't have time to practice just go through your normal routine in your mind. And if you don't have a normal practice routine, get one! In my opinion it is very important to have a few core exercises to work on. Remember the first time you tried to tie your shoes you weren't that good at it but over time you got better at it, it's the same concept with the drums or any musical instrument for that matter.



Can-Do Musical Notes

Can-Do Featured Muso - [Tom Newnham](#)

Tom is a 29 year old drummer who has been playing for nearly 20 years. He has played with a lot in bands in and around London both live and in the studio, with some touring; styles ranging from rock, pop, jazz and funk. I have a degree in Music Production and Performance from the London Centre of Contemporary Music and also teach privately.

I have experience running percussion workshops for young people with physical and learning disabilities.

Have recently become a member of Drake Music, creating projects and music with other disabled musicians as part of their London team with the aim of becoming one of their first physically disabled facilitators.

My first love is playing with other musicians and whilst i really enjoy teaching and running workshops, i would definitely consider myself a player first and foremost.

I am always looking for chances to expand my horizons, meet new people and work and play as much

as possible.



Tom's Fast Five

1. What started you playing music?

I grew up in a house where music was being played, discussed and openly shared. Each member of my family had different tastes that I would soak up. I remember sitting on the stairs in my house and listening to all the different music coming from all the different rooms at the same time. Jazz, metal, orchestral music, dance music... It helped me develop into a versatile, open-minded musician. I was banging on pots and pans at the age of 4 like most drummers. By the age of 10, having realized it wasn't a phase my family bought me a drum-set. My first memories of playing with someone was with my gran as she played piano, bashing my way through jazz standards...and some Bach, too. Although I played a lot of jazz, I was a metal-head growing up, but I saw no reason why I couldn't enjoy both.

2. What are you working on at the moment?

Having been teaching now for two years, I've come to really appreciate the skill involved in conveying information as succinctly as possible. Not leaving someone completely baffled and motivated to continue learning is an art and is something I'm developing. I always think room for improvement with my explanations. I'm actually putting together a work-book for beginner drummers based on my lessons. Practical vocabulary, cool grooves and basic theory, to get the beginner drummer hooked.

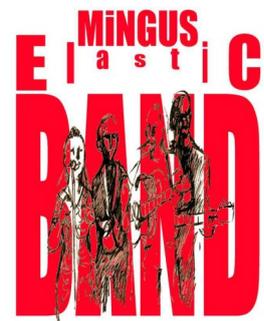
3. Had any bad gigs? Any funny gig stories?

My band-mates will tell you I'm not easily pleased. I've had plenty where the sound was rubbish or the crowd were less than enthused. One incident that stands out wasn't really a bad gig but came about through extreme circumstances. I had just played a festival. 5 shows in 2 days on different stages and I had to get back to London and play a gig with another band, obviously I was a little tired and it was a 2-hour show, it wasn't going to be easy! Half way through the first set, the room span and I think I must've have taken a micro-nap because the next thing I know, my snare was on the floor and I was halfway off the stool.

4. Who inspires you? Who are your heroes?

Being surrounded by all that musical knowledge and passion as a child inspired me and set me in good stead for the future. My drumming influences had three main strands. Firstly the metal guys, like Dave Lombardo and lesser-known people like Glenn Evans, who I just loved for their sheer speed and power. There were the jazz drummers, like Joe Morello and Peter Erskine who showed me that you can play drums musically and sparingly and that space in music could be used to great effect. Then there were the classic rock guys that were all originally jazz players too. Bonham, Mitchell and Brian Downey from Thin Lizzy all had a jazz-swing to their playing, and a great groove. Those influences came from the music I was surrounded by. The album Spectrum by Billy Cobham opened a whole new world to me. A level of drumming I'd never heard before. From there, I discovered fusion, progressive rock and other 'drummer's drummers' entirely on my own...I say no more...but all these people, helped me form my own voice. Two other drummers I was heavily influenced by growing up was Tony Allen, Fela Kuti's drummer and Jaki Leibezi of Can. Those two taught me how to groove and appreciate consistency and accuracy. Drummers I'm really into at the moment... Gavin Harisson, Jeff Hamilton, Danny Carey, Todd Sucherman, Nathan Townsley... I love that mix of finesse and power that those guys have, and absolutely phenomenal groove. There are countless others...

"STRENGTH
DOESN'T COME
from what you
CAN-DO.
It comes from
OVERCOMING
The things you once
thought you couldn't"



Check out Tom's band [Mingus Elastic Band](#) facebook and find out more about Tom and his music. Also check out Tom's page on [Sound Cloud](#)

Tom also had a recent article

[Tom Newnham: Putting Creativity Before Disability](#)

Can-Do Musical Notes

Tom's Fast Five (continued)

5. What is your biggest challenge as a musician, in what way have you had to adapt your playing to work around your challenges?

Disabled professional musicians aren't very common, I suppose.. The inevitability of surprising people as they watch me work becomes tedious night after night. This is definitely my biggest challenge. The tedium is compounded by some peoples' reaction when we meet. "Inspiring" is a word that gets used a lot. I understand the meaning and appreciate the sentiment but the implication takes away from my performance, focusing on my limitations I'm well trained and good at my job, like a lot of other drummers. We all have limitations. I'd much prefer someone say "Dude!...Your back-beat took my face off! Gimme a lesson!" I'm happy to talk about my disability in relation to drumming but having people make the same observations and come to the same realisations grates a little as you sit and smile sweetly, nodding politely. I imagine female drummers must feel like this as punters jokingly quip "Not bad for a girl!." It's harmless, but there's only so many ways you can react to the same statements. Having said that, of course my disability limits me physically. When I was younger, I had no speed or power and my right side was drastically weaker than my left, forcing me to play sparingly, focusing on the music. I really got into understanding beat placement and things that didn't really require much strength, just a musical brain. It made me a more musical drummer. As my speed and power increased, I kept hold of that of that sensibility. I can now make the most stubborn audience dance like a crazy thing, which is what it's all about! I can't drum and headbang, I'll fall over...

What's cool on Can-Do Youtube



[Bearbrass Asylum Orchestra](#) performing [Welcome](#)



[Jesse Magee](#) and his band [Left Stronger](#) performing ["Sick and Tired"](#)



[Olle Frodin](#) performing ["Rocket Man Jam"](#)

The Final Note

Success... What does it mean?

Some people consider success as to how much money you have in your bank account. To me, and many other musicians with challenges, success has a totally different meaning.

For me personally, success means to be able to achieve goals, to be able to do things that quite often seem impossible.

Til next time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shoban".

If Can-Do Musos members have any musical news, gigs, or stories they would like to share in the next issue of *Can-Do Musical Notes*, please email us at candomusos@gmail.com

Please visit our website at <http://www.candomusos.com>