

## Not your father's rock band

I confess complete ignorance to how Brad Garton makes his music.

I spent 30 minutes on the phone with him, most of it dedicated to his patient explanation of his particular art form.

I am still clueless.

I do know however that the music he does today is years away from the garage-band variety he played as a teenager in Columbus.

His music is produced on laptop computers.

Today, Brad is a college professor at Columbia University. Actually, he's on sabbatical from his post as director of Columbia's Computer Music Center, but he's using that time to perfect this new art form.

He and two colleagues will demonstrate it to a local audience at 4 p.m. Feb. 3 in the Barbara Stewart Room of the Columbus Area Visitors Center.

Laptop music is still in its infancy. An audience for it is primarily located on college campuses and instead of screaming preteens, devoted followers are more likely to be scholarly types fascinated with the technology involved in producing the sounds.

The Feb. 3 concert at the Visitors Center is going to be as much a college seminar as it is a music binge.

With a mandolin thrown in to the laptop mix to give traditional music lovers an anchor, Brad and his team will explain the nature of the new art/science.

They've already found an audience around the country. The Columbus visit will be sandwiched between appearances at the schools of music at Indiana University and the University of Cincinnati.

On the East Coast, it is off to a running start. The form was created at Princeton University, which has an official Princeton Laptop Orchestra. Its shortened name is PLOrk, which only computer whizzes would really understand or relate to.

Brad, who has been on the cutting edge of new music art forms most of his adult life, has become a proponent of the laptop concerts.



At Columbia he has developed several approaches to electronically generated sounds that have literally taken him all over the world in a variety of fields.

Two of his electronic compositions were once performed at the historic Delphi Theater in Greece, and he has worked with others in the field on studying ways that music can help in the treatment of neurological disorders.

While the idea of a laptop concert might seem very New Wave, there is something about it that harkens back to the old days of garage bands when people would get together to see what kind of sounds they could make.

Actually, that's how this particular project got started.

"Gregory Taylor, Terry Pender and I had begun having sessions in which we used out computers to realize sound," Brad said last week.

"Terry brought along an acoustic mandolin and started playing it along with what we were doing on the laptops. Pretty soon we realized we were having a great time."

I'll leave it to Brad and the others to explain the art form but I think we'd better be prepared to get on board.

Electronic music has advanced way past Chuck Berry's electric guitar.

For instance, if you happen to attend a Broadway musical and have a chance to look into the orchestra pit, chances are you won't find a full-scale orchestra of dozens but a handful people with a couple of traditional instruments and keyboards.

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