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LONG BIOGRAPHY



Born into a family with a musician mother and engineer father, Craig Woodson began playing the drums at the age of nine and began making drums at the age of thirteen. He became a professional drummer at sixteen and began private teaching at seventeen. During most of his life, he has lived in the Los Angeles area, but he spent three years in Ghana, West Africa, and currently lives near Cleveland, Ohio. Follow this link for a [one-page biography](#).

Formal Education

Dr. Craig Woodson earned his doctorate (1983) in music from the University of California at Los Angeles, with specializations in music education, ethnomusicology, African music and ethnic musical instrument technology. His education includes a B.A. (1966) and M.A. (1973) in music education with a specialization in ethnomusicology, both at U.C.L.A. He has musical training in Orff-Schulwerk (Level I) and Dalcroze Eurhythmics (Level II) techniques. He has studied privately with many teachers including western percussion with Murray Spivak and Charles Delancy, jazz drumming with Stan Hollingsworth, Mel Lewis and Tony Williams, African drumming with Robert Ayitee and Kwasi Badu, Balinese drumming with Hardja Susilo, Cuban drumming with David Garcia, Middle Eastern drumming with Philip Harland, and South Indian drumming with Tanjore Ranganathan.

Performing Musician

His 45-year career as a professional musician began as a freelance drummer in Los Angeles in the 1960s that included work in show bands, nightclubs, movies, television, and recordings. Musical genres included performances in rock, jazz, Latin, opera, classical concerts, and world music, including African, Israeli, American Jewish/Klezmer music, Greek, Turkish, Balkan, East Indian, and Iranian ensembles.



In the 1960's, Woodson played drums in movies with Elvis Presley, Connie Francis, and Debbie Reynolds, performed on TV with Linda Ronstadt, and recorded with Ray Manzarek, the Brothers Four, David Ackles, and as a Columbia Records recording artist with the 1967 electronic rock band, The United States of America.

A professional percussionist, Dr. Woodson plays traditional drum set, western symphonic percussion, and a variety of drums including Cuban congas, bongos, and timbales, the Middle Eastern doumbek, and African drums from Ghana, Nigeria, and Morocco, the South Indian mrdanga, and instruments of the Balinese gamalen.

Instrument Making

While Dr. Woodson began making musical instruments as a teenager, his interest expanded dramatically when asked, as an undergraduate music student at the University of California at Los Angeles, to repair instruments in the renowned collection of the Institute for Ethnomusicology. During this time, he experimented with substitute materials including synthetics to improve durability

of some instruments. In 1970, he made a short documentary in North Africa on the snared frame drum, the Moroccan bendir. On his return from Morocco through London saw a fiberglass dundun, made by a Nigerian company. This inspired him to begin making African musical instruments out of synthetics. Back in the U.S., he learned how to use fiberglass to make drums and began his company, Ethnomusic, Inc. (1974) making and selling a set of Ghanaian dondo drums (hourglass talking drums) and adawia bells made with modern technology. During this work, he obtained twelve U.S. patents on musical instrument technology related to his design of the dondo.

In 1976, his company became incorporated and he expanded it to include other world music products and services primarily for educators. As owner of Ethnomusic, Inc., he currently offers musical services and products that specialize in providing schools, colleges, universities and the general public ways of introducing global music primarily through the making and playing of simple musical instruments from around the world.

In 1979, he started a three-year project as an invited researcher in Ghana, West Africa, assisting in the mass production of African instruments for Ghanaian schools. This work began at the invitation of the renowned African ethnomusicologist, Professor Kwabena Nketia of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. During this time, Dr. Woodson headed the Musical Instrument Technology Workshop at the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana and eventually became Acting-Head of its Centre for Cultural Studies. Some of Woodson's work became the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation on the atumpan drum of the Asante people in Ghana.

His relationship with the Remo, Inc. drum company since the 1960's, evolved into being a consultant in the 1990's and this has resulted in several innovations for the company. One of Woodson's recent inventions for the Remo company is a product called Handle-Leg Connectors, a device that holds, connects, and supports the various sizes and shapes of Remo Sound Shapes, flat, pre-tuned drums. The Handle-Leg Connectors were introduced to retailers at the International Music Products Association (NAMM) show in Anaheim, California in January 2006, and will be available for sale in the spring of 2006. For more information on stores go to www.Remo.com. Follow this link for more details on his Handle-Leg Connector invention.



While much of his musical instrument making energy has gone into professional quality products, Dr. Woodson has also maintained an interest in homemade instruments since making such instruments as a teenager. Now focusing on ideas from around the world, he currently makes around 130 different types of instruments in all musical families: aerophones (blowing), chordophones (strings), idiophones (most percussion), and membranophones (drums). In some cases, they are based on children's ideas from other countries, but most of them are his inventions that make use of simple tools and recyclable materials. One feature of some of his instruments is to combine several families into one instrument. For example, his "Drumpet" is a combination of a drum and trumpet, a so-called composite musical instrument. One version of the Drumpet combines all four instrumental families and several cultures from around the world. For a description of some of his instruments and instrument-making assemblies and workshops, go to K-8 Programs and Make.



In 1999, Dr. Woodson was featured in a video as one of seventeen artists talking with eleven scientists in a NASA-sponsored production called "Windows on Mars" about taking the arts on a future trip to the red planet. The next year, he received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts to develop a school music assembly called "To Mars with Music in 2030" about this future trip to Mars, showing how musical instruments could be made out of materials on a spaceship and out of materials on Mars. For more information about this program go to K-8 Programs. Follow these two

links for more information on his [NASA project](#) and [Pele Base](#).

Teaching Artist

As teaching artist (1976-present), he works in schools, colleges, universities, and other public venues presenting assemblies and workshops across the United States and in Europe. The focus in most cases is on the making and playing of simple musical instruments from around the world. In addition to booking his own program in Ohio, his work is available through arts organizations in Ohio including the Medina County Schools' Fine Arts Tours and the Greater Columbus Arts Council. He travels to Los Angeles ten to twelve times a year to present his programs for the Los Angeles



County Music Center on Tour and the Orange County Performing Arts Center, and other organizations including Design for Sharing, through the University of California at Los Angeles. He also has presented programs for science, art, and children's museums including The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Norton Simon Museum, the Craft and Folk Art Museum, The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Cincinnati Art Museum, The Great Lakes Science Center and the Cleveland Children's Museum.

For information on:

- * Dr. Woodson's current programs go to [K-8 Programs](#).
- * Booking a program go to [Affiliations](#).
- * On his recent work with the [Norton Simon Museum](#).
- * On his teacher workshops for the [International House of Blues Foundation](#).

College Lecturer

Dr. Woodson has taught teacher-training courses for over 35 years as an assistant or adjunct lecturer. These courses have included subjects such as ethnomusicology, African music, music and science, making K-8 musical instruments, and music education. This has included work at the University of California at Los Angeles, California State University at Los Angeles, California State Polytechnic University, Chapman College, Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio Cleveland State University, Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, and [Cuyahoga Community College](#) in Cleveland, Ohio.

Play-Along Concert



He has presented educational play-along concerts with organizations such as The National Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, The Orange County Performing Arts Center, and Kronos Quartet. During these events, audience members make their own instruments under Dr. Woodson's direction and then play along on one or more specially written compositions or on standard repertoire arranged for use with his instruments. For past and upcoming events, follow this [link](#). Follow this link for more information about his work with particular reference to his work with [Kronos](#) or [UCLA's Daily Bruin](#).

Consultant

As a consultant on world music, popular music, and/or instrument making, Dr. Woodson has worked for many organizations. These have included the U.S. State Department for cultural work in Ghana, West Africa; NASA, through the National Endowment for the Arts for work on a video; Walt E. Disney Enterprises for work on EPCOT's World Showcase; Mick Fleetwood for a film project in Ghana; Remo, Inc. for work on instrument design; the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum for program development and implementation; A Cultural Exchange in East Cleveland for work on an Afro-centric curriculum; and the Percussion Marketing Council and the International House of Blues Foundation for work on a world drumming curriculum.

Beginning in 2001, after six months as a consultant to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, Ohio, and he became its Senior Director of Education for two years. In this position, he designed ten interactive programs for K-12 audiences and presented them to over 25,000 students. He directed and taught six teacher workshops for the Museum.

Grant Recipient

In 1981, Dr. Woodson received a grant from Valco—Kaiser Aluminum in Ghana, West Africa—for tools to build Ghanaian musical instruments for schools in that country. In 1999, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) provided funds for him to develop a music and space science school assembly called "To Mars with Music in 2030." Dr. Woodson received a grant from the International Music Products Association (NAMM) to begin a graduate level, teacher certification course based on his curriculum called Roots of Rhythm. This workshop will take place in June 2006 in Cleveland, Ohio.

Author

As a writer, Dr. Woodson has completed booklets, articles including musical transcriptions of African drumming, jazz drumming, East Indian drum making, North African drumming, and curriculums on Black music in America and world drumming. He has written articles and monographs on a variety of subjects in world music and instrument technology since the 1960's. Recently, his new curriculum and two CDs called Roots of Rhythm and Roots of Rhythm: Extensions have been published as a free download online at [Play Drums](#). For a list of his works, go to Selected Publications and Unpublished Monographs.

In 2004, he wrote an Afro-centric curriculum called "The Black Music Experience" for Read and Rock, a project of the literacy-based organization, A Cultural Exchange in East Cleveland, Ohio.

Currently, Dr. Woodson is a percussionist, performing artist/teacher, a music consultant, and writer. His recent invention for the drum company Remo, Inc., called Handle-Leg Connectors, connects Remo Sound Shapes together into drum sets, and was introduced to music retailers in January 2006. He is married, has two grown children, and lives with his wife near Cleveland, Ohio.

