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A NEW BEAT

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The Dallas Morning News: Wes Pope

Jamil Byrom wipes his brow as teacher William Richardson (foreground) empties the chips from Bryan Osteen's drum. Mr. Richardson, a jazz musician,

is teaching the pair how to make West African drums at Paul Quinn College in Oak Cliff as part of the Young Artists Institute.

By Rufus Coleman
Staff Writer of The Dallas Morning News

Rap! Rap!! Rap!!!
It's the name for the musical expression of today's youth. But for Bryan Osteen, 15, it's also the sound of the two hours a day for five weeks that he has spent chiseling out a drum from a block of wood.

"It's more than just something to do," he said as he hammered his chisel deeper into what will be his *djembe* drum. "It's something I want to accomplish. I never made a drum before."

The sound of the work was all that

Drum-making course aims to inspire youths

could be heard Monday from behind the Price Branch Building at Paul Quinn College — two hammers pounding away.

Bryan and classmate Jamil Byrom, 16, are in the Young Artists Institute, one facet of the Paul Quinn College Preparation Institute, which is designed to interest young people in extending their education.

The summer institute offers music, art, engineering, computer, sports and

spiritual development courses at Paul Quinn's southeast Oak Cliff campus.

"They're precollege programs that push the idea that these kids are going to college," said Dr. Burtis B. Robinson, vice president for development and director of community affairs for the college. "And if they want to move forward, then we want to move them. We want them to show us what they can do."

The drum making is part of a class taught by jazz musician William A. Richardson, who got the idea from Drum-It-Up, a city Office of Cultural

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Affairs program in which he taught. That program for youths focused on making West African instruments such as shakers and rainmakers.

"We learned how to make them, but we never got to play," Mr. Richardson said. "We would learn the rhythms on a snare drum, but when you play it on the *djembe*, the sound is totally different."

The free drumming program that Mr. Richardson runs ends July 29. Admission was open to any fourth-through 12th-grader in the Dallas and Wilmer-Hutchins areas. The requirements to sign up were

passing grades, parental support and a willingness to work.

The Young Artists Institute gets \$6,000 of a \$25,000 gift from an anonymous donor to Paul Quinn College. But even so, Mr. Richardson had to turn away 10 possible students.

"I've got about eight students, and I'm supposed to only have five," he said. "We just had too many students for the amount of money we had."

Of the eight students, only Jamil and Bryan are in the advanced drum-making class. Jamil, who is making a "talking" drum — one used for communicating — carved its hourglass shape from a 2-foot

block of wood. For a couple of weeks, he has been hollowing out the inside for the sound chamber. The drum will be played with a curved stick.

Jamil got into the program because Mr. Richardson was his music tutor for two years, and he liked the sound that the instructor's talking drum made. A talking drum changes tones when the player adjusts strings that run along the outside.

It almost speaks another language, Mr. Richardson said.

"I just want to have one," said Jamil, scooping out more wood chips from the drum. "I'm going to enjoy

playing it, and it's worth a lot of money."

Mr. Richardson said a machine-made drum similar to Jamil's could cost about \$500 and a handmade one even more. Saving that cost is what inspired him to make his first drum.

"My friend imports them from Zaire, and I looked at some of the drums and took them apart to figure out how they were made," Mr. Richardson said. "It's not complex, because they're handmade. Someone else taught me how to string the heads."

The *djembe* drum that Bryan is making is a hand-played drum used

in religious ceremonies. It's shaped like a goblet. Bryan said he was surprised at the amount of work involved in making his drum.

But despite the countless times Bryan has hit his hand or Jamil has stubbed his thumb, they both continue to work.

"I thought it would be a little something we'd throw together with some glue and then put aside," Bryan said. "I didn't know it would be like this."

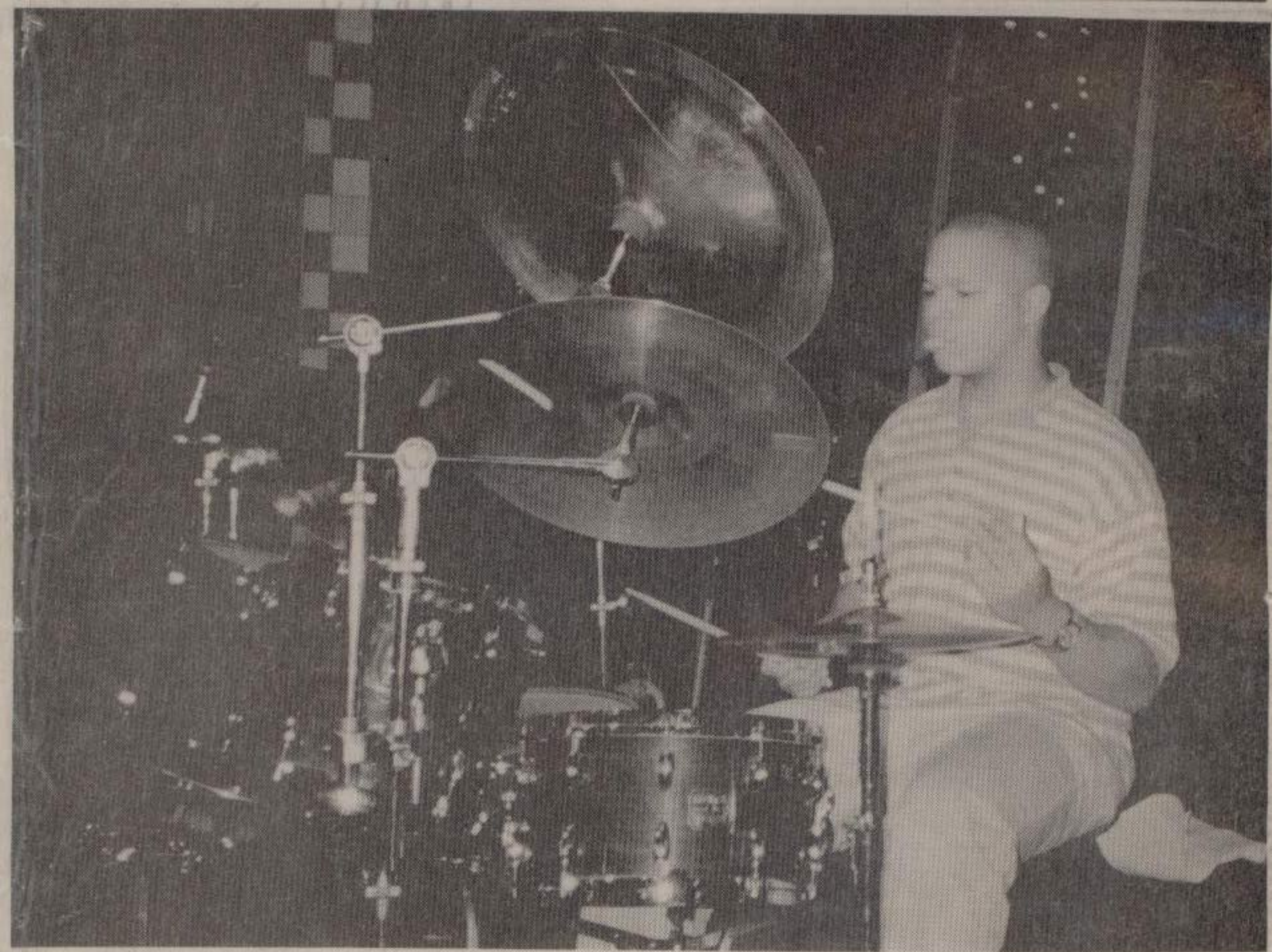
After they hollow out their drums, Jamil and Bryan will have to sand them smooth and then put on the drumheads, which are made of goatskin.

Mr. Richardson has had to make some adjustments to the drum-making process.

"Traditionally, they burn the instruments to make them black and then they carve a design in them," he said. "We're not going to burn ours. I don't think they'll let us burn them out here at Paul Quinn."

But Mr. Richardson thinks that overall he is giving something to the youths in his class.

"I really enjoy the drum making," he said. "My first drum was a really spiritual experience. And it's my way of giving somebody something they can feel good about."



Jamil Bryom, the states' best drummer, was undefeated in UIL competition, performed Friday (3/8/96) with six young musical lions and turned out the Clarence Muse Cafe Theater. Robert Seawright was on vibes, Jason Davis on tenor sax, Keith Taylor on bass, Sean Martin on piano, and Chris Curielon trumpet. These are the 90's Miles Davis, Trane, Bird and even the Duke.