

A journey to the origins, artists and techniques of American craft

CRAFT IN AMERICA

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CRAFT IN AMERICA: MUSIC

Premieres on PBS Friday, November 20, 2015 at 10:00pm*



Los Angeles, CA - *Craft in America*, the Peabody Award-winning documentary series, now in its 7th season, returns to PBS, on November 20th at 10pm*, with an all new episode, titled *MUSIC*, which focuses on how fine handmade instruments are crafted and the world-renowned artists who play them, demonstrating the perfect blend of form and function. The hour features interviews and performances from Joan Baez, Rhiannon Giddens, Director of the Count Basie Orchestra Scotty Barnhart, banjo master Tony Ellis, L.A. Philharmonic timpanist Joseph Pereira, and virtuoso ukulele player Jake Shimabukuro.

By exploring how various instruments are perfected, *MUSIC* also offers viewers a unique journey through our country's past, detailing the contributions of jazz and Appalachian roots music to the American cultural landscape, as well as the intersection of the guitar and political activism, and how the legacy of West African instruments is embedded in the American banjo.



Crisscrossing America, *MUSIC* takes us first to Hawaii where the Kamaka family has been making ukuleles since 1916. By detailing the careful construction, assembly and tuning of the ukulele, this often-misunderstood instrument receives its rightful place among other fine hand crafted string instruments. Four generations of Kamakas have devoted their lives to the ukulele, honoring the importance of this instrument to the Hawaiian culture. The segment concludes with a performance from Jake Shimabukuro, who takes the ukulele to new artistic heights with his passionate, innovative style.



The trumpet transforms breath into music. The trumpets made by David Monette in Portland, Oregon are considered the gold standard by award winning musicians such as Wynton Marsalis and Scotty Barnhart, Director of the Count Basie Orchestra. *MUSIC* captures the intricate craftsmanship that goes into fashioning a trumpet; it can take as long as a year to create one horn. During a recording session in Los Angeles, Scotty Barnhart demonstrates the unique qualities of the Monette trumpet.



The Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia are home to Geoff Stelling and his team who turn out some of the finest bluegrass banjos ever created. *MUSIC* captures the meticulous layering of metal and wood that gives Stelling banjos their unique sound. North Carolina native, composer and acclaimed banjo master Tony Ellis, who has deep roots in "Appalachian eloquence," contributes instrumental performances. His sound will be immediately recognizable to PBS viewers as his artistry has been integral to many Ken Burns documentaries. Says Ellis, "Geoff Stelling's banjo has power. It can be soft and sweet at the same time. It changes the way we play music. I can't overestimate his contribution to music."



Next, acclaimed musician, composer and singer, Rhiannon Giddens, founding member of the Grammy-winning American roots band Carolina Chocolate Drops, explains her musical obsession with the fretless minstrel banjo that evolved from the African American slave instruments brought from West Africa. James Hartel, who made Giddens' banjo, fashions replicas of these historic instruments. As Giddens explains, before providing a memorable performance, "This banjo is a triple threat. It's historically accurate, it's beautifully made and it sounds amazing."



In Los Angeles, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra Principal Timpanist Joseph Pereira is both master musician and craftsman. Dedicated to achieving the subtlest tonal variations in his music, he controls his sound by stretching his own calfskin drumheads to achieve different timbres and implementing custom mallets handmade by mallet master Jason Ginter. At famed Walt Disney Concert Hall, Pereira performs a stunning final piece with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel.



The hour concludes with Joan Baez, who welcomes *Craft in America* cameras into her home to explain the role her Martin guitar has played in her 50-year career of music and activism. Martin guitars are still made in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, using a technique C.F. Martin first perfected in 1833. We capture the skilled artisans as they build soundboards, bracing, frets, insert inlays and apply unique finishes to specialty guitars in Martin Guitar Company's Custom Shop. The hour ends with a performance by Baez of her composition *Diamonds and Rust*.



Another new episode of *Craft in America*, titled *CELEBRATION*, will premiere December 11th at 10pm* on PBS. The hour, which explores the many ways Americans celebrate time honored traditions,

features lion dancers and float builders for San Francisco's acclaimed Chinese New Year Parade, artists in Michigan making ceramics for the holidays at Pewabic (Detroit) and Motawi Tileworks (Ann Arbor), Kwanzaa celebrations with artists in Chicago and Oakland, and Christmas card making in Tacoma, Washington with woodblock print artist Yoshiko Yamamoto.

CRAFT IN AMERICA is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing original handcrafted work through the Peabody Award-winning documentary series on PBS nationwide and the free-to-the-public Craft in America Center located in Los Angeles, which offers artist talks, exhibitions, workshops and a library. With thirteen episodes produced since 2007, *CRAFT IN AMERICA* takes viewers on a journey to the artists, origins and techniques of American craft. Each episode contains stories from diverse regions and cultures, blending history with living practice and exploring issues of identity, ritual, philosophy and creative expression. Ancillary projects include extensive websites providing hours of online videos and interactive learning materials, as well as museum exhibitions, and the Random House book *Craft in America: Celebrating Two Centuries of Artists and Objects*.

For more about Craft in America:



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Photos courtesy of Mark Markley, Judy J. Hing, Geoff Stelling, Motawi Tileworks.

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