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► HOLLIS

Sharing a world of music

■ Musician re-creates
the sounds of other
nations for Hollis pupils.

By DIANE RIETMAN
Telegraph Staff

HOLLIS — Randy Armstrong turns a large bamboo stick and it suddenly sounds like rain. The children aren't sure where it's coming from since the sun is shining outside and the tape recorder is turned off.

Hollis Elementary School pupils were introduced to a new instrument Tuesday morning — the Brazilian rainstick. Different chambers are created through pegs placed into the bamboo and pebbles fall through the chambers making the rain-like sounds.

Long before Paul Simon recorded "Graceland," Armstrong has used instruments, rhythms and sounds native to Africa, South America and Asia to evoke the feelings and emotion in his music.

Music can bring the whole world together, Armstrong told the pupils as he played various instruments and re-created the sound of a Native American Indian ritual or an animal in nature.

"Anywhere you go, people will tell you they like music," he said. "By using the native instruments and blending them together, we experience the sounds from all over the world. I look at the world as one country. We have different national backgrounds, but we share one thing in common — the Earth — and we all enjoy music."

When working with the children, he performs on instruments such as the Moroccan clay drum, Lakota Sioux Indian courting flute, the Brazilian rainstick and the West African balofon, along with acoustic guitar and synthesizer. He encourages the students to move, sing and dance to the sounds or close their eyes and create an



Staff photo by Kathy Seward-MacKay

Musician Randy Armstrong plays the balofon, an instrument from Africa, for pupils at the Hollis Elementary School on Tuesday.

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— Randy Armstrong

image based on the music.

Hollis is Armstrong's first stop during 22 weeks he will spend in the New Hampshire Council for the Arts "Artist in Residency" program.

For 17 years he was a touring artist with the group DO'AH but has since decided to stay closer to his home in Dover. He now performs with another group called Uno Mondo, which means "one world."

"When I go into the schools, one of the things I like to do is get the students of multicultural backgrounds to participate in the class presentation," Armstrong said.

"Music is something that can give them honor.

"With music, we all try to address the multicultural problem that exists in this country. We have racism that continues to this day to keep people apart."

While performing with DO'AH, the group recorded "One World Symphony," one of the first orchestrations by the group using voices as instruments. The work included the word "peace" in 39 different languages as part of the lyrics.

The album on which it was recorded, "World Dance," was composed in 1986 for the United

National International Year of Peace and was inspired by "The Promise of World Peace," a statement issued to the leaders and the people of the world by the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel.

For Armstrong and his fellow musicians, it was a musical response and contribution to the United Nations peace effort. They toured the United States, Canada and India performing and distributing peace literature and information before recording the album.

His current album, "One World," includes a tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. and King's vision of peace in the world.

"If music, going into schools and performing for people can open people's minds just a bit, then perhaps we can change people's view of the world," Armstrong said. "It's important for us to live, learn and grow together by respecting and celebrating the rich diversity of our world community."