



A bang-up job: Composer Joseph Bertolozzi tests the tones on the Mid-Hudson Bridge

## The Melodious Mid-Hudson Bridge

When Joseph Bertolozzi looks at Poughkeepsie's **Mid-Hudson Bridge**, he sees not just a means of crossing from one bank of the historic river to the other. He envisions a musical instrument of the grandest proportions.

And you thought tubas were big.

The Beacon composer is working on a project that essentially uses the structure as an enormous drum. With a variety of specially designed mallets, an ensemble of 16 percussionists will bang, beat and batter on railings, cables, panels and other miked surfaces of the bridge. "The bridge has all types and shapes of metals, each giving a different vibration," Bertolozzi explains. The different surfaces are located all over the bridge, so the players must be daring as well as talented: drummers cannot be "afraid of heights, afraid of the dark, of bridges, or of enclosed spaces," he cautions.

Two and half years into the planning process, the project really got underway this past July, when the composer met with bridge officials and made a preliminary recording of sounds across the span.

He plans to use these transcribed tones to write his bridge-based masterpiece.

The idea to use the bridge as an instrument came to Bertolozzi while traveling with his wife in France. "We were looking at a poster of the Eiffel Tower, and my wife pretended to hit the picture — gong! And I was like, 'Oh, my God!'" Working with a musical genre that has no real precedent, he is enthusiastic about bringing this fascinating first to the Valley. "I'm going into a realm where there is no model — it's exciting."

Bertolozzi hopes his suspended symphony can be part of the 2009 Hudson-Fulton-Champlain celebrations, a series of events that will commemorate the triple anniversaries of Henry Hudson's original voyage on the river, Samuel de Champlain's expedition to Lake Champlain, and Robert Fulton's first steamboat journey on the Hudson.

Composing beats for the bridge is particularly meaningful work, says Bertolozzi. "I've always loved the river and the mountains, and now I'm writing a piece that includes them as my theater."

— *Jakki Kelley*

**“You Can Quote Me...”**

*“A manatee in the Hudson River is certainly going to get a lot of attention.”*

— The Riverhead Foundation's **Kim Durham** on reports that a 12-foot manatee was seen in the Hudson near Manhattan's 125th Street in July. Rarely found outside the warm waters off the Florida coast, the 1,000-pound marine mammal was thought to be headed upriver