

SPIRIT & PLACE FESTIVAL EVENT

**The Rhythm of Us:
Interfaith Understanding
Through the Art of Music**

Thursday, Nov. 10, 2022, 7 p.m.
Branigin Room, Napolitan Student Center



Welcoming Remarks..... President Kerry Prather

Identity and the Rhythm of UsEric DeForest

Performance from the Hindu Tradition.....Members of the Hindu Temple of Central Indiana and the Sai Center of Indianapolis

Performance from the Protestant Christian TraditionMaegan Pollonais with accompanist Chang Shen

Performance from the Greek Orthodox Tradition..... Constantine (Dean) Maniakas

Closing Remarks.....Eric DeForest



The organizers of the Spirit and Place Festival invite your feedback on this special event by scanning the QR code or by visiting with the volunteers staffing the information table in the Atrium.

FACULTY REFLECTIONS

MUSIC AS SOUL FOOD

Professor Emeritus David Carlson

A song comes on the radio that we haven't heard for decades. Yet, we sing along, somehow remembering all the words. That experience tells us something important about the power of music, a power that religions have always known. Sound, especially music, expresses the wide range of human emotions better than the other human senses. In the history of religions, when communities were thankful, they expressed thanksgiving to the sacred in song. When meeting tragedy, those communities offered laments to the sacred, not just in words, but in song.

From birth to death, music is the vehicle that has transported humanity through the joys and sorrows of life. At times, music speaks to the human soul. At other times, music speaks for the human soul. From drumming to chanting to gospel choirs to requiem masses, music has always been the "soundtrack" of religions. Our time in human history is often referred to as "the information age." For humanity to thrive, however, we need more than information. We crave transformation. We crave transcendence. And where do our souls turn when we want to rise above the ordinary, when we seek the divine? We turn to music. Humans can love music without being religious. But humans, it seems, cannot be religious without embracing music.

FAITH THROUGH MUSIC

Assistant Professor of Music Eric DeForest

I will never forget the moment when my spiritual world and my music world collided. I was in Salzburg, Austria, the land of Mozart, and I walked into Cathedral, where a performance of the Mozart Requiem with the Berlin Philharmonic was taking place. When the "Lacrymosa" began, with its heart-wrenching opening theme and glorious choral singing, I began to weep from its beauty. The only thought I could gather was "This must be what heaven sounds like!" I will never forget the feeling in that moment. For me, that is when I found God. Since then, music has always been fundamental in my spiritual practice. Music is worship to me. I have been singing my whole life and when I sing in church, be it a solo, in a choir or in the congregation singing the hymns, I feel like I am giving thanks to God for the gift he has given me. That is my identity...I am a singer who worships through music.

When I think back to my childhood, I believe that this has always been the case. My mother was my greatest musical influence. She is a wonderful soprano and an inspirational teacher. She was the choir director for the Catholic Church in our little town of Tupper Lake, NY and, as a child, she would let me sing with them. Those songs are still a part of me and I call on them when I am, as I like to say, "in my prayer closet" talking to God. I am now the Music Director at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Carmel, IN.

In speaking to my Associate Pastor, Karla Elliott, about the topic of one's identity through faith and music, she had this to say: "The very first song I can remember learning as a child was "Jesus Loves Me." Such a simple tune with such a profound message. Because I loved singing it so much when I was very small, my mother decided to introduce me to more songs in order to diversify my repertoire. She was a church organist and chose some of her favorites from the hymnal to start with. I learned, in that context, how the words mattered - how they told of God's love. Because of my mom's approach to teaching me, first as a small child and throughout my life since then, music so often has served as a reminder of who and whose I am. At the very core of my identity, I am a beloved child of God."

I, too, feel as Karla feels. My faith and my musical self cannot exist separate from one another. Therefore, I will always "Make a Joyful Noise" because, after all, those who sing pray twice!
