

Sixth Annual Interfaith Music & Spoken Word Concert 2022

Learning About Our Diverse Neighbours by Sharing the Sacred & Inspirational Through Music & Spoken Word

Introduction

A diverse cross-section of faith communities united to perform for the Sixth Annual Interfaith Music & Spoken Word Concert. This was one of three sponsored events by the Surrey Interfaith Council for the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2022. For the second year in a row, concerns about the COVID Pandemic prevented an in-person audience in the British Columbia area, but the concert was enjoyed virtually on YouTube. Despite many of the presenters having to take time to attend a make-shift recording studio in order to pre-record their presentations, the participants so willingly gave of their time and talent to be involved. Even the videographer/editor and sound engineer volunteered their time to the project to ensure a quality event.

This year's recitations included a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community reciting a selection from the Holy Quran in traditional Arabic, a Hindu Teacher reciting an original Peace Poem in Hindi with "There is no distinction of colour and faith; all human beings are equal," an individual from the Buddhist tradition offering a prayer of well-wishing for all and an Anglican Pastor offering the closing prayer adapted for the occasion from the Anglican Service Book.

Among the musical presenters were Latter-day Saints, Bahá'í, Lutherans, a member of the Métis Nation, and a Jewish Ensemble. The Jewish Ensemble happily presented in Hebrew two selections that reflected the Jewish longing for peace and unity, while the Metis individual used a tradition drum that reflected her unique cultural heritage as her accompaniment.

Reviews

The following reviews were received following the premiere of the concert on Friday February 4, 2022.

"Frankly amazing production quality, my wife and I enjoyed watching it all the way through. Seeing the various faith leaders was good, I did not know them of course.

Thank you for your work organizing, producing, and marketing this year's entry. It was respectful of our COVID situation at the time, and yet we were reminded of our common loves."

Peace,

Ken Madden (Buddhist - First time participant)

"This splendid presentation has been something both my husband and I have attended, probably from its inception. And this year the concert lived up to our expectations again, though provided to us virtually, rather than with a full audience present."

"These presentations made possible by Surrey Interfaith Council give me, and many others, opportunities to mingle with one another as an inter-faith community. The Music and the Spoken Word Concerts offered by the Council have always been very inclusive, with high quality spoken and musical offerings from a broad range of faith communities. I believe that they relate so well to The United Nations Interfaith Harmony Week."

"I found that the expertise in managing and directing the online event this year was excellent and allowed us to participate from home. I do look forward to the time when we will be able once again to sit with friends as an interfaith community and attend in-person this concert again. Saying this, I highly recommend the Surrey Interfaith Music and the Spoken Word Concerts for any and all."

Dorothy Gurney (Audience Participant)

“The music [and items] presented by Native, [Muslim], Baha’i, Hindu [Jewish], Buddhist, and Christians were soothing, spiritual and peaceful...”

Acharya Shrinath Dwivedi (Hindu - Interfaith Activist)

“I love that these are mostly ordinary people, not trying to impress the audience with what great performers they are, but focusing on expressing their faith through the performance. That brings a different spirit. And I loved the diversity of faith traditions—all of the “people of the book” are trying to worship God as they understand Him. That is beautiful. I appreciated learning more about faith traditions that I know little about. This particular time, I learned more about that Baha’i faith than I knew before. I would think that the event organizers wanted to expose viewers to a variety of faith traditions to help us have more respect and consideration for those who are “other” to us. They are more alike than different—they were humble and sincere in their expressed devotion, and that made me feel peace and acceptance...”

Myrna Layton (Audience Participant)

“Anything to promote cross cultural awareness and understanding is critical for all of us to embrace our differences and move forward in peace. I am honoured to participate in the concert once again. Thank you for having us.”

Peace,

Gerry Parsons (Lutheran - Returning Presenter)

“It felt like a very serene and uplifting experience of music and words, beautifully presented and coordinated, reflecting how religious and spiritual diversity can be integrated. It was also a powerful testimony to how the arts can be harnessed for socially redemptive purposes.”

Harold Rosen (Bahá’i - Audience Participant)

“I was pleased to have been a first-time participant in the Interfaith Harmony Week Concert 2022. I am truly grateful for this year's opportunity I was given. I hope my participation in this Concert provides those who view it with a small insight into the spiritual nature of my Métis culture and faith.”

“Today, I am a grandmother, one of the Métis keepers of spirituality for my family. The song I sang for the International Harmony Week Concert 2022 is a song I first learned myself when I was a very young child. All three of our daughters and all nine grandchildren either know this song or heard it as babies. I am pleased they can now listen to it again as they watch the Interfaith Concert on YouTube. I especially enjoyed the comment our middle daughter gave me after she had watched the Concert, when she wrote to me to say that she had found all the Concert to be uplifting, and that she 'enjoyed ... and [appreciated] the efforts the Interfaith Council has made'. I echo my daughter's comments and my thanks to the Council for their dedicated work in organizing and presenting this Concert.”

Karen Shirley (Métis - First Time Presenter)

“Each participants’ offering is personal, meaningful and sincerely represents how they feel about their spiritual traditions and God. Pulling this type of event together takes a lot of work, but the results have always made it worth it!”

Sherry Marceil (Producer & Interfaith Activist)

Conclusion

The Surrey Interfaith Council is anxious to return to an in-person event during future World Interfaith Harmony Weeks so that the audience and presenters can mingle together in the uplifting and positive spirit that is present at this type of interfaith gathering. Although the video broadcast was enjoyed by those who viewed it, there was a sincere longing expressed by a number of viewers to be in one another's presence once again.

If awarded any prize money, the concert will be able to successfully return to be a larger live in-person event that will continue to promote peace and harmony through interfaith interaction and cooperation.