

THE DAILY *splash*

INSIGHTFUL. OUTSPOKEN. UNFILTERED.
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PUTS FASHION
ON DISPLAY**



SOUND LOGIC

THE FOUNDER AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF RUSH HOUR CONCERTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE LIVE MUSIC



Sang Mee Lee and Mark George at Make Music Chicago 2012

In this fragmented day of record-high unemployment and equally record-high celebrity contracts, I like to think of music as the great equalizer. It doesn't recognize age, nationality, sexual orientation, race or economic status. It needs only humanity to affirm its reason for being and serves us all.

It reminds us of the true essentials of being human: our innate ability to see, hear, feel, imagine, laugh, cry and hope. It has the capability to ferry us beyond the pedestrian trials of daily existence and to a place of inspiration, affirmation, wonder and gratitude.

Experiencing music through headphones goes a long way in terms of transporting us to a higher altitude. But experiencing it live — engaging in the listening process with other human beings — is, as a popular TV commercial says, “priceless.”

Rush Hour Concerts is indeed that: priceless. We believe it's important that music be free. So all of our programs are, including Our Summer Series at St. James Cathedral downtown (65 E. Huron), our Make Music Chicago festival June 21 and our year-round community engagement residencies. People know they can get to them, access them, go to them and be a part of them, whenever

they want or need to.

I know how important this is. I've witnessed the power and effectiveness of free music personally over and over again since Rush Hour's inception 14 years ago.

At one concert a few years ago, a young woman came up to me. She'd just learned that she'd failed the medical board exams, and she was so distraught that she'd run into the nearest open church, which happened to be St. James Cathedral (Rush Hour Concerts' Summer Series home). She told me that the music brought her back to herself, to the reality that she could take the exam again, this time with more experience. She left calm, restored and encouraged.

Then there's the homeless man who comes neatly dressed every week, puts 15 cents into our donation box, and sits next to one of Chicago's philanthropic icons (free admission means no assigned seats), discussing “what we heard last week” and “what we'll hear next Tuesday.” He leaves connected and dignified.

And there are the families from Davis Square Park in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood, who participate in our year-round music residency in their field house. They board a bus and come up to the city's Magnificent Mile to a space that dates back to the Civil War. There, the kids perform alongside “rock stars” — acclaimed ensemble Third Coast Percussion — at the Make Music Chicago Grand Finale.

There are thousands of other folks crossing the threshold to hear Rush Hour Concerts' free Summer Series, each bringing their own humanity to the occasion, each “hanging out” with the magic we call live music, and all on their own terms: no tickets, no subscriptions, no demands.

Music truly is the great equalizer. Free music, even more so. A great city does this for its citizens. And Rush Hour Concerts does this for its city.



SPLASH ON IPAD

Check out Splash online at Chicagosplash.com and in the Splash by Chicago Sun-Times iPad App.

The Make Music Chicago festival (Makemusicchicago.com), presented by Rush Hour Concerts, is a live, free musical celebration that takes place across the city June 21. Rush Hour Concerts take place every Tuesday through Aug. 27. Find out more at Rushhour.org.