Rick DellaRatta & Jazz for Peace™ Landmark Concert in Pakistan

While the past year was another interesting one for the Jazz for Peace™ Benefit Concert Series taking me to parts of the world I had never been before such as Uganda and Nepal as well as return events in familiar cities such as Puebla, Mexico; Helsinki, Finland; and our own Baltimore, Maryland; there is one event that everyone seems to find especially unique and fascinating and that is our recent concert in Lahore, Pakistan.

SEE VIDEO HERE: https://vimeo.com/151107991

Purpose:

After performing over 850 concerts over the past 13 years to help the world’s most outstanding causes, we decided to celebrate the 13th Anniversary or our United Nations concert (which united Israeli, Palestinians and American Jazz Musicians and launched our Benefit Concert Series) by going to one of the most dangerous places in the world in order to prove that the art form of Jazz can unite people in profoundly positive ways even in the most difficult and challenging of situations. A goal that would eventually lead to our concert in Dinshaw Hall at the Avari Hotel in Lahore, Pakistan on December 29, 2015 to promote children’s literacy.

The concert to promote children’s literacy was an especially important one to me because Unesco estimates that some 70 percent of Pakistan’s rural population is illiterate, with even higher rates for women. A key factor of high illiteracy rate in Pakistan is child labor and it is considered “the ROOT of terrorism” with studies showing an increase in Terrorist Incidences and Illiterate Populations from 1998—2012. With this important cause in mind we were told this concert from a historical perspective was unique and would be a first of its kind in the region.
The outstanding recipient of this event was New Life Ministries of Pakistan headed by Aamir Isaac Sindhu and Shagufta Aamir. New Life Ministries is a non-governmental, non-political, non-profitable and non-denominational ministry working for the uplift of the poorest of the poor community of our society.

In the words of our Empowerment Grant Recipient Aamir Sindhu: “The Vision and Mission of this concert was to give the message of peace and harmony to the whole world from the land of Pakistan, and to aware the people of Pakistan about the importance of education for their respect and prosperity and to aware them about our future, our children who are the backbone of our nation. Fund raising concert’s vision was to give hand in hand to support the literacy of children in Pakistan.”

Sponsors

In order to confirm each Benefit Concert Series event “with funds already raised for you!”, our team of Event Staff and Volunteers at Jazz for Peace™ were able to help New Life Ministries assemble an outstanding VIP Guest of Honor list as well as obtain amazing sponsors such as William and Dianna Koeth from Crossroad to Victory Ministries, The Global Humanitarian Relief Project, Peace for Children, New Life School Systems, and A Better Community 4 All. We were also able to obtain support for New Life Ministries via the event from numerous media outlets including Daily Pakistan Global, Pakistan Christian Post, NIDA-E-NAU Islamabad and Abb Tak TV. Because YouTube is banned in Pakistan, we used the Vimeo website for all video communications and presentations in order to help achieve these goals.

Security:

On AUGUST 28, 2015 The Department of State issued a Pakistan Travel Warning cautioning U.S. citizens against all non-essential travel to Pakistan and mentioning that “so far in 2015, there have been more than 200 terror-related incidents in Pakistan” and that “Terrorists and criminal groups regularly resort to kidnapping for ransom.”

And on December 11th the Pakistan Media published an article titled “Churches in Youhanabad receive threats of terrorist attacks on Christmas”.

Because of actual church bombings that had taken place in May, 2015 combined with the new threat of terrorist activity, the original venue Baptist Bible College of Youhanabad was changed to FGA Church Sultan Park where much more security was
promised. However, within days the venue had to be changed again to the ultra high security Avari Hotel when local organizers were told by VIP Attendees that they along with their friends and family would not attend if the concert was held in ANY church no matter how much security was promised, giving new meaning for me to the importance of word of mouth publicity.

Below is the original event flyer made before the change of venue due to terrorist threats.

New Life Ministries presents:
Rick DellaRatta and Jazz for Peace™
Historic Concert in Pakistan! 13th Anniversary celebration of their landmark United Nations Concert.
Tuesday, December 29, 2015 4:30 PM
Baptist Bible College in Youhanabad
Contact: Aamir Isaac Sindhu at 920306941406 Jazz Pianist & Vocalist Rick DellaRatta
***Proceeds will be used to improve literacy of children in Lahore.***

**Special thanks to our Sponsors!**

“When we fill our souls up with creativity, artistry and intelligence, things of that nature, we have a better chance at avoiding the behavior that leads to destruction”

Rick DellaRatta, Founder, Jazz for Peace™

**Jazz For Peace reaches out to individuals and organizations on both sides of conflicting issues, believing that if we as a species embrace qualities such as creativity, artistry, intellectuality, humanity, individuality, etc. we will all have a better chance at avoiding the behavior that leads to destruction. For more info www.jazzforpeace.org**

With these serious concerns in mind and to divert attention, it was decided that it would be best if I arrived & departed from Lahore Airport in the early hours around 2AM. Having travelled to Kathmandu, Nepal to perform a concert for EduVision just a few months earlier in September, I was able to bring clothing from the region to help me blend in and I was told not to speak outdoors when moving from the car into the schools where once inside I addressed the children and teachers and played songs for them the day before the Gala Concert.
Above is the Sedan which had Black Veils placed over the back windows to transport me. All non concert pictures and videos taken by me had to be taken through the front window and then significantly cropped. When you look at these photos in the Live in Pakistan Video (Go to www.vimeo.com, type in Jazz for Peace Rick DellaRatta in the search bar) you will see photos that had to be cropped up to 75% in order to remove the seats, dashboard and other parts of the car interior.
Once we made it to the point where I had finally arrived in Pakistan and it was becoming clear that this dream was actually going to become a reality, I began to notice that the event had taken on a very spiritual tone as exemplified by these quotes from Sponsors -

“The best of the best is a must for the sake of the children, that is what this is all about and where our focus must be in Peace and Love with the core of our heart… I am 76.5 years of age and am so glad and so humbled I can witness this, being alive still. We must ALL do what is best for children and that is the reason we do this World Class Event.” ~ Burt Danet, Founder - A Better Community for All (USA)

“Rick DellaRatta, a man for Peace, has arrived in Pakistan. He brings to an assembled group of caring people a Jazz For Peace Poem and a concert repertoire uniting people in the fervent need for Literacy for All Children in Pakistan. Let us rally around this World Class Event and bring to bear the support needed for groups like New Life Ministries to educate the children. STAY SAFE ALL.” ~ Yuell Bhatti, Co-Founder - A Better Community for All Pakistan

“Dianna and I share the vision of all children learning the ability to express themselves in spoken and written ways from their heart. Each one is precious in the eyes of our God. Together we move forward in love, joy and peace to live in harmony and respect. When we view the other as greater than ourselves we see each other from the heart. For the glory of God alone,” ~ Bill & Dianna Koeth, Crossroad to Victory

The Music:

Because of some of the unique areas of the world that we go to, many people ask me what techniques I use to connect with the audience and if I alter my repertoire depending on the region in order to do so. For this Holiday event I was very fortunate to have recorded a Christmas CD in 2002 called “Jazz at Christmastime”, and in order to obtain common ground with the audience as quickly as possible I opened the show with a gospel version of one of my favorite vocals from this album titled “Nearer My God to Thee” with hopes of making an immediate musical, humanitarian and spiritual connection with the audience in order to lay down the carpet for some of the more challenging Jazz selections to follow. I then continued with an instrumental Latin/Jazz arrangement and reharmonization of “Greensleeves” from the same CD and completed this section with an original song called “Joshua’s Song” which also has a spiritual theme and message. An arrangement of John Coltrane’s Lazy Bird featuring my own Lyrics was followed by an original composition titled “Living Inside a Daydream” which is found in both studio version on my second album “Thought Provoking” and live on my third Stella Records album titled “Live in Brazil & The Blue Note”. This set up an original composition based on All the Things you are titled “All Of The Things We Are” (you can see a live performance of this in the video on vimeo.com), followed by a Milton Nascimento arrangement of “Felicidade” which I sang in Portuguese. The set finished with a composition I co-wrote with the great bassist Eddie Gomez in dedication to Dizzy Gillespie called “Cheeks” from my CD Jazz for Peace. After an intermission which featured an additional performance by Pakistani artist Haroon Jequb, I returned full circle with a bluesy version of “Go Tell It On The Mountain”, and then ended the concert with my original composition “Jazz for Peace” from my seventh Stella Records CD of the same title.
Summary:

The evening was extraordinary and surreal, with lots and lots of flowers followed by an award presented to me on behalf of the organization as well as long lines of people wanting to take pictures with me. I obliged as many as possible because I could see and feel how happy they were to be in this moment and many of them told me that it is extremely rare that they would ever have an opportunity to see a musical artist like me from America. After all it had taken for me to be there I knew first hand that they were right. After these ceremonies concluded I was interviewed by Abb Tak TV which you can also see at the Vimeo.com address detailed above. At about 11 PM the same evening of my concert I was taken by a handful of people from the organization to the airport on a long ride through at least five different checkpoints along the way and finally departed at around the same 2 AM time that I had arrived just a few days earlier.

When I arrived back to my apartment in New York, I received this note:

“We are thankful to you……to conduct this concert in Lahore, Pakistan. God is so big who made this possible for us through His own ways…..thankful to you all for the support and guidance and your kind help.” ~ Aamir Isaac Sindhu, New Life Ministries of Pakistan. (And a few weeks later received this moving summary in his own words)

With our efforts to address illiteracy as well as assist outstanding organizations like this one continuing, it’s notes like these that keeps me going.

Jazz for Peace™ separates the wheat from the chaff by exposing to the world the most hard working and dedicated organizations, artists and projects working tirelessly to address our worlds most important and greatest causes. For more information on how to obtain this Grant for your favorite organization, cause, artistic career or musical project please review the “EASY STEP Process” at www.jazzforpeace.org/step1.pdf and email us at info@jazzforpeace.org
We welcome Mr. Rick DellaRatta to Pakistan!
We appreciate the Premiere Concert by Jazz For Peace in Pakistan.
On behalf of Pakistani People, we extend our Infinite Gratitude at the core of hearts.
Your efforts are enhancing Global Peace.

Presented by
Mr. and Mrs. Yuel Bhatti
Executive Secretary, United Religions Initiative Pakistan & Co-Founder, A Better Community For All Pakistan