

Wednesday, Dec 20, 2017

'Soundings Series' speakers use music to unite, engage community

For nearly a year, the founders of the *Soul Food* concert series — [Mark Stone](#), associate professor of music at Oakland University, and Dwayne Anthony, community relations specialist and arts commissioner for the city of Pontiac — have been bringing their message of peace and unity through music to the Oakland County community.

On Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2018, they'll share how they did it — and how others can do it too — during the next installment of Oakland University's popular [Soundings Series](#), which features examples of faculty successfully taking their research out of the classroom and using it to make a positive difference in the world.

The next *Soundings Series* event — *Soul Food: Music as a Ladder and a Bridge* — will take place from 3-4:30 p.m. Jan. 10 in the Oakland Room at the Oakland Center.

"The overt mission of the Soundings Series is to help faculty on the OU campus learn how to become publicly engaged academics or intellectuals, wherever that may be on the spectrum of public engagement," said [Dave Stone](#), Ph.D., chief research officer for Oakland University. "The more covert mission is to get people of different disciplines in a room together."

According to Anthony, bringing people together is what *Soul Food* is all about.

"We're trying to grab all types of musicians, bring them in one room, and share their positivity and music with the community," he said. "That's what we're trying to do. We're one human race, so let's promote love and togetherness. That's what *Soul Food* is about, and that's why we think it's such important work to continue to do that."

Presented by the Pontiac Arts Commission and sponsored by the OU/Pontiac Initiative, *Soul Food* was inspired by Professor Emeritus Marvin "Doc" Holladay, who established Oakland University's World Music Program in 1975. It features different groups, representing a diverse range of cultural and spiritual traditions, sharing their message of peace and unity.

"One of the jobs of the Pontiac Arts Commission is to be a connector," said Professor Stone, who also serves on the commission. "I often do find myself acting as a translator between cultural communities. That's what *Soul Food* is about; this idea of common humanity that centers around the oneness in humanity. We have all different languages and music, and the different religions and cultural traditions, but if we dig deep enough to what we're really about, that's where we start making the connections."

A leading expert in global percussion performance and education, Stone has performed with the foremost musicians in Uganda, Ghana, Trinidad, South Africa, India and the United States.

"A lot of my research can be divided into two areas," Professor Stone said. "One is researching music traditions, like those from Ghana, and understanding them. The other side is contemporary composition. I'm a composer, so when I go to India, I'm studying the music but at the same time I'm also doing performances with some of the top musicians in India. They are collaborative efforts, and that's something I think other researchers can relate to because it poses a huge problem to be solved in terms of how you bring these two different traditions together and create something that really connects with an audience."

The *Soundings Series* event will help faculty learn how to bridge that gap, as well.

"If you think about it, when people are singing, they're singing together," Anthony said. "They all have the same goal — to make the melody sound right. They're not thinking 'I'm black you're white' — they're just trying to sound good together. Everything else is thrown away in that moment when the music is really good and everyone is singing together. That's what music does. It unifies. It takes you out of who you are."

The next *Soul Food* concert will take place at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2018 in Varner Recital Hall at Oakland University. Admission is free and the event will be followed by a post-



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For more information about the Soundings Series, visit oakland.edu/research/soundings-series. To attend an event, RSVP to Leanne DeVreugd, program assistant for Women in Science, Engineering and Research (**WISER**) at Oakland University, at ldevreug@oakland.edu.