

## **Music Knows No Borders**

By Thor Steingraber

Music is timeless. It unites across time and geography. It flows, permeates, and transcends. Rhythm is elemental, and melody is universal. Music does not discriminate.

Some borders are ancient, forged in mountains or carved by rivers. Other borders are manmade. **But music knows no borders.**

Latin rhythms were born from African beats. Friday jazz descends from Sunday worship. The Russian shtetl and the Appalachian barn are not so distant. Radio call letters cannot entirely divide classical music from country. And even the most sacred music can be non-denominational.

Music thrives in Los Angeles at the intersection of global cultures, at the crossroads of three continents, in the creative capital of the world. At Valley Performing Arts Center, we give voice to the musical diasporas. This is our foremost value and the underpinning of our programming. In recent months, VPAC presented an Indian dance company that broke with its Hindu tradition by performing with a predominately Muslim musical ensemble. VPAC presented LA-based artists who are fusing American pop with Mexican traditional music. VPAC presented a heavy metal artist backed by a symphony orchestra.

In the 21st century networked world, these artists not only preserve and perpetuate their own cultures, they also sing, play, and dance a fusion of many worlds. They look backward and forward. They embrace a complex web of cultures that extends

from nearby neighbors to distant strangers, from the traditional to the experimental.

VPAC is committed to an earnestly non-political idea - the concert hall is an inclusive place. After all, ears know no borders. Hands clap and feet stomp regardless of nation-of-origin, religion, or cultural background. The communal joy of music and dance is immediate, intergenerational, and accessible.

When water divides us, music compels us to build bridges. When mountains divide us, music guides us as we climb. When what separates us overshadows what we have in common, music inspires us to play louder, clearer, and in unison.