

www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/music/ct-ent-0616-makemusic-20110615,0,6290301.column

chicagotribune.com

Grab your guitar and join in for Tuesday's citywide Make Music Chicago fest

John von Rhein

Classical music critic

4:56 PM CDT, June 15, 2011

The original plan was simply to throw a musical block party. But the idea quickly grew into something much bigger and far more ambitious – a daylong, anything-goes Chicago festival featuring live music of every variety, presented in public spaces and neighborhoods throughout the city.

The result is a moveable musical feast called Make Music Chicago, and the best part about it is that anybody who can tootle a flute or croon a show tune can participate – or simply take it all in from the sidelines.

The event, which will make its debut – rain or shine – on Tuesday, is predicated on the belief that you don't need to hold a diploma in musical performance to play or enjoy music.

Amateur musicians, professionals and marquee artists alike will gather throughout the day and into the evening to revel in the joys of spontaneous music-making, on, appropriately, the first day of summer. Performance sites range from churches and concert halls to Belmont Harbor, Daley Plaza and the Lincoln Park Zoo.

More than 100 musicians and ensembles are scheduled to participate. But that doesn't include the ones who choose to join in as the spirit moves them.

"We may have somebody just taking his guitar or banjo out on the corner of one of the Chicago neighborhoods," said Deborah Sobol, the Chicago pianist who serves as artistic director of Rush Hour Concerts at Chicago's St. James Cathedral, which is presenting the free, citywide event.

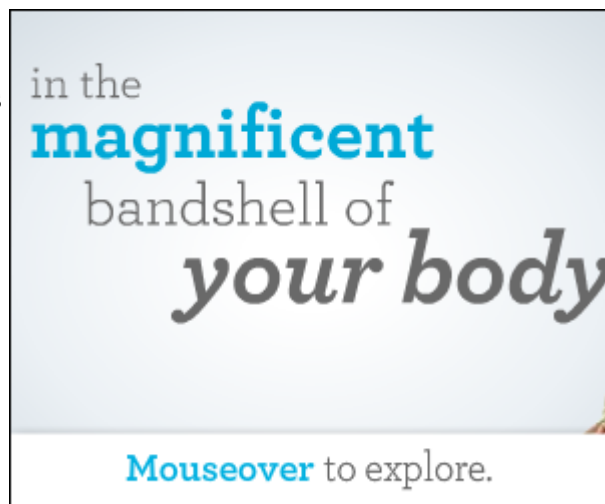
Rush Hour is partnering with various businesses and organizations, including Comcast, WFMT radio, Alliance Francaise de Chicago, **Concierge Unlimited**, the Consulate General of France in Chicago, Chicago Park District and Chicago Sister Cities International. All partner groups are offering their services pro bono, as are the performers.

Just as there will be no restrictions as to the age or technical ability of the performers, so too will there be no restrictions as to musical genre. You name it and chances are you'll hear it around town on Tuesday, whether it's classical, folk, jazz, swing, pop, R&B, rock, fusion/world or dance/electronic.

The idea for the festival, Sobol said, originated at a lunch she had last fall with Graham Paul, the French Consul General in Chicago.

When she mentioned she would like Rush Hour to throw a musical block party, he suggested she expand that into a Chicago version of France's Fete de la Musique, a national musical holiday that's marking its 30th anniversary this

advertisement



year. That famed event has become a global phenomenon, inspiring copycat days-of-music, all on June 21, in more than 460 cities in 110 countries.

Sobol pounced on the idea as a logical extension of Rush Hour's mission to bring good music into Chicagoans' stressed-out daily lives. (She also admits to taking a leaf out of the Chicago Symphony/Yo-Yo Ma Citizen Musician playbook.) She formed a planning committee and got busy soliciting sponsors and participating musicians via a dedicated website, makemusicchicago.com. (There the public can receive up-to-the-minute information on events and times.)

"Everybody is talking to everybody else about it and spreading the word," said Sobol, excitedly. "One of our partners told me, 'You know, my uncle plays the trombone. I must tell him about this!'

"Chicago is a great place for this to happen, because there's an openness here, a willingness on everyone's part to pitch in and to share in the fun," she added.

The fun will come in numerous guises.

One of the most interesting segments will be a lunchtime "Sousapalooza" at Daley Plaza. The Concordia University Concert Band will anchor the event, which will be followed by a sing-along of operatic choruses and show tunes. Brass players are invited to take part, and the scores of John Philip Sousa marches are downloadable from the festival website for those wishing to practice them ahead of time..

Also promised are two "SuZOOki" performances at the Lincoln Park Zoo, involving Suzuki violin and guitar students and alumni of the Music Institute of Chicago and the DePaul Community Music School.

Kicking off the grand finale to Make Music Chicago will be the world premiere of Chicago composer Mischa Zupko's "God Has Gone Up," performed by the Fulcrum Point New Music Project. The program will conclude with a public sing-along of "Sweet Home Chicago." Music-makers of all skill levels are invited to join in. The event, which begins at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at St. James Cathedral Commons, 65 E. Huron St., will be broadcast live by WFMT-FM 98.7.

Sobol hopes Make Music Chicago will be successful enough to become an annual summer tradition here, as it has become in New York, Paris and hundreds of other cities around the world. To that end, she is crossing her fingers that the storm gods will smile on Tuesday's inaugural edition.

"I told someone that I don't care if it snows the entire month of July, just as long as we have good weather on Tuesday," she said.

jvonrhein@tribune.com

Twitter @johnvonrhein

Copyright © 2011, [Chicago Tribune](http://chicagotribune.com)