

World Music Day returns to Palo Alto

Second festival of free concerts set for June 20

by Rebecca Wallace

After the success of Palo Alto's first World Music Day last year, the free outdoor concert cornucopia is coming back to downtown this June. This year's event is set for Sunday, June 20, with a variety of musicians playing corners, sidewalks and plazas from 3 to 7:30 p.m.

Claude Ezran, Palo Alto's main World Music Day organizer, should have more help this year; he has joined forces with the Palo Alto Recreation Foundation.

This collaboration, he said, will make it easier to organize and market World Music Day, and establish it as a regular event in town. "It will be less dependent on one person," he said, adding with a laugh, "I'm willing to organize it for a few more years, but ultimately you have to pass the baton."

The Palo Alto City Council agreed on its April 5 consent calendar to bring World Music Day under the foundation's umbrella. The city will continue to waive permit fees and pay for the extra policing costs the event entails, Ezran said, which helps keep the budget low. (Last year, thanks to the city's help and other donations, Ezran estimated that he paid \$110 out of pocket. The musicians play for free.)



Musicians play at last year's World Music Day. Photographs by Veronica Weber.



Last June, thousands of people came downtown during World Music Day, an annual event that started in France in 1982 and has since spread to many countries. In Palo Alto, people heard indie rock, pop, Yiddish jazz, Celtic folk, hip-hop and other kinds of music. This year, Ezran is expanding the event from two to three hour-and-a-half time periods of concerts.

"Many people told me they didn't have enough time to see everything," he said. "We can now spread out over a larger time, maybe having fewer events at one time."

Last year, some attendees said University Avenue should have been closed to car traffic during the event, since the sidewalks were packed. Ezran said he'd ultimately like to see that happen, but added: "I'm not going to lead that effort right now; I've got enough on my plate. I think I will leave it up to the city if they really want to do it."

For now, Ezran is thinking about the kinds of musicians he'd like to take part this June. He said he'd like to see more student players, and more Latin music and jazz.

For more about World Music Day, go to pamusiceday.org.