

# Bring Our Music Back: An Instrument for Change

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*By: Marci Wise*



Music offers us many gifts: It provides the soundtrack to our lives and captures the mood of the moment. A familiar song can transcend the parameters of time by instantly whisking us back to a treasured memory. Yet this valuable avenue of self-expression may be one of the first casualties of our struggling economy. Many schools have been forced to drop their music education programs, leaving students without the tools to unleash their inner creativity and realize their dreams.

## **A Plan of Action**

In 2009, high-school senior Frank Bombaci Jr. devised a plan to raise both funds and awareness for the cause. He created the first Bring Our Music Back concert, nicknamed B.O.M.B. Fest, and opened the stage to seasoned artists and beginning musicians alike. The unique concert line-up created an atmosphere of excitement, mentorship, and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. In its first year, the event managed to raise an impressive \$30,000 for music initiatives. Now, with the help of social media, the movement is growing like wildfire and using its proceeds to make the dreams of young talent come true. Their outreach is multi-faceted and uses the powerful effects of music to bring hope, help, and healing to those in need.

## **Hope**

From the success of American Idol, to the fan-base of Glee, to the phenomenal rise to stardom of YouTube sensation Justin Bieber – music is one of our favorite indulgences. Its amazing success stories help us believe in our own greatest potential. B.O.M.B. Fest takes that dream one step further, giving aspiring artists the exhilarating experience of standing on a stage and experiencing the joy of free flowing creativity firsthand. Seventeen-year-old Raina Mullen

performed at last year's event and was uplifted and encouraged by powerful energy in the air. "I was watching the headliners, and the crowds were going wild. I dream of one day having a crowd of people sing my songs back to me like that. It was an honor to perform at the event and a great experience," she said.

One of the national acts and volunteer mentors is Christine Ohlman, the long-time vocalist for the Saturday Night Live Band. The soulful singer believes the experience offers aspiring talent an important opportunity by saying

"It's an invaluable way of validating yourself as an artist when you're that young and are able to say to yourself 'Wow, I can do this. They gave me the chance and I rose to the occasion.'"

## Help

Bring Our Music Back is committed to preserving music as an art form and making it accessible and affordable to everyone. Recently they've turned their attentions toward procuring instruments. As a result of the cancellation of numerous school music programs, many schools have instruments that are going unused. The Bring Our Music Back organization hopes to put these instruments back into the hands of grateful students and then provide instruction, at no cost, to those in underserved areas.



Preservation Hall Plays August 4, 2010

When compared with reading, writing, and arithmetic, those in charge of funding often see music education as an unnecessary component of a child's overall success. Recent research, however,

has challenged this view. It's been shown that the study of music stimulates and strengthens that part of the brain responsible for abstract operations such as mathematical and spatial reasoning. In addition, music study improves a student's self discipline, listening skills, dexterity, and self-esteem.

## Healing

Bring Our Music Back Executive Director Gail Stevens is especially proud of the work they're doing in hospitals.

"Music enlivens the spirit, it lightens the heart, and there's actually a movement that claims that music heals,"

she says. In fact, science is just beginning to embrace the effects of music therapy. Studies have shown that the beat and tempo of music can stimulate brain waves and alter breathing and heart rates. Other potential positive effects are lowering blood pressure, boosting immunity, and easing depression. Blues Musician Dan Stevens routinely takes his talents to a local hospice facility and often finds that music touches people in unexpected ways. "People who've been unresponsive will open their eyes and begin to sing along. There's a heavy emotional response, a release of memories and emotions, and a real bringing together of families," he says.

## A Plan for the Future

This year's B.O.M.B. Fest will take place on the campus of Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut, over the Memorial Day weekend (May 28-29), and is planned to be bigger and better than ever before. Aspiring artists will travel from all over the country to participate, but promoters hope to orchestrate involvement on an even larger scale. Their five-year plan is to take B.O.M.B Fest on a national tour of college campuses and spread their melodic message to at least ten U.S. markets.



Sugarfoot Youth Jazz Band Plays August 4, 2010

In these trying economic times, Bring Our Music Back is setting the tone for social empowerment at a grassroots level, and it's a message that people are hearing loud and clear. The amazing success of B.O.M.B. Fest has allowed the movement to expand and include other fundraising concerts throughout the year. It's a heartfelt effort that seems to be hitting all the right notes.

## **Play Your Part**

Bring Our Music Back is a 501c3 non-profit organization that relies on the help of volunteers to bring their mission to life. They have opportunities available for people of all skill sets, and are in need of corporate sponsorships, music industry mentors, and social media masters. If you'd like to help, please visit [www.bringourmusicback.org](http://www.bringourmusicback.org) for more information.