

LiveConnections To Build Bridges



PICTURED ABOVE: HAL REAL (LEFT) & DAVID BRADLEY (RIGHT)

TOP GUNS PHOTO

Perhaps the most compelling sound was the silence.

For five minutes, World Cafe Live vibrated with a battery of percussion instruments from across the globe. Three musicians jammed on the theme of environmental sounds, and the audience students swayed and even laughed along.

But then, as the trio evoked the intimacy and quiet of nature, the audience grew still. The music disappeared, but the listening of the students – from Mastery Charter School’s Shoemaker Campus and Young Scholars Charter School – was its most intent.

It was a moment of curiosity and possibility, with no evidence of the much-maligned attention span of today’s adolescents. This was total engagement that crossed cultures and generations. What might they hear? What could happen next?

This was the initial “Bridge Session”, a program in which music becomes a catalyst for thinking about the diversity of cultures and viewpoints in the

world, and the first offering from LiveConnections.org. Launched by World Cafe Live, this new nonprofit aims to build community through music, education, work force development and mentoring.

Like the medley of instruments onstage, LiveConnections.org represents its own coming together, joining the nonprofit and for-profit sectors with artists, entrepreneurs, schools, and business leaders. If the first Bridge Session is any indication, it too will be something worth listening for.

When World Cafe Live began in 2004, our aim was to be a clubhouse for the community, bringing together artists and audiences in a world-class venue that the music deserved with an intimacy and warmth that every city needs. We’ve always been dedicated to imagining new possibilities for the rich resources of the Philadelphia region.

LiveConnections.org marks the next step in that journey. This stand-alone nonprofit will bring a range of artists together with diverse student and adult

audiences. It will seek to bolster arts education in schools through curriculum, instrument donations and programs like the Bridge Sessions. It will draw on the talent of the region’s music and hospitality industries to open doors for those interested in training for jobs in those fields.

Already, the venture has inspired local musicians to share their art with students in new ways. It has spurred partnerships with local universities. And it has stimulated new thinking at World Cafe Live about how we can continue to break boundaries and create a more connected community.

Like the rapt silence between the artists and students, this moment is rich with possibility.

What could happen next? What will we discover when we build those bridges?

We hope you will keep listening.

HAL REAL, founder of World Cafe Live, and artist DAVID BRADLEY cofounded LiveConnections.org