



Music For Mankind The Power of Art to Change

Last autumn, in a rented room in an 1895 Victorian mansion on a hill in Bellows Falls, a young woman sat at a 1930s-era desk. She was waiting on a phone call, a knock, some sign of life.

The man she was romantically involved with – a musician and sound technician – had been working with a mildly eccentric character as of late, acting as a guitar tech in Celtic folk concerts put on across New England. She had heard little about the man for whom her boyfriend was working, just a few stories here and there of a terrifically eager, diligent, almost overwhelmingly enthusiastic personality. That was until this morning, when she had been called and asked to accompany the man and her boyfriend on a random road trip to Waterbury, two hours north, to help search for his missing wedding ring in the town green.

“He’s a wacky guy,” she’d been warned. “He talks lightning fast. He’ll talk your ear off about this project he’s working on, Music for Mankind. But



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it’s because he’s so dedicated to it.”

During load-out at their Waterbury gig the previous night, the ring slipped off his finger as he removed the gloves he’d donned to handle heavy equipment. The glove flung the ring into the air, into the inky darkness, the expanse of lawn devouring it immediately. The matching wedding rings that he and his wife shared were particularly special because they’d had them engraved together in Sweden, where they were married. The crew pitched in, and the ring was found. A few minutes later, miraculously, it was lost again.

Not wanting to burden his crew further, the man called it a night, asking his new recruit that he’d gotten friendly with if he wouldn’t mind coming back with him tomorrow – hours from home – to help look again. He offered to pick him up and take him out to dinner. Since the new recruit was supposed to be visiting Bellows Falls the following day, he figured that a three-way effort could be in order.

This is how I – the somewhat confused girl at the desk – and Kelly Moore of Manchester Center – the tall, thin, quirky and enigmatic Celtic guitar virtuoso and humanitarian – ended up in a van together cruising through the early foliage of the Northwest Kingdom, on a hunt for a Swedish wedding band.

I enjoyed Moore’s company that day. He did indeed talk immediately and at length about the project he started in 2007, Music for Mankind, as United Nations delegate for the World Food Program to Nicaragua and Peru. His passion was palpable; it

nearly dripped from his eyes, and I could tell that he felt an inner light and sense of purpose the way that religious converts describe.

In the program, he plays a series of concerts in varied national venues to raise awareness of world hunger and donates nearly 100 percent of proceeds to the U.N. World Food Program.

It is an ongoing concert series, and it’s what Moore dedicates every working hour to when not in Washington lobbying for the cause.

He travels to Nicaragua and Peru regularly to observe the program’s field operations. So far, Music for Mankind has raised enough money to feed 33,000 people. To recognize his efforts, he was recently awarded the title of community delegate for the Friends of the World Food Program, a title held by only three people on the globe.

“I’m just so happy that I’ve got this talent, that I can sing and play guitar and express my own heritage through music, and it can actually help those

suffering from hunger,” he said emphatically that day. “It’s such a simple concept.”

When I saw that he would be at Bellows Falls’ Rockingham Public Library next Wednesday at 7 p.m. to speak about his mission to end hunger through music, I nearly fell out of my chair. A return to the genesis, of sorts.

Moore and his band, Emerald Dreams, perform a flowing, dark tapestry of moody, thoughtful contemporary Celtic folk. Moore’s voice is perfect for balladry, the raspy baritone soaring over grand moral tales of life and love.

The music is not exclusive to traditional tastes, either, as many of his benefit shows are at colleges, where young people give him enthusiastic receptions. Dancing and revelry is not uncommon, as Moore’s meticulous finger-picking and constant guitar changes keep the music nuanced and lively. He performed for three decades before forming his organization, so naturally the honed sound is

worthwhile even without the backing of altruism.

More information about Music for Mankind, ways to donate and a concert schedule can be found at musicformankind.net. Once visited, it’s hard to get the program or the man behind it out of one’s head.

Sadly, we never found his wedding ring that day, but we did find a shining soul and a unique understanding of the power of art to change.

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