

RE-PUBLIC MUSIC SHOWCASE

PN staged a concert in the streets of downtown Champaign with the triple mission of celebrating the community's diversity, demonstrate how people make our cities' spaces both beautiful and meaningful, and standing for the idea that a welcoming community makes for a better community.

On September 22nd, 2017, Planners Network staged a 7 hours-long concert on Walnut Street, in the middle of downtown Champaign that featured Congolese, Italian, Korean, Chinese, Brazilian, and Black American music! All performed by members of our community of each heritage. Almost 5 months of planning and organizing, partnerships with 6 community & university organizations, and the work of over 50 individuals produced an incredible event that saw the celebration of the music of C-U's immigrant and minority communities.

Almost 200 people attended throughout the day, and by the evening the whole space and the entire sidewalk was packed and even people on the opposite side of the street were having a blast. We even had a wonderful recital of the *adhan* - the Muslim call to prayer - beautifully executed by our friends from the Muslim American Society of Urbana-Champaign!

The event provided an opportunity for members of all these communities, and the community at large, to mingle and enjoy each other's music in a space that was welcoming and accepting of all. Re-Public's guiding philosophy was that the only truly public space is a welcoming space, an idea that proved its power as we witnessed strangers coming together to sway, sing, dance or simply just be. Performers were emotional at the opportunity to play their culture's music in the middle of downtown. Friends, family, and supporters were moved at the sight of their music occupying the city's center, and the sight of their fellow community members enjoying it too. A man who got off at a bus stop a couple of blocks away heard the music, was drawn to the concert, and ended up spending the entire afternoon and evening with us – bonding with all who came, dancing to the jams and swaying to the ballads.

The drive behind Re-Public came from two national events: 1) [Welcoming Week](#) – celebrating the contribution of immigrants to our communities, and brought to C-U by the University YMCA; and 2) [Park\(ing\) Day](#) – reclaiming for the benefit of people spaces usually given up to cars, and brought to C-U by the Student Planning Organization. Re-Public combined the mission of the two by opening a central area to a celebration of the community's diversity. It sought to lay a welcome mat in the middle of the city by shaping it into a place where everyone would find things dear to themselves and things dear to their neighbor. Thus Re-Public's slogan became: Sharing Music – Sharing Spaces.

In an incredible display of community cooperation, the entire thing was executed with a budget of \$150 dollars. Over 50 individuals - performers, heavy lifters, audio tech, design students, organizers - and over a dozen organizations contributed everything the event needed: from furniture to speakers and musical instruments, to the labor of securing the space and the collaboration of Champaign city officials and police department.

A special shout-out has to go to our outstanding partners: the Student Planning Organization, the University YMCA, Champaign County Habitat for Humanity, the Academy of African American Arts at the Nesbitt House, the Independent Media Center, and the Spurlock Museum! And of course we must extend our unending gratitude to our performers, who volunteered their many members and their instruments to grace us with their amazing talent.

- Clockwork Owl -- [Facebook Page](#)
- Jean Rene Balekita -- jeanrenebalekita@yahoo.fr, [C4A Page](#)
- Gah Rahk Mah Dahng -- cu.grmd@gmail.com, [Facebook Page](#)
- Jasmine Field Orchestra -- [Facebook Page](#)
- Desfinado Band -- desafinadoband@yahoo.com, [Facebook Page](#)
- Soul Premiere -- academyofafroarts@gmail.com

The event underscored for us all the power of ideas when passion and opportunity allow them to snowball. It was an incredible community organizing opportunity, and we were all left with a sense of awe at the beauty and power of a community united.