

LANDFALL WINDFALL

Legion Arts/CSPS world music festival
celebrating 10th year in Cedar Rapids

By Diana Nollen, The Gazette

The Floods of 2008 surged through the CSPS building in southeast Cedar Rapids that June but couldn't drown the first Landfall Festival of World Music three months later. The Legion Arts organizers, synonymous with the CSPS building it now owns, simply took the shows on the road, to Greene Square and McKinley Middle School in Cedar Rapids and First Presbyterian Church in Marion.

Nothing was simple about staging that first-of-its-kind festival, and nothing is simple about staging the 10th edition. But it's important to bring global sounds to local stages, said F. John Herbert, executive director of Legion Arts/CSPS. Artists are coming from a dozen countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe and North America for concerts and workshops from Monday through Sept. 16.

Details still were being ironed out at press time, but workshops and events will be held during the day at the Cedar Rapids Public Library, Johnson STEAM Academy, Coe College, NewBo City Market grounds, all in Cedar Rapids, and the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Evening concerts will be held at CSPS beginning Tuesday. Check Legionarts.org for scheduling updates.

"We believe that Cedar Rapids and Eastern Iowa and in fact, I guess you could say the U.S., are becoming more culturally diverse all the time, and I think there are always some stresses involved in that process, which again you can see very clearly this week with the debates around DACA and other related issues," Herbert said.

"We believe that the arts generally, and music in particular, are really good ways for people to communicate and expand their understanding of cross-cultural borders and bring people together from different cultural backgrounds. So it's always our hope that if we have a Spanish-speaking artist performing, that there will be people in audience that don't speak a word of Spanish, as well as people for whom Spanish is their first language," he said.

"In that way, music serves to

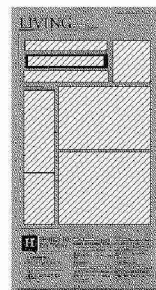
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really create a sense of community and also to establish bridges locally."

It's also a way to show how music passes from one culture to another.

ROOPA PANESAR

British sitar superstar Roopa Panesar is making her first foray beyond New York City this fall, with a tour that will bring her to Cedar Rapids. She'll present a workshop and concerts with percussionists Pirashanna Thevarajah and





Nitin Mitta, who plays the tabla, a pair of small drums similar to bongos.

Audiences will hear some elements of traditional music from north and south India, along with new pieces being developed. However, much of her Wednesday night concert at CSPS will be improvised.

"We'll probably see how it feels on the day and jam," Panesar, 38, said by phone from her home in Leicester, about 100 miles north of London. "Depending on the time of day and time we have, we'll be selecting pieces that we feel are going to best represent the atmosphere."

She gravitated toward the sitar at an early age and began studying the stringed instrument at age 7.

"My cousins, who were young at the time, were learning, and I used to see the instrument in their house whenever I used to visit. I was always very fascinated by it," she said. "From there, my parents noticed that I was taking an interest in that, so they got me started on lessons, and I seemed to take to it. I had quite an affinity with the instrument, so it took off from there."

Her guru, Ustad Dharamb Singh, felt children should begin performing at an early age to stave off nervousness and stage fright, so she was onstage within a year or so. While she said she was "not necessarily at any brilliant level," she continued studying and performing.

She did veer off in college, earning a chemical engineering degree and working briefly in oil and gas. But she found herself retreating to the restroom on the job, to work out her frustrations by singing. When her daughter was born nearly 12 years ago, she took a maternity break "and never went back." Soon, the siren song of her sitar was luring her onto a new professional path.

She hopes to communicate

to her audiences "a universal message of love," she said. "It doesn't have to be that I'm trying to show that this is what I am, this is where I'm from — it's just music that connects people. And to give them an insight into our instruments and into the music. But generally, for people to just to enjoy it."

OTHER PERFORMERS

Guitarist and songwriter Mdou Moctar, a star in his homeland of Niger in West Africa, has created a tribute to Prince's film, "Purple Rain."

"It pretty much follows the story of the film, of a young struggling artist and guitarist trying to establish himself in the music scene and work through his family problems and his romantic problems," Herbert said. "He wrote all of the songs for the film and performs them ... but in the Tuareg language, there's no word for 'purple,' so the title translates to 'Rain the color of red with a little bit of blue mixed in.'"

The film will be screened at 7 p.m. Monday at CSPS, and Moctar will perform the music at 8 p.m. Thursday, also at CSPS.

"That's really exciting to us in terms of how cultural influences travel around the globe and how artists can be inspired in their musical growth and direction by artists from the other side of the planet," Herbert said.

Other performers include South Carolina's Ranky Tanky, updating the Gullah traditions of the slaves who developed their own language and music; Maria Pomianowska from Poland, who performs on ancient instruments; Chilean singer, songwriter and accordion player Pascuala Ilabaca; Ladama women's ensemble from North and South America; and Bang Data from Oakland, Calif., mixing bilingual rhymes and melodies over electroacoustic beats.

They come to Cedar Rapids through Legion Arts' extensive networking efforts.

"We lucked out some years ago in the fact that there are a number of world music festivals that take place concurrently in the Midwest every fall," Herbert said. "Because of those festivals, artists are coming from all over the globe to Chicago, to Minneapolis, to Madison, to Albuquerque, to Toronto. We're able to tie into that network, and we're in communication on a regular basis with the programmers in those cities."

"And therefore, people in Cedar Rapids can experience artists that we know would be really unusual in a city this size, to see that range of artists in a short period of time. Certainly, these are artists we could never afford to bring in on our own, and even those large cities probably couldn't bring in on their own. But because the artists can perform in four or five different places in a two- or three-week period, it makes it financially feasible for them to tour to the U.S."

COSTS

Legion Arts wants everyone to be able to experience the weeklong slate, regardless of ability to pay, so admission is by a suggested donation of \$5 to \$10. "On the other hand, we're dependent on that support, so if people come and have a good time, we encourage them to be as generous as they can," Herbert said.

The festival of concerts and educational workshops will cost from \$25,000 to \$30,000 to stage, he noted, and financial support comes from local grants, corporations and national funders.

TRAVEL TRAVAILS

In previous years, some artists have had to bow out at the last minute, because visas were revoked or promises of financial support from their unstable governments fell through, causing them to can-



cel overseas tours.

"In the past decade or so, the process for getting visas from the U.S. government to tour in the U.S. has been increasingly complicated and expensive, and sometimes artists aren't able to get their visas together in time," Herbert said. "We're always keeping our fingers crossed that everything's going to work out. This year looks pretty good."

And despite recent U.S. travel restrictions for people from Muslim-majority countries, that hasn't been an issue for the current Landfall performers, Herbert said.

"I didn't see any direct impact from that," he said. "I know some of our colleagues who present a lot of international work actually went out of their way to book artists from those countries."

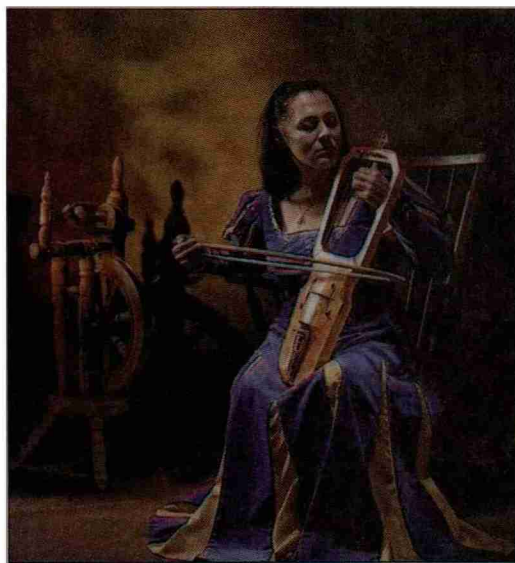
Landfall doesn't have anyone coming from that region this time. That wasn't a deliberate omission.

"Every year, we try to find some artists from the Middle East, because we feel that's something audiences around here don't have the chance to experience very much. But there aren't a lot of artists from that part of the world that tour, and we really don't see them here as much as we would like to."

● Comments: (319) 368-8508;
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LANDFALL SCHEDULE

- **Mdou Mactar**, Tuareg guitarist from West Africa: film screening loosely based on "Purple Rain," 7 p.m. Monday, CSPA Hall, 1103 Third St. SE, Cedar Rapids, \$10; and concert at 8 p.m. Thursday, CSPA Hall, \$10
- **Roopa Panesar**, sitar: noon Tuesday, Cedar Rapids Public Library, 450 Fifth Ave. SE, \$10; and 7 p.m. Wednesday, CSPA Hall, \$10
- **Ranky Tanky**, Gullah musical traditions from Georgia and Carolina Sea Islands: 7 p.m. Tuesday, CSPA Hall, \$10; 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Cedar Rapids Public Library, \$10; and 4 p.m. Friday, NewBo City Market, 1100 Third St. CE, Cedar Rapids, \$10
- **Ladama**, women's ensemble from North and South America: 6 p.m. Friday, NewBo City Market, \$10
- **Pascuala Ilabaca**, Chilean singer/songwriter: 8 p.m. Friday, CSPA Hall, \$10
- **Bang Data**, bilingual rhymes and melodies over electroacoustic beats: 4 p.m. Sept. 16, NewBo City Market, \$10
- **Maria Pomianowska & Reborn**, Polish musician and composer who performs on ancient instruments: 6 p.m. Sept. 16, CSPA Hall, \$10
- **Details:** Legionarts.org

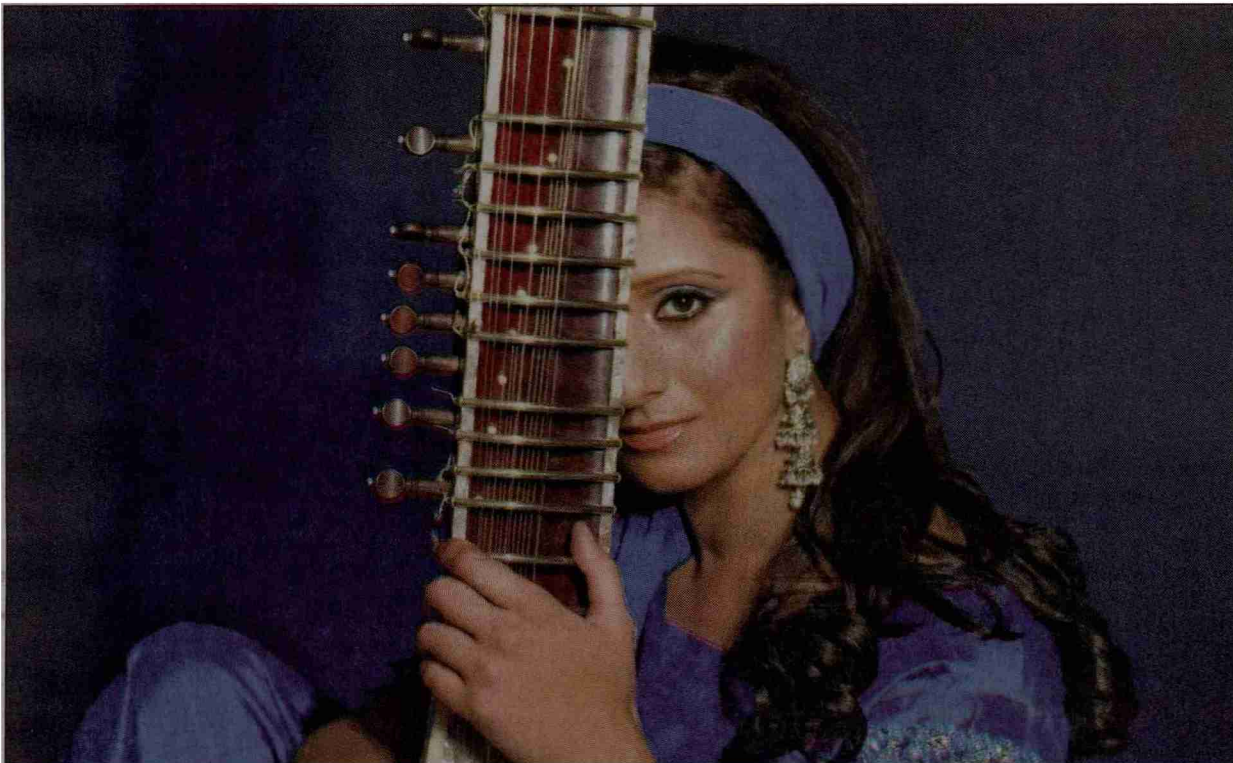


Maria Pomianowska



Courtesy photos

Other performers at the Landfall Festival include: (top) Polish musician and composer Maria Pomianowska, who performs on ancient instruments from European and Asian traditions; (middle left) Mdou Moctar, a Tuareg guitarist from Niger in west Africa; (middle right) Pascuala Ilabaca, a Chilean singer/songwriter; (above left) Ranky Tanky, a band from South Carolina that blends gospel, jazz trumpet and an R&B rhythm section; and (above right) Bang Data, a duo featuring bilingual rhymes and melodies over electroacoustic beats.



East West Photography

British sitar player Roopa Panesar will bring her artistry and Indian influences to the Landfall Festival next week in Cedar Rapids. The 10th annual world music festival, produced by Legion Arts, showcases musical traditions from around the globe.



Ana Lira

Ladama is an ensemble of female musicians from across the Americas, who produce and perform original work, driven by rhythm and percussion and combining traditional roots music with pop.