

With four secondary academic institutions, two beautiful public libraries, an array of art galleries, and local theatre projects all within a ten mile radius of downtown L/A; the area that I think/feel makes L/A a happening place lies with the multitude of musical venues that exist in the twin cities. From the concerts in the park, open mic night at the library, summer festivals, local clubs and pubs, and the Franco- American Heritage Center music is everywhere for everyone in L/A.

As a toddler I started attending Wednesday evening Auburn Community Band concerts at the park behind the Dunlap building with my mother and grandparents. These concerts provided an opportunity for the community and families to come together to share the common language of music. Those concerts have expanded into the summer concert series that we have now. The summer concerts enable community members from varying backgrounds to experience culture they may not otherwise have the chance to experience. The concerts bring people from all social demographics together in one place. The people who work in the banks and offices come to the free concerts on their lunch breaks with other people they may not necessarily associate with. As an individual who plans to be a special education teacher, it brings me immense joy to see individuals from various support agencies, i.e. the Life Center, Navigators, and Tri- County who attend these concerts faithfully. The same is true for the children who attend these concerts. The concerts also expose children in the community to culture and diversity in a fun and relaxed atmosphere.

The informal atmosphere of the outdoor concerts allows people to enjoy and express themselves freely. It also enables the performer and audience to interact. Warning! Dancing is likely to occur at any moment at any concerts. Depending on the type of music being performed it not uncommon to see a number of people from the diverse backgrounds previously mentioned come together and dance.

Teen Open Mic night is a fairly new venue for the twin cities. This venue allows teenagers to showcase their talent to their peers once a month. Opportunities for children to demonstrate their musical talent is being threatened by the budget cuts to the arts departments of schools. This is why what the Auburn Public Library does on the third Friday of the month is so important. On this day the library hosts an open mic night for teens to sing, play, or read originals or covers pieces by well known artists. The teens that perform are able to have a public venue to express themselves. Regardless of their choices these once a month gatherings are yet another forum in which local young people are being exposed to the arts and culture. An important part of culture because music is a universal language the whole world speaks.

Besides the afore mentioned concerts in the park, Lewiston/Auburn has many other venues for the community to experience music. L/A boast being the home of the Franco-American Heritage Center, church turned performing arts center. At the performing arts center individuals can enjoy music and dance around the world. The Franco- center provides people a convenient place to view song and dance performances from around the world, without having to travel to Portland or Boston. While show casing world class artists the center is able to maintain affordability, therefore locals who appreciate more formal arts and culture, but might not otherwise afford it, now have a place.

L/A is a diverse place with an array of races, ethnicities, languages, and social classes. Music is the universal language that crosses all boundaries allowing individuals to unite regardless of race, ethnicity, language, or social class. It is my hope that the music programs that exist in Lewiston/Auburn will continue to grow with renewed interest and support for generations to come. Continuing the legacy of bringing my own children and grandchildren to experience arts and culture, in the same manner that it was introduced to me, is something I am looking forward to.