

Heading: Music as Art, Art as Community

Subheading: In a world so divided, see how music can be used to create unity.

Emily Schauer

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When asked to consider what is or isn't a form of art, music may not be the first thing that comes to mind. Spanning across endless genres and cultures, music has a way of bringing people together to create. Being a part of many different choirs over my life has shown me what it means when people come together in this way, most recently being the Sing for Unity event.

According to their website, the Sing for Unity movement spans worldwide, spreading messages of peace, unity and community. On the UN International Day of Peace of 2025, which fell on September 21<sup>st</sup>, choirs from around the world gathered at 2pm in their own local times to sing all kinds of works together, with one message in common. The movement began as a small idea in Denmark with the all-female choir known as Female Singers, and on September 21<sup>st</sup>, over 180 choirs participated all around the world. From Denmark to Germany, England to Belgium, and Australia to the States, voices sang together proclaiming the message that we are one world and one people standing together for unity and community.

As a member of the University of Idaho's Vandaleers, I got to perform as part of this movement. A few members of the university's choir joined us as well. In the past I've participated in a couple of sing-along events, but they were more casual. There were church services and Girl Scouts get-togethers, but nothing to this scale. Originally the event was going to be held in East City Park, but due to the inclement weather they changed the location to Unitarian Church hours before the event began. Over 100 people attended the event, including all the choirs! As well as the Vandaleers, WSU had their chamber, concert, treble, and university choirs in attendance, then there were the Palouse Chamber Choir, Unitarian Church Choir, Palouse Choral Society, Inland Harmony Choir, and Colfax High School's choir, joined by singers from WSU.

The church was packed, so much so that the staff had to pull extra chairs from storage spaces and empty rooms; even then people still crowded the back. At one point, one of the hosts got up on stage to remark about the vast number of attendees. He said that it was a good thing the

event got moved, as the space we were supposed to be in wouldn't have been big enough for all of us. This was hard to comprehend since the initial space would have been outside!

The Vandaleers performed a song called "Easy on the Earth," written by Luke Wallace and arranged by Wallace and Shawn Kirchner. We also performed this song at our concert on November 10<sup>th</sup>, but for this occasion we also taught the crowd the refrain for them to sing along. The song tells its listeners to literally go easy on the Earth, to preserve it for future generations since our offspring will inherit it when we're gone. It will be a place for them, and should be something beautiful that they can shape for themselves. We went fifth in the lineup, following a moving performance from WSU's treble choir.

The whole experience was really lovely. It isn't often that I get to experience being in an environment of people as passionate about music as I am, especially one where we are all performing together. In a regular concert environment, it is usually one group performing, or a few groups from UI. At the Sing for Unity event, choirs that I didn't know existed, comprised of people of all ages, all got up to share one message with each other.

Sam Walton, a junior Broadcasting and Digital Media major, also really enjoyed being able to sing with people from all over the community.

"I love to sing and getting to be in a room with three hundred plus other singers was really magical," he said. "Hearing everyone sing with us on 'Easy on the Earth' was so special."

The individual performances were breathtaking, but I also thoroughly enjoyed the group sing-alongs that we did throughout the day. Everyone received the same sheet of paper with all of the songs, and though I didn't know the melodies of most of the songs there, it didn't matter. Each choir taught the audience how their song they were sharing went, and we even learned a little body percussion on one notable instance. It didn't matter if someone was on the money every single note; what mattered was that we were all singing together.

When you sing in a choir, the goal is to sound like one voice, even though there are different parts being sung. You breathe together in the same way, you pronounce words the same, and for some groups you even dress the same. But with the sing-alongs, there was none of that. What mattered most was the love and connection everyone put into what they sang, and it was evident the whole time. I would love to participate in a sing-along like this again!