

## Zade Dirani Knows

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Whenever there is mention of a meeting of the minds - a major academic conference - it is generally followed by cities such as New York, Chicago, or L.A. However, Louisville broke that pattern as the host of Ideafestival 2006. Created in 2000, Ideafestival is an "open source" forum for jumpstarting the notion of innovation, for discussing and applying similar ideas across disciplines to generate solutions and new ideas for the future. As a result, the event attracts some of the brightest and most unique minds from around the globe to speak about the power of ideas.

Among the over 40 keynote speakers appearing at the festival this year was a twenty-five-year-old Jordanian composer and pianist by the name of Zade Diriani. Zade's session on Friday, October 13 was anything but eerie, as he openly and frankly addressed a room of Ideafestival attendants about his life, his inspirations, his work and his goals. A graduate of Berkley College of Music, and an avid believer in the power of music to blend and bridge cultural gaps, Zade was deeply touched by the events of September 11, 2001.

In response to the terror and prejudices spurred by 9.11, Zade began a grass-roots, house concert tour across the country - "seeing America through the backdoor", as he calls it. Since the beginning of the tour, this musical mastermind has performed roughly two hundred nights a year. The reason for his non-stop schedule, he explained, is because, "in that setting, through the music, we [he and the audience] were connecting on a level that totally transcended all cultural tensions." This reaction has spurred Zade to dedicate his life to building bridges of peace and tolerance through the universal language of music, a goal which has earned him the title of 'Jordan's leading cultural ambassador.'

In fact, his United States tour and subsequent diplomatic traveling and concerts have been so successful in provoking cultural discussions and understanding that Zade has envisioned a new project: "Roads to You." Sponsored by Queen Noor of Jordan and the Berkley College of Music, "Roads to You" is a concert series that will bring together 40 musicians from 18 countries to showcase participants from war-torn regions and attempt to build atmospheres of understanding and trust. The participating musicians will not only share their talents, but also their cultures and their personal stories. Each stop on the tour will last approximately one week, during which the group will break up into quartets and host breakout sessions throughout the city. The weekly mini tours will then culminate in the full concert.

The "Roads to You" tour will come to Louisville May 14-20, 2007. The breakout sessions are still in the works, but there is every possibility, after talking to the event coordinator for Louisville, Mr. Omar Ayyash, that one of the sessions may be held here on campus if there is enough interest. Furthermore, Ideafestival is slotted to stay in Louisville for at least the next four years, thereby attracting even more speakers and performers like Zade Diriani to the area - a promising idea.