

**Instructional Related Activities  
Report Form**

SPONSOR	DEPARTMENT
Steven Marsh	Performing Arts
ACTIVITY TITLE	DATE (S) OF ACTIVITY
Moira Smiley and VOCO concert	Oct.18, 2012

**PLEASE EXPLAIN (1) DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY; (2) HOW DID THE ACTIVITY RELATE TO A COURSE(S); AND (3) WHAT YOU LEARNED FROM THE PROCESS.**

1.) This concert featured the exceptional vocal and instrumental talents of Moira Smiley and VOCO. Two different CSUCI classes were assembled to hear the dazzling music that VOCO provided. My PAMU 333 "Varieties of Musical Experience" class was present, along with Dr. KuanFen Liu's PAMU 100 "Music Appreciation" class. KaunFen's class always joins forces with my class whenever I bring musical events to the campus. Other CSUCI students and staff also attended this concert.

2.) My PAMU 333 course examines a wide variety of music from different cultures, and VOCO provided a great performance/presentation to match the goals of our class. During this performance, Ms. Smiley and VOCO demonstrated folk music from Eastern Europe and the Appalachian Mts., and they also performed some of their original songs. Some of the songs were sung in Bulgarian and Hungarian languages, which was certainly a new experience for our CI students! Ms. Smiley led the audience through a very interesting call and response singing exercise. By singing in response to Moira, our students got to actually experience singing some of the different sounds and nuances that are found in Eastern European music. Exotic instruments such as accordion, banjo, ukulele, and ethnic percussion were used during the performance. All of those elements contributed towards our students' musical knowledge, as they happily absorbed new combinations of sounds that they had never encountered before. At one point, Ms. Smiley played recordings of Bela Bartok's folk inspired compositions, and then Moira demonstrated her arrangements of those same songs. It was quite an informative and interesting presentation.

At various points during the presentation, C.I. students were able to ask our guest musicians questions about their musical influences, their musical training, and general questions about the performers' lives in the music world. Our students learned that our women performers in VOCO also sing operatic styles, and they have been recorded on several major motion picture soundtracks. Especially for our Performing Arts students, it is very important to have these interactions with the professional musicians who visit campus by means of the IRA funded concerts.

My class was required to write an in-depth concert report paper about this event.

This writing project was one of several assignments that served to address the University's writing goals for this class. In writing the concert report, the students sharpen their writing skills, practice their newly acquired musical terminology, and have an opportunity to share their thoughts and reactions to the concert. My students stated that seeing these bands perform on campus is essential to their understanding of the content and objectives of this course.

Excerpts from the students' concert reports are attached to this document.

3.) I learned that Moira Smiley and VOCO are very experienced at these kinds of presentations, and that our students really enjoyed the performance. VOCO did an excellent job of presenting information about their music to the students. Our students reacted very positively to this musical experience. I would be happy to bring this ensemble back to our campus for another concert at some future date.

These 9am concert times are not convenient for all students and faculty, but we must present the concerts at the time that the classes are scheduled for. I estimate that we had about 75 people in attendance for this concert. All those people in attendance seemed to enjoy the concert very much.

**\*\*Please attach assessment forms from students, list of attendees, peoplesoft program report**

## EXCERPT of Student Reviews of VOCO concert. 10/18/12 at Malibu Hall.

**Abigail Goldman:** The performance given by “Moira Smiley and Voco” was inspirational and refreshing. There were three female vocalists who appeared to be down to earth and dressed in casual wear. To me, their appearance suited them well as they explained the importance of voice and performing to be that of communication, sharing, and telling stories, rather than glamorous performances and fame. Moira- vocals, banjo, and body percussion, led the trio. The two other members were April Guthrie- vocals, cello, and body percussion, and Pilar Diaz- vocals, ukulele, and body percussion. The trio worked well together in a capella pieces as well as the arrangements with instrumentation. Overall, I was very impressed by their performance and their general point of view on music, method, and intentions. I greatly appreciated this performance, and couldn’t have thought of a better way to start my day.

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**Eric Lange:** Moira Smiley explained that the VOCO’s music is inspired by folk songs, and by the stories that these songs told. The folk songs she was most influenced by came from Eastern Europe, and the Appalachian mountain area of the United States. She interpreted these traditional songs that she felt a connection to, and created her own spin with them with the group VOCO. I understand Moira Smiley’s vision, and feel, for creating her arrangements. VOCO is an amazing musical group.

I feel this concert and all of the other IRA funded live in class concerts were a very worthwhile use of IRA funds for learning and understanding the music. I felt that these live concerts in class helped me greatly in my learning, and were very useful. It is enjoyable and a great way to experience the music firsthand. This is also a fantastic way to understand different music perspectives. Especially for this class, PAMU 333, The Varieties of the Musical Experience.

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**Bree Emery:** Have you ever had a moment where a musical piece moved you in such a way that made you feel inexpressible joy, peace, or wonder? These are some of the feelings that I felt when I heard the brilliantly written songs and captivating voices of VOCO. Moira Smiley, April Guthrie, and Pilar Díaz formed a perfect blend of harmonies and awed me with their vocal and instrumental versatility in the different genres of music they presented to us (Eastern European music and Appalachian/American folksongs).

I thought it was wonderful how Moira started the concert off by interacting with her audience. She involved her audience by demonstrating a call and response technique. I could not believe the control she had over her voice! She had incredible pitch and a distinctive and wholesome quality to her voice.

VOCO is a group that I will always remember, especially because I bought two of their CDs! I enjoyed their harmonies, creative arrangements, orchestrations, and passion for their music. This is a band that I would truly enjoy seeing again. I want to become a part of their mailing list so I can go see them when they play locally. I definitely feel this concert was a good use of IRA funds. Not only is IRA funded live concerts crucial to the content of our course, but it also gives students a chance to learn more about different types of music and become more educated on cultures around the world. Additionally, the women in this concert inspired me to want to pursue a career in music. They made me hopeful that I can use my creativity to touch others with music.

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**Christa Estrada:** The diverse singing trio VOCO was incredibly enjoyable. I was immediately impressed with the lead singer, Moira Smiley, who started the performance off with an a capella song she wrote about living in California. She was so relaxed and her voice was so clear. As she sang she looked

directly into my eyes for a moment and I was totally absorbed in her song. Moira then led a call and response singing exercise with us. This was perfect, because at nine in the morning we all needed something to wake us up and thoroughly engage us. I ended up having a lot of fun participating.

I admire how Moira talked about the goal of her music being that she wanted to be an honest storyteller, because that is also how I feel about the music that I write. She says she is not focused on fame, but instead she is focused on the spirit of the music. This is evident in the songs they performed. There was definitely a free spirit-folk vibe to all of Voco's songs.

I was very impressed with how they sang in other languages. They had a Bulgarian folk song medley that they sang in Bulgarian flawlessly, and then they even sang another song in Hungarian.

Voco was a really entertaining group, and I could feel their heart behind the music. The way that they used their voices, bodies, and instruments in such a creative way was truly a work of art that left me very impressed.

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**Hannah Russell:** A group about the voice and the beautiful things the voice can do, VOCO is made up of people from all over the country. The music featured by VOCO is specifically folk music of the Eastern United States (such as from the Appalachian Mountains) and the countries of Eastern Europe. The three women that performed for us were Moira, April, and Pilar. The vocal harmonies in the songs were absolutely breathtaking, creating a work of art within a few simple chords. In addition to using their voices to make music, these women played the accordion, cello, banjo, ukulele, and various forms of percussion.

The performance by these three amazingly talented women began with a solo, "I Live in California." Sung by the leader of the group, Moira Smiley, the song set the tone for the rest of the concert. A simple melody with lyrics about the land of California, the folk song helped me leave my thoughts and worries at the door, and focus on the music. Moira then led a "call and response" that allowed us as an audience to test our vocal chords, bending our voice into strange sounds. This exercise was great, not only because it foreshadowed the Bulgarian songs that were to come, but also because it woke us up and got us to participate in the music. Following the interactive exercise was an American folk song called, "Bring in the Water, Sylvie."

These live performances made possible by the school are definitely necessary. Professors can discuss and lecture about music till the sun burns out, but the only way for students to truly learn about music is to hear it performed live. These concerts not only allow students to experience the music in person, but they also allow students to talk to the performers and ask questions, learning what it takes to be a professional musician. I hope the school keeps funding the concerts, because I will definitely attend them even after I've completed my music courses—I bought CDs from both bands I've seen, because I crave and enjoy new music. VOCO has been my favorite in-class performance so far, mainly because I like folk music already and, as a singer, appreciated the vocal harmony parts. I would see them again any day, because I know I can expect something new and refreshing from them each time.

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**Julie Lemon:** On Thursday, October 18, 2012, I had the pleasure of attending a vocal performance of a group by the name of "VOCO". Coming into this performance I really did not have any pre-conceived expectations or ideas of what the concert would be like. However, this performance by far

exceeded any ideas that I may have had before listening to these women sing. I absolutely enjoyed this concert and am so happy that I had the privilege of listening to the incredible voices that make up this group.

Overall I feel that this concert was very beneficial to the learning goals and expectations of this course. The name of our class is "Varieties of Musical Experience" and there really is no better way of "experiencing" music than to actually see it live and in person. Sure, we can learn about the different varieties of music while in the classroom, but being able to study a real-life performance of what we are learning about is ultimately going to be immensely more beneficial. Also, this group in particular incorporated a lot of learning into their performance. For example, Moira did a "call and repeat" like exercise where we were able to see some of the different sounds that we could make with our voices and showed some really great illustrations of how she used arranging in her own music. Moira even played us three different arrangements of one song in order for us to see the how arranging works. This was especially beneficial for someone like me who does not have a lot of musical background. Altogether this concert was such a memorable experience and I am really glad that we were able to see VOCO perform.

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**Matt Anderson:** Last Thursday our class once again had the pleasure of seeing some fine musicians, who went by the name of VOCO. This trio gave an incredible performance, and definitely made their stage presence known by using all of their limbs as they played their arrangements of songs that were influenced by folk songs. I was taken in by VOCO's outstanding performance. Their incredible execution of complicated body percussion, and harmonies really took me by surprise. I was deeply moved by their gorgeous harmonies that had great color, and I hope to come across them again someday.

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**Rayann Searles:** I was rather excited to see this Folk Music concert and I thoroughly enjoyed this music. The performance of Moira Smiley and Voco had the audience feeling their music through the floor with the powerful vibrations of their vocals and instruments. Truly great bands can make a living selling their unique stories through song, Moira Smiley and Voco are one of those exceptional, rare talents that do just that. This concert was a rousing, visionary blending of vocals and instruments that reflected an ethereal experience to all that witnessed this unique trio of musicians. Their passion for Folk Music genre is reflected by their fierce, virtuoso execution of this musical style.

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**Nic Forsberg:** VOCO was a very interesting and fun group. I had never experienced a performance like this. The fact that this was a mainly a cappella group was very cool to me. Their voices sounded so good all together, and the few instruments they used, accompanied their voices very well. This band got all their influences from old folk music. They pull ideas from all over the world, and all music types. They write a lot of their own music or recreate a lot of the music that they hear. This is what makes VOCO such a unique, and interesting group to listen to.

I really enjoyed this concert and all they had to bring to the performance. It was a lot of fun to listen to and be apart of. It opened my mind to a new style of music that I hadn't really thought about listening to in depth, but now I will give folk music and new age folk music a shot. This was a great performance to have brought to our class.