Music of “hope and engagement” has long punctuated American social movements, whether the anthems we know for the Feminist Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, or the more recent Environmental Movement. Singers and songwriters recognize the power of song and music to unify and to build community momentum in the struggle for any given social justice cause.

Our multiple award-winning Project Humanities initiative at Arizona State University continues that tradition now that we have a theme song that captures the ambitious efforts of our Humanity 101 Movement to create a social drumbeat of conscience and consciousness around these seven principles—respect, integrity, compassion, forgiveness, kindness, empathy and self-reflection.

This tune, “Love Is in the Air, Breathe Deep,” was written about three years ago by the legendary rock guitarist and songwriter Dick Wagner who passed away suddenly before recording the song expressly for our Humanity 101 Movement. When Wagner and his business partner Susan Michelson were introduced to our Humanity 101 effort, Wagner immediately wrote the song for our purposes. Attention and work on the song remained dormant for about two years before Michelson agreed to continue work to complete the song to support our Movement and to continue Wagner’s distinguished legacy. Because of Michelson’s extensive in the music industry, Michelson assembled a stellar slate of technicians and musicians for her circle to produce this song, including her long time-colleague Bobby Taylor of Bobby Taylor of the Vancouvers. Taylor is credited for “discovering” Michael Jackson and the Jackson Five and Taylor and Michelson worked together on the television series “The Jacksons.” Ultimately, this creative collaboration included 11 vocalists (including Bobby Taylor), 4 engineers and technicians, and 6 musicians.

The song was produced over the course of three days, and witnessing the process was truly amazing for those both inside this industry and those out. Taylor’s experience allowed everyone around him to learn from his extensive work and knowledge as a songwriter, singer and producer. From beginning to end, the experience far exceeded our expectations, and the midweek public event with Taylor, “An Evening with Bobby Taylor,” was a treat for the seventy who attended. Members form the surrounding university community and as well as from the university attended the event. More than one or two individuals spoke about how they were influenced by Taylor’s own music and he was able to give some sage advice to those audience members anticipating a career in music. An unmastered version of the song was revealed at the public event and the audience response was encouraging. The “big reveal” will happen in Spring 2017 as part of a Project Humanities public program on “Music and Social Movements,” to be presented by historian Professor Donald Guillory, here at Arizona State University.
We remain grateful to the Puffin Foundation West for supporting this program specifically with $1500 toward Taylor’s $2000 honorarium, and our ongoing and impactful “talking, listening, connecting” Project Humanities efforts more broadly. This support represents an historical moment for Arizona State University and this product of the Humanity 101 theme song, giving us the potential to take our shared humanity efforts beyond our expectations. The next steps will be the song “reveal” as well as two videos on the making of the song and a video for the Humanity 101 song. We are excited and fortunate.

Event Media and Social Media:

https://asunow.asu.edu/20161018-creativity-motown-legend-bobby-taylor-brings-power-music-asu

https://usenate.asu.edu/motown-legend-bobby-taylor-brings-power-music-asu


https://asuevents.asu.edu/content/evening-bobby-taylor?eventDate=2016-10-20T19%3A00

https://twitter.com/asunews/status/788787342052093952

https://twitter.com/asu_alumni/status/788778065962860544

Photos from Bobby Taylor Visit: http://humanities.asu.edu/media/photo-album/4066

Project Humanities Event Report
Date: October 20, 2016
Title: “An Evening with Bobby Taylor”
Number of Attendees: 70

How did you hear about this event?

- Email: 16
- ASU Events: 11
- Facebook/ Twitter: 4
- Project Humanities: 1
- Print Media: 1
- Other:
  - Friend: 6
  - Family: 2
  - Other: 3
  - Professor: 3
  - Susan Michelson: 4
  - Dr. Lester: 3
  - Alex Cyrell: 1
Rate the following statements about this presentation, using this scale:

Strongly agree (5)
Agree (4)
Neither agree nor disagree (3)
Disagree (2)
Strongly Disagree (1)

This program made me want to learn more about and explore the topic further.

Strongly Agree: 41
Agree: 8
Neither agree nor disagree: 1

The speaker was engaged and provided useful information.

Strongly Agree: 45
Agree: 3
Neither agree nor disagree: 1

There was adequate time for Q&A and discussion.

Strongly Agree: 44
Agree: 4

I gained valuable information and the experience was worthwhile.

Strongly Agree: 45
Agree: 3
Neither agree nor disagree: 1

Summative Comments:

I want to thank Dr. Neal Lester for his work and I hope he will continue his progress.
The sound, technology problems were very distracting.
Sound system.
Very interesting.
Great experience, it has given me a new perspective.
Too bad that the sound speakers and media had problems.
I am so inspired to be more loving and connected to my family and community. Thank you for hosting this beautiful conversation.
Very enjoyable.
Entertaining/ inspiring and a definite score for Project Humanities, particularly in and for Arizona.
So glad I came to see Bobby Taylor! What a man!! Thanks.
Sound/ technical (difficulties) were slightly distracting.
I am not a student. The presentation and speaker were great, but the overarching theme of humanities and the humanities project was not engaged enough.
Thanks Dr. Lester and group. Bobby Taylor was great! I learned a lot!

I loved it! It was my introduction to Bobby Taylor and Project Humanities and both are absolutely wonderful. I could've listened to Mr. Taylor speak and sing all night long.
The event itself was great.

Very informative, up close and personal. Enjoyed it all! Perks to Bobby staying over, at 82 years old, to talk with some of the audience; especially, me! Good photo ops too!

I enjoyed hearing the stories and the audience participation and learning about the Project Humanities group.

Enjoyable. Entertaining and informative

A night with Bobby Taylor was a once in a lifetime opportunity to be with a living legend. He had so much to offer that is in alignment with Project Humanities mission.

Thought it was great----very interesting to hear the history of Bobby and Motown and of course Michael Jackson.

Really enjoyed. Very informative. Bobby was engaging and very eager to speak and answer questions. I felt blessed to be able to take part.

Very nice and very informative.

A very enjoyable event! It was great to hear the stories. Also it was refreshing to be in a room with other people who appreciated Michael Jackson for who he is, not for who the media branded him as. I had an opportunity to speak with Bobby afterward and enjoyed sharing some commonalities of which I was not previously aware. A BIG thanks to Doc Lester and Project Humanities!

I thought it was extremely interesting.

It was wonderful!

I'm surprised there weren't more people in attendance. Maybe more help with marketing because that was truly a special evening.

The auditorium that the event was held in had very poor quality sound.

Would enjoy other opportunities to be a part of similar Evening with? Bobby shared the behind the scenes, the back story, in a way that made us all comfortable. Meeting Bobby's family was the "fitting" touch on the night.

It was unfortunate that there were so many problems with the audio system.

It would be good to check all of the infrastructure before events, e.g., A/V to catch workability issues before the event takes place

Only criticism was the A/V stuff was not working well and that definitely impacted the
enjoyment of the music. Re question 4 below there is no place to comment or give a conditional answer. I answered "no" because most of the categories would not apply to me like "internship" but I would like to hear more about what is available in terms of involvement and if appropriate I would consider it because I like the concept of what you are doing.

The technical aspects of the presentation, especially the audio should be handled by someone who at the very least, understands the equipment in the room. The audio problems were a distraction. To offer such an event, the technical aspects should, at the very least, have a professional technician overseeing the presentation.

Bad audio.

I enjoyed learning about Project Humanities - I tend to live that way now and passing it along has been a real challenge! Good to hear that it is alive and well. I would like to get my student organization involved with possible joint events.

I have been to a couple of previous events and have enjoyed them tremendously. One was one of the sisters from [The Pointer Sisters], loved it!

- NOTE: Regarding the poor sound system, we had no reason to believe that the sound system would present challenges and none of the facility attendants were able to assist during the event. We have registered concerns with the facility management staff and they have apologized profusely. We have held programs in this room before without incidence.