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867 words

**“DO-RIGHT” MAYOR HANCOCK JOINS THE RANKS OF WORLD LEADERS
IN THE LOVE AND RESPECT OF MUSIC:
Why you should vote this Tuesday!**

No incentive to get out to the Voting Service Center or slip that ballot in the many drop-off locations and you’ve missed May 1st mail-in ballot deadline? Allow me to speak to something you may not know about our Mayor Michael Hancock – my friends, acquaintances, business colleagues and not a few naysayers – have come around to having another level of respect for this man that guides Denver in “bold” directions. Who of us can use the word “bold” without pairing it to the Mayor – his favorite word! If you revere music, read on and consider putting that “X” on the May 5th ballot. And yes, he’s uncontested, but maybe this will draw one of you out of apathy or ennui - or – “Why vote?” - here is a reason.

At the last Red Gala, the amazing event organized by The Spirituals Project, the Mayor had us gripped and enthralled as he delivered a non-scripted, off-the-cuff speech beginning it with an on-the-beat rendition of the chorus lines of Aretha’s ’67 hit, a *Rolling Stone’s* 500 Greatest Songs of All Time, “If you want a do-right all days woman; You’ve got to be a do-right all nights man ...” As a youth at Manual HS, it spoke to him about how he was to conduct his life - taking the words to his core to win the heart of his eventual lovely Mary Louise Lee. With that light touch, the Mayor launched into how music impacted him and shared results of his considerable research on origins of music - for the love of music and Denver is all about music – then, and now. So began an eloquent presentation of “the universal language of music ... the universal power of music” without skipping a beat and the history of capture, Middle Passage and slavery and what it should mean particularly to the African-American community – the heritage of “the challenges and the times of the slaves.”

The Red Gala, the brainchild of Dr. Arthur S. Jones and directed by Amani Ali with amazing talent like Bennie L. Williams as Artistic Director, it celebrates and recognizes this era through the sustaining of spirituals, “the very foundation ... that brought the slaves together and kept them together.” It is personified by the wearing of red on this evening; every imaginable red emblazons the gigantic ballroom; proud men in silk and woven scarves, kente cloth, bow-ties; elegant gowns, beautiful women in vermilion, carmine, Venetian red, Alizarin crimson, cardinal red, amaranth ... not one identical, yet united in the message of the blood shed from iron cuffs, whips, daily abuse and lynchings. A very heavy message.

“Without music, there was no bonding of the slaves. Without music there was no coming together of the communities from plantation to plantation. Without music there is no love. Without music we don’t find peace.” The Mayor added statistics that silenced the ballroom, “ ... during 1900’s – 1930’s ... more lynchings in America than men and women died in the Civil War.” The importance of spirituals “... said something about faith, hope, redemption, forgiveness. Words touch your heart, but music captures the soul.”

Speaking of the Spiritual Project choir, “ ... all different hues, ages, the one thing that bonded them ... music holds us all together ... it demonstrates the soul tapping, people integrating, the heart’s stirring ... the universal language that brings us all together, no matter what end of the earth you stand on.” The Mayor likened the choir’s unity to the Kenyan wild elephants experiment – when music introduced at the watering and feeding areas – the video showed, “... one day, the elephants lined up, all facing the place where the music was coming from and almost in unison, they began to sway to the music.” Music “... can take a slave master and make him Freedom Rider and ... give faith to the slave that knows nothing than a master’s whip and duration of the sun.”

Mayor Hancock joins the elite group of powerful leaders, “poet-kings”, who spoke to music and words as the sustaining force: Nelson Mandela “ ... music and dancing makes me at peace with the world ...”; Poet, playwright, President Vaclav Havel’s overthrow of communism, The Velvet Revolution, based on his love for Western rock music, of Lou Reed, Zappa and the influence of Velvet Underground; former NYC Mayor Bloomberg launched poetry in the subways and public structures, writing his own poem to his city that Pulitzer poet Tracy Smith called “a love poem to the city.” In Denver, the do-right Mayor Hancock launched last year the first cultural plan since 1989 – IMAGINE: 2020 “... a shared vision for Denver’s artistic, cultural and creative future ... more of the arts in your daily lives ...” says Kent Rice, Director of Arts & Venues.

Isn’t this worth casting a vote for a man of much depth representing more than just the economic and social growth of the city; but a champion of the arts – music above all - a complete man – a do-right Mayor?