

Poetry provides access to spirituality, identity

I would like to draw out an idea that wasn't made explicit in my previous column ("Political poetry can bridge gap between personal, political," ODE, Feb. 19). The idea was that writing can, and should be, a spiritual and life-affirming process.

This perspective, of course, is not easy to hold in the everyday world. At least not for me. The amount of tasks I subject myself to over the course of a given school/work week usually leaves me feeling like a thin coating of peanut butter spread over a piece of bread. There's just not enough to go around. I'm sure others have felt the same way.

So how can spirituality permeate a world such as ours? I'll be the first to admit it's not always possible in an academic setting where time limitations, deadlines and term papers are a way of life. And I'll speculate that it gets no better once we leave this shroud of academia and



Eric Layton Illustration

never been before."

The metaphor of the bridge is particularly apt because poetry seems to be about mending dualism such as "us versus them," homosexual and heterosexual, friend and enemy, nature and culture, and so on. As the highest branches of a tree seem to embrace the sky, so can poetry melt the divisions that exist between people and their heretofore "separate" environment.

The birth of the political, then, is rooted in poetry.

"It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change," Lorde said. "(First) made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action."

Many would shy away from this action. Despite its vague meaning, in the context of this particular society, true action is when we begin to distinguish who we are from a society that increasingly values thoughtless visual

captivation, fear, conformity and domination.

Persian poet Rumi (1207-1273) wrote: "Be melting snow / Wash yourself of yourself. / A white flower grows in the quietness. / Let your tongue become that flower." Here is that melting of the subject into object. It need

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Aaron Shakra
The poet's tree

further subject ourselves to a capitalist job market.

But perhaps a good place to start would be with our poetry.

In her essay "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," Audre Lorde says: "Poetry is not only dream or vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundation for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has

CROATIAN

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region of Europe. They play a number of instruments native to Balkan countries, such as the kaval (a Bulgarian end-blown flute which is the size of a recorder) and the tambura (a

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Dan Downes
Balladina drummer

teardrop-shaped string instrument).

Dan Downes — who plays tupan (a large, stick-beaten, double-headed drum) and doumbek (an hourglass-shaped hand-beaten drum) — said Balladina's presentation of Croatian music will be "cheerful and perky."

"You just want to move (when you hear Croatian music)," he said. "You have to do something to it. The dance is based on little tiny bounces. You do several bounces on one foot before switching to the other foot. There is a bounce for each beat, so you can end up vibrating if the music is fast."

Downes, who also helped organize the festival, said his group will play five to six stringed instruments — including a violin, bass and three sizes of tamburas — to mimic a traditional Croatian ensemble. He said the Greek portion of their show will be more soulful and laid-back than the Croatian section; it will also employ more percussion and woodwind instruments.

The festivities won't end with Jergan's workshop and Balladina's performance. At 7:30 p.m. Saturday, four groups will present cultural pieces that are not of Croatian descent. These will include Korean music, and salsa and Egyptian dance.

"For the performance portion of the festival, we like to show a range of different styles," Downes said.

The evening show will be followed by a dance party at 8:30 p.m. featuring live music by Arcada, Calif.-based folk band Chubritza. The six-member group is similar to Balladina in its choice of unusual instruments. Their varied musical genres stretch beyond the Balkan region to Israel and Mexico. They will set the scene for the dance party with traditional songs from Eastern European countries.

The package cost for all festival events is \$35 for the general public and \$25 for students and seniors. For those who only attend the workshop, tickets are \$10 for the general public, \$7 for students and seniors. Ticket prices for the dance party are \$15 for the general public and \$10 for students and seniors. The 7:30 p.m. showcase of international song and dance is free.

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Room 198, UO School of Music

TICKETS: \$5 General Admission, \$3 Students & Senior Citizens; available at the door. Room 198 is wheelchair accessible