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Translations

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06.24.2011 | Fine Arts, Campus and Community

Musicians, dancers and birders will come together for an unusual open-air art event in one of the Miami Valley's most distinctive woodland parks.

The Blue Sky Project, in collaboration with the University of Dayton and Five Rivers MetroParks, will present "Translations: an exploration in birdsong, sound and movement" 6 p.m. Saturday, July 9, and 3 p.m. Sunday, July 10, at the Aullwood Garden MetroPark, 955 Aullwood Road, Englewood, Ohio. It's free and open to the public.

In the event of rain, the performance on Saturday, July 9 will be cancelled but the Sunday, July 10 performance will be moved to Cox Arboretum MetroPark, 6733 Springboro Pike. For updated information on the days of the shows visit www.blueskydayton.org.

Violinist Shaw Pong Liu and choreographer Rodney Veal created the work, which invites audience members to walk along trails throughout the garden, encountering violinists mimicking birdsongs, dancers improvising on the shapes of trees and birders with iPods contributing the real songs of birds.

"The point of the piece is to get people to slow down and pay attention to the environment," Liu said. "We lead such busy lives, it is rare to take time to attune to the environment, and truly listen. Through this creative exploration of a hidden gem in the Dayton community, we hope to inspire others to listen and see their environments more deeply."

Liu said the piece is very much in the spirit of the garden's founder, the late Marie Aull, who opened and donated the garden to the public, and placed inspirational quotes throughout, encouraging visitors to enjoy nature and meditate on its beauty.

Participants include professional musicians from the area, dancers from the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company and the Dayton Ballet, and birders familiar with the region's birds.

Liu said the some paths go over rugged terrain and recommended appropriate footwear. iPhone users may also participate by downloading iBird Explorer Lite, a free app, before the performance.

Liu's role as community artist/investigator for Blue Sky is new for the organization, a juried international summer artist residency now in its seventh year and its third based in Dayton, that brings internationally recognized artists to the area to work with young people on public, contemporary art.

The new position was prompted by Liu's work in 2010 with Blue Sky and the community connections she made, according to Peter Benkendorf, founder and co-creator.

"Collaboration and community are central to both Blue Sky Project and the University of Dayton. It's exciting to see Blue Sky expand through an artist who is taking the Blue Sky model beyond collaboration of program participants, and out to the larger community," said Benkendorf.

It's a good fit for the University, according to Paul Benson, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, because it combines the University's commitment to community and its interest in infusing the creative process into education.

Blue Sky also makes good use of ArtStreet, an innovative living and arts community on campus, where the artists both live and make art in the facility's studios, Benson said.

"We are pleased to support Blue Sky as well the new community artist/investigator position as part of our ongoing commitment to expand the arts on campus and in the community," he said.

"Translations" is the second major collaboration for Liu and Veal. Their 2010 production "Of a River" transformed the Schuster Center Wintergarden with dancers, musicians and 600 yards of silk.

Liu is a Boston-based, classically trained violinist who performs internationally and creates innovative shows involving...

Dayton native Rodney Veal is a choreographer and interdisciplinary artist whose work has been featured at the Ohio Dance Festival, among others. Veal teaches at Stivers School for the Arts in Dayton and Sinclair Community College. A solo show of his work, "Reveal: Five Zones on Beauty," opens July 23 at the Springfield Museum of Art.

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