

Why We Do This

At St. Andrew's, we challenge ourselves to remain open to many ways of experiencing the Divine. For many people, live music is one of those ways. Music touches us in ways that are deep, mysterious, personal, and sometimes inexplicable. With live music, the time, the place, the words, the sounds, the mental and emotional states of performers and audience, and the connections made between performers and audience all combine to create a unique transcendent experience. This transcendence is not limited to traditionally spiritual music performed in a worship service. Often, music that we consider 'secular' delves into themes, emotions, and spirituality that touch people in ways that hymns cannot. This is the type of experience that we aim for when selecting performers for the Open Ears Concerts. We hope you'll join us in helping to expand our opportunities for experiencing the joy of live music.

Carrie Elkin – January 28

Thank you to everyone who came out to share the evening with us. Carrie played and sang beautifully, entertained us with some of the stories behind the songs, led us in some heartfelt sing-alongs, and even previewed some new songs planned for her upcoming CD. It was a joyous and warm evening despite the cold and rainy weather.

Michael Fracasso – February 20

It seems as though I've known of Michael Fracasso since I moved to Austin fifteen years ago. He is, sadly, one of those artists of whom everyone talks, but who is rarely heard on the radio. To be honest, before I started working on this show, I probably couldn't have named one of his albums or songs. However, since the very first time I heard him, I have been able to identify a song as his within about one bar of hearing his voice. I'm pretty sure I'm not alone in that.

Michael Fracasso has been described as a "songwriter's songwriter." He sings with an extraordinary and uniquely expressive tenor that has been compared to Roy Orbison, Buddy Holly, and Gene Pitney. He has worked with, and claims as admirers, many of the best-known musicians of the Austin scene including Charlie Sexton, Patty Griffin, Alejandro Escovedo, Jimmy LaFave, and Eliza Gilkyson. He has toured with the Woody Guthrie tribute show Ribbon of Highway, Endless Skyway. He performs with Matt the Electrician, Beaver Nelson, and Nathan Hamilton (all of whom have played at St. Andrew's) as part of Pop Stars: Dads Who Rock! He writes strongly melodic songs with lyrics that offer narrative, characterization, and aphorisms. He plays mean guitar (and piano). He can carry a solo show, and he's a first-rate bandleader. He is also an accomplished Italian chef whose cooking and singing performances give new meaning to "dinner and a show."

Dave Marsh of the Austin Chronicle wrote an excellent cover article about Michael from which I have borrowed heavily

(<http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Issue/story?oid=oid%3A207599>). No

Depression magazine also ran a very good article about him in issue #14

(<http://archives.nodepression.com/artist/michael-fracasso/>) – almost a decade earlier. For many years, he has earned widespread critical acclaim and the respect of his peers. How then, after all that, does Michael Fracasso remain one of Austin's best kept musical secrets?





To cure my own ignorance, I picked up a copy of his latest CD *Red Dog Blues*. To me, each song seems an Americana gem – some a little folksier than others and some a little bluesier, but all of them top notch compositions that are at once catchy and ripe with meaning. Through all of them, that distinct voice croons, growls, hollers, and mourns without ever losing its signature quality. It's easy to see why the critics and musicians love him so much. So, again, why is he not a big star?

Perhaps his wife Paula said it best: "He doesn't want to be famous. He wants the songs to be famous." Dave Marsh wrote a great summary:

"The solution to the Michael Fracasso mystery, like the mystery of the purloined letter, lies in plain sight. It involves paying attention to the details. That is, there's really no mystery at all - just a guy with great talent who's made the most of it without shouting the fact in our faces. Someone who thinks enough of his listeners to believe we can keep up with him at his best. What are you waiting for?"

Stop waiting. Join us for an evening dedicated to listening and experiencing Michael's talents first hand on Saturday February 20. Doors open at 6 PM and the show starts at 7. As usual, there will be free coffee and snacks. You can listen to some of Michael's music online at www.myspace.com/michaelfracasso.

Upcoming Shows

Sunday March 7 - John Spillane. A huge star in Ireland, John is touring festivals, small venues, and house concerts in the US. This will be a Sunday afternoon show, starting at 1:30 PM. Katie Gosnell opens. Advance tickets will be available starting February 6 at St. Andrew's and at Things Celtic (www.thingsceltic.com). Thanks to Vicki at Onion Creek House Concerts for helping set this up. www.johnspillane.com

Friday April 9 – Tom Pacheco. A rare visit from a legend of the folk underground. He has written songs with and performed with the likes of The Band, Doug Kershaw, Flaco Jimenez, Pete Seeger, Steve Bruton, and many others.

Saturday May 1 – Leonard Cohen Hoot Night. Performers to be announced. Email us at info@openearsconcerts.com if you would like to participate.

Saturday August 21 – St. Andrew's Variety Show and Silent Auction. An open mic of sorts, in which all are invited to share their enthusiasm and experience the joy of performing. No talent required! Also, a fundraiser to help keep the series going and growing. Email us at info@openearsconcerts.com if you would like to participate.

Friday September 24 – Austin Lounge Lizards. The masters of satire and bluegrass overcome the shallow end of the gene pool to enlighten and entertain us.

We are working on some other exciting shows which we hope to announce soon!