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## Sacred Festival Raises Musical Spirits

### World Music Review

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SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

The World Festival of Sacred Music wound up a colorful, 16-day array of presentations Sunday night with a program celebrating the deep belief in community that has underscored the event from the beginning.

Conceived in 1999 as a onetime series of concerts tied to the millennium, it now will return as an established, triennial offering.

Sunday's Greek Theatre production, like so many other concerts large and small in the festival's run, emphasized the spiritual aspects of music from around the globe. Less obviously but perhaps more importantly, it also revealed the spiritual qualities that are intrinsic to virtually all music.

The mythological gods and heroes in the graceful music and dance of the Balinese ensemble Cudamani, for example, represented an approach to spirituality different from that of Western religions. Yet the stimulus they provided for creative artistic expression was, at its core, no different from the intentions of, say, a Bach cantata. And Cudamani's brilliant performers, working together with stunning cohesion were both as superbly coordinated and as compellingly entertaining as any Western ballet performance.

The Lifou Island Dance Theater of New Caledonia offered another approach to the sacred roots of music and dance. As with Cudamani, the ensemble—which has taken on the name "Ziethel" ("looking up")—works toward resurrecting ancient legends by fusing them with more contemporary

performance styles. The result was a powerful combination of rhythm, melody and visceral dancing.

The group's enthusiasm, deceptively well-crafted foot-stamping choreography and unexpected blending of unison tribal chanting with choral harmonies justifiably generated some of the most spirited applause of the evening.

The most receptive response of all, however, was reserved, predictably, for the climactic appearance by the Grateful Dead's Mickey Hart, leading a multinational band called Bembé Orisha ("party of the spirits" in the Yoruban language, according to the program).

This global version of a Grateful Dead drum jam featured a clutch of gifted drummers—Hart, Greg Ellis, Sikiru Adepaju and Humberto "Nengue" Hernandez—in a searing display of spectacular rhythmic pyrotechnics.