



Firebird Arts Alliance

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By Lisa Moore

Building Bridges Through Unique Musical
Collaboration

'New South Crossings'

Groundbreaking TV Series Premiering on WTVI

What do you get when you cross a traditional Southern swing band with an African-American Pentecostal praise band? You'll witness great musicians shatter the barriers of race, religion and musical training during a jazz session of unity, joy and devotion. This swing-shout combination is just one of the unique performances you'll see on the Nov. 18 debut of "New South Crossings," an innovative television series by local PBS Station WTVI-TV, the Firebird Arts Alliance and the Levine Museum of the New South...



David Tang on the set of
New South Crossings

...This groundbreaking program is the brainchild of David Tang, artistic and executive director of the Firebird Arts Alliance, a nonprofit organization that creates collaborative, multi-disciplinary arts and educational experiences that are engaging, innovative transformational and relevant.

"My mission is to bring together artists from all disciplines and challenge them to work together in innovative ways in order to make the world a better place.

"The theory is that artistic collaboration will lead to civic collaboration, which will better our art, as well as our lives," said Tang...

Members of Grupo Estilo Norteño and Carolina Gator Gumbo,
who overcame language and cultural barriers through music,
having fun on the set



Over 100 musicians and 50 television personnel from the Charlotte area supported the project. Offbeat pairings include contemporary gospel up-and-comers Dennis Reed & G.A.P. and Son de Cuba who infuses Spanish, African, French Creole and native musical influences...

...Master musicians from diverse races, backgrounds, styles and genres worked with young, emerging musicians to create a made-for-TV version of the theme song "Meet Me at the Crossroads." Kids ages 10 to 18 who played a variety of instruments soaked up the attention and knowledge of these experience artists.



Jim Brock and Jamione Washington

Noted percussionist Jim Brock was paired with 14-year-old gospel-drummer, Jamione Washington. After working with jamione, Brock was inspired to give the young musician a set of drums.

"It's up to us to pass our knowledge on to the younger talent so one day they can pick up where we leave off," Brock said. "Experience is the greatest of all teachers."

Tang hopes the "New South Crossings" series will inspire all people, artists or not, to reach out to others.

"All of the artists involved in 'New South Crossings' want to show the world that embracing an 'other' doesn't force us to give up our own identities. If we share of ourselves with mutual respect and a desire to understand others, we will all live in a much better city..."