

Hosting a *SOUND OF THE SOUL* House Party

The *SOUND OF THE SOUL DVD* is designed as the centerpiece for an entire evening of meaningful sharing. This is what we call a *SOUND OF THE SOUL* House Party. The House Party helps build a vision of peace, justice and interfaith healing by starting locally. By hosting a House Party, you will encourage people of various faiths and traditions to share their experiences—and create new ones together.

The House Party begins with a group screening of *SOUND OF THE SOUL*, where the inspiration of sacred music can “open hearts” to deeper understanding and connection.

After watching the film and enjoying the wonderful music from Fes, you'll invite your guests to participate in exhilarating ways. You can spark a lively atmosphere by playing world music party tracks, or use the film to launch an engaging interfaith conversation among your guests. Or perhaps you want to move into a more meditative space, and close your eyes to fully experience songs and chants from three different religious traditions.

As the House Party host, you can set the agenda, or decide as a group, which of these special DVD attractions to follow-up on, and in which order. Possibilities abound, so allow for unexpected, creative directions to arise once the group gets together.

Host a *SOUND OF THE SOUL* House Party!

Just Follow these Eight Easy Steps:

Step 1. PREPARATION:

Set a Date: When choosing a date, allow 2-3 hours for the event.

The Invitation: Invite 8-12 people, (20 max.) ideally from three (or more) different religious, spiritual and cultural backgrounds. Use www.evite.com to create simple invitations and track your RSVPs. In the invitation, direct your guests to www.soundofsoul.org where they can watch a trailer of the film.

Step 2. THE WEEK BEFORE THE PARTY

Confirm Your Guest List: Call or email your expected guests to confirm attendance. Once you know your group's size, you are ready to prepare a seating arrangement for the screening, and also to decide the refreshments you may want to provide.

Sign-In Sheet: Preparing a sign-in sheet allows guests to share contact information—such as name, phone number, and email address. This will help you organize a follow-up gathering for those who are interested in continuing to cooperate together, or in creating a project.

Photographing or Filming Your Party (optional): We would like to post “great moments” or lessons learned, from your House Party on *SOUND OF THE SOUL*'s website. We are looking specifically for video clips, photos, and stories that can inspire others, and generate feedback and/or a larger conversation. Ask a friend to help by taping your event, or taking still photos. Send the best, edited video (5 minutes or less) or selected photos to: www.soundofsoul.org.

Inviting Local Press (optional): Email or call a local newspaper or TV news station to attend the party and witness how some people in your community are working together to promote peace and understanding among different faiths. We can allow local news stations to use up to four minutes of the film without charge. (They should contact us at www.soundofsoul.org)

Step 3. THE DAY OF THE PARTY

The Food: You can prepare refreshments or simple appetizers for your party, or have a potluck, multi-cultural meal. Perhaps you and your friends are even inspired to create an authentic, delicious Moroccan meal for the screening.

Here's our favorite website for recipes:

<http://www.friendsofmorocco.org/Food/moroccanepicurious.htm>

The Setting (Testing your Technology):

Seating: Make sure you have adequate seating for the number of guests you expect, and that all seats have an unobstructed view of the screen.

Lighting: Determine two different lighting setups, one brighter for when guests arrive, and the second, a lower level, for optimal viewing during the film screening.

The Technology: Test your DVD and monitor equipment, to make sure there are no problems when your guests are seated and ready to begin. Familiarize yourself with the DVD's main menu so you can quickly start the film, as well as navigate to the Special Attractions you'll wish to use later in the party. We suggest adjusting the sound volume up a bit higher than usual for maximum enjoyment of the film's highly engaging musical soundtrack.

Background Music: The perfect backdrop to welcoming your guests is the "Moroccan Landscapes" Special Attraction on the DVD. Beautiful scenes from Morocco are paired with music from Francoise Atlan and the Mohamed Briouel Orchestra.

Step 4. THE GUESTS' ARRIVAL (10 min.)

Welcome your guests, and thank them for attending. Offer refreshments and ask your guests to briefly introduce themselves.

To set-up the film screening, offer a short description of ***SOUND OF THE SOUL***

(if needed refer to the synopsis and reviews on www.soundofsoul.org). Explain what drew you to the film and why you are excited to hold this House Party. *(Also suggest your guest visit the restroom prior to the screening, by letting them know the film lasts 70 minutes.)*

Step 5. SCREEN THE FILM (70 min.)

Watch ***SOUND OF THE SOUL***. Remember, for maximum enjoyment, turn the volume up to enhance the audience's direct experience of sacred music from the Fes Festival.

Step 6. AFTER THE FILM (15-90 min.)

Ask if anyone would like to share initial reactions to the film. What did they enjoy, what musicians or moments struck them? Did they learn anything in general, or something new about another religion? What did the film say to them, on a personal level? Did they feel an "opening" to another faith or world-view? Did the film seem to have a "message"?

Note: At this point, your House Party can take a variety of turns. Try the following in advance, yourself, with the DVD, to get a sense of your options. Choose how you would like to structure the party, but allow flexibility too. It may be that your guests are thrilled to try all three options below!

OPTION 1: Interfaith Dialogue: (60 min.) Watching the film may leave you motivated to participate in an interfaith dialogue or exchange. Start by giving everyone in your group a copy of the Appreciative Inquiry Questions (attached) to explore each other's beliefs, traditions, and experiences. Listen powerfully and respectfully and see how the conversation can grow, become enriched and even lead to new, creative projects.

OPTION 2: Direct, Personal Experience: (15 min.) *To prepare, navigate to the "Experience Sacred Music" Special Attraction on the DVD.*

In ***SOUND OF THE SOUL***, the Moroccan guide, Dr. Ahmed Sidi Kostas says

Sufi practitioners “*listen with their hearts*”. Now try listening with your heart, on a deeper level. Play these three audio tracks to experience directly and personally how different spiritual traditions use music to reach and communicate with the Sacred. You may invite the group to close their eyes to focus on the music and chants. Included is a Christian hymn by the Tallis Scholars, a Sufi zikr by Saad Tamsamani and excerpts from a Moroccan Jewish bar mitzvah.

After listening, ask people to share what they heard and felt. Or to move to another level, play the Sufi zikr track once more—and this time invite everyone to practice the zikr breathing together, with a focus on opening the heart further with each breath.

OPTION 3: World Music Party Mix: (18 min.) *To prepare, navigate to the “World Music Party Mix” Special Attraction on the DVD.*

You can add energy to the party by turning on these three extra music performances from Fes, suggesting everyone dance or clap along! Listen! Move! Share! Experience!

Step 7. CLOSING & FOLLOW-UP ACTION

Thank the group for coming, and ask if anyone is interested in throwing their own House Party, or coming together for a follow-up event to initiate some inter-faith project or service opportunity. Commit as a group to take some action! Brainstorm ideas together, and send a follow-up email the next day.

Step 8. FINALLY, SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE!

Remind your guests that www.soundofsoul.org has more music, web links and information to further explore themes from the film. Invite your guests to send feedback to the website, as a way of connecting with the larger **SOUND OF THE SOUL** community.

As the host, remember to share your best photos, video, or comments/exchanges from your House Party, as a way of celebrating and reflecting on your experience—and inspiring others in the process!

Directions for Creating an Interfaith Dialogue

Designed by United Religions Initiative

Centering Meditation

Introduce the idea of silence as a time to slow down and become present. Invite people to relax and share this time of centering meditation. You might offer a prayer, a reflection, or simply a bell to signal the open and close of this centering meditation time. *(Using words or prayers from a specific religious tradition is fine but remember to preface your words by saying something like, “I would like to open this meditation time with a prayer from my own faith tradition.”)*

Introduce the Appreciative Interview Process

One way to help people engage with one another and share their feelings and thoughts about experiences with people from different faith backgrounds is to engage people in a process called Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry gives people a natural and comfortable context for interfaith conversation and offers an opportunity for people to listen to each other and to discover the special experiences, values, and perspectives each bring. Appreciative Inquiry involves pairs of people each interviewing one another. *(Hand out a copy of “Listen to Another – Appreciative Inquiry Questions” to every person).*

Interviews, 20 Minutes Each.

Introduce Partner to Group

Ask everyone to return to the circle and introduce his or her partner, sharing one highlight from the interview.

Invitation to Participate

Acknowledge the gift of listening and being listened to. This conversation of the heart often leads to new openings and possibilities. How was this experience? What did we learn? What common themes did we hear? The group might be left with a question. What’s next? Where do we go from here? What can I do?

Future Cooperation

Is there interest in meeting again? Is there interest in forming a group that would initiate on-going activities to build respect, cooperation and peace building among people of different faiths? If yes, ask everyone to fill out contact information on the sign-in sheet, and send a follow-up email the next day. Your group, working together, can make a difference in our world today!

Closing

Go around the circle and ask each person to offer one idea or impression that he/she will take from this experience.

Listen to Another – Appreciative Inquiry Questions

The gifts needed to create a better world are within us and are within the group assembled here. The purpose of this activity is to welcome and appreciate each other and to discover the special experiences, stories, and values we bring to the unprecedented vision of people from different religions and spiritual traditions living with respect for one another and working together for the good of all.

Getting Started: Find a partner, preferably someone you do not know well, and then find a comfortable place to sit to listen well and take some notes. Using the questions below, take 20 minutes for each interview. Your host will signal when 20 minutes have passed, and then switch, and take 20 minutes for the second interview.

When it is your turn to interview, read each question aloud to your partner. Taking notes will help you share highlights of your conversation later.

Appreciative Inquiry Questions:

1. Please tell me your name and why you decided to come to this gathering today.
2. We live in a time of remarkable change, a time when people of diverse backgrounds are often our neighbors. As the world shrinks, most of us experience more and more encounters with people from other backgrounds, spiritual traditions and religions. Would you share a story of an interfaith encounter that was especially meaningful to you? An encounter when you were surprised or humbled? Where there was a genuine experience of respect and friendship?
3. We have all been part of efforts where we have joined with others and brought our dreams of a better world into being. Reflect on a high point in your life experience—a time when you were involved in something meaningful, when visions of a better world were actually brought into being. Please tell me a story about this experience.
4. Imagine people in your community doing things that bring the **SOUND OF THE SOUL** vision to life. Imagine it is ten years from now and significant positive changes have happened. What do you see? What is different? How has interfaith cooperation been instrumental in this change? What part do you see yourself playing?