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# MLK COMMEMORATIVE CONCERT **ADDRESSES HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

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As part of the annual commemorative concert celebrating the life of Martin Luther King Jr., on Jan. 17 Michigan State University's [Jazz Orchestra](#) performed the world premiere of "Do You Know My Name?" which is the first major jazz work to address human trafficking.

MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon and her husband, Roy, commissioned the piece, which was the brainchild of Associate Professor of Composition Mark Sullivan, Director of Jazz Studies Rodney Whitaker and James Forger, dean of the MSU College of Music.

Grammy-winning composer Billy Childs wrote the piece specifically for the MSU jazz group and played the piano with the group, as guest vocalist Alicia Olatuja also joined the group. Childs said that when he took the commission to compose the piece, he knew it would occupy a lot of his thought.

"It's a lot of responsibility because there are a lot of people whose lives are affected and are impacted by this subject, so to treat it lightly would be a disservice," Childs said.

He said that before writing "Do You Know My Name?" he thought of human trafficking in a cursory manner where everything was abstract. When he started researching and hearing stories about the topic, it became more personal.

Childs thinks that people really want to hear a beautifully crafted melody that has a good structure. Once this is achieved, he said the piece of music will hold the audience's attention.

"Art communicates things more powerfully than if it were to be said," Childs said. "Music creates environments where you are able to receive a message more readily."

The Michigan Human Trafficking Task Force partnered with the College of Music for the initiative.

The event was also connected to [MSU Project 60/50](#), which launched in January 2014 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court Decision in Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education and the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

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