

French Musician Answers Call to Play God's Music

Dominique DiPiazza, renowned former guitarist with the John McLaughlin Trio, is making new sounds

When renowned French musician Dominique DiPiazza recently re-entered the music scene after several years of seclusion from his professional career, connoisseurs avidly embraced his unswerving talent. No one understood why this famous virtuoso wallowing in wealth and celebrity had cast aside undaunted prestige for some "higher cause" at the very peak of his career.

"I'd reached a point where I seemingly had so much—family, fame, world tours, but I was empty. Something was missing," DiPiazza explained.

The former bass guitarist with the famous John McLaughlin Trio had actually laid down his vocation to follow Christ after he and his wife responded to the gospel as shared by a musician friend. He had faced a personal conflict in which he believed God was calling for a change in his professional life.

"I had no peace. I realized music was my whole identity, and it actually dominated me, like a drug. I felt a struggle within and sensed God was asking me to put my instrument aside completely."

Following his dramatic conversion, DiPiazza was moved by the condition of unsaved French people. "I shared my faith, but my knowledge was limited. So I began studying at the Theological Institute in Nîmes. After my graduation, I went on to get my

master's of arts in missions.”

While soaking up solid biblical teaching, he sensed a new call emerge, as an evangelist. He involved himself in various missions and outreaches ranging from sidewalk sketch-board witnessing to street preaching.

During one mission trip working with poor street children, he risked his life while sharing Christ in a Hindu temple in India. He laughs at this now, not just because he sees an absurd irony in a Frenchman preaching to Hindus, but because some were so intrigued that they “listened and received,” he said.

Believing his weaning period to be finally over, DiPiazza began playing his instrument again, first in church and then out on the streets, exploiting his talent to draw crowds and share his testimony. Yet God required more.

“He wanted me to reach a greater audience for Him. But I wasn't sure if this involved secular or Christian music, so I asked my pastor to pray for me,” DiPiazza said.

This led to the creation of a mainstream CD called Front Page, featuring DiPiazza with renowned drummer Dennis Chambers and guitarist Bireli Lagrene.

“The pieces I composed reflect my new birth. One title—‘The Eyes of Jesus Christ’—posed a major problem for the producer, Universal Studios. They asked me to change it, but I wouldn't bend. I just prayed.”

The title remained, and the album won the French equivalent of the Grammy.

But DiPiazza claims his greatest reward is to see souls come to Christ. In the midst of a promotional concert in Grasse, France, he led an admirer to Christ backstage, then during a solo performance played the hymn "How Great Thou Art."

"No one but a few friends even knew this Christian tune. But God knew, and it strengthened me to remain focused on Christ," he said.

More recently, DiPiazza produced a new CD of hymns dedicated to the world's suffering children, with a financial participation for orphans. "I grew up in state orphanages and suffered. My deep compassion compels me to help the children."

His next aspiration is to make an impact on Christian music.

"Presently, I teach worship in various churches, including a local charismatic church. I lead worship in my church and the [United States] upon request. I want my life to serve the one whose Spirit fills me with joy."

Janey L. DeMeo in France