

Kirtan with Ragani

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Kicked to the Curb

Fire Marshal called after Standing Room Only at Milwaukee's Renowned Kirtan with Ragani Event

MILWAUKEE, WI—Milwaukee's Kirtan with Ragani, the nation's largest ongoing and independent yoga chant event featuring the sacred music experience called *kirtan* (yoga chant), was recently kicked to the curb after their monthly event reached standing room only, with over 350 participants.

Recently featured in *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Yoga Journal* and other national publications, this style of sacred world music, known as *kirtan*, follows on the heels of the nation's popular yoga trends, and is the musical extension of it. With hundreds of events happening across the country, *kirtan* is a burgeoning, grass-roots trend in the U.S. Although major cities such as New York and Los Angeles are home to numerous *kirtan* bands and many well-known names, it is Milwaukee's monthly Kirtan with Ragani event that is at the forefront of this trend, with nation's largest ongoing and independent *kirtan* event.

"It [the fire marshal] was bound to happen, and we'll certainly miss our home at the North Shore Presbyterian Church", says Ragani, leader of Milwaukee's *kirtan* scene. "As we move into our third hall since our Milwaukee debut in 2001, we expect that it will only continue to grow. There is a great momentum and inspiration behind these events—from the participants, the band members, and volunteers who help to keep it going. We're very grateful for this entire experience, for the love and support that Milwaukee gives to us."

With over 25 years experience in leading *kirtan* events, Ragani's easy-going, welcoming atmosphere draws hundreds of participants each month from all faiths, religions, ages, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds. The non-denominational, eclectic mélange of people creates a unique sense of community that transcends all differences, uniting all through the heartfelt experience of sacred music.

A high-energy, musically beguiling form of chanting that originated in India many centuries ago, *kirtan* is a lively call-and-response format of music that incorporates the audience right into the performance. "These are universal sounds," Ragani explains. "Though the language of *kirtan* is often in Sanskrit, the true language of *kirtan* is the language of the heart. *Kirtan* is not about music ability or training—it is about the heart."

With the largest crowd at an independent and ongoing *kirtan* in the country, Ragani surrounds herself with a band of high-quality, well-known artists such as Mike Kashou (fretless bass guitarist featured on platinum debut album of band *Garbage*), Fred Bliffert (leader of 60's

R&B band, Freddie and The Freeloaders), Anthony Finlayson (Milwaukee's OneDrum, Kothi Dance Company affiliate), Holly Haebig (DevaNation, De La Buena, and live guest artist for artist Willie Porter), among others.

In addition to their award-winning debut CD, *Best of Both Worlds (Kirtan Café, Vol. I)*, Ragani's most recent CD release, *Ancient Spirit (Kirtan Café, Vol. II)*, has been awarded "Best of the Year" 2006 by Backroads Music and "Runner-Up" in the "Best Production" category of the International Music Awards 2006 (sponsored by Music Aid Organization in association with the United Nations UNV program, IMA Productions, Broadjam.com and other leading international music industry partners).

Kirtan with Ragani takes place on the first Friday of each month and will resume events at the Unitarian Universalist Church West at 13001 West North Avenue in Brookfield, WI. For more information about kirtan, including dates and times, press photos, and music reviews, please visit www.RaganiWorld.com.

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