

Eric Harper



Do you have a passion that you dream of turning into your career? For musician Eric Harper, that fire ignited when he heard a song on the radio when he was about seven years old in Texas. He stood in awe of how the song made him feel and thought, "I want to make people feel like that!"

Eric's mom is a classical pianist, so he tried piano, and then drums, like his older brother. But in seventh grade, he discovered the guitar—a transformation that influenced his entire career. He focused on heavy metal music until age 15, when his family moved to Portugal and he went to a classical music school. After high school, Eric came back to the U.S. and earned a degree in film scoring at Berklee College of Music in Boston. Today, he's an Emmy award winner who's composed for 10 films and over 1,000 TV shows, in addition to recording albums and performing live. He lives in British Columbia, Canada, with his wife, H el ene, and son, Shiloh.

Q: What's one of your favorite childhood memories?

A: Going down to the creeks in Texas and catching crawdads and snakes . . . It was so fascinating as a kid . . .

Q: What was the most challenging experience for you as a kid?

A: Moving a lot and [facing] bullying . . . We moved to New Mexico when I was seven or eight . . . In those days, the typical mentality [was] you don't complain about being bullied . . . which we know now is a terrible thing to do. I never went to anybody [to] say that I was being bullied . . . I adopted this stance of just staring at the ground anytime I would walk anywhere.



Left: At about age 9, Eric loved exploring music and nature.

Right: When he was 15, Eric moved to Portugal with his family and enrolled in a classical music school.

Q: At 15, why did you shift from heavy metal to classical music?

A: My hair was grown all the way down my back . . . and I loved playing Metallica . . . When we got to Portugal, [I went to] a classical music school . . . I was the only male in town that had long hair . . . People would shout obscenities at me to cut my hair every day . . . I remember walking down the street with my Portuguese teacher . . . She said, "Why are you staring at the ground?" I said, "So they don't beat me up." She burst out laughing. She's like, "They are not going to beat you up, Eric. They are just fascinated by you." And that began the slow transformation of me allowing [myself] to show up in my life and let go of these grievances.

Questions and
Answers with an
Inspirational Bahá'í



Left: Eric and H  l  ne got married in 2017. Eric's son, Shiloh, joined in the festivities. **Right:** Eric performs at the 2018 Grand Canyon Bah  '  Conference in Arizona.

Q: What virtues are important to practice in your work?

A: Dedication. Patience. Wisdom. Wisdom is a big one, because you have to understand that it's going to take many hours of dull repetition for something magical to come out . . . I didn't write "Rain" until I had written so many horrible, horrible songs. So there's no such thing, in my opinion, as writer's block, because it's just our inability . . . to accept imperfection.

Q: How has the Bah  '  Faith influenced your career choices?

A: It's influenced me in trying to stay true to that initial thought I had when I was seven or eight, which was I want to make people feel the way I felt in that moment . . . Feeling close to the Holy Spirit is sort of what I equate it to . . . I gave up a really big opportunity to become a big name in Mexico . . . I didn't feel like it resonated with me trying to bring people closer to God.

Q: What it is like working with kids and youth to set the Bah  '  writings to music?

A: They are so enthusiastic . . . It's such an empowering thing that you've got this thing up in your head and all of a sudden it comes through your body, through your hands, and it comes into the world of reality. I don't think there's anything more powerful that I've experienced . . . Helping them get past the "Oh, but it's not good enough" conversation we all have in our heads . . . Giving them the space and the freedom to just create and see what happens is a wonderful act of discovery.

Q: Why do you think music can have such a powerful impact on people?

A: It's one of those things that is material in nature but has a spiritual effect. And I think when it's done right, it can cause people to have so many different reactions . . . It can cause somebody to relive a childhood moment . . . something beautiful that you remember . . . or something that hasn't been resolved . . . That's a very powerful thing just by these vibrations that come through the air . . . This power allows you to teleport across the globe without you ever leaving your chair or your home. To me, this is a wonderful, magical experience.

Q: What are some ways that kids can help change the world for the better?

A: Get deeply educated in reading and writing . . . If you're not creating opportunities for yourself, then you can't effect change in others . . . Discover what it really means to be of service . . . My Portuguese album, *Romper a Madrugada*, was written specifically [as a service]. The Portuguese needed [devotional] songs, so I wrote all of them for them . . . That CD went everywhere . . . Kenya, Brazil, Japan . . . That's the magic of service: it's not about you, and you don't know where it's going to go. It's really about what is the need and how can you provide for that need.