

UN Messenger of Peace: Midori’s artistic residency in Portugal with Afghan students

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The UN Messenger of Peace, violinist Midori performing with young students from the Conservatory and the Afghan Youth Orchestra @Paul Mueller-Hahl

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The United Nations Messenger of Peace, violinist [Midori](#), has collaborated with young Afghan students from the National Music Institute of Afghanistan as part of an artistic residency in Braga, Portugal through her International Orchestra Residencies Program (ORP) which aims to provide musical experiences for young musicians. The artistic residency took place at the Conservatory Calouste Gulbenkian.

Over ten days, dozens of young students from the Afghan Youth Orchestra and some from the Conservatory worked and performed alongside Midori. The performance included several orchestral pieces.



The UN Messenger of Peace, violinist Midori with young students from the Conservatory and the Afghan Youth Orchestra @Paul Mueller-Hahl

Since 2022, 58 students from the National Music Institute of Afghanistan (ANIM), aged between 13 and 21, have settled in the northern Portuguese cities of Braga and Guimaraes. The Conservatory has supported the students who were evacuated after the Taliban assumed power in 2021 in their musical education. At the return of the Taliban all non-religious music was banished from the country and all musical instruments from ANIM were destroyed.

Working with Orchestras

Midori has established a record of achievement which sets her apart as a master musician, an innovator, and a champion of the developmental potential of children. The violinist began working with youth orchestras around 20 years ago in the United States. This work has expanded along with her other activities through the non-profit organisations she has started since then.

Young students from the Conservatory and the Afghan Youth Orchestra @Paul Mueller-Hahl

Just before the Covid-19 pandemic, Midori who has been aware of the Zohra orchestra for a long time was able to contact the founder of ANIM with the goal of organizing an artistic residency where she and the students of ANIM could all work together and learn from each other.

“It came to my attention one day about the music school ‘ANIM’ – Afghanistan National Institute of Music – which actually was the main body that was supporting the Zohra orchestra in Kabul, [and] that their students and teachers were being evacuated from Kabul to Portugal.”

Residency in Braga

When in Braga, Midori met these young Afghans, who are now living in Portugal and attending schools in the Braga region along with Portuguese children.

After ten days of intense work and rehearsals, the students participated in a concert that took place in the Conservatorium’s auditorium, where they performed several musical compositions.

The UN Messenger of Peace, violinist Midori, with young Afghan students during an artistic residency in Braga, Portugal @Paul Mueller-Hahl

For Midori, the experience went much beyond rehearsing music: “It’s something that really goes beyond words. Yes, we are able to converse, but we are also able to connect through music.”

In 1992, Midori has founded several initiatives, including Midori & Friends, a non-profit organization that brings music education programs to thousands of underprivileged children each year. She has also worked with many different youth orchestras throughout the years but there was something about this residency that touched her: “What really moved me so much was how a number of them had come up to me and said that their dream is to go back to Afghanistan, to bring music to people and to make people happy.”

Midori explains that these students are already thinking about going to different parts of Afghanistan, including places where they may not even have awareness of western classical music, to bring their joy of music and connect with the people there. As a Messenger of Peace, Midori continues to inspire young people through music education to build a sense of community and to learn from each other.

“There is nothing more inspiring than this. Rather than deciding to be victimised by something that should have never happened to them, they take this opportunity to go further with their education, to feel like they are becoming a member of our community and our global society.”

Watch the full interview here:



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