

CREATING HARMONY: A SYRIAN-ISREALI ORCHESTRA BRINGS
MUSIC TO THE KUNETRA CROSSING

I would like to propose the following project for the Davis Project for Peace.

Kunetra crossing on the border of Israel and Syria is controlled by an international force of the UN. My idea is to have a concert there of an orchestra of Israeli and Syrian young players, conducted by myself. The program will include a world premiere of two pieces, written by Israeli and Syrian composers in honor of peace. The audience will be comprised of the families of the players, the UN troops and possibly the press. I strongly believe that making music together will be a meaningful experience for the young players. Listening to each other very carefully, and making a shared effort for the desired artistic result, which is required from classical orchestral players, will be a deep form of communication which does not relate to political views but only to human and artistic values. Last year I successfully presented a sold-out recital at Carnegie Hall in honor of Israel's 60th anniversary, which was supported by the Israeli consulate in New York and the America-Israel Cultural Foundation. After having completed this project, I believe I have the musical and personal skills to succeed at this new endeavor.

The steps and challenges for the successful execution of my idea are the following:

1. **Getting the approval of the UN to have the rehearsals and the concert at Kunetra.** This first step will be the main challenge I will be facing. My sponsor for my studies in New York City is one of Israel's most influential business men, and is a friend of the Israeli ambassador in the UN. He had already told me that he will be happy to use his connections to help in that matter.
2. **Commissioning two pieces, each 10 minutes in length, from an Israeli composer and a Syrian composer.** I know many Israeli composers, of whom I premiered several pieces, and who dedicated works to me. My former composition teacher, Dr. Michael Wolpe, has connections with several composers from the Arab countries with whom he has cooperated before. Commissioning a piece from a Syrian composer will naturally not be as easy as from an Israeli composer, but I predict that this step will not be difficult to fulfill.
3. **Getting young musicians from Israel and Syria to play in the orchestra.** I have already conducted a young Israeli-Palestinian orchestra in the World Economic Forum in Jordan, for King Abdullah II and other world leaders. Getting Israeli musicians, both Jewish and Arab, will be easy to achieve. However, in order to get the Syrian players I will use the connections of my friend Nabeel Abboud Ashkar, who is the dean of the Barenboim Conservatory in Nazareth, where I was the head of the piano department before coming to New York City. I

will also write to Maestro Barenboim, who has a successful orchestra of Israeli and Arab players from different countries, which is called the Divan Orchestra. I am positive he will be happy to help in that matter, and might even be interested in co-sponsoring the event. Recruiting the Syrian musicians will be my second hardest challenge in that project, although I believe it is quite possible.

4. Determining the program, concert date and times of rehearsals. Since I've done those things as an active musician many times, there will be no special difficulties in that matter.

5. Advertising the event. A press release will be sent to Israeli and Syrian newspapers and media, as well as to those of other neighboring countries. I'm afraid that the Syrian media will not be cooperative in that matter, but Israeli coverage is very possible. One of my friends is the executive director of an important Israeli news channel, Channel 10, and I will ask for his help. Another friend of mine is the editor of a popular talk-show and interview program on the same channel. I will send invitations to politicians as well.

6. Documenting the event. The event will be documented free of charge by a friend of mine who is an extremely gifted young Israeli film maker. Afterwards the documentary will be sold to one of Israel's television channels, which have already broadcast several of my concerts.

In case the UN force in the Kunetra crossing will not approve the use of their facility for the performance, I will have the concert at a major venue in New York City, such as Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, or Merkin Hall, with New Yorkers as the audience of this concert for peace. In that case, flying musicians from Israel and Syria to New York will be too expensive. Therefore I will use Israeli and Arab musicians who reside in the city. That will be a much easier project to handle, yet effective, and will probably get more attention since it will be in New York. I will work hard to have the performance in the Kunetra crossing, though, since I feel it will be more meaningful to have the performance in the one geographic point where Syrians and Israelis can meet on their shared border, right in the middle of the conflict.