

International Festival for Israel and Palestine – Project For Peace

Location: Israel (four cities: Tel-Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem, and Ramallah)

Time: 10 days in the summer of 2007

Participants:

- Rasa Vitkauskaitė (Lithuania) – pianist, UWC of the Adriatic, the Boston Conservatory.
- Sebastian Plano (Argentina) – cellist, composer, UWC of the Adriatic, the Boston Conservatory.
- Eran Houja (Israel) – composer, singer, UWC of Mahindra, the Boston Conservatory.
- Yael Vidan (Israel) – dancer, choreographer, presently doing her social service at NGO “Physicians for Human Rights,” UWC of the Adriatic
- Local Israeli and Palestinian students from music schools in each town of the tour: the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem; Shtriker Conservatory, Tel-Aviv Academy of Music and Telma Yalin school of the Arts in Tel Aviv; Haifa Conservatory; Blum Village performers; and Ramallah music school. We would publicize our event and recruit student participants primarily through the schools.

Aims and Expectations:

- to suggest another way of communication among the nations and promote an ongoing dialogue through the arts;
- to display the consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from different perspectives using music, dance, and visual arts;
- to collaborate with local artists and involve performers from both conflicting sides;
- to bring art of Israelis and Palestinians living abroad back to their homelands; and
- to make art available to Arab minorities living within Israel.

Events:

We chose Israel because we are particularly concerned with the present situation and continuation of the war. We wish to organize a festival there consisting of four workshops and performances in four major regional cities involving the collaboration of student artists from both Israel and Palestine. Workshops would be organized in local music schools and universities (the Tzavta Theater in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, the Rubin Academy of Music Performance Hall and the Han Theater in Jerusalem, the Haifa Conservatory and Ramallah). The festival would involve students, artists and organizations promoting peace. Each workshop would last a full day and be divided into 2 sessions – morning and afternoon.

- **EXHIBITION:** Placed before the main event hall would be a photography, artwork and video installation exhibition (theme: “Co-existence”) by photographers and artists from the Tel-Aviv-based art group Galeriat Beit Ha-am (“Gallery of the people's home”), who have confirmed their interest in collaborating with us. The visual arts exhibition would depict the daily life of the people who live amidst the conflict. In the background would be Israeli and Palestinian folk and ethnic music. (An additional focus of the exhibition in the city of Haifa would be the aftermath of the Israel – Lebanon conflict one year ago, as this city was one of the centers of the war. The exhibition in Jerusalem would additionally focus on the unique minority group populations resident in the city.) Photography and video material would provide visual impressions and starting points for discussion that might be more effective than words alone.
- **PERFORMANCES:** In the main event hall, morning performances would involve both Israeli and Palestinian students from regional schools: the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem; Shtriker Conservatory and Telma Yalin school of the Arts and Tel Aviv Academy of Music in Tel Aviv; Haifa Conservatory; Blum Village performers; and Ramallah music school. The participants will perform music of their cultural background. Each group of performances would be followed by discussions about participants’ feelings about the conflict and the relationship between the conflict and their art. Among the performances would be several collaborative chamber music ensembles that would involve Israeli, Palestinian and international musicians rehearsing and performing together, and we would select music for them to perform that comes from both Israeli and Arab composers and traditions.

- **WORKSHOPS:** In the main event hall, afternoon workshops would involve discussions about local music traditions and how the conflict has influenced them. Students would be asked to discuss and work together to propose ways to address particular conflict transformation situations. Representatives from organizations promoting peace among youths in the region (Students for Peace and Shalom-Salaam, who have both confirmed their interest in collaborating with us) would co-facilitate the sessions to lend their expertise in the discussions of conflicts and peace.

In one special workshop, a poetry session would be combined with music and dance to add the artistic influences of dancers and the thoughts of contemporary writers to the expression and discussion of the conflict. Music performed would include works by event organizers Eran Houja and Sebastian Plano, and the dance component would be directed by event organizer Yael Vidan's Dance Ensemble (in Tel-Aviv and Haifa) and the Arab Dance Company (in Jerusalem and Ramallah).

Outcomes Expected:

We would like to promote a different kind of communication, where the language of art contributes to and melds with a continuous dialogue among the people. We chose to suggest an artistic project because art does not contain limited associations as words do. We believe that art has enormous influence on people's thoughts and lives.

EXHIBITION: The importance of exhibitions is not only to present reality, but also to influence it. Some people have given up and accepted the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but we want to encourage them to continue to strive for communication among different peoples in order to improve the situation and change the future. Visual arts could help them to look at their role from a different perspective.

PERFORMANCES: Through performances in the regional music schools, we will bring together local people to interact across cultures and to start a dialogue that could lead to increased collaboration and cooperation not only in music, but also in daily life. We would like to promote the incorporation of multi-national arts in the performances to emphasize that art does not have national identity or borders. Discussions about national art could be a good beginning for future negotiations that would promote communication among the people and appreciation of different ideas and opinions.

WORKSHOPS: Through the workshops, which include collaborative efforts with the two international peace organizations active in Israel, we want to exhibit, perform, and discuss the art and the ideas of both Israel and Palestine in order to show that art is available equally for everyone. To show the wide-reaching effects of the conflict and broaden the discussion, we also find it important to include the arts of minority cultures in the region and the art of Israelis and Palestinians who emigrated as a result of the conflict.

We wish to work together across boundaries and borders to produce art and to use this common ground to promote further discussions of Israeli-Palestinian relationship both in and out of the arts. We would like to encourage people to end the conflict by showing what great arts and artists they have lost and how the region's cultural life has changed as a result of the conflict. We would like people to understand that, with peace, more people would create beautiful things as artists rather than as soldiers. We feel that many people our age do not have the same educational possibilities that we ourselves have had, as the conflict prevents them from getting the same quality of education. We would like to promote peace as a perspective among young people talented in the arts to create a possibility for them to be professionally trained and further develop their artistic skills.

In our project we would mention no religion, remind no history and blame neither side. We are concerned about the presence of negativity and we would like to promote peace through encouraging people to communicate. We would like to start from simple collaboration in art which we hope would begin promote bigger co-operations that can improve the present situation and create better opportunities for future generations.

MEASURING OUTCOMES: We plan to measure the outcomes of each day-long event—specifically, changes participants' feelings or attitudes about the conflict and their views on the festival event itself—through pre- and post-workshop surveys, with the survey sections about the conflict designed in collaboration with the peace organizations.