

## **Universal Language: Connecting People Through Music**

Team: Kate Chiucchini, Chaza Abou Daher, Youssef El Toukhy

### **The Challenge:**

The current relationship between East and West is most often framed through economic and political interests, while connections based on ideologies and values have become increasingly fragmented. In the globalized world we live in today, where media plays a prominent role in shaping our perceptions of different cultures, generalizations imposed on individuals and nations have tended to serve as the proxy for entire populations. This has inhibited communication and understanding at a more basic human level.



Egypt and the United States are two nations in the midst of transition and significant events that will have reverberating effects across the Eastern and Western world. Shifting the focus to connections on a personal level is a way to promote deeper understanding of this critical time for our generation. Music is one universal commonality that has the ability to break down barriers across cultures. The challenge of this project will be to use the power of music as a universal language to connect people from East and West at the most basic human level—through a shared emotional experience.

### **Project Overview**

The cornerstone of this project will be the creative development of original compositions by musicians from the East and West. These compositions will be inspired by the various musicians' reactions to images representing different themes relating to the human experience. Five photographs depicting powerful images of critical events from around the world will be selected as visualizations of these themes, and a selection of performers and orchestras from both regions of the world will each interpret one of the photographs through music. The resulting pieces of music will be recorded and compiled into an album.

In conjunction with completion of the album, an event will be organized and held to exhibit the compositions through a live performance played by one prominent orchestra. The event will be promoted to a broad audience in both Eastern and Western countries. This will help to further the purpose of the project by ultimately building on a form of communication through music, regardless of the nationality, language, or culture that characterizes the background of the musicians and the audience.

## **The Goal**

The goal of this project is to foster human understanding and dialogue through the universal language of music. By eliciting emotion from both the musicians', in reaction to the photographs when composing the pieces for the album, and from the wide audience of listeners in reaction to their music, we hope to create a connection between people from around the world on a personal level. While the pieces may have different interpretations from both the musicians and the listeners, contain unfamiliar instruments, sounds or languages, the resulting multi-national and cross-cultural album will break a boundary of communication through the foundational level of a shared experience.

## **Population Served**

The population served by this project is expansive. Since music is a widely accessible medium through distribution on the Internet, streaming applications, and live performances, we hope to reach people of all ages in Egypt, Lebanon, the US, and other nations around the world.

## **Project Milestones**

**Phase 1:** Selection of themes and photographs, and outreach to musicians and orchestras.

**Phase 2:** Recording of original compositions and album development.

**Phase 3:** Album distribution and outreach to prominent orchestra to perform at a live concert.

**Phase 4:** Planning and logistical coordination for the event.

**Phase 5:** After the inaugural performance, future events will be planned to hold additional performances that will reach a broader audience in both Eastern and Western countries.

## **Expected Outcome**

The outcome of this project will include the production of an album with ten tracks of music from Eastern and Western composers and a live orchestra performance of these compositions. After completion of the album and the first performance, we will continue to promote the project and generate exposure through online resources. The creation of dialogue through music between cultures will promote the values of respect, diversity and cooperation between East and West.

Future events will be held with different musicians performing the album across a range of communities in both regions to further the project's overall mission—to foster an intercultural experience and develop understanding between East and West through the universal language of music.

## **Furthering Foundation's Mission**

This project ultimately seeks to promote the Gabr Foundation's mission of bridging the gap between East and West through the creation of shared experiences at a personal level, and impacting how people perceive differences by focusing on integration rather than opposition. Music, the universal language of mankind, can break barriers between cultures and promote dialogue through shared emotion and human understanding.