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**Summer 2017 YES Academies**

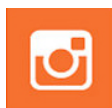


A Pakistani cast of 7 join a Broadway team of 3 from New York for a rousing revue featuring excerpts from Hamilton, Cabaret and Sound of Music

### YES Erbil 2017: Our Signature YES Academy Program Scaling New Heights

This summer was the 11th season of our YES, Youth Excellence on Stage Erbil Academy reaching over 150 participants from across Kurdistan and Iraq. The American Voices faculty of 12 increased our capacity to engage, motivate and inspire this next generation of the nation's performers, teachers and cultural leaders. Please [enjoy this short video](#) about this summer's program by Al Jazeera English, seen by hundreds of thousands worldwide.

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Two groundbreaking aspects of this summer's program, the first nationwide [Break Dancing competition](#), Hip Hop Bound, and our first venture at this program into [training for Singer/Songwriters with the band Awtar Nergal](#) from Mosul. At the time of the Academy, Mosul had only been liberated from the ISIS occupation for a few days. It was a pleasure to host these dedicated young musicians and guide them as they seek ways to help Mosul overcome its years of trauma through spontaneous public performances in some of the most devastated parts of this ancient city.

Please enjoy these short videos [of program highlights](#) including an expanded program for [young composers](#) supported by the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation, two youth orchestras, a guitar orchestra, wind ensemble, jazz ensemble and vocal ensemble!

We are looking forward to YES Erbil 2018 and wish to thank our program partners, the U.S. Embassy Baghdad, The Ministries of Culture and Education of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Erbil Institute of Fine Arts.

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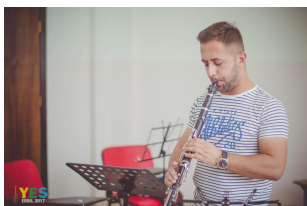
### YES Academy Lebanon:



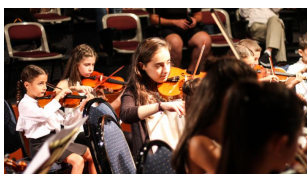
We had an exciting two weeks with 150 aspiring young musicians from across the Levant; Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. The Academy is the only inter-regional performing arts program in the Middle East, offering unparalleled instruction with 13 distinguished artist teachers from across the USA in programs for both children and young professionals in piano, composition, string orchestra, chamber music, songwriting, voice and guitar. 2017 was the first summer we have offered business and leadership training through a daily Cultural Entrepreneurship seminar with musician and motivational speaker Ravi Hutheesing.



This year American Voices was able to offer full scholarships to 45 Syrian participants among whom was featured a quartet of vocalists from Aleppo accompanied by their conductor Father Elias Yeghiche who has been key to the revival of musical life in Aleppo in recent months. Listen to them [here](#).



The YES Academy offered four public concerts which reached hundreds of Lebanese concert-goers. One highlight was the performance of Vivaldi's complete Four Season's in the 12th century. Eglise St. Jean-Marc in ancient Phoenician city of Byblos. Two live television interviews reached millions across the Middle East. In addition, the Academy faculty performed music outreach to youth in the northern city of Ehden and programs for the blind in Tripoli and Beirut.



Our faculty featured Juilliard grads cellist Avery Waite and violist Kim Mai Nguyen, Marc Thayer of Symphony New Hampshire (violin), Mariano Vales Director of the DC Youth Orchestra (conductor), Dr. Bradley Bolen of Baylor University (piano), Dr. Scott Donald (piano), John Ferguson (piano), Dr. Jason Terry of Bradley University (piano), Dr. Patrick Clark (composition), Derek Beckvold (jazz), Susan McDonald (guitar), and Ravi Hutheesing (song writing).

A big "thank you!" to our principal supporters: Sinquefield Charitable Foundation, supporters of our Indiegogo campaign, and the US Embassy in Lebanon. Further thanks are due to our program partner, Notre Dame University-Louaize, for hosting our concerts and classes and housing our faculty and international students and to the Conservatoire Nationale for supporting this program.



*Michael Lewanski rehearses the National Orchestra of Turkmenistan*

### Rhapsodies in Turkmenistan:

American Voices (AV) continued its long-term cooperation with the U.S. Embassy Ashgabad and Turkmen national musical institutions with a concert on March 17 featuring American Voices' soloists with the National Orchestra of Turkmenistan. The concert was presented in honor of International Women's Day with featured soloist, percussionist [Dr. Bonnie Whiting](#), performing Alan Hovanhess' [Fantasy on Japanese Woodprints](#) and compositions by contemporary women composers; Augusta Read Thomas' [Reverie from Jubilee](#) [Orchestral Suite](#) and Jennifer Higdon's [Fanfare Ritmico](#). The program was rounded out with Bernstein's [Mambo from West Side Story](#) and George Gershwin's iconic [Rhapsody in Blue](#) performed by American Voice's John Ferguson and conducted by Michael Lewanski.

A highlight of the visit was the donation of a vast library of percussion instruments to the National Orchestra - ranging from a new xylophone to glockenspiel and cowbells- allowing the orchestra to greatly expand its repertoire. American Voices began its programming in Turkmenistan in 2000 and, in the meantime, has brought a dozens of programs ranging from Hip Hop Dance to Broadway to enthusiastic audiences and students from the ancient Silk Road cities of Turkmenabad and Mary to the modern capital of Ashgabad. The next program will take place this coming December at the National Conservatory in December featuring a faculty of four working with the student orchestras, choirs and composers as well as developing a jazz program with the first Big Band in the Conservatory's history.



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