

## UNESCO recognizes exceptional contribution of young musicians to intercultural dialogue

Paris, 13/04/2011 - The UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova will award twenty artists aged under 35 with the title of "Young Artist for Intercultural Dialogue between Arab and Western Worlds" at a ceremony held at the Organization's headquarters on 13th of April. Eleven of these twenty laureates were nominated by the International Music Council: pianist Zuhal Sultan from Iraq, composer and musician Merlijn Twaalfhoven from the Netherlands and nine young musicians from the „Talent 2008“ project. These young artists are recognized for their exceptional contribution to dialogue and exchange between Arab and Western cultures.

**Zuhal Sultan** founded the National Youth Orchestra of Iraq at the age of 17 and has organized its activities ever since. Among these activities have been several collaborations with the Western World. Her usage of social media both in founding and organizing the orchestra have been remarkable. The IMC had nominated Zuhal Sultan on behalf of the European Federation of National Youth Orchestras, member of the IMC.

The **Talent 2008** project was an international music project for young musicians in the field of traditional/folk music. It comprised of 9 young musicians: three from Palestine (Suhail Nassar, Mira Azar, Majd Shanin), three from Egypt (Hind Ali, Ahmed Amer, Rami Mohammed Shamrokh) and three from Norway (Julie Alapnes Normann, Ingrid Stuhaug, Ingebjørg Bratland). The project was initiated during Førde International Folk Music festival in Norway in July 2008. During a 5 day workshop the musicians created a program together that was based on musical tunes and melodies from each others countries. Each of the participants suggested sounds from their background and culture, but also studied the musical traditions of others so they could develop further as a group. The "Talent 2008" project presented their final program in concerts in Førde and in Cairo. The group was presented to IMC by Rikskonsertene from IMC-Norway.

Musician and composer **Merlijn Twaalfhoven** has designed and directed several exceptional artistic projects in Jordan, Syria, the Netherlands and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In these projects he has used music to draw the attention of the international news media to the richness of Arab culture. The nomination of Merlijn Twaalfhoven was submitted by IMC-member ECPNM, the European Conference of Promoters of New Music.

"The International Music Council and its members are grateful to UNESCO for recognizing the significant contribution of young musicians to dialogue and exchange. On many occasions, music has proven to be an important tool for dialogue and conflict resolution", said Silja Fischer, IMC Secretary General. The music world will highlight this and other aspects of music at the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> IMC World Forum on Music to be held in Tallinn, September 26 – October 1 2011, under the title "Music and Social Change".

### About IMC

The International Music Council is the world's largest network of organizations, institutions and individuals working in the field of music. IMC promotes access to music for all and unites organisations in some 150 countries worldwide in building peace and understanding among peoples of all cultures and heritage. IMC has proclaimed and advocates five music rights pertaining to freedom of expression, access to music education and musical involvement for all, artistic development and communication with the audience, as well as just recognition and fair remuneration of artists.

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