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UN agency honours young artists who promote Arab-Western cultural exchanges



13 April 2011 – The United Nations cultural agency today celebrated [20 young artists](#) – from an Iraqi pianist and a Lebanese trumpeter to a Dutch composer and two Israeli curators – for their contributions to dialogue between the Arab and Western worlds, saying it hopes their efforts will spark similar initiatives from other artists.

The Young Artists for Intercultural Dialogue between the Arab and Western worlds were announced at a ceremony early this evening at the Paris headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

The agency said in a press statement that the awards are part of a wider joint effort by UNESCO and the UN-backed Alliance of Civilizations to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding, and it hopes these awards will heighten awareness about their work.

One of the artists honoured, the Iraqi pianist Zuhail Sultan, founded the National Youth Orchestra of Iraq when she was aged just 17 and has since worked with many Western performers.

The Palestinian-American playwright Betty Shamiieh writes plays focused on intercultural relations, particularly involving Arab-Americans, while the French-Algerian novelist Faïza Guène depicts the realities of life for North Africans residing in the French suburbs.

Other artists named include the Belgian-Moroccan dancer-choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, the French photographer JR, the Italian film director Federico Ferrone and the Israeli curators Ruti Sela and Mayaan Amir.

Several musicians were also garlanded, including the Lebanese trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf, the Egyptian band Massar Egbari, the Dutch composer Merlijn Twaalfhoven and the members of Talent 2008, a project bringing together nine musicians from the Palestinian territories, Egypt and Norway.

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