

Italian violinist strikes a chord with street kids



These pictures show Italian violinist Sara Michieletto playing violin for street children at a shelter for less fortunate children in Bekasi, on the outskirts of Jakarta. —AFP photos

A leading Italian violinist has swapped gilded concert halls for audiences of street children around the world, using music therapy to help those less fortunate. Sara Michieletto has performed with top orchestras across Europe during an illustrious career and since 1998 has played in the first violins of the orchestra of the Fenice opera house in Venice. But more recently the 41-year-old has played for children across the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, in Indian slums and helping street kids and orphans in Indonesia.

Soothing, classical music helps angry, traumatised youths become "emotionally aware", she said, helping them to better chan-

nel their anger and frustration. "In the case of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, this is so important because they have faced a lot of difficult things in the past and trauma," she said. "Music is a very powerful means of conveying emotions." Since 2010 the violinist has been working with street children in and around the Indonesian capital Jakarta, a seething metropolis of 10 million people where many live in grinding poverty, as well as other parts of the country.

'We are a lot calmer'

At a recent workshop at a centre for rescued street children on the outskirts of Jakarta, a group of youngsters raced up to

Michieletto and embraced her as she entered with her violin case slung over her shoulder. A small group looked on as she drew the bow over the violin strings, playing a concerto from Antonio Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons". As well as performing for the youngsters, she organises workshops in drama, singing, photography and dance. Among the children at the recent workshop was Suharti, a 14-year-old girl who spent years living on the streets, busking on overcrowded, sweltering trains or buses to make a living. The youngster, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, was rescued and brought to the Kampus Diakonia Modern centre—which has living quarters and a school—along with her younger brother and

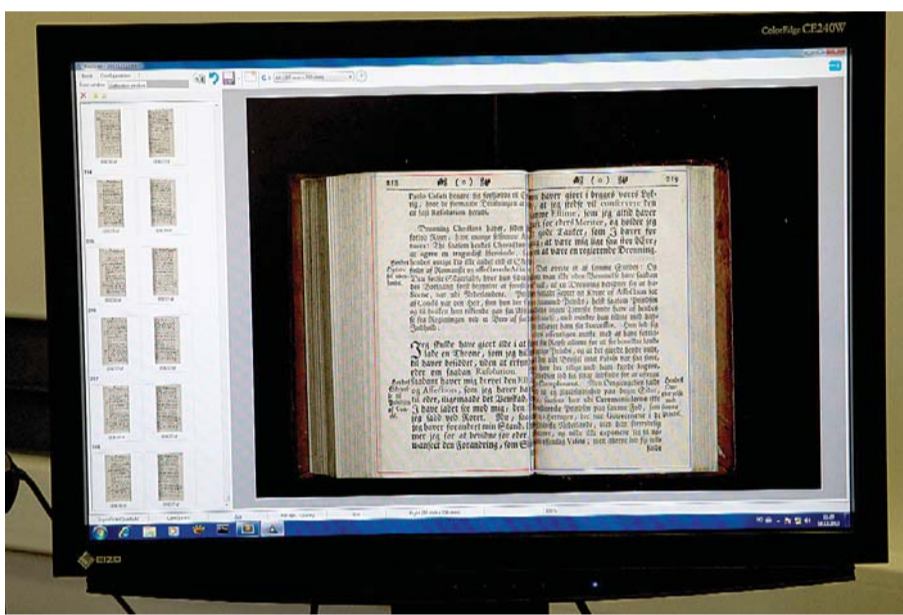
sister. "Everything feels very unpleasant when you are on the streets," she said.

"I always felt ashamed of myself every time I was busking." But she has found a new, more peaceful life and feels that Michieletto's music has been a great help to her and the other children. "We used to fight each other here, we are a lot calmer and more keen to study," she said.

Sotar Sinaga, in charge of organising music programmes at the centre, said the music had made a substantial contribution to helping Suharti. "The way she (Suharti) expresses her emotions is much better now—she is no longer mean to her friends," he said. Michieletto

started playing for underprivileged children in 2004 when she toured schools around the West Bank for several weeks, and in the decade since she has played for thousands of children around the world.

Under a special arrangement with the Fenice Foundation she is able to carry out her charitable work and continue playing with the opera house's orchestra for a short period each year. And while playing for underprivileged children is a world away from sold-out performances at world-famous venues, she says it brings her just as much happiness. "When I play for the children, for me it's like playing in an important concert," she said. —AFP



Book pages are digitized at the National Library of Norway in Oslo. —AFP

LITERATURE GOES ONLINE FOR FREE IN NORWAY

Most books published in Norway before 2001 are going online for free thanks to an initiative that may have found the formula to reconcile authors with the web. At a time when the publishing world is torn over its relationship to the Internet—which has massively expanded access to books but also threatens royalty revenues—the National Library of Norway is digitising tens of thousands of titles, from masterworks by Nobel laureate Knut Hamsun to the first detective novels by Nordic noir king Jo Nesboe.

The copyright-protected books are available free online—with the consent of the copyright holders—at the website bokhylla.no ("bookshelf" in Norwegian). The site currently features 135,000 works and will eventually reach 250,000, including Norwegian translations of foreign books. National Library head Vidgis Moe Skarstein said the project is the first of its kind to offer free online access to books still under copyright, which in Norway expires 70 years after the author's death.

"Many national libraries digitise their collections for conservation reasons or even to grant access to them, but those are (older) books that are already in the public domain," she said. "We thought that, since we had to digitise all our collection in order to preserve it for the next 1,000 years, it was also important to broaden access to it as much as possible."

The National Library has signed an agreement with Kopinor, an umbrella group representing major authors and publishers through 22 member organisations. For every digitised page that goes online, the library pays a predetermined sum to Kopinor, which will be responsible for distributing the royalties among its members under a system that is still being worked out.

The per-page amount decreases gradually as the collection expands—from 0.36 kroner (0.04 euros, \$0.06) last year to 0.33 kroner next year. "A bestseller is treated on an equal footing with a regional almanac from the 1930s," said Yngve Slettholm, head of Kopinor.

A second life

Some measures have been implemented to protect the authors: "Bokhylla" does not feature works published after 2000, access is limited to Internet users in Norway and foreign researchers, and the books cannot be downloaded. An author or publishing house that objects can also request the removal of a book, but relatively few have done so.

Only 3,500 books have been removed from the list, and most of them are not bestselling novels, but rather school and children's books—two very profitable genres for publishers. Among all the works eligible to appear on "Bokhylla" by household names Stephen King, Ken Follett, John Steinbeck, Jo Nesboe and Kari Fossum, only a few are missing.

So far, sales do not appear to have been affected by the project. Instead, "Bokhylla" often gives a second life to works that are still under copyright but sold out at bookshops, said National Library head Moe Skarstein. "Books are increasingly becoming perishable goods," she said. "When the novelty effect fades out, they sink into oblivion." Eighty-five percent of all books available on the site have been accessed by users at some point, proving that digitising does not only benefit major works.

While many countries' attempts at digital libraries have gotten stuck in complex copyright discussions, Norway has been successful partly due to the limited number of stakeholders—the library and Kopinor—and the near-universal coverage of their agreement, which even includes authors who are not Kopinor members. "In other countries, you need an agreement among all the copyright holders," said Slettholm, the head of Kopinor. "But it's hard to find all of them: old authors that nobody knows, publishing houses that closed in the 1960s, every illustrator, every photographer." Instead of spending our money on trying to find the copyright holders, we prefer to give it to them," Moe Skarstein said. —AFP

Los Historiantes



Young people take part in 'Los Historiantes' during a tour around the neighborhood of San Antonio Abad in San Salvador, on January 17, 2014 during the celebration of the patron saint. Many of the dancers are young people who keep the tradition alive. 'Los Historiantes' is a dance drama brought to the country by the Spaniards 500 years ago, and each representation which lasts about two hours and a half dramatizes an episode of the battles between the Christians and the Moorish. —AFP photos



In letters, JD Salinger bemoans trappings of fame

In a letter to his college friend, a young JD Salinger writes about yearning for fame. In ensuing correspondence to the same woman and her son over the next four decades, the American author describes how much he loathes his status as a celebrity. In the letters from Salinger to Ruth Smith Maier, a woman he met while attending Ursinus College in Pennsylvania in 1938, the two share stories about parenthood, working as a writer and general banter about popular culture.

The letters, which experts say humanize the notoriously reclusive author as he experiences a range of life-changing events, were acquired by the Harry Ransom Center, a humanities

research library at the University of Texas, and made available to researchers this week. In the earliest correspondence from January 1941, a confident 22-year-old Jerry Salinger writes to Ruthie that he intends to leave his mark as an author.

"Oh, but I'm good," he says in the single-spaced, typewritten letter. "It will take time to convince the public, but (it) shall be done." He reminisces about his time and the people at Ursinus, giving a hint of themes that would be a part of his later work. "For every hundred phonies, there is one goodie, and that is a better ratio than I find here in savage hometown New York," he says. —Reuters