

Salzburg Festival to host charitable concert for BiH tonight

The Salzburg Festival will tonight play host to a charitable concert for Bosnia and Herzegovina by the La Scintilla orchestra of the Zurich Opera and one of the world's leading conductors, Nikolaus Harnoncourt.

Orchestra members and the conductor will forego payment for their appearance fees. All proceeds from the concert will go to three integrative projects – multiethnic kindergartens in Sarajevo, a multiconfessional gymnasium in Banja Luka and a multicultural music school in Srebrenica.

Calling the concert an “extraordinary gesture”, High Representative Valentin Inzko thanked Nikolas Harnoncourt and orchestra members for their generosity and this “overwhelming gift”.

“Bosnia and Herzegovina and its wonderful people deserve a better future. The international community, but also we as individuals, as Europeans, have a responsibility to ensure that this beautiful country can heal the scars of its recent past”, Inzko said.

Tonight's concert is part of a cycle of Haydn oratorios, which have been billed as one of the highlights of the Salzburg Festival. La Scintilla will play Haydn's early work “Il ritorno di Tobia”, which was one of most widely performed pieces of classical music in Vienna at the time of its completion, but has been staged only very rarely in recent times.

The initiative for today's event came from the La Scintilla orchestra, which decided to honour Harnoncourt with a concert at a time and place of his choosing. “This is such a unique gift. I have never in my life seen an orchestra playing for free in honour of a conductor”, a visibly moved Harnoncourt told the press. Harnoncourt was also named an honorary member of the orchestra in recognition of their long-lasting cooperation.

Charitable associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Caritas, Merhamet, Dobrotvor and La Benevolencia – will also benefit from today's concert.