INSTITUTIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION AND UTOPIAN FUTURITY IN AFGHANISTAN'S TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING ERA

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Abstract

For almost 100 years, institutional music education in Afghanistan has both thrived and been devastated as a result of the country's political changes and upheavals. This thesis explores the place and role of institutional music education within Afghanistan's recent liberal peacebuilding era (2001–2021) and considers how international agendas during this time were translated into educational initiatives on the ground. Despite increased academic and media interest in the country's music education initiatives during the last decade, little attention has been paid to the experiences and motivations of the students themselves. Focussing on the case study of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), this research investigates what institutional music education afforded individuals and social groups, what stakeholders wanted to achieve by engaging with music education, and how individuals conceptualised their role as musicians within Afghan society and beyond. Using a critical ethnography approach, this research also looks beyond ANIM's public narrative to interrogate taken-for-granted claims about social transformation and societal change through music.

The research found that during the past two decades, institutional music education was used by ANIM's community, collaborators, and supporters to contribute to three key themes associated with Afghanistan's post-2001 reconstruction: first, the advancement of the liberal values of individualism and freedom; second, the promotion of women's rights and freedoms within public space; and third, the development of cultural diplomacy efforts linked to Afghanistan's global reputation and bilateral relations with other nations. In addressing and responding to many of the country's historical and contemporary challenges, institutional music education functioned as a vehicle for imagining and projecting into alternative futures and for presenting a utopian image of Afghanistan. However, the findings of the research also elucidate asymmetrical power relations within ANIM's educational processes and its interactions with other organisations and reveal tensions around the use of music education to further geopolitical agendas. Finally, this thesis

reflects upon the recent return of the Taliban regime and the implications of this political change for the future of music education in Afghanistan.

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Notes on Transliteration

This thesis combines the transliteration system for Persian as set out by the International Journal of Middle East Studies with transliterations used by scholars of Afghan music such as John Baily, Hiromi Lorraine Sakata, and Ahmad Sarmast. Long vowel sounds are rendered using the diacritical marks *ā*, *ū*, and *ī* and the digraphs *gh* and *kh* are used to represent the letters غ and خ, respectively. Transliterations of Pashto words have been copied from their original sources. When quoting from other authors, original transliterations and spellings have been retained. Finally, I follow Baily's (2015a) spelling of the word *mujahideen*, although other spellings such as *mujahedin* can be found.

Glossary of Musical Instruments and Terms

Antara	Melody played during the verse section of a piece of music.
Arkestar	Translation and transliteration of 'orchestra' used to refer to some large instrumental ensembles in Afghanistan.
Āstāi	Melody played during the refrain section of a piece of music.
'Armonia	Free-reed aerophone housed in a portable wooden box with hand-pumped bellows and a keyboard.
Bājakhāna	Municipal brass band during the early 20th century that provided entertainment for private weddings and public festivals.
Beiru (rāg)	Afghan term for *rāg Bhairav*.
Bhairav (rāg)	Hindustani *rāg* traditionally played in the morning characterised by a sombre, meditative mood.
Chang	Plucked mouth instrument also known as 'Jew's harp'.
Daireh	Frame drum with jingles (iron rings) attached to the inside of the frame, played with the hands.
Dambura	A fretless long-necked lute with two strings.
Dilrubā	Bowed lute with the fingerboard of a *sitar* and curved frets arched over sympathetic strings.
Dohl	Double-headed drum played either with the hands or sticks.
Dutār	Long-necked plucked lute sometimes with sympathetic strings.
Ghazal	Love poem with a fixed number of verses often sung with instrumental accompaniment.
Ghichak	Two-stringed fiddle with a body made out of a large tin can and played with a horsehair bow (*kaman*).
Ghinā	Practical art of song in pre-Islamic times.

Guru-shishya (perampera)	Teacher-discipline tradition and lineage (*perampera*) found in many aspects of Indian society.
'ilm-e musiqi	'Science of music'. Canon of verbalised musical knowledge among urban male musicians.
Kesbi	Professional musician.
Klāsik	Afghan art music ('classical').
Musiqi	Afghan concept of music, defined in terms of musical instruments (also *sāz*).
Naghma	Fixed instrumental piece or section.
Qashkarcha	Long-necked bowl lute with frets found in north-west Afghanistan.
Qawwali	Genre of Sufi Islamic devotional music which originated from the Indian subcontinent in the 13th century.
Rāg	Melodic modes in north Indian Classical music.
Rubāb	A short-necked plucked lute with a double chamber, frets, and sympathetic strings.
Sampurna rāg	A *rāg* which has all seven *swaras* (notes) in its scale.
Sargam	Notation system used in Indian music.
Sarod	Plucked, fretless lute with metal strings and metal fingerboard common to north Indian Classical music.
Sāz	Afghan concept of music, defined in terms of musical instruments (also *musiqi*).
Sazandeh	Professional hereditary musician.
Shauqi	Amateur, sometimes self-taught musician.
Shāgerd	Disciple, or student, or an *Ūstad* (master).

Sitār	Large, long-necked plucked lute with moveable curved frets, sympathetic strings, and a gourd resonator.
Tabla	Pair of tuned kettle drums made from metal (*bayan*) and wood (*dahina*).
Tanbūr	Long-necked plucked lute with sympathetic strings.
Tarana	'Song/chant' in Pashto language. New genre of religious chant created during first Taliban period.
Tarz	Popular song style characterised by verse, refrain, and instrumental section (can also refer to style, melody, method).
Tula/Tulak	Transverse or fipple flute made from wood or metal.
Ūstād	Honorific title given to those in Arabic, Persian, Central Asian, and Hindustani cultures who have mastered a skill and embody their tradition.
Zerbaghali	Single-headed goblet drum made from wood or pottery.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Visitor

In a wood-panelled practice room at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), Kabul, a young female Afghan percussionist—dressed in a grey school tunic and a worn black leather jacket with a ruby red headscarf wrapped loosely around her neck—plays a piece for four mallets on marimba. She is playing from memory and her eyes are focussed on the instrument's keyboard. Her modest audience—dressed formally in Western-style suit jackets, collared shirts, and ties—is standing by the door: in front is Tobias Thyberg, Sweden's Ambassador to Afghanistan from 2017–2019, who is at the school for an official visit; to his right is ANIM's founder and director, Ahmad Sarmast; and behind both is a male member of ANIM's teaching staff holding the schedule for the visit. One of my colleagues and I look on from behind a desk at the opposite end of the room.

All eyes are on the young percussionist. Ambassador Thyberg is smiling, his face genial and his body language relaxed and informal, with his left hand in his trouser pocket and his right hand placed upon his left-side chest [read: heart] in awe of the student's music. By contrast, Sarmast is unsmiling, his face in a frown, and his body language static and formal as he inspects the student's every move. The third observer, the staff member in the far background, appears to be captivated by Sarmast's response and watches his face closely. The young woman is being observed and scrutinised, but in two different ways: Thyberg's gaze expresses admiration and compassion, while Sarmast's implies discipline and control. Coming from a poor family and living at a local orphanage, she is a symbol of ANIM's commitment to transforming lives and empowering girls through music, and in this moment, she has a responsibility to shine and impress

the visitor. A photo of the scene, taken from where I was sitting, was uploaded to Thyberg's Twitter profile later that day with the following caption:

> Yet a reason [*sic*] to love #Afghanistan: students and staff of Afghan National Institute of Music. @DSarmast and everyone at @OfficialANIM: you're building a better future. #Education @Polarmusicprize (Thyberg, 2018).

Ambassador Thyberg's official visit took place in late November 2018, at a time when ANIM's relationship with Sweden was steadily growing; earlier in the year, the school and Ahmad Sarmast had been awarded the prestigious Polar Music Prize in Stockholm and in March of the following year, the school's 'Zohra' Orchestra were scheduled to embark on a multi-city tour of Sweden in recognition of the institution's achievement. Hosting foreign ambassadors and other VIPs was a common occurrence at ANIM, and each time they came students were displayed room after room like exhibits in a museum of living culture. During Ambassador Thyberg's visit, he and his entourage (personal staff and security detail) enjoyed performances by the school's various large and small ensembles and listened to pieces from individual students in each studio, including the young female percussionist described above. For ANIM, the visit was diplomatically important as it offered an opportunity for the school to parade its educational achievements, strengthen its partnership with Sweden, and hopefully secure further financial and political support from the country in the future[1].

The central aim of this thesis is to explore the place and role of institutional music education during Afghanistan's liberal peacebuilding era. This historical period ran from October 2001, when the Taliban regime was ousted by US-NATO forces and a foreign-backed interim government was

[1] Although not publicly articulated, it is likely that the event was also politically important for the Swedish government in demonstrating their commitment to civil engagement within Afghanistan.

formed, to August 2021, when the group regained power and the foreign occupancy abruptly ended. The turmoil of the Soviet occupation (1979–1989), the Afghan Civil War (1992–1996), and the subsequent cultural censorship imposed by the Taliban during their first regime (1996–2001) had a devastating impact on Afghanistan's indigenous and institutional music education systems: musical instruments were burned or confiscated (Baily, 2001a: 39; 2009: 155–156), master musicians and professors at higher education institutions fled overseas (Sarmast, 2005: 349), and Kabul's musicians' quarter (*Khucheh Khārābāt*)—'a place for training in music' (Baily, 2011a: 21)—was completely destroyed (Sarmast, 2005: xvi). However, after the end of the Taliban's first rule, music education in Afghanistan made a steady and sustained recovery. The liberal peacebuilding era provided ideologically and financially fertile ground in which to re-establish music education in Afghanistan. Beginning in the early 2000s, valiant efforts were made by the international aid community to set up and support new music education initiatives in an attempt to revive the country's shattered musical culture (Doubleday, 2007). Over the course of the next two decades, both Afghan and Western music traditions were widely taught across the country in a variety of indigenous and institutional contexts and from primary to tertiary level, and steps were being taken to include some forms of music making in the national curriculum (see Chapter 3, p. 64). One of the most prominent institutions involved in music education's post-2001 revival was the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), a co-educational specialist music school founded in 2010 by Afghan-Australian musicologist Ahmad Sarmast. Constituting the main case study for this thesis, I look at how ANIM's music education practices, musical outputs, and national and international activities contributed to and translated the values and objectives of the foreign-led liberal peacebuilding agenda.

The opening vignette introduces two further themes which will also be addressed in this thesis. First, referring to Venezuela's El Sistema orchestra scheme—with which ANIM's

programme shared many similarities[2]—Geoffrey Baker (2014a) reminds us of music education's two faces: 'The press and public have fixated on one—"rescuing" and training the poor—and have largely ignored the other: discipline and profit. Only when the second is fully grasped can a proper assessment be made'. Within this opening vignette, Thyberg sees in the young percussionist music education's first face, '"rescuing" and training the poor', while Sarmast sees in her the second face, 'discipline and profit'. As is often the case with music education programmes and initiatives in conflict-affected or developing nations, the public only sees and hears about the first face—which is often accepted as the truth—while the second face is concealed by a lack of critical inquiry. Using a critical ethnographic approach, this research sets out to elucidate hegemony, oppression, and asymmetrical power relations (Palmer & Caldas, 2015) found within and perpetrated by Afghan institutional music education which were largely obfuscated by public narratives espousing the transformative power of music. Second, Thyberg's suggestion in his Twitter caption that ANIM's staff and students were 'building a better future' speaks to the perceived role of institutional music education in constructing and shaping Afghanistan's future. Drawing on a body of literature which explores futurity and utopianism across several disciplines, this study investigates how music was used by various stakeholders as a vehicle and medium for imagining future states of being and to present an imagined utopian Afghanistan.

Music Education in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's institutional and indigenous music education systems have been largely neglected by scholars in favour of ethnographic inquiry into the country's diverse musical traditions. Before the last decade, accounts of indigenous music learning processes featured briefly and intermittently in ethnographic research (Baily, 1979, 1997, 2011[3]; Doubleday & Baily, 1995) while institutional

[2] In 2017, ANIM students participated in a project, organised by Tricia Tunstall and Eric Booth, which brought together El Sistema-inspired projects from across the globe to record a peace anthem called 'Love People' (House of good tones, 2017).
[3] Although published in 2011, the data in this book comes from Baily's fieldwork during the mid-1970s.

music education was given almost no consideration by scholars (except for Sarmast, 2005), thus leading to an incomplete picture of the country's music education systems. Comparatively speaking, academic interest in Afghanistan's music education systems has increased since the end of the Taliban period as institutions took on a prominent role in the revival of the country's music culture. John Baily (2015a), Veronica Doubleday (2007), and Islamuddin Farooz (2016) outline the development of interventions run by NGOs and other organisations, such as Aga Khan, in the years immediately following the Taliban's demise, with the former also offering a useful factual overview of ANIM and its institutional set up. More recently, Ghaffar Maliknezhad (2019) explored the challenges facing music education in Afghanistan, including lack of government support, poor professional development, low student recruitment, and resistance to developing pedagogical practices and methods. Eddie Ayres' (2017) personal memoir of his time working as a cello teacher at ANIM offers a window into the lived experiences of students and the challenges they faced learning music and describes in some detail the daily activities of the school. However, given its non-academic target audience, the narrative is at times sensationalised and focusses heavily on the stress and trauma of living in Afghanistan as a foreigner. Afghanistan's institutional music education has also begun to surface (Haskell, 2015; Howell, 2018; Kartomi, 2014) within a growing body of literature which explores the roles of music and applied ethnomusicology within conflict-afflicted contexts (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010; Grant, 2017; Howell et al., 2019; Kallio & Westerlund, 2016; O'Connell, 2010, 2015; Opiyo, 2015; Pruitt, 2011). Scholars in this field point to the use of music within functionalist paradigms, such as the revival of music and the promotion of healing, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. However, even within this modest literature, most accounts of Afghan music education are either brief and largely descriptive or used as case studies to discuss broader themes.

There are two major weaknesses in the recent literature on Afghan music education. First, there is limited inclusion and representation of participant voices and experiences, a concern which has been flagged more generally within the literature on music participation in conflict-affected

settings (Bergh, 2010). Original data from participants only features within Gillian Howell's PhD thesis (2017) and her recent article on configurations of hope at ANIM (2021). Second, most accounts are uncritical and only reproduce what is presented in the mass media or in the institutions' mission statements without assessing the authenticity of these claims. Tunstall and Booth's (2016) short segment on ANIM, for example, is a biased narrative of Ahmad Sarmast's 'courageous' endeavour to save Afghan music and his 'visionary energy' which is compared to that of Maestro Abreu, the founder of El Sistema in Venezuela. Again, an exception to this trend is Howell's work on ANIM (2017, 2020, 2021) which highlights some of the challenges faced by the school and begins to question certain aspects of the institution's pedagogical approaches and methods. In response to these limitations, the present study looks at institutional music education programmes through a critical lens and foregrounds the narratives of the participants who were enrolled within them. While my work largely resonates with Howell's in its focus on the institution and the broader political context, this present research departs from her work by expanding on the number and type of stakeholders interviewed and advancing a critical perspective.

In sum, the existing literature only provides a fractional view of why music education is viewed by many as a necessary and valued aspect of Afghan life, both historically and during the recent reconstruction period. Considering the country's unpredictable political situation—which has invariably impacted the country's musical heritage (see pp. 13–16)—there is an urgent need to document and assess Afghanistan's music education systems and practices[4]. Thus, a key aim of this research is to address the critical gaps and weaknesses in the literature and to explore what institutional music education afforded individuals and social groups, what stakeholders wanted to achieve by engaging with music education, and how individuals conceptualised their role as musicians within Afghan society and beyond. Following the work of Baker (2014b) and Bergh and

[4] At the time of writing (April 2022), Dr Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey (University of Sheffield) is conducting research with a group of Afghan musicians and scholars to explore historical and contemporary orchestral practices in Afghanistan. Although not focussed specifically on music education, many of the institutions mentioned in Chapter 3 are included in her research.

Sloboda (2010), this research seeks to address the discrepancy between the aspirational claims of music education institutions and the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore both the country's indigenous and institutional music education systems, the present research constitutes the first dedicated study of institutional music education during the recent reconstruction period and marks a crucial step towards bringing this area of study to the forefront of academic discourses.

To summarise, the main research questions of this study are:

- What role(s) did institutional music education have during Afghanistan's liberal peacebuilding era?
- What was the place of institutional music education during Afghanistan's liberal peacebuilding era?
- How, and to what extent, did ANIM's music education practices, musical outputs, and national and international activities contribute to and translate the values and objectives of the foreign-led liberal peacebuilding agenda?
- How was music used by various stakeholders as a vehicle and medium for imagining future states of being and to present an imagined utopian Afghanistan?
- Within the context of the liberal peacebuilding era, what did institutional music education afford individuals and social groups, what did stakeholders want to achieve by engaging with music education, and how did individuals conceptualise their role as musicians within Afghan society and beyond?

Afghanistan and its Musics

Afghanistan is a landlocked country situated in 'the heart of Asia' (Barfield, 2010: 1) sharing land borders with Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China, and Pakistan (Figure 1). Due to its geographical location, Afghanistan was intersected by numerous ancient trade routes and became a meeting place for diverse cultures and ethnic groups. Consequently, modern-day Afghanistan—whose population in 2021 was estimated to be 39.8 million—is 'composed of a number of micro-societies, divided along ethnic, tribal, clan, sectarian, and linguistic lines' (Saikal, 2012). The major ethnic groups in Afghanistan are the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and Turkmen, and Aimaqs, while smaller groups include Nuristanis and Pashai, Qizilbash, Baluch, Arabs, and Pamiris (Barfield, 2010: 24–30). Each of these ethnic groups is, in turn, divided into further subgroups (Saikal, 2012). Since the creation of the modern Afghan state at the end of the nineteenth century, ethnicity has been increasingly politicised by various groups to legitimise their power and to achieve certain political goals; most recently, Afghanistan's 'ethnic problem' was misjudged by the international intervention as the main dimension in the country's ongoing conflict (Schetter, 2003). The country's dominant religion is Islam[5] which came to the region through the conquests of Arab generals during the seventh and eighth centuries (Green, 2016). The majority (85 percent) of Afghans are Sunni Muslims, while a minority (15 percent) are Shia and Ismaili Muslims (Barfield, 2010; Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 2022). As Thomas Barfield (2010) notes, 'Afghanistan is an example of an older form of Islamic society in which religion is not an ideology but remains an all-encompassing way of life' (40), and Islam's stance on music has shaped, to some extent, the ambiguous place and different usages of music in Afghanistan (see Chapter 3)[6].

[5] However, followers of other faiths, such as Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, and Bahá'ís, also live in Afghanistan (Mohammad & Udin, 2021).

[6] As discussed in Chapter 3, the influence of religion on music's acceptability has weakened in recent decades.

Figure 1. Map of modern Afghanistan (Barfield, 2010)

Concept of music in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, an important conceptual distinction is made between music ('*musiqi*'[7]) and song which can be traced back to pre-Islamic times when *musiqi* represented the theoretical aspects of

[7] The term *musiqi* is derived from the Greek *mousike* (Sakata, 1983: 39).

music and *ghinā* signified the practical art of song (Sakata, 1983: 40). The contemporary concept of *musiqi* in Afghanistan 'is closely linked with musical instruments, either played by themselves for what we would term in English "instrumental music", or to accompany singing' (Baily, 2001a: 21; see also Baily, 2004: 19), and by extension, 'unaccompanied singing does not […] constitute music' (Baily, 2009: 155). In other words, 'music implies the use of instruments and song refers to poetry' (Emadi, 2005: 103). Sakata (1983) further distinguishes between the formal use of *musiqi* to describe 'secular music' and its colloquial or informal meaning which can be glossed as 'professional music' or 'instrumental music' and which has an equivalent meaning to the term *sāz* (music, instrument, melody) (74). Following this framework, the recitation of the *Qur'an*, calls to prayer, religious chants, and lullabies sung by mothers to their children are not seen as music[8] and are therefore deemed more acceptable[9] than *musiqi* which is often associated with celebrations and enjoyment, such as weddings and parties (Doubleday, 2007; Sakata, 2012). The music taught and learnt in Afghanistan's music education institutions during the inter-Taliban[10] period was almost exclusively instrumental music or accompanied singing (*musiqi*) and therefore the rest of this thesis refers to music within this conceptual framework.

Genres and styles of music

Baily (2001a) identifies three main components of Afghanistan's musical culture—the art music of urban areas, popular music, and regional 'folk music'—each of which has its own distinct social and political history. Music from all three of these strands was taught, performed, and developed at Afghan music institutions during the last two decades. Additionally, with the 'opening up' of the country and the spread of the internet during the last two decades, other musical genres such as hip-hop and rap have gained popularity among Afghanistan's youth culture (Roth-Burnette, 2019).

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[8] By contrast, Baily (2001a) notes that in Egypt, a relationship between *Qu'ranic* recitation and music is recognised, with some reciters consulting musicians on musical matters (21).
[9] See Chapter 3, p. 83, for a discussion on the contested place of music in Afghan culture.
[10] See Chapter 2, p. 51, for a discussion on the use of this term.

In the diaspora, a new style of dance music, known as *fast muzik*, *musiqi-ye mast* ('intoxicating music'), or *musiqi pop*, was cultivated by young Afghans who were inspired, in part, by Western popular music (Baily, 2015a; Baily, 2018).

While at least three different art musics from North India, Iran, and Uzbekistan are believed to have been brought into Afghanistan at one time or another, it is the first, Hindustani music, which is 'the best known in Afghanistan and the most frequently performed, and also constitutes the [country's] 'official' art music' (Baily, 1981: 1). Under the rule of Amir Sher Ali Khan (1869–1879), musicians from northern India (Punjab) were brought to the royal court in Kabul to provide musical entertainment and teach music lessons to members of the ruling dynasty (Sarmast, 2005: 179)[11]. Over time, these musicians and their descendants developed a distinct form of Afghan art music known as *klāsik* ('classical') comprising of two genres—the Kabuli style of *ghazal* singing and an instrumental genre known as *naghma-ye kashāl* (Baily, 2001b). During the course of the twentieth century, these genres became widely disseminated to other urban centres such as Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-i Sharif (Baily, 2001b).

From the 1940s onwards, Radio Kabul[12] took over from the royal court as the main centre of musical patronage and institutional sponsor for new developments in Afghan music (Baily, 1988: 30). Referred to nostalgically by Afghans as the "Golden Age"[13], the 1950s to 1970s was a period of relative political stability in which the country's music culture thrived and a modern popular music style known as *tarz* emerged. This new genre was developed specifically for the radio and was characterised by verse, chorus, and a melodically distinct instrumental section (Baily,

[11] Both Baily (1988) and Sarmast (2005) suggest that Indian musicians were possibly first brought to Kabul during the rule of Timur Shah (1772–1793) over a century earlier.
[12] Radio broadcasting initially began in 1925 but encountered a number of setbacks until the mid-1940s when nationwide broadcasting was established (Baily, 2015a: 25). See Baily (2015a), Sarmast (2005), and Slobin (1974) for further detail on the emergence of radio in Afghanistan.
[13] The term "Golden Age" may also be applied to the ethnomusicological research that was carried out in Afghanistan during the same period and which resulted in a canon of Afghan music literature comprised of writings from John Baily (1976, 1979, 1980, 1981a, 1981b, 1988, 2011), Veronica Doubleday (1982, 1988, 2011), Hiromi Lorraine Sakata (1968, 1976, 1983, 1985, 1987), and Mark Slobin (1969, 1970, 1974, 1975, 1976). Important contributions have also been made by Jan van Belle (2000), Christer Irgens-Møller (2005, 2007, 2010), Ahmad Sarmast (2000, 2005), Victor Mikhaikovich Beliaev (1960), Felix Hoerburger (1969), Abdul Wahab Madadi (1996), and Enayatullah Shahrani (2010).

2015a: 28). Among the initiatives of Radio Kabul—renamed Radio Afghanistan in the 1960s[14]—was the development of various ensembles referred to as '*arkestar*' ('orchestra') which were established to perform and accompany the singers of these new popular songs. Many of the radio singers achieved 'celebrity status' as a result of their work at the radio (Slobin, 1974), including Ahmad Zahir, *Ūstād* Mohammad Hussain Sarahang, *Ūstād* Farida Mahwash, Nashenas, and Sarban. The final ensemble established by Radio Afghanistan was the *Arkestar-e Bozorg Radio Afghanistan* (The Big Orchestra of Radio Afghanistan)[15] which combined all the previous radio ensembles and consisted of Afghan traditional, Hindustani Classical, and Western instruments. This orchestra is of particular interest to this study as it was conducted by the father of ANIM's director, Ahmad Sarmast, and may be viewed as the early model for ANIM's hybrid orchestras.

A large part of the *Arkestar-e Bozorg*'s repertoire consisted of the country's regional folk songs which were re-arranged, orchestrated, and performed for broadcast by Radio Afghanistan (Baily, 2015a: 29). As Marcus Schlaffke (2016) observes, 'one can hardly speak of a uniform 'traditional' music in Afghanistan' (81) but only a patchwork of regional musics—usually identified in Dari as *mahali* 'local' or 'village' music (Baily, 1981a: 1)—associated with the country's different ethnic groups. Importantly, these groups have historical, cultural, and linguistic ties with other ethnic groups beyond Afghanistan's borders and have significantly shaped each regional musical style. However, while these styles possess unique characteristics, they should not be considered separate from one another. Mark Slobin's (1976) study of music in three regions of northern Afghanistan—Turkestan, Qataghan[16], and Badakhshan—demonstrates that despite being occupied by a multiplicity of ethnic groups, the 'people of the area share in a joint pattern of musical behaviour to a greater or lesser extent' (2) which he observed in the shared musical culture found in the bazaars and teahouses of the regions' market towns. Finally, in addition to musical styles and behaviours, certain musical instruments are also associated with the country's distinctive

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[14] I will refer to Radio Afghanistan henceforth.

[15] See Chapter 6, p. 208, for more detail about this ensemble.

[16] Qataghan province was officially disbanded in 1963 into Baghlan, Kunduz, and Takhar provinces.

ethnic groups and cultures; the *dambura* is associated with Hazara culture, the *dutār* with the Uzbeks, and the *rubāb* with the Pashtuns[17] (Olson, 2017: 17).

War and Music

Afghanistan has been in an ongoing state of war since 1978 when Nur Ahmad Taraki's communist party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), overthrew President Mohammad Daud Khan[18] in a violent *coup d'état* known as the *Saur* Revolution[19]. In the decades that followed, Afghanistan passed through various stages of conflict[20], each of which had an increasingly devastating impact on Afghanistan's tangible and intangible cultural heritages. When discussing the impact on music, however, public narratives tend to focus solely on the Taliban's strict laws and overlook events that occurred beforehand. In reality, Afghanistan's musical cultures have been subject to increasing destruction, restriction, and censorship since the 1978 *coup d'état*, eventually culminating in the Taliban's complete ban on certain types of music[21].

The arrival of Soviet troops in Afghanistan in December 1979 provoked a *jihad* (holy war) against the Afghan communists and the foreign, non-Muslim (*kafir*) invaders (Baily, 2015a: 46). The Islamist Resistance, known as the *mujahideen*—a heterogenous collective of quasi-autonomous rebel fighter groups—quickly assembled around a collective objective to expel the Soviets from Afghanistan's territory. The conflict rapidly escalated and became a proxy battlefield for the Cold War when Western powers, including Japan, United States, West Germany, and Saudi Arabia,

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[17] Despite its affiliation with the country's dominant ethnic group, the *rubāb* is now recognised Afghanistan's national instrument.

[18] Daud Khan himself was responsible for disposing of Mohammad Zahir Shah and overthrowing Afghanistan's monarchy in 1973.

[19] Named after the month in the Solar *Hijri* calendar in which it took place.

[20] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to describe in detail the politics of these conflicts. See Ali (2021), Barfield (2010), Edwards (2002), Emanuilov and Yashlavsky (2011), Jones (2009), and Schofield (2010).

[21] Within the Afghan concept of music (described above), the Taliban enforced a complete ban on music. However, from a Western perspective, scholars have argued against referring to a complete ban on *all* music during the Taliban's first regime. The Taliban's *taranas* have been described as 'Taliban music' (Johnson & Ahmad Waheed, 2011: 4) while Baily (2009) draws attention to their clear regional Pashtun folk song elements (157; see also Sakata, 2012: 4). Margaret Kartomi (2014) provides specific examples of the genres banned by the regime and draws attention to the important exceptions made for Taliban *tarana* chants and the *daireh* frame drum (382).

started supporting the *mujahideen*. Under the communist regime (1978–1989), music was caught between these two political factions: on the one hand, the communist-backed government utilised music for propaganda purposes and conscripted musicians educated in Western notation into various ministry ensembles and the army band (Sakata, 1983: xiv; Sarmast, 2005: 348), while on the other hand, in areas held by the *mujahideen*—including the refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan—civilian music making was forbidden in order to maintain a state of mourning for martyrs lost in the war (Baily, 2001a; Doubleday, 2007)[22]. As fighting intensified between the communist regime and the *mujahideen*, many professional musicians fled the country[23], while others who had previously left to study overseas were unable to return home (Sarmast, 2005: 348).

Significant changes within the USSR[24] prompted the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989, leaving the PDPA in charge under President Najibullah for the next three years[25]. The expulsion of the foreign invaders was meant to bring peace and stability to the country, but in reality the victory marked the beginning of an even bloodier civil war. Following the fall of the PDPA in 1992, a fragile coalition government comprised of various *mujahideen* groups and led by Burhanuddin Rabbani was established. However, without a common enemy to unite around, the rival factions—each of whom had their own political, religious, and ethnic goals—became embroiled in an intense power struggle and an internecine war broke out. At the epicentre of the conflict almost all of Kabul was destroyed, including *Khucheh Khārābāt* (musicians' quarter) which was razed to the ground by rockets[26]. Yet more professional musicians fled the country, taking with them their instruments and knowledge. For music, this period of conflict brought with it

[22] This state of mourning and ban on music was also imposed in the refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan.
[23] Sakata (1983) notes the emigration pattern of these musicians based on economic status; low-income hereditary musicians crossed the border to Pakistan while more affluent amateur, nonhereditary musicians went to Europe and the United States (xvi).
[24] After becoming head of the Communist Party in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev launched two successive reforms; first *perestroika* ('restructuring') followed by *glasnost* ('openness'), both aimed at tackling political repression and government secrecy. However, these reforms destabilised and weakened the system, contributing to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union.
[25] Najibullah's government still received Soviet aid until the collapse of the USSR in 1991.
[26] Kabul Museum was also destroyed by rocket attacks and fires and had many of its priceless items looted (Grissmann, 2003).

stricter censorship, including an almost complete ban on music in public places, although private music making was still tolerated (Baily, 2001a; Doubleday, 2007). A certain amount of music making was allowed but professional musicians needed to apply for a licence which specified the types of music they could and couldn't perform; songs in praise of the *mujahideen* and lyrics from Sufi poetry were permitted, but love songs and music for dancing were not (Baily, 2001a: 32). When Gulbuddin Hekmatyar—known as the 'butcher of Kabul'[27]—became prime minister, music was completely banned from television and radio in Kabul.

Amidst the chaos of the civil war, a new group came to prominence—the Taliban. A cross-border Islamist movement led by Pashtun Afghans and trained in Deobandi *madrasas* in Pakistan, the Taliban sought to end the disorder whilst also reforming Afghanistan's religious and cultural practices by creating a pure Islamic state along Salafist[28] lines (Barfield, 2010: 255). Initially, the new regime brought some semblance of security and stability following the anarchy of the previous decades. However, once the Taliban took over Kabul, 'the darker side of their ideology became apparent' (Baily, 2015a: 104) and they imposed severe restrictions on most aspects of daily life. The hardest hit were women who, among many other things, were denied an education, banished from workplaces, prohibited from leaving home without a male family member, and forced to wear the *burqa*. The Taliban also took a hard-line stance on Afghan culture in all its forms by banning music, cinema, board games, images of humans, and various other forms of entertainment. According to Nancy Dupree (2002), the Taliban's machinations, deftly wrapped in the mantle of Islam, were designed to diminish Afghan identity (986). Following the group's rise to power in 1996, 'they imposed an extreme form of music censorship, including banning the making, owning and playing of all types of musical instrument, other than, perhaps, the frame

[27] Hekmatyar was accused of atrocities and human rights violations and gained the reputation as the most ruthless warlord in the country (Myre, 2017).
[28] Salafism is 'the ideas that the most authentic and true Islam is found in the lived example of the early, righteous generation of Muslims, known as the *Salaf*, who were closest in both time and proximity to the Prophet Mohammad' (Hamid & Dar, 2016).

drum' (Baily, 2015a: 104)[29]. If musical instruments were found by the Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, they were often burned in public along with other confiscated items and their owners beaten or imprisoned (Baily, 2001a: 7; Doubleday, 2007: 280)[30]. Under the Taliban's conservative interpretation of Muslim *Shari'a* law, 'music was perceived as a distraction from the remembrance and worship of God, the logic behind this injunction being that it arouses the passions, lust and causes deviation from piety, modesty and honour' (Skuse, 2002: 273). The few remaining musicians in the country either left[31] or stayed, attempting to continue their music in secret.

After 9/11

The events of 11 September 2001 marked the start of a new chapter in Afghanistan's conflict. The coordinated terror attacks which occurred on United States soil ignited the 'War on Terror' and Taliban-controlled Afghanistan was immediately identified as the primary security threat to the United States and the Western democratic world (Goodhand & Sedra, 2013). Although not directly responsible for the attacks, the Taliban regime had allowed the perpetrators, al-Qaeda, to be based in Afghanistan. Thus, with the support of NATO and over forty other allies, the United States launched 'Operation Enduring Freedom' (known as 'Operation Freedom's Sentinel' after 2015) and invaded Afghanistan on 7 October 2001 to eliminate al-Qaeda and topple the Taliban regime[32]. Over the next two decades the international community attempted—but ultimately failed—to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan and transform the country from a failed state to a democratic nation.

[29] The impact of the Taliban's first regime on Afghan music is well-documented both in academic literature (Baily, 2001a, 2005, 2009, 2015; Banerjee, 2002; Doubleday, 2007; Sakata, 2012) and in the international mass media (Coren, 2012; Stewart, 2014).
[30] Since the Taliban regained power in Afghanistan in August 2021, similar videos have emerged on social media of Taliban officers destroying and burning musical instruments. Reports have also claimed that musicians have been kidnapped, tortured, and killed.
[31] A former Afghan colleague of mine once recounted his experience of smuggling his instruments out of Afghanistan by hiding them under a chess board—the punishment for having a board game was far less severe than for possessing musical instruments.
[32] Anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan helped the international forces to defeat the Taliban (Bizhan, 2018).

The process to restore the Afghan state began with the signing of the Bonn Agreement[33] in December 2001 at a conference convened by the United Nations in Bonn, Germany[34]. The meeting set out the framework for a new provisional Afghan administration—which was to be led by Hamid Karzai—and sowed the seeds for a new political order which 'emphasized the right of the people to democratically determine their political future according to the principles of Islam, along with promoting national reconciliation, stability and respect for human rights' (Bizhan, 2018: 975–976). From a security perspective, the Bonn Agreement also mandated the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)[35], a multinational military mission whose primary objective 'was to enable the Afghan government to provide effective security across the country and develop new Afghan security forces to ensure Afghanistan would never again become a safe haven for terrorists' (NATO, 2022). With an interim government in place, the next step towards democracy was to create and agree upon Afghanistan's new constitution[36]. In December 2003 a constitutional *Loya Jirga* was held in Kabul where 500 members, a quarter of whom were women, represented Afghanistan's various political factions and ethnic groups, with the notable exception of the Taliban (Barfield, 2010: 297). The moment was framed by the United States as an opportunity to 'lay the foundation for democratic institutions and provide a framework for national elections' (Khalilzad quoted in Ingalls, 2004), despite reports that the process of selecting representatives for the *Loya Jirga* was marred by 'vote-buying, death threats and naked power politics' (Ingalls, 2004). Less than a year later, Afghanistan successfully held a presidential election, marking 'the first time in Afghan history that a national leader had ever sought electoral approval' (Barfield, 2010: 300), and Hamid Karzai began his first official five-year term as the country's legitimate president.

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[33] Full name 'Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions'.

[34] The decisions made in Bonn were later ratified by an emergency *Loya Jirga*—a traditional tribal assembly—held in Kabul in mid 2002. It was asserted that a *Loya Jirga* was the way Afghans had always elected their leaders although Barfield (2010) illustrates that this was an 'invented tradition' (294).

[35] See Long (2016) for a discussion on ISAF's partnership with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and its various sub-components.

[36] Since 1923, Afghanistan has instituted eight different constitutions—1923, 1931, 1964, 1977, 1980, 1987, 1992, and 2004 (Thier, 2003).

The planned withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan in 2014 provoked a significant deterioration in security, economic instability, and political challenges. Fears about safety and lack of job opportunities coupled with a steep fall in Afghans' optimism about the overall direction of the country led to a wave of migrants leaving the country in the following year (Asia Foundation, 2015). There was cause for cautious optimism when peace talks between the United States and the Taliban began in earnest in 2019, followed by intra-Afghan talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban the following year. However, despite continued diplomatic efforts, the withdrawal of US troops in May 2021 created a military vacuum which enabled the Taliban to regain control of the country within two months[37].

'Music is more than entertainment'[38]

While the international intervention was occupied with rebuilding the Afghan state, a corresponding restoration of the country's musical heritage was taking place within the country's emerging music education institutions[39]. Describing them as 'musical academic authorities', Farooz (2016) briefly documents the work of the Department of Music at Kabul University, the Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI), and ANIM over the last two decades in terms of 'progress towards the restoration and re-stabilization of the foundations of Afghan music' (23–26)[40]. Similarly, Kartomi (2014) identifies AKMI and ANIM as examples of the successful revival of musical cultures which have suffered as a result of 'war, natural disaster, enforced bans on all music, or neglect' (372). Yet, while describing them as initiatives that revive, Kartomi simultaneously presents them as places of healing, referring to them as 'safe havens' where 'therapeutic solace through music' can be sought

[37] This phase of Afghanistan's recent history will be dealt with in Chapter 7.
[38] Sarmast quoted in UNESCO (2014). Sarmast has used this phrase on several occasions when talking about the transformative power of music.
[39] After the fall of the Taliban, many Afghan musicians returned to Afghanistan, bringing with them their knowledge and skills. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the important contributions of these professional and amateur musicians. See Baily (1999, 2005, 2011b, 2015a, 2015b).
[40] ANIM was originally conceived from the Revival of Afghan Music (ROAM) project in Monash University, Australia under the auspices of Ahmad Sarmast. See Chapter 3 for a more comprehensive overview of Afghanistan's nodal institutions.

(Kartomi, 2014: 386). Similar ideas are dealt with in two unpublished studies (Braithwaite, 2016; Vicziany, 2015) which looked at ANIM through a therapeutic lens, the latter of which concluded that 'the scientific literature that links Western music to physical and psychological healing processes has equal validity in Afghanistan' (9).

Indeed, as Afghanistan began to rebuild itself after decades of war and conflict, music took on new roles within society and was increasingly used as a medium to address the country's acute social issues such as child poverty, women's rights, political conflicts, and ethnic unity. From the broader literature on Afghan culture, Karimi (2017) describes how, in response to ongoing political persecution and forced migration, Hazara *dambura* music has become a powerful tactical medium of communication and is 'serving as a crucial *tool* in political mobilization among this community' (emphasis added: 732). Similarly, music has also been used by young Afghans as a tool for challenging over-simplified hegemonic narratives in the West (Ghani & Fiske, 2020). Music's shift from being used as entertainment (at weddings, parties, and ceremonies) to a social and political tool is perhaps best illustrated by the 'Girl with a Guitar' programme which was founded and run by American guitarist Lanny Cordola as part of his Miraculous Love Kids (MLK)[41]. Established in 2016 and located in a flat above a supermarket in Kabul's central district, the programme offered guitar lessons to under-privileged girls (and some boys) to 'help give a voice to kids living in poverty-stricken areas and war zones' (The Miraculous Love Kids, 2020). The 'Girl with a Guitar' programme was a humanitarian response to the country's child poverty situation and used music 'as a way of healing […] kids who had no happiness in their lives' (Cordola quoted in Lamb, 2017) and who had been adversely affected by poverty and war. More specifically, Cordola was drawn to Afghanistan after reading the story of six street-working children who were killed by a suicide bomb attack in 2012 while selling trinkets, chewing gum, and other items outside the ISAF Headquarters in Kabul (see Khamoosh, 2016; Lamb, 2017; McKay, 2017). Among those killed

[41] The 'Girl with a Guitar' project is not included in the discussion of nodal institutions in Chapter 3 as it was framed by its members and media as a guitar school. Moreover, the project did not include any formal assessments or curricula.

were two young girls, Parwana and Khorshid, whose younger sister, Mursal, survived the attack and became one of the founding members of the 'Girl with a Guitar' school. The focus of the guitar programme, therefore, was not on attaining high skill levels or academic achievement, but on the social and therapeutic benefits of music making. To raise awareness of girls' rights in Afghanistan and to fundraise for the project, Lanny and his guitar students collaborated with several famous international rock and pop stars, such as Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys and members of Nickelback, to produce high-quality videos which were shared on social media (Cordola, 2018, 2020, 2021).

Similarly, during the 11 years it was operational, ANIM accumulated a sizeable repertoire of social change songs which addressed 'the big issues' facing Afghanistan in the twenty-first century: 'We, up to now, distributed tens of songs for special occasions to do advocacy for women's rights, for children's rights, for girls' rights, and we always distribute those recordings free of charges [*sic*] to all media of Afghanistan to take the message as far as we can do this' (Sarmast, Polar Music Prize, 2018: 17:10). From the ANIM project's outset, Sarmast viewed music as 'more than entertainment', as illustrated by the following quote taken from an early ROAM report:

> We recognise that music is a powerful and very valuable healing and unifying tool for all people, especially for children. It is also an important device for economic development and poverty reduction. The establishment of a vocational school of music is one of the most important measures that can be taken to assist this much traumatised nation, which has millions of orphans (Sarmast, 2008: 4).

These sentiments were also shared by ANIM's primary financial sponsor, the World Bank, who believed the school 'play[ed] a vital role in rebuilding a just, harmonious and civil society' (The World Bank, 2015).

The multi-dimensionality of Afghanistan's (post-)conflict music education interventions may be understood within Howell's (2018) topology of 'intentions or stated goals that underpin many music interventions in conflict-affected settings' (45). This framework outlines four mutually inclusive and intersecting fields—Music Education, Cultural Regeneration, Social Development, and Healing, Health and Well-being—each one of which, in differing combinations and proportions, is clearly discernible in Afghanistan's peacebuilding era music education programmes. In the case of ANIM, for example, the school's focus on skills development, education, and cultural regeneration was always in dialogue with a commitment to using music as a tool for social change and therapeutic healing. However, as Howell and other scholars have observed, there is often a disparity between the founding intentions and the actual outcomes of a programme and marked differences between a project's intentions and those of its participants. With this in mind, the current research considers the narrative gap between the public-facing aims of ANIM's project and the ways in which its students conceptualised the role of music education in their lives.

Institutional Music Education as a Utopian Impulse

This thesis builds upon and departs from the discourses described above to explore further ways in which music education was used by various stakeholders as a tool to achieve tangible social, economic, and political objectives which were aligned with the hegemonic liberal peacebuilding agenda. In turn, music education's increased functionalism during this period of transformation is considered within the theoretical frameworks of futurity and utopianism in order to elucidate the ways in which music was operationalised as a vehicle for individuals, gender and class groups, and the Afghan nation to project into and imagine alternative futures.

Afghanistan's inter-Taliban liberal peacebuilding era may be defined as an 'endless present', those periods which are 'gaps in time, intervals which are entirely determined by things which are no longer and things which are yet to come' (Hartog, 2015: 106). In the context of Afghanistan,

the 'no longer' describes the first period of Taliban rule and the Soviet and Civil wars which preceded it, while the 'things which are yet to come' depicts the peaceful Afghanistan of tomorrow which was shaped in the imaginations of Afghans over the past 20 years. As Bilquis Ghani (2020) argues, Kabul was 'a city immersed in the liminal between what it could be and what it was' (9). From the outset, Afghanistan's liberal peacebuilding era was discursively framed by the international community as future oriented. Zalmay Khalilzad, US Ambassador to Afghanistan (2004–2005) and later Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation (2018–2021), described the early 2000s as '[the] heydays of the American encounter with Afghanistan where people were hopeful, positive with a lot of expectations that finally maybe Afghanistan was getting it right and that there was an opportunity to build a peaceful and potentially prosperous country' (Doucet, 2021a: 13:22). Similarly, in an article written for *TIME* magazine in November 2001, Hillary Clinton[42] (2001) remarked that 'thanks to the courage and bravery of America's military and our allies, *hope* is being restored to many women and families in much of Afghanistan' which would 'allow all the people of that nation to *dream* of a better life' (emphasis added). It is this fixation on a better, idealised tomorrow and the country's long-term future which this thesis explores as it is manifested and articulated through music education activities.

Futurity, hope, and utopianism

The concept of futurity can be broadly defined as an engagement with the future or 'a transformation in temporal arrangement such that the future […] becomes the most dominant sense of time' (Sprengel, 2018: 140). Leslie Adelson (2013) contends that there are 'multiple forms of futurity relative to social relations, historical constellations, and creative formations in which the future comes to matter in different ways' (215). The Black speculative arts movement known as Afrofuturism, for example, 'imagines a future void of white supremacist thought and the

[42] At the time Clinton was serving as United States Senator from New York.

structures that violently oppressed Black communities [and] evaluates the past and future to create better conditions for the present generation of Black people' (Crumpton, 2020). By contrast, Shahjahan and Edwards' (2022) study of inequalities in global higher education proposes the framework 'Whiteness as futurity'—that is, a futurity orientation embedded in Whiteness—to understand how Whiteness governs the future and colonises global subjects' imaginaries. As such, if the future is construed as something that is entwined in varying relationships to past and present, then futurity is not a fixed concept but a 'protean abstraction' which describes various uses of the future relative to the frameworks in which the future emerges as an object of thought (Adelson, 2013: 215).

Hope, also understood as a relation or engagement with the future (Hage, 2016; Kleist & Jansen, 2016) or 'an emotional orientation to something that is desired but that has not (yet) happened' (DeNora, 2021: 1), is an important aspect of future-oriented thinking. In recent years, the topic of hope—alongside issues of temporality, nostalgia, and the place of the future in the present—has received increased attention in several fields including the medical and social sciences and the humanities[43]. Cook and Cuervo (2019) outline two modes of hope: first, non-representational forms of hope which are 'characterised solely by the affect of hope – by feelings and sensations of hopefulness – but as absent a specific referent' (1106), and second, representational forms of hope that 'pertain to a specific referent or concrete, linguistically accessible image of the hoped-for future' (Cook & Cuervo, 2019: 1106). These conceptualisations of hope resonate with Ernest Bloch's distinction between abstract utopias and concrete utopias, respectively, which Ruth Levitas (1990) summarises as thus:

> Abstract utopia is fantastic and compensatory. It is wishful thinking, but the wish is not accompanied by a will to change anything. […] Concrete utopia, on the other hand, is

[43] Kleist and Jansen (2016) suggest that a widespread sense of crisis and a heightened sense of lack of political ideological direction in this situation may account for hope's recent attention.

> anticipatory rather than compensatory. It reaches forward to a real possible future, and involves not merely wishful thinking but will-full thinking (14–15).

Oriented towards the creation of an 'ideal society' or reaching forward to a transformed future, the concept of utopia, or utopianism, may be viewed as the 'expression of hope' (Levitas, 1990: 14). Simultaneously, 'to hope, whether privately or collectively, is to possess a utopian vision, an imagined vision (or 'dream') of a place, time or state in which things are, if not perfect, then certainly better' (DeNora, 2021: 4). Eggerman and Panter-Brick (2010) argue that Afghan culture is characterised by a 'social hope' which is founded on a sense of moral and social order and the production and maintenance of long-lived cultural values, and which recognises the roles of education and hard-work in securing a prosperous future. In the early years of the foreign intervention, Afghanistan's social hope was further bolstered by the promises of the international community and their reconstruction efforts.

Hope, utopias, and future-oriented thinking are not arbitrary processes that exist in a vacuum. Rather they are a conscious *response* to existing and unwanted social conditions and evils that attempts to transcend or eradicate those conditions to achieve the vision of an alternative society (Taylor, 2018). This process has been described as a 'utopian impulse' and is comprised of two elements: first a critique of existing conditions, and second, a vision or reconstructive program for a new society (Chodorkoff, 1983). The liberal peacebuilding agenda in Afghanistan was undoubtedly a 'reconstructive program' which undervalued Afghanistan's existing political models and was oriented towards the establishment of a new society based on liberal democratic principles. At the same time, Afghans weary of nearly four decades of protracted war, insecurity, and poverty, looked hopefully towards an imagined future in which their social, political, and economic problems were eradicated. This thesis explores the nature of the new society and alternative future which was imagined, and articulated through music, by ANIM's community and stakeholders.

Music, education, and the future

Scholars have identified music and music making as sites or mechanisms for imagining and projecting into alternative futures (utopias) and engaging in utopian thinking (Anderson, 2002; Beckles Willson, 2009; Den Tandt, 2012; Levitas, 2010; Saffle & Yang, 2010; Sites, 2012; Sprengel, 2018). Ruth Levitas (2010) argues that abstraction and performance are the defining elements of music's special utopian function: 'there is something *in the nature of music itself and our making of it* that both conjures the possibility of a new world and moves toward it' (229). For instance, Darci Sprengel (2018) has explored the ways in which artists experiencing marginalisation and declining performance opportunities in the Egyptian city of Alexandria are able to imagine and live a future through independent musicking in the present (138). Similarly, in his analysis of Black utopian expression and the construction of idealised imaginary spaces in twentieth-century African American experimental music, William Sites (2012) contends that music's social embeddedness 'furnishes musicians and audience alike with opportunities to imagine other identities and other worlds for themselves' (585). Music, therefore, operates within the utopic realms of 'alternatives, hopes, and wishes' and offers something that can be imagined, escaped into, and maybe realised (Dyer, 2002: 20). However, Richard Dyer (2002) also draws attention to the limitations of the utopian sensibility, stressing that while responding to the real needs created by society, the utopian image articulated by music (and other forms of entertainment) also defines and delimits what constitutes the legitimate needs of people in that society (26). Building on this idea, Beckles Willson (2009) argues that the framing of the West-Eastern Divan orchestra as a 'utopian republic', or a model for Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, specifies the type of suffering in the region as being misunderstood by 'the other' and overlooks more dominant forms of political and economic suffering in the Middle East (1–2).

In contexts of conflict, hardship, and forced displacement, education can also serve as 'a portal through which a more positive future can be imagined and a vehicle for building oneself a

better future' (Howell, 2021: 358)[44]. These findings are nested within a broader body of literature which examines specific formations of hope and anticipation in situations of uncertainty such as political and economic crisis, protracted conflict, and rising inequality and stratified globalisation (see Kleist & Jansen, 2016). In her study of the educational experiences of refugee and national children in refugee-hosted areas of Uganda, Sarah Dryden-Petersen (2011) identifies three mechanisms through which education functions as both a resource and a strategy for refugee children to aspire towards the future:

> First, education can promote current physical security and the promise of future economic security. Second, it can create the conditions for children to imagine future stability through integration into a social, economic, and political system […]. And third, it provides a critical link between the present and the future through aspirations (98).

The third mechanism highlights the central role of different temporalities informing and shaping individuals' future projections. In their study of 'aspiring youth' in Afghanistan, Holland and Yousofi (2014) found that 'the recent past hangs heavily over youths' views about the Afghan present and projections about its future. As the *only* solution, aspiring youth also understand education to be the primary way to avoid repeating the past' (244). Interlocutors consistently presented the idea that education is the only way to change society and solve problems in Afghanistan and that by pursuing higher education, they would be better positioned to contribute to these future conditions (Holland & Yousofi, 2014: 244).

Finally, Howell (2021) identifies two configurations[45] of hope within ANIM's learning experiences which invite experiences of possibility and agency in the conjuring of future imaginations. In the first, hope is a tool for enabling students to engage positively with a (newly)

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[44] More broadly, academic studies and policy research have explored the notion of 'future-oriented education' (Bolstad, 2011; Bolstad et al., 2012; Gilbert, 2020; Rieckmann, 2012; Rowan & Bigum, 2012). See also Vlieghe (2019) for a discussion on the relationship between education and hope.

[45] Howell identifies four configurations in total but the latter two are less relevant to the present discussion.

possible future in which they can imagine themselves pursuing careers in music. In the second, hope becomes a source of meaning and a coping mechanism for the precarious present as students frame their own education hopes as a form of service and social responsibility to Afghan society. In both contexts, the students' aspirations and hopes articulate a 'positive futurity' which views the 'future as the locus of desired transformation' (Elliott, 2022: 150). At the same time, both authors highlight how students' individual ability to construct and imagine their futures was often limited by external factors such as lack of educational resources, limited employment opportunities, absence of supporting industrial infrastructure, and conflicting temporal horizons. Indeed, by the second decade of the foreign intervention, Afghans' desire and ability to project into the future began to wane significantly—a number of social, political, and economic factors, including high unemployment, worsening security, and political uncertainty, circumscribed young Afghans' ability to plan for the future and contributed to a loss of hope (Høyen & Mortensen, 2015).

Acknowledging the ability of both music and education to function as sites of utopian and future-oriented thinking, this thesis frames music education in Afghanistan as a utopian impulse which responds to the country's historical and contemporary challenges in search of a better future. Furthermore, considering that 'all statements about the future depend on the society in which they are formulated' (Luhmann quoted in Adelson, 2013: 215), this thesis engages in what Mische (2009) describes as a 'sociology of the future' to explore how music education's utopian futurity is shaped by and translates the broader future-oriented peacebuilding agenda in which it is situated.

Outline of the Thesis

This opening chapter has introduced the central focus of this thesis—the place and role of institutional music education during the liberal peacebuilding era—and the main institutional case study (ANIM) through which this will be explored. I have also drawn attention to the additional

themes addressed in the thesis, namely the need for critical enquiry into Afghan music education and a focus on participant voices and experiences. A review of the existing literature on music education in Afghanistan emphasised the importance of the present study and identified gaps in the scholarship which this thesis seeks to fill. I have contextualised the project in relation to the political circumstances preceding and during the period of study and have discussed the impact these had on Afghanistan's musics. Finally, this chapter has introduced the theoretical frameworks of 'futurity' and 'utopianism' which will inform the overall analysis of this research.

In the following chapter, 'Methodology', I explore how my own experiences of working as a music educator in Afghanistan informed my decision to conduct a critical ethnography of ANIM. I examine the underlying principles of critical ethnography before drawing on the concepts of researcher positionality and reflexivity to reflect upon my own shifting engagement with the school, my participants, and the research topic. Details of the sampling, data collection, and data analysis methods are outlined, and ethical considerations pertaining to the research design and context are discussed. This chapter also discusses the challenges and opportunities of conducting ethnographic research during the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary discursive adjustments that were made in response to the Taliban's return to power in August 2021.

Chapter 3 provides a consolidated narrative of Afghanistan's indigenous and institutional music education systems and maps the terrain of the main music education institutions and their grassroots offshoots which operated in Afghanistan during the liberal peacebuilding era. Following this, I explore the extent to which music education institutions effected a change in attitudes towards music and musicians, and examine ANIM's desire to create a new class of musician based on academic training. The factual foundations laid out in this chapter provide a broader context for the subsequent thematic chapters which concentrate on the case study of ANIM.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 discuss the main findings of the research under three main themes—liberal values, women's rights and public roles, and cultural diplomacy, respectively. Together,

these thematic chapters outline some of the ways in which ANIM's actors and other national and international stakeholders used music to contribute to wider issues and agendas associated with Afghanistan's foreign-led peacebuilding project and how, in turn, these agendas were translated into music education activities and products. The focus here is on how students and other stakeholders experienced and valued institutional music education and how they perceived and conceptualised their role as musicians within a transitional and hopeful period of Afghanistan's history.

In the conclusions chapter, I draw on the findings discussed in this thesis to address the role and place of institutional music education during the liberal peacebuilding era. In addition, I discuss the common thread of future-oriented and utopian thinking that characterised the way in which ANIM, its students, and other stakeholders used and viewed institutional music education within the context of the country's prospective and liberatory reconstruction. Finally, this chapter reflects on the Taliban's recent return to power and the implications of this historical event for the material presented in this thesis and the future of music education in Afghanistan.

Chapter 2

Methodology

From Researcher to Educator, and Back Again

This research is born out of my experience of living and working in Afghanistan as a music educator from 2016–2019. During these three years, I was employed as a woodwind teacher at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), Kabul, and later became Artistic Director of the Afghan Women's Orchestra 'Zohra', an educational initiative of the same institute. I first came to know about ANIM while studying for my Master's degree at Oxford University from 2015–2016. I was interested in writing about the school and its role in rebuilding lives after war for my final dissertation and contacted the school's director to suggest visiting ANIM in a voluntary capacity so that I could contribute my time while also carrying out fieldwork. The school agreed to my proposal and sent a letter of invitation for me to obtain a visa from the Embassy of Afghanistan in London.

During my first visit to Kabul in January 2016, I undertook two and a half weeks' teaching as a 'guest artist'[46] at ANIM's Annual Winter Music Academy. Most of the classes I taught were one-on-one 40-minute sessions in flute, oboe, and clarinet, but I also assisted in large ensemble rehearsals and led woodwind sectionals. At the same time, I carried out the research for my dissertation as a 'participant observer', interviewing students and staff about their experiences of music education in Afghanistan and observing lessons and rehearsals. Teaching provided a wealth of access to many areas of the school and enabled me to work unobtrusively and in a way which was consistent with the daily activities of the school. The focus of my research was the proposed therapeutic role of music education in Afghanistan—media narratives on the school often underscore Sarmast's faith in the 'healing power of music' (Ferris-Rotman & Hassib, 2012; Gul,

[46] See Chapter 6, p. 229, for further details of this programme.

2018)—and the final dissertation explored ANIM's ability to function as a 'musical asylum' (DeNora, 2013) through a human rights lens. It was during this brief trip that the current woodwind teacher enquired about my plans once I had finished my Master's in the summer as she was planning to leave the school in a few months and wanted to secure her replacement. The school preferred to hire faculty who had previously been to Kabul and who demonstrated that they weren't fazed by the, at times, challenging environment of the city. Having thoroughly enjoyed my short time at the school and not been put off by a bomb blast earlier in the week, I expressed my strong interest in joining the school permanently. I successfully applied for the role of 'oboe and flute' teacher in the Spring and moved to Kabul in early August 2016.

In reality, my job encompassed a wide range of musical and administrative tasks beyond the role of 'oboe and flute' teacher. Firstly, given the growing number of students at the school, I was also responsible for teaching individual classes in clarinet, saxophone, and trumpet, alongside the permanent Afghan faculty in clarinet and saxophone and the junior faculty[47] in oboe and trumpet. As per the school's sustainability plan, foreign faculty members worked closely with their junior faculty to train them in the musical and administrative skills and knowledge necessary for them to eventually 'takeover' the studio once funding for the foreign faculty ceased (see Chapter 3). In addition to instrumental teaching, I also taught (and sometimes co-taught with junior faculty) music academic classes at all levels from Grades 5 to 14—at lower grades this included Western music theory and Ear Training, and at diploma level, Analysis and Forms and Harmony. After eight months of being in Kabul, I was offered the opportunity to be the Artistic Director of the Zohra Orchestra, a role which included transcribing, arranging, and orchestrating repertoire for the ensemble, auditioning members, and co-conducting the ensemble with two female student conductors. With my administrative hat on, I was responsible for writing and editing various official documents, including the school's Annual Report, the Winter Music Academy Newsletter,

[47] Recent graduates of ANIM who were training to become teachers. They taught a variety of music lessons under the guidance of a senior faculty member (see Chapter 3).

policy documents, and scholarship requests to overseas institutions. I regularly undertook the task of revising various practical and academic curricula which was sometimes done in collaboration with an Afghan faculty member who had limited experience of preparing these resources. Finally, I was also heavily involved in the planning and organising of international tours with the Zohra Orchestra, including overseeing visa applications, communicating with collaborating organisations, and planning repertoire.

When I initially started working at the school, I diligently followed the school's music programme and related activities, assuming that what I and my colleagues were doing must be having a positive impact. At the time, I knew shamefully little about the foreign intervention and how it was experienced by Afghans. I didn't spare much thought to what role music education played in Afghanistan's reconstruction, the ways in which music was used to promote certain discourses and ideologies, or how external funding was potentially shaping and driving the school's educational vision in specific ways. However, over the three years I was there, I increasingly questioned the school's educational priorities and who was benefitting from the music we were producing. Was it the students enrolled at the school or the external donors who had targets to meet? Somewhere along the way, for me at least, the music education was getting lost in translation as the focus shifted to preparing impressive musical performances and presenting images of peace and harmony. I felt my capacity to teach well and effectively was being compromised by the incessant need to prepare orchestra and ensemble performances for visits by VIP guests (as described in the opening vignette to Chapter 1), international tours, and other public-facing activities which could potentially lead to further financial or political support for the school. Alongside this growing unease about the direction the school was moving in and my complicit role in its trajectory, I was struck by the lack of critical reflection not only among the educators on the ground, but also in the public discourses surrounding the school. As a member of the ANIM community, I witnessed Baker's (2014a) two faces of music education—'"rescuing" and training the poor' and 'discipline and profit'—mentioned in the opening of the previous chapter. It was

the unbalanced and idealised public narrative surrounding ANIM—which unquestioningly acclaimed the school for transforming the lives of Afghan children through music—and the urge to counterbalance it with a critical assessment of the school's activities that ultimately drew me towards pursuing doctoral research on the topic. In other words, I wanted to move 'beyond simplistic and romantic views of music's transformative powers, to deal with the complex, contradictory, and ambiguous outcomes of […] music making' (Boeskov, 2018: 9).

In order to interrogate ANIM's educational activities and practices on the ground and to offer a counterweight to the school's public narrative, I chose to adopt a critical ethnographic approach to this research. Critical ethnography has been described as 'critical theory in action' (Madison, 2020) or 'conventional ethnography with a political purpose' (Thomas, 1993) and has been used as a methodology for education research for several decades (Morrin, 2020). The approach, which explicitly aims to critique hegemony, oppression, and asymmetrical power relations (Palmer & Caldas, 2015), is committed to critical reflection and raising awareness through the process (Norander, 2018). As Jim Thomas (1993) notes, 'critical thinking implies freedom by recognizing that social existence, including our knowledge of it, is not simply composed of givens imposed on us by powerful and mysterious forces' (18). The critical ethnographer, therefore, looks 'beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo*, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control' (Madison, 2020: 4). In particular, this study subscribes to Morrin's (2020) assertion that ethnographic work should be '*critically* curious (centred on issues of inequality), *connected* (to wider issues, politics and histories) and sensitive to the *complex* nature of school life and people's positions within it' (224). As such, this research critically examines both the school's internal practices and its broader relationships with other institutions and foreign governments while remaining attentive to the complex subjectivities of the school's actors. However, unlike other critical ethnographies, this study does not attempt to intervene or actively foster social change (Norander, 2018; Palmer & Caldas, 2015). Rather, in highlighting the problematic and uncomfortable aspects of ANIM's

programmes, this research aims to further our understanding of the complexities and contradictions of music education initiatives in (post-)conflict zones and contribute knowledge to developing ethical and responsive pedagogical practices in future projects. Finally, the research is interdisciplinary in nature as it engages with multiple topics associated with the country's reconstruction such as liberal politics, post-colonial feminism, and cultural diplomacy.

Reflexivity and Positionality

A driving force behind undertaking this research from a critical perspective was my strong desire to reflect upon and examine my own judgments and pedagogical practices while working at ANIM. The opening part of this chapter describes the early rumblings of this urge for critical reflection, but at the time, the school's environment did not allow me to act upon this aspiration. This thesis, in many ways, is a means of acknowledging, highlighting, and scrutinising the problematic aspects of my previous working environment, my role in shaping it, and the unspoken power imbalances that existed between myself and my students.

Reflexivity, a process of 'bend[ing] back on self and look[ing] more deeply at self-other interactions' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000: 740), is regarded as a vital process in ensuring rigour, trustworthiness, and credibility in qualitative and ethnographic research. It involves describing the contextual intersecting relationships between the researcher and their participants (Dodgson, 2019) and recognising the importance of self in the creation of knowledge (Berger, 2015). Embedded within this approach is taking into account and reflecting on the researcher's positionality about the research subject, context, and participants and how this impacts the research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In my own case, I was particularly attentive to how my own experiences in Afghanistan and bias towards a highly critical approach could determine the way in which I read and interpreted participants' accounts. I needed to be cautious not to problematise everything I was told and to recognise that participants' positive

reflections were not necessarily evidence of false consciousness or lack of criticality on their behalf. To enable me to negotiate these considerations, I incorporated elements of participatory research into the interpretation and analysis of the research findings. As Jo Aldridge (2015) notes,

> Without input from participants themselves in research that encourages and promotes their participation, collaboration, their views and distinct voices (including reflexive and analytical voices), there is a very real danger that a different story may be presented from the one originally told. When participants are vulnerable or marginalised, it is even more vital that their views are sought and presented (and represented) fairly and faithfully, especially because these groups are more likely either to be overlooked in (conventional) research or to be included in ways that are inappropriate or ineffective (132).

Wherever possible, I invited participants to review the transcriptions of their interviews, reflect on their narratives, and to revise or omit any sections. I also discussed with them how, and in which context, their narratives would be discussed within the research and invited feedback on whether they viewed this as a fair and faithful representation of what they had previously told me.

Within any qualitative research, and especially critical ethnography, positionality plays a vital role in forcing the researcher to acknowledge their own power, privilege, and biases just as they are denouncing the power structures that surround their subjects (Madison, 2020: 6). In particular, I draw on Richard Milner's (2007) framework for engaging racial and cultural awareness in research which stresses the importance of 'researching the self'—researchers 'engaging in evolving and emergent critical race and cultural self-reflection'—and 'researching the self in relation to others'—researchers reflecting about themselves in relation to the communities and people involved in their research and 'to acknowledge the multiple roles, identities, and positions that researchers and research participants bring to the process' (395). First and foremost, I have an obligation to reflect on my own power and privilege in relation to the research context and my interlocutors. The dominant relationship with my student interlocutors—that is, as their teacher—

had always been one in which I had been in a position of power. As a faculty member at ANIM, I had been an authoritative voice, and they had an obligation to follow my instructions within this context. Although I made every attempt to make sure that power imbalances were absent from the research space, residue from this former relationship will inevitably have been present. Likewise, I am also aware of the tensions which arise from being a white, educated woman from a privileged middle-class background doing research in what is often viewed as a neo-imperialist context. Reflecting on her own positionality researching public primary schools in Kenya, Catherine Vanner (2015) concedes that

> The privilege of my social location means that my efforts to support education in postcolonial contexts risks being patronizing, insulting, threatening, imperialist, and recolonizing. Yet neglecting and ignoring postcolonial contexts similarly reflects and reproduces a privileged position (1).

While Afghanistan cannot be described as 'postcolonial', Vanner's comment still resonates with the ambiguity of my research endeavours. In the Afghan context, the fact that I am British—and therefore directly associated with a powerful country heavily involved with Afghanistan's contested reconstruction—means that I represent, to some extent, a neo-colonial presence. Finally, in the months immediately preceding the Taliban's return to power, I became increasingly uncomfortable with my own physical positionality in relation to my interlocutors based in Afghanistan—I was living in a safe country with freedom to move and they were facing a rapidly declining security situation and curtailed freedom. This added a further layer of privilege to my position as researcher.

As the introduction to this chapter suggests, my positionality in relation to ANIM has fluctuated over the past six years. Within the context of the current research, my positionality about my research participants and the institution was never fixed and always dependent on the situation and context (Holmes, 2020: 2). There has been considerable debate surrounding the

insider-outsider dialectic in ethnography (Al-Makhamreh & Lewando-Hundt, 2008; Bruskin, 2019; Gelir, 2021; Gregory & Ruby, 2010; Hammersley, 1993; Holmes, 2020; Weiner-Levy & Aby Rabia Queder, 2012) and the relative advantages and disadvantages of emic and etic perspectives. However, this dichotomous perspective has been contested in favour of frameworks which reflect the fluidity and context-specificity of researcher positionality (Brun-Cottan, 2012; Bruskin, 2019; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Dwyer and Buckle (2009), for example, propose the notion of a space in between which allows researchers to occupy both positions. The hyphen within insider-outsider 'acts as a third space, a space between, a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence, as well as conjunction and disjunction' (60). As researchers, 'we may be closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position, but because our perspective is shaped by our position as a researcher […] we cannot fully occupy one or the other of those positions' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009: 61). My position in relation to the research context and my participants shifted within this third space according to different identities. As a musician researching musicians, I was an insider, but as a non-Afghan researching the lives of Afghans, I was an outsider. As a woman researching women, I was an insider, but simultaneously as a white woman researching women of colour, I was an outsider. As a former teacher I was viewed within the context of the institution as an insider, but with time and geographical distance, I felt for all intents and purposes, an outsider. My relationship with my interlocutors and the institution was therefore characterised by varying degrees of difference and sameness, and the degree to which I was seen as, and perceived myself to be, 'insider' and 'outsider' shifted with my interactions. Overall, however, I was always situated somewhere within the third space between insider and outsider.

The concept of a third space resonates with recent research on the position of Western women living and working in Afghanistan (Hayhurst, Thorpe & Chawansky, 2021; Partis-Jennings, 2019). In her study of female international humanitarian actors, Hannah Partis-Jennings (2019)

proposes a 'third gender'[48], an embodied, performed hybridity which combines 'female bodies and 'liberal' gender expectations with traits, access and behaviour associated strongly with masculinity in 'illiberal' Afghanistan' (179). As a female foreigner in Afghanistan, 'you tend to be treated as this kind of third gender where the rules don't really apply to you […]. You can be in female spaces, *and* you can be in male spaces' (Hayhurst, Thorpe & Chawanksy, 2021: 229). However, Western women are also marked by difference, and while they may have *access* to both gendered spaces, there is also a liminal dimension to their place in Afghanistan in the sense that they occupy an 'in-between' space, not really *fitting into* either male or female Afghan spaces (emphasis added, Hayhurst, Thorpe & Chawanksy, 2021: 230). My own experience of living in Afghanistan resonates with both perspectives and, for the purposes of the present research, these conceptualisations indicate a further layer of positionality which may have shaped and disrupted my relationship with both my male and female interlocutors.

The Participants

Participants were selected using a purposeful sampling method with the general criteria for inclusion in the research being any involvement, either in Afghanistan or remotely, with institutional music education in Afghanistan. The majority of participants had either attended, worked at, or been affiliated in some way with ANIM, although other stakeholders were interviewed as part of the study. In general, I approached participants I already knew and who I could contact easily. The main body of participants from ANIM included:

- 3 current[49] students of ANIM

[48] It is important to note the existing 'third gender' within Afghan culture which describes a category that does not fit typical definitions of masculine or feminine (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2017). Afghanistan's *Bacha Posh*, girls who live as boys, have also been referred to as a 'temporary third gender' (Hashimi, 2015).
[49] I use the words 'current' and 'former' to refer to their status at the time of research.

- 15 former students of ANIM (some now working as independent musicians or at grassroots music schools)
- 2 current foreign teachers at ANIM
- 4 current long-distance tutors at ANIM
- 5 current junior faculty at ANIM
- 9 former foreign teachers at ANIM
- 2 members of ANIM leadership
- 4 attendees of ANIM's Annual Winter Music Academy
- 7 of ANIM's international collaborators (educators, students, facilitators)

Other participants included:

- 5 current Kabul University Music Department students
- 3 current Kabul University Music Department teachers

Although I attempted to interview an equal number of female and male Afghan participants, many more females declined to participate than males. While this means that the thesis includes fewer female voices than males, this disparity in fact reflects the reality of the gender imbalance at ANIM during the time of research. Despite this limitation, the Afghan participants included in this study come from a range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. There are also certain groups not included in the research, including current ANIM students under the age of 18 years and current Afghan music faculty at ANIM. It was not possible to interview these groups for two reasons: first, challenges faced in communicating with the school across continents and during a very unsettled period for the school (COVID-19); and second, logistical issues trying to conduct interviews with participants who did not have email or an online presence.

While Afghan participants' backgrounds—place of birth, ethnicity, family circumstances, religion—are important factors in the current research, reporting these characteristics makes them more vulnerable. The sensitive nature of music education in Afghanistan, combined with the fact that most Afghan participants are now either refugees living in exile or still living in Afghanistan but hiding their identity as musicians, has made it impossible for me to consistently describe in detail Afghan participants' backgrounds. In research conducted in a defined environment or institution, chances are high that participants may be recognised by others, and it is difficult to ensure that data are totally unattributable (Thorjussen & Wilhelmsen, 2019). In the case of ANIM, this issue is compounded by the heavy media coverage of the school's small student population which often openly describes the students' names and social details alongside photographs. Therefore, during data analysis, names and certain contextual identifiers which were irrelevant to the topic were removed to reduce the risk of identification. In this thesis, I have pseudonymised all participant names[50] and only included contextual identifiers if they provide information that is crucial to the meaning or significance of the participant's narrative. The issue of naming students in academic outputs is contested at ANIM. Despite preferring to 'anonymise'[51] participant quotes, Howell (2021) respected the desire of some students to have their real names included after they argued that anonymity constituted another form of the silencing they experienced in real life. This view was also supported by Ahmad Sarmast who believed identifying the students would 'not further contribute to the risk that they take every day' (Howell, 2021: 361). Other names in the article are either pseudonymised or assigned random initials, resulting in an inconsistent framework for referencing participants. However, in the current research I had an obligation to follow strict ethical guidelines and recognised that the dramatic change in circumstances that occurred during the research had a significant impact on the issue of participant confidentiality.

[50] With the exception of interviews and personal communication with composers where it is clear who is being referred to.
[51] Following Wiles (2013), I argue that anonymity cannot be fully assured in most qualitative research.

Data Collection Methods

Remote virtual 'fieldwork'

The research for this thesis encountered two major obstacles which significantly impacted my capacity to carry out in-person ethnographic fieldwork in Afghanistan. I had initially planned a multiple case study research design which focussed on three main institutions—the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, Kabul University Music Department, and the Aga Khan Music Initiative. I intended to travel to Afghanistan for two separate research trips, each lasting around four to six months, to visit Kabul and Herat. However, six months after beginning my DPhil, the world was turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic and global travel became increasingly restricted. At the same time, the security situation in Afghanistan grew increasingly unstable and eventually led to the Taliban's takeover of the country in August 2021. In late 2020/early 2021, just as the prospect of some in-person fieldwork looked faintly possible on account of Afghanistan's easing COVID-19 cases, foreign embassies in the country began releasing security alerts urging their citizens to leave the country as soon as possible by commercial means. Consequently, all the primary data for this research was collected remotely and I was required to reconsider my initial multi-case study design to focus instead on one institution.

Certain conventional methods of ethnography, such as long-term immersion in the field and in-person participant observation, were not possible under these circumstances. I attempted remote online observation by asking educators in Afghanistan to record, with students' permission, their lessons and rehearsals and send them to me for observation. However, this was often not practical as the internet did not support sending long videos, and those teaching at private schools did not have permission to share the school's music programme with third parties. This study, therefore, falls under the purview of ethnography as a form of qualitative research *not* constituted by fieldwork and which views the researcher's in-depth interviews and conversational meetings with interlocutors as ethnographic (Madison, 2020: 3–4). Furthermore, elements of the data

collection—such as virtual participant observation and remote interviewing—constitute what Cooley and Barz (2008) describe as 'the new fieldwork' which takes 'into account the benefits of what living in the digital world can afford us all' (14).

My previous experience of working in Kabul for three years was a tremendous asset in these challenging circumstances. The difficult task of 'gaining access to the field' (Gobo, 2008) and the process of building trust and establishing relationships with participants were already done during my time working in Kabul. In the short time since leaving ANIM, I had kept in contact with most of the people who would become my interlocutors either through social media or email. Moreover, I had detailed records (personal notes, emails, annual reports) of the various activities I had participated in during my time with ANIM and had the contacts to call upon for the ones before and after my time there. The same could be said for musical scores which were all readily available on my hard drive. In sum, a lot of the preparatory work was already done, and I could draw extensively on these experiences and resources.

Interviews

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews with individual participants were the primary method of data collection for this research. In total, 59 interviews were conducted over a period of 15 months[52]. For each group of participants—for example, current students, former students, foreign teachers, junior faculty, overseas collaborators—I devised seven to ten open-ended questions which guided the conversation and were designed to solicit elaborate and individualised replies (Marvasti & Tanner, 2020). For individuals who were interviewed with regard to a particular event or institutional relationship, I planned questions specific to that situation. Each participant took part in at least one interview with some taking part in multiple interviews. In addition, three focus group interviews were carried out with students from ANIM and Kabul University Music

[52] Some of these were follow-up interviews to clarify specific themes with the interviewee.

Department. A semi-structured approach to interviewing allowed for specific dimensions of the research questions to be addressed whilst also enabling participants to offer new meanings to the study topic (Galletta, 2012). The space left open by this approach furnished a 'fluid and reciprocal dynamic' in which the 'interviewer and interviewee are in partnership and dialogue as they construct memory, meaning, and experience together' (Madison, 2020: 35).

Informed consent was taken from all participants, either orally or in writing, before the interviews took place[53]. Participant information forms, in both English and Dari, were distributed to participants via email when I first approached them for an interview, and they were given up to a week to consider their participation before an interview day and time was arranged. Due to logistical and communication challenges with ANIM's leadership, I did not interview any students under the age of 18 so parental consent and participant assent was not necessary.

Interviews were conducted entirely online using Microsoft Teams and depending on the participants' access to technology, they were either audio only or audio and video[54]. While most interviews were carried out in English between me and the interviewee, some were done with the aid of a Dari interpreter based in Afghanistan. This in itself was a logistical challenge as most interlocutors did not have access to stable internet which could support a group video-conference call. Therefore, for a small number who did not have internet data on their phones, my interpreter needed to call the mobile of the interviewee while simultaneously talking to me via the internet. Although this was adequate under the circumstances, I felt very distant from my interviewees given the multiple technological mediations and lack of visual cues. Furthermore, Afghanistan's fragile communications infrastructure often made it difficult to conduct interviews using internet-based audio and video calls. Frequently, the participant's mobile phone network would be very weak and the audio quality very poor, resulting in lost audio which made transcription a long and difficult

[53] Informed consent was obtained in line with the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) requirements. See Appendix E for written consent forms and oral consent giving scripts.
[54] Only audio recordings of the interviews were made for transcription purposes.

process. At other times, telephone infrastructure would be destroyed by terror attacks making it simply impossible to conduct interviews.

Susan Chase (2008) reminds us 'that the narrator's story is flexible, variable, and shaped in part by interaction with the audience' (65), and as such, the authenticity of participant responses must be critically examined. There are several external factors which could potentially influence participants' narratives, including the presence of an interpreter, the students' desire to 'please the researcher', and, in the case of the teachers, employment-influenced bias towards the school. This latter consideration was not confined to just the teachers—I also perceived a degree of forced bias towards the school among the students. On one occasion, a former ANIM student participant asked to retract 'anything negative' they had said about the school in their interview after they had visited the school's director. As discussed below (pp. 47–48), I took these factors into consideration when analysing interview data.

Ethical considerations

Research is a 'deliberative intervention in the world, with its own aims and purposes […] and like any such intervention, it has the potential to cause harm' (Calder, 2020: 94). The potential for this research to cause harm both to my participants and myself was amplified by Afghanistan's overall lack of security, sensitivities around music and musicians in Afghan society, and the risks of discussing potentially challenging subjects during remote online interviews. I was particularly concerned about ensuring the psychological safety of my participants or unintentionally discussing unnecessarily upsetting topics or experiences (see Mannell et al., 2021). Therefore, before each interview, I asked participants if there were any topics that they wished not to speak about such as their family background, ethnicity, religion, or politics. However, conducting interviews online raised additional considerations for my participants' safety and wellbeing. Visual cues, such as body language, that can alert the interviewer to a participant becoming distressed or tired and therefore requiring the interview to be paused or terminated, are harder to discern online than in person. I

therefore needed to ensure that I was paying particular attention to the individual's image on the screen and reiterate to participants before the start of the interview that they could ask to pause or stop at any time. Similarly, I had little control over the location of the interview and could not ensure that the participant was in a safe space. To mitigate any risks, I discussed with participants the importance of finding a place where they wouldn't be overheard by others and in which they felt comfortable to do the interview. Finally, I made sure that interviews, where possible, were conducted using secure online platforms such as Microsoft Teams. When this was not possible, such as in the use of three-way communication described above, I discussed the confidentiality implications of the arrangement with the participant and interpreter beforehand.

Secondary sources

This research draws upon a diverse range of secondary sources to collect additional data and contextual information. First, social media (such as Twitter and Facebook) and online personal blogs proved to be very important spaces in which to gather information about the educational activities of music education institutions and grassroots music courses, to gauge public opinion about Afghan music education activities, and to investigate how institutes and actors were representing their activities in online public spaces. I also regularly consulted the official websites of ANIM (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2019e) and the Zohra Orchestra (Zohra, 2019) for information about the school's intentions and their public statements. Second, this thesis includes analyses of ANIM's[55] musical outputs which include either YouTube videos[56] or digital musical scores—the latter I either possessed as a former teacher or obtained with permission from other ANIM teachers. Third, I collected ANIM's promotional material and concert programmes; some of this was obtained from the internet and some I kept as hard copies for my personal

[55] During the initial stages of the research, I collected and analysed musical materials from other institutions, including the MLK project, but quickly excluded these from the study when I chose to focus solely on ANIM.
[56] ANIM has its own YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/c/AfghanistanNationalInstituteofMusic, first accessed April 3, 2016.

records from my time working in Kabul. Fourth, I regularly consulted the filmic ethnographies and documentaries relating to both ANIM and Afghan music more generally, including *A Kabul Music Diary* (Baily, 2003), *Return of the Nightingales* (Baily, 2013), *Sisters* (Blackwell, 2021), *Breaking the Silence* (Broughton, 2002), and *Dr Sarmast's Music School* (Watkins, 2012). Bearing in mind that these documentaries are very narrativized—and some more than others—I was conscious not to view their content as 'evidence' but to critically examine them as part of a broader narrative about the school's mission. Fifth, I made every effort to attend and make notes on relevant panel discussions and talks relating to ANIM, Afghan music, and music education in Afghanistan, and also sourced historical events through YouTube and other websites. Finally, I collected several World Bank reports and documents relating to ANIM and its umbrella project—the [Second] Afghanistan Skills Development Project—which are publicly available through the organisation's website (The World Bank, 2019). These sources were not thematically coded and analysed in the same way as interview data but were consulted in relation to specific events and themes. A separate media discourse analysis was carried out for newspapers, visual news reports, and radio programmes, as described below.

Data Analysis Methods

I transcribed in full and verbatim all interviews so as to become intimately acquainted with the data and to start identifying salient themes before the data analysis stage.

Coding

The data analysis involved a hybrid process of inductive and deductive coding. Data-driven codes—born from salient themes which arose from the data—were integrated with theory-driven codes informed by existing theory and literature (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Bringing the two coding methods into dialogue with each other fostered an iterative and

reflexive process in which ideas and theories were explored and amended as the research progressed. Although NVivo software was used for the majority of coding and thematic analysis, for a selection of rich interviews I also carried out textual analysis by hand. While attempting to keep the analysis as open as possible, it is important to acknowledge the active role of the researcher in 'identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers' (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 80). My own observations from working in Afghanistan, for example, informed the deductive codes as I had already begun to identify issues that I wanted to interrogate. I was also very aware of the impact of my theoretical assumptions during the process, including my critical orientation and constructionist approach to the data which interpreted meaning and experience as socially produced and reproduced. As such, I was cognisant of the philosophical sensibility and theoretical assumptions informing my engagement with both the data and the analysis process and sought to maintain a reflexive approach throughout (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Faith and suspicion

In analysing and interpreting my data, concerns about faithfully representing the stories and views of the participants were negotiated with a need to not take things at 'face value'. Building on the work of Paul Ricoeur, Ruthellen Josselson (2004) outlines two approaches to the analysis and interpretation of participant narratives. First, a 'hermeneutics of faith' (restoration) which examines the various messages inherent in an interview text, giving 'voice' to the participants. This approach assumes that the participant is an expert in their own experiences and aims to represent, explore, and understand 'the subjective world of the participants and/or the social and historical world they feel themselves to be living in' (Josselson, 2004: 5). In contrast, a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (demystification) works to problematise participants' narratives and 'decode' meanings beyond the text. From this perspective, the interpretive effort is 'to tear away the masks and illusions of consciousness, to move beyond the materiality of a life to the underlying psychic or social

processes that are its foundation' (Josselson, 2004: 13). In taking up the position of 'suspicion' and re-authoring participant stories, the researcher is imbued with authority and is making a claim to privilege (Josselson, 2004: 15–19). Although both approaches will lead to different readings of a text, Jeong-Hee Kim (2016) argues that combining them is important 'if the research topic is about challenging the status quo, or social injustice, based on critical theory, critical race theory, or a poststructuralist framework' (194)[57]. The current research, therefore, adopts a combined epistemological stance and recognises that narrative strategies are 'mediated by historical and cultural locations and influenced by political considerations of identity and community' (Josselson, 2004: 22). In taking this position, I do not wish to privilege either the 'faith' or 'suspicion' approach, but instead provide interpretations of the data which elucidate the complex and contradictory nature of the research context.

Media discourse analysis

One aim of this critical ethnography is to bridge the gap between what ANIM claimed and was reported by the media to be doing, and what was happening on the ground. I therefore carried out two corpus-based media discourse analyses to identify, analyse, and report dominant patterns in the media data corpus. The first included media published from 10 June 2009—the publication date of the first article post-2001 dealing exclusively with music education—to 31 July 2021, and the second included texts published from 21 August 2021 to 31 May 2022.

For the first study, all national (Afghan) and international 'texts' reporting directly on music education initiatives in Afghanistan were selected to create an overall corpus of 134 items, of which 39 were national sources and 95 were international sources[58]. Applying Anne O'Keeffe's (2011) broad definition of media discourse as 'interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or

[57] Josselson (2004) argues that a true combination of the two approaches is very difficult and rare (22).

[58] Duplicate articles sourced from syndicated feeds were not included in the main corpus but their differing headlines were extracted for analysis and have been included in Appendix A.

viewer' (441), the corpus includes 93 online and print articles, 35 television features, and 6 radio features. Media were taken either directly from the news bureaux' websites and social media platforms (via Google searches) or from two online databases, LexisNexis and ProQuest. Outputs were categorised by the geographical origin of their producer, and not by the geographical location of the subject matter; therefore, 'international' media refers to outputs produced outside of Afghanistan while 'national' media refers to outputs produced within Afghanistan. Within Afghanistan, reports came almost exclusively from three independent, privately-owned news agencies, *TOLOnews*, *Khaama Press*, and *Pajhwok Afghan News*. Three articles were written by *Bakhtar News*, the official state news agency of the Afghan government. Other state-run bureaux, such as the *Afghanistan Times* and *Kabul Times*, have not reported on the activities of music education institutes to date. In the content analysis, major themes were inductively and deductively coded using NVivo and comparisons were made across and between variables of location, time, and institution. Finally, the headline of each text was extracted to form a separate data set for analysis as they serve as a useful preview of the salient theme(s) of the main body and provide clear evidence of discursive framing of articles (Appendix A).

Despite there being several music education initiatives of varying size and reach operating within Afghanistan during the peacebuilding era, this study found that only two initiatives—ANIM, and its all-female orchestra Zohra, and the Miraculous Love Kids (MLK) 'Girl with a Guitar' school—were covered by the media. Table 1 shows the distribution of data items by location among the three cases in the study and the clear media attention centred around ANIM.

Table 1. Location distribution of data items by case[59]

	ANIM	MLK	Zohra
International	83	12	42
National	39	0	13
Total	122	12	55

The second discourse analysis followed the same data collection and analysis methods as the first but only included 'texts' reporting on the Afghanistan National Institute of Music and the Zohra Orchestra. The corpus includes 36 items—28 online and print articles, 7 television features, and 1 radio feature—and apart from one online article from *TOLOnews*, all are international sources. The headline of each text was extracted and can be found in Appendix A.

Musical analysis

Although this study is predominantly ethnographic in nature, musical analysis plays an important role in exploring certain themes, particularly in Chapter 5 and the second half of Chapter 6. ANIM's musical outputs (scores, videos, performances) offer further insights into how Afghan musicians interpreted and processed their social and political surroundings in musical terms[60]. At the same time, the themes and components of these public-facing musical materials reveal the school's educational priorities and demonstrate how the wider social and political context was translated into institutional music education activities. Therefore, where appropriate, this study combines musical and textual analysis of ANIM's musical outputs with an analysis of the social and political contexts in which they were produced. While the student composers often drew on Afghan modes and melodies in their compositions, they explained that overall, their pieces followed Western models of harmony and structure. Therefore, I chose to analyse harmony, tonality, and structure from a Western perspective and draw on theories of musical meaning

[59] Zohra items were also coded as ANIM.
[60] This is based on the assertion that musical material is socially mediated and shaped by the social political relations in which it was produced (Born, 2011; Hennion, 2002; Horner, 1998; Shepherd, 1986).

originally derived from Western musicology, such as Agawu's theory of musical semiotics and Green's theory of gendered musical meaning (see Chapter 5).

From the Present to the Past

In August 2021, eighteen months into my research, the Taliban overthrew the incumbent government and regained power in Afghanistan. By this point I had completed all my planned interviews and had drafted half of the thesis which was written in the present tense. Interlocutors' narratives recounted either their current lived realities or reflections made within the context of Afghanistan's reconstruction. However, the swift return of the Taliban, along with their ban on public music, rendered my data time sensitive—my findings no longer reflected a current, lived reality but were instead an account of a historical period that no longer existed. Consequently, the temporal significance of this research became even more poignant, and everything needed to be re-written in the past tense. Furthermore, phrases such as 'current reconstruction', 'post-2001 intervention', or 'ongoing Peace Talks' no longer accurately described the time-period I was discussing. I have chosen instead to describe the period between 2001–2021 using the term 'inter-Taliban'[61], referring to the fact that these two decades were bookended by two distinct, but largely similar, Taliban regimes.

Edward Carr (2001) argues that choosing a specific time period for [historical] research is a selective process. While I initially decided to focus this study on music education during Afghanistan's recent history, the choice to limit the subdivision of time to the 20-year period between 2001–2021 was not selective but forced upon me by the country's sudden regime change. From August 2021, institutional music education ceased to exist in Afghanistan. Although I felt I had collected sufficient data by that point, I made a firm decision not to conduct any more interviews for several reasons: firstly, in light of the trauma experienced by musicians who had lost

[61] At the time of writing (April 2022) I have not seen this term used elsewhere.

their livelihoods overnight and who were forced to go into hiding, I felt it unethical to ask my interlocutors to further share their experiences; secondly, contact with musicians in the weeks and months after the Taliban took over was extremely risky and discussing music or any related topic over the phone or social media would have further endangered musicians' lives; and finally, I quickly realised that my research had captured a particular moment in time during which music education had been shaped by certain historical conditions and that I didn't want to 'muddy' my findings with data gathered from a time with new historical conditions.

I do not wish, however, for the findings of this research to be read or analysed retrospectively in light of the political events that occurred in Afghanistan in 2021. I consider the main body of this thesis as an account of institutional music education within the context of the liberal peacebuilding era. The final chapter of this thesis, while reflecting on the liminal temporality of this period, views the time after August 2021 as a new phase in the story of music education in Afghanistan which brings with it its own challenges and opportunities.

Chapter 3

Music Education in Afghanistan: A Fragmented History

Introduction

During the 1960s and 1970s, Western academic interest in Afghanistan's musical traditions turned the country from 'a musical *terra incognita*' to 'one of the best-documented of lands' (Slobin, 1973: 151). The same, however, cannot be said for Afghanistan's music education which remains an underdeveloped area of enquiry. Decades of active fighting and political instability have made it extremely difficult for foreign academics to conduct fieldwork in Afghanistan and the lack of resources and training in the country's tertiary education sector has severely limited research outputs from Afghan scholars[62]. Drawing on the fragmented existing literature on Afghan music education and original data from participant interviews, the first part of this chapter offers a consolidated historical account of Afghanistan's indigenous and institutional music education systems. Following this, I describe the three main music education institutions—Kabul University's Music Department, the Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI), and the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM)—which operated in Afghanistan during the past 20 years before exploring some of the smaller grass-roots initiatives which emerged in Kabul and other regional centres. In highlighting the diversity of initiatives that existed during the foreign-led reconstruction period, I seek to challenge the misrepresentative academic, public, and media discourses on Afghan music education which describe ANIM as the 'only music school in the country' (The World Bank, 2016), the 'only place where young people can learn music at an academic level' (TOLOnews, 2016), and the 'most important arts learning institution […] in Afghanistan' (Tunstall & Booth, 2016: 269). These narratives either exclude or down-play the important work done by other musicians, ethnomusicologists, and cultural and educational

[62] A foreign teacher working at Kabul University Music Department told me that students had researched Afghan music education as part of their internal assessments, but the papers had not been published externally.

initiatives to revive Afghan music during the country's reconstruction. Finally, this chapter draws on participant narratives to explore the extent to which post-2001 institutions effected a change in attitudes towards music and musicians within Afghan society and examine ANIM's aspiration to produce a new class of musician based on academic training.

Systems of Music Learning in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, music is, and historically has been, very separate from 'education' and so the term 'music education' necessarily requires some discussion and clarification. The literature describes two distinct music learning systems within Afghanistan: first, indigenous learning situations and teaching methods such as the *ūstād-shāgerd* (master-student) apprenticeship relationship mostly used by professional hereditary musician families (Baily, 1988: 112); and second, institutionalised music education practices which have their roots in the progressive education reforms led by King Amānullāh Khan (1892–1960) in the 1920s (Sarmast, 2005: 309). The latter was part of the monarch's wider political agenda to modernise the country in response to the need to 'protect itself culturally and militarily' from European powers (Akseer, 2013: 4). During the inter-Taliban period, the two systems of learning merged—indigenous teaching methods were largely incorporated into and practised within institutionalised settings due to a strong need to revive and safeguard Afghanistan's musical heritage after the increasing censorship and destruction of the previous 20 years. This is especially clear in the contexts of the Aga Khan Music Schools and ANIM, as described below.

Indigenous systems

In Afghanistan, the musical development of young children is characterised by distinct processes of musical and social enculturation which may, or may not, depending on circumstances, advance into more formalised music learning at a later age. Patricia Shehan Campbell (2010) describes

'enculturation' as a process by which 'individuals achieve cultural competence by way of osmosis, absorbing the many facets of their home environment, learning by virtue of living within a family, community, or culture (65). Afghan children tend to learn music through indirect forms of acquisition such as observation, imitation, and participation, either in the family home or in musical performance contexts. As such, Doubleday and Baily (1995) argue that 'one could not really talk about music education or musical training in this context'[63], and instead proffer the term 'self-paced instruction' (441–442) to describe early years' music learning.

The social environment of an Afghan child has a strong influence on their musical development and learning processes. In turn, this environment is shaped by the socio-cultural constructions and expectations of gender and professionalism, with the separate worlds of men and women, and of professional and amateur musicians, largely anticipated in the musical lives of children at home[64] (Doubleday & Baily, 1995). While all children are exposed to lullabies and women's domestic music from a young age, the long-term learning experience of an Afghan child is determined by their gender and by the classification of his/her family's position within the *kesbi/shauqi* social categorisation of musicians (Baily, 1979: 51–53). Within the concept of 'musician', "Golden Age"[65] scholars (Baily, 1979, 2015a: 34; Sakata, 1983, 1985; Slobin 1976) identified a social distinction between professional (*kesbi*) and amateur (*shauqi*) musicians across the whole country, which is underpinned by a system of binary oppositions (Baily, 1979: 46; Sakata, 1976: 25–16). In terms of musical development, boys and girls from these two social groups acquire 'very different levels of musical competences according to the richness of their musical environment and the expectations with which they grew up' (Doubleday & Baily, 1995: 432)[66]. The

[63] The language used by Doubleday and Baily (1995) to describe traditional learning contexts, such as 'acquire', 'inherit', and 'observe', contrasts starkly with the literature concerning practices in institutions of music learning (Baily, 2015a; Sarmast, 2005) which uses terms more closely associated with 'directed learning process[es]' (Merriam, 1964: 146) such as 'education' and 'teaching' which imply deliberate intent to create a learning situation.
[64] The authors also noted that unlike other societies, Herati children did not have a distinct musical culture of their own and did not compose new songs of their own (Doubleday & Baily, 1995: 435).
[65] See Chapter 1, page 11, f.n.
[66] In Doubleday and Baily (1995), amateur musician families are referred to as 'ordinary' families. Equally, the authors use the term '*sazandeh*' to refer to professional musician families. *Kesbi* refers to any professional musician

only detailed account of children's learning processes comes from the ethnographic research of Doubleday and Baily carried out in Herat during the 1970s. Therefore, the following brief description of the learning process of four distinct categories—amateur female, amateur male, professional female, professional male—is taken from this research[67].

For girls from amateur musician families, any musical development beyond their experiences with women's domestic music and the age of puberty was discouraged, and they never received any formal training (Doubleday & Baily, 1995). Equally, unless their mothers were professional musicians, girls from professional musician families were not encouraged to develop musical skills. Girls who did pursue music professionally acquired their musical skills through apprenticeship, first through watching and listening to music at weddings then beginning to perform, at the age of 10 or 11, solo song-and-dance acts at the same events (Doubleday & Baily, 1995: 439; Doubleday, 2013: 197–198). Later, female musicians learnt to play the *tabla*, and sometimes *'armonia*, although not to the standard of their male counterparts. The main distinction between boys from amateur and professional backgrounds is that the former were mostly self-taught, while the latter were brought up as musicians and taught by their fathers or other family members. Although male children from both groups began with musical enculturation—either through exposure to music in the domestic home (both) or in performance contexts (*kesbi*)—their learning processes differed once the child began to play an instrument[68]. While the process for a *shauqi* remained indirect and self-taught, the child of a *kesbi* family became 'subject to the most *direct* forms of teaching, the father (or relative) demonstrating phrase by phrase, the child imitating and receiving verbal feedback and a great deal of encouragement' (emphasis added, Baily, 1979: 51). As they grew older, amateur male musicians may develop their skills through playing music

while *sazandeh* refers to a professional hereditary musician (Baily, 1988: 102). For clarity, I will refer to the broader categories of *kesbi* and *shauqi*.

[67] Although their data was obtained in Herat, the authors assert that their general analysis applies to Afghanistan as a whole.

[68] Baily notes that the nature of the instrument taken up by a boy from a *kesbi* family is 'dictated by the long-term needs of the family performance group' (Baily, 1979: 51).

with friends, while professional male musicians would continue to learn through playing regularly in professional bands (Doubleday & Baily, 1995).

A noticeable exclusion from the wider literature on music learning in Afghanistan is the ascribed role of being a music 'teacher', or earning a sole income from teaching music, which is not described anywhere as a profession in and of itself[69], but only as one of the duties practised by *ūstāds* ('master musician')—'those musicians who are polished performers and who have a number of students' (Sakata, 1976: 7). An important site for understanding this learning arrangement is the musicians' quarter of Kabul, locally known as *Khucheh Khārābāt* ('Kharabat street/lane/alley'), described as

> […] a place for training in music. Some musicians held music classes in their houses; in effect they ran their own little private music schools. They taught youngsters from within the Kharabat, who learned through an apprenticeship system, in which they paid not with money but with service to their teacher (Baily, 2011a: 21)[70].

The 'master-disciple'[71] arrangement central to the learning protocols of the *Khārābāt*—known in Afghanistan and Pakistan as the *ūstād-shāgerd* (Dari/Urdu) and similar to India's *guru-shishya perampera* (Farrell, 2001)—emphasises 'learning *sineh be sineh* ('chest to chest') – that is, by direct one-to-one personal teaching, rather than through the medium of books and printed notations' (Baily, 2011a: 21). In contrast to the process of musical enculturation experienced by young children described above, the *ūstād-shāgerd* arrangement is a formal learning situation. According to Baily (1988), musicians emphasised the distinction between a person who learned music through taking lessons and a person who learned by ear, and to learn music 'properly', one needed to learn

[69] See Slobin (1976) for an outline of musicians as arranged by musical earnings (48).
[70] See Foschini's (2011) article on the *Khārābāt* for a more recent ethnography of the neighbourhood. The *Khārābāt* was almost completely destroyed during the 1990s but was later rebuilt by the families living there and 'has resumed its role as a centre for musical activity and learning' (Baily, 2018: 18:51).
[71] See Kippen (2008) for a discussion of the master-disciple relationship in India and the region.

music with an *ūstād* who had 'completed' himself in music (*chekideh*)—that is, someone was taught by an *ūstād* himself, could play all the instruments, and who understood the *'ilm-e musiqi* ('science of music') (112).

Lessons in the *ūstād-shāgerd* relationship typically consist of 'continuous repetition, certain patterns, phrasing techniques and compositions [which are] rehearsed and memorized' (Schlaffke, 2016: 84)[72]. However, this does not mean that notation is not a part of the *ūstād-shāgerd* learning process. In his account of learning the *rubāb* with one of these master musicians, *Ūstād* Mohammad Omar in Kabul, Baily (1997) writes 'Ustad's method is first to play you your new piece, then write it out for you, then to play it with you while you try and read it' (122), indicating the use of the Indian *sargam* system within the oral tradition[73] (c.f. Baily, 1988). The *ūstād-shāgerd* relationship was central to the pedagogy of the AKMI Tradition Bearers Programme which was initially set up in Kabul in 2003 as a musical revival effort with a small group of master musicians of Kabuli art music and their students and later expanded to Herat in 2006 (Baily, 2015a: 162–166; see also Doubleday, 2007: 304; Kartomi, 2014: 384–385; Sakata, 2012: 4).

The literature describing contemporary music education practices in Afghanistan suggests that, like Afghan music itself, indigenous learning methods are experiencing a continual process of change which has seen a period of acceleration since 2001. Schlaffke (2016) recently explored the impact of the development of mass media and a new digital public space in Afghanistan on traditional indigenous learning methods and environments. He describes the synthesis of traditional teaching by professional masters with self-taught methods using electronic media as educational tools, a process which Schlaffke ultimately views as an expansion of the *ūstād-shāgerd* paradigm (2016: 85) but which is also arguably evidence of the rapid globalisation experienced in Afghanistan since 2001. In response to these changes, it appears that hereditary oral traditions have become more valued and protected (Schlaffke, 2016: 84). Similar pedagogical transformations

[72] See also Doubleday (1988: 178) for an example of this process in women's music learning.
[73] As Farrell (2001) notes, the use of notation in the *guru-shishya* tradition is a method of shorthand and is not a prescriptive representation of musical form or style (67).

have been observed in both AKMI and ANIM programmes. During the initial years of the AKMI programme, Baily (2015b) noted that group lessons were adopted in favour of the indigenous one-to-one *ūstād-shāgerd* interaction (166), a preference which is also made clear by the presence of group *rubāb* lessons at ANIM (Watkins, 2012: 31:22). Likewise, Western constructs which were previously unheard of in indigenous systems, such as a prescribed curriculum and tiered examinations, slowly became established in the AKMI programme[74] (Baily, 2015a: 166). Overall, these observations suggest an interesting synthesis of indigenous and Western methods of music learning in Afghanistan.

Institutional systems

The disjointed history of Afghanistan's institutional[75] music education system can be pieced together from the writings of Baily (2015a), Doubleday and Baily (1995), Farooz (2016), Howell (2017, 2020, 2021), Kartomi (2014), Maliknezhad (2019), and Sarmast (2005), along with the filmic ethnographies of Baily (2013), Blackwell (2021), and Watkins (2012). Together they highlight three significant narratives: first, since institutional music education was established in Afghanistan around 1924 (Sarmast, 2005), it has been intimately tied to and dependent on the country's political situation; second, there has always been a heavy reliance on foreign financial and personnel support for the operation of these initiatives and a prolific use of Western-based education practices in their programmes; and third, a lack of clarity as to whether music, either Afghan or otherwise, as a subject has ever been a part of the country's nationwide 'modern'[76] education system.

[74] It is unclear from Baily's account exactly who initiated these changes. However, at the time, an Afghan with experience of working in education in Europe, was the director.

[75] Elsewhere in the literature, for example Howell (2017), Afghan institutional music education has been described as formal music education. I find the term 'formal' too broad and ambiguous, and its use implicitly suggests that certain indigenous learning practices, such as the *ūstād-shāgerd* paradigm, are not formal processes. I am therefore using the term 'institutional' to distinguish the distinct setting in which both Western institutionalised and Afghan indigenous methods and practices of music learning take place. See Folkestad (2006) for a critical discussion on the formal/informal binary in music education.

[76] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to survey the literature on Afghanistan's 'modern' education system. However, important contributions in this area include Baiza (2013), Karlsson and Mansory (2007, 2008), Pherali and Sahar (2018), Samady (2001), Sayres (1974), and Yazdani (2020). Baiza (2013) describes Afghanistan's 'modern

Western style institutional music education in Afghanistan has its roots in military modernisation processes and the development of military brass bands. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Amir Abd al-Rahmān (1844–1901) set about creating a new, centralised army in Afghanistan and as part of this process, foreign music advisors were brought in to help establish the country's first military brass bands with bagpipes. These musical advisors were mostly Indian bandsmen, most likely trained by British bandsmen and musical advisors (Sarmast, 2005: 299–300). Decades later, during the reign of Amānullāh Khan, an institution for music training, which was attached to the military college and responsible for providing musicians for the royal court's brass band—*Muzik Risala-e Shahi* (Music Band of Royal Command)—alongside bands in the military camps and municipal brass bands called *bājakhānas*, was established (Sarmast, 2005: 308). This institution, founded c.1924, is understood to be the first institutional music school in Afghanistan[77]. An almost identical process of establishing European-style institutional music education occurred in neighbouring Iran a few decades earlier. In an attempt to modernise Iran's military, the Qajar monarch Nasir ed Din Shah (1831–1896) invited a French music master in the 1850s to train his *corps de musique* (Zonis, 1973: 39). Starting with Bousquet and Rouillon in 1856 and followed by Alfred Jean Batiste Lemaire in 1868, these French advisors were brought in to assist with the country's military institution and resulted in the establishment of Iran's first formal music school[78] (Zonis, 1973: 39). Like Afghanistan's first military-affiliated music school, this institution became an important place for training military band players and music administrators. However, the political changes that took place in Afghanistan during the second half of the 1920s disrupted the development of music education in this sphere and the military music school was

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education' system as the 'Western-style education—that is non-traditional or non-*madrasa* education—that emerged tentatively under Amir Sher Ali's rule and was fully realised at the beginning of Habibullah's period (44). Despite existing in Afghanistan for over a century, it is still referred to in the literature as 'modern', an English translation of *talimat-e jadid* (new or modern education) or *talimat asri* (contemporary education) (Baiza, 2013: 44).

[77] Likewise, one of Oman's first music academic initiatives was the establishment of a military music school in the 1970s (Aljabri, 2017: 52).

[78] Although not mentioned explicitly by Zonis, Nooshin (2015) describes this institution as 'the *first* formal music school in Iran' (emphasis added, 57; see also Bastaninezhad, 2014, 7–8). It is now the chief music conservatory in Tehran.

closed either during the 1924 rebellion against modernist reforms or after the fall of Amānullāh Khan in 1929 (Sarmast, 2005: 309). Once modernist reforms were resumed in the 1930s, a music education institution called *Maktab-i Musik* (School of Music) was re-established by the Ministry of Defence c.1934 (Sarmast, 2005: 310).

During the second half of the twentieth century, a civic music education institution was gradually established. In 1974, the music courses which had been run by Austrian music trainers at the Ministry of Education since 1959 were developed into the country's first specialised 'Music Lycée' (known as *Lycée Honari*), sponsored by the Ministry of High and Professional Education (Sarmast, 2005: 348). For many years the music school only provided tuition in Western music theory, *solfège*, piano, guitar, saxophone, drums, flute, trombone and accordion, and provided tuition to a number of prominent Afghan musicians working in Western music genres including Babrak Wassa[79], Khaled Arman, and Ahmad Sarmast (Baily, 2015a: 205–206 f.n.). The school was closed in 1992 when the Coalition government came to power and reopened in 2003 as a Vocational School of Fine Arts with a dedicated Music Department. The minimal infrastructure, staff, and students of this music department later became the early foundations for the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. My interlocutors who started their music education at the *Lycée Honari* were very scathing about the quality of the music education they received and felt that their time there was 'a big waste of our life' (Tabesh, interview, June 20, 2020) and that music was viewed as an extra-curricular activity for students to 'have some fun' (Tabesh, interview, June 20, 2020). Some described how they were unable to select the instrument they wanted to learn and were instead assigned an instrument depending on existing numbers, instruments available, and even physical features (for example, longer fingers for piano or bigger lips for trumpet). All agreed that the school had no dedicated teachers and that their practice time was extremely short due to a severe lack of instruments. These narratives support those described in Howell (2017).

[79] Wassa composed the music for Afghanistan's national anthem (*Sarūd-i Milli*) that was used from 2006 to 2021.

As Sarmast (2005) notes, 'it was foreign experts who were responsible for the introduction of Western notation and the dissemination of Western musical instruments within the first and subsequent music educational institutions of the country' (302)[80]. He describes how during the twentieth century, advisors came from the USSR (Sarmast, 2000: 3), Turkey[81], (Sarmast, 2000: 3; Sarmast, 2005: 311–312), and Austria (Sarmast, 2005: 306) to work in a variety of military and civic institutes of music learning, a list which has increased dramatically with the continual stream of foreign tutors working in projects established since 2001 (see Baily, 2015a: 162–66; Watkins, 2012). Consequently, it appears that a privileging of Western instruments, genres, and pedagogical methods occurred in this context, which is clearly discernible in the limited literature describing the academic activities of the various formal institutions of musical learning in operation during the last century. At the *Maktab-i Musik*, students were taught according to the *solfège* system and Western notation (Sarmast, 2005: 311) and at the Vocational School of Music (*Lycée Honari*), it wasn't until 1987—13 years after its establishment—that Afghan traditional instrumental training was introduced to what was until then an entirely Western-based programme (Baily, 2015a: 206 f.n.). The institutions' heavy focus on Western musical models, alongside the exclusion of local musics, suggests a degree of control over the musical knowledge being taught. This scenario resonates with Edward Said's (1978) critique of Orientalism and the West's way of 'dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (1978). In the Afghan context, an Orientalist discourse was established in which Western systems of musical knowledge, brought in by foreign advisors, became the dominant and authoritative pedagogy while Afghan traditions were 'othered'. By contrast, the music curricula at ANIM and Kabul University (since its reopening in 2002) have, from their inception, provided equal training in both indigenous and Western systems (Baily, 2015a: 205–208), with the former institution creating hybridised orchestras which contain

[80] Western instruments, styles, and ensembles have existed in Afghanistan since the late nineteenth century (Gray, 1895: 134, 219, 376, 481; Martin, 1907: 70–71, 223–225).
[81] Given that Turkey received a similar influx of foreign music specialists from Europe after 1930 (Göktürk-Cary, 2019: 275) it can be assumed that Afghanistan was receiving European models second-hand.

instruments from both traditions (see Watkins, 2012: 42:37). Thus, it appears that in light of recent demands to revive and preserve Afghanistan's indigenous music cultures, the previous imbalance has been adjusted to some extent[82].

Music in state and private school curricula

Since 2001, music as a subject has been absent from Afghanistan's national curriculum in state-run schools. Prior to this, it is unclear as to whether music was ever taught in Afghanistan's state-run schools at primary or secondary level[83]. Doubleday and Baily (1995) claim that 'in prewar Afghanistan instrumental music played no part in either the traditional or secular school curriculum' and 'nor was music taught as a subject in government schools' (434). By contrast, Sarmast (2005) suggests that during the educational reforms of the early 1920s music as a subject was inserted into a new system of secular and vocational curricula introduced into the country's modern education programmes (308–309): according to this narrative, masters of Hindustani music taught at the Lycée Habibya, Lycée Amaniya[84], and the college of pedagogy (Sarmast, 2005: 309). Following the 1924 rebellion against Amanullah's modernist reforms, music was withdrawn from the modern education curriculum and Sarmast claims that 'never again has music been part of the secondary school programme' (Sarmast, 2005: 309)[85]. Elsewhere in the literature, however, there is evidence to suggest that music, in one form or another, existed within Afghanistan's school curriculum during the communist government era. Doubleday and Baily's (1995) slightly ambiguous claim that 'after the communist government came to power in 1977, music education may seem to have been incorporated more into the school curriculum' (435) is reinforced by Karlsson and Mansory's (2008) research which demonstrates that music as a subject was allocated

[82] See Chapter 6 for a critique of the aspects of ANIM's programme that produce forms of re-Orientalism.
[83] In neighbouring Iran, music 'has never been a part of an official discourse in public education' (Niknafs, 2020: 5).
[84] Later known as the 'Lycée Istiqlal'.
[85] Howell (2017), drawing on Sarmast (2005), also claims that Afghan music has never been taught in schools apart from a brief period in the early 1920s (73).

one hour a week in primary school curricula under the communist government from 1978–c.1989 (17).

Whether or not music was officially recognised within state school curricula, music activities have sometimes enjoyed a place in Afghan school classrooms. As Baily (2001a) notes, before 1978 some amateur musician school teachers 'might organise informal musical activities for their pupils, such as occasional concerts to invited audiences to display the children's talents (especially in singing)' (18). Such ad hoc music making is exemplified by Louise Pascale's 'Afghan Songbook Project' (2011, 2013). While working in Afghanistan as a member of the US Peace Corps in the 1960s, Pascale embarked on a project to collect Afghan children's songs into a book which was distributed to elementary schools across the country. Nearly forty years later, Pascale revived the Afghan Songbook Project with the help of Afghan musician, Vaheed Kaacemy, and revised and updated songbook packs, along with an accompanying CD, were distributed to schools and orphanages. Recognising music's potential contribution to Afghanistan's general education, Pascale created a teacher's guide which linked the songs to building basic reading and writing skills. While music may not have played a recognised role in the national curriculum at the time, in schools where the Songbook was the only educational resource, music became a crucial learning tool.

In the two years prior to the Taliban's return to power, attempts were made to include certain forms of music in Afghanistan's National Curriculum[86]. Within the Afghan Government's 'National Education Strategic Plan' (NESP III, 2017–2021), curriculum reform was identified as a key priority in efforts to improve the quality and relevance of education in the country (Ministry of Education, 2016). As part of its Capacity Development for Education 2030 (CapED) program[87],

[86] At the 2011 'Afghan Music Festival', held at *Bagh-e-Babur* (Babur Gardens), Kabul, Sayed Makhdoom Rahin announced the Afghan Ministry of Culture's goal to include music as a subject in the school curriculum (Maliknezhad, 2019).

[87] CapEd 'assists the development of more equal and sustainable societies by creating lifelong learning systems and increased learning opportunities for all' (UNESCO, 2019). In Afghanistan, CapED is supporting 'ambitious curriculum reform' (UNESCO, 2019).

Afghanistan's Ministry of Education (MoE) worked with UNESCO to develop a new advanced subject syllabus for the Arts, based on a new competency-based curriculum framework[88]. Much of the curriculum was devised over a two-week period in late 2019 during which UNESCO staff, a MoE team, and international subject specialists came together in New Delhi for intensive face-to-face team workshops (and later remote online work) (Lierse, 2020). While visual arts, handicraft, calligraphy, and drama were deemed central to Afghan culture, for the delegation from Afghanistan, music was a 'sensitive issue', and they were initially reluctant to include it in the curriculum (Lierse, 2020). However, after a period of negotiation and probing, unaccompanied singing[89] of the Afghan National Anthem and patriotic songs was included in the curriculum; this was the only form of music making which adhered to the views of all political and religious groups and would therefore enable the new curriculum to be rolled out in all provinces (Lierse, 2020). The return of the Taliban government has thwarted, for the time being at least, any plans to include music making in state-run schools.

In contrast, private schools in Afghanistan increasingly incorporated some form of music making into their education programmes in the past two decades. Several students who attended ANIM, either as permanent students or as part of the Annual Winter Music Academy, taught Afghan, Hindustani, and Western musical traditions in private schools in Kabul (Afghan-Turk Maarif International School, Afghanistan International School) and in the regional capitals of Herat and Mazar-i Sharif (Professor Sakena Yacoobi Private School and Afghan-Turk Maarif Schools, respectively)[90]. Some schools, such as the Afghan-Turk Maarif International School in Kabul, had a dedicated music department while others integrated music into their general curriculum. The content of the music activities at each school varied: one teacher, who provided music classes at a school in Mazar-i Sharif, was responsible for teaching Western theory and *solfège*,

[88] See Ministry of Education (2016) for a more detailed discussion of the reforms which took place under the NESP III.
[89] Instrumental music was not allowed.
[90] This list of schools is not comprehensive and is just a representation taken from my interlocutors' accounts; there may have been other private schools offering music education from 2001–2021.

teaching guitar (first individually and then in groups), and preparing students to sing Afghan, Turkish, and other songs for special events and celebrations, while another from Herat solely taught Afghan traditional and local Herati music. However, even in these private schools, music was not always viewed as an essential or valuable component of the schools' educational programmes. One provincial educator felt that there was insufficient time provisioned for music classes at his institution and that 'the main attention of the school [was] their general education and not music' (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020). Despite being the only music teacher, he lacked agency to teach in the way he believed best for the students' learning and admitted that 'I feel like I'm in a caged system and I should just do what [the school] want' (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020). Finally, at one Kabul institution, the entire music and arts programme was cancelled when the American member of the board of directors left and the school attempted to save money (Tabesh, interview, June 20, 2020).

Informal music learning practices

The current research also identified what Göran Folkestad (2006) terms 'informal music learning practices' among interviewees' narratives, where music knowledge was acquired outside school and formal learning situations. Music students and recently graduated teachers from ANIM and Kabul University often enriched their institutional education with their own self-driven learning through the internet: 'I taught myself the guitar from YouTube channels. I found many videos. I practise a single video of five minutes over one month to learn that specific piece' (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020). For students who either lacked a permanent teacher or whose teacher had limited knowledge, the internet was a useful learning resource: 'when I face problems with some pieces, I go to search YouTube, I'm searching the internet' (Elyas, interview, June 19, 2020). Schlaffke (2016) also notes the increase in self-taught musical learning within Afghanistan's indigenous system, and identifies a 'new learning culture, which differs in many respects from the traditional method and which is dominated by the requirements of digital media' (86). Music

educators also utilised social media platforms such as Telegram and YouTube to share information and resources with their students outside of their regular lessons, a practice which was accelerated by the online learning necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The content shared on these platforms included demonstrational videos, audio descriptions of musical terms, videos of Western classical music/Afghan music taken from the internet, and links to scores and other online learning resources. Indeed, one of my non-Afghan interlocutors believed that Afghanistan's music culture was gradually shifting online as it increasingly struggled to thrive in Kabul and other cities (Michael, interview, June 19, 2020).

Institutional Music Education from 2001–2021

The end of the first Taliban regime in 2001 gave way to a rebirth of music education in Afghanistan. Having suffered an increasing level of censorship since 1978, music was finally permitted again in daily Afghan life and music education was recognised as one mechanism through which to revive and protect Afghanistan's musical heritage. Baily (2015a), Doubleday (2007), and Sarmast (2006) briefly document early attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, to establish and re-establish music education initiatives in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Taliban's defeat: among them, a small music department was re-established in the School of Fine Arts[91]; Kabul University's music department was reopened; the Aga Khan Music Initiative started its Tradition Bearers Programme; music courses were provided to adult music trainees at the Music Training Directorate at the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism; short-term (3–6 month) music courses were run at local orphanages such as Aschiana and Allahudin; and finally, the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society established a six-month music programme for two girls' schools in Kabul. Similarly, in the mid-2000s, Afghan musician Nazir Khara established a

[91] Previously the Vocational School of Music (*Lycée Honari*). The funds which helped to reopen the *Lycée Honari* in March 2003 were collected with the help of Polish children through the Polish Humanitarian Organization's 'One Zloty for Afghani Children' campaign. From November 2001 to August 2002, children from around 2215 schools in Poland donated their pocket money to raise approximately USD$100,000 (Polish Humanitarian Action, 2005).

clandestine 'Education Centre for Music' (Ghilzai, 2018) which was part funded by the US-based 'Afghan Music Project' (Nawa, 2008). Accounts of these institutions and music schools indicate that their proper functioning was severely curtailed by a lack of financial and institutional support, shortage of expertise and instruments, and tensions around offering females access to music education. The inclusion of girls in these early initiatives was an important factor in securing vital international funding—in line with the international community's focus on improving the lives of Afghan women—and led to the Polish Humanitarian Organization (PHO)[92] mission withdrawing their support for the *Lycée Honari* (the Fine Arts High School which later became ANIM) when its director refused to admit female students (Doubleday, 2007: 303). In his 2006 report on 'Music in Afghanistan Today', Sarmast reported that 'despite some positive developments, the revival of music has been patchy, intermittent, very slow and severely hampered by circumstances reflecting the long history of musical destruction' (Sarmast, 2006: 3). His subsequent recommendation to establish a 'vocational secondary school of music' was the seed from which ANIM would eventually grow.

By the end of the peacebuilding era, however, three main institutions—which will be discussed in the following sections—were successfully operating in Kabul and Herat. Through these institutions, a new generation of Afghan musicians and educators were trained who would ensure the survival of Afghanistan's musical heritage and introduce Afghan society to Western musical genres such as classical and popular music. My own experience of working at ANIM combined with participant accounts suggests that at the top level, cooperation and collaboration between the institutions was limited and fluctuated over time—some initially established working partnerships but these disintegrated due to several factors such as lack of trust, competition and possession over resources, disagreements between institution directors, financial constraints, or decisions made by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education. By contrast, there

[92] Known today as Polish Humanitarian Action or *Polska Akcja Humanitarna* (PAH).

was a greater degree of collaboration between the students of these institutions as they sought to bring together their skills and knowledge for their own individual projects. With the exception of Aga Khan's music school in Herat (capital of Herat province and third-largest city in the country), all of the main institutions were situated in Kabul, thus confining institutional music education to the country's capital. Furthermore, all three institutions were (re-)established with some degree of foreign intervention, either through funding and financial aid or through foreign teachers and/or advisors brought in to help set up and teach at the institutions. While ANIM and Kabul University's Music Department were part of Afghanistan's modern education system—and came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, respectively—the Aga Khan Music Initiative was run by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, a non-denominational philanthropic foundation.

Following a description of these institutions, I provide a representative but by no means comprehensive overview of the grassroots academies and music courses run by graduates of these main institutions (and other musicians) that emerged in Kabul and other regional capitals during the past two decades. Any efforts to provide an exhaustive mapping would be futile given the fast-changing environment of the country; due to security, funding, and changing demands for music, initiatives come and go at varying pace and are often undocumented.

Kabul University School of Fine Arts

The Music Department at Kabul University[93] was established in 1981 as part of the Faculty of Fine Arts[94]. Until the return of the Taliban in August 2021 it was the only tertiary institution in Afghanistan to offer music as a subject. Like many cultural institutions, the department was closed during the civil unrest of the early 1990s and the subsequent Taliban regime. With the help of

[93] In 1932, Afghanistan's first Faculty of Medicine was established in Kabul. Over the next decade and a half, further faculties of Law, Science and Letters were founded, and eventually these faculties formed the basis for the University of Kabul, the country's first university (Akseer, 2013: 12).
[94] The Faculty of Fine Arts was opened in 1967.

external donors, including the Goethe Institute, music classes recommenced in 2002 after the ousting of the Taliban and a year later, a broad four-year music degree course was inaugurated (Doubleday, 2007: 303). During his visit to the department in late 2002, Baily (2015a) noted that both *gharbi* 'western' and *sharqi* 'eastern' music were being taught; the former consisted of 'harmonized Afghan melodies, with the use of western notation', while the latter referred to North Indian classical music (154–155). Over the course of the following decade, the scope of the music department's taught subjects expanded considerably. By 2016, the department had two educational programmes in 'Afghan' and 'global' music at Bachelor's degree level (Farooz, 2016: 25) and the content of these courses had grown to include a range of subject areas: Table 2 outlines the 'core' and 'specialisation' subjects offered by the 'Music and Audio Engineering Department'[95]. In addition to these subjects, students were required to take an elective language (either English, German, or Arabic) and compulsory subjects of 'Islamic Law' and 'Contemporary History of Afghanistan'. Although not focussed specifically on music, the Faculty of Fine Arts started a Visual and Performing Arts Master's Degree in 2013.

[95] Every three years the University undergoes a curriculum revision. This list represents the curriculum in 2020.

Table 2. Bachelor of Music subjects offered at Kabul University Music Department

Core Subjects
Theory of Eastern Music (Hindustani Classical Music)
Theory of Western Music
Solfege
Music History
Ensemble and Directory
Harmony
Knowledge of Taal
Organology
Knowledge of Raga
Ethnomusicology
Poetry and Music
Choral
Light Music (Jazz, Rock, Popular music)
Composition
Musicology
Music of Film
Music Forms (Eastern and Western)
Specialisation Subjects
Vocal Music (Hindustani Classical Music)
Guitar
Piano
Violin
Percussion (Drum Set)
Audio Engineering
Tabla

Many music students gained places to study at the Music Department through the *kankors*[96], a nationwide university examination which tests students' academic level in a range of subjects. The level of musical ability and knowledge among these students was variable; some could already play an instrument while others were entirely new to music. Students from AKMI and ANIM, however, were sometimes offered alternative pathways to study at the University. For several years, Grade 14 students who had graduated from ANIM were given a special dispensation to enter the Bachelor's course at Kabul University in the third year. An agreement between ANIM, Kabul University, and the Ministry of Education recognised that Grade 14 students had completed

[96] The spelling of this term varies across the literature. Baiza (2013) and Kennis (2020) use 'Concours' exam, referring to the term's origin in French for 'competition'. However, Sherzad (2016), Zirack (2020), and Afghan media refer to 'kankor' exam.

their education to a second-year college level and their State Exam could act as an entrance exam[97]. However, many of the ANIM graduates who did continue their education at Kabul University were also employed as junior faculty at ANIM, and consequently they could only attend the 'night school'. As one of the University faculty explained, 'we had no ANIM students coming in during the day. And that would have helped us build up even our Western music programme because we could have had some of those kids that actually had some training' (Kate, interview, June 15, 2020). Similarly, under an exchange agreement between the two organisations, students from AKMI were able to enter Kabul University's music programme without taking the *kankors* exam. In return, AKMI sent teachers of Eastern instruments which Kabul University didn't have to teach in its programme. However, this exchange programme was eventually removed by the Ministry of Higher Education (Rashid, interview, June 19, 2020).

The aims of the Music Department over the last decade were to 'improve the quality of education, to create a stimulating environment for musical education, and to educate future teachers and academics' (Farooz, 2016: 25). Many of the teachers and professors at the Music Department had no official or systematic training in how to teach their instruments or academic subjects. Initially, graduates could be employed with a Bachelor's degree but the Ministry of Education later required new teachers to have a minimum of a Master's degree to work at the University. Consequently, existing faculty at the Music Department were actively searching for or undertaking Master's degrees overseas in order to meet these requirements. In addition to these tertiary qualifications, all teachers needed to produce 'promotion papers'—academic papers that were internally assessed—alongside publications in recognised international academic journals, in order to move up the University's ranks. At the time of my research (June 2020–August 2021), there were no Afghan female members of staff at the Music Department—there was one foreign female employed as a 'Consultant in Western Music'—and female student enrolment fluctuated

[97] Some interlocutors indicated that this alternative entrance exam may have stopped, and ANIM graduates were required to pass the *kankors*.

year by year. The Music Department at Kabul University has been indefinitely closed since August 2021.

Aga Khan Music Initiative

First established in Central Asia[98] in 2000 by the Aga Khan[99] Development Network and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI) is an 'interregional music and arts education programme' (Aga Khan Development Network, 2020a) which works 'to promote the revitalization of musical heritage in order to provide a livelihood for musical artists and to strengthen pluralism and dialogue in nations where those very things face significant social, political, and economic challenges' (Bayat, 2018). Described in the sparse literature as a 'humanitarian initiative' (Doubleday, 2007; Kordmafi, 2018), AKMI's focus is on 'music practice in the realms of transmission and performance' (O'Connell, 2015: 618)[100]. This vision is manifested through a 'Tradition Bearers Programme' in which master musicians train disciples through the traditional apprenticeship known as 'ustâd shâgird' (Aga Khan Development Network, 2020b). In Afghanistan, AKMI operated in the capital Kabul and the western regional capital of Herat; the Kabul school was established in 2003 with the help of ethnomusicologist John Baily, and the Herat school followed in 2009 (Baily, 2015a). Both music schools were immediately closed when the Taliban regained power in August 2021.

Each iteration of AKMI in Central Asia (AKMICA) addresses a concern for the preservation of a particular musical heritage in its respective country. In Afghanistan, AKMI responded to immediate concerns over the fragility and possible loss of the country's traditional

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[98] Since then, AKMI has expanded to include parts of the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia (O'Connell, 2015). See Kordmafi (2018) for a description of 'The Academy of Maqam' in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, which was founded with the support of AKMI.

[99] His Highness the Aga Khan is the hereditary Imam (Spiritual Leader) of the Shia Imami Isamili Muslims. Belonging to the Shia branch of Islam, the Shia Ismaili Muslims are a community of ethnically and culturally diverse peoples living in over 25 countries worldwide.

[100] In Central Asia, the Music Initiative is complemented by the Aga Khan Humanities Project which focusses on curriculum development, academic instruction, and scholarly research and 'aims to promote leadership through a humanist approach to education' (O'Connell, 2015: 618).

methods of teaching and learning and intangible musical heritage as a result of the Taliban's strict censorship of music during their first regime. In a report written a year after the fall of the Taliban, Baily made a number of recommendations to help restore the country's music life including the 're-establishment of music education, and bringing back musicians from abroad for concerts and to teach' (Baily, 2015a: 162). Unlike other Afghan music education institutions, such as ANIM and the Kabul University School of Fine Arts, which offered students training in both Western and Afghan music, AKMI's focus was solely on Afghanistan's music traditions. In the programme's early years, the emphasis was on teaching Kabuli art music, or the art of *ghazal* singing, alongside instrumental pieces of the *naghma-ye charārtuk* genre and for *rubāb* students, *nagma-ye klāsik* (classical music) (Baily, 2015a: 165). Over the years, the instruments taught at the AKMI schools expanded to include *rubāb*, *ghichak*, *tulak*, *dambura*, *tanbūr*, *dutār*, *tabla*, *dilrubā*, and singing, the programmes incorporated the regional musics of Afghanistan, and women were able to enrol in the programme. In addition to the Tradition Bearers Programme, the initiative also included 'music research and archiving in Herat and Badakhshan, as well as outreach to schools, instrument-making workshops, and public performances' (Haskell, 2015: 462). The AKMI in Afghanistan was forced to discontinue its activities in August 2021 when the Taliban took over the country.

Afghanistan National Institute of Music

The Afghanistan National Institute of Music, also known as 'ANIM'[101], was a co-educational vocational music school (grades 4–14) founded by Ahmad Sarmast as part of Monash University's (Australia) 'Revival of Afghan Music' (ROAM) project. As previously mentioned, ANIM grew out of the Music Department at the *Lycée Honari* which Sarmast said 'existed just in name with no

[101] There have been two notable films made exclusively about ANIM: *Dr Sarmast's Music School* (2012) directed by Polly Watkins and *Return of the Nightingales* (2013) directed by ethnomusicologist John Baily. Both offer a visual portrayal of the school's early music activities; the former focusses on giving a broad account of the story behind the school's establishment while the latter emphasizes the teaching, rehearsal, and performance of the music. There is also a written account of ANIM in the final chapter of Baily (2015a). See also Forrest (2013) for an interview with Ahmad Sarmast.

music program, no music educators, no facilities or equipment, no musical instruments, and no sheet music' (Forrest, 2013: 78). While preparations to establish ANIM began in 2006, the school was officially opened in June 2010 and continued to operate until August 2021 when the Taliban returned to power, and the school's buildings were taken over as a base for the Haqqani network[102]. The takeover prompted a major international effort to evacuate the entire school which led to five separate airlifts to Doha between 3 October and 16 November 2021[103] (Gavrilis, 2021; Hernández, 2021). The school is currently in the process of re-establishing itself in Lisbon, Portugal, where members of staff, students, and some family members have been granted asylum (The Portugal News, 2021).

ANIM offered a core curriculum of general subjects, such as Maths, Science, Religion, Sports, Dari, Pashto, and English, in addition to a specialist music programme which incorporated Afghan traditional music (regional folk and urban classical art music), Hindustani classical music, and Western classical music. Students received individual tuition in one instrument (and a second instrument at Grades 13 and 14) and took a range of academic music subjects such as Harmony and Theory, Ear Training, Rhythm, Hindustani Music Theory, Analysis and Forms, and Advanced Harmony. ANIM followed a strictly curriculum-based pedagogy for both instrumental teaching (Western, Afghan, and North Indian instruments) and general and music academic subjects. The school's Western music curricula were originally designed by the National College of Music and Arts[104], London, and were subsequently revised by various foreign and local faculty members[105] during the school's lifetime. Curricula for Afghan and Hindustani instruments were developed by Afghan teachers and faculty from India. However, each instrumental teacher had some freedom

[102] Sunni Islamist militant organisation, founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani, which is officially subsumed under the larger Taliban organisation.
[103] The school officially announced that all current students from grades 6–14 and faculty were evacuated, however some students and staff either decided to stay in Afghanistan or leave the country with their families via other routes. Furthermore, there is some sensitivity around the subject of the evacuation as a number of former ANIM students who had contributed significantly to the school's programme over the last decade were not included.
[104] Small examinations board specialising in music and speech subjects.
[105] Where a local faculty member was tasked with revising their instrument's curriculum, this was usually done with the help of and in consultation with a foreign faculty member.

in what they taught and visiting tutors also brought with them their own practices and ideas. Formal examinations took place twice a year in all subjects, and students were required to undertake a practical examination in their instrument—this was modelled on other international music examination boards (such as ABRSM and AMEB) and included three contrasting pieces, a duet/ensemble piece, scales and arpeggios for Western instruments, and sight reading.

Students were typically enrolled at primary level (Grade 4) and continued to the end of their secondary education (Grade 12), at which point they had the option to continue at the school for Grades 13 and 14 to obtain their Associate Diploma. Prospective students needed to pass a 'musical aptitude test' in which they were scored on their ability to sing an unaccompanied song of their choice, clap simple rhythms in 4/4, sing as echoes three short melodies in C major, discern the higher of two notes, and determine if two phrases were the same or different (all melodies and notes played on the piano)[106]. With the help of international donations and funding, the school was able to provide each student with their own instrument, although these instruments could not be taken home for practise due to security concerns.

ANIM also had a substantial ensembles programme which included a vocal choir, small Afghan and North Indian ensembles—such as the *Sitār* and *Sarod* ensemble, *Qawwali* group, *Azadi* Ensemble, *Tabla* Ensemble, *Rubāb* Ensemble—and three large hybrid (Western, Afghan, and Hindustani instruments) orchestras—the Afghan Youth Orchestra, the ANIM National Symphony Orchestra, and Afghanistan's first all-female orchestra, 'Zohra'[107]. Many of these ensembles performed nationally, regionally, and globally, and participated in international

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[106] In my view, this exclusionary mechanism—which is strikingly similar to the aural tests required in ABRSM's lower grade examinations—undermines the school's commitment to equal access to music education by restricting the school's programme to students who show potential to excel as musicians. The test equated musical ability with aural abilities and was culturally biased towards a set of 'objective' measures based on Western tonal music. The belief in innate and testable musical talent, however, has been challenged and is now viewed as a social construction which acquires different meanings in, and across, different cultures (Devaney, 2019; Hallam, 2010; Hallam & Prince, 2003; Helding, 2011).

[107] Much of the data gathered for this research and the case studies discussed in this thesis pertain to the Zohra Orchestra. This focus reflects not only my own personal experience as the orchestra's Artistic Director from 2017–2019, but also the ensemble's prolific international presence. See Blackwell's short film *Sister* (2021) which documents the lives and aspirations of, and challenges faced by, Zohra's members.

competitions and festivals such as the Sharq Taronalari International Festival in Uzbekistan, Viljandi Folk Festival in Estonia, and ChoirFest Middle East in Dubai. Membership of at least one ensemble was compulsory for all students as part of the 'ensembles' class.

Like many post-2001 music education interventions in Afghanistan, ANIM was established to help revive and develop Afghanistan's musical traditions following decades of war and to train the next generation of Afghan musicians and educators. At the same time, the school was a manifestation of Sarmast's desire to 'use the power of music to bring about social changes, to transform the life of Afghan children and return their musical rights' (Sarmast quoted in Forrest, 2013: 76). The school made music education available to all Afghan children regardless of gender, economic circumstances, ethnic background, or religion, and maintained strong partnerships with several local NGOs and orphanages, such as Save the Children, the Afghan Child Education and Care Organization (AFCECO), and Aschiana, in order to recruit children from the most disadvantaged strata of Afghan society such as street working kids, orphans, and girls. The school's ambitions to revive Afghan musical traditions while simultaneously transforming the lives of the country's most underprivileged groups through music resonate with characteristics of other contemporary ensembles and youth orchestra programmes around the globe, including Uzbekistan's Omnibus Ensemble (Lisack, 2018) and Venezuela's El Sistema (Hallam 2012, Tunstall & Booth, 2016)[108], respectively.

The school held a unique position within the country's 'modern' education system. Despite being an initiative of Afghanistan's Ministry of Education and later the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Authority[109], ANIM increasingly became an autonomous institution which had full control over its external funding, academic affairs and reforms, procurement of resources, and administration and human resources. The school received a

[108] By contrast, Baker (2014b) provides a critical analysis of El Sistema and largely dismisses prevailing notions that the programme is a force for positive social change.

[109] Formerly the Deputy Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (DMTVET) under the Ministry of Education.

substantial amount of funding from foreign governments, NGOs, private donors, and development banks over the years[110], affording it a privileged position in comparison with other state schools in the country. During its existence in Afghanistan, ANIM was co-financed by The World Bank—a transnational body which embodies free trade as their governing ideology—through its Afghanistan Skills Development Project (ASDP)[111] which supported the development of sustainable vocational education in the country. While for The World Bank 'the need to build skills and capacity in Afghanistan was recognized as a priority for continued peace-building, long-term economic growth, and poverty reduction' (Flanagan, 2015)[112], this necessarily required the support of the Afghan Government who were the main decision makers when it came to investing in skills development and vocational education at the time.

Finally, in early 2020, an interlocutor at ANIM explained that a 'sister school' had been established in the north-eastern province of Badakhshan which was focussed solely on teaching Afghan instruments and music and vocational training. Supported by funding from Playing for Change and the Polar Music Prize, the sister school was going to receive training, curricula, and resources from the main ANIM campus in Kabul.

Grassroots academies and music courses

Privately-run, grassroots music courses and academies existed in Kabul from the early 2000s, but after the establishment of ANIM, Kabul University's music course, and the Aga Khan Music Initiative, the number increased as graduates of these institutions started to find and create work in their respective cities. I am using the term 'grassroots' to distinguish between those initiatives

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[110] It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of these donors, but significant funds came from the British Council, Goethe Institute, Monash University, and the Embassies of the United States of America, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden.

[111] Two ASDP projects ran from 2010 to 2021: the first was the Afghanistan Skills Development Project, followed by the Second Afghanistan Skills Development Project. See Chapter 4, pp. 109–110, for further discussion on the role of The World Bank and ASDP at ANIM.

[112] It is important to note that The World Bank did not implement these projects or dictate how they were run but rather had an accountability role to ensure projects met targets and were performing well.

which were established by ordinary Afghan citizens with local support and larger organisations, such as the main music education institutions described above, which were largely founded and supported by international organisations and funding. In turn, these grassroots music courses are distinct from the indigenous *ūstād-shāgerd* teaching contexts described earlier. The exact nature of the grassroots courses and academies varied depending on the founder's vision and expertise, but they can be loosely described as small privately-run schools which offered private instrumental and academic tuition to the Afghan public, and in a couple of cases to foreign workers, in various areas of Afghan traditional, Hindustani Classical, and Western classical music. Some had permanent studios where teachers conducted their lessons while others travelled around their respective cities to teach at various locations. In addition, all used some form of social media, such as the platform Telegram, to supplement their teaching online. All the music courses I researched in Kabul and regional areas were run by male musicians except for one Kabul-based project run by *rubāb* player Fazila Zamir—a graduate of ANIM and the Faculty of Fine Arts at Kabul University—which taught women in the private sphere of the domestic home to encourage female participation in music. These initiatives constituted the early shoots of Afghanistan's homegrown music education industry and provided optimism that institutional music education in Afghanistan would continue to grow after foreign support ceased. In Herat, private grassroots schools and courses were the only institutional music education available because 'there [was] no official or public school for teaching and learning music in Herat' (Wais, interview, June 21, 2021). However, as this section illustrates, these music courses and academies were vulnerable to the social, economic, and political challenges of post-2001 Afghanistan and as such, their existence was extremely fragile. While some music courses were well-established and operated for several years, others were only around for a few months at a time and then disappeared.

The genres of music and instruments taught at grassroots music courses varied depending on the students' interests and goals for learning, and the teacher's own training. For example, at 'Tolo' music course (Kabul)—a small music school made up of graduates from Kabul's music

education institutions—lessons were offered in guitar, violin, *'armonia*, and theory (both Western and Hindustani), while at 'Musico Academy' (Kabul)—founded and run by an ANIM graduate—lessons were offered in guitar, piano, violin, *rubāb*, *'armonia*, and *tula*. Although one guitar instructor I spoke to taught Western classical music at one of his music courses, the rest of my interlocutors explained that many of their Afghan students weren't interested in the genre and wanted to focus on learning Afghan music:

> If I have ten students, nine of them they don't like classical music. Because they don't know this kind of thing. So they say 'this is very dry, no feeling', something like this, and they just want to learn piano to sing some songs, this kind of thing. And also, most of them have a vision to join to the *Afghan Star* programme that is about singing (Arash, interview, July 10, 2020).

Teachers expressed some frustration about their students not taking music very seriously, complaining that 'they don't want to learn very difficult music. They just want to learn something and show themselves on Instagram and TikTok, they don't want to really learn music for music, they just want to have some videos to show the others' (Elyas, interview, June 19, 2020). These comments indicate that while Western classical music was successfully taught at ANIM and Kabul University, the demand for learning this genre outside of these institutions was low. Discussions with other musicians suggested that Western classical music did not, at the time, have a recognisable place in Afghan society. One instrumentalist, who occasionally performed at foreign embassies and up-market hotels, explained that 'there isn't much of an audience for classical music here, so who would I play for? […] There are very, very few Afghans who I've met that like classical music' (Hussein, interview, February 25, 2020), while another admitted that although his goal at school was to learn 'academic Western' music, he ultimately learnt 'Ahmad Zahir[113] songs to be

[113] Known as 'Afghan Elvis', Ahmad Zahir was a popular singer in the 1960s and 70s before his untimely death in 1979.

able to go and play at the parties' (Tabesh, interview, June 20, 2020). These narratives raise questions about building the aspirations of young musicians trained in Western classical music in a place where there is no interest in, or audience for, this musical tradition. The teaching of notation (both Western and Hindustani) at grassroots courses was also dependent on the students' own learning goals and the pedagogical approach of the teachers:

> We have different students here. So there's ones who just learn the Afghan music, like pop, we just teach them the scales and some chords. And some guys who are coming just want to learn the notation, like we have Western students here, foreign students here, like Turkish guys, Nepalese, French guys, they are coming to my academy and I teach them the notation (Hasib, interview, November 27, 2020).

Many teachers transcribed Afghan songs into Western notation for their students, either by hand or using music software such as Cubase. In Herat, the founder and director of the 'Honarestan Tarana' (Dari: 'song conservatory') believed that notation and a thorough knowledge of Hindustani and Western theory was fundamental to improving the quality of music education in Afghanistan: 'after learning Western and Indian scales, I teach [my students] Afghan songs and I use notation' (Wais, interview, June 18, 2020). In sum, the content and delivery of music tuition at these courses was often student-led and rarely followed a predetermined curriculum or learning plan.

When speaking to educators who ran or taught at grassroots music courses, it became clear that due to Afghanistan's socio-economic situation, private music tuition was only appealing or accessible to the middle class of Afghan society. In Kabul, for example, courses were located in certain neighbourhoods of the city: 'with these kinds of music course, it's very important the part of Kabul, you know. Maybe in *Pul-e-Surkh* area and *Shahr-e-Naw* area, most of them are here. Where people are more educated and they have open minds, that's very important' (Arash, interview, July 10, 2020). In addition to these two locations—in the west and centre of Kabul, respectively—*Kart-*

e-Chahar (close to *Pul-e-Surkh*) was also a desired neighbourhood for establishing a music course due to its close proximity to Kabul University. These neighbourhoods were popular with the country's middle class (Foschini, 2019), a stratum which, at the time[114], widely received an education, had increased access to information, a professional job, and a certain level of monthly income (Kalinovsky & Giustozzi, 2017; NBC News, 2014). Establishing music courses in these areas increased the number of potential students and offered a relative degree of security because people in the area were perceived to be more tolerant towards music. However, finding a building in these neighbourhoods was still not straightforward:

> Here, the whole of Afghanistan, they all have problem with the music, with the musicians, and music courses. My big problem is that I cannot find a good place for my course. When I go to the real estate, I told them that I need a house for my academy. They ask me 'which kind of academy?' And when I told them a music academy, they don't accept that. They told me that they won't rent for a music academy (Hasib, interview, November 27, 2020).

That grassroots music courses charged fees for private lessons also suggests that this type of music education was only available to those with disposable income. Music courses charged monthly for lessons with fees ranging from 2000 afghani[115] a month for 2 lessons a week, to 3000 Afghani per month for three lessons a week. In a fragile economy and unpredictable security situation, charging monthly in advance ensured that teachers received the money even if students did not attend all their classes. However, monthly fees were a barrier for some students. One guitar teacher recounted the story of an enthusiastic student who was eventually forced to quit lessons because his father insisted that he leave music and start working to provide for the family, despite the teacher agreeing to lower the monthly amount from 3000 to 1000 afghani. In addition, purchasing

[114] Media reports since the return of the Taliban suggest that the country's middle class is vanishing as a result of lost jobs, lack of income, and restrictions on women's education (Keath, 2021).
[115] Afghani is the country's official currency. During the current research the value of the Afghani against the United States Dollar rose from 78 Afghani per dollar (October 2019) to 103 Afghani per dollar (January 2022).

an instrument was also a barrier to private lessons for many students who 'can't even afford 8000 afghanis for a guitar' (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020). Some educators told me that they had invested in instruments for students to use but this was not common. Finally, many interlocutors complained that their need to earn money and make a living from teaching and performing conflicted with their personal desire to make music education available to all strata of Afghan society, especially those from poorer and disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, beyond the walls of institutions such as ANIM and MLK, which offered free education to disadvantaged children, music education remained largely an activity only available to middle-class families.

Despite appealing to Kabul's growing middle class, educators often faced challenges finding and retaining sufficient students to remain operational: 'Each month we have different students. Sometimes it will be a lot, sometimes it will be zero. Because in Afghanistan, people are trying to learn music, they are coming to the courses. But they are just like for one month, for two months, [and] after they leave' (Elyas, interview, June 19, 2020). For many families, private music lessons were an unnecessary expense and as one musician told me, '[people] prefer paying their daily expenses rather than coming and paying that amount of money to you' (Naser, interview, March 14, 2021). Even when families had disposable income for extra-curricular activities, music was competing with other subjects: 'no matter how much they love and like music, they're not going to invest in music. They are investing their money on social sciences, English, other languages, for them to just have a job and be qualified in a good job and a salary. They know that music's not gonna solve anything for them' (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020). Although affordability and social pressures were common concerns for both male and female students, there was a clear gender distinction in the barriers students faced in continuing their music lessons; for male students, it was pressures to earn money and provide for the family (see Chapter 4), while for female students it was society's negative attitude towards women playing music (see Chapter 6).

Having mapped the terrain of Afghanistan's institutional music education landscape during the last two decades, the following section considers the extent to which institutions effected a change in attitudes towards music and musicians and examines ANIM's desire to create a new class of musician based on academic training. From this point onwards, the data in this thesis refers only to ANIM stakeholders unless explicitly specified.

Music as a Profession

In Afghanistan, music and musicians have historically been discredited by certain strata of society. While 'music in many forms has been passionately nurtured for centuries at all levels of society' (Dupree, 2015: 260), the artform, activity, and its practitioners are still seen as lower-class citizens and some Afghans believe music is 'forbidden' (*haram*). As Lorraine Sakata (1983) notes, there exists a long-established 'discrepancy between theory – the unfavorable attitude of Islam toward music – and practice – the existence of music as an almost indispensable part of Islamic social life' (35). Interlocutors described this paradox in various ways, such as '[Afghan] people like to hear the music, but they don't like to learn the music' (Elyas, interview, June 19, 2020), 'they don't like [music] but they are always enjoying and hearing on their phone, their TV, audio, everything has music' (Aimal, interview, June 18, 2020), and 'you talk to any Afghan, they will tell you 'oh, music, I love music, it's in my heart, you know I just love it. But it's *haram*'' (Kate, interview, June 15, 2020). However, Sakata's assessment of the situation assumes Islam is at the centre of the debate on music's place in Afghan society and overlooks the influence of other socio-economic, political, and cultural factors in the formation of public opinion towards music in Afghanistan and, more broadly, the Islamic world[116]. Mark Halstead (1994) questions 'is [aversion to music] part of the fundamental tenets of the faith of Islam, or is it based more on the traditions and culture of the

[116] While attempts have been made to localise the study of Muslim attitudes towards music (During, 1992; Otterbeck, 2008; Rasmussen, 2010), in general, the theological literature dealing with classical exegesis is often consulted as a 'one size fits all' approach, centred around the Arab world.

Muslims?' (145). The evidence from historical and contemporary literature on Afghan music suggests that religion, although still important, is not the primary influence upon peoples' opinions towards music and musicians (Baily & Blacking, 1978: 610) but rather socio-economic factors[117]. According to Mark Slobin (1974), the historical development of Islamic ideologies concerning musical practices in Afghanistan is complicated by the intersection of 'local interpretation[s] of Islamic beliefs and the traditional social hierarchy of Afghan village and town life' (239). In particular, he draws attention to 'a fear of loss of social class' as a result of musical overindulgence which drives many to discourage musical practices; due to the low stratum of Afghan society occupied by musicians, many people 'would not like to be associated with the practices of such a lowly group' (Slobin, 1974: 240). Likewise, Baily's (1988) summarisation of the arguments against music in Herati culture shows that purely theological concerns are weak, and that negative cultural associations—such as dancing boys (*bacha bāzi*) and wine—and pragmatic concerns—neglecting to say prayers and compromising one's economic and work duties as a good Muslim—are more salient factors (146)[118]. The narratives of my interlocutors largely support Slobin and Baily's observations:

> We have a lot of musicians in Afghanistan, but they use music in a very bad way. I did research about this problem… it's boy play [*bacha bāzi*]. Do you know about this ceremony? *Bacha bāzi*. Some people that are not educated, they think that yeah, when you become a musician, you will join to this kind of [*bacha bāzi*] ceremony and just play with the boy or girl and have a sexual event with others. And when they see this, they think that all musicians are the same (Arash, interview, July 10, 2020).

[117] While religious beliefs may not be the most prominent influence on attitudes towards music, it is important to note the profound influence of Islam in shaping Afghan identities, belief systems, and socio-cultural norms. From this perspective, religion is still a significant secondary factor.
[118] For further discussions on music and Islam in the context of Afghanistan, see Baily (1988: 146–149; 2015a: 37–39), Sakata (1983: 35–38), and Slobin (1976: 25–27, 58–60).

> I think [music's place] has a kind of economical side to it as well, in Afghanistan at least. For example, here we have this big exam after you finish school to go to university which is called *kankor* exam and everyone has to do that and then you choose like 10 degrees that you want to do. So it could be anything, it could be medicine, it could be engineering, art […] And then according to the grade you get, they will put you in one of those degrees probably. So the lowest mark you get you would go to do art and music, apparently. So yeah, the highest mark you would go to medicine, and then it's engineering […]. So people think that if you graduate and you're a doctor, or you're an engineer or you've studied economics, then you will have a better salary. And then obviously if you studied arts, people kind of look at you as a failure. Because the lowest mark you get, you will go to arts in those exams (Feroza, interview, January 27, 2021).

The perspective that music is below other professions was confirmed by a male student who explained how his family were concerned that he would not be able to find a good job in music and that 'they thought my future would be more bright if I studied computer science' (Wares, interview, June 9, 2021)[119]. As discussed in Chapter 4, concerns about engaging with music education can be distinguished by gender—for males, apprehension focussed on financial and careers choice while for females, anxieties concentrated on bringing shame on family and the community[120]. Interlocutors also highlighted the significant influence of Afghanistan's recent political turmoil on attitudes towards music:

> It's not about the religion at all, it's about the perspective that [Afghan people] have got from Taliban time and after that, you know. […] In 2001, Taliban did things, you know, they destroyed music instruments, they destroyed everything which was. And then suddenly in 2001 democracy comes to a war zone country and these modern musicians like Aryana Saeed,

[119] See Chapter 4 for further narratives about the economic tensions experienced by male musicians.

[120] Although this was the general pattern, there were exceptions; see p. 121 for an example of a male student who expressed concerns about bringing shame on his family.

> like Ghazar, […] they have grown up in Europe, they come with their European style in a country that they are not even healed yet. They come and they are with their complete modern ideology. […] So this affects the people, you know. Like it's not something religious, it's something that suddenly, out of nowhere, this openness and this Western thing comes inside that country. So people get this negative idea about everything (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021).

Overall, my interlocutors strongly believed that 'music was […] not introduced correctly to Afghanistan' (Aminah, interview, March 8, 2021), and that music was often used by 'non-professional' musicians in a bad way, either playing at inappropriate events or simply as a way to make money.

Music education institutions, alongside popular institutions such as *Afghan Star* (see Olson, 2017) and various Afghan TV channels, are believed to have effected a change in people's attitudes towards and social acceptance of music, both as an art form and as a social activity. Staff, current students, and former students felt that ANIM was playing an active and important role in changing societal attitudes towards music by showing what music really is and increasing music's role in society: 'We have to bring music into society and to show people and ANIM did a great job to bring musicians and music more into society' (Edris, interview, May 4, 2021). Many interlocutors strongly believed it was the responsibility of musicians, like themselves, to present music to Afghan society in a good way, to disprove negative stereotypes about the artform, and thus change society's attitudes:

> So we have to train audiences for our music, genres of music that we are doing, or the way we learn the music. So I see this more the responsibility of the musicians rather than the people. Because the people, whether they want or not, they have experienced war for almost four decades, more than four decades, and this is something powerful. Like... there's nothing wrong with the people... we have to change the people's mindset, whether to choose our music or

> the wedding party's music. […] We should have good musicians to train people (Wares, interview, June 9, 2021).

This quote suggests that society needs to be educated on how to appreciate 'better' music and that this responsibility lies with the musicians themselves. Musicians educated at music education institutions thus take on a didactical responsibility to enlighten the masses about the correct music to be engaged with. At the same time, there was a belief that 'the culture should be changed, how people interact with music and musicians' and that this was 'related to the musicians themselves; they need to get together and clean their ideologies' and not be led towards bad situations because of their economic problems (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020). However, despite ongoing discrimination towards musicians, there was a strong belief among my participants that significant, but gradual, change may come from the new generation that had grown up since 2001. Where the older generation were seen to be 'just listening to *mullah*, like the religious perspective [on music] that they have, like they always listen whatever *imam* says in *masjid*' (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021), the younger generation had the resources and education to be able to look to other sources of information to form opinions about music and other arts.

Writing on the legitimising dimension of institutionalisation, Ingrid Le Gargasson (2020) argues that 'in the case of discredited or marginalised music, [institutionalisation] opens the way to social acceptance as well as the respectability of the profession of "musician"' (19). Timothy Olson (2017) observed that *Afghan Star* had effected an opening up of the music profession beyond traditional hereditary lineages and that historically established disrespect towards professional (and amateur) musicians had been, to some extent, extinguished as a result of the show's 'process of normalizing musicianship in society' (76). This echoes a similar claim that the proliferation of public radio since the 1950s has been an agent of change for attitudes towards musicians through the 'creation of a star system and upgrading of the performer' (Slobin, 1974: 245). While my interlocutors corroborated the assertion that the traditional distinctions of professional and

amateur documented by the "Golden Age" literature were now largely redundant and that new understandings of 'musician' have begun to emerge (see p. 93), they still reported a high degree of stigmatisation for being a musician. Despite the work done by popular institutions, all the musicians I spoke to for this research had experienced some form of negative reaction to their music education during the past 20 years, including uncomfortable questioning on a public bus, being called offensive words, and being ostracised from their family. While some interlocutors felt that there had been some improvement in society's attitudes towards music (although not among all people), others thought there had been little or no change[121]:

> [Being a musician], people don't respect you, they see you in a different way, but recently it has changed because of course all these TV shows supporting music, introducing music, although still people see it in a very low, how do I put this… basically, if you're a musician you're a very low-class person in the society. Or they see you in a very bad way, that oh, this guy's a musician, so it's kind of a taboo or a bad thing. It still is to be honest (Ramin, interview, May 5, 2021).

Being a musician could have a significant impact on several aspects of life. One male student explained that 'even families, if they know you are an artist or a musician, they don't give their daughter for you to marry her' (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020). Others experienced problems finding jobs in non-music related fields. A former ANIM student recounted an unpleasant experience of applying for a job relating to his Computer Sciences Bachelor's Degree: 'one of [the interviewers] knew me as a guitarist, he saw me on social media, like Facebook and Instagram, and social events held in [province]. He told the other guys 'he is a musician' and they rejected my application' (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020). Similarly, a musician employed by a Kabul-based ensemble explained:

[121] See Ekhtyar and Habib (2014) for musicians' accounts of discrimination in Jalalabad.

> when [my current job] is finished, I will be a driver, a good driver, professional driver, or a professional shopkeeper! We don't have other choice here. You can't go anywhere, in any ministries to a job. Because when we go there and they take our graduation certificate and when they see you have graduated from music, and he say go, go, go, go and play music, here is not a place for you (Aimal, interview, June 18, 2020).

These comments suggest that certain people don't want their families, businesses, or organisations associated with musicians. Students and ex-students also consistently recounted stories of harassment on the streets and being called *dalak* (Dari) or *dam* (Pashto) which are considered extreme insults towards musicians in Afghan culture:

> There's kind of words like *dalak* and also in Pashto like *dam*. It's a kind of word like it's not good for musicians, like how can I tell you, like... bad musician who is a really, really, really bad guy […]. So when I went in the street in Kabul, like somebody say 'oh look at this *dalak*, she's like on TV, she's playing music, she's *dalak*', like this. So it was kind of bad words, not like she's an artist, but the kind of bad way (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

> [People] see a musician as cheap. It's like they think it's a cheap thing, not very important in our lives. [But] when they have the [wedding] parties, they are telling a musician to come to our party and play music, we are dancing. They are enjoying, but at the time that one guy say 'I am a musician', they say 'oh you are a musician, we don't like you'. They are telling it straight to you. Like we have a word, we call *dalak*, you know *dalak* it is a very bad word. […] So that's why when we go outside and we have our own instrument, we hide it. We hide our instrument and take it out from home. Neighbours doesn't know that we are musicians (Darius, interview, June 4, 2020).

In the 1970s, the words *dam* and *dalak* referred to 'groups of low social status, like barbers, but were also applied to musicians and entertainers' (Gopal & van Linschoten, 2017: 15). These occupational groups were not regarded as members of the community they served but were looked upon as an 'endogamous occupational group of outsiders or foreigners' (Sakata, 1985: 133). As Baily (1979) notes, 'the *kesbi-s*, […] are regarded in a vague sense as "bad people", who lie, cheat, who make excessive demands for money, who do not care about religion, whose wives are prostitutes and whose sons are dancing boys. Their behaviour is regarded as deviating from the expressed ideals of Muslim society. Much less prejudice is directed against *shauqi-s*' (47). Scholars draw attention to the financial implications of professional musicians' activities and how this assigns them a lower status in society: 'when someone is paid, the activity becomes a service purchased and the one who receives money becomes a servant', thus pushing the person into a lower caste (Miller & St. John, 2012: 317). Some of the ANIM musicians I spoke to looked down on musicians who 'think that music is just money' (Arash, interview, July 10, 2020), seeing them as lacking any regard for music's deeper meaning and human potential. These sentiments were reinforced by some male students who expressed discomfort at being expected to play music just for a salary[122]. The second extended quote above, which describes concealing instruments on the way to wedding parties, also raises the issue of musicians' self-censorship. Several interlocutors, both male and female, felt the need to conceal the musical nature of their education from their immediate family members:

> I was studying music for three years and in my family just my [parents] knew about it, nobody else. Because if they would know, there would be a huge problem for me (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021).

[122] Overall, any discussion of earning money from music was confined to interviews with male interlocutors and was never brought up as a subject by female interlocutors.

> I started music at the eighth class, and until twelfth class I didn't say anything about the music to my father. I hide it from my father but the rest of the family, they did know, but they didn't say anything to my father. So I just did that secretly for four years. And after four years, I had to tell to my father but he was really upset and he was really disappointed (Edris, interview, May 4, 2021).

Lloyd Clifton Miller and Katherine St. John (2012) describe a similar scenario in Herat during the 1970s whereby 'students learned music in secret and instruments were not sold out in the open as they were later. Musicians, even though they were well liked by their numerous fans, were still considered by some to be lower on the social scale than a tailor or carpenter' (158). For some interlocutors, being a musician inhibited their ability to move freely and safely in Afghanistan: 'I cannot go to my house in [my province] because there are Taliban there. I cannot go there because I am playing music. […] My brothers can very freely go to [my province], they live there and come back, but I cannot go there' (Hasib, interview, November 27, 2020). Those who did visit provincial areas often hid their identity as musicians for fear of being targeted. However, it is important to note that there is not a strict capital-regional divide in terms of music's acceptability, with the former being more tolerant to music than the latter. The following scenario, recounted by an ANIM student, highlights the problem with thinking in terms of this binary:

> So, we had a concert in one of the districts of Jalalabad[123], it was quite far from the city, in a village. […] Our concert was in a garden […] and all the pieces were instrumental. So, some of our people hate like totally music, and then some people at least they like the music with voice or vocal, just singing. So they are not so familiar to hear, to listen to the music which is without words or not having words. […] But then the good experience we had was we were playing and then *azan*[124] started. And so we waited for almost five to ten minutes, […] just

[123] Capital city of Nangarhar province which is located in eastern Afghanistan and shares a border with Pakistan.
[124] Muslim call to prayer which is recited by a muezzin from a minaret.

> waiting for the *azan* to finish. And then when one *azan* was finishing, the other was starting […]. And then one man stood up and said 'come on, you have to continue the music, we have heard a lot of *azans* but we are interested in your music, because we haven't heard this kind of music'. The music we were playing was new for them, but they really appreciated it (Wares, interview, June 9, 2021).

Thus, beyond geographical distinctions, the acceptability of music in Afghan society is influenced by numerous factors including financial concerns, cultural values, prolonged conflict, foreign influence, and displacement.

The above narratives suggest that institutionalisation had little, if any, impact on the respectability of the music profession in Afghanistan. However, in contrast to the experiences of the musicians in Afghanistan, for ANIM students who emigrated to other countries, being a musician afforded cultural capital and facilitated a smoother integration into their new country. Rather than receiving disrespect, former students living overseas recounted greater acceptance in their host countries because they have a musical background:

> If you say 'I am from Afghanistan', they think directly bombs, explosions, war, such things, or Taliban or anything terrorist. […] they just look at me like a refugee, like the other people. […] But if I say 'I am a musician from Afghanistan, I play rock music, I studied classical, now I play in a band' and such things, you see that they change completely. They react and behave *completely* differently. They trust you because you're a musician. And I saw exactly these things every day. They gave me a lot of chances because I was a musician, they could trust me […] Music brought me really a lot of opportunity and respect (Edris, interview, May 4, 2021).

As Edris's experience suggests, being a musician can help overcome the negatively value-laden identity of 'refugee' and challenge stereotypical ideas about Afghanistan, thus affording greater opportunities and integration. Similarly, during the first Taliban rule, the musical activities of

Afghan refugees in the Iranian city of Mashhad were recognised as a 'way of presenting a more positive image of the Afghan refugee as someone with something to offer in the way of artistic activity' (Baily, 1999: 11).

A new kind of 'professional'

The present research proposes that during the inter-Taliban period a new conceptualisation of 'professional' musician, distinct from other categories of musician such as hereditary professional (*kesbi*) and amateur (*shauqi*) groups, began to emerge. This new conception of 'professional' musician was heavily influenced by the institutionalisation of music education during this time and was characterised by academically focussed education, musical literacy, understanding of both Western and Eastern musics, and proficiency in theory, harmony, and history of music. Music institutions such as ANIM and Kabul University 'are working to train a generation of educated musicians which means so much for the culture of a country. It has changed the levels of learning music' (Michael, interview, June 19, 2020).

Scholars have argued that processes of 'transformation, modernization and nationalization' (Schlaffke, 2016: 81) over recent decades have resulted in a dissolution of the *kesbi/shauqi* social distinction and its related stigmatisation (see also Baily, 1976: 54). While traditional practice made a strict social distinction between professional musicians[125] (earning money and passing on their craft through their family) and amateur musicians (learning purely for personal interest), the latter increasingly began to make a living through music as well (Baily, 1988: 101; Schlaffke, 2016: 81; Slobin, 1976: 33). When asked whether the *kesbi/shauqi* binary was still relevant today, one musician from a rural province stated that 'still there are two groups of musicians. The same as the history that you talked about, 40 or 50 years ago. […] One is the people who have their own jobs but they perform music for fun, as they love to do it, but not as their profession. But the other group is people who perform music as their profession to make some earnings' (Sayed, interview, July 3,

[125] Baily (1988) makes a further distinction within the category of 'professional'; '*Kesbi* […] refers to any professional musician; while *sāzandeh* refers to a hereditary professional musician' (102).

2021). Likewise, another rural musician outlined two groups based on the *kesbi/shauqi* binary: 'we have professional musicians, those generational musicians. Their father teach them and then they get their sons to learn music. It's like a family business. […] Amateur musicians just play at home or at social events' (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020). However, while the distinction between amateur and professional musicians may still be relevant in certain contexts or regions, other interlocutors agreed that the terms *kesbi* and *shauqi* were largely out-of-date: 'Those [terms] are old, that was whenever we had like Indian classical music, like there was a court of people that were performing and learning and teaching Indian music, and there was some other group of people they were learning and teaching classical music which was amateur' (Jafar, interview, September 15, 2020). The case of institutional music education further highlights the necessity to reconsider existing classifications of 'musician' in Afghanistan. Students of institutional music education signify a group of musicians who pursue music neither solely by virtue of their hereditary lineage (professional)[126], financial gain (professional), nor purely for personal interest (amateur). Instead, they simultaneously learned music because it was their passion, they may have envisaged a future career earning money through music, or, in many cases, they wanted to use music for social justice and improving the lives of other Afghans.

The existence of multiple conceptualisations of 'musician' based on educational experience and academic training was alluded to by an interlocutor from Herat who explained:

> There are three different categories [of musician] that are known to the public or that people in Herat talk about locally. The first one is a group who only can perform as a musician. And the other one is the ones who have a little access to music education and also performs, has the opportunity to perform. But the third one is the one who knows the knowledge and has the 'science' of music. And I particularly feel myself in the third category, that I know the science and also the theory of music (Wais, interview, June 21, 2021).

[126] While some students at ANIM and other institutions came from musician families, this is not necessarily the reason why they attended music school.

Rather than describing the groups in terms of payment or hereditary lineage—as were the findings in the "Golden Age" literature—Wais compares the three groups in terms of their varying levels of knowledge and skills. This inclination suggests that education and academic knowledge are now important factors in determining musicians' status, and by extension, what constitutes 'professional'. Indeed, an emphasis on institutional 'academic' education as a way of musicians distinguishing themselves from other musicians was pervasive in interviews:

> *Herfayi*, means academic or professional or they learn like from the basic things of music, understand everything about the music. But the other one is not... [they] don't know anything, it's not *herfayi*, like ANIM student is *herfayi* because they're studying everything about music but the others not, they're just saying that 'we are musicians' (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

> In short, I can say that I'm an 'educated musician'. ANIM helped me to be an 'educated musician'. There are musicians but they don't know notation and they cannot read, they cannot teach students based on notations. I know and I have that ability and skills now, that is why I call myself an 'educated musician' (Sayed, interview, July 3, 2021).

> Outside ANIM, I think there are a lot of musicians who are working but they are not really professional. ANIM provided Western or European classical music which is really good for the students, which is really professional and based on notation and everything (Basir, interview, June 2, 2021).

The idea that certain musicians possess more advanced musical knowledge than others is not new in Afghanistan. The *'ilm-e musiqi*, or 'the science of music', was 'the special canon of verbalised musical knowledge held by urban male musicians, especially those competent in the performance

of Kabuli art music' (Baily, 1988: 37). Furthermore, Baily (1988) observed ideas that musicians 'who learned music without a teacher did not understand music 'scientifically'' (112). However, in the current context, there was a greater emphasis on *written,* rather than verbal, knowledge, elucidating 'a scholarly discourse connected with a scientific corpus and new procedures for the validation of knowledge' (Le Gargasson, 2020). At ANIM, for example, Afghan music was 'for the first time in the history of music in Afghanistan […] incorporated in a curriculum, into an *academic* music curriculum' (emphasis added, Polar Music Prize, 2018: 07:03) as part of a wider effort to preserve Afghan music. The school's modernist approach to teaching Afghan music privileges 'a structural, linear way in which knowledge could be transferred from a more or less absolute source of knowledge to a recipient of this knowledge' (Schippers, 2009: 104). Central to this process of 'academicization' was 'to transcribe an oral tradition in Western notation' (Polar Music Prize, 2018: 07:34), as exemplified by the large repertoire of Afghan popular and folk songs which were orchestrated by Western faculty for the school's large ensembles (see Chapter 6)[127]. A preference for Western notation music is also shared by Ghaffar Maliknezhad (2019), assistant professor at Kabul University's music department, who argues that 'many cultures, using Western writing, have made their national and traditional instrument academically sophisticated, and this has accelerated and improved the process of music education […]' (58).

Notions of being a 'professional' and 'educated' musician were also intimately tied to what interlocutors perceived as 'good' or 'proper' music. One former student explained that 'at ANIM we are learning like proper music, we are educational, we learn music in school […]. And the other music, like, [it's] not really good music, music that is... like the people that play music and are not like learning in school' (Gulmina, interview, January 24, 2021). Proper music, therefore, was associated with academic learning, being educated, and a form of professionalism not associated with solely hereditary lineage or amateur music making. Finally, for one interlocutor who lived in

[127] In his 2006 report on the state of music in Afghanistan, Sarmast explicitly recommended that Afghan folk songs be transcribed into Western staff notation as a means of rebuilding the traditions of Afghan folk music (Sarmast, 2006: 10).

a western province and attended the ANIM Winter Music Academy (WMA) each year, the type of venue and event at which he and his students performed also enabled him to construct a specific identity as a musician:

> The public […] believe that musicians are only jokers and the people who just help people laugh. I personally would like to only perform in formal and academic ceremonies—such as the inauguration of an exhibition or any cultural and music festival or any other form of ceremony—and to keep myself and my team kind of apart from the groups that the people have their negative perspective from. We would like to have a different identity. And we would like to help music and show the real identity of a musician to the public, which should be respected as a musician, not only as a joker or the people who entertain (Wais, interview, June 21, 2021).

The above discourses illustrate a tension between different figures of musical knowledge and elucidate a 'gap between musicians who have graduated from an institutional education placing notation and/or composition at the heart of pedagogy, and those from family or community training celebrating orality' (Le Gargasson, 2020). This distinction was, in fact, the goal for Sarmast who wanted 'ANIM graduates to be recognised as a different class of musician, entitled to greater consideration and higher social value by virtue of their formal education' (Howell, 2017: 112) and admits telling his students "Guys, when you play outside of ANIM, anything you do should be different to the ordinary hereditary musicians. The way you speak, the way you play, the way you dress—everything will affect your social status" (Howell, 2017: 112). This quote implicitly reaffirms the low and ordinary status of hereditary and amateur musicians and suggests that the school was concerned about producing an elite and better class of musician, rather than trying to improve the social status of *all* musicians in Afghanistan. Ultimately, these discourses risk creating a further two-tier class system of musicians in Afghanistan—to perhaps replace the professional/amateur binary—in which institutional education is seen as socially and academically

better than indigenous professional or amateur practices. The desire to institute a status-based distinction between Afghan musicians stands in stark contrast to ongoing debates within music education more broadly that seek to challenge and eliminate elitism and exclusions based on social status and class (Bates, 2017; Bull, 2016, 2019; Väkevä, Westerlund & Ilmola-Sheppard, 2022; Wilson, Hunter & Moscardini, 2020). However, as the data discussed in the previous section suggests, even those Afghan musicians with an institutional education, or a 'proper music education' (Sarmast quoted in Howell, 2017: 125), were not immune to society's ambivalence towards musicians.

Overall, ANIM students viewed themselves as another group, or even class, of musician in comparison to other musicians in Afghan society. This attitude was also internalised by visiting students from rural provinces who attempted to distinguish themselves, by virtue of their institutional training, from other musicians in their local areas. Thus, while Sarmast's goal to get society to recognise ANIM musicians as a better class of musician may not have fully succeeded—on account of the continued discrimination they faced—the musicians themselves clearly represented themselves in this way.

Conclusion

This chapter has integrated historical and contemporary accounts of indigenous and institutional systems of music learning in Afghanistan with original data from the current research to provide a consolidated narrative of what can broadly be described as Afghan music education. While the focus of this thesis is ANIM, I have provided an important mapping of the country's main music education institutions, and their grassroot counterparts, which existed during the inter-Taliban period. Finally, the anticipated and actual impact of institutional music education on societal attitudes towards music and musicians was explored, revealing an ambiguous effect on musicians' place in Afghan society. Building on the factual foundations laid out in this chapter, the following

chapters concentrate on the ways in which ANIM actors and other national and international stakeholders used music to contribute to issues and agendas associated with Afghanistan's foreign-led peacebuilding project. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the most recent phase of music education's history under the second Taliban regime: the impact and implications of the Taliban's return for Afghan music education will be discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 4

Music Education and the Values of Liberalism

Progress or Imperialism?

In a speech given at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music's performance at the Kennedy Center, Washington D.C. in February 2013, Eklil Ahmad Hakimi—Afghanistan's Ambassador to the United States from 2011–2015—applauded the achievements of the school and its students and thanked the United States for its contribution to rebuilding education in Afghanistan:

> [The Afghanistan National Institute of Music's] success illustrates the remarkable progress in Afghanistan, particularly in our education sector. And it shows that the amazing talent can come from Afghanistan's young men and women when given the right opportunities. I truly admire the dedication of those young artists and their ability to overcome all these challenges. I strongly believe that objectives like music and art [are] crucial components of a well-balanced education that will enable Afghan youth to become tomorrow's agents of peace and change (Gharanai, 2013).

At the time these remarks were made, Afghanistan had experienced 12 years of the US-NATO-led intervention and tensions were running high over the lack of progress made by the peacebuilding agenda in terms of nation-building, bringing security to the region, and establishing economic structures. Three months later, a news editorial was published by the Afghan independent newspaper *Cheragh* entitled 'When the BBC becomes a saviour of Afghan culture' (Cheragh, 2013). In the article, *Cheragh* accused the *BBC* of using music as a tool for imperialist objectives which would ultimately prevent Afghanistan from progressing as a nation:

> The special attention paid by the BBC to Afghan music and disregard for other treasured aspects of culture in Afghanistan suggests that this British media outlet is trying to keep the people of Afghanistan backward and occupied with hollow culture in the form of music.
>
> The [UK-based] BBC Farsi website has dedicated a special page to music in Afghanistan and publishes news and reports about the history of music in Afghanistan, introductions to Afghan artists and progress in the music industry in Afghanistan especially since 2001 i.e. since foreign military forces came to Afghanistan. […]
>
> It is surprising that a media outlet like the BBC ignores all other artistic and historical aspects of Afghan culture and passion by focusing solely on music. It seems there are secret objectives behind this; objectives that are like imperial designs in other countries. Preoccupying the people of Afghanistan with music with the aim of creating an open society and providing music with an environment to flourish in Afghanistan could prevent Afghans from reaching higher echelons of progress and art. The BBC should pay equal attention to more important and productive forms and encourage Afghans to make progress. […]
>
> However, the truth is that the imperial policies of this biggest British media outlet are against promoting arts and domestic industry in this war-battered country. […] It seems that the West has made it part of its agenda to keep Afghanistan backward by using the tools at its disposal [128].

These two quotations between them introduce the broad scope of this chapter—the extent to which music and institutional music education were considered vehicles for shaping Afghanistan's future within the context of the liberal peacebuilding era. Two very different perspectives on progress were articulated by Hakimi and *Cheragh*: for the ambassador, music is a symbol of progress[129] and a crucial component for ensuring future peace and change, while from the

[128] *Cheragh* is a non-English daily newspaper which was generally critical of the foreign-backed government. See Billaud (2015), Chapter 4, for a similar excerpt from a *Cheragh* article which challenges the imposition of foreign culture on Afghanistan.

[129] In a podcast recorded in the middle of 2021, an ANIM student also equated music education with progress: 'All of us are here, the girls, the boys, and when we create music in a way we are protesting, we are saying that you cannot silence us, we will continue playing music. You cannot stand in front of progress' (Doucet, 2021c: 03:44).

perspective of *Cheragh*, music drags Afghans 'backwards'. In turn, this discrepancy highlights the way in which music was a site of contestation between traditionalists and modernists during the two decades of Afghanistan's reconstruction. *Cheragh* pushes back against 'creating an open society and providing music with an environment to flourish in Afghanistan' and disregards music as 'hollow culture' which threatens the very fabric of Afghan society. By contrast, Hakimi sees value in the artform and potential in giving music a greater role in Afghan education. In other words, the latter wants to embrace change as progress, while the former wants to preserve the country's traditional arts as progress. Finally, in different ways, the quotes also encapsulate the liminality of the peacebuilding era and Afghans' desire to engage in future-oriented thinking, a theme which runs throughout the following three thematic chapters.

For the two decades between 2001 and 2021, institutional music education served both as an apparatus for and a mouthpiece of the foreign-backed government in Afghanistan. By helping to establish and support music education initiatives in the country, the intervention could immediately implement some of the international community's[130] broader peacebuilding aims such as developing Afghanistan's education system, increasing vocational training, supporting women's and girls' rights, and reviving the country's cultural heritage. At the same time, music education initiatives such as ANIM played an important role in 'bringing about social change through promoting gender equality, democracy and open-mindedness' (HundrED, 2021), all of which are fundamental liberal values. Building on the relationship between institutional music education and the foreign liberal peacebuilding intervention in Afghanistan, this chapter critically examines the way ANIM operationalised music education to disseminate, embed, and extol the liberal values of individualism and freedom within both the school community and Afghan society during the past decade. In the first part of this chapter, I consider how institutional music education in Afghanistan became a site for constructing 'liberal individuals' and explore participants' narratives of carving

[130] Referring to the governmental and non-governmental organisations and individuals involved in Afghanistan's reconstruction.

out their own choices and life paths during their time at ANIM. Following this, I focus on a collection of ANIM's publicly released patriotic songs to critically examine the school's promotion of the liberal value of freedom with respect to the themes of pan-Afghan identity and neo-colonialism. I conclude with a discussion of the particular units of belonging—self and nation—which are articulated by the themes of individualism and freedom.

Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

Since the end of the Cold War, international interventions, underpinned by the concept of liberal peacebuilding, have gradually emerged as the dominant response to global insecurity, internal conflict, and failed states (Dodge, 2013; Goodhand & Sedra, 2013; Karlsrud, 2018; Richmond, 2011)[131] [132]. According to American political scientist Francis Fukuyama, the end of the East–West conflict and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s was confirmation 'that liberal capitalism was unchallenged as a model of, and endpoint for, humankind's political and economic development' (Burchill, 2005: 56). A decade later, the United States' declaration of the 'War on Terror' gave birth to exogeneous peacebuilding interventions in both Afghanistan and Iraq—and later Syria in 2011—in an attempt to eradicate terrorism and rising violence through establishing liberal democracies. Ironically, the rise of Islamic militancy—as a revolt against Western political and cultural authority in the global order—was, in the Middle East at least, fought with a further show of Western political and cultural dominance. In Afghanistan, the intervention promised not only to remove the Taliban regime from power but to transform the country into a peaceful, democratic state with a government which could 'stand on its own feet' (Dodge, 2021: 49). However, the liberal peacebuilding agenda was not the United States' initial objective in

[131] It is important to note that the liberal treatment of war with democracy and free trade was not a new phenomenon but emerged in the eighteenth century (Burchill, 2005).
[132] With the exception of Abirafeh, Ayotte & Husain, Barfield, Bizhan, Dodge, Emadi, Goodhand & Sedra, Gregory, Keane, Rashid, Rubin, Saikal, Shahrani, Spears, Stabile & Kumar, Stewart, Tadjbakhsh, and Walter—which are specific to the Afghan context—all literature in this section refers to liberal peacebuilding more broadly.

Afghanistan, but rather an afterthought to their modest approach to stabilising the country and eradicating terrorism post 9/11 (Bizhan, 2018; Emadi, 2010). Toby Dodge (2021) argues that George W. Bush was initially hostile towards liberal peacebuilding[133] and wanted US troops to be withdrawn from Afghanistan as soon as possible after the Taliban and al-Qaeda were removed. However, increasing instability in the country and the growing presence of pre-Taliban era warlords during the 2000s prompted a change in tactics. The liberal-peacebuilding agenda was first promoted by Zalmay Khalilzad when he was a member of Bush's National Security Council staff and later implemented under the policy 'Accelerating Success' when he was US Ambassador to Afghanistan from 2004–2005. As such, the United States' central policy objective in Afghanistan promptly shifted from winning the 'War on Terror' to establishing a new, democratic Afghan state.

Liberal peacebuilding is understood as the 'simultaneous pursuit of conflict resolution, market sovereignty, and liberal democracy' (Goodhand & Sedra, 2013: 239) through 'internationally-sponsored peace-support and reconstruction interventions' (Mac Ginty, 2007: 457). External solutions are applied to apparently internal problems, resulting in the universal implementation of an ideology based on the experiences of the Western world (Tadjbakhsh, 2009). An apparatus of the now waning Liberal World Order[134], peace interventions view the liberal democratic state as the end goal of their operations and have become a largely unchallenged, 'universal framework for emancipation' in the developing, conflict, and post-conflict world (Richmond, 2011: 1). Underpinning this view is the conviction that the projection of liberal-democratic principles onto the international realm will provide the best prospect for a peaceful world order because all nations would reciprocally recognise one another's legitimacy and therefore have less incentive for war (Burchill, 2005: 57).

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[133] At a National Security Council Meeting on 15 October 2001, George W. Bush stated 'I don't want to nation-build with troops' (Dodge, 2013: 1190).

[134] In the wake of World War II, democratic countries established a liberal international system based on the rule of law, respect for countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the protection of fundamental human rights (Haass, 2018).

The 'liberal' aspect of peacebuilding encompasses the moral, the political, and the economic, including the transposition of Western liberal values (such as freedom of the individual, gender equality, universalism, egalitarianism), promotion of democracy and political freedoms, and the development of a neoliberal market-based economy. At the heart of liberalism lies the individual who enjoys the 'freedom to act politically, economically and socially, within a liberal governance framework which constitutionally guarantees human rights' (Richmond, 2011: 7). However, in post-conflict and weak state contexts, individual freedoms are often undermined by governmental and institutional imbalances and a lack of consideration for local conceptions of individual freedom. In Afghanistan, for example, the tenets of democracy—including elections, respect for people and personal freedoms, and freedom of expression—are already embodied within an Islamic framework of morality, responsibility, and social justice (Tadjbakhsh, 2009: 646). Research conducted by Sciences Po and Kabul University[135] found that Islamic peace, based on social justice and morality, was viewed by some Afghans as more desirable than a liberal peace based on individualism (Tadjbakhsh, 2009: 646).

Within the field of International Relations (IR), liberal peacebuilding has been intensely debated and scrutinised. Newman, Paris and Richmond (2009) identify, very loosely, two main schools of thought in the liberal peacebuilding debate; one offers a conventional critique revolving around its effectiveness, while the other, more 'critical' approach, challenges the assumptions of liberalism and state building as they are applied across diverse contexts (23). Within the latter, many view the liberal peacebuilding framework as a neo-colonial or neo-imperialist project which attempts to reorder the global political economy, arguing that it enables liberal states to justify the imposition of liberal political institutions and social aspirations upon non-liberal states (Chandler, 2006; Robinson, 1996; Ryan, 2012; Taylor, 2010). The effectiveness and appropriateness of liberal peace has been widely contested due to its 'top-down mediation amongst power brokers' and lack

[135] The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 100 Afghans: 40 in Kabul (experts, politicians, government workers, police, NGOs, students, clergy), ten with leaders of major political parties, and 50 in the provinces of Herat, Maidan Wardak, Balkh, Parwan, and Nangahar (governors, police, experts, clergy, NGOs, and tribal leaders).

of consultation with local stakeholders, leading to the exploitation of the global poor by the global rich (Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009; Robinson, 1996). While these critiques are commonplace, other scholars have challenged the conflation of liberal peacebuilding with imperialism or colonialism, claiming that these evaluations are exaggerated or misguided (Charbonneau, 2014; Paris, 2010). As Roland Paris (2002) notes, 'the practice of peacebuilding has been considerably more charitable and consensual than the behaviour of many colonial powers' (653). In the context of Afghanistan and the Middle East region, however, scholarly discourse leans largely towards the former assessment[136], and accusations of coloniality (Ayotte & Husain, 2005; Dabashi, 2009; Gregory, 2004; Rubin, 2006; Stabile & Kumar, 2005). Ian Spears (2021), for example, asserts that 'there can be little doubt that for the past 20 years, Afghanistan has been a colonized state', a view shared by many Afghans who, as the intervention matured, increasingly experienced it as an unwelcome occupation[137] (Abirafeh, 2009; Barfield, 2010). In unpacking their colonial accusations, scholars point to two aspects of the peacebuilding intervention in Afghanistan. First, the United States' 'tendency to see itself as a force for liberation and modernization derives from its long-standing colonial mentality, and the belief that people in the periphery need imperial powers to rescue them and to articulate their needs' (Emadi, 2010: 205). And second, the prescriptiveness and cultural blindness of the liberal peace model and its facilitators. Rory Stewart (2004) situates the neo-colonial problem in post-conflict experts' 'implicit denial of the difference between cultures' (248), a view shared by Oliver Richmond (2011) who highlights the inability of the liberal peace model to 'move beyond its universal prescriptions derived from a narrow Western experience' (3). In terms of improving Afghan women's rights, this translated into a disregard for complex, local understandings of gender relations and gender politics in favour of a universal and Eurocentric vision of gender progress (see Walter, 2017).

[136] The United States' war in Iraq was also viewed as 'imperial nation-building' (Bendaña, 2005) which sought 'the reproduction and expansion of hegemonic international order' (Lacher, 2007: 247).
[137] One Afghan writer, Sanjar Qiam, described the inter-Taliban period as marked by a new type of oligarchy called 'Expatlordism' (Abirafeh, 2009: 177).

Afghanistan's recent history poses a serious challenge to the liberal-democratic state and the effectiveness and legitimacy of liberal peacebuilding (Braithwaite, 2021). Even before the abrupt end to the US-NATO presence in Afghanistan and the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, the country's liberal peacebuilding and nation-building project was regarded by both Afghans and the international community as a failure (Bizhan, 2018; Dodge, 2021; Emadi, 2010; Rashid, 2008; Shahrani, 2016; Spears, 2012). As Conor Keane (2016) notes, 'a smooth transition to Western-style democracy was always an unlikely, if not altogether utopian, challenge, given Afghanistan's economic underdevelopment, ethno-sectarian fissures, and institutional fragility born of decades of military conflict and authoritarian rule' (1). Previous peace interventions in Afghanistan have also received criticism for their idealistic approach to conflict resolution and state building. In evaluating the outcome of the United Nation's (UN) peacemaking response to the crisis in Afghanistan following the Soviet Union invasion 1979, Amin Saikal (1996) argues that the UN 'proved incapable of tackling the conflict from other than the rigidly conventional angle that has generally characterized its approach to conflict resolution' (19). While the historical contexts of the UN and US-NATO interventions differ significantly, both critiques highlight the problem of applying formulaic, 'one-size-fits-all' models to highly complex (post-)conflict contexts. Both interventions sought solutions to Afghanistan's political and economic problems based on the expectations and frameworks of the intervenors, and their relevant external actors, and not in response to the needs and realities of the Afghan people (Barfield, 2010; Saikal, 1996). Such an approach is symptomatic of two interrelated aspects typical of international responses to rebuilding failed states: first, decision makers' lack of familiarity with local culture or history (Barfield, 2010: 317); and second, the axiomatic assumption that 'democracy is the only acceptable political system, good for all countries under all circumstances' (Ottaway, 2007: 603). That being said, in comparing the state of Afghanistan in 2001 (immediately after the Taliban were ousted) with the state of the country in early 2021, some have argued that the foreign-led peacebuilding intervention was, in many areas, a success, especially in terms of improved infrastructure, women's

rights, and education. Reflecting on a shared feeling among Afghans and the international community that collective efforts over the past 20 years were immediately lost with the return of the Taliban, Shukria Barakzai believes that 'the treasure is still there, when today [November 2021] women are marching on the streets and asking for their rights, that is the treasure. That is the result of great work in the last twenty years' (Afghanaid, 2021: 01:20:22). However, despite liberal peacebuilding showing signs of working in many aspects of Afghan society, it was ultimately unsustainable in its fullest form without the ongoing presence of the West's military supervision. This situation in itself casts doubt on the extent to which the expansion of the 'liberal zone of peace' (Linklater, 1993) is actually a peaceful process.

In response to claims of imperialist hegemony, scholars have questioned the suitability of the liberal peacebuilding model in a 'multi-order' world (Cassin & Zyla, 2021; Flockhart, 2016; Richmond, 2011), calling for a reassessment, and even replacement[138], of the liberal peace project and its attempts to unite the world under one hegemonic system. This alternative 'post-liberal peace' (Richmond, 2009) stresses the need for a localised perspective on peacebuilding which 'enable[s] local knowledge transfer, accountability, exchange and dialogue' (Cassin & Zyla, 2021: 455). Focussing on Central Asia and Afghanistan, Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh (2009) argues that the legitimacy of the liberal peace project 'depends on both how much, in the eyes of the local populations, liberal peace actually improves everyday life, and how much it is valued as a goal and adheres to internal norms and values' (635). In Afghanistan, the uncritical acceptance of liberal values, such as individualism and personal freedoms, is often contrasted with the desire to uphold local value systems. As Barfield (2010) notes, 'an international NGO that saw itself as doing good by helping women get divorces [read: individual freedom] was seen by Afghans as encouraging home wrecking in a country where divorce (by a man or a woman) was socially unacceptable' (317).

[138] Dodge (2021) cites the immense cost of the war to the Afghan population—between 66,000 and 69,000 Afghan army and police personnel killed since 2001 and an estimated 47,245 Afghan civilian lives lost as a direct result of war—as an invalidation of the liberal peacebuilding model and why it should be removed from the 'policymaker's toolbox' (55).

This chapter considers the role that institutional music education played in supporting and promoting the values and ideologies of the recent liberal peacebuilding intervention and to what extent this form of music education was complicit in supporting neo-imperialist tendencies.

ANIM and liberal peacebuilding

ANIM emerged at a transitional moment within the foreign-led peacebuilding narrative. By the end of the 2000s, the optimism which had coalesced around the US-NATO presence in Afghanistan during the early years of the intervention had begun to wane. The top-down state building agenda had become 'bogged down in bureaucracy, duplication and inefficiency' (Kilcullen, 2011: 44), creating a space for the Taliban to come in at the grassroots level and out-govern the Afghan government. This led to the increased valorisation of local traditions and the recognition of more hybrid and pluralised forms of authority (Goodhand & Sedra, 2013). ANIM's project, which was primarily aimed at reviving Afghan musical traditions, to some extent reflected this new 'local narrative'.

Despite this 'local turn', several of ANIM's educational and institutional practices, structures, and policies mirrored the broader liberal peacebuilding intervention in Afghanistan. Indeed, ANIM's music project has itself been described as a 'cultural regeneration *intervention*' (Howell, 2015: 88), referring to the school's initial focus on the revitalisation and preservation of Afghanistan's decimated musical traditions following Taliban censorship. The musical intervention, like its political counterpart, was almost exclusively initiated from the 'outside' by Ahmad Sarmast (at the time living permanently in Australia) with the assistance of foreign funding and foreign faculty. ANIM's parallels with the broader political agenda are not surprising given that the school was financially dependent on some of the primary transnational bodies and foreign governments driving Afghanistan's reconstruction and state-building agenda at the time. The money that paid for the salaries of the school's Director (Ahmad Sarmast) and eight (at any one time) expert foreign faculty, for example, came exclusively from The World Bank as part of their

Afghanistan Skills Development Project (ASDP), while the rest of the [Afghan] faculty salaries were paid by the TVET authority. The ASDP—which also included other vocational institutions such as the National Institute of Management and Administration (NIMA)—was itself a small cog in the large neoliberal machine driving Afghanistan's reconstruction. While organisations such as The World Bank aim to provide developing societies with opportunities to overcome financial hardship and build their economies, some argue that 'they impose free market structures on developing countries' (Burchill, 2005: 75). The project's development objective was to 'increase the number of immediately-employable graduates by building, in stages, a high quality [*sic*] Technical Vocation and Education Training (TVET) system that is equitable, market responsive, and cost-effective' (The World Bank, 2019). The need to build among Afghans themselves the skills and capacities required to sustainably rebuild the country was recognised by The World Bank as a priority for achieving the objectives of the liberal peacebuilding agenda, which included peacebuilding, long-term economic growth, and poverty reduction. As such, ANIM, under the umbrella of the ASDP, was tasked with producing skilled individuals who could enter into and contribute to Afghanistan's emerging neoliberal economy. Similarly, the school's Winter Music Academy and English Programme were largely funded by the United States Government through the United States Embassy in Kabul. To ensure the continuation of foreign and transnational financial support—and to demonstrate how the money was directly contributing to the development of Afghan civil society—the school necessarily aligned itself with the values and ideologies which these transnational institutions and international governments were establishing and promoting in Afghanistan. For example, practising democratic principles and the right to suffrage was an important aspect of ANIM's educational practices. Two years after Afghanistan's second democratic election under foreign intervention took place (2009), ANIM established a student association body named '*Sadai Shāgardan*' (Students' Voice) (Braithwaite, 2016: 22). The association's first election took place on Thursday 13 October 2011 during which candidates gave speeches to the entire student body, who subsequently voted to elect their chosen representatives.

Through this process, students could learn about and exercise their right to suffrage, thus preparing them for their future lives as citizens of a democratic Afghanistan.

From a human resources perspective, ANIM's reliance on foreign faculty to help re-establish music education mirrored the influx of foreign aid workers, experts, and advisors to the country over the past two decades. As part of ANIM's ten-year sustainability plan, foreign experts came to assist and train the next generation of teachers with a view to leaving and handing over to a completely Afghan faculty in 2021. Speaking in 2013, Sarmast explained: 'we have a plan for the sustainability of music pedagogy. We are currently investing a lot in the professional development of our older students as music educators, and they will be replacing, one by one, the expert faculty' (Forrest, 2013: 82). This strategy reflects the gradual international troop withdrawal and 'scheduled transition to 'Afghan ownership' in 2014' (Goodhand & Sedra, 2013: 239). However, ANIM's sustainability plan differed significantly from that of the international NGOs[139] which were also working during the reconstruction era to establish educational, cultural, and civic institutions. International NGOs, it is claimed, 'generally failed to build local capacities and continue[d] to use their own people rather than locals to fill most positions' (Emadi, 2010: 231), thus preventing any movement towards community self-sufficiency. In contrast, from the moment ANIM opened, the school emphasised the role of foreign expert teachers in building local capacities and training senior students and graduates—the latter known as 'junior faculty'—to become future teachers. However, the professional and economic relationships between ANIM's foreign faculty and their Afghan colleagues raises issues associated with the institutional inequality of liberal peacebuilding:

> The faculty of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music is comprised of three groups of people. The first is those who are responsible for the general education of our students. The second group is Afghan musicians teaching Afghan traditional and Afghan classical music.

[139] It should be noted that ANIM is not an NGO. However, both are similar in that they contracted foreign 'experts' to assist with capacity building, skills development, and reconstruction efforts.

> And the third group is a group of *experts*, faculty who come from many part [*sic*] of the world and who have been employed with the support of the World Bank. These people come and teach western musical instruments and western academic subjects, not only to our students but also to a very small number of the local faculty who have some basic knowledge of western music (emphasis added, Forrest, 2013: 80).

This quotation, taken from an interview with Ahmad Sarmast, suggests an explicit hierarchy among ANIM's staff. While the foreign faculty are assigned the title of *experts*, their Afghan counterparts—who are also experts in their field—are not bestowed this designation and are instead described very simply in terms of their teaching role at the school. This discourse has strong Orientalist undertones and suggests that within the institution the foreign 'experts' possessed more authority, and that their knowledge was more highly regarded than that of their local colleagues. The distinction between 'foreign' and 'local' staff at ANIM was also reflected in the salaries paid to each group: while the former received USD$5,500 gross per month, the latter only received around USD$400. Indeed, it was commonplace during the two decades of peacebuilding for a local employee with a similar background, education, and/or experience to be paid a fraction of the amount their foreign co-workers received (Emadi, 2010: 231). Moreover, the above quote implies that the professional development in Western music offered to local faculty by Western experts is not reciprocated, and if it is, this is not one of the school's priorities. Rather, the narrative suggests that the local musicians need training in Western music to improve on their 'basic knowledge'. This unidirectional professional development has neo-imperialist undertones, suggesting that Western experts need to come to the country to impart knowledge about Western music onto their non-Western colleagues, without necessarily learning about the local traditions in return. Indeed, Goodhand and Sedra (2013) argue that 'the dominant role played by external 'experts' and 'technical assistance' providers points to a neocolonial use of ideas and knowledge to perpetuate the exercise of power' (248). However, despite the public narrative, in reality many of ANIM's

foreign faculty did take an interest in learning about Afghan music from their Afghan colleagues. A desire to engage with and understand Afghan musical traditions is also evidenced by the foreign faculty's continued use of Afghan music and resources in their creative outputs and teaching after leaving Afghanistan permanently. One former teacher now working at a private school in the United States explained how 'my favourite tie-over between my job in Afghanistan and my job at Rabun Gap has been sharing Afghan folksong with my students here. Not only are they beautiful, but they have unique lessons for the students' (Rabun Gap, 2019).

Finally, ANIM—and to some extent other music education institutions in Kabul[140]—effectively centralised formal music education in Afghanistan, resulting in a perception that the best music education could only be found in the capital and, more specifically, at ANIM. This scenario is reflected in the narratives of provincial participants attending ANIM's Winter Music Academy (WMA) who valorised Kabul's urban centre of learning and lamented the lack of institutional centres in provincial areas. An interlocutor from Mazar-i Sharif alluded to the way in which the foreign peacebuilding apparatus overlooked the areas beyond Kabul:

> At the Institute of Music [ANIM], there is so much professionalism and highly qualified teachers that teach at a world-class level. There is a lack of [music institutions] for more students [and] the other provinces also need an institution for music. What The World Bank and US Embassy says about the other provinces? (Hamid, interview, July 15, 2020).

A focus on centralisation was also a characteristic of the broader liberal peacebuilding agenda which sought 'to create highly centralised institutions in Kabul' (Dodge, 2021: 50) which had political influence across the whole Afghan territory. Working from Afghanistan's 'political

[140] Kabul University, for example, was the only institution in Afghanistan to offer music as a tertiary-level subject. An exception to this trend is Aga Khan who established a music programme in both Kabul and Herat. However, it is important to note that while Herat is 'provincial', it is still an urban capital and cannot be classed as 'rural'.

centre'[141], ANIM developed, through its WMA, outreach programmes, and media output, a degree of [musical] influence across the entire country, positioning itself as the ideal model for future formal music education initiatives in the country.

Against this historical and political backdrop, the following section explores music education's role in constructing and shaping liberal individuals and the consequences this individualism had on smaller collective groups.

The [Liberal] Individual

Central to liberal ideology is the theory of the individual as autonomous and more specifically 'the belief that the freedom of the individual is the highest political value' (Ryan, 2012: 23). Within this framework, liberal individuals are 'free to choose their own goals and their affective ties with others' (Gauthier, 1986: 330) and are granted the autonomy to realise their full inner potential away from state interference (Burchill, 2005: 58). Although Richmond (2011) argues that Afghanistan and Iraq are 'parodies of the liberal state' (2)—by virtue of their military fortifications, high security expenditure, massive public sector employment, and reliance on quickly rotated international personnel—this does not preclude the development of the liberal individual who can be found in societies that are not themselves liberal democracies (Svendsen, 2017: 174). The individual also plays an increasingly important role in global modern education, especially following the requirement, under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), that 'each child be treated as an *individual* who can expect to see their 'personality, talents and mental and physical abilities' fully developed' (emphasis added, Fevre, Guimarães & Zhao, 2020: 693). Within this framework, the goal of education is at an individual level, rather than at the level of the state, community, or family.

[141] Shahrani (2013) argues that President Karzai 'insisted on […] the reimposition of the highly centralized government system of the monarchy era' which ignored 'emergent and local self-governance structures' (35).

In the present research, the liberal individual was manifest in most interviews with ANIM students and graduates but was discussed in different ways. The following three quotes introduce various facets of the liberal individual which will be explored in the subsequent sections:

> As soon as I got picked for ANIM, I started realising and recognising many, many things about myself (Naser, interview, March 13, 2021).

> Like for me, I guess ANIM helped me to understand and to accept the power of, like my own power as an individual, as a woman (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021).

> It was music which introduced the world to me and me to the world around me (Ramim, interview, May 5, 2021).

Generally, students described gaining a sharper and more acute understanding of themselves as individuals, and their place within Afghan society and the world, as a result of their engagement with music education at ANIM. Moreover, students recognised others' individuality, as described by one female former student in a panel discussion who said 'that feeling of accepting everybody in this society, that feeling of accepting everyone as an individual rather than their background […], I think music helped me to think broader' (Zarifa, Afghanaid, 2020). All three of the quotes above indicate a strong sense of personal change and a simultaneous widening of horizons, a notion which was echoed in interviews with foreign teachers: 'For me, [ANIM's] greatest success is that development of the individual child into like a well-rounded person… educated and also like emotional development' (Kayla, interview, May 12, 2020). It was also clear from the students' reflections that it was both ANIM as an institution, and music as an artform, that facilitated the various forms of individual transformation.

As an institution, ANIM furnished a physical and ideological space in which liberal values were practised, and, by extension, liberal individuals were constructed. As one male junior faculty

member (and former student) described, 'the atmosphere that has been created in ANIM for the students is so... free and you have the right to say your problems, to ask for your rights, and to be involved in many things that you want' (Naser, interview, March 14, 2021). He continued to elaborate on his own experience, explaining how 'when I entered the school, I kind of understood the human rights that I have as a human, to stand up and being open, being free... yeah, things like that. And how to live in harmony with people in the society' (Naser, interview, March 14, 2021). Music education plays an important role in facilitating this development. As Afghanistan's general education subjects leave little or no room for discussing liberal ideas in the classroom, ANIM was highly committed to producing, performing, and promoting social change songs—such as the patriotic and women's rights songs analysed in this chapter—through which ANIM's students were able to learn about these values (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020).

An important aspect of ANIM's liberal space, which Naser alludes to, is upholding individual human rights, which neo-institutionalists[142] view as integral to affirming individualism. According to this paradigm, human rights give individuals direct encouragement to defy family authority on issues such as differential access to education and forced marriage (Fevre, Guimarães & Zhao, 2020: 696). In the present research, this was mostly evident in female narratives where individuals were often challenging gendered belief systems which acted as barriers to continuing their education. For many female interlocutors, ANIM had helped by 'raising the voice for women's rights, for giving the girls the power to believe in themselves. […] That boys and girls, they both have the capacity to do whatever they want to do' (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021). From an educational perspective, ANIM's music education programme exhibited a combination of both 'meritocratic individualism' and 'developmental individualism'. The former is 'predominantly concerned with the provision of equality of opportunity within the education system' (Hargreaves, 1980: 187) and can be found in ANIM's commitment to prioritising the

[142] For neo-institutionalists, the family is viewed as a primordial group which plays no role in the development of world culture (Fevre, Guimarães & Zhao, 2020: 695).

enrolment of disadvantaged children and its efforts to promote gender equality through increasing female enrolment and establishing the Zohra women's ensemble. Through the provision of education to students 'regardless of their gender, social circumstances and ethnic background' (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2019e), ANIM ultimately treated each child as an individual independent of their identification with a particular social or economic group. The latter asserts that 'education must be centrally concerned with the growth and development of the individual person' (Hargreaves, 1980: 187) which aligns with the process of individuation which emerged from interviews with participants.

Individuation and individualism

Within the wider theme of the liberal individual, two interrelated concepts were identified in participants' narratives: individuation, a *process* of becoming 'self', and individualism, a *state/paradigm* in which one acts in and prioritises one's own interests. While these two ideas were often discussed concurrently, I will attempt to disentangle them and demonstrate how a socially informed notion of individuation can offer a theoretical base for understanding the complex relationship between individualism and Afghan collectivist society.

Individuation

When asked about what impact music and music education had on her life, one female former ANIM student, Arezo, confessed, 'I think music has changed my life completely. I mean... like now I can play music and I don't have to hide myself or wear a scarf. I mean... it gave me my voice and to share what I have inside me […]' (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021). This quote encapsulates Svendsen's observation that 'the liberal individual is liberated from the force of tradition, but she has also gained a new responsibility for herself, for *becoming* herself' (2017: 177). In Arezo's case, the 'force of tradition' is represented by her scarf (Islamic/Afghan tradition) and her process of 'becoming' is signified by her ability to share what she has 'inside' of herself with

her own voice. Another former student, this time male, described how 'ANIM was the good thing during my life. It made me [Hasib]' (Hasib, interview, November 27, 2020), suggesting that his experience as a student at ANIM, and presumably music, had directly shaped the individual he had become and that he recognised himself, through his explicit naming, as a complete and autonomous individual. The above quotes suggest a process of individuation 'by which a person becomes a psychological individual, a separate unity or whole, recognizing his innermost uniqueness' (Schlamm, 2014). In other words, music, and ANIM as an institution, facilitate 'the means by which one finds oneself and becomes who one really is' (Schmidt, 2004: 596).

One former student described the process of finding and becoming himself in more humanist terms:

> N: First of all, music made me a human. This is my own perspective, my own kind of like experience over all the time that I have been engaged with music. That's my perspective about music. Music made me human. And that's the only reason. Not religion, not society, but music.
>
> L: And what do you mean by 'human', I mean what for you do you understand as 'human'?
>
> N: Human for me, personally for me, means being kind, being helpful, having a peaceful relationship with people, with humans and the society in which you are living. And being humble. Take the hands of someone who needs your help. And to change your inner self of your body... peaceful, as it reflects peacefully for your society and for other people (Naser, interview, March 14, 2021).

Naser's experience speaks to education's humanist doctrine and the assertion that 'the apex of educational outcomes [is] the act of becoming *more* or *fully human*: the betterment of the self *as a self*' (Burdick & Sandlin, 2013: 145). His reference to an 'inner self', which is a key concept in individuation, clearly suggests he went through some individuating process and that he now possesses an awareness of his unique individuality. Moreover, his narrative points to a personal

reflection in which he was able to make sense of his own experiences with music and how they shaped the way he feels he should now act as an individual member of society. However, Naser's notion of becoming human and changing the 'inner self of your body' does not refer to a Western notion of the self as an 'autonomous, and rational isolate' (Burdick & Sandlin, 2013; 145), but is instead described in relation to other people and society, suggesting a process of individuation which is in dialogue with the social world. The traditional Jungian conception of individuation, described as a 'process by which a person becomes differentiated from the *collective*' (emphasis added, Dohe, 2016: 53), views the social world as suffocating the process of individuation. This framework has been criticised for being essentially modern and Western (Brooke, 2008), leaving little space for postcolonial and subaltern notions of self-realisation. By contrast, Esha Niyogi De (2011) argues that in modern Indian thought, the 'autonomous agent stands out as an ethical norm which refuses to distantiate collectivity' (200). Similarly, the Zulu term *Ubuntu*, which describes 'a person's sense of community, of responsibility toward others, both living and dead, and toward the wider world at large' (Brooke, 2008: 49), emphasises the way in which the social world facilitates individuation. From this perspective, individuation is imagined 'as a process of personal growth and transformation within that network of relationships that make such transformation possible and to which the person remains, therefore, ethically indebted' (Brooke, 2008: 49). As the following chapters demonstrate, ANIM students felt a strong sense of duty to use their music to contribute to various social and political causes affecting Afghanistan and different class- and gender-based groups. In order to realise an individual self who could be of service to an ever-widening circle of affiliation, some students chose to marginalise affective group ties and obligations. However, rather than reading this marginalisation as an indication of increased isolation from group affiliation (c.f. Svendsen (2017) on the 'loneliness of the liberal individual'), a socially informed understanding of individuation enables us to view this process as shaping and facilitating students' self-realisation.

Individualism

Interviews suggested that ANIM students and graduates gained a clearer sense of their own life path as separate from their parents, family, and other group affiliates as a result of their engagement with music education. This theme may be read as a form of individualism, 'a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives' (Triandis, 1995: 2). Individualistic tendencies are particularly significant in a society such as Afghanistan which is scaffolded by collectivism and where tribal and ethnic groups take primacy over the individual (Barfield, 2010; Deleal et al., 2013; Entezar, 2008; Mohammadi, 2011)[143]. For many ANIM students, pursuing music education beyond early adolescence[144] gave rise to tensions between their individual right to choose their own educational and career paths and the collective desires and expectations of the larger family unit:

> When I graduated from grade 12, [my family] really like forced me to study computer science but then I said no, this isn't what I want. I love music, I don't want to study any other field. My family was unhappy. They were sad about my decision. Especially like... so in Afghan families we have to have lots of respect to the older ones. Even sometimes if we are alone, we should follow them and we should accept anything they will say to you. So then I didn't pay attention to them. So for some, they were unhappy for a while. Even now sometimes they are saying they are not happy (Wares, interview, June 9, 2021).

> When we came to America to perform and they saw our performance on television, they were really upset about it and they didn't... not exactly my father and my mother, but when my relatives saw and they were like telling to my father that I shouldn't go to music school and it's just a shame for the family and the whole relatives (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

[143] According to research conducted by Sciences Po and the University of Kabul, 'Afghans would be against liberalism if it meant sole insistence on individual absolute freedoms' (Tadjbakhsh, 2009: 646).
[144] Several students mentioned that resistance to their music education was minimal when they were young but when it came time for students to start thinking about their future career options, families were more opposed.

Afghans' primary loyalty is to *qawm*, the complex interpersonal networks of political, social, economic, military, and cultural relations based on patrilineal descent and patriarchal authority (Geller & Alam, 2010: 11; Shahrani, 2009: 5). As such, Afghan society is understood to be what Geert Hofstede (1980) describes as 'collectivist', where 'people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty' (225). The term *Afghaniyat*, which represents a national identity that fluctuates in different periods of Afghan history, is 'deeply embedded in the collective units of the tribe, clan, and family' and plays an important role in determining 'Afghans' sense of self and place in the world' (Abirafeh, 2009: 86). At a family level, the hierarchical structure of the group leaves little room for individualism with all members required to conform to prescribed forms of acceptable behaviour (Dupree, 2004: 312). These behavioural expectations are part of the honour-based system which underpins, in part, collectivism in Afghan cultures (Galád, 2012) and which is alluded to in the above quotes. In pursuing an education in music, many students reported that they brought shame on their families: 'we are from a really religious province, and [my music] was really a shame for my father. […] The community, and also the brothers, father, relatives, they put a really big pressure on my father' (Edris, interview, May 4, 2021). Oftentimes, it was the father who was most negatively impacted by their son or daughter's decision to learn music, as senior males are charged with maintaining family honour and social status (Dupree, 2004; Rostami-Povey, 2007). Studies have shown that individual freedom is viewed as a potential threat to traditional Afghan values and that 'democracy based on a Western individualism rather than traditional Afghan Islamic communalism, gender-blind social interaction, and the elevation of the individual above society, do not appear to be part of the emerging… Afghan worldview' (Magnus & Naby quoted in Abirafeh, 2009: 71). Some Afghans believe that when democracy and freedoms are misunderstood and misused, they could lead to *bihayayi* (lack of shame), and that unlimited freedoms have the potential to damage the well-being of society (Tadjbakhsh, 2009). Almost all

tribal and nontribal groups in Afghanistan have cultural values dealing with honour and shame (*sharm*) (Hanifi, 2004: 185), a prime example being *Pashtunwali*, the rules of conduct for Pashtuns. Within this system, an individual's behaviour is 'evaluated in the eyes of others according to the common understanding of honour and shame' (Rzehak, 2011), leaving little room for individualistic desires. Consequently, individuals often support decisions made by their group even when this support has negative consequences for the individual (Barfield, 2010: 17):

> Individuals are defined by the community in terms of their association to families. Few individuals want their families to be declared outcast in the community by logic of guilt by association if they do acts that are contrary to group expectations. This desire to avoid social disgrace provides a strong incentive for individuals to comply with moral codes, social norms and essential interests of the community at all times, in private and in public (Mohammadi, 2011).

In contrast, ANIM students displayed strong individualistic traits, putting their own interests (music education) above those of their family or *qawm*. They embodied a liberal individual who 'not only wishes to pursue her goals in life, but also the right to make choices' (Svendsen, 2017: 175), even if this means upsetting or causing shame for the extended family:

> And then when I turned to grade 5, my family said that 'are you still going to learn music?' And then I said 'yes of course I'm going to continue learning music because I love music'. And then they said that like you can't really go to music school since you are getting older and older. And then they say that our relatives will not let you to do it. And also our neighbours will not let you to do it. And then I say that I can't, because I love music and this is my goal to help people understand music, I really love music. And then they say that if you're going to do that, it will be really hard for you. And then I say that I don't care, I need to do it because I love music (Gulmina, interview, January 24, 2021).

As her account demonstrates, Gulmina was determined not to let her family's concerns or potential hardships hinder her continuation of music education into adolescence. Likewise, Wares's comment above (p. 120) that 'I didn't pay attention to them' when faced with disapproval from his family suggests an unwavering commitment to his personal freedom to choose music.

Gulmina's account also implies that her individual actions were intimately tied to the opinions and desires of the family and wider community. This was a common theme across interlocutors' narratives: 'When somebody came to my house, like to visit, they will ask me 'are you still doing music?' I said 'yes'. They will say 'at least, think of your family'. Like something this straight in front of me, they say those things, like don't do music' (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021). The advice given to Arezo to 'at least, think of your family' demonstrates the strong relationship between individual actions and collective concerns. Similarly, another female former student told me that her family 'care about the comments of people' (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021) and how they are perceived by the extended family and community. By contrast, for students who came from musical families, their desire to learn music was not misaligned with the interests of the group:

> My family from the very beginning, they were really supportive and of course the whole feeling of having interest in music, it came from my family because they were into music. […] My grandfather he was a very good friend with *Ūstād* Sarahang. I'm sure you know him because he was one of the Afghan legend musicians for a very long time. So that's why my father was always into music. When he saw that I'm interested in music, so of course he didn't hesitate, he was like ok, so I'll see what's gonna happen, let me just take you to music school. But yeah, my family has been always supportive with music (Ramin, interview, May 5, 2021).

> [My family] were positive about my music education. […] I was born in an open-minded family, of course my father was a *ghazal* singer and my mother also had a Master's degree. So they didn't have any backward thinking like other people (Basir, interview, June 2, 2021).

Read together, these narratives suggest that family expectations and opinions towards music had a significant impact on individuals' experiences of asserting their individualism and choice to study music.

Individualism through music education also has implications for gender roles in Afghanistan. Male interlocutors described how their pursuit of music education prompted concern among family members about their future economic security and ability to fulfil family obligations:

> How will you build your life through music? I was thinking that [my father] would tell me that, because he always worry about our future. Even as a child he was telling me to study hard because you have to build your life, you have to get married, you have to... like these things, always the Afghani parents are always telling their son, that how you will build your life, how you will feed your children and so on? (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021).

Aziz Hakimi (2020) states that 'providing for one's family, rather than the desire for individual fulfilment, is […] one of the many ways in which men in Afghanistan assert and perform their masculinity' (1). This is especially true for the pursuit of music as a career which, as discussed in Chapter 3, is not viewed by some Afghan families as a financially secure career option. Thus, male music graduates needed to prove to their families that their individualistic desire to learn music will not impact their family responsibilities: 'They were worried that I cannot support myself with the music, that I need to change my field and find other work to get money. After that, I had my music course, I could support my family and take some money for them. Like this, they were really very happy' (Hasib, interview, November 27, 2020). Moreover, one male graduate of ANIM suggested that being a music student could impact one's ability to create a family because 'no one

will give you their daughter' (Abdullah, interview, November 4, 2020). In contrast, concerns about female students learning music centred around bringing shame on their family and community. As discussed in Chapter 5, many of ANIM's female students who learnt music against the desires of their families or communities received death threats and condemnation. In Afghanistan, the historical and contemporary connection between music and prostitution combined with negative attitudes towards music and the 'ideology of seclusion and economic dependency of women' has rendered music an unacceptable profession for women (Doubleday, 1999: 840; 2013: 200). As such, a female performing in public, pursuing music education and eventually a career in music, is viewed by many as dishonourable: 'when I came to ANIM I felt a lot of discrimination from men in [province], like they would stand against me, telling my mum to not let your daughter, or she's a shame for our family, for the region. And she shouldn't go' (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021). In Afghan society, the honour of the family, tribe, and even the nation is invested in women. Within 'the patriarchal belt' (Moghadam, 1994)—which stretches from Northern Africa across the Middle East to the northern plains of the Indian subcontinent and parts of rural China—family honour is closely linked to women's controlled 'virtue' (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Moreover, viewed as 'cultural and biological reproducers of the nation and as transmitters of its value' (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 3), women 'are burdened with the task of maintaining the nation's (read men's) honor and integrity' (Alexander, 2011: 373). Consequently, any female's individualistic interest (such as music education) which is viewed as shameful can potentially impact the interests of an entire family or tribal group, or reflect negatively on the entire nation. This gendered distinction was summarised by a current foreign faculty member when discussing the reasons why students were commonly 'pulled out' of the school: 'if they're a guy it's probably because the parents prefer that they do IT or something else more useful and if they're a girl it's because they have family responsibilities' (Sarah, interview, April 16, 2020).

To manage and overcome collectivist expectations and pressures, many students carved out 'a space of non-interference' (Svendsen, 2017: 174) in which they could pursue their music

education and aspirations. While this was necessary to continue learning and practising music, it was often done out of personal choice. As the following accounts illustrate, this involved either physically moving to another living space and/or breaking ties with family members who did not support their music education:

> For me, I had to like stop the relationship [with] my relatives. I have to like just stay in Kabul, not to go in my village where my family, my uncles, like my whole relatives are. […] I didn't deny music, I wanted to continue, and I accept that I don't have relationship with my relatives (Nazira in Cuatro Puntos, 2020).

> I am living alone, not with my family […] because two of my brothers they don't like that I'm working with music. I have my own space, I am very relaxed (Hasib, interview, November 27, 2020).

Some students were forced to choose between music or their family: those, as in the previous comments, who chose the former were able to put their individualism above collective interests and continue their education, while for those who chose the latter—often girls forced to leave school and marry—collective interests overwhelmed their individualism. For one student, a space of non-interference was already furnished for him by his family's existing viewpoint on familial interactions. When I asked him if he had ever experienced any resistance towards his music education from his extended family, he explained that 'my uncles, they did not much agree [with my music], to be honest. Because my father is an independent person, he never gave any chance to others to interfere in our own internal things in our family. Therefore, my uncles never told me, 'why you study music?" (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021). Clearly, family and other group dynamics played an important role in shaping music students' individualism.

The narratives described above indicate that participants' on-the-ground experience of liberal interventionism and the value of individualism was generally positive. Even when faced with pressures from the collectivism of family and larger social groups, students viewed their struggle as eventually leading to a desired outcome. The perceived positive transformation of students' lives is inconsistent with the negative and sceptical critiques of liberal peacebuilding in the literature described earlier in the chapter. This disjunct may be reconciled in two ways. First, although it has been argued that liberal peacebuilding in Afghanistan, and more generally, failed politically at the level of the nation, this does not necessarily preclude positive transformations at an individual or smaller group level. Second, analysing the students' narratives from the perspective of a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Josselson, 2004) raises questions about the role of the school and its dominant discourses in shaping these experiences. Given the school's overwhelming commitment to liberal values and 'progressive ideas', and the fact students were required to participate in performances and recordings of songs which espoused liberal values as part of their school duties, it would not be a mistake to believe that when enrolling at the school they needed, or at least felt obliged, to accept these values. If we assume this to be true, we may pose the question: are the students' opinions on liberal values and individual liberty their own and did they hold them before entering ANIM? In problematising and looking for meaning beyond these narratives, I do not wish to suggest that the student body were hegemonized—although this could also be argued—but propose the idea that music education served as an effective tool for instilling the values of the wider intervention in the younger Afghan generation.

Investing in the future individual

An important step in developing individualism through music education in Afghanistan was cultivating 'the habit of long-term accumulation of value' (Bull, 2016: 133) among stakeholders. ANIM's leadership subscribed to the belief that the art of music can guarantee individuals' futures and used the 'future' as a tool to entice lower socioeconomic families to enrol their students at the

school. During an early scene in Watkin's film *Dr Sarmast's Music School* (2012), Ahmad Sarmast is seen addressing a group of street-working children and their families at the Aschiana[145] Centre for Street Working Children[146]. Seated on the floor in a large circle, the group listens to the school's director as he explains 'I know these kids are breadwinners and help you with your daily life. But I also know you want these kids to have a bright future, to be well educated. I'm sure you don't want your children to sell things on the streets for eternity' (Watkins, 2012: 02:31). In 2011, the last year Watkins filmed in Kabul, an estimated one in three school-aged children[147] were forced to engage in casual labour, usually selling items on the streets or working in small car service workshops, to support their family livelihood (Nussrat, 2011). Studies have identified endemic poverty and parental deaths caused by decades of war as the most common reasons why Afghan children are required to supplement their family income (Human Rights Watch, 2016; Nageswaren, 2021; Terre des Hommes, 2002). In enrolling their children at ANIM, Sarmast was asking the families of street-working children to invest and have faith in the long-term accrual of their children's human capital over and above their immediate economic value on the streets. This required a monumental reconfiguration of low-income families' perspectives on the value of education and an 'orientation to strategies of long-term investment in cultural capital as a way to accumulate value for the future' (Bull, 2016: 131). 'Investment', writes Beverley Skeggs (2003), 'must be about a projection into the future of a self/space/body with value. We only make investments in order to accrue value when we can conceive of a future in which that value can have a use' (146). In Afghanistan, such an investment relies on being able to conceive of two imagined future entities: first, a future 'individual' whose hard work and investment will benefit both the individual and their family; and second, in a society which will support and recognise the

[145] Established in 1995, Aschiana 'is an indigenous local Afghan NGO that is assisting the street working children in the areas of nourishment, basic education, health education, mind awareness, vocational training as well as their overall social, emotional, intellectual and physical development' (Terre des Hommes, 2002: 5).
[146] It is important to note that one of the main narrative threads in Watkins' film is that of transforming the lives of disadvantaged children through music.
[147] In February 2022, aid agencies estimated that the number of street-working children and beggars in Kabul had tripled since the return of the Taliban regime in August 2021 (Glinski, 2022).

efforts, investments, and achievements of the individual. It involves viewing the future educated child as more valuable than the present uneducated child. Music education, Sarmast believed, could guarantee those imagined futures: 'It's critical you don't sacrifice your future for your current situation. We will give you opportunities that ensure your future. You will stand on your own feet and not need to be a street worker. That is no future for you at all' (Watkins, 2012: 05:23). For street-working children and their families, however, this future-oriented investment and its associated imagined self and society was not sufficient to offset their immediate financial needs and concerns. Within a week of enrolling the first 50 children from Aschiana in 2010, all but two children had dropped out of the school. When Sarmast approached the NGO to understand why this had happened, they explained that 'unfortunately, […] they left school because they are the breadwinners of their family. When they come to the school 8 o'clock in the morning, finishing their programme 4 o'clock, the entire family will be sleeping hungry that day' (Polar Music Prize, 2018: 14:00)[148]. To ensure that these students remained at school, ANIM initiated a sponsorship programme which offered families USD$30 per month to financially compensate for the students' daily loss of earnings. During the following decade, this programme was largely successful in bridging the gap between daily financial concerns and the need to invest long-term in a child's education.

In contrast, some interlocutors from lower- and middle-class backgrounds—whose family's livelihoods didn't depend on the support of their children's labour—were able to imagine these projected futures and believed that their long-term investment in their music education would pay off both academically and financially:

> It's very difficult to even learn music. Like day by day, I was encouraging myself that ok, maybe tomorrow will be better, maybe tomorrow will be better and better. However, now I

[148] Baily (2015a) also suggests that some of the street-working children dropped out because they were so behind in their general education and had great difficulties with schoolwork, leading to them being ashamed of their 'educational backwardness' (207).

> graduated, and now I made my life through music, I did what I want and I achieve what I planned. Now I have Bachelor in Music, I have a very good job, I have salary. And even I achieve those economic goals that I had (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021).

Similarly, Edris's ability to project himself into the future was a strong motivating force during his time at ANIM:

> I dreamed a lot of things when I was looking for concerts or gigs or musicians. And I was motivated to play music, to continue and how I said, that I take on a lot of energy from [my teacher] because he always pushed me and I know, somehow, I have some future in music but I have to work a lot. And I just keep hoping and that was the only thing that motivated me to play music (Edris, interview, May 4, 2021).

Both Jafar and Edris identified individual responsibility and hard work as important factors in guaranteeing a successful future as a musician in Afghanistan:

> If you are a good musician, if you worked hard during your education, if you made plans for yourself, if you think about your future then you will definitely find a job in music industry in Afghanistan. But if you didn't work hard during your study and you were thinking that ok, I am a musician and there will be some job for me, then definitely you will not be able to find those jobs. But this all depends on myself or everyone's self, what they think and how they can find jobs and how they can build their life (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021).

According to Jafar, an individual musician's future is in their hands and that they will only prosper if they possess the important attributes of aspiration, hard work, and self-discipline. Such rhetoric 'echoes neo-liberal ideals of social mobility, which individualises failure by attributing it to a lack of these attributes, bypassing social structural issues such as high unemployment' (Bull, 2014: 20),

or, in the case of Afghanistan, ongoing political stability, conflict, and poverty. Another student, on returning from the USA tour in 2013 made a promise to himself to practise harder, and to honour this commitment to his future, his parents bought him a saxophone so he could practise and play outside of school (Aimal, interview, June 18, 2020)[149].

In contrast to Edris and Jafar—whose imagined futures were their motivation to learn music—*music itself* was the motivating factor for Zarlasht to keep working towards her imagined future:

> Like thinking about [how] I know music and I'm gonna do music, [that] kept me motivated to dream more bigger everyday. Like right now, the ideas that I have in my mind, the things that I want to do in the future for the education system, for everything... like even the smallest thing that I want to do in my life, music motivates me and it motivates me in a good way (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021).

Zarlasht possessed a strong sense of her goals in life and the role music played in fulfilling those aims. Despite receiving relentless opposition to her music education for years—which eventually forced her to finish her secondary education elsewhere—Zarlasht maintained a robust image of her imagined future throughout.

During their music education, all three students possessed a conception of their 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986)—'what they might become, what they would like to become' (954)—and what role music played in this future being. Their imagined futures, and the investment this necessitated, were articulated in very individualistic terms, as autonomous beings, without any reference to large group affiliations or expectations. Moreover, their narratives suggest that they all believed 'in a world that rewards your hard work and will recognise your achievements' (Bull,

[149] ANIM students cannot take home the instruments provided to them by the school and the vast majority do not have their own private instrument at home.

2016: 134). However, as discussed later in Chapter 7, other ANIM graduates did not feel Afghanistan's music industry offered them satisfactory opportunities in light of their investment in music education.

The contrasting experiences of street-working students and those from lower- and middle-class backgrounds described above support Bull's (2016) claim that future-oriented investment is a classed resource, only possessed and practised by those who benefit from material and financial security in the present moment and who can therefore project themselves into the future (134). Moreover, the cultivation of a future-oriented perspective on the value of education is also highly dependent on the socio-economic needs of the collective group to which a student belongs. While the class system in Afghanistan differs considerably from that of the UK—where Bull carried out her fieldwork—there exists a stark difference between class groups in Afghan society in their ability to invest in imagined futures. For street-working families, the individualising moral culture of ANIM—and more broadly, modern institutional education—clashed with their academic orientation, or valuing of and commitment to education[150] (Goff, Silver, & Sigfusdottir, 2022), which led to dropouts. By contrast, students from lower- and middle-class backgrounds were able to embrace the school's individualising moral culture due to their different circumstances.

As the previous two sections have illustrated, tensions exist between Afghanistan's collectivist society, and the responsibilities it places on individuals, and the individualistic outlook required to pursue music education. This tension arises when music education does not fit within the collective interests of a particular group, forcing a student to adopt an individualistic outlook on their lives and potentially endanger collectivist ties. For some students, enrolment at ANIM required them to marginalise or even dismiss short-term obligations to primordial groups (such as family or community), while other families attempted to weaken and undermine their child's individualistic

[150] It is important to note that this low academic orientation may not have been voluntary—the families may have valued education but not have been able to commit due to their socio-economic situation.

desire to learn music. Such tensions were absent in families which are already musical or support their child's music education.

'Inside' and 'outside' worlds

During my initial research on ANIM in 2016, I proposed that 'a moral and ideological conflict [had] developed between the quasi-private sphere of the school and the public sphere surrounding it' (Braithwaite, 2016: 2). In this statement, I was referring to the contrast between the liberal values, ethnic and gender equality, and democratic principles practised within the school's fortified boundaries, and the existence of conservative interpretations of Islam, ethnic conflicts, strict gender structures, cultural expectations, and a struggling democracy within Afghan society. Drawing on Michel Foucault (1986), I concluded that the school functioned as a 'heterotopia' or '[a] counter-site, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' (Braithwaite, 2016: 24). A similar dichotomy is discussed by Baker (2021) in reference to the Red system of schools in the Colombian town of Medellín. These schools are referred to as 'the bubble' in the sense that they constitute safe spaces within violent cities[151], leading eventually to social separation between the inside world of the school and the outside world in which it is situated. Some narratives about ANIM attempt to make the school's inner world appear more liberal by exaggerating the 'conservatism' of the outside world. In their description of female equality at the school, Tunstall and Booth (2016) note that 'outside their guarded gate, women are completely covered in burqas; inside the gate, young women wear their headscarves casually and talk and play music with young men' (270). Aside from falling into the trap of problematically equating female veiling practices with gender equality (see Chapter 5), the authors fail to note that ANIM's campus was situated in a neighbourhood of Kabul (Dehbori, part of Police District 3) where few women,

[151] From the 1970s to the early 1990s, Medellín was known as the 'murder capital of the world' (Baker, 2021: 1).

at the time, wore the *burqa* in public[152]. In light of the current research, I now wish to explore my earlier observation further in terms of the impact this juxtaposition had on ANIM students' sense of self as individuals and their relationship with society. I focus specifically on the school's female students who appear to have been impacted more by the disparity between the two spheres than their male peers.

Some female interlocutors described inhabiting two opposing worlds: the 'inside world' of ANIM's hyper-liberal space in which they could speak and act 'freely', and an 'outside world' where they felt the need to be careful with and even censor the opinions they voiced:

> In ANIM, you can just share your idea of what you want to say, just say it. I mean... you're not afraid of like what somebody might say […] If I were with my family, like relatives in [my province], I wouldn't say like 'I should do what boys do, like equal'. […] In ANIM, you are just equal as the boys, you can just say anything a boy could say... I feel, like, more free in ANIM (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

This quote suggests that ANIM's female musicians felt they needed to 'move between contexts in which they [had] considerable freedom and other contexts in which they act[ed] on gendered codes of conduct' (Knight, 2011: 81). In other words, the students' 'internal self'—which was afforded and shaped by ANIM's hyper-liberal space and processes of individuation—was consonant with the school's environment (inside world) but dissonant with the environment outside the institution (outside world). These experiences resonate with the findings of a paper published by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) which reported that

[152] With many educational facilities (such as the Kabul University campus opposite ANIM), green areas, and comparatively low prices, Dehbori was a sought-after location for middle-class Afghans and foreigners (Foschini, 2019).

> […] Afghan women, particularly women who were raised in the West and return back to Afghanistan after a long absence, have to navigate between two parallel worlds in society—the outside appearance, where one must conform to all the traditional social and gender norms, and the inside world; care must be taken not to say certain things that could be seen as un-Islamic (2017: 106).

The 'inside world' (which I have referred to as the 'internal self') described here is an internalisation of one's experiences of liberal life, values, and practices, while the 'outside world' embodies Afghan traditional attitudes and values which dictate how individuals should conduct themselves in public and private spheres. This observation, based on the experiences of returned Afghan female refugees, mirrors the dualistic existence of some of Zohra's members. For one interlocutor, this dyad impacted how she felt about herself:

> School was my heaven for me. Because I feel really like myself, and outside I had to like control what I'm saying... I didn't feel that happy like when I'm with the regular people, my relatives and those people. I had to be careful what I'm saying mostly (Feroza, interview, January 27, 2021).

As this statement suggests, the student's 'inner self'—which is accepted within ANIM, or the 'inner world'—represents their 'real' or 'authentic' self in comparison to the person they presented to the 'outer world' who was obliged to conform verbally and physically to societal expectations. Some students, therefore, only felt comfortable to engage with and voice their 'inner self' within the ideological safety of ANIM. Returning to the model described by the EASO, moving from ANIM's hyper-liberal space to a conservative province is not dissimilar to the ideological journey taken between spending time in the West and travelling back to Afghanistan. This sensation of one's 'inner self' being at odds with the 'outer world' clearly caused students to feel disconnected from their families and communities or 'regular people'. In sum, liberal individuals do not exist

independently of the environment in which they find themselves and can only truly be 'free' in environments with the apposite socio-political scaffolding. In contrast to the positive narratives discussed above, the movement of the 'inner self' between the 'inside' and 'outside' worlds of ANIM and Afghan society, respectively, highlights some of the negative impacts of the liberal agenda.

The first half of this chapter has explored ANIM's promotion of individualism through music education and has highlighted some of the tensions which arise from this agenda within the Afghan context. The next part of this chapter moves away from the individual to explore the liberal value of freedom at the level of the nation and the ways in which this theme was promoted as a unifying framework for Afghanistan's imagined future.

Freedom

From the moment the first bomb of 'Operation Enduring Freedom' was dropped on Afghan soil on 7 October 2001, 'freedom' was a defining value and goal of the US-NATO-led intervention in Afghanistan. In return for having the 'War on Terror' fought in their own backyard, Afghans were promised numerous forms of political, economic, and social freedom by the West: freedom from terrorism and extremism, freedom from state corruption, and a free market economy, in addition to rights enshrined in liberalist ideology such as freedom of speech, freedom of press, women's freedoms, and the freedom and integrity of the individual. However, as the events of August 2021 showed, many of these were not 'enduring freedoms' which could be easily implanted into Afghan society and survive without the paternalistic supervision of the Western intervention. Although liberal theory emphasises freedom at the level of the individual, this section takes a broader perspective on the value of freedom to include the nation as an imagined collective. The liberal

value of freedom is discussed in relation to two different themes—pan-Afghan unity and neo-colonialism—which will be explored in the following sections.

Pan-Afghan unity

In August 2019, ANIM released a collection of four patriotic[153] songs entitled *Azadi* (Dari: 'Freedom'), *Watan* (Pashto: 'Homeland'), *Azadi Khawri* (Dari: 'Land of Freedom'), and *Khpolwaki* (Pashto: 'Independence') to mark the 100th anniversary of Afghanistan's independence[154]. The songs were composed and arranged by two senior ANIM students, performed by ANIM's National Symphony Orchestra and Choir, and professionally recorded for public release. The compositions represented an important milestone in the school's revival of music and its journey towards its post-2021 sustainability plan as they were the first publicly released songs composed and/or arranged entirely by students at the school. Following a public press release held at the school, the songs were extensively broadcast on Afghanistan's major television and radio media outlets including *RTA*, *Afghanistan Music Channel*, *TV1*, *Ariana*, *Saya Media*, *TOLO*, *Arezo*, *Ayina*. The ANIM Independence Day songs were produced as part of a patronage system between the school and the Afghan Government (through a special Commission group for the Independence Day celebrations)[155]; the school received USD$16,000 from the government to produce the songs[156]. This payment covered the composers' fees, a small honorarium for the student performers, video and audio recording, post-production, and other costs such as transportation, lunches, and hire of the venues.

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[153] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore these songs from a purely patriotic perspective. However, it is important to note that the teaching and place of patriotism (and nationalism) in music education has been widely debated and contested in democratic societies (Hebert, 2012, 2015; Hebert & Hertz-Welzel, 2012; Jorgensen, 2007; Kallio & Partti, 2013; Keller, 2012).

[154] See Afghanistan National Institute of Music (2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d) for the official videos of these songs.

[155] As discussed in Chapter 6, this relationship caused problems when the Afghan Government Commission tried to censor girls and boys playing together in the videos. It is important to note that ANIM started planning, composing, and rehearsing the four songs before the Afghan Government agreed to financial support for the project. However, their financial endorsement indicates a system of patronage and a promotion of the government's values.

[156] Similarly, the song *Salam* ('Salute/Hello'), which was released by ANIM in early 2020 to celebrate women in the Afghan Army, was financially supported by the Ministry of Defense.

Rather than celebrating the country's historical independence from British rule in 1919[157], the songs interpret and contextualise Afghanistan's sovereign independence and freedom within a framework of liberal values. As one of ANIM's leadership explained:

> We are […] promoting gender equality, ethnic equality, freedom of expression, freedom of press. All these things are in those four songs that we produced on the Independence Day. […] Independence is freedom […]. Independence is human rights in all wide understanding of the term. Without freedom you cannot achieve human rights (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020).

The main function of ANIM's Independence Day songs was didactical: 'through releasing those patriotic songs […] we can [easily] reach to the masses and promote those ideas [peace, unity, freedom, gender equality, women's rights, hope and nationhood] and to enlighten those people about these important issues' (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020). In doing so, the school hoped to 'promote an Afghanistan with progressive ideas forward' (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020). The collection of songs, therefore, possesses what Lila Abu-Lughod (2005) describes as an aesthetic of 'development realism' which 'idealizes education, progress, and modernity within the nation' (81). Originally used as a framework for analysing Egyptian nation-television serials, the aesthetic is 'connected to an ideology of social welfare and uplift for the benefit of a nation in need of development' (Abu-Lughod, 2005: 81). ANIM believed that by 'being ready to fight for a better future through claiming rights, modelling progressive social goals such as gender equality and ethnic diversity – and allying the school community with liberal Afghans' (Howell, 2021: 366), its songs could help lead the country to a better future.

[157] In August 1919, the Treaty of Rawalpindi, which recognised Afghanistan as a sovereign state, was signed (Barfield, 2010: 181). On 19 April 1919, King Amanullah exclaimed, 'I have declared myself and my country entirely free, autonomous and independent both internally and externally. My country will hereafter be as independent a state as the other states and powers of the world are. No foreign power will be allowed to have a hair's breadth of right to interfere internally and externally with the affairs of Afghanistan, and if any ever does I am ready to cut its throat with this sword' (quoted in Baiza, 2013: 68).

In its self-proclaimed role of 'enlightening' the masses, ANIM expands its sphere of influence and speaks across the ideological and spatial boundary between the modern liberal public sphere and the peripheral 'everywhere else' of Afghan society (Chishti, 2020). However, the expansionist rhetoric of 'educating the masses' risks constructing a neo-imperialist relationship between the urban, educated, and 'enlightened' population and their rural, uneducated, and 'unenlightened' counterparts, with the latter encouraged to adopt, uncritically, the modernist ideologies of the former. According to one Afghan teacher at the school, the songs had the potential to bring peace to the country 'because, you know, music has a very strong power that can *change the people's mindset*' (emphasis added, Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021). The songs, therefore, are part of a society-wide civilising mission which arises from the perceived need to enlighten Afghanistan's 'dark regions'. Such a process imitates liberal peacebuilding's 'propensity to try to transform rather than engage with non-liberal others' (Richmond, 2011: 9), thus translating the inclusiveness and plurality represented by liberal norms into exclusivity and liberal enclosure. For example, one interlocutor involved in the project suggested that 'the Afghan people, most of them are like sheep. They are just given food and just give them comfortable ways to live. They don't think about their human rights, their social rights, their value, and it takes time to get them to realise' (Naser, personal communication, June 16, 2020). Notwithstanding its neo-orientalist tone, this comment illustrates the paternalism inherent in the discourse of national development where 'those in authority […] are there to ensure social justice, to help those in need, and generally improve society' (Abu-Lughod, 2005: 91). Naser sees himself as a truth teller to an unconscious public (Gershon, 2009: 630), the latter of whom cannot and will not be 'enlightened' and lead fulfilled lives without realising their social and human rights.

However, ANIM's Independence Day songs not only sought to educate Afghans about liberal values, but also encouraged them to adopt them as a unifying national trait. The songs were

part of a wider genre of patriotic songs which 'in the atmosphere of post-Taliban[158] Kabul […] seem[ed] to express people's desire to feel unified and secure in a national identity'[159] (Doubleday, 2007: 283). As such, the common trope running through the collection of songs naturalises 'freedom as a social ideal' (Mahmood, 2001: 206) which has the potential to unite Afghan people. The songs celebrate and promote a largely theoretical[160] matrix of individual freedoms which were, at the time, apparently afforded to Afghans: 'we are celebrating what's happening currently which is certain freedom given to the Afghan people, the struggle of the progressive forces towards a brighter future for the country' (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020). In releasing this collection of songs, ANIM invited the Afghan public to unite around a shared belief in, and commitment to, individual liberal values and freedom which, in turn, will guide the country towards what Faridah Zaman (2017) refers to as an 'as-yet-unrealised future political and social order'[161] (645). In other words, freedom, framed here in its liberal context, is operationalised as a trope for Afghanistan's collective identity. This narrative resonates with the discursive styling of Afghanistan as a 'freedom-loving country', a national character trait which was promoted, exercised, and exploited at various moments in Afghanistan's modern history (Schetter, 2005: 59). The discourse of Afghans' 'love of freedom' was initially ascribed to them by British authors during 'The Great Game'[162] and continued under the pens of Afghan authors. This national characteristic trait played a role in Afghan resistance propaganda against the Soviet invaders and was later an influential force in the coalition's strategy against the Taliban in autumn 2001 (Schetter, 2005: 59)[163]. However, Schetter also notes that this trait was largely unusable as a uniting factor 'because most of the Afghan

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158 'Post-Taliban' referring here to the period of time after the first Taliban regime.

159 National unity was also an important subject matter in other musical genres during the past two decades. For example, the rapper Bezhan Zafarmal, also known as 'DJ Besho', raps in Dari about peace, love, and national unity.

160 I use the word theoretical due to the disjunct between the freedoms afforded Afghans through the 2003 constitution and how these are actually realised in real-life. Freedom of press, for example, is a highly contested issue in Afghanistan as many Afghan journalists were victims of violence or killed during the inter-Taliban period.

161 Zaman was originally referring to Mohammad Ali's argument that 'the full realisation of the ideal of Islam is in the womb of futurity' (645).

162 The Great Game, which lasted most of the nineteenth century, was the political and diplomatic contest between the British and Russian Empires for control of Afghanistan and neighbouring Central Asian territories.

163 See also *Afghanistan: A Nation in Love with Freedom* (Tabībī, 1985).

political parties and actors had been blamed for collaborating with foreign forces and for selling out this national value' (Schetter, 2005: 60).

The problem of Afghan unification

Since Afghanistan's modernising reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, top-down attempts to unify the country's diverse ethnic, tribal, and social groups have largely failed. The national and patriotic idea propagated by the Afghan state during the last century was the exclusive purview of Kabul's modernised, political elite and had little appeal to, or influence on, the country's rural and tribal population (Hyman, 2002; Rasikh, 2010). In fact, instead of achieving national cohesion, the Afghan state's efforts to forge a common collective identity led to further cleavages both between state and society, and between the country's various socio-political entities (Rasuly-Paleczek, 2001). Afghanistan's competing ethnic spatial perceptions (Dupree, 1973; Schetter, 2005) and tribal and sectarian divisions (Baily, 2004; Hyman, 2002) are consistently rendered as barriers to the construction of a coherent pan-Afghan national identity. For example, the concept of national unity in which all citizens are to be considered as 'Afghan' (as written in the 1964 and 1977 constitutions) is problematic and ambiguous as the term 'Afghan' is synonymous with the country's dominant ethnic group, the Pashtuns (Barfield, 2010; Ehsan, 2017). In recent years, the term 'Afghan' has acquired a more national character by virtue of the way the outside world labels the country's ethnically diverse people, but the use of 'Afghan' in a national context is still contested (Barfield, 2010: 24). However, despite the sensitivities surrounding the term 'Afghan', research carried out by Lina Abirafeh (2009) found that many Afghan men and women expressed a strong sense of *Afghaniyat*, with one interlocutor saying that 'being Afghan is what holds us together. It should be our strength' (92). Elsewhere, scholars have drawn attention to other socio-political obstacles which have curbed Afghan nationalism and any attempts to create a unified nation-state since the late nineteenth century: these include neo-colonial projects led by foreign powers—such as Britain, USSR, and more recently the US-NATO

intervention—which often ran concurrently with a form of exclusionary internal colonialism/ethno-nationalism[164] imposed by Pashtun tribal elites (Bleuer, 2012; Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont, 2000; Ehsan, 2017; Hyman, 2002; Rasikh, 2010; Rasuly-Paleczek, 2001; Sadr, 2020; Schetter, 2005; Tapper, 1983), anxieties surrounding the effects of Westernisation/modernisation as a result of nation-state building agendas (Raqib & Barreto, 2014), and a weak, unstable government as a result of decades of war (Hyman, 2002). Finally, despite the majority of Afghans sharing the common religion of Islam, pressures between the Shia minority and Sunni majority in the country rule out unity based on religion. On the contrary, the fact that the many of the country's Shia population are also Hazara—historic victims of prejudice on religious and racial grounds and ranked at the bottom of Afghanistan's ethnic hierarchy (Barfield, 2010: 26)—only exacerbates tensions between these two religious sects. Religious unification is also problematised by the presence of other minority religions in Afghanistan including Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Ahmadi Islam, Baha'i faith, and Judaism[165] (Mohammad & Udin, 2021).

Despite these barriers, scholars have identified several socio-political factors which have historically unified Afghanistan to some extent. Following years of failed top-down attempts to forge a pan-Afghan identity, scholars argue that the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet troops in 1979 indirectly led to the awakening of a national consciousness in both rural and urban areas. Barfield (2010) and Boesen (1990) look at conceptions of Afghan national unity which developed during the Soviet war and show how shared feelings of *jihad*—the common cause of defending Afghanistan against the invasion forces and the 'marionette regime' in Kabul—and a shared common fate as refugees contributed to a growing sense of national unity during that period

[164] Terms used by Hyman (2002) and Sadr (2020), respectively. Also referred to in the literature as 'Pashtunisation', 'internal imperialism', 'interior colonization', 'Afghanization', and 'Pashtun colonization'. Beginning in the 1880s and continuing under successive rulers until 1978, Pashtunisation was a policy of attempting to homogenise the peoples of Afghanistan through promoting Pashtun nationalist ideology (Bleuer, 2012: 70).

[165] The last member of Afghanistan's Jewish community left the country in early September 2021 following the Taliban's takeover (Associated Press, 2021).

(Boeson, 1990: 172). In living as refugees abroad and fighting the Soviet invaders at home, a sense of national unity emerged which was 'rooted in the will of its people to persist together, united by a common experience that transcended ethnic or regional differences' (Barfield, 2010: 278). The post-9/11 era nationalistic songs of Malang Kohestani trace Afghans' unity against a common enemy back even further to invasions by Alexander the Great and the British (Doubleday, 2007). Schetter (2005) provides further nuance to this experiential understanding of Afghan national unity, claiming that as a consequence of mass displacement and the dissolution of smaller social units such as family[166], clan, tribe, or village, a strong 'belief in the precisely delineated borders and the territorial inviolability of Afghanistan' (60) became a defining symbol of national identity over the course of the Soviet and Civil wars[167]. As such, Afghan national consciousness during this time was understood both in terms of shared experience and determination against a common enemy and in terms of shared identification with a tangible spatial territory. Nearly 40 years later, journalist Lotfullah Najfizada revisited the idea of a common experience, this time based on suffering: 'When people talk about Afghan unity and all that, I think what's common among Afghans is our suffering. A common feeling, a common pain' (Doucet, 2021b: 07:50).

Music and pan-Afghan unity and identity

Scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology and musicology have identified music and music institutions as agents for creating and expressing a national identity in modern Afghanistan (Dupree, 2002; Foschini, 2021). Baily (1994) and Slobin (1974) cite the royal court and national radio as key institutions in forming a shared national music. Writing in the early 1970s, Slobin

[166] Dupree (2004) explores how major events, war, and civil unrest since the late 1970s have impacted the family as a social institution in Afghanistan.

[167] As Dupree (2002) notes, Afghanistan's modern nation-state was confined within borders drawn up between 1904 and 1907 by 'outsiders'. Nevertheless, this spatial conception of national identity manifested itself in recent years through the celebration of 'Flag Day' on the 7th of Asad. Although not an official holiday, Flag Day was recognised by the Afghan government in 2019. The significance of the country's flag, and the territory it represents, was also confirmed when citizens took to the streets with the tricolour flag on Afghanistan's Independence Day in 2021 as a sign of protest against the Taliban's recent takeover of the country (BBC News, 2021c).

(1974) declared the music coming out of Radio Afghanistan as 'one of the few manifestations of an emerging pattern of national values and expression that may eventually comprise a pan-ethnic distinctively Afghan society' (248). According to the singer Husain Arman, during this era—and the two decades preceding it—everyone was 'conscious of participating in the building of a national cultural identity' (quoted in Doubleday, 2007: 300). In an online panel discussion organised by the Royal Anthropological Institute, Baily described how

> all these different kinds of regional musics had been brought together through particularly Radio Afghanistan[168] and so on, and that they really were part of a feeling of Afghan… identity. For example, Heratis are playing Uzbeki, they're playing Logari, they're drawing on all these different resources from the different parts of the country and bringing them all together. That was very important (Baily, 2021).

It is not insignificant, then, that when trying to unite Afghans for the country's 100th year of Independence, ANIM chose to include patriotic songs from a period in Afghanistan's musical history which was both experienced and framed as cultivating a sense of Afghan unity (see p. 146).

The national identity forged by radio music during this time resurfaced decades later on Afghan television, particularly through the popular talent show *Afghan Star* which was viewed as a strong voice in promoting national unity. Olson (2017) describes several ways in which musical performances on the show make a statement on Afghan identity, including the singing of polyglot poetry—alternating lines in Hazaragi, Pashto, Uzbeki, and Persian—and the singing of a patriotic song in a wide variety of languages and styles from different ethnic groups. One of Olson's interlocutors strongly felt that '*Afghan Star* has broken down ethnic divisions in Afghanistan' and the fact that there were performers from all over Afghanistan on the same stage 'was a good symbol of national unity and evidence that people are not thinking along ethnic lines' (Olson, 2017:

[168] The station was also known as 'Radio Kabul'. See Baily (1981b) for a discussion on the way in which regional musics travelled from the provinces to the capital and back again.

97). Finally, Baily (1999) stresses the importance of music in maintaining a sense of Afghan culture and identity among Afghan diasporic communities, most notably eastern Iran and California. However, while this body of literature emphasises music's role in forging a pan-Afghan identity and unity, Sakata (2020) reminds us that since 1978, music has also helped to maintain and reflect ethnic and regional identities amidst protracted fighting and turmoil.

During the centennial year of Afghanistan's Independence, ANIM had a strong focus on using music as a way of promoting Afghan unity. Towards the end of the school's 2019 Annual Gala Concert—held in March of that year—the Afghan National Symphony Orchestra performed an orchestral medley, arranged by the orchestra's student conductor Qambar Nawshad, of seven Afghan regional folk songs entitled 'Afghan Medley Song'. The piece took listeners on an aural journey through Afghanistan's rich and diverse musical traditions and brought them together in a musical display of unity. As the orchestra approached the final chord, the medley segued immediately into the four powerful opening chords of Afghanistan's national anthem. At this point the audience at Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) rose to their feet as images of Afghan soldiers, military helicopters, and AK-47 automatic rifles appeared on giant television screens positioned around the stage. The intended purpose of the audio-visual spectacle was two-fold: first, to publicly show solidarity with the national security forces in what was Afghanistan's 100th year of Independence; and second, to promote a sense of national unity amidst growing political uncertainty by symbolically bonding Afghanistan's diverse regional and ethnic songs included in the medley with the country's national anthem and national security forces. Continuing to draw on evidence from ANIM's Independence Day songs, the following section scrutinises ANIM's attempts to engender Afghan unity through the promotion of a liberal ideal of freedom.

Nostalgic futurity

Temporality plays an important role in the Independence Day songs' message of national identity and unity. The songs weave together narratives of both Afghanistan's past and its imagined future

as a way of dealing with the present moment. This creates a temporal ambivalence which reflects the liminal nature of the peacebuilding era which itself was suspended between a tormented recent past at one end, and an imagined utopian political and social order at the other. Released shortly after the eighth round of peace talks between the United States and the Taliban, which took place in Doha, Qatar, in early August 2019 (Qazi, 2019), the songs responded to a perceived need for Afghans to feel and appear unified at a historically salient moment which was potentially going to determine the future of the country. As Kallio and Partti (2013) note, 'music has often been used deliberately to express and communicate national identity[169], both in terms of creating and strengthening a sense of belonging within a nation and to signify to outsiders a commonality between them' (5). During the talks, solidarity, or at least the appearance of solidarity, among Afghans was crucial, not only for maintaining domestic morale but also to give foreign stakeholders, such as the United States and NATO, confidence that the country would remain a cohesive body politic once the peacebuilding intervention ceased. Against the backdrop of this 'lived present', the language of futurity used to describe the songs—'celebrating […] the struggle of the progressive forces towards a brighter future for the country' (Nasrullah, interview, July 3, 2020)—is juxtaposed with a nostalgia which is evoked by ANIM's revitalisation of earlier genres of patriotic songs from Afghanistan's "Golden Age" of music. While two of the songs recorded, *Azadi* and *Khpolwaki*, are musical arrangements of lyrics written by two contemporary Afghan poets, Dr Samay Hamed and Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, respectively, the other two are rearrangements of popular songs from the 1970s and 1980s[170]. As Doubleday (2007) notes, pre-conflict (before 1979) patriotic songs—which also often enjoyed a resurgence during the Soviet war—became commonplace in post-2001 Kabul music-making. The first song, *Azadi Khawri*, was recorded by Nashenas and played widely during the time when the leftist regime was in power and the second, *Watan*, was recorded by Mashoor Jamal in the mid-1970s when Afghanistan was in the process of

[169] To clarify and avoid any potential slippage by referring to the terms 'identity' and 'unity' simultaneously, I view shared Afghan identity both as a signifier and an ingredient of a perceived or felt unity among Afghans.
[170] However, the orchestral arrangements of these songs by ANIM students are new.

becoming a republic. These songs were chosen by ANIM's leadership because the lyrics express the importance of the struggle for the values of freedom, independence, and progressive ideas without explicit reference to historical events which happened during the time they were written. However, while these songs may evoke feelings of nostalgia for a better, more unified period in Afghanistan's history (see Chapter 6, p. 209, for YouTube comments under *Azadi*), they do not seek to fully restore or return to this past. That the orchestral arrangements of these songs by ANIM's students were entirely new and reflected ANIM's globalised education programme suggests a more future-oriented perspective. Within political spheres, collective nostalgia is often used at historically salient moments as an emotional tool capable of mobilising a nation towards illusory future goals (Campanella & Dassù, 2019). Thus, rather than offering a nostalgia for Afghanistan's [musical] past which only looks backwards, the "Golden Age" patriotic songs were recontextualised to address '[to]day's challenges that Afghanistan is facing' (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020) and the 'prospective potentialities' (Zaman, 2017: 640) of freedom in Afghanistan's present. That is, the song collection 'animates a temporality through its retentions and protentions—through connections to prior and prospective objects or events—in this way acting in and on time' (Born, 2015: 373). This 'nostalgic futurity'—looking back in order to look forward—was deployed by ANIM to deal with Afghanistan's present moment: to encourage the Afghan public to unite around a shared belief in individual liberal freedoms at a politically charged moment in Afghanistan's history.

Liberal nationalism and Afghan identity

ANIM's popularisation of a shared liberal political culture is another attempt to construct a common denominator to unite all Afghans. This endeavour may be understood using Yael Tamir's (1993) concept of 'liberal nationalism'[171]. Highlighting the interconnections between the two fields,

[171] Similar theories include Weber's 'civic nationalism' or Habermas's 'constitutional patriotism' (*Verfassungspatriotismus*).

Tamir's theory draws from 'liberalism a commitment to personal autonomy and individual rights, and from nationalism an appreciation of the importance of membership in human communities in general, and in national communities in particular' (Tamir, 1993: 35). Applying this framework to the present case study, it becomes clear that ANIM's songs attempt to weld together both the individual and the collective in the service of national unity. By espousing [Western] liberal rights-based values as a framework for national unity, ANIM's Independence Day songs promote a supra-ethnic nationalist ideology which stresses shared civil rights over shared cultural or ethnic roots (Eriksen, 2010: 144). Rather than looking back in time for shared roots, ANIM's vision of national unity looks towards a shared future shaped by liberal freedoms. As Ghumkhor and Daulatzai (2021) explain, Afghanistan is 'a strange reverse of the romanticism of ethnocultural nationalism which locates authenticity in those with roots in the land, here the nation is birthed in the urban centre, where modernity, not land, has breathed life into it'. While the first section of this chapter demonstrated that the individualism promoted by liberalism is in tension with the small units of collectivism in Afghanistan (family, community, tribe), the freedom of the individual present at the core of ANIM's liberal nationalism suggests that this same individualism may not be in tension with larger imagined collectives such as the nation.

However, while liberal nationalism may appear inclusive, at least from an ethnic and tribal perspective, this proposal can be interrogated as being exclusionary on several other levels. As Tadjbakhsh (2009) stresses, 'assumptions cannot be made about the universality, compatibility and moral value of liberalism for everyone, or the supremacy of political freedoms over socio-economic well-being' (636). Indeed, the United States' post-9/11 approach to public diplomacy in the region

> seems to take for granted that Muslim culture accepts the constituent elements of modernity, and that all Muslims have an innate, albeit repressed, desire to support both liberal democracy and capitalism. […] It further assumes that although ordinary Muslims may be opposed to US

> policies in the Middle East, they continue to be drawn to 'American values' like individual choice and freedom (van Ham, 2003: 432).

Specifically, Prakhtar Sharma (2020) draws attention to the plurality of lived experiences and socio-political realities which shape the desired national trajectory of Afghans today:

> There is an Afghan who is inspired by trajectories of Western modernity. She seeks to challenge, if not confront, traditional structures rooted in ideas from the past. […] There is another Afghan who experienced war, is embedded in the village life, and who feels insulated from the tidal waves of globalization that now engulf the country. […] There is yet another Afghan, who [is] disenfranchised by the post-2001 political configuration, […] disillusioned with the gradual transition of political power from social hierarchies toward the centralized state in Kabul […] and [declares an] urge to remoralize politics.

ANIM's contribution to Afghan national unity during the most recent phase of nation building parallels in some respects the role of music during Israel's nation building era post-1948. During this time, music, and particularly music education, contributed to a homogenising agenda to bring dispersed Jewish cultures together under a single Israeli identity (Laor, 2017). However, this uniform Israeli identity was later challenged by pluralist agendas which emphasised the existence of multiple heterogeneous communities with distinct cultural identities. While the Israeli and Afghan contexts are distinct in the nature of the unifying identity—the former built on Hebrew religious identity and the latter on political identity—both highlight the function of music and music education in homogenising agendas during periods of nation building.

Thus, in overcoming the ethnic and tribal diversity of the country, the political values and concepts embodied in ANIM's Independence Day songs—and other ANIM social change songs—threaten to overlook the heterogeneity of political, social, and cultural values that exist

within the Afghan population[172]. This process functions as a form of neo-colonialism based on the political ideologies of a thin strata of Afghan society inhabiting the country's liberal spheres[173], imitating the agenda of internal colonialism, or Pashtunisation, which began over a century before.

Neo-colonialism

As discussed earlier, ANIM's Independence Day songs are framed as a celebration of 'freedom' and 'independence' which can be achieved through embracing and accepting liberal rights. However, the composers[174] of these songs viewed and interpreted freedom in Afghanistan differently in response to their own lived experiences. They both felt that Afghanistan was, at the time, not a free country and that Afghan people were not afforded the freedoms mentioned in the songs:

> I don't feel like Afghanistan is a very independent and free country. Even the people, like not just the country but even the people, like for example... the Hindus in Afghanistan they don't have any freedom or women in Afghanistan, they don't have any freedom to do what they want or even marry who they want or study what they want or like... so many examples (Arson, interview, August 8, 2020).

In particular, they expressed concerns about the neo-colonial aspect of Afghanistan's socio-political situation under the foreign peacebuilding intervention and voiced a desire to reclaim the country's dignity and sovereign control and to 'not be silenced anymore by colonialism' (Qambar, personal communication, June 1, 2020). Afghanistan's reliance on other countries post-2001 and the way in which its infrastructure and economy were controlled by outside bodies were salient

[172] Narayan (1997) cites a similar example of anticolonial Indian nationalism where 'Indian culture' was equated with aspects of upper-caste Hindu culture and ignored the cultural and religious diversity of India.
[173] Richmond (2011) argues that 'liberal peace represents the biases of a specific set of actors, a knowledge system and epistemic community allied to a narrow set of interests, norms, institutions and techniques, developed from these' (3).
[174] The composers' names in this section have not been pseudonymised.

themes in our discussions: 'The whole country is getting paid by the international community and especially by the US Government. Everything is coming from outside the country, so how can we be proud of ourselves?' (Qambar, personal communication, June 1, 2020). Arson explained how Afghanistan's reliance on other countries for infrastructure—such as Tajikistan for electricity and the US for election results— and its dependency on NATO forces for security meant that 'we can't do what we want' (Arson, interview, August 8, 2020). At the time of the interview, Kabul was experiencing long hours of no power because Tajikistan had drastically reduced its exports of electricity to Afghanistan following a prolonged period of drought. For Arson, who had an electric keyboard at home, the power outages meant he couldn't practise or compose. Ultimately, both composers were critical of the foreign intervention and agreed that 'since we're dependent on something or someone else, we're not free' (Arson, interview, August 8, 2020). The composers' sentiments about neo-colonialism resonate with the findings of Heddy Lahmann's (2018) study of a US-funded non-formal arts education programme which operated across Afghanistan. Lahmann observed that Afghan youths' perceptions about national identity were not founded upon an imagined community with a common set of laws, traditions, values, and culture (Anderson, 1983), but were instead shaped by a history of colonial projects and foreign interference which led to fragmented communities, weak central government, and a lack of independence. In sum, the concerns of ANIM's composers surrounding a lack of emancipatory freedom during peacebuilding times speak to broader criticisms of liberal peace as 'an ideology whose universal aspirations are not mirrored on the ground' (Richmond, 2011: 7).

To illustrate Afghans' lived reality, Arson, the composer of *Azadi* (see Appendix B for score), chose to articulate through his musical arrangement the fact that Afghanistan does *not* have freedom, despite the song's lyrics proclaiming 'The anthem of our land/Freedom, Freedom, Freedom/The song of our land/Freedom, Freedom, Freedom'[175]. These lyrics—and those of

[175] See Chapter 6, pp. 200–202, for the song's full lyrics.

Azadi Khawri, which celebrate the 'land of free people'—explicitly illustrate Afghanistan's 'freedom-loving country' narrative described earlier. By contrast, Arson decided to challenge the poetry's positive freedom narrative: 'I went for this very sad kind of piece, it wasn't like a celebration piece. It was like a song for *not* having freedom than having freedom' (Arson, interview, August 8, 2020). To express this melancholic mood, he chose to base the song harmonically on *rāg Beiru*[176] due to its sober character. The arrangement also articulates Afghanistan's lack of freedom from a future-oriented perspective, especially in the central piano solo (bb. 47–96)[177] which is, according to him, always 'longing for freedom' (Arson, personal communication, August 9, 2020) but never achieves full emancipation[178]. This future-oriented view of freedom was echoed in public comments posted below the video on YouTube—'looking forward to freedom, […] looking forward to sustainable peace' and 'I wish they would listen to our heart's voice and the voice of the children until we have freedom'[179]. In this solo section, the music is trapped tonally and motivically: it never explores beyond four closely related chords[180]—C Major, d♭ minor, b♭ minor, and f minor—and is caught in a perpetual cycle of variations of a tetrachord motif (Figure 2) inherited from the preceding 4-bar transition (bb.43–46). Even when the solo expands in pitch range at b. 88 to encompass four octaves and a major third, this is done out of necessity in order to be heard over the thickening instrumentation. Eventually the music builds texturally and dynamically to an unfulfilled climax on a root position C Major chord at b. 96. The music is therefore stuck in the 'endless present' (Hartog, 2015), unable to reach the utopia of tomorrow which promises *actual* freedom. In many ways, this stagnation mimics the liminal temporality of

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[176] *Sampurna rāg* known in Hindustani music as *Bhairav* and which is traditionally played in the morning. As Baily (2020) notes, many of the *rāg*s of North India used in Afghan traditional music are known under rather different names.
[177] See Chapter 7 for an analysis of this solo from a feminist perspective.
[178] I asked the composer to elaborate on this point and to offer some musical examples but instead he invited me to interpret the meaning for myself: 'I like to say what the piece is about, or just the name, but leave the interpretation to the person and even if it's wrong, it's not what I had in mind, I think that's the beauty of music, that people can feel different things from the same piece of music' (Arson, interview, August 8, 2020).
[179] References are no longer unavailable for these videos as comments were turned off on YouTube following the Taliban's takeover.
[180] Although the song is based on a Hindustani *rāg*, the composer utilises the basic concepts of Western harmony such as triads.

the liberal peacebuilding intervention which was discursively framed as a ‘never ending’ (Bacevich, 2017) or ‘forever’ war (Garver, 2021).

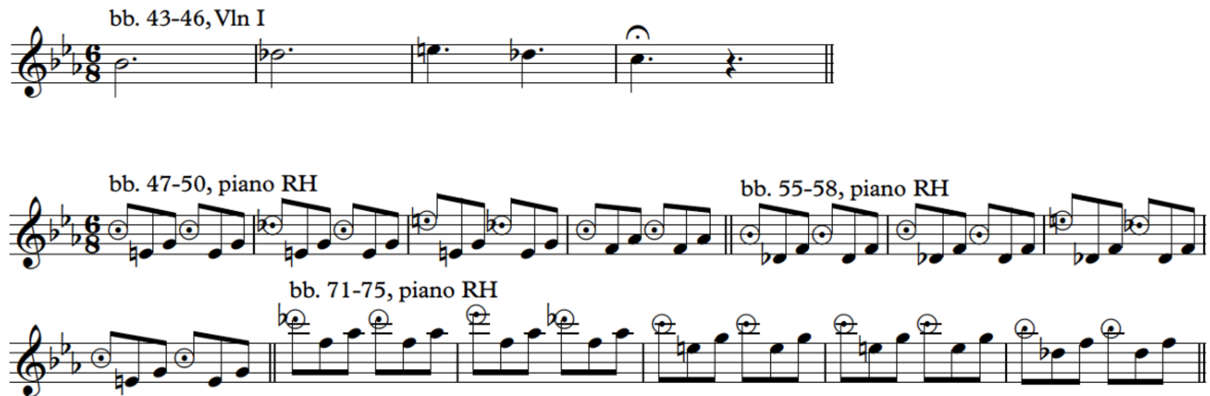

Figure 2. Tetrachord and variations in *Azadi* section B

Clearly, there exists a tension between the songs’ political message of liberal freedom and the student composers’ intended message about neo-colonialism. According to the lived experiences and opinions of the student composers, the free and independent Afghanistan celebrated in these songs is still an idealisation and not a reality. On the one hand, the songs celebrate a liberal democratic political framework which is itself a foreign import, directly imposed upon Afghanistan by external, neo-colonial forces during the inter-Taliban period, while on the other, the students viewed the songs as an opportunity to express their frustrations about the impact this control had on Afghanistan and its people. In other words, the foreign politico-military apparatus which brought liberalism, and the promise of freedom, to Afghanistan is viewed as the very mechanism which undermines Afghans’ ‘freedom’. The subversive political critique clearly invested in the students’ compositions bears similarity to the use of music as a vehicle for conveying hidden messages of dissent by earlier classical composers, chiefly those associated with twentieth-century totalitarian regimes (Garratt, 2019: 147). The disconnect between the sentiments of the Afghan composers, as manifest in the musical material, and the songs’ public narrative may

be viewed as 'a double-talk idiom […] combining external accommodation with inner bitterness and sadness' (Žižek, 2008: 236–7). However, there is a further degree of irony in the fact that although the Afghan composers addressed their criticism of the intervention's neo-colonialism, the songs themselves implement a form of internal colonialism based on the liberal tenets implanted by the foreign intervention. As Ryan (2012) notes, 'it is impossible to force [societies or individuals] to "do freely" what we force them to do' (108), whether that 'we' is a foreign intervention or Afghans themselves.

Conclusion

During the recent liberal peacebuilding era, ANIM translated the liberal values of individualism and freedom into its music education programme on-the-ground while simultaneously feeding these values back to Afghan society through its students, performances, and public-facing activities. While these values appear to have thrived within the institutional seclusion of ANIM, this chapter has explored several challenges for those who wished to promote liberal individualism and freedom across Afghanistan as a whole. At the same time, the interrelated themes of individualism and freedom evidence a projecting into and yearning for future imagined political and ontological states. The individualism promoted by institutional music education required students and families to adopt a future-oriented perspective to education and to invest in the future individual. Likewise, ANIM presented liberal rights and freedom as a unifying force which could advance Afghanistan towards a prosperous and peaceful future. As the subsequent two chapters illustrate, the liberal individuals who emerged from ANIM's educational programmes undertook, and were at times deployed to carry out, socio-political work both domestically and overseas in an attempt to challenge social injustices and present a utopic image of Afghanistan's future.

The two units of belonging described in this chapter—belonging to self and belonging to nation—indicate a non-binary and nuanced relationship between individualism and collectivism in

the Afghan context. While this research suggests that the individualism promoted by ANIM and the liberal peacebuilding agenda conflicted with smaller units of belonging in Afghanistan (such as family and community), the concept of the liberal individual did exist, and was used by ANIM to create a sense of belonging, within the context of larger imagined collectives such as the nation. Thus, despite the emphasis on the liberal individual in the context of the recent intervention, collective imaginaries also existed, as manifested through the products of institutional music education.

The conflicting perspectives on music and its place in Afghan culture highlighted in this chapter's opening vignette are symptomatic of a wider contestation between modernists and traditionalists over the nature of public space and culture in Afghanistan. The following chapter views this historical and ongoing struggle through a feminist lens to explore the challenges faced by female musicians in becoming visible and legitimate actors in public spaces and suggest ways in which music education was used as a medium for promoting women's rights and agency.

Chapter 5

Music Education, Afghan Women, and Public Space

Introduction

When the 30 young female musicians of the Afghan Women's Orchestra, 'Zohra', returned home to Kabul from their inaugural international tour in January 2017, no one could predict the public's reaction. During their two-week trip to Germany and Switzerland, the orchestra captured the world's imagination with their bravery, colourful dresses, and lively songs, and reignited an 'Afghanistan-wide conversation on the role of women in society, and that of music' (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2019e). Afghan media closely followed and reported the activities of the group and how they 'portray[ed] a different image of Afghanistan to the world' (TOLOnews, 2017). The orchestra's initial welcome home at Hamid Karzai International Airport (Kabul) was overwhelmingly positive—a large crowd of family and friends, media reporters, and other members of the public greeted the girls with applause and plastic-wrapped roses as they left the terminal building (Figure 3). In the weeks following, the group was invited to celebratory receptions at government ministries and media organisations. However, beyond the public's gaze, others responded differently. One of the orchestra's *tabla* players was immediately removed from the school because her family had seen footage of her performing at the World Economic Forum closing ceremony on Afghan national television. The decision was taken by her uncle, the most senior male in her immediate family, who said that girls should not be seen playing music on television, it's "un-Islamic", and it had brought shame on his family. Another student was suddenly absent from ANIM following the tour and later admitted to having been beaten by one of her male family members who didn't know until then that she was a musician.

Figure 3. Zohra returning to Hamid Karzai International Airport, January 2017. TOLOnews, 2017

Even though the orchestra's concerts had taken place over 4000 miles from Kabul, the tour immediately thrust the young women into the public limelight in Afghanistan. The contrasting reactions to their new position in Afghan society illustrate a long-standing tension between different logics of public space in Afghanistan and women's role within it. Throughout Afghanistan's modern history[181], women's visibility and active participation in the public sphere and civic life have been crucial signifiers of progress, modernity, and democracy in the country's various nation-building agendas. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the issue of the 'public woman' has ignited contestation, debate, and new discourses in both political and civic arenas, and top-down, domestic attempts to bring about female emancipation have persistently resulted in a 'tug of war' between traditionalists and modernisers (Barakat & Wardell, 2002: 911;

[181] Adelkhah (2017), Barfield (2010), Rasanayagam (2003), and Shahrani (2002) trace the transformation of the country into a modern nation state back to the second Anglo-Afghan war in the late nineteenth century.

Benjamin, 2000: 54–55; Coleman, 2004: 58–59)[182]. In the recent phase of nation-(re)building—this time under the paternalistic guidance of liberal peacebuilding—women were once again positioned at the centre of this tug of war. Women's public activities and identities became sites for claiming ideological superiority on both sides of the 'war on terror', either as barometers for measuring Western notions of modernity, progress, and liberation or as signifiers of authentic Afghan tradition and cultural values.

This chapter explores the intersection of music education, gender, and publicness within the foreign-led reconstruction context. A feminist reading of ANIM's music education programmes and its products elucidates a strong agenda of promoting women's rights and freedoms within the public sphere while simultaneously fostering women's public music making. As Julie Billaud (2010) observes, the liberal peacebuilding project afforded new possibilities for women to become public and shaped new imaginaries pertaining to their role in society (4). This transformation was attested to by the public visibility of ANIM's female students, and in particular the Afghan Women's Orchestra, 'Zohra', and the way in which they carved out gendered musical roles never before witnessed in Afghanistan. Working within a wider framework of Andrew Eisenberg's (2013) 'multiaccentual public space', I draw on postcolonial feminist theories (Butler, 1995; Crenshaw, 1989; Mahmood, 2005) to argue that ANIM and its members espoused a problematic model of women's public freedom and emancipation which was clearly aligned with the liberal accent of this contested public space. The second half of this chapter explores the presentation of the public and 'free' woman through music. Bringing into dialogue Kofi Agawu (1991) and Lucy Green's (1997) theories of musical meaning, I offer a detailed analysis of one of ANIM's social change songs which highlights the disruptive nature of female public performers in Afghanistan's contested public spaces.

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[182] On at least two occasions, these gender reforms played a central role in the overthrow of power in the country: first, opposition by conservative clerics towards King Amanullah's attempts to emancipate women contributed to a series of rebellions (Khost Rebellion, 1924, and smaller uprisings in 1928) and the 1929 revolt which led to the King's demise; and second, women's issues played a crucial role in fuelling the 1970s anti-government protests which ultimately resulted in the leftist *coup d'état* of April 1978 and the abolition of the monarchy (Dupree, 1998).

Women's Music Making at ANIM

ANIM's mission statement prioritised the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women through music. Aside from its commitment to increasing and safeguarding female access to music education, ANIM promoted gender issues in the public sphere in two ways: first, through the production and dissemination of social activist music videos which directly addressed women's rights and freedoms in Afghanistan; and second, through the public activities of the Zohra Orchestra. Named after the Persian goddess of music[183], the Zohra Orchestra was Afghanistan's first all-female ensemble in the country's history[184] and was comprised of female students between the ages of 14 and 21[185]. The young women came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds: many lived at the Afghan Child Education and Care Organization (AFCECO) orphanage, having come from poor families or provincial areas where access to girls' education was limited or non-existent, while others came from more middle-class backgrounds. Members were not auditioned for the orchestra but were chosen to join once they reached a certain level on their instrument, usually after two or three years of learning. In addition to the ensemble's Artistic Director, who oversaw rehearsals, arranged repertoire, and helped with overseas tours arrangements, Zohra had student conductors who shared the conducting responsibilities with the Artistic Director. This marked the first time Afghan women had stood on a conductor's podium. The orchestra boasted a unique combination of Afghan traditional, Hindustani Classical, and Western classical instruments[186] and played a wide repertoire of music from traditional Afghan folk and popular songs to Western classical works. The majority of the orchestra's repertoire consisted of orchestral

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[183] In her translation of the *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz* (1897), Gertrude Lowthian Bell notes that 'Zohra is the planet Venus, the musician of the heavens, and the protector of all musicians and singers upon the earth. Zohra played a part in very ancient mythology' (149).

[184] Although there are plans to revive Zohra as part of ANIM's reestablishment in Portugal, at present (March 2022) this hasn't officially happened. Furthermore, the group of musicians who constituted Zohra at the time of research has dispersed across different countries. Therefore, I am referring to the orchestra in the past tense.

[185] The exact number of girls in the ensemble fluctuated considerably between 2015 and 2021. When the ensemble travelled to Europe in 2017 for its first overseas tour, there were 29 members. Two years later, on their tour to Slovakia, the ensemble numbered only 20. This number subsequently fell further after seven members sought asylum on two separate tours that year (Radio Free Europe, 2019).

[186] At its largest, the orchestra included violin, viola, cello, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, percussion, piano (four hands), *tabla*, *rubāb*, *sitār*, *qashkarcha*, *dutār*, and *tanbūr*.

arrangements (using notated score and following Western harmony) of Afghan folk music and popular songs from the "Golden Age" of Afghan music which were transcribed and orchestrated by the school's foreign faculty (see Chapter 6).

The original idea to create an ensemble exclusively for girls came from a female trumpet student at the school and was subsequently developed by the school's leadership. As one of the orchestra's original members recounts, Zohra started as a small chamber group and quickly expanded: 'It started with just 5 people, two years ago. We never thought of having a female orchestra. Zohra was built day by day. Soon, the membership of the group expanded and it changed into the first female orchestra in 2015' (Adiba, 2017). Initially, the orchestra performed at local events in Kabul but later burst onto the international stage following their first overseas tour to Germany and Switzerland in 2017, during which they performed at the Closing Ceremony of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Following the success of this tour, the ensemble went on to perform in eight different countries across three continents, with notable performances at the *Hindustan Times* Leadership Summit, New Delhi (2017), the British Library, London (2019), and the Sydney Opera House (2019), and quickly became a symbol, both nationally and internationally, of women's rights, freedom, and gender equality in Afghanistan.

The very existence of the orchestra, it was claimed, indicated a tangible change in attitudes towards women and women's rights in the country—which have since been almost entirely reversed with the Taliban's return to power—with Daswani and Brandon (2017) arguing in 2017 that '[Zohra] is not simply a consequence of a changing Afghanistan: they are the change'. On a broader level, Sarmast viewed Zohra as 'a model for other Muslim countries, for the neighbouring countries where still girls and women are facing enormous challenges and inequality' (World Economic Forum, 2017a: 04:27) and erroneously indicated that Zohra 'did not have, and does not have, its equal in any Muslim country around the world' (Albany Law School, 2022: 23:50). However, all-female music ensembles and orchestras which combine local traditional and Western instruments are not uncommon in Muslim-majority countries. The Zohra Orchestra joins a

growing list of women's music groups in the MENA[187], including *l'ensemble national féminin de musique andalouse d'Algérie* (Algeria), *El 'Azifet* (Tunisia), *l'Orchestre féminin Cheikh Sadek el-Bejaoui* (Algeria), and the *Al Nour Wal Amal* Chamber Orchestra (Egypt) which have been established over the past thirty years.

Historically, women's involvement in Afghanistan's musical culture had been limited due to physical gender segregations embedded in Afghan social life, musical instruments having powerful gender associations, a covert climate for prostitution surrounding certain music types, and men's general disregard for women's music as 'trivial and unskilled' (Doubleday, 1999: 837). These factors, alongside patriarchal structures, meant that women 'had no real opportunity to explore their potential talent in the field of music' (Ahmadi, 2016: 73). However, ANIM's music programme broke new ground and directly challenged and disrupted musical norms associated with society's gender ideologies. Firstly, many students were the first females in their families to have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, either Afghan or otherwise. Previously, 'strict social and religious customs […] deemed only two traditional instruments, the frame drum [*daireh*] and mouth harp [*chang*], suitable for women' (Doubleday, 1999: 838; see also Doubleday, 2008, 2011; Slobin, 1976), but the school defied the gender-typing both of musical instruments (Doubleday & Baily, 1995: 435; Slobin, 1976: 29, 53) and of musical styles and genres (Doubleday, 2011: 25, Doubleday & Baily, 1995: 443; Slobin, 1976: 53), to enable girls to learn and play instruments previously out of bounds to them. Secondly, ANIM ruptured the relationship between women's music making, gender segregation practices, and women's only spaces. As Doubleday (1999) notes, in Afghanistan, 'virtually all musical activity is segregated according to gender[188]. Women perform in the privacy of domestic surroundings[189]; men play in public, or in the separate

[187] Acronym referring to the Middle East and North Africa region.
[188] During the inter-Taliban period, however, it was increasingly common to see mixed bands and music ensembles playing on Afghan TV.
[189] There are exceptions to this statement. During the "Golden Era", women sang on national radio but they often received condemnation.

guest rooms of private houses' (837)[190]. However, ANIM strongly promoted co-educational practices—which also meant that female students learned and played music with males who were not family members—throughout its educational programmes and public-facing activities, and through the efforts of the Zohra Orchestra and its other performing ensembles, opened up opportunities for women's music making in 'male' public music spaces. Thus, by learning music at ANIM, female students were automatically and unavoidably also 'becoming public' in Afghanistan.

However, despite being viewed as a symbol of positive gender changes in Afghanistan, the heightened local and transnational attention towards the Zohra Orchestra after 2015 caused feelings of resentment among ANIM's male students:

> Like for boys, […] they think that [the school] has given all the chances just for the girls, they go on all the tours and everything is just about the girls and they feel kind of left behind […] like the girls are their enemies, like that they're competitors. So I think that's created a bad atmosphere, like people always trying to compete in a very unhealthy way (Hussein, interview, February 25, 2020).

For a period of about three years (2017–2020), the majority of invitations ANIM received for large-scale international tours and festival performances were solely for the Zohra Orchestra[191]. As one interlocutor described it, 'at school there is no opportunity. If there is opportunity, it is for some special amount of people [girls] in school' (Naser, interview, January 13, 2020). Male students felt that they were being excluded from, and unable to take advantage of, the musical opportunities afforded by the school's international reputation and that there were no significant performance

[190] This conceptual link between the division of musical roles and responsibilities and other culture-specific gender-related domains has been observed in several diverse musical cultures and celebrations (see Koskoff, 1987: 8).
[191] Small-sized, mixed-gender traditional Afghan ensembles did travel internationally to perform at diplomatic events, cultural festivals, and regional competitions. Male performers also competed in international traditional music competitions such as the 'Sharq Taronalari' in Uzbekistan.

occasions outside Kabul presented to them. This led to some male students feeling disenchanted and leaving the school in Grade 12 rather than continuing to Grade 14 to receive their advanced diploma; as one student put it, '[they] just want the girls in the school, not the boys' (Nimatullah, personal communication, May 4, 2020). These discontents were not, it seems, unfounded. Upon visiting the main page of ANIM's website (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2019e), an unknowing visitor would not be mistaken for thinking that the school was only for girls, on account of the fact that every picture in the slideshow, bar one[192], is of female students. In a 2016 interview, Sarmast explained with pride how 'we are committed to more gender equality: we have an objective of 50:50. We do positive discrimination, we give priority to the girls' (Associated Press, 2016). Such rhetoric serves to substantiate male students' claims that their musical opportunities are reduced, to some extent, as a result of broader women's rights agendas currently operating in Afghanistan.

Members of the Zohra Orchestra, however, stressed the importance of having an ensemble just for women at that particular moment in history when women needed, and had the resources, to demonstrate their strength, capabilities, and power *without* the support of men and to encourage other women to be independent:

> There shouldn't be all boys or all girls in the first place, but in [Zohra] we had all girls which was a necessity I think at that time. Because there are not many organisations who will encourage women to do things and this was a very good opportunity for us, all girls playing together. […] In that way it was positive, but like elsewhere in Afghanistan, there are schools that they do just boys and just girls which is not that good. But in a group of girls, just to show a positive message and encourage other girls, this was good (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

[192] The exception is a picture of Ahmad Sarmast receiving the Polar Music Prize in 2018.

> When we are playing with the girls, we are like showing that girls can stand on their feet without men. And women are strong to do anything. And when we are playing with the boys, it shows that music can be powerful with both of them, and in that time, gender doesn't... like... we're equal to each other and they can work together and make Afghanistan a better place for musicians (Gulmina, interview, January 24, 2021).

These arguments were countered by some male members of the ANIM community who thought it 'more important for boys and girls, for both genders, to come together than it is for girls to prove that they can do it alone […]. I think that's the point of music, to unite, not to just separate' (Hussein, interview, February 25, 2020). Indeed, during the inter-Taliban Afghanistan, there was a tendency for humanitarian and development efforts to single out women as a category and abstract them from their wider social, cultural, and family contexts (Abirafeh, 2005; Barakat & Wardell, 2002). This, coupled with the international humanitarian community's imbalanced attention towards the female population, led to increased sensitivity among Afghan men towards women's issues, women's rights, and the promotion of gender equality. In Afghanistan, the term 'gender' is now associated solely with women[193] and the increasing exclusion of men from gender discourses has prompted anxiety among the male population who feel that gender is about augmenting the power of women over men and thus diminishing the latter's privileges (Abirafeh, 2005: 13; Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, 2012; Billaud, 2015; Elks, 2019)[194].

The above accounts provide a counter-narrative to Ellen Koskoff's (1987) belief that 'music performance can be an active agent in inter-gender relations, transforming, reversing, or mediating conflict between the sexes' (9). Rather than ameliorating gender-based tensions between students, increased attention towards women's music making within educational contexts can

[193] This misrepresentation is not unique to Afghanistan. As Matthew Gutmann (1997) notes, '[too often] masculinity is either ignored or considered so much the norm that a separate inventory is unnecessary. Then, too, "gender" often means women and not men' (403).
[194] To compound this further, masculine identities—which are founded on social expectations to be the breadwinner and protector of one's family—are also being undermined and eroded by the country's precarious security situation, job market, and economic situation.

result in alienation and resentment among male students. Such feelings of anger indicate another conflict between logics of public space centred around the redistribution of power and wealth across gender, race, and class lines (Lubiano, 1991). However, as Michael Kaufman (2004) stresses, 'men are the gatekeepers of current gender orders and are potential resistors of change. If we do not effectively reach men and boys, many of our [gender and development] efforts will be either thwarted or simply ignored' (20). The importance of male inclusion in gender reforms is recognised by the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)[195] who strategically use men as active partners in their social and political programmes in order to diminish patriarchal notions of women's limited capacity in the Afghan family and larger social structures (Fluri, 2008: 41).

While there is no evidence to suggest that the perceived or actual privileging of female students within music education contexts is contributing to *conflict* between sexes—on the contrary, there was a great deal of cooperation, musical collaboration, and mutual respect between the sexes at ANIM—the above narratives point to broader issues concerning the practices and frameworks relating to gender-mainstreaming in (post)conflict contexts.

Negotiating Identities

In becoming public-facing musicians, Zohra's members negotiated certain binaries pertaining to female identity embedded in Afghan society. The dominant binary which haunted ANIM's female musicians, and pervades Afghan women's public life in general, was the distinction between being a 'good girl' and a 'bad girl'. Some of the values which scaffold these opposing identities are articulated by Afghan rapper and anti-child marriage activist Sonita Alizadeh:

[195] Socio-political organisation established in 1977 by Meena Keshwar Kamal to struggle for peace, freedom, democracy, and women's rights in Afghanistan. See Cheryl Benard's monograph *Veiled Courage* (2002) which documents the work of RAWA.

> They always told me a good girl is mild and meek,
>
> Who sacrifices her future and never speak
>
> And she never wants to learn and go to school
>
> You see she's good as long as she doesn't break the rules
>
> If that's the case then we're all bad girls, loud and proud
>
> We know our worth, and we stand separate from the crowd
>
> Despite the obstacles and risks that we have to take
>
> We'll leave the shards of the STOP signs in our wake
>
> — *Bad Girls*, Sonita Alizadeh (2020)[196]

According to Alizadeh, 'good girls' are submissive, silent, uneducated, and bound by rules, while 'bad girls' are the opposite—outspoken, educated, and rule breakers. Analogous ideals were articulated by one of Zohra's members during a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum in 2017; 'a good girl is the one who never goes to school. A good girl is the one who washes the dishes and sits at home. […] Unfortunately, I am a bad girl because I go and study' (Lipman, 2017). During the country's Communist era (1979–1989), government-controlled media (television, radio, newspapers) promoted the image of Afghan women as 'urban, educated, and modern' citizens (Frogh, 2012). However, people in rural areas felt intimidated and overlooked by these images and an opposing belief that educated women were not of good character slowly developed (Frogh, 2012). This perception re-emerged in the last two decades as the liberal content of new media programming originating from urban areas did not fully resonate with the lives and values of rural women, causing a 'growing resistance to the idea of educating and empowering women and the stigmatizing of women who are educated or who do work outside the home as dishonourable' (Frogh, 2012). This notion was confirmed by a student from a remote province who told me that '[rural people] think education will guide girls in bad ways […] and that if you

[196] See Women for Afghan Women (2020) for a performance of *Bad Girls*.

are educated you will take off you scarf' (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021), the latter referring more broadly to anxieties over the perceived loss of Afghan and Islamic cultural values. Clearly, modern education, and its liberal modernist underpinnings, plays a prominent role in defining and shaping the 'good girl'/'bad girl' binary and as such, becoming an actor within an educational site necessitates the negotiation of these contrasting identities.

Zohra's members also referenced a number of music-specific factors which contributed to their own labelling of 'bad girl', such as illicit performance behaviours—'you are a bad girl, you are like dancing, you are playing music on TV so we do not love you, you are not a member of our family' (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021)—and even music itself—'so [my family] were saying 'she will be a bad girl, music is bad, music will make her a bad person'' (Gulmina, interview, January 24, 2021). Additionally, participants suggested that the mixed social environment in which music was learnt and practised could also be viewed as corrupting:

> Since music, like many other fields of study, have traditionally been really male dominated, therefore, for a woman to go and work in that area would definitely mean that they will be in contact with other men. Traditionally, any kind of relationship (even workplace relationship) between a male and female is not ok and therefore if a woman is seen to work in a male dominated field, they will be given the label of vulgarity and being a *bad woman* (Feroza, personal communication, April 7, 2021).

Within the Afghan social imagination then, becoming a music student involved a shift from being a 'good girl' (a category of advantage) to a 'bad girl' (a category of disadvantage). The girls saw it as their duty to overcome this binary and to prove that their actions (education, music, public performance) were not 'bad' and did not make them 'bad girls'[197].

[197] Billaud (2010) adopts the term *jihad* to describe the internal dilemmas faced by her female interlocutors at Kabul University who were trying to negotiate being 'good' Muslim girls whilst also appearing modern and liberated.

This recent iteration of the 'good girl'/'bad girl' binary is part of a broader ideological contestation which during the peacebuilding era forced women to choose which Afghanistan they wanted to be a part of: an Afghanistan shaped by foreign intervention and Western liberal values, or an Afghanistan faithful to its cultural traditions and Islamic values. According to the two sides of the argument—that is, the US-NATO intervention and Islamic fundamentalists[198]—women who participated in Afghanistan's public sphere, adopted Western values and practices, and benefited from and engaged with foreign-facilitated reforms and aid programmes were positioned in a binary which constructed women either as 'nation builders' or 'nation betrayers', respectively (Chishti, 2010; Chishti & Farhoumand-Sims, 2011; Zine, 2006). One female student at the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) in Kabul explained how women needed to prove they were 'still a good girl, a good Muslim, a nationalist' (quoted in Peterson, 2019) in order to overcome the Taliban suspicion that going to an American school was seen as 'Christian' and an attempt to destroy Islam. There was no middle ground or room for negotiation within and between these roles. As Billaud (2015) notes, 'women cannot make choices that do not show—at least partly—their adhesion to [social][199] norms without fearing the social sanction reserved for those who are considered traitors' (11)[200]. This scenario is illustrated by the story of one female former student of ANIM who played a Western instrument on a television show broadcast by one of Afghanistan's private television networks. As a potential 'nation betrayer', Safia received visits in the night from members of the Taliban who threatened her life and demanded she cease her public activities; 'it's so so so dangerous for me to go playing music on TV […] Yeah, [Taliban] are coming in my home at 1 am at night, they are coming, saying 'please do not go on TV or play music'. It's too dangerous. I want to leave Kabul' (Safia, interview, October 23, 2020). Eventually she was

[198] By using the collective term 'Islamic fundamentalists' to describe the spectrum of insurgent groups currently operating in Afghanistan I do not wish to insinuate that they necessarily collude or support each other. Each group has their own agendas and beliefs which are loosely bound by overarching ideologies.
[199] These norms include family honour, feminine modesty, and the glorification of motherhood.
[200] In one southern region of the country, a group of Afghan women who helped to organise general elections were harassed and accused of 'working for the infidels' by men who claimed to be speaking on behalf of the insurgents (Gentilini, 2013: 136).

forced to move to another family member's house. Yet her presence on national television marked her as an essential 'nation builder' from the perspective of the foreign-backed, liberal reconstruction agenda. I asked her why she continued to perform on television despite receiving credible threats from the Taliban, to which she replied, 'so how to do? You know, my family's poor, I need to work for them. My father is so sick and my mother is so sick. We don't have any worker in my home, I need to work for them. I really need to work' (Safia, interview, October 23, 2020). In a culture where family responsibility, especially towards parents, supersedes other needs, the risks that came with performing publicly on a regular basis were taken to ensure that her family was provided for. Clearly, Safia's choice to be visible in the public sphere was not as a result of her own empowerment, liberation, or agency (as dominant feminist narratives would suggest) but was instead dictated by social responsibilities, expectations, and economic concerns.

Contested Public Spaces

The 'good' girl/'bad' girl binary elucidates anxieties concerning women's public music making and more broadly, women's ability to occupy public space and assume public roles in Afghanistan. Since King Amanullah's modernising reforms in the 1920s, Afghan women's public visibility has continuously waxed and waned between prominence and total exclusion. The last two decades arguably saw a gradual waxing of women's engagement in all aspects of Afghanistan's civic and public life, indicating a 'feminisation'[201] of the country's public sphere. According to Moghadam and Sadiqi (2006), the public spheres of MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries are becoming 'engendered' and 'feminized' as a result of women's greater social and political participation, the proliferation of women's organisations, their involvement in or initiation of

[201] While the term 'feminisation' has been at home in the fields of public health, social work, and development since the 1970s where it is used to describe the disproportionate representation of women and children among the world's poor compared to men—the 'feminisation of poverty' (Chant, 2012; Christensen, 2019)—it is now increasingly used as a positive signifier of the greater incorporation and participation of women in political, civil, and virtual spaces across the globe.

public debates and national dialogues, and their access to various forms of media. Much has been written on the journey (many)[202] Afghan women took after 2001, from being completely excluded from public life (at least without being accompanied by a close male family member, or *mahram*) and having their bodies 'privatised' under the Taliban regime[203], to gradually emerging as a political and social force who participated in civic and political arenas (Billaud, 2015; Cole, 2003; Coleman, 2004; Das, 2006; Kristensen, 2016; Rostami-Povey, 2007). Western discourses repeatedly mobilised the tropes 'first female' or 'all-women' to describe and celebrate moments when women 'broke out' into previously male-dominated arenas; we were continually invited to read about Afghanistan's stereotype-breaking all-female motorcycle show, all-female robotics team, and all-female radio station, or to meet the country's 'first female' break dancer, rapper, aeroplane pilot, or UN envoy. ANIM played an important role in this feminisation of the public sphere by establishing Afghanistan's first all-female orchestra, producing the country's first female conductors, regularly releasing social activism songs which address women's and girls' rights, and empowering more girls to pursue further education and careers in music.

Although the liberal peacebuilding agenda afforded and celebrated women's public agency and participation, ironically, the very presence of this intervention also fuelled tensions which undermined and negated Afghan women's ability to move, act, and communicate freely within public spaces. Ongoing war and foreign occupation in Afghanistan have incited a crisis of masculinity, leading to 'restrictions on women's mobility and increases in violence against women, both at home and on the streets' (Moghadam, 2011: 84). Many female artists and cultural producers have been harassed verbally and physically while working in public spaces. On several occasions, street artist Shamsia Hassani has had her public murals removed or defaced and she admits that 'I am really scared of public spaces […] Specifically, it's difficult for women to do graffiti and street art because usually, people are not happy with women's activity' (Jones, 2018). Likewise, while

[202] Some Afghan women, especially in rural areas, did not experience a marked change in their living conditions after the first Taliban regime (Allen & Felbab-Brown, 2020).
[203] For an account of women's experiences under the Taliban regime see Schulz and Schulz (1999).

filming on the streets to highlight gender violence in public spaces, filmmaker Sahar Fetrat has been hit with small rocks, tomatoes, and fruit (Jackman, 2017). These actions may be understood as direct attempts by the public itself to 'purify public space' (Sibley, 1988) by prescribing, policing, and governing what kinds of actions are possible in this domain and by whom.

In late 2020, the struggle of Afghan women to be legitimate actors in the public sphere took a particularly bloody turn, with stories of female assassinations, targeted shootings, IED[204] bombs attached to cars, and knife attacks against women in public roles becoming a disturbing leitmotif in both national and international news bulletins. Although many of the attacks were not claimed by any group, it is believed that both the Taliban and the Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan, known as Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K)[205], were behind the wave of attacks. While participating in public life has always been precarious for Afghan women (Jones, 2018; Wardak & Mitchell, 2013), attacks against prominent and publicly visible women, and civil society professionals in general, rose considerably amidst tensions about a potential peace deal between the Afghan Government and the Taliban (Kermani & Zubaide, 2020). Increased gendered violence was witnessed in both urban and rural provinces and targeted women engaged in a range of political and civic roles, including politicians, tribal and community leaders, police officers, army officers, journalists, television presenters, and human rights activists (Faiez, 2020; Ghazi & Gibbons-Neff, 2020; Kumar, 2020; Mashal, 2020; Noorzai, 2021). In some rural parts of the country, women were targeted simply for taking a job outside of the home, including one female crime officer in Ghazni who was shot and stabbed in the eyes three days after starting a job with the local police force (Qadir Sediqi, 2020). The crucial role of publicness in this upsurge in violence is exemplified by the misleading rhetoric of a *BBC News* (2021a) report entitled 'Taliban tried to kill me for being a woman' which describes the attempted assassination of Afghan policewoman, actor, and director, Saba Sahar in August 2020. The segment's title implies that the attack took

[204] Improvised explosive device.
[205] Also known as 'Islamic State-Khorasan Province' (ISKP), the group's name refers to a historical name associated with parts of Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia.

place *only* because Sahar is a woman. However, during her interview, Sahar explains that it was because she was a woman *working in public professions* that she was targeted by the group. Ultimately, the increase in (gendered) violence had a direct and perceptible impact on the wider opportunities available for Afghan women in public life. In response to the killing of four of its female media workers in the eastern city of Jalalabad (Nangarhar province) between December 2020 and March 2021, *Enikass TV* made the decision not to hire any more women until the country's security situation improved and asked all its female employees to work from home, essentially asking them to physically return to the private sphere (Glinski, 2021a).

The gendered decline of the country's public sphere was also articulated in musical terms. On 10 March 2021, as I was in the throes of writing this chapter, the Afghan Ministry of Education released a memo banning girls over the age of 12 from singing in public, at school, and in mixed-sex company, and allowing them only to sing at women-only events or at home (BBC News, 2021b; TOLOnews, 2021). Within a day, social media erupted in protest and a hashtag campaign called #IAmMySong launched by ANIM immediately gained traction (see Noyan, 2021). Female and male musicians, both in Afghanistan and internationally, began sharing videos of themselves singing and performing to raise awareness of the issue and to put pressure on the ministry to reverse their decision. In response to the online backlash and condemnation from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), a spokesperson for the ministry claimed that the decree had been made only to prevent boys and girls from participating in public events that could spread the COVID-19 virus and was not intended as a breach of human rights (Gannon, 2021). However, for most people, the fiasco was viewed as yet another curtailment of Afghan women's public lives and agency in public spaces, and even a 'Talibanising'[206] of the country by education officials (Gannon, 2021).

[206] This comment alludes to the Taliban's banning of musical activities and female education during its five-year rule.

It is important to note, however, that the violence towards public-facing women during this time was not exclusively a consequence of sex-based oppression, but should be understood as one of many outcomes of the broader ideological anxieties and contestations concerning the political and cultural future of the country being played out in the public domain. As Eisenberg (2013) notes, 'contestations in concrete public space may also be contestations *of* concrete public space, driven by (epistemological) disagreements over how space can be known to be public or private and (ontological) disagreements over what constitutes public or private space in the first place' (188). Although attacks were more prevalent among females, the wave of violence existed on both sides of the gender divide with men working as journalists, activists, and in governmental roles also being targeted and killed—men too could be accused of being 'nation betrayers'[207]. British journalist Anthony Lloyd described the attacks as a 'purge of those from the strata of Afghan society most likely and most articulate in speaking out against any return of an Islamic Emirate' (Afghanaid, 2021). In reality, the factors that influenced the rise in violence were likely to have been manifold and complex, including perceived class divisions, political ideology, and education, as exemplified by the following quote from a male member of the public: 'The people in the capital are educated, bright people. Some people from the villages are uneducated, and they come and kill the educated people of Afghanistan' (quoted in Ferguson & Kassie, 2021). Elsewhere, scholars have argued that the US occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq severely curtailed 'post-conflict' political processes and reconstruction, leading to an escalation of violence and sectarian conflicts (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009; Kandiyoti, 2007). Therefore, the increase in violence witnessed in late 2020 and early 2021 was not solely an attack on women's right to participate in Afghanistan's public spaces, but a symptom of a broader ideological battle for the very *nature* of public space—it was an 'active competition between logics of public space' (Eisenberg, 2013: 197). That being said, in Afghanistan and other countries in the region, women's bodies and visibility

[207] The impact of Afghanistan's ongoing conflict on men is often overlooked by the media and scholarship who tend to focus on the plight of women and children.

are more commonly used as sites for defining and contesting the nature of public space (Ayotte & Hussain, 2005; Billaud, 2015; Chishti, 2010; Fluri, 2009; Göle, 2002; Hong Tschalaer, 2015).

Afghanistan's public space during the peacebuilding era was characterised by a perpetual contestation between modernists and traditionalists, liberals and conservatives, and Islamic-Afghan and liberal-democratic understandings of publicity and privacy, creating what Eisenberg (2013) describes as 'multiaccentual' public space[208]. Drawing on Vološinov's (1973) heuristic concept of multiaccentuality, Eisenberg conceptualises the conflictual multiplicity of sounded space in Mombasa old town as an 'ontological politics about the very nature *of* urban space' (Born, 2013: 60). During the liberal peacebuilding era, the nature of Afghanistan's public space was heavily influenced and shaped by the liberal peacebuilding agenda and the ongoing presence of the foreign politico-military apparatus in the country. Maliha Chishti (2020) argues that Kabul and other Afghan government strongholds (such as Mazar-i Sharif and Herat) constituted 'hypermasculine and highly militarized pockets of liberal public space that [were] extensively protected by security forces' (583) and which contrasted with the 'everywhere else' in Afghan society, living in the shadow of the liberal sphere[209]. Even within Kabul, certain areas were perceived as more liberal than others, as explained to me by one female interlocutor:

> So people get this negative idea about everything. And that just keeps going on, you know, after 2001, after 2002 until now. It just keeps moving forward. We should not just talk about Kabul, you know, even Kabul... just a tiny part which is *Pul-e-Sorkh*, *Shar-e-Naw*, *Taimani*, and these small areas. People are travelling abroad, they are understanding another world, they know about women's rights (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021).

[208] Although influential in the field, I wish to avoid conceptualisations of subaltern or Islamic counterpublics, as proposed by Fraser (1990) and Hirschkind (2001, 2006), respectively, as they suggest the existence of a public *always* against a hegemonic public, or other publics. A 'multiaccentual' conceptualisation recognises the plurality of Afghanistan's public space without reifying or determining the relationships between its publics. Although the theory of the multiaccentual public space originates in the field of sound studies and sonic-spatial practices, I am abstracting it from this framework and applying it to a more general discussion about the ontological nature of the public sphere in Afghanistan.
[209] From an economic perspective, Walter (2017) argues that Kabul became a 'bubble economy, based upon the wealth that ha[d] been created by the presence of the Western state-building mission' (chapter 1, para. 44).

Yet, as Goodhand and Sedra (2013) point out, the international mission in Afghanistan and its liberal-democratic logic of public space was 'far from hegemonic, in that liberal peacebuilding compete[d] with (and [was] undermined and colonized by) alternative power centres, institutions, and sources of authority and legitimacy' (241). In Islamic societies, notions of public are shaped, largely, by 'social practices that are based on ideas of the common good' (Salvatore & Eickelman, 2004: xiii) and issues of community concern and conduct[210]. Scholars have argued for an emerging 'Public Islam' in which intellectual and discursive spaces have expanded to include the participation of a wider spectrum of citizens who shape normative expressions of Islamic belief and practices and the larger political system (McLarney, 2011; Salvatore & Eickelman, 2004; Salvatore & LeVine, 2005; Willemse & Bergh, 2016). Beyond this, there is also radical Islam's 'reconfiguration of the public and the private in their quest for a pure Islamic countermodernity' (Cole, 2003: 775). These can all be understood as 'competing logics of public space' which contribute to the country's multiaccentual public space.

The following sections contextualise the narratives and musical activities of ANIM's female musicians within Afghanistan's multiaccentual public space and argue that their perspectives on women's freedom articulate a liberal model of female emancipation. Their narratives demonstrate a collective concern for the limitations placed on Afghan women's lives and how, as public-facing musicians and potential role models for women's freedom, they could effect change for girls and women in the future.

Shaping girls' futures

The Zohra Orchestra was viewed by its members as a vehicle through which to effect gendered social change in Afghanistan. The students articulated a collective concern for creating and

[210] These notions are born out of the religious necessity of 'commanding right and prohibiting evil' (*al-amr bi al-Ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*). See Michael Cook (2000).

advancing opportunities for the next generation of Afghan girls to be able to play music, have greater and easier access to education, and to choose their own path in life. As Aziza explained,

> Our focus [in] the girl's orchestra [was] to tell Afghan families that look, we are not doing anything bad, let your daughters go to school, let your daughter to be a musician. […] we [told] ourselves that we shouldn't stop music because we have to fight to open the doors for others […] (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

As Aziza's comment demonstrates, this concern was often framed as a 'fight' and students sometimes described themselves as 'fighters':

> ANIM open my mind to be a fighter, to work for women (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

> Zohra was so important for me because there was all the girls who were fighters for Afghan music. Like for the future, for music's future in Afghanistan (Aminah, interview, March 8, 2021).

Depictions of Afghans, both in colonial and media discourses, as proud, heroic, and fearless fighters have historically been assigned to male members of society. However, women are increasingly assuming metaphorical soldier-like roles in their public lives. Afghan women, argues Billaud (2015), 'play with the polysemic nature of hegemonic political/religious repertoires (notions of jihad and martyrdom, for example) in order to assert their presence in male-dominated arenas' (17). In an online panel discussion, for example, a former Zohra Orchestra member, Nazira, explicitly recontextualised notions of war within a musical context:

> Amin (Iraqi musician): […] we are not soldiers, we don't have weapons, we are not fighters—
>
> Nazira: Our instruments are our weapons.

> Amin: I mean I hate the term of weapon but it's a way to fix it, it's a tool to fix, weapon it's a tool to destroy. But it's also like, it's fighting the ideas, the bad ideas and the darkness (Cuatro Puntos, 2020).

That Nazira's instrument could assume the function of a weapon immediately allowed her to assert herself as a fighter or soldier who might wield such an object. This figurative speech echoes a broader 'war narrative' which was identified in the present media analysis. A linguistic component of this narrative is the use of what I term here 'weapons metaphors', a signifying device which was used in an ArtLords[211] mural in Kabul (Figure 4). The image, entitled 'pen is mightier than gun', proposes that pens and pencils (recognised resources and symbols of education) have the power to overcome conflict and extremism and can function as 'soft' weapons. Similarly, in the context of the present analysis, the resources or objects of music education (music as an artform, the institutions themselves, musical instruments etc.) are likened to the resources and sounds of war (and *vice versa*) in media rhetoric[212]. In one article, ANIM (as an institution) was described as a 'potent weapon against the Taliban' (Gramer, 2017) and in another, the author suggests that 'violins could become the most powerful weapons of counterinsurgency' (Boyle, 2013). The allegory is also reversed, as in the headline 'In Afghanistan, teaching music to overcome war's percussion' (Druzin, 2013) which exploits the onomatopoeic similarities of drums and the sounds of war.

[211] ArtLords is an art collective who painted murals on blast walls in Kabul and across Afghanistan to provide a positive visual experience and to raise awareness of important socio-political issues concerning the Afghan public (ArtLords, 2020).
[212] Similar examples can be found in Ayres (2017); 'their music […] shot out of them like bullets from a Kalashnikov' (83). See also *Sonam and the Silence* (Ayres, 2018).

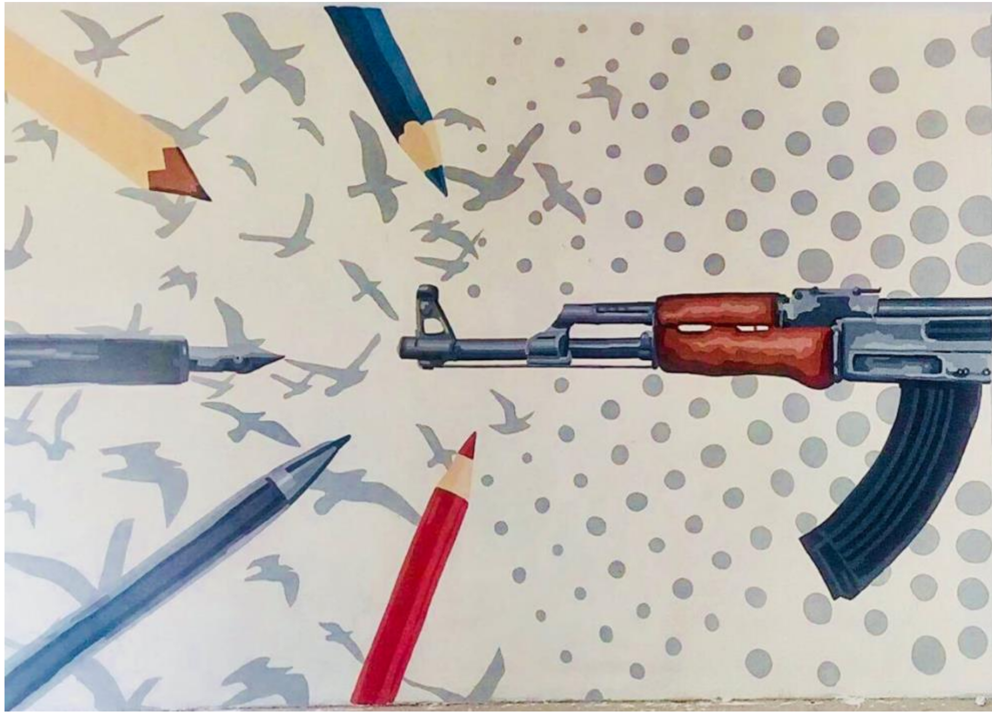

Figure 4. ArtLords mural in Kabul city (Sharifi, 2018)

Two factors played an important role in cultivating students' desire to improve the future of Afghan girls' and women's education opportunities. Firstly, the musicians described the influence of battling to overcome the barriers and opposition to their own music education:

> When I get into ANIM, then I saw that, oh my god, people are thinking [so badly] of music. They are against music and musicians this much. There are still parts of Afghanistan, there are still people in Kabul that they think of music as forbidden. So after getting involved in music, then I kind of started realising all these things. And especially for girls, how much it's a big risk for them to do it, it's a big challenge for them to do it. I started to know all these challenges and risks when I was in ANIM, when I started music, when I was inside that journey (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021).

> When I started music I was, like I faced a lot of struggles to go and learn what I love. So in the future at least I should help one kid [to] not struggle as much as I did and do what they

> want. It's a very simple thing and it's the right of every individual human being which is not accessible in my country. So that's my goal, to help as many kids as I can to study, to do what they want, and to live safe (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

At the same time, witnessing other girls' struggle to obtain a general education also ignited a critical response from ANIM students. In a country where over 2.2 million girls are not attending school[213], a need to build a pathway for the next generation of girls to go to school without barriers was particularly strong among Zohra's members:

> […] in my village, there was no school and even if there was, girls were not allowed to go to school. […] I want to go back to my province and at least help ten or twenty [girls], more than that […] so they don't have to be separate from family like me, so they don't have to go far away (Safia, interview, October 23, 2020).

> What inspired me the most is that every day when I see girls are suffering in Afghanistan and like some families didn't let them to study. All this gave me inspiration that I need to help them to achieve their goals, whether they want to be a musician or whether they want to be a doctor, because some girls don't even have the right to go even to school[214] (Gulmina, interview, January 24, 2021).

Therefore, in response to their own lived experiences and their knowledge of other girls' struggles, Zohra members cultivated a desire to achieve social justice, especially in the fields of education

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[213] According to a 2018 UNICEF report, an estimated 3.7 million children—44 percent of all children aged 7 to 17 years—in Afghanistan are not attending school, and of this figure, 60 percent are girls. Moreover, for the first time since 2002 the number of girls attending school is declining across most (32 out of 34) of the country's provinces (UNICEF, 2018).

[214] Purewal (2015) argues that 'girls' education as a 'right' has become a tool rather than a strategy within the neoliberal economic agenda to proliferate the ideology of the 'free market' while simultaneously sanctioning the neoliberal military intervention and occupation of the region' (47).

and music. While the students' accounts focus primarily on girls' ability to learn music and go to school, they also communicate a broader concern for female agency in Afghan society and public life. Having overcome their own obstacles and barriers to 'do what I love', Zohra's musicians saw themselves in a position of advantage to be able to help those less fortunate, the 'girls who are still not allowed to go to school' (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021). They believed that other Afghan girls (and women) needed help to overcome the external circumstances that subdued their capacity to choose their own path in life, such as the 'beliefs and traditions which are not letting them [study]' (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021). Consequently, Zohra's members reconfigured the 'Saving Afghan Women' discourse espoused by foreign governments and transnational feminists in the early years of the intervention; that is, they wanted to use their seemingly 'liberated' position within Afghan society to help other Afghan girls overcome their subordination.

Overall, the young women's narratives reflect a struggle over what kind of world the students considered possible and the role they played in shaping this new reality (Mayo, 2013). Every one of them visualised and had faith in an imagined future where women and girls would be able to freely shape their own lives. Within their narratives 'there is a sense of desire for Kabul's [and Afghanistan's] future and a sense of control in shaping its trajectory toward that future' (Ghani, 2020: 10). Against a backdrop of Afghanistan's waning gendered public sphere and concerns that women's rights and gender equality would be sacrificed in an attempt to forge a deal between the Afghan government and the Taliban (Doucet, 2019), Zohra's determination to fight for an alternative public sphere along gender lines may be read as a form of 'militant utopianism' (Giroux, 2001, 2003, 2006). As a precondition for individual and social struggle, militant utopianism is 'the desire for a better way of living expressed in the description of a different kind of society that makes possible that alternative way of life' (Levitas, 1993: 257). For the members of Zohra, their imagined ideal 'emerge[d] out of critical and practical engagements with present behaviours, institutional formations, and everyday practices' (Giroux, 2001: 121) which shaped the public agency of Afghan women and girls in the public sphere. In other words, Zohra's utopianism was

a critical response to their own lived experiences and observations of the various forms of gendered power imbalances, oppression, and domination inherent in Afghan society.

Such militant utopianism recently manifested itself musically in a female student's composition. The piece, entitled *Sapida Dam* (Dari: 'Dawn') for solo cello and orchestra, was written by Meena Karimi and orchestrated by fellow student Arson Fahim (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2021a), and portrays the 'dreams, hopes, and struggles of women and girls in Afghanistan today' (Interlochen Centre for the Arts, 2021). Following the return of the Taliban, the piece gained international recognition and was premiered by Chineke! Orchestra at the Southbank Centre, London, on 16 October 2021 (Interlochen Centre for the Arts, 2021). In a speech given at a special ceremony hosted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Kabul in celebration of International Women's Day 2021, Meena explained how

> Those who are familiar with music might be surprised that why I have not finished my song and left it incomplete[215]. The reason I did not complete my song is that I wanted to tell the truth. The truth is the unfinished struggles of women. I will complete the song when all Afghan women have achieved their dreams and rights (RTA World, 2021).

The unfinished nature of Meena's composition acts as a metaphor for the incomplete experience of women in Afghanistan's public life but also furnishes her piece with a 'future-orientated anticipatory dimension' (Halpin, 2003). Similarly, the title alludes to the liminality of the peacebuilding period and the futurity which frames it: 'the reason we've called it Dawn is that right now we are in this dawn, we're going to continue fighting, so it's not day yet' (Arson in Doucet, 2021c: 20:31). The 'imperfect present' captured in the piece parallels the lack of freedom felt by the Independence Day composers, as discussed in Chapter 4. Meena's promise to finish the piece when women have achieved their dreams and rights recognises that 'every present [is] incomplete'

[215] The piece is in the key of a minor throughout but finishes with a dominant (E major) chord.

(Giroux, 2001: 121) and 'prepares people for a world not as it is but as it should be' (Mayo, 2013: 36). For another student, this alternative, utopian future was visualised within and through the orchestral space: 'when I play with Zohra Orchestra, I imagine women are strong, it comes to my mind, and I imagine that one day all women will be free' (Gulmina, interview, January 24, 2021). However, the utopian future envisaged by the students, and the freedom that it promised, was built upon a narrow conception of women's rights and emancipation, as discussed below.

'A symbol of freedom'

The public presence of the orchestra was seen by its members as a cultural force which could show 'that girls can stand on their feet without men' (Gulmina, interview, January 24, 2021) and 'open doors for the future generations […] and encourage women to do what they love' (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021). This was achieved by acting as role models for other young Afghan girls and to help them to realise their potential, receive an education, and to pursue their interests and goals. As one of the orchestra's ex-members explained, 'the main purpose [of Zohra] would be encouraging other girls to do music […] I mean there might be some girls who would like to do it, but they don't have any inspiration or role model' (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021). For Aziza, the underrepresentation of women in Afghanistan's public musical landscape was an important motivating factor in deciding to go to music school:

> I didn't see any girl playing instruments in Afghanistan, I just see the singer. So that's why I take the decision that I should go to music school and should play an instrument because there is no girl. […] I thought that maybe when I go to music school maybe my daughter in the future she will be a musician from Afghanistan, maybe I can teach more girls. So that was the idea (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

A lack of appropriate contemporary female role models in Afghan public life is lamented by Wardak and Mitchell (2013) who stress that 'young girls need new female role models if they are to develop as the voices of a new generation of leaders' (288). Indeed, promoting and leveraging the influence of Afghan female role models became a top priority for the international mission in Afghanistan over the past two decades. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for example, organised several events in provincial capitals and rural areas where speakers explained that girls should aim to play a greater role in society, have higher visions for the future, and decide what they want in their lives and careers (UNAMA, 2011, 2013, 2015). Similarly, Zohra held a mirror up to the youth of Afghanistan to show girls, and crucially their families, that they are also capable of pursuing their dreams, learning music, and becoming public actors. This is exemplified by the following accounts:

> When we came to music school […] we were eight girls from the orphanage. So after some years we saw lots of girls coming to music school […] because we gave concerts and the families' minds become open, like they say 'look at [Aziza], she's the first [conductor], so maybe my daughter should become like her, or maybe like [Zarlasht], maybe like [Arezo], maybe like [Aminah]'. So that's why they bring their daughters (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

> But when we performed and they saw us on TV, a lot of girls got inspired, encouraged, and […] we had more girls coming to ANIM. I think most families did change their mind in Kabul, mostly, about studying, letting their daughters got to school, music school especially (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

Moreover, in presenting themselves as powerful, public female role models, participants believed they offered an alternative to, and actively challenged, the traditional domestic roles usually assigned to women in Afghan society:

> [Zohra is] very important because it shows the power of girls. Again, in Afghanistan they think women are only doing work in the kitchen and inside the house. They don't see girls and women more than that. And being in Zohra Orchestra it just show them that you can do like... you can be the same as everybody else. Like they can work and play music the same as boys (Safia, interview, October 23, 2020).

> So we just want to show that [Afghan women] have power, we can do anything... like music, everything. We are not just at home or to work in home and wash and these things (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

The negative framing of women's domestic roles suggests a resistance against this path for women and essentially erases 'forms of being and action that are not necessarily encapsulated by the narrative of subversion and reinscription of norms' (Mahmood, 2005: 9). Rather than submissive beings that lack agency, scholars have demonstrated how some domestic Afghan women feel they play an important role in brokering and maintaining peace within the home, promoting values which influence social norms and behaviours in wider society, and making decisions on the mobilisation of men for fighting (Barakat & Wardell, 2002: 920; Moosa, Rahmani & Webster, 2013: 459).

The orchestra's members discursively presented themselves as role models for the freedom and emancipation of Afghan girls and women and gender equality. The same discourse was espoused by the school's director, the media, and the international music community, who viewed the orchestra as 'a symbol of freedom' (Sarmast quoted in CBC News, 2021: 02:00; Zemaryalai & Geddie, 2021), 'a model for emancipation of women and the representation of women in music, arts, and culture' (World Economic Forum, 2017a: 05:51), and 'a symbol of the struggle for women's rights, a symbol of heroism, determination and freedom' (Pohoda Festival, 2022). Having overcome 'external barriers of power' to become public-facing female musicians in a patriarchal

country, the young women were 'considered heroic, or bearers of a universal capacity which has been subdued by oppressive circumstances' (Butler, 1995: 136). As discussed in the next chapter, this conception of Afghan women was utilised to show a positive image of Afghanistan as part of the school's cultural diplomacy efforts. However, as the following section argues, Zohra was a false effigy of women's freedom and only symbolised an idealised, utopian freedom which did not actually exist or reflect the students' lived experiences.

Zohra realities

Despite the musical achievements of the Zohra Orchestra and its transnational reputation as a symbol of women's rights and freedom, the lived realities of the majority of the ensemble's members were 'scripted by those very structures of family, community, and religious authority they are expected to stand apart from' (Chishti, 2020: 597). Many of Zohra's members faced daily challenges, condemnation, and even received death threats from their families, communities, and local religious leaders for their membership in the orchestra. Some attempted to hide their music education from their family members, claiming instead that they attended a regular state school during the day, while pressure and lack of support from family members forced some girls to end their music education and participation in the orchestra prematurely: 'They really didn't support my musical education journey. That's why I stopped. But at the same time, they were not supporting my education at all after they learned about my musical background, that for years I was studying music' (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021). While in some cases this discontentment stemmed from an overall disapproval of music as a profession, for others it was the fact that girls were performing publicly. Tensions were often heightened in response to the orchestra's increased public visibility and media attention during and after international tours, putting its members in extremely vulnerable positions, as evidenced by the following account:

> I was studying music for three years and in my family just my [parents] knew about it, nobody else. Because if they would know, there would be a huge problem for me. And when I went to World Economic Forum, everybody got to know about me, about my music life through social media. And then when I came back from Europe, like I remember my uncle beat me and then my hand was broken almost and I was stopped from going to school. […] And I stopped and then... my family asked me to get married and then I had to fight, I had to like... I left home, I went to my grandmother in [another country] (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021).

Thus, a paradoxical situation arises—by acting as female role models and symbols of women's freedom and emancipation, Zohra's members own freedom to do what they wanted was eroded as they experienced increased risks and condemnation.

Female students' ability to study music was also often negated or constrained by a matrix of socio-cultural expectations and social imaginaries pertaining to women's roles in society. Factors forcing girls to leave ANIM before they graduated, or before they felt ready, include arranged marriage[216], financial problems at home, and social pressure for bringing shame on the family. As one student explained 'when I came to ANIM I felt a lot of discrimination from men in [my province], like they would stand against me, telling my mum to not let your daughter [go to music school], or say that she's a shame for our family, for the region' (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021). Another recalled how her family 'really care about the comments of other people' (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021), forcing them to compromise between what they saw their daughter doing and what their community thought was right. In Afghan society, family honour is extremely important and for many communities, women (and their actions) are the locus of this honour (Gibbs et al., 2019; Ginsburg, 2011; Moghadam, 2002). As girls progressed through the school,

[216] Conversely, one participant joked that 'if it wasn't for music, I would have already maybe got married or something!' (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

they were seen by their families to be slowly turning their backs on maternal and marital obligations prescribed by Afghan society. In the present research, it was found that a family's anxiety towards their daughter learning music was closely linked to the student's age; when the girls joined ANIM at a young age, the family were not worried because they didn't think it would be a long-term arrangement. However, as the girls got older—and closer towards the moment when they needed to think about family responsibilities or viable career choices—problems started, and families expressed concern over their daughters continuing to learn music:

> When I joined music school, everything was cool for the first year and everybody was like ok, it's fine. And then when I turned to grade 5, my family said that 'are you still going to learn music?' And then I said 'yes of course I'm going to continue learning music because I love music'. And then they said that like you can't really go to music school since you are getting older and older (Gulmina, interview, January 24, 2021).

> I mean at that time I was very young and my family didn't think of music as a serious problem at that time for me. But my mum wasn't happy, and my father thought that it will be just for a few years and […] he didn't think that I was going to do music like full-time. But later, like it did cause problems for me, they didn't want me to continue music (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

As Huma Ahmed-Ghosh (2003) writes, the concept of motherhood is idealised to ensure the transmission of religion, culture and family values from mothers to children, and 'threatening this safe haven is projected as destruction of the very fabric of society' (8). Consequently, many of the girls were forced to make drastic decisions about their domestic arrangements and personal lives—including moving provinces, living separately from their families, and even breaking ties

with their families—in order to continue their education at the school and minimise the impact on their families.

The school's measuring of its gendered achievements through the percentage of girls in attendance—as of the middle of 2021 this figure was 35 percent (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2021d)—papers over the deeper challenges faced by ANIM's female students in their struggle to remain in school. Such statistical reification provides only a static image of female participation in institutional music education and fails to account for the challenges faced by female music students, both within the school and within society. Graduation numbers for female students were dramatically lower than that of their male counterparts, highlighting the uneven access to education which pervades Afghanistan's contemporary education system. Between 2015 and 2021, only a handful of females officially graduated from ANIM at grade 12 with their secondary diploma, while only one successfully obtained their grade 14 advanced diploma during the school's existence. Some girls left the school early in order to take up opportunities to study overseas, including two *sitār* players who were awarded scholarships to study at universities in India through a partnership between ANIM and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). Nevertheless, Grades 13 and 14 became a very male-dominated space at the top of the school which opened up possibilities for patriarchal power structures to crystallise. This stark gender imbalance was also seen in other music institutions in Kabul such as the Music Department at the Fine Arts Faculty of Kabul University. During the academic year of 1400 (2021–2022), of the 87 students enrolled on the Bachelor's degree in Music, only 25 were female, while on the Master's degree there was one female out of five students. The same pattern of female under-representation continued within ANIM's teaching faculty; in the final months before ANIM was forced to close, all music teachers were male, except for two foreign female teachers[217]. In the decade since the school opened, only one female was employed as a junior faculty member, but she eventually left

[217] There was, however, a higher representation of female teachers among the school's general education faculty.

ANIM to establish her own *rubāb* school for women in their homes. Overall, these statistics provide evidence of what Wardak and Mitchell (2013) describe as a narrow 'educational pipeline for girls' in Afghanistan which inhibits significant numbers to progress through elementary school and on to university (288–289). Despite the exponential increase in girls' school enrolments during the peacebuilding era up until 2017 (Haque, 2020: 12), studies still emphasised the overall underrepresentation of girls in Afghanistan's general education system and women in educational leadership roles (Kissane, 2012)[218] and 'dramatic gender inequity […] at every level of education and where educational policy is made' (Wardak & Mitchell, 2013: 287).

Gendered smokescreen

ANIM's public promotion of women's freedoms also acted as a smokescreen to obscure the ways in which female students' agency within ANIM's educational spaces was limited, to a large extent, by the continuity of patriarchal power relationships and gender inequalities within the institution. Writing on music and gender, Green (1994) urges us to 'dig just beneath the surface appearances of things—beneath what we take to be innocuous, harmless and apparently unproblematic' (66). While the presentation of female performers as symbols of women's freedom was highly appealing to audiences both nationally and internationally and appeared to reflect women's greater freedoms within Afghan society, this was far from the reality within the school. For example, displays of female musical authority and leadership—such as female conductors—concealed relational processes within ANIM's educational spaces which privileged male agency. On three occasions at least, female students were invited by their male peers or the director of the school to take to the podium at the last minute to conduct songs 'about women, for women' as it was deemed more appropriate to have a female rather than a male conductor. It was believed that this would send the right message to the community and show that ANIM was actively doing something for

[218] On a global scale, a USAID report concluded that while the world knew how to increase the number of available primary schools for girls and enrolment numbers, keeping girls in these schools until they completed their basic education remained a significant challenge (O'Gara et al., 1999: 99).

women's rights[219]. This narrative was directly challenged by one of the female conductors who explained:

> The idea was like this; if a girl performs, so everybody will be focussing on ANIM, that it's doing a lot for women's rights, that they are supporting girls, like this. […] But they are not, you know. They just want to show to the people, but in reality they are not doing that much. Like we gave lots of concerts, and the students need money, but they did not give the money to the students, they just kept it in the school (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

From Aziza's perspective, female performers were for presentation purposes only and that underneath this, the school wasn't working to improve the lives of its female students. Co-opting women's bodies and gender identities to send a positive message echoes the US government and transnational feminism's appropriation of the plight of Afghan women to show that the 'war on terror' was doing something, when, in reality, most Afghan women's lives weren't improving under the intervention. One occasion when a female conductor was substituted at the eleventh hour was during the final recording of *Salam* (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2020) which celebrates women in the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). Given the song's subject matter, the male composer and conductor decided it was not appropriate for him to be leading the orchestra and invited one of the school's female conducting students to do it instead. While the gesture was applauded by members of ANIM's faculty as a sign of progress towards instigating values of gender equity among [male] students, the moment equally demonstrates an uneven distribution of agency among the student body—that is, female students' agency at ANIM was largely determined by the actions of male decision-makers. Female conductors' power to act and their choice to assume leadership roles was not autonomous or free-

[219] A further example of ANIM's symbolic support of women's empowerment was when the school presented Afghan singer Aryana Saeed with a 'bravery award' for her support of Afghan musicians, advocacy for gender equality, and promoting peace between Afghan people. The award was presented to her by two male staff members, one of which was the director.

willed, as their own narratives infer, but rather *given* to them by their male counterparts, illustrating the former's position of subordination in the educational system. Being placed on the conductor's podium solely by virtue of one's gender caused feelings of guilt and inadequacy for one of the school's female conductors. The student recalled how she was told to conduct in a recording thirty minutes before the cameras started rolling: 'I did not even study conducting, even one lesson, I did not have one lesson in that time. […] Until now I'm still feeling so guilty like why should I do that? It's not my right, maybe somebody is more good than me' (Aziza, interview, February 13, 2020). For Aziza, the title and position of conductor should be earned through study and hard work, and not bestowed solely on the grounds of her gender. In a later interview she lamented, 'I was not happy. I tell them many, many times that I don't want to be like this, I want to *learn*, then I want to be in front of people to conduct' (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021). These feelings of unease and guilt which arose from the top-down imposition of a musical identity not only contributes to the representational control of women by dominant groups, but also colonises individuals' experiences of music education and their musical identities to the point where female students begin doubting their position.

This façade of female leadership has been witnessed in other spheres of Afghan public life such as politics, civil society, and business. Within Afghanistan's political spaces, for example, there was increasing criticism of the perceived symbolic roles given to women in Afghanistan's political spaces during the foreign-backed intervention: '[The] Government should put an end to the symbolic roles given to women. Women need equal opportunities to participate in decision making roles and access to political, economic and all other rights' (Amwaj quoted in UNAMA, 2019). This notion was also alluded to by one of my female interlocutors who explained that 'most of these [famous] women who work in politics, they do not have as much effect in this society as [men] […] they can't do enough' (Feroza, interview, January 27, 2021). According to Nijat and Murtazashvili (2015) '[Afghan] women in positions of authority are perceived as symbolic, lack political support, have weak decision-making and enforcement power,

and lack access to sources of financial and human capital' (1). In 2011, such complaints and criticism were directed at Bamiyan governor Habiba Sarabi by residents of the province who believed that she was 'there only as a showpiece by Kabul to impress the international community for involving women in senior government positions' (Emadi, 2015: 253).

Overall, a feminist reading of the school's musical practices elucidates the ways in which structures of patriarchal dominance were maintained through a division of labour within the student body which established males as producers and primary decision-makers and females as reproducers. This emulates the broader role of women as bio-social reproducers within Afghan nationalist discourses and social imaginaries. Since 2014, when the school began releasing official, public-facing videos addressing important social issues and challenges facing contemporary Afghanistan—three of which focussed solely on girls' and women's rights[220]—not once has a female musician or poet played a role in a song's composition or arrangement. The composition *Sapida Dam* (Dari: 'Dawn'), mentioned earlier in this chapter, was a sign that this situation was beginning to change; however, this piece was the students' own initiative and not organised or commissioned by the school. Nevertheless, while female students have always participated equally in public performances (as part of the school's mixed-gender symphony orchestra) and have twice assumed 'leadership' roles as conductors in publicly released videos (*Zanan-e-Sarbuland* and *Dokhtar Astam*), women's creative voices were still surprisingly absent from the school's canon of musical works.

In sum, the (self-)presentation of Zohra's musicians as 'free' and with the 'power to do whatever they want' was a weak effigy for two reasons: first, many of the young women were constrained by violence, condemnation, and social-cultural expectations; and second, female students' agency within ANIM's educational spaces was undermined by structures of patriarchal dominance and

[220] '*Zanan-e-Sarbuland*' ('Proud Woman') (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2016a), '*Dokhtar Astam*' ('I am a Girl') (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2016b), and '*Salam*' ('Salute') (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2020).

practices of using female musicians for symbolic gestures. There exists a clear gap between the orchestra's utopian imagining of female freedom and lived reality; although Zohra's members were 'using music to tell women that women are strong and women can do whatever they want' (Gulmina, interview, January 24, 2021), many of them were not able to do 'whatever they want'.

As the following example of one of the school's gendered social change songs demonstrates, a rhetoric of women's freedom which is abstracted from and ignores the complexities of Afghan women's lived experiences was also promoted in ANIM's public-facing musical outputs.

'Oh women, proud women!'

The image of Afghan women presented in ANIM's gendered social change songs is strategically packaged and promoted in a way that resonates with what the international community wanted to see—liberated, empowered, and corporeally free women as evidence of the triumph over social and cultural backwardness, patriarchal systems, and extremism. During its 11 years in operation, ANIM participated on several occasions in international civil awareness days such as International Day of the Girl Child (11 October) and International Women's Day (8 March) by recording songs which celebrate the fight of women and girls in Afghanistan and call for the advancement and safeguarding of female rights and gender equality. One particular song, *Zanan-e-Sarbuland* (Dari: 'Proud Women') (see Appendix C for score), which was originally composed and arranged by ANIM faculty member *Ūstād* Shefta and recorded in 2015 for Playing for Change's 'Songs Around the World' celebration, was often used as the school's anthem for celebrating International Women's Day (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2015, 2016a); during the Zohra Orchestra's 2019 tour to Sweden and the UK the song was performed for this occasion both at the Berwaldhallen, Stockholm, and at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford. Directed primarily towards Afghan women to encourage them to stand up for their rights and to take control of their own

lives, *Zanan-e-Sarbuland* adopts a gendered, liberal, rights-based perspective on freedom[221]. However, while the poetry of the song, written by Sulaiman Laeq, expresses themes of liberation, freedom, emancipation, and gender equality, the poem is also interwoven with a narrative of Afghan women as an oppressed group:

Zanan Zanan-e-sarbuland

Oh women, proud women!

Zanan Zanan-e-arjuman

Oh women, noble women!

Ze dast-o-pay-e-tan ba dur, ba dur, tanab-o-alqa-o-kamand

Free yourselves from the chains from your hands and feet which constrain you[222]

Durud-e-ma ba madaran ba khwaharan ba dokhtaran

We salute all mothers, sisters, and daughters[223]

Ba hamsaran-e-mehraban ba in khojesta hamraham

And to all kind-hearted wives, these blessed companions

Durud-e-ma ba madaran ba khwaharan ba dokhtaran

We salute all mothers, sisters, and daughters

Shohar-e-ma bara bari bara dari-o-khwa hari

We stand for equality, brotherhood, and sisterhood

Ba har du jins-e-hamsafar yaga naghi-o-hamsari

For both genders[224] together, we strive for unity and partnership

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[221] Tadjbakhsh (2009) discusses an alternative understanding of freedom in Afghan society based on the Islamic tenets of morality, responsibility, and social justice. See Decosimo (2008) for a discussion on the concept of political freedom in Islam.

[222] This refrain is repeated in between the subsequent verses.

[223] In Afghanistan, a woman's identity is often understood in relation to her family role (Abirafeh, 2009).

[224] '*Jin*s' (Dari) translates as 'genus', in the taxonomical sense of the word (Steingass, 1977: 374), which implies biological sex. As Abirafeh (2009) notes, there is no word in Dari or Pashto which conveys the distinction between men and women, or 'gender', which is often viewed as a foreign concept. As Rostami-Povey (2007) notes, Afghan

Shohar-e-ma bara bari bara dari-o-khwa hari

We stand for equality, brotherhood, and sisterhood

Ba har du jins-e-hamsafar

For both genders together

Nezam-e-na bara bari negun-o-sar shekasta bad

Inequality and discrimination be abolished and overthrown!

Dar-e-tafawot-o-setam ba dast-e-hadil basta bad

Prejudice and cruelty be replaced by justice

Nezam-e-na bara bari negun-o-sar shekasta bad

Inequality and discrimination be abolished and overthrown!

The poem homogenises Afghan women as a singular group in two distinct ways. First, the stark imagery of Afghan women as 'shackled' suggests that all Afghan women live, and must free themselves from, a constrained and enslaved existence by virtue of their gender[225]. That is, *Zanan-e-Sarbuland* subscribes to a universal understanding of female subordination which is underwritten by an intrinsic Western bias towards models of gender inequality and hierarchy (Tapper, 1991: 20) and presents Afghan women's 'subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis' (Crenshaw, 1989: 140). However, as Gayatri Spivak (1999) argues, the conditions experienced by women in the third world cannot, and should not, be reduced only to gender at the expense of other significant factors such as race, class, and empire (409)[226], echoing Chandra Mohanty's (1988) assertion that women's subordinations must be addressed within their respective contexts. Through the theoretical lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), ANIM's focus on the single

women see gender as a process embedded in all social relations and institutions (4). To fill this linguistic void, in Dari the word *jinsiyat*, meaning sexuality, is commonly used but still disputed (Abirafeh, 2009).

[225] See Daulatzai (2006) for a discussion on the privileging of gender as the primary axis for understanding and attending to women's experiences in Afghanistan.

[226] Spivak includes exploitation by multinational capital, internal racism, and colonial relations as some factors which can influence female oppression.

category of gender in its women's rights discourses erases other social and political identities and conditions which intersect and combine to create discrete sources of discrimination and subordination for Afghan women[227]. Chishti (2020), for example, draws attention to long-term war and insecurity, Western imperialism, foreign and national militarism, structural poverty, the contentious politics of post-conflict aid, and the particular ways gender relations are manipulated by an active insurgency, as possible social-structural factors which intersect with gender to exacerbate power differences and negatively impact Afghan women's freedoms. Several studies have shown that women and girls are disproportionately affected by war (Lindsey, 2001; United Nations, 2003; Whiting, 2018) and that prolonged conflict exacerbates gender inequalities (OCHA, 2019). John Allen and Vanda Felbab-Brown (2020) reported that 'instead of economic, social, and political empowerment, Afghan women in rural areas—where an estimated 76 percent of the country's women live—experience the devastation of bloody and intensifying fighting between the Taliban and government forces and local militias'. This observation was echoed by one of my interlocutors who believed that gender reforms 'are just in Kabul, and [in] a lot of other provinces and especially in the villages, there is literally no change' (Hussein, interview, February 25, 2020). Finally, historical and ongoing ethnic and religious persecution is also a significant factor in understanding the conditions of certain groups of Afghan women (Emadi, 2000; Marie, 2013; Mohammadi & Askary, 2021; Saikal, 2012)[228]. Thus, if gender exists in a complex assemblage of class, ethnicity, religion, 'a woman cannot be liberated from gender violence if she continues to be proletarized or discriminated against on account of her class or religious position – emancipation cannot be piecemeal' (Chatterjee, 2012: 796). Nevertheless, in the context of education, the sex axis of Afghan girls' identity is still the central issue in their discrimination. On the day girls over

[227] The song's heavy focus on the category of 'woman' also overlooks the fact that for many Afghan women, gender is a weak marker of identity (in comparison to others such as ethnicity, religion, and being Afghan), and being a woman (as an isolated category based on gender alone) only became visible when 'foreigners started talking about it' (Abirafeh, 2009). See Tapper's (1991) study of marriage in Maduzai Durrani Pashtun tribes for an example of the traditional operation of gender through masculinised honour codes.

[228] For example, in May 2021, a girls' school in a predominantly Hazara neighbourhood in west Kabul was attacked (Glinski, 2021b).

11 years old were meant to be allowed back into their classrooms (23 March 2022) after over seven months at home following the return of the Taliban, the ruling group reversed their decision, citing logistical challenges such as lack of teachers and appropriate learning environment for their U-turn (Glinski & Kumar, 2022)[229].

Second, the emancipatory rhetoric in *Zanan-e-Sarbuland* upholds the perceived 'universality of the desire—central for liberal and progressive thought, and presupposed by the concept of resistance it authorizes—to be free from relations of subordination and, for women, structures of male domination' (Mahmood, 2001: 206), a supposition, Mahmood argues, that is seldom problematised in analyses of women's agency. That is, the song assumes and suggests that all Afghan women view 'freedom' as a social and political ideal. This discourse mirrors the tendency in gender programming in Afghanistan to '[treat] Afghan women as unrealised "Western women" who must rise above their cultural backgrounds to become empowered' (Walter, 2017: chapter 1, para. 31). The assumption that all Afghan women need and want the same kind of universal emancipation is challenged by a body of research which argues that many women demonstrate their own agency in ways that outsiders cannot see and, therefore, judge (Abirafeh, 2009: 112) and that nearly a third of women feel they already possess a surfeit of rights (Elks, 2019). Discourses surrounding women's rights in Afghanistan and what they should look like are also disrupted by a rural-urban divide. In two recent studies (Allen & Felbab-Brown, 2020; van Bijlert, 2021), rural Afghan women were invited to share their views on the intra-Afghan negotiations. While one report concluded that 'dreams of greater agency for Afghan women are not the exclusive domain of those who can speak up publicly, that the priorities of rural women are not that different from those put forward by the more well-connected women activists'[230] (van Bijlert, 2021: 7)—thus suggesting that ANIM's message is representative of *all* Afghan women—the other found that 'at

[229] At the time of writing (May 2022), girls over the age of 11 are still not receiving an education.
[230] This view is shared by Afghan politician, journalist, and Muslim feminist Shukria Barakzai who claims 'There's no big different [*sic*]! We all are women! […] Ok, yes, I know the difference of lifestyle, but we are human. Our need, our demands, our goal, our views, the same' (Afghanaid, 2021: 01:22:00). Barakzai is a former Member of Parliament elected to the *Wolesi Jirga* (lower house of the National Assembly of Afghanistan) in 2005.

least some rural Afghan women do not feel connected to [the] elite women [government representatives] nor do they believe that urban elite women[231] necessarily speak for them' (Allen & Felbab-Brown, 2020). For example, a *BBC News* report released just over a month after the Taliban's takeover spoke to a woman living in Helmand who said 'I like the Taliban because they respect Islam. Women like me are not like women in Kabul'[232] (Bowen, 2021).

Together, these divergent narratives elucidate an acute heterogeneity of women's beliefs and experiences in Afghanistan[233] and suggest that a one-size-fits-all liberal vision for Afghan women's future may not be plausible or effective. Therefore, while the rhetoric in *Zanan-e-Sarbuland* will undoubtedly resonate with many Afghan women, this liberal gendered message may not necessarily reflect the lived reality or desires of *all* Afghan women. Similar to the way in which transnational feminist writings 'discursively colonise the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/representing a composite, singular 'third-world woman'' (Mohanty, 1988: 62), ANIM's liberal framework merges Afghan women into a standardised group based on a common political aspiration for freedom. Rather than being a homogenised 'other' bound by family, tradition, and victimhood, Afghan women are instead bound together by an assumed shared desire for liberal values and individual freedom. The following section explores the sonic and visual presentation of the public woman according to this liberal framework and the way in which she operates as a disruptive force within Afghanistan's contested multiaccentual public space.

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[231] While ANIM's community does not necessarily belong to Afghanistan's 'urban elite' (apart from Ahmad Sarmast—see Chapter 7 for a discussion on comprador intellectuals), the values that they espouse and promote mirror those of the educated women who represent Afghan women at governmental levels.

[232] The above evidence is further complicated by the methodological challenges of interviewing rural Afghan women. As a condition of their presence in Helmand, the *BBC News* team mentioned above travelled with an armed Talib bodyguard and a translator who was present in the interview, which Bowen argues calls into question how freely the woman was able to speak in the interview. Similarly, Allen and Felbab-Brown (2020) do not specify the conditions under which the interviews with rural women took place and therefore must be read with some degree of caution.

[233] Benard's (2021) 'A Field Guide to Afghan Women' discusses four types of Afghan women and the West's failure to understand their diverse experiences.

The Female Public Performer

In Afghanistan, female public music performances have ignited debate and contestation in Afghanistan's political and civic spheres for decades. Resistance and criticism towards publicly performing female musicians from wider family and community circles has been identified across Afghanistan's historical and contemporary musical landscapes. Mirmen Parveen, the first female musician to perform on Afghan radio and a pioneer of women's music in Afghanistan during the 1950s and 60s, was forced to cut ties with her relatives and suffered much opposition and threats from the community in order to pursue her musical career (Akhtari & Loewen, 2010: 293–294; Constable, 2004). Over half a century later, Kabul Television 'immediately drew outraged opposition from the Supreme Court and an alliance of powerful Islamic groups' when they began rebroadcasting footage of female singers from the same "Golden Era" (Coleman, 2004: 62; Constable, 2004). Gendered tropes which uphold the view that women should not be seen performing in public have also been identified more recently in popular music contexts such as *Afghan Star*. In his study of the televised singing contest, Olson (2017) found that the issue of women's participation was divisive among his male interlocutors; while some welcomed the presence of female singers, others expressed reservations and even disgust at the idea, citing the contravention of Islamic laws on women's public performance and challenges to family honour as reasons for their stance (95–96). These misgivings are often played out in online public spaces, as in the case of Zahra Elham, the first female to win *Afghan Star*, who faced insulting comments on her social media page throughout the contest's season (O'Grady, 2019). Finally, in 2019 a video emerged on social media showing men beating women for allegedly singing in public in Nuristan (a remote Eastern province)—although the authenticity of the video has never been verified, criticism was directed at the Taliban and their strict views on music and women's public singing (Swati, 2019)[234]. Lyse Doucet notes the problem with the publicness of women's music making in

[234] **Warning: this video contains images of physical violence.**

Afghanistan: '[…] this is a deeply conservative society. Not everyone approved of girls studying music, or worse, performing *in public* on stage' (Doucet, 2021c: 10:50).

Performing the 'public woman'

The following detailed analysis of one of ANIM's social change songs, entitled *Azadi* (Dari: 'Freedom') (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2019a; see Appendix B for score), demonstrates how in Afghan society the presence of female musicians in the public sphere is highly disruptive. The song is a performance of the school's educational priorities—namely gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's public music making—and presents ANIM's conceptualisation of the public woman and the discourses she embodies and enacts. Through this analysis, I demonstrate how the music may be read as a commentary on the liberal model of female agency and emancipation described earlier in this chapter.

Azadi is one of a collection of four patriotic songs released for Afghanistan's Independence Day in 2019 as described in Chapter 4. The lyrics[235] are an ahistorical and universal celebration of [Afghan] freedom which affords discursive (re)interpretation and manipulation through the video's multimodal elements:

سرود سرزمین ماست

The anthem of our land

آزادی آزادی آزادی

Freedom, freedom, freedom

ترانهء زمین ماست

The song of our land

آزادی آزادی آزادی

[235] English translation taken from YouTube video. Translator unknown.

Freedom, freedom, freedom

آزادی

Freedom

روح آدم و شگوفه و پرنده است

The soul of human, blossoms, and birds

آزادی

Freedom

صدای آبشار شعر و خنده است

The sound of the waterfall is poetry and laughter

آزادی

Freedom

شکوه کوه ماست

The glory of our mountain

آزادی

Freedom

تجسم شکوه ماست

The embodiment of our glory

آزادی

Freedom

سنگری برای رزم ما

A stronghold for our battle

آزادی

Freedom

خانه یی برای بزم ما

A house for our party

آزادی

Freedom

سرود ملی تمام رودخانه های ماست

The national anthem of all our rivers

آزادی

Freedom

موج پرچم صدای ماست

The wave of the flag is our voice the freedom

Central to the subject-position that *Azadi* constructs is the specification that women's emancipation is indicative, and a crucial component, of the freedom that the song's lyrics celebrate. This is achieved through a multimodal matrix of musical and visual elements which mediates a strong gendered message, the focal point of which is a reflective and expressive piano solo (bb. 47–96) played by a female pianist in the middle of the song. As the composer explained to me, the entire piece was written around an initial idea to showcase the piano and a female pianist:

> In *Azadi*, before I started the piece, I knew that I wanted this one big section where I'm featuring the piano and no voice, nothing, I just wanted to feature [Laila] in one section. […] And so my whole piece was built around that idea, that I want to have this section of [Laila] playing the piano. That's what I do often in my compositions, and I just decided to go for an ABA, so I had that A section and then [Laila's] big solo and then back to the A section with a few small changes (Arson, interview, May 23, 2020).

According to Green (1997), women's instrumental performance enters into delineated meaning as an interruption and threat to patriarchal definitions of femininity, offering instead a femininity

which controls, alienates itself as an object, and impinges on the world[236]. Delineated meaning is highly dependent on contextual factors, both at the moment of production and of reception, and is largely shaped by discourses surrounding the use of music in a given social context. In the case of Afghanistan, the delineated meaning of a female piano soloist arises primarily from its challenge to the cultural system of values which dictates women's agency, visibility, and participation in the public sphere, and more specifically its opposition to the restrictions historically placed upon women's music practices in Afghanistan. As one female student explained, 'woman musicians have more egalitarian gender expectations and therefore may not abide with many traditional rules and traditional identities for women, which is a threat to male superiority in patriarchal societies' (Feroza, interview, January 27, 2021). Challenging cultural and gender norms that are key to social order and identity was alluded to by the solo pianist who described how

> I wanted to show my abilities as an Afghan female pianist and at the same time I wanted to feel that memorable moment. I felt many emotions. Excitement and pain. I was proud. Playing in a combined orchestra made me feel supported by the boys and the girls in the orchestra which is *rare for an Afghan girl that gets supported by men and boys in Afghanistan*. It was a special moment (emphasis added, Laila, personal communication, August 7, 2020).

Here, masculine definitions of femininity are challenged through the subversion of dominant patriarchal power relations. As an unequally empowered social group, women's musical traditions and contributions have historically been undervalued and marginalised within Afghan society. For the pianist, the very fact of being in a position of musical authority and supported by her male peers afforded feelings of empowerment, pride, and musical value. The mixed-gender orchestra

[236] This is part of a broader framework of music meaning in which delineated meaning describes the way in which 'music metaphorically sketches, or delineates, a plethora of contextualising, symbolic factors' (Green, 1997: 7) and is in a dialectical relationship with the music's inherent meaning which arises from 'the conventional interrelationships of musical materials' (Green, 1997: 6). I disagree with Green's choice of the nouns 'interruption' and 'interruptive' which denotes a complete stop or cessation of something. Instead, I will use the nouns 'disruption' and 'disruptive' to describe the impact of women's performance.

thus furnished a 'counter-patriarchal empowerment zone' (Fluri, 2008: 51) in which gender-equitable practices were enacted and female musicians felt they had agency to assert their musical identities.

Another plane of gender delineation which functions within discourses of material disciplining and physical modesty of the female body in public spaces is constructed within this performance. As her solo gradually opens out in pitch range, dynamic intensity, and expressivity, the pianist's headscarf slowly slips off and by the end of the section she is 'liberated'. For the pianist, the moment clearly contributed a gendered element to the song's overall message; 'after my scarf fell while playing […] it also showed that freedom is one of the women's rights' (Laila, personal communication, August 7, 2020). For Laila, unveiling directly symbolised women's freedom. Initially, the display was not choreographed but rather the idea was adopted after members of the team directing the performance realised that the drone used for filming the video was creating a breeze above the pianist's head and causing her scarf to slip. While the intention behind the display was to reject the material disciplining of women's bodies and to emphasise a woman's freedom of choice regarding corporeal coverings, the moment resonates with similar 'unveiling' events which pervaded Western discourses in the aftermath of the US-NATO intervention in 2001 (see Ayotte & Husain, 2005; Fluri, 2009; Hirschkind & Mahmood, 2002). One particularly controversial performance, this time concerning the *burqa*, occurred during Eve Ensler's "V-day" benefit for feminism held in New York City in 2001, at which Oprah Winfrey unveiled a member of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) as a form of figurative emancipation[237]. These spectacles, it is argued, wrongly equate women's liberation with corporeal freedom and overlook the nuances and cultural significance of various veiling practices. This symbolic association is clearly being evoked in the visual element of *Azadi*'s video: 'In the centre of this song is with the piano, with her hair not covered under the wind and

[237] This particular display was criticised for its orientalist overtones; a Western woman liberating an Afghan woman was seen as metaphorically suggesting that the latter needed to be saved by the former.

the wind is playing with her hair and the scarf is flying away by the wind. […] So, by this I wanted to say that *this is independence*, *this is freedom*' (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020), thus binding 'a priori the meaning of her veiling to the teleology of emancipation' (Bilge, 2010: 9).

This message of a woman's right to choose how she materially disciplines her body and presents herself physically in public fits neatly into the liberal principles of individual rights and gender equality which are celebrated and enacted throughout all four of the Independence Day songs. Yet, in the current political climate of Afghanistan, this unveiling display operates beyond its signification of liberal values. In Afghanistan and other states under foreign intervention in the broader Middle East region, Islam—and its cultural indices such as female veiling—has become one of the main, highly protected markers of 'authentic identity'. Even in Islamic states not under occupation, such as Iran, women are assigned a corporeal responsibility for preserving cultural and indigenous norms (Najmabadi, 1991). Writing on the veiling practices of political women in Afghanistan, Billaud (2015) describes how

> […] in a context of foreign occupation, where women's bodies have become the symbolic markers of the broader social body, veiling represents the privileged medium of expression of one's nationalist endeavours and resistance against external influence. The veil […] provides a sense of national continuity when society is threatened by fragmentation from the presence of an external enemy (166).

Similarly, in her study of the discourse on the veil in colonial and early nationalist Egypt, Leila Ahmed (1992) notes how in response to the construction of the veil as a symbol of 'Muslim backwardness' by the ruling elite, the practice of veiling became an act of anti-colonial resistance. Furthermore, in the context of inter-Taliban Afghanistan, Billaud (2015) argues that veiling was a way for political Afghan women to express pious identities in order to make themselves visible and become legitimate actors in the public sphere. Through their covered bodies, these women

asserted 'a set of values that contradict[ed] Western notions of modernity according to which withdrawal from religion is a prerequisite to women's emancipation'[238] (Billaud, 2015: 152). The presentation of the unveiled female body for patriotic purposes in *Azadi* offers a counter-narrative to these practices. Rather than rejecting them, ANIM's patriotic narrative aligns itself with Western notions of modernity and female emancipation and leverages the disruptiveness of the image of the unveiled woman to promote female visibility in the public sphere. According to ANIM's narrative, national and patriotic allegiance is not based on notions of religious piety or authenticity but in embracing liberal values. Scholars such as Bilge (2010) and Mahmood (2005), however, argue that feminist readings of the veil (or lack of) as a symbol of either submission, resistance, or emancipation overlook the most common reason women choose to veil—Islamic virtues of female modesty or piety, which are often 'accorded the status of the phantom imaginings of the hegemonized' (Mahmood, 2005: 16). While this observation is valid, the context of inter-Taliban Afghanistan reveals complex and contradictory meanings attached to women's veiling practices which in turn speak to women's negotiation of a multiaccentual public space.

However, it is in the interplay between the piano solo's gendered delineations and the music's extroversive and introversive semiosis that the full disruptive power of the pianist's performance is realised. In his theory of musical semiotics, Agawu (1991) proposes a model for the analysis of music based on Roman Jacobson's terms 'introversive' and 'extroversive' semiosis: the former describes 'the reference of each sonic element to the other elements to come', while the latter denotes 'the referential link with the exterior world' (23). The two modes of meaning are linearly related and lie at opposite ends of a continuum. However, Agawu's model is entirely score-based and offers no scope for exploring the contributions of the performer in making meaning. Conversely, the lens of female publicness through which this piece of music is being analysed necessitates a performance-focussed model. Therefore, the following analysis adapts Agawu's

[238] Afghan female MPs who did not veil sufficiently were accused of being infidels and disrespectful of national values (Billaud, 2015: 167).

model by integrating it with Green's (1997) theory of delineated meaning in order to explore how the interaction between the performance of *Azadi* and its score-based elements foregrounds the presentation of the public woman.

Introversive semiosis – the 'antara-āstāi' model

The central position of the piano solo and its accompanying visual properties (female, unveiled pianist) within the song's structure is musically and semantically significant. While from the composer's point of view the piece adheres to a Western ternary form structure and is 'definitely not an Afghan structure' (Arson, interview, May 23, 2020), other interlocutors draw attention to the way in which the musical treatment of the poetry obeys the generalised form of popular radio songs (*tarz*; see Chapter 1, p. 11) with its *antara* (verse) and *āstāi* (refrain) units (Baily, 1988: 82) (see Table 3). This alternating structure, in which the *antara* has a higher tessitura than the *āstāi* (Baily, 1988: 82; Sarmast, 2005: 226), plays a central role in Afghan musical genres and is highly recognisable to Afghan listeners[239]. It is this conventional interrelationship of musical materials which gives rise to the music's introversive semiosis (Agawu, 1991: 23).

[239] In North Indian classical music, the terms *āstāi* (*sthāi*) and *antara* (*antarā*) are used to identify the first and second sections of any Hindustani musical form. In Afghanistan, they refer to the refrain and verse section, respectively, of any song (Sarmast, 2005: 226).

Table 3. Outline song structure for "*Azadi*"

Time (Mins:Secs)	Bar number	Section (Afghan *antara-āstāi* model)	Section (Ternary form model)	Musical material
00:00	1	Introduction (Instrumental)	A	Full orchestra
00:08	9	*āstāi*		Full orchestra/mixed choir
00:22	21	*antara*		
00:44	33	*āstāi*		
01:07	47	---	B	Piano solo (full orchestra resumes at b. 71)
02:24	97	*antara*	A	Full orchestra/mixed choir
03:07	122	*āstāi*		

Extroversive semiosis – patriotic song style

Within this popular song genre, *Azadi* mobilises musical characteristics of the familiar patriotic song style which emerged during the 1950s at Radio Kabul (later known as Radio Afghanistan). These patriotic songs, many of which were either composed or arranged by Ahmad Sarmast's father, *Ūstād* Salim Sarmast[240], were produced in order to promote national unity during three critical phases in Afghanistan's history when the country was going through significant social and political changes: first, the border dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan which began in 1950[241]; second, the announcement that Afghanistan was to become an Islamic republic in 1973; and third, the arrival of the leftist regime in 1978 (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020). Later, after the Taliban were driven from power and national solidarity was once again called upon, the first song to be played on Radio Afghanistan was a patriotic song entitled *Watan* (Pashto: 'Homeland'). This latter event clearly illustrates the national significance of this musical style in Afghan culture. As an institution, radio has played an extremely important role in fostering a sense of unity among

[240] See Sarmast (2000) for a discussion on the career and work of *Ūstād* Salim Sarmast.

[241] From 1947 onwards, Afghanistan repudiated the foreign-drawn Durand Line and demanded the right of self-determination for the Pakhtuns. See Qureshi (1966).

Afghans, especially, as Baily (1994) argues, through the development of a pan-Afghan national music (see Chapter 4, pp. 143–145). In the context of the country's current period of substantial social and political upheaval, the revival of this patriotic song style by ANIM reignites previous nationalistic sentiments while at the same time writes a new chapter in the political narrative of this style.

In the early stages, Radio Kabul's patriotic songs were recorded by the station's *Arkestar Jāz*[242]*/Arkestar Shomara Dovom* ('Jazz Orchestra'/'Number Two Orchestra'), but after its establishment in 1970, a larger ensemble, *Arkestar-e Bozorg Radio Afghanistan/Arkestar-e Siwoahsht Nafari* ('Big Orchestra of Radio Afghanistan'/'Orchestra of Thirty-eight Persons')[243], was primarily used (Sarmast, 2005). As one of only a handful of Afghan musicians trained in the principles of Western harmony and orchestration at the time, *Ūstād* Salim Sarmast was well-positioned to develop this patriotic song style within a Western symphonic framework[244]. This work culminated in a patriotic song entitled *Inqlāb-e Jawedan* (Dari: 'Eternal Revolution') (Farid, 2010) which Sarmast (2000) identifies as the first Afghan composition written specifically for symphony orchestra and chorus[245]. As Afghanistan did not possess a full symphony orchestra at the time, the song was recorded in Tajikistan with the symphony orchestra and chorus of the Opera and Ballet Theatre of Tajikistan on 21 December 1983 and transmitted to Afghanistan for broadcast on Afghan State Television (Sarmast, 2000: 5–6). A quick glance at the comments posted under the video recording

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242 As Sarmast (2005) notes, the name '*Jāz*' was used to distinguish their use of European instruments, not the genre or style of music played (313). Sarmast elaborated on this usage, explaining that in fact the instruments were those commonly found in a jazz band (personal correspondence, November 24, 2020).

243 The combination of Afghan, Indian, and Western musical instruments in this latter ensemble parallels the instrumentation of ANIM's current symphony orchestra. However, one highly relevant dissimilarity between the two ensembles is the complete absence of female musicians in *Arkestar-e Bozorg Radio Afghanistan* and the addition of instruments such as oboe, viola, and cello in ANIM's orchestra.

244 *Ūstād* Salim Sarmast's musical compositions are influenced by his thorough training in Western music, orchestration and harmony, first at the *Māktāb-e Sanāhāe Nāfisa* (School of Fine Art) and later under the instruction of USSR musical advisors at the Afghan State Radio (Sarmast, 2000: 3).

245 Miller and St. John (2012) describe Radio Kabul's tendency to favour orchestrated type performances—instead of emphasising improvisations of soloists and small ensembles—as 'disconcerting' given the trend of Westernisation taking over in neighbouring Iran (106).

of *Inqlāb-e Jawedan* on YouTube illustrates the historical and emotional significance of the patriotic song style for Afghans:

> It was the GOLDEN TIMES in history of Afghanistan which we maybe [*sic*] lost forever. It was the times when Afghanistan steped [*sic*] in into the way of enlightenment an [*sic*] development but unfortunatly [*sic*] we missed that chance (Jawfrosh, 2012).
>
> […] Seeing this beautiful orchestra only brings regret, tears and sorrow for our past… (Alizehi, 2020).

According to these commentaries, *Inqlāb-e Jawedan*, and its use of the orchestra, appears to be symbolic of a more prosperous era in Afghanistan's history, what historian Lucie Ryzova (2015) calls a 'once-had-and-lost' modernity, and a potential pathway to enlightenment and development.

In comparing the opening four bars of *Azadi* and *Khpolwaki* (another song in ANIM's Independence Day collection; see Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2019b) with *Inqlāb-e Jawedan* (Figure 6, Figure 7, Figure 8, respectively), it becomes clear that they share common sonic components—strong beat felt in two, militaristic percussion, full instrumentation, Western-style orchestration, and three variations of a distinct rhythmic motif (Figure 5). These sonic components may be understood as topics, or 'patches of music that trigger clear associations with styles, genres, and expressive meanings' (Hatten, 2004: 2)[246]. These topics (or musical signs) signify the style of the Afghan patriotic song which in turn connotes—through the prominence of a strong metre felt in two and the provision of a rousing percussion section—a military topic (Monelle, 2006). As Agawu (1991) notes, 'the primary condition for the perception of topic is listener-competence' (49) and familiarity with the idiom being evoked. For Afghan listeners—especially those who were

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[246] The definition of topics presented in the introduction to Danuta Mirka's (2014) edited volume—'musical styles and genres taken out of their proper context and used in another one'—is useful in the present analysis for understanding the use of the patriotic song style within an educational context. However, I am uncomfortable with the use of the word 'proper' to describe the original context in which styles and genres were conceived.

alive during the second half of the twentieth century—the Afghan patriotic song style and its musical characteristics are highly familiar due to their extensive dissemination on Afghan radio.

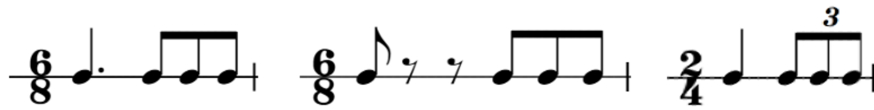

Figure 5. Three variations of rhythmic motif in *Azadi, Khpolwaki,* and *Inqlāb-e Jawedan*

By mobilising these sonic components, *Azadi* alludes topically to this Afghan patriotic song style. This topical commitment affords the inheritance of certain historical political associations, symbolisms, and nationalistic sentiments (as articulated in the above YouTube comments) embodied by this style which, in turn, furnishes the song with a distinct plane of extroversive (referential) semiosis (Agawu, 1991: 23). Moreover, in light of the musical, or topical, correlation between the three songs discussed above and the familial lineage between Ahmad Sarmast and his late father *Ūstād* Salim Sarmast, I argue that ANIM's Independence Day songs revive and develop—by expanding the orchestration, instrumentation, and textures[247]—the patriotic song style popularised between the 1950s and 1980s at a time when Afghanistan's sovereignty is again dominated by external powers (US-NATO forces).

[247] In discussing the two other songs in the collection, *Azadi Khawri* and *Watan*, which were originally recorded by Nashenas and Mashoor Jamal, respectively, ANIM leadership believes 'they are much richer in terms of colours and orchestration values today than the time it was [originally] recorded. The quality of music is extremely much, much better than the time it was recorded. […] ANIM made these songs much more monumental, much more greater than it sounds in Nashenas original performance' (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020).

March (♩=c.120)

Voice
Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B♭
Clarinet in B♭
Alto Clarinet in E♭
Horn in F
Trumpet in B♭
Trumpet in B♭
Trumpet in B♭
Snare Drum
Bass Drum
Cymbals
Piano
Sitar

March (♩=c.120)

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello

Figure 6. *Azadi* (2019), bb. 1–4

Presto

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B♭
Clarinet in B♭
Alto Clarinet in E♭
Horn in F
Trumpet in B♭
Trumpet in B♭
Snare Drum
Triangle
Bass Drum
Cymbals
Glockenspiel
Xylophone
Piano
Sitar
Male Tambura
Oud

Presto

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Violoncello

Figure 7. *Khpolwaki* (2019), bb. 1–4

Figure 8. *Inqlāb-e Jawedan* (1983), bb. 1–4 (taken from Sarmast, 2000)

Violating the 'region of play'

Azadi, therefore, possesses two gestures of meaning identifiable to Afghan listeners: first, the introversive semiosis of the *antara-āstāi* popular song structure which arises through the learnt syntactic processes of the musical material; and second, the extroversive semiosis of the patriotic song aesthetic which carries emotional significance and signifies socio-political struggle, nationalistic values, and a lost "Golden era" within the Afghan imagination. Both gestures are violated by the piano solo in the contrasting B section. The piano solo operates within what Agawu describes as the 'region of play', where the 'domains of expression (extroversive semiosis) are integrated with those of structure[248] (introversive semiosis)' (1991: 24) (see Figure 9). According to Agawu, 'the confines of *play* between the two modes are where we may apprehend the rich meanings that underline [the] music' (Agawu, 1991: 18). In other words, in *Azadi*, meaning arises from the interaction of the *antara-āstāi* structure and the topical references to the patriotic song style. However, I am not interested specifically in the meaning arising from dialectical interplay between the music's referential surface and the nonreferential underlying structure, but rather how this meaning is disrupted and violated by the presence of the piano solo and its gendered delineations.

[248] It is important to note that the playfulness described in this analysis is analogous, but ultimately different, to Agawu's model as his introversive semiosis discusses structure less in terms of formal divisions and more in terms of Schenkerian-style voice-leading. From the perspective of voice-leading and harmonic progression, the song adapts the Hindustani *rāg Bhairav* within a framework of Western harmony.

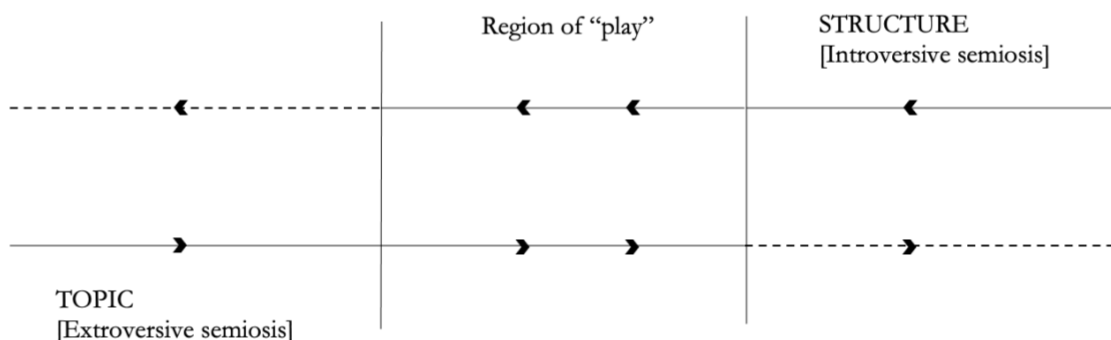

Figure 9. A model for the interplay between introversive and extroversive semiosis in *Azadi*. Adapted from Agawu (1991: 24)

Within the framework of the Afghan *antara-āstāi* model, the contrasting instrumental B section (piano solo) with a different tempo is entirely novel and unanticipated, thus drawing attention to that section of the music through the violation of musical expectation[249]. This is evidenced by the fact that the modification caused concern for the school's director who believed that the public wouldn't like it because it was too uncommon. The musical pause (b. 47) followed by the immediate change in rhythmic stress (from 6/8 to a rhythmic hemiola), texture (full orchestra to piano solo), and mood (powerful, militaristic to expressive, Neoromantic), all work together to distinguish this section aesthetically from the rest of the song. Thus, for an Afghan listener enculturated to the popular song form, the introversive semiosis of the music is temporarily suspended, and the delineated meaning of the female performer is foregrounded. Additionally, the disruption of the patriotic song style and the sonic elements which characterise it is tantamount to the violation of Afghan cultural forms and the national identity that they embody.

The contrasting B section also acts as a wayward and rebellious musical 'Other' (McClary, 1991) within an overall narrative of domination—that is, the powerful force of a full orchestra and

[249] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the theories of musical expectation; however, the current analysis builds on the work of Meyer (1956), Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983), and Huron (2006).

mixed voice choir which bookends the piano solo. Breaking away from the rest of the ensemble at b. 47, the pianist is given space to spotlight her individuality and musicality—a reflection of the liberal values of individualism and freedom—but is eventually reined back in to conform to a rigid beat felt in two when the orchestra joins her with sustained chords at b. 71[250]. She challenges [male] authority on both a micro and macro level: the former arises from the fact that she is unconducted and temporarily takes musical authority away from the male conductor; in the latter, she acts as a metaphor for challenging patriarchal authority in society—'for a woman to [perform], it means that the male members of the family has [*sic*] not been strong enough to stop her from doing so. It will question the authority of the male members of the family' (Feroza, personal communication, April 7, 2021). Furthermore, evidence from my interlocutors indicates that a certain imagined female performer who embodies the intermingling of music and immoral behaviour exists in the imagination of some Afghans[251]. When describing her family's attitude to her musical performances, one former student recalled how 'they say that I am a bad girl, like a kind of dancer' (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021), while another explained how:

> for some reason women are seen as devils. […] Some people believe that women's voice, women's body, women's clothing, and anything related to women have the potential to provoke men to do something that God would not approve of and therefore, the best thing to do is to stop them from showing their bodies, silence their voices, or hide them away somewhere (Feroza, interview, January 27, 2021).

Such anxieties may be traced, in part, to the recent (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) history of Kabul's *Kharābat* neighbourhood, whose residents'—musicians and dancing girls—

[250] For the sake of narrative closure, the pianist's voice is eventually quieted at b. 97 with the return of the A section/*antara*.

[251] Similarly, in her work on Tunisian women's music, Laura Lengel (2004) describes how female performers resist the subject position of a sexualised Other which is shaped by a sordid history of women's music practices in Islamic cultures.

reputation was mired by the 'negative attitude of religious bigots, who considered musical activities and dancing as an outrage, and musicians and dancers as debauchees' (Sarmast, 2005: 184). These, in turn, merge with more contemporary debates surrounding certain female Afghan pop singers who are viewed by some as un-Islamic, to underscore the contestations around female public performers[252]. As such, the structural otherness of the piano solo intersects with the cultural otherness of the Afghan female performer to reinforce the violation of the extroversive and introversive semiosis.

By integrating Green's notion of delineated meaning with Agawu's model of music semiotics, this analysis has offered a way of understanding the disruptive potential of public female musicians from the perspectives of both performance and semiotics. When experienced multimodally within the context of the video, the musical violation of the conventional Afghan popular song structure and patriotic style reinforces the visually disruptive gendered meaning of the solo, and, in turn, the disruptive force of a female performer in the public domain. In other words, the dialectical relationship between the music's delineated meaning—the disruptive force of a female, unveiled, playing a piano in an Afghan context—and the musical defilement of the introversive and extroversive semiosis of the Afghan popular song structure and patriotic aesthetic, respectively, work to foreground the issue of women's freedom and public presence. *Azadi* constructs a liminal space, both in its composition as defamiliarizes the familiar elements of the patriotic/popular song structure, and in its performance of an alternative gendered reality. The piano solo affords a display of individualism and corporeal freedom and thus functions as a musical performance of 'becoming public' within the language of the liberal peacebuilding narrative.

[252] From a religious perspective, Spellberg (1996) argues that the explanation of Eve's birth from a rib in one *hadith* (Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ)—'treat women with care, for woman was created from a rib, the most crooked part of which is the highest—allows the simultaneous association of her entire gender with innate duplicitous qualities of character (311).

'Azadi' ***as ontological politics***

An attempt to visually censor the female participants in the *Azadi* video provides tangible evidence of Afghanistan's multiaccentual public space. Before releasing the songs, the school needed to gain the approval of the government's Independence Day commission[253]. The reaction from one member of the commission demonstrates how girls playing music in public (alongside boys in a Western-style orchestra), and women's public presence in general, is still a vexed issue in Afghan society:

> There was one man who wanted to remove orchestra, all footage of the orchestra, and also all footage of women playing an instrument. He proposed that we should replace those footages with photographs of historical figures who fought for Afghanistan independence and also historical places. […] They just wanted to keep the text but remove everything that is a symbol of freedom (Nasrullah, interview, July 3, 2020)[254].

The Afghan commissioner's reaction clearly suggests that *Azadi*'s gender delineation is disruptive enough to operate as a taboo, thus pointing to the video's mobilisation—either intentionally or unintentionally—of broader social imaginaries pertaining to the potentially threatening nature of women's bodies and their presence in Afghanistan's public sphere (Billaud, 2015: 16). Ghani (2020) alludes to a similar disruptive force when she describes how the 'space [Shamsia Hassani] inhabits as a woman and a graffiti artist, and the work she leaves behind, are politically and socially disruptive' (3). The commissioner's comment also indicates that similar to debates about female MPs' veiling practices, the presentation of liberal females in public is deemed unnationalistic and unpatriotic in comparison to images of celebrated historical [male] freedom fighters. Through the

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[253] See Chapter 5, p. 137, for a discussion of the patronage system which supported these songs.

[254] This response echoes a similar controversy at a performance of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra at the World Wrestling Clubs Cup, held in Tehran in 2015. Only 15 minutes before the performance, the conductor was informed by the event's organisers that the orchestra would not be allowed on stage with female performers; his response was 'either we all will perform together or we all will leave the hall' (Center for Human Rights in Iran, 2015).

lens of 'multiaccentuality', therefore, the female performer(s) and the commissioner's response act as 'multiaccentual signs', each of which 'reflects and refracts another reality' (Vološinov, 1973: 10). Both push against each other's gendered perspective on women's public performance and together, they evidence an ontological conflict between disjunctive and competing conceptualisations for gendered space. The ontological politics waged over *Azadi*'s presentation of the female public performer articulate a broader contestation over Afghanistan's peacebuilding public space.

The Liberal Accent

The narratives of Zohra members and discourses of ANIM's gendered musical products articulate a universal, liberal model of female agency and emancipation. As an apparatus of the liberal peacebuilding project, the school, and by extension its students, aligned itself with the notions of women's freedom and agency espoused by the values promoted by the liberal intervention. In addition, the orchestra's opportunities for international travel enabled the young women to see a Western [read: universal] model for women's agency and emancipation which they internalised and aspired to achieve. For Aziza, travelling overseas prompted her to compare the gender situation in Afghanistan with how women conduct their lives in other parts of the world:

> Before I was in ANIM, I didn't see anything, I was just a normal girl, and I was just going to the public school and home and public school and home. But when I came to ANIM I see the world. […] when I go to Europe, or go to America, [I] see how people are open-minded, how people are doing hard work to improve themselves, to do something in their life. So that's why it gives me the idea that we have to fight for women because women of America, women of Europe, like they are so improved. They have their rights but women in Afghanistan, they are just like... they don't (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

Aziza's comment suggests a form of agency in which she has chosen to pursue a model of women's rights which contrasts with her lived reality. At the same time, her comment sustains the widespread belief that 'women in the United States and Western European countries are better off vis-a-vis their menfolk than their sisters in societies that are not "developed"' (Nader, 1989: 323). Following Mahmood's (2005) observation that 'the desire for freedom from, or subversion of, norms […] [is] profoundly mediated by cultural and historical conditions' (14), I argue that ANIM's (and Zohra's) approach to female freedom and agency is evidence of the influence and internalisation of gendered liberal discourses which were promoted in Kabul during the peacebuilding era and which the students encountered while performing overseas. This, in turn, may be read as an utterance of the liberal accent of Afghanistan's multiaccentual public space. The universal emancipatory model of agency—which assumes all humans are 'endowed with a will, a freedom, and an intentionality' which is 'thwarted by relations of power that are considered external to the subject' (Butler quoted in Mahmood, 2005: 20)—has been widely challenged in recent decades. As a corrective, alternative paradigms for understanding women's agency in non-Western contexts as 'formed through a process of interaction between the individuals and the larger social mechanisms operating on them' (Sehlikoglu, 2017) have been suggested (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Ahmed & Jahan, 2014; Benhabib, 1992; Bilge, 2010; Chatterjee, 2012; Knight, 2011; Mahmood, 2001, 2005; Moghadam, 1994). However, in an educational context so heavily influenced by liberal values (as discussed in the previous chapter), universal conceptions of female emancipation and corporeal freedom clearly dominate. Echoing Roger Mac Ginty's (2017) observation that in post-conflict contexts liberal peace is constructed as the 'only game in town', Afghanistan's liberal public is, from a feminist perspective, 'discursively imagined as the only space of possibility for Afghan women to attain their full rights and freedoms' (Chishti, 2020: 583). This has the effect of excluding those Afghan women living outside these pockets or who do not wish to engage with the notions of freedom and emancipation afforded by liberalist ideologies. Ultimately, I argue that Zohra were symbols of the liberal accent of Afghanistan public space, but

that their liberal gendered image does not necessarily reflect the lived reality, or desires of, all Afghan women.

Conclusion

During the liberal peacebuilding era, institutional music education joined the ongoing 'tug of war' between traditionalists and modernists over the issue of women's public presence in Afghanistan. The many examples of ANIM's female performances described in this chapter—from Zohra Orchestra's welcome home to the 'nation-betraying/nation-building' violinist, and finally the female musicians in *Azadi*—bring to light competing logics of public space and the contested nature of female music making in Afghanistan. Within the liberal peacebuilding narrative, Zohra's members were symbols of liberal freedom and democratisation. At the same time, the young women were also bearers of social change that many Afghans perceived to be in conflict with their own cultural and religious values. In the context of Afghanistan's contested multiaccentual public space, ANIM actors firmly aligned themselves with the notion of women's agency and freedom espoused by the liberal intervention in their desire to 'promote an Afghanistan with progressive ideas forward […] through music' (Mirwais, interview, June 4, 2020). Indeed, while participants' concern for improving the lives of Afghan girls were largely shaped in response to their own hardships faced in learning music and their observations of other girls' struggle to attend school, their narratives also suggest an imbibing of this gendered model. However, I have argued that by promoting this universal political model of women's agency and freedom in its social change songs, ANIM homogenises Afghan women based on a perceived innate desire for freedom and erases other factors that intersect to create sources of female subordination.

ANIM also leveraged the contested nature of Afghanistan's public sphere and women's role within it to send a strong message about women's rights, corporeal freedom, and gender equality. By combining the disruptive force of the female [unveiled] performer with the musical

violation of the patriotic song style, *Azadi* ignited an ontological conflict about the gendered nature of Afghanistan's public space. The following chapter continues to explore the way in which ANIM and other stakeholders used musical performance as a vehicle for communicating certain images and ideologies which were pertinent to Afghanistan's global relations.

Chapter 6

Musical Diplomacy and Public Image

Introduction

On 19 December 2016, a lorry deliberately ploughed into visitors at a Christmas market outside the *Gedächtniskirche* (also known as the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church) on Breitscheidplatz, Berlin, killing 12 people and injuring more than 60 others. The attacker was believed to be a 'soldier of the Islamic State' who carried out the terror attack in response to calls from the militant group to target 'citizens of the Crusader coalition'[255] (Lui, Jenkins & John, 2017). Six weeks later, the walls of the *Gedächtniskirche* resounded with the melody of Beethoven's famous 'Ode to Joy' played by the 30 young women of Afghanistan's first all-female orchestra, Zohra, and the young German musicians with whom they were collaborating. Although the words of Friedrich Schiller's poem, which call for unity and peace between all of mankind, were absent in this particular rendition, the symbolism of the young women's performance was unambiguous. The earlier terror attack reinforced a binary of "Us' *and* 'Them" [read: the West and an unknown, threatening East] which was immediately reconfigured as "Us *with* 'Them" [read: the West and a more familiar, unthreatening East] by the image of an orchestra of young Afghan and German musicians performing side-by-side on the same stage. At a time when Germany was experiencing increasing polarisation over the recent influx of refugees to the country, and nationalism and Islamophobia were on the rise across Europe[256], Zohra's performance was framed as a genuine cultural exchange across continents. For a short time at least, the young women's musical offering promised to supersede the previous month's message of terror with a message of peace, cooperation, and cross-

[255] In the language of retaliation used by the Islamic State, the Crusader coalition refers to the group of countries who engage in military interventions on the Prophet's lands, such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan (Bruun, 2019).
[256] Following the 2015 refugee crisis, right-wing populism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia began to rise in Germany (Gedmin, 2019; Schwartz, 2016) and in 2017, the far-right *Alternative für Deutschland* entered the federal parliament for the first time, becoming the country's biggest opposition party. Similar rises in far-right nationalism have been witnessed in other countries in the European bloc (BBC News, 2019; Davis & Deole, 2017).

cultural dialogue through music. The desire of Berliners to hear Zohra's performance and witness this alternative narrative was unprecedented, with more than 2500 people turned away at the door once the church had reached capacity. As one of the tour organisers noted, 'I think it was just this outpouring, just this need, especially a month after this terrorist attack in that same location, just this human need to connect and to share in these moments when there's so much grief and to come together around beauty and around connection' (Jacques, interview, March 29, 2021).

I offer this opening vignette as an illustration of just one of the many possible ways in which music can be used as a vehicle or site for cultural diplomacy, or what is often termed 'musical diplomacy' (Dunkel & Nitzsche, 2018; Pestel, 2021; Prévost-Thomas & Ramel, 2018; Statler, 2012). At its broadest, cultural diplomacy describes 'the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding' (Cummings, 2003: 1) and has for centuries been used by states and international organisations as a soft power tool for pursuing foreign policy objectives (Isar & Triandafyllidou, 2021). This chapter describes how institutional music education was used by different stakeholders as an apparatus to serve distinct cultural diplomacy agendas related to the war and military intervention in Afghanistan. I consider two different contexts, one actor-led (cultural relations) and the other state-led (cultural diplomacy): in the first, Afghan musicians and ANIM's leadership used music to present a peaceful and positive image of their country to Western audiences and to engage in cross-cultural dialogue and skills development; while in the second, foreign governments engaged with music education for geopolitical purposes, such as demonstrating bi-lateral cooperation and reducing insurgency. In both instances, ANIM students self-identified themselves, and were viewed by decision-makers, as cultural diplomatic tools who could achieve social and political end goals. However, a postcolonial analysis of these two agendas elucidates the ambiguities and complexities of musical diplomacy endeavours and brings to light the 'relationship between acts of musical communication […] and political, economic, and cultural power-relations' (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000: 5). Using Georgina Born's (2011, 2012) theory of social mediation as an

analytical framework, this chapter argues that while musical diplomacy affords the development of 'new points of connections […] among artists and audience members of different ethnicities, nationalities, and generations' (Guilbault, 2010: 17), these are, in turn, mediated by wider institutional processes and modalities of power.

Cultural Diplomacy and Relations at ANIM

As an institution, ANIM engaged in musical diplomacy in several ways, ranging from grass-roots collaborative projects to state-organised overseas tours. In his 2018 Polar Talks seminar, Ahmad Sarmast described how the school is 'committed to bring Afghanistan closer to the international community, to facilitate a dialogue between Afghanistan and between the international community through music' (Polar Music Prize, 2018: 17:40). The school's musical activities lay at the intersection of cultural *relations* and cultural *diplomacy* and illustrate the increasing blurring of boundaries between these two interrelated practices (see Ang, Isar & Mar, 2015). The former, mostly practised by non-state actors, is driven by ideals and grows naturally and organically without government intervention, while the latter is motivated by national interests and takes place when formal diplomats try to shape and channel natural cultural flows to advance national interests (Arndt, 2006: xviii). During their 2013 tour to the United States, former US Secretary of State John Kerry described ANIM's students as 'ambassadors of peace' who had come to the country to speak the 'international language of peace and of possibilities and dreams' (TOLOnews, 2013a). Since then, national and international media have reported extensively on how ANIM's various ensembles travelled across the globe introducing 'Afghanistan to thousands of people in a way different from the dominant narrative of conflict' (TOLOnews, 2013b) and 'carrying the torch of people-to-people and intercultural dialogue between Afghanistan and the international community' (The Pak Banker, 2016), highlighting music's increasing value and presence in

international diplomacy (see Statler, 2012; Zawisza, 2015). Of the three nodal institutions described in Chapter 3, ANIM engaged the most with cultural diplomacy/relations activities.

On several occasions, ANIM ensembles were officially engaged by Afghanistan's overseas diplomatic missions to celebrate and strengthen bilateral diplomatic relations. In September 2018, for example, the ANIM Chamber Orchestra was deployed to Islamabad, Pakistan to mark the 99th Anniversary of Afghanistan's Independence and to provide a musical salve to the two countries' troubled relationship[257]. As ANIM's director explained, 'we are using the healing power of music to look after the wounds of the Afghan people as well as the Pakistani people. We are here with the message of peace, brotherhood and freedom' (quoted in Gul, 2018). The event, held at the Pakistan-China Friendship Center, was particularly ground-breaking as it was the first official performance of Afghan musicians in Pakistan for over 40 years. The following year, the Zohra Orchestra travelled to Australia to commemorate 50 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Leading Afghan and Australian political figures hailed the tour as an opportunity to support 'the development of people-to-people diplomacy and cultural links between Australia and Afghanistan' (H.E. Wahidullah Waissi, Afghan Ambassador to Australia) and to 'strengthen and celebrate relations between [the] two nations' (Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, Premier of NSW) (Afghan Australia, 2021). Finally, although not solely an initiative of either the Afghan Government or the United States Department of State, ANIM's 2013 tour to the United States was framed by the media as a signal of 'the growing potency of cultural diplomacy in Afghanistan amid ongoing negotiations over the United States' post-2014 role in the country' (Boyle, 2013). However, the fact that ANIM's Afghan staff and students usually travelled on Service Passports—assigned to 'administrative and technical staff of cultural, commercial, and military representations in [*sic*] abroad (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021)—as opposed to Private Passports suggests that even when the school went overseas for non-government sponsored events, they were still

[257] Tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan go back to the creation of the latter in 1947 which ignited conflicts along the border between the two countries (the Durand Line) (Ahmed & Bhatnagar, 2007: 159) and have increasingly worsened with the development of terrorist activity in the region (see Grare, 2006).

officially seen to be helping the Afghan government promote relations and a more positive image internationally.

Most of the time, however, ANIM's activities lacked any top-down, state intervention and were simply realisations of the school's vision to promote intercultural dialogue and people-to-people diplomacy through music, as illustrated by the image of Afghan and German musicians sharing the same stage in the opening vignette. Since the school's first international tour in 2013, its orchestras usually[258] collaborated with young musicians from local orchestras and music institutions in 'side-by-side concerts'. While the experience of rehearsing, performing, and sometimes touring multiple cities together was believed to foster deep interpersonal connection and understanding between the youth of both countries, a statement issued by ANIM ahead of their performance at the Muscat Opera House, Oman, in 2014 indicates broader benefits in terms of regional cooperation: 'As a characteristic example of invaluable cultural diplomacy and exchange, Anim's [*sic*] students will play alongside Omani young musicians from the Muscat Philharmonic, creating an opportunity for the youth of Afghanistan to directly communicate and work with the youth of Oman, an important and influential country in the Arab world' (Gulf News, 2014). The Gulf states have increasingly played an important role in Afghanistan post-9/11, including offering military support and hosting and mediating peace talks. While Oman has usually only held a tangential role in the Gulf's engagement with Afghanistan—the country once hosted the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG)[259] in October 2017 in an attempt to engage the Taliban in peace talks—ANIM's tour may be viewed as part of wider efforts on behalf of Afghanistan and the Gulf states to strengthen ties in the region.

Collaborations between ANIM and overseas musicians ranged from one performance to multi-city tours. Guest musicians received ANIM's repertoire in advance, rehearsed the music before the tour, and then joined the Afghan orchestra when the latter arrived. While augmenting

[258] Notable exceptions include Zohra's tours to India (2017) and Slovakia (2019).
[259] The QCG is comprised of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and USA.

ANIM's orchestras was often necessary on a practical level—to fill in instrument gaps (brass, for example), bolster numbers, and add support to the young, and at times, inexperienced musicians[260]—the public-facing motivation was to engage in micro-level (individual-to-individual) cross-cultural dialogue and peer-to-peer diplomacy, and to further cultural understanding through music making. This interaction, in turn, was promoted at a macro level as a metaphor for Afghanistan's broader peaceful cooperation with the international community. On the ground, however, the demonstration of mutual collaboration was often negotiated with the school's desired optics, as described by one of the organisers of Zohra's collaboration with professional musicians during their UK tour:

> the girls needed to be seen at all times and you know, that had to do with like the number of people that we had playing with them, and where those people sat, was all very important to [Sarmast] because he wanted to make sure that the girls were always in the front at all times. Even when that wasn't the thing that was most helpful for them musically or educationally (Claire, interview, March 20, 2022).

For the school, therefore, the priority was the promotion of the Afghan musicians while the image of cross-cultural cooperation played a supporting role.

During its 11 years of operation, ANIM increasingly utilised new technology and media to engage in cultural relations with other music schools and organisations, both in Afghanistan and across the globe. In 2018, ANIM installed a Shared Studios 'portal'—an immersive, interconnected space that enables life-sized, life-like connection across distance and creates the sensation of truly being in the same room (Shared Studios, 2021)—which enabled staff and students to connect with other 'portals' in Afghanistan and around the world to engage in shared music-making, workshops

[260] When Zohra went on its first tour in 2017, for example, the orchestra only possessed three cellos, one viola, and no brass instruments. Likewise, on the US tour in 2013, some of the students had been playing their instruments for less than two years.

and performances, conversations around music and social change, instrumental and conducting lessons, and other multi-disciplinary collaborations[261]. Between 2017 and 2019, students from ANIM and Great Neck North High School (New York state) participated in multiple cultural exchanges via live video conferencing. During these sessions, groups of music students from both schools gathered in a room, played music for each other (the students in Great Neck performed band arrangements of Afghan songs), and asked each other questions about daily schedules, other subjects studied, security issues, being a woman musician, and the universal language of music. New technology and media were also used to facilitate domestic cultural diplomacy with various communities around Afghanistan. In collaboration with the US Embassy in Kabul, ANIM's instrumental ensembles performed a number of concerts in 2018 which were broadcast to Lincoln Learning Centers[262] in various provinces. While the concerts were not a mutual exchange between ANIM musicians and their audiences (rather they were one-way), the events still offered a unique opportunity for Afghanistan's musicians to come together virtually.

Finally, the foreign teachers who were either employed by ANIM or who visited as part of the school's 'Guest Artist in Residence' scheme[263] were also an integral part of the school's cultural relations initiative. In his opening remarks at ANIM's concert at the Kennedy Center in February 2013, William Burns commented that 'Mr. Harvey[264] and his fellow teachers have forged connections across cultural and national barriers [and] have been a powerful force in defining the United States to the people of Afghanistan and beyond, for which we are truly grateful' (US Department of State, 2013). These teachers continued a form of musical diplomacy which has occurred in Afghanistan for centuries. Beginning with the court patronage of north Indian

[261] See Humberstone (2020) for details of ANIM's distance learning programme.
[262] Funded by the United States' Public Affairs Section (PAS), the centres primarily functioned as tools for public diplomacy by providing access to information about the United States via book collections, the Internet, and through local programming to the general public, but they also conducted youth-oriented educational and cultural programming.
[263] This programme was funded by the US Embassy, Kabul. Foreign teachers visited the school for short periods of time (2–4 weeks) usually as part of the Winter Music Academy held each year during the long school break (January–March).
[264] Conductor and arranger of the ANIM Symphony Orchestra at the time.

musicians under Timur Shah Durrani (1772–1793) (Baily, 1988: 25; Sarmast, 2005: 172–173) and later Shah Amir Sher Ali Khan (1863–66 and 1868–79)[265] (Baily, 1999; Sakata, 1985: 137, 2012: 3), Afghanistan's musical landscape has both shaped, and been shaped by, the country's overseas relationships. Throughout the twentieth century, Turkish, European, and Soviet musical advisors travelled to Afghanistan to assist a number of state institutions, including the establishment of the country's military brass bands and providing professional development for Radio Kabul's orchestral musicians (Sarmast, 2005).

While all ANIM's cultural diplomacy and relations practices deserve further exploration, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to interrogate each one in depth. Rather, the following section returns to one of the key themes illustrated by the opening vignette: the presentation of an alternative image of Afghanistan and its people through music.

'Positive Image of Afghanistan': Widening the 'Accepted Grid'

The divergent events described in the opening vignette to this chapter introduce a central theme of the first cultural diplomacy agenda examined in this chapter: the way in which musical performances create a communicative space in and through which alternative images of places, nations, and peoples can be articulated. As Patricia Goff (2013) notes, one of cultural diplomacy's many facets is the ability to 'tell another story about a country [and] offset negative, stereotypical, or overtly simplistic impressions' (421). This capacity informed one of ANIM's primary objectives when performing overseas:

> Through music we can change perceptions about Afghanistan which is mainly in the mind of the international community—who do not have close contact with Afghanistan and the Afghan people—a place of violence, a place of Kalashnikov, a place of negligence of women's

[265] The court patronage of north Indian musicians continued under the rule of King Zahir Shah (1933–1973) (Sakata, 2012).

> rights. Yes, we have all those challenges, but Afghanistan is a place of peace, harmony, and through music education we are teaching our kids to live in peace and harmony and respect each other (Ahmad Sarmast, World Economic Forum, 2017b: 11:00).

As this section illustrates, students and staff at ANIM shared a commitment to and felt a strong responsibility to present a 'positive image of Afghanistan' to international audiences and to directly challenge, through music, negative images and stereotypes of Afghanistan circulating in the West. This image celebrated Afghanistan's diverse and rich musical heritage and culture, the strength of Afghan women, the country's ethnic diversity, and peaceful cooperation between different cultures. The desire to tell another story about Afghanistan was particularly prominent among female interlocutors. For Zohra's members, promoting a positive and beautiful image of Afghanistan and Afghan women to the world—what Ang, Isar and Mar (2015) refer to as 'cultural self-representation'—was central to their paradigm of why the orchestra existed and what its role was within Afghanistan's present and future: 'The main purpose of Zohra, I would say, is to show the positive side of Afghanistan to the world and that women can do all the good things that boys [can do]' (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021). Building on the fundamental principle of symbolic representation which underpins traditional diplomacy (Jönsson & Hall, 2005; Sharp, 2009), the Zohra Orchestra presented itself to the international community not only as a demonstration of the country's cultural beauty but also as a symbol of Afghanistan's achievements in the areas of women's rights and female empowerment over the past 20 years. The students thoroughly internalised their role as musical ambassadors and felt a sense of duty to promote Afghanistan's beautiful side on the world stage; 'we *need* to show other countries that Afghanistan also has a different side that is art, music, beautiful things like that, that it's not just only fighting and war here' (Gulmina, interview, January 22, 2021). International actors likewise aspired to assist the students in their mission, as articulated by a member of the World Economic Forum's (WEF) organising team who explained that one of the primary motivations for Zohra's 2017 Europe tour

was to help ANIM and Ahmad and others present a vision of Afghanistan that was not only the vision of war and terrorism, but that was also a narrative of beauty and courage. I think that's what really got Ahmad excited too, to say that we want to be able to present a different understanding of what our country is about, it's not just what you see on the news (Jacques, interview, March 29, 2021).

That Zohra were recognised domestically as one of the country's valued exports is illustrated by an ArtLords mural—painted on a blast wall in downtown Kabul—of some of the ensemble's members which exclaims, in Pashto[266], 'Our heroes! Show Afghanistan's positive face to the world' (Figure 10)[267].

Figure 10. ArtLords mural of Zohra Orchestra members, Kabul, March 2018. Author's own photograph

[266] Pashto is one of Afghanistan's official languages, alongside Dari.
[267] Soon after the Taliban takeover in August 2021, all of ArtLords' murals—which also covered themes such as the signing of the US-Taliban peace deal, celebrated and martyred aid workers, and Polio health campaigns—including this one, were painted over and replaced with Taliban flags and Islamic slogans which celebrate the group's victory.

Pascale's Afghan Children's Songbook Project (2011, 2013) demonstrates how educational engagement with Afghan music can help change perceptions about the country and promote cultural understanding. Although the primary mission of the project is to revitalise children's music in Afghanistan (after the civil war and the Taliban's musical censorship) through the distribution of songbooks to schools across the country, Pascale realised that it also had the potential to challenge misconceptions and negative opinions about Afghanistan back home in the United States. When the Afghan Children's Songbook Project was adopted for a fundraiser—and in the process raise cultural understanding—at a school in Colchester, Connecticut, students responded with comments such as 'Don't we hate the Afghans? Aren't they our enemies?' (Pascale, 2013: 133). However, upon seeing the impact that learning the Afghan songs and exploring Afghan culture had on the students, Pascale concluded that 'the music provided an opening for an honest discussion to take place and for concerns and misconceptions to be addressed. As a result, perspectives could be shifted, views altered, barriers removed, and cross-cultural connections made' (Pascale, 2013: 133).

At home and in the diaspora

The desire shared by ANIM's members to challenge misconceptions and negative stereotypes about Afghanistan through their musical activities constitutes part of a movement among young Afghans (both in Afghanistan and the diaspora) which utilises art and cultural production to confront hegemonic narratives of the country circulating in the West (Ghani & Fiske, 2020). Artists within this movement fundamentally see artwork as a way of communicating and expressing ideas, feelings, and identities that are difficult or impossible to be disseminated through more conventional means (Ghani & Fiske: 120). Although their work is aimed primarily at domestic audiences, Kabul-based street artists, film makers, musicians, poets, and photographers use artistic mediums to represent themselves to the world *on their own terms* and to articulate an authentic

Afghan identity which challenges Western stereotypes[268]. This in turn can be understood as the manifestation of a wider obligation felt by Muslims to situate themselves on the 'good' side of what critical theorist Mahmood Mamdani (2004) describes as a 'Good Muslim/Bad Muslim' dichotomy which has dominated US foreign policy since the Cold War. According to Mamdani's distinction, so-called 'Good Muslims' are modern, secular, and Westernised while 'Bad Muslims' are doctrinal, anti-modern, and virulent. Until proven otherwise, all Muslims are presumed to be 'bad' in the Western imagination. For Omaid Sharifi, co-founder of ArtLords, the responsibility to rewrite the narrative on Afghanistan (and the Muslim world) and expand the knowledge grid lies with Afghans who have the opportunity to present themselves in new ways:

> I think we are the most misrepresented people in the whole world. The world really does not know about us. We are always misjudged, looked at very differently. I think there is so much room for writing about us, knowing us, and that also applies to us. The responsibility is on us to connect with the world and [show] the people who we really are (quoted in Ghani & Fiske, 2020: 118).

Street artist Shamsia Hassani makes a point of travelling overseas with her artwork 'to show people a new Afghanistan, to show people something that until now they didn't know about' (Ghani & Fiske, 2020: 119). Rather than being represented in the West by Western actors, these Afghan 'cultural diplomats' *represent themselves* in the West through their own cultural products. The activities of ANIM students and other Afghan cultural producers respond to the ongoing need for 'discourses that counter Orientalist misrepresentations of the East' and 'can provide alternative models to the reductively simplifying and confining ones […] that have prevailed in the Middle East and elsewhere for so long' (Said, 2004: 875).

[268] I am reluctant to write about this movement in the past tense as many of the artists and cultural producers involved are continuing their work in exile.

The current research found that for musicians living in the Afghan diaspora, presenting a positive image of Afghanistan and its citizens overseas is a major concern. In speaking to former ANIM students who emigrated from Afghanistan, it became clear that music, as an artform, remains an important vehicle for achieving such ends. The Switzerland-based rock band 'White Page', for example, was set up by a group of ANIM musicians (and another Afghan musician from Sweden) in 2011 in Kabul. The name of the band represents a 'new blank page for Afghan music' and seeks to overwrite the years of 'black pages' which represent the adversity of three decades of war (White Page, 2021). The music is a mix of musical styles, heavily influenced by Afghan music, and what the band call 'Afghan rock': 'it is hard-rock, alternative-rock with Afghan music scales. If you listen to it you say, ok, it's rock but not really typical American rock. It's really special' (Najib, interview, May 12, 2021). As ambassadors of Afghan music, the band 'works for promoting the music, especially rock music in Afghanistan, in order to show the real and good face of Afghanistan to the world' (White Page, 2021). Their music is politically charged, as illustrated by their 2018 album 'Fuck the War', which explains (in English) the war, the political situation, and expresses the musicians' views on the conflict. One of the band members explained:

> […] we hope that in the future we can be one of the biggest bands from Afghanistan, to represent Afghanistan, a new picture of Afghanistan, and to say everything about Afghanistan. That Afghanistan is not a country of terrorists, it's not a country of bombs. It's a country of peace, there's heritage, great heritage and culture. […] if there is a war, […] we never choose that, the Afghan never choose that. And through the music we want to explain everything, almost everything to the people, from Afghanistan (Najib, interview, May 12, 2021).

For 'White Page', music is a communicative vehicle for challenging war-based misconceptions of their home country, and as such, their songs are primarily directed at non-Afghan, English-speaking audiences: 'We decided to sing our songs in English and we have just one song in Dari.

Because we want to give a message to the people of the world, that's why we are trying to adapt it to the people and sing in English, because most of the people understand it' (Najib, interview, May 12, 2021). As Harris Berger (2003) notes, 'questions of language choice are a crucial part of musical experience' and musicians around the globe often ask 'which languages or dialects will best express my ideas? Which will get me a record contract or a bigger audience?' (8). In the case of 'White Page', language choice is vital for communicating a certain message to a particular audience—that is, telling the rest of the world a different story about Afghanistan. Benson and Chik (2012) reported similar sentiments about reaching a global audience among pop artists in Hong Kong: '[…] since English is the international language, writing in English can let people know more about Chinese culture. So, rather than submitting to English culture, we are in fact using English as a medium to get Chinese culture across to people' (27). However, while the use of English may be valuable in terms of legibility and communicability, it also raises questions about certain paradigms of power which ensure the ongoing centrality of Western frameworks and discourses for representing the East[269].

By communicating an alternative image of their country through musical performance, I argue that ANIM students and staff attempted to expand what Said (1978) terms the 'accepted grid' through which knowledge of the East (and Afghanistan) is filtered into Western consciousness. The following sections explore this process further and offer a framework in which to understand the musical presentation of the positive image narrative in a performance context.

The 'accepted grid' and Orientalist narratives

As most people in the West have never been to Afghanistan—or, in some cases, even had personal interaction with an Afghan person—their limited knowledge of the country is garnered through

[269] Building on this point, ANIM's educational programme stresses the importance of English as a skill for its students: 'Since ANIM students interact with international faculty and visiting teachers every day, English is crucial for them now and in their future careers as musicians' (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2019e).

other people's accounts, interpretations, experiences, and opinions, most of which are predominantly Orientalist in nature. As Ghumkhor and Daulatzai (2021) note 'the coverage of Afghanistan, by the time it arrives on our screens, is churned through narratives that make it familiar to people – in other words, it has been read for us'. Said (1978) describes Orientalism, among other things, as 'a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness' (6) by 'making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it' (Said, 1978: 3). In the case of Afghanistan, this 'accepted grid' is constructed from the historical canon of novels, scholarly articles and books, news reports, images, and films which present the country to Western audiences. The following quote from one of Zohra's student collaborators during a tour in Europe illustrates this process:

> I knew where it was, I knew Kabul, and I read a book… I don't know the name in English, it is called *Les Cerf-volants de Kaboul* ['The Kite Runner'] […] I read this book and it's fact, so I knew. I saw movies, American movies, about war in Afghanistan. It's what we hear on the TV, there is war, it is dangerous, but we don't know much about the country (Josephine, interview, May 7, 2021).

Another young collaborator from Europe also admitted that '[I knew] really nothing. Like erm… the headscarf. Tanned skin. And outside Europe. That's all!' (Sophie, interview, April 26, 2021), illustrating a limited and stereotyped knowledge of the country.

For centuries, Orientalist discourses on Afghanistan have essentialised the country as static, undeveloped, and dangerous. In his account of a diplomatic mission to Afghanistan from 1808–1809 to conclude an agreement with the ruler, Shah Shuja Durrani, Mountstuart Elphinstone—an administrator with the East India Company—wrote

> if a man could be transported from England to the Afghaun country […] he would find it difficult to comprehend how a nation could subsist in such a disorder; and would pity those, who were compelled to pass their days in such a scene, and whose minds were trained by their unhappy situation to fraud and violence, to rapine, deceit, and revenge (Elphinstone, 1815: 149).

Over two hundred years later, Western media has been indicted for shaping a 'false world opinion' of Afghanistan by portraying Afghans as 'savage, conservative and medieval people with no appetite and understanding for modernism, democracy and freedom' (Daud, 2020) and representing the country as 'an abode of Taliban and extremism, a penitentiary for women, a narcotics den, a centre for Islamization, and a safe haven for Al-Qaida and Usama Bin Laden' (Shabir, Ali & Iqbal, 2011: 83). In contrast to nineteenth- and twentieth-century representations of Orientals as 'strange' and 'irrational' but ultimately harmless, Asef Bayat (2015) argues that post-9/11 'neo-Orientalism'—now dominated by Islam and Muslims—presents Orientals as dangerous 'threats to the cultural values, civilized integrity, and the physical well-being of the West'. Post-2001 popular fiction narratives, such as Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003), Susan Froetschel's *Fear of Beauty* (2013), and Trent Reedy's *Words in the Dust* (2011), have also come under intense scrutiny for reinforcing and emphasising negative stereotypes and misconceptions of Afghanistan as primitive, less civilised, and lacking morality (Dale, 2016).

Orientalism and Afghan women

Following the US-NATO invasion in 2001, the lives of Afghan women and girls were filtered through a particularly narrow Orientalist grid to construct the image of the archetypal Afghan woman as a silent, oppressed, veiled victim. In Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), for example, the author is accused of reproducing the media's dominant representation of Afghan women as passive victims of war and violence (Kazemiyan, 2012), while Sensoy and Marshall

(2010) argue that colonialist discourses of Afghan girls as poor, uneducated, and constrained are evoked in Deborah Ellis's novel *The Breadwinner* (2000)[270]. This portrayal was also used by various international actors, including nation states and transnational feminist networks, to justify, on a humanitarian level, the 20-year foreign military intervention in the country and the perceived need to 'save Afghan women' from their patriarchal prisons. As Gillian Whitlock (2005) notes, 'the already deeply embedded interpretative frameworks of Orientalism, exoticism, and neo-primitivism through which the East is stereotypically and variously produced for Western consumption have hardened in ideological support of the war on terror' (56).

Representations of ANIM's female music students in the international media often cemented and perpetuated these Orientalist tropes of Afghan women. Western media coverage of the Zohra Orchestra emphasises the violent family and community opposition experienced by the girls over any musical, aesthetic, or educational aspects of their activities. The students are portrayed as being subject to and overcoming violent family and community threats and condemnation in order to continue their musical education; 'Afghan female orchestra faces DEATH THREATS for 'dishonouring families' over Davos concert' (Oliphant, 2017) and 'her uncles and brothers threatened to beat her for performing on television' (Harooni, 2016). In particular, the media highlights the male protagonists of this violence, alluding to a particular form of gendered Orientalism which views brown women as the victims of brown men (Spivak, 1988). In one arresting account of the conductor's lived experience, the media quotes her uncle who told her 'Wherever I see you, I'll kill you. You are a shame for us' (Oliphant, 2017) upon learning that she attended a music school. While it is important not to critically dismiss these narratives and Zohra members' lived experiences—indeed, threats of violence were a daily reality for many of the musicians—this aspect of their lives did not, and does not, define their identities, either as women or as musicians. Rather, the point to be made here is that this aspect of the young women's

[270] In June 2017, five members of the Zohra Orchestra recorded vocal parts for the soundtrack to the Hollywood adaptation of *The Breadwinner*.

lives was sensationalised and spotlighted to fit Western audiences' perceptions of Afghan women at the expense of other aspects of their identity.

The media's focus on this gendered violence served to associate the students, despite their perceived bravery and defiance, with Mohanty's (1988) concept of the 'Third World woman', who lacks agency and are 'objects-who-defend-themselves' (67). Mohanty argues that Western feminist writers discursively colonise the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thus reducing them to a homogenised 'other' who are bound by family and tradition, domesticated, and victimised, and so ignoring the diversity of experience within this group. Several scholars have identified and looked critically at analogous discourses which reproduce this image within the transnational feminist campaign to liberate Afghan women after the fall of the Taliban (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Bergner, 2011; Berry, 2003; Hunt, 2002; Mitra, 2020; Rich, 2014; Rostami-Povey, 2007). These feminist movements, it is argued, 'collude with Orientalist tropes by constructing a singular, monolithic Afghan Woman, whose agency and heterogeneity is appropriated and controlled to advance a neo-imperialist agenda as part of the war against terror' (Chishti & Farhoumand-Sims, 2011: 123).

Zohra members explicitly identified these Orientalist representations as one of the reasons why they wanted to present another view of Afghanistan and Afghan women to Western audiences. During a panel discussion at the World Economic Forum in 2017, one of the orchestra's conductors explained how '[Zohra] want to tell to the other countries that Afghan women can do everything and they are not just sitting at home, like they are thinking' (World Economic Forum, 2017b: 07:55), a sentiment which was echoed by another student in an interview with myself: 'So we just want to show that [Afghan women] have power […] We are not just at home or to work in home and wash and these things' (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021). Similarly, on tour in the United States in 2013, another female student (who later became a member of Zohra) wished to demonstrate Afghan women's abilities because '[Americans] think that the women are under the *burqa* and can't do anything' (Glasse, 2013), directly alluding to the image of the veiled Afghan

woman which was used as justification by the United States to liberate Afghan women (Berry, 2003; Rich, 2014). In sum, members of the orchestra felt they were in a position to counterbalance the dominant image of Afghan women as veiled, oppressed, and domesticated through musical performances which celebrated Afghan women's freedoms, strengths, and abilities. However, in challenging one narrow understanding of Afghan women's identity and subordination, ANIM and its students replaced it with an equally narrow and problematic notion of women's freedom and liberty which, as I have argued elsewhere, was not actually practised, or possessed, on the ground.

'Positive image of Afghanistan' through musical performance

The primary mode through which ANIM students presented a positive image of Afghanistan to overseas audiences was live public performance. Danielle Fosler-Lussier (2014) claims that musical performance enables 'both the transmission of ideas through the content of the works (symbolic power) and a new understanding of self and other through the performative nature of the events (social power)' (271). The following comments illustrate the centrality and importance of this agenda for the students:

> I was so happy because it was like, we were the first music group from Afghanistan and showing the good side of Afghanistan to [America]. And they were seeing this for the first time, an Afghan music group coming to America and performing in Carnegie Hall, it was a big thing. I feel really happy and proud and honoured. It was like a dream, it was so good (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

> We are musicians and we are learning music so we can share our music with people. This is our reason. Whenever we go and whenever we have performances, so our goal is to share the beauty of Afghan music with other people. Not just Afghan people but with international people, people from outside Afghanistan, with foreigners. So this is our reason and whenever

we are performing in concerts, the only reason that we have is to share the beauty of Afghan music with others (Jafar, interview, September 15, 2020).

As Afghan women musicians, we were performing on such a big platform, we were presenting another image of Afghanistan beside the image that people know. We were giving the message that how Afghan women are struggling but at the same time how strong they are. We were presenting a beautiful culture of Afghanistan, a beautiful image of Afghanistan which has not been shown through social media to other people because the World Economic Forum is an international platform and almost all around the world people heard about us, people saw us and maybe we couldn't change a complete point of view of people about Afghanistan but at least we as an Afghan, as a citizen, we did our job to at least show a very tiny part of our culture and our country to the world (Zarifa in Cuatro Puntos, 2020).

While presenting a 'positive image of Afghanistan' to audiences was a priority during all ANIM's overseas tours, there is a clear geographical distinction in how performed cultural diplomatic activities were distributed. ANIM's traditional instrumental and vocal ensembles usually performed in countries in the Global South[271]—Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, China, South Korea, Argentina, Dubai—while the school's orchestras mostly toured the Global North—Australia, USA, Switzerland, Germany, UK, Sweden, Portugal, and Slovakia—indicating an imagined binary in addressing different parts of the world. There were, of course, exceptions to this distinction. For example, ANIM's smaller Afghan groups did on occasion perform in the Global North—a small group of staff and student traditional instrumentalists performed yearly in Germany as part of the *Safar* project with the Franz Liszt School of Music, Weimar; in 2016, another Afghan traditional group participated in the Viljandi

[271] The categories of 'Global North' and 'Global South' have become increasingly popular in the past two decades and signify a shift away from focussing on development or cultural difference towards an emphasis on geopolitical relationships of power (Dados & Connell, 2012). The model has also been 'a general rubric for decolonised nations roughly south of the old colonial centres of power' (Haug, Braveboy-Wagner & Maihold, 2021). The model, however, has been problematised (Trefzer et al., 2014).

Folk Festival in Estonia; and the school's 'Young Afghan Traditional Ensemble' performed in Denmark. Similarly, the school's orchestras have also performed in the Global South, such as Zohra's tour to India in 2017, the performance of the school's Chamber Orchestra in Pakistan in 2018, and the Youth Orchestra's tour to Oman in 2014. However, the orchestral tours to countries in the Global North were always the biggest in terms of duration, number of concerts, and sponsorship, and always received the most media attention. Although this emphasis was likely due to better funding opportunities in these countries, it may also indicate ANIM's greater desire to communicate with the Global North to garner financial support and overcome the particular stereotypes that originate there. While both regions received a 'positive image of Afghanistan'—which was articulated through the beauty of the music performed, an image of Afghanistan's ethnic groups playing together, and the promotion of women's music making—the Western framework of the orchestra enabled the communication of further narratives which were socially and politically valuable in Global North contexts.

In the subsequent sections, I use Born's theory of social mediation to explore the way in which ANIM's performances of the positive image of Afghanistan to audiences in the Global North refracted and presented four distinct social identity formations—nationality and locality, gender and ethnicity—pertaining to Afghanistan's perceived positive transformation during the peacebuilding era. Expanding on existing conceptions of the social in music, Born (2011, 2012) argues that music's social mediation occurs on four distinct and mutually modulating or intersecting planes:

> In the first plane, music produces its own diverse socialities in the guise of the intimate microsocialities of musical performance and practice […] In the second, music has powers to animate imagined communities […] In the third, music refracts wider social identity formations […] In the fourth, music is entangled in the institutional forms that enable its production, reproduction, and transformation (Born, 2012: 266–267).

The first two planes, therefore, focus on the socialities and social imaginaries which arise from musical experiences while the third and fourth are refractions which reveal wider social relations and institutional forces. Although autonomous and irreducible to each other, the four planes interact in complex ways to enter into the 'musical assemblage'[272] and 'animate music's aesthetic, ethnical, and political operations' (Born, 2012: 267). Born's theory is attractive for analysing ANIM's musical diplomacy activities as it encapsulates both the micro and the macro, enabling an examination of the ways in which musical diplomacy is used by, and benefits, different stakeholders at interpersonal, communal group, and geopolitical levels.

Nationality and locality

Beginning with the sonic experience of ANIM's orchestral performances, audience members were met with a unique sound which was achieved by blending traditional Afghan and Hindustani Classical instruments—the *rubāb*, *tanbūr*, *dutār*, *ghichak*, *tabla*, *sitār* and *sarod*—with Western classical orchestral instruments. Depending on the size of the orchestra and the nature of the piece being played, an Afghan rhythm section comprised of *tabla*, *zerbaghali*, and/or *dohl* was usually used to retain the spirit of the music[273]. Figure 11 (p. 247) outlines the instrumentation of two of ANIM's most prominent orchestras during two separate tours: first, the Afghan Youth Orchestra's performance of *The Four Seasons of Afghanistan* in the United States in 2013; and second, the Zohra Orchestra's performance of an ABBA Medley in Sweden in 2019[274]. To accommodate this hybrid combination, Afghan folk and popular songs were specially arranged and orchestrated by the

[272] In an earlier article, Born (2010) describes the musical assemblage as a 'series or network of relations between musical sounds, human and other subjects, practices, performances, cosmologies, discourses and representations, technologies, spaces, and social relations' (87–88).
[273] The inclusion of the Afghan rhythm section often caused timing issues in the orchestra as players sometimes followed the rhythm section aurally rather than watching the conductor.
[274] It is important to note that the instruments included in these and other ANIM large ensembles varied considerably over the years due to the students available.

school's international faculty; all arrangements were written in standard Western staff notation[275], including the parts for the Afghan instruments. By contrast, ANIM's traditional ensembles learned and performed their music either orally or through Indian *sargam* notation[276], which meant that students of Afghan and Hindustani traditional instruments needed to learn Western notation to fully participate in the orchestras. The physical and sonic union of Afghan and Western musical heritages articulated an East-West dialogue and acted as a symbol of the orchestra's endeavours to promote cooperation between Afghanistan and its global partners, both on and off stage. The practice of collaborating with local young musicians—who became temporary members of the ensemble and sat side-by-side with their Afghan colleagues—provided another symbol of international cooperation and dialogue. In this way, the performance foregrounded peaceful musical and personal interaction over the antagonism and violent exchanges which are most commonly associated with the ongoing conflicts in the region. For many, the timing of Zohra's performance at Berlin's *Gedächtniskirche* just weeks after a deadly terror attack accentuated and re-affirmed the symbolism of peaceful cooperation between the Afghan musicians and their German peers.

Many of the songs included in the orchestras' repertoire were written and/or performed by artists who were active during Afghanistan's '"Golden Age" of music' (Sakata, 2012: 3) including Ahmad Zahir, Nashenas, Nainawaz, and Salim Sarmast. The ongoing survival, albeit it in new Westernised forms, of these old songs through protracted war and music's censorship, was an important aspect of the positive image of Afghanistan presented in concerts:

> [In the orchestras] we played the beautiful music and the good music that presented the beauty of Afghanistan and that presented the talent of the musicians of Afghanistan in the past, you

[275] See Cook (2000) for a description of standard Western staff notation. The importance of using Western staff notation at ANIM was emphasised in Ahmad Sarmast's 2018 Polar Music Talk where he described the different aspects of Afghan traditional music which have been transcribed into Western notation for the purposes of 'preservation' (Polar Music Prize, 2018: 07:34, 09:13).

[276] See Baily (1988) for a discussion on how *sargam* functions as both oral and written notation (56).

> know, like how beautiful the music was. And also, to show that the music will never die and to remind the people not to forget this music. It should be alive, the music, never to forget that music (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

The symbolic power of this "Golden Age" music lies in its ability to represent not only the resistance and revival of Afghan music after nearly four decades of war, but by association, the Afghan people too. Media narratives surrounding ANIM tours, which often reminded readers of the fact that music was completely banned during the first Taliban regime, served to further reinforce the symbolic power of the orchestras' chosen repertoire. This choice of repertoire looked to the past in order to articulate a sense of Afghanistan's future within the present moment.

Afghan Youth Orchestra (AYO) (2013)

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in Bb
Alto Saxophone

Horn in F
Trumpet in Bb

Percussion
Tambourine
Bass Drum
Djembes
Tabla

Piano (4 hands)

Acoustic Guitar
4-string Bass guitar

Sitār
Rubāb
Ghichak

Violin I
Violin II
Violin III
Viola
Violoncello I
Violoncello II

Zohra, Afghan Women's Orchestra (2019)

2 Flutes
Oboe
2 Clarinets in Bb

Trumpet in Bb

Percussion
Snare Drum
Triangle
Bass Drum
Cymbals
Tabla

Piano (4 hands)

Sitār
Dutār
Qashkarcha (Kashgar rubab)
Rubāb

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello

Figure 11. Instrument list for Afghan Youth Orchestra (2013) and Zohra, Afghan Women's Orchestra (2019)

Key features of ANIM's large ensemble performances, such as the choice of repertoire, inclusion of an Afghan rhythm section, use of authentic Afghan and north Indian instruments, and the overall orchestral framework and Western staff notation, bear striking similarities to trends identified by Fakher Hakima (2011) within Tunisian music. Drawing on Ingrid Monson's 'intermusicality', Hakima argues that 'on the one hand, there is a local repertoire representing identity and authenticity, and on the other hand an orchestral arrangement with a vertical musical notation symbolic of "universal music"' (69). In the case of ANIM, the orchestras communicated their unique Afghan identity through playing local music genres but at the same time expressed their desire and ability to speak to the rest of the world in 'universal' musical terms. The negotiation of particularism and universalism can also be seen in the physical set up of the school's orchestras. While the Western instrumental players assumed a recognisable orchestral layout using chairs and music stands, the Afghan and Hindustani traditional instrumentalists would sit cross-legged on carpets on the floor in front of their counterparts with their sheet music either placed on the floor or perched on their knees[277]. This put the latter at a severe disadvantage when it came to following the conductor as they were mostly looking down at their music sheets and not at the conductor.

ANIM's orchestras, and the music they played, highlight the interaction between Born's first, second, and third planes. The distinct Afghan national consciousness and patriotic sentiment communicated by the "Golden Age" repertoire was traversed by statements about locality, as expressed by various social and musical symbols of East and West. Similarly, the microsocialities produced by the Afghan musicians collaborating with local musicians were also mediated and shaped by social identity formations of nationality and locality. In turn, the hybridity of the ensembles and the music brought together Afghanistan and the Western world to form a musically imagined community. This musical union symbolised Afghanistan's desire to engage in cross-cultural dialogue with the international community and to work peacefully with other countries.

[277] However, during Zohra's dress rehearsal at the Gulbenkian Center, Lisbon in September 2018, it was decided by the school's staff that the traditional instruments should join their peers on chairs. The section was subsequently implanted into the main body of the orchestra and this became the standard configuration for Zohra henceforth.

Gender and ethnicity

ANIM's orchestras also functioned as metaphors for the positive social changes which occurred in Afghanistan after 2001. As an institution, ANIM was often recognised by Western actors as 'both a source and a symbol of Afghanistan's progress' (Office of the Spokesperson, 2013; see also Boyle, 2013 and Stancati, 2013). The Zohra Orchestra, for example, was viewed by audiences and collaborators, and presented by the school and its students, as evidence of the significant positive changes in the country's gender equality witnessed over the past two decades. Against a background of Western discourses that perpetuate the negative stereotype of Afghanistan as a patriarchal prison, an all-female orchestra conducted by a female conductor was viewed as a symbol of the strength, courage, autonomy, and determination of Afghan women. As one former student described, 'Zohra was a message from Afghanistan to other countries that we [women] can do music. Our women have power' (Aziza, interview, January 9, 2021). This message resonated globally at the World Economic Forum (WEF) closing concert when the eyes of some of the world's most important and powerful leaders were focussed solely on the orchestra:

> [The WEF] wanted to present a different vision of what leadership is. The World Economic Forum is a place that brings leaders together, you don't necessarily think of young Afghan women as leaders. And I think in that closing concert in Davos, I think the penny dropped for a lot of people […] you realise that there's a whole other world, there's a whole other realm where leadership is correlated with courage and vision' (Jacques, interview, March 29, 2021).

Zohra's performances presented a new narrative to audiences of Afghan women as independent and in positions which empower them. The legibility of these gendered images to foreign audiences was strong on account of the transnational discourses surrounding the [West's] ceaseless efforts to improve women's rights and freedom in the country (see Bergner, 2011; Chishti &

Farhoumand-Sims, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2019). However, as I have argued in Chapter 5, these positions of female leadership and displays of 'empowerment' were largely symbolic and disguised unequal gender power relationships within the institution. Moreover, at the time Zohra were performing overseas, many women in Afghanistan were still experiencing severe restrictions in several aspects of their lives, and those who attempted to assert their freedom in public spaces often received severe backlash, as described in the previous chapter.

For ANIM's leadership, the microsocialities of the school's orchestras signified an inclusive and tolerant Afghan society which ANIM presented to its audiences as a utopian vision of Afghanistan's future. Referring to ANIM's youth orchestra, Sarmast proudly notes that

> [In] this orchestra, we've got Uzbeks, Turkmens, Hazaras, non-Hazaras, Pashtuns, Tajiks. We have orphans, street-working children, girls, boys, and some middle-class students also in this orchestra. So, in other words, we say that this orchestra is a symbol of tomorrow's Afghanistan. An Afghanistan that embraces the diversity and also creates equal opportunity for everyone regardless of their gender, their ethnicity or social circumstances (Braithwaite, 2016: 71).

Given the historical friction between Afghanistan's various ethnic groups, the orchestra's utopic image of diversity and cooperation between different ethnic groups replaces social fragmentation within the community and offers 'an expression of what life could be, or what it could become' (Barenboim quoted in Beckles Willson, 2009). Framed as a 'symbol of tomorrow', the youth orchestra reordered time so that Afghanistan's future as an ethnically unified and peaceful country was experienced in the present performance space, demonstrating music's ability to present models of concrete utopian worlds.

Considering Born's first and third planes of social mediation, the microsocialities of ANIM's orchestras were suffused by the social identity formations of gender and ethnicity,

enabling the school to articulate a positive image of Afghanistan characterised by female empowerment and ethnic unity. This image, however, was imagined in the sense that despite reflecting the values and realities of ANIM and its educational spaces, it never fully represented lived reality in Afghanistan. Rather, it was an imagining of a future Afghanistan, articulated in musical terms.

Using Born's (2012) theory of social mediation as a framework, I have suggested how ANIM's overseas musical performances refracted the wider social identity formations of nationality, locality, ethnicity, and gender to articulate an imagined, and sometimes future-orientated, 'positive image of Afghanistan'. When an audience member saw a live performance of an ANIM ensemble, their view of Afghanistan and its people was significantly less filtered than when seen through the Orientalist lens which refracts a great deal of international media and popular culture. The live musical performance context offered an interaction between groups of people (either between players and audience, or between players from different places) in the same physical space rather than across the vast ideological space which is constructed by Orientalist discourses. This creates what Jocelyne Guilbault (2010) describes as a 'public intimacy' based on the spatial proximity between the performers and the audience. Reflecting on the outcomes of Zohra's tour of Europe in 2017, one of the organisers stated

> I think it was an extraordinary project of peer-to-peer diplomacy. […] We think we're connected because we're on YouTube and Facebook but actually when do people, when are they in a room confronted with these incredible young women playing their hearts out and being able to talk to them? […] we have these ideas about other people but then when do we actually get to meet, and meet in a context where there's such power and beauty coming together? (Jacques, interview, March 29, 2021)

These musical acts, therefore, stress 'the importance of interactive aspects of diplomacy at people-to-people levels' (Lindsay, 1989: 429). In this way, ANIM's performances both expanded the 'accepted grid' through which Afghanistan is filtered to the West, removed much of the Orientalist filter through which the country is usually viewed, and thus let more of Afghanistan and its culture through to Western audiences. However, the new and different image of Afghanistan that the musicians presented was still in large part refracted and mediated by Western discourses, frameworks, and systems of knowledge, as discussed later in this chapter.

Whose Positive Image?

So far, I have suggested ways in which ANIM musicians, with the support of the school's staff and other non-state collaborators, presented a positive image of Afghanistan to Western audiences. However, the image presented during ANIM's live performances should not be analysed in isolation or viewed as a contextless vehicle that only communicates what is seen and heard in that particular moment. Rather, the image should be considered in relation to the pedagogical, social, and political contexts in which it was made and received and how these can potentially mediate and reframe the message being communicated. For example, beyond the immediate live performance context, who was using this image and to what ends? Equally, before it was presented on the global stage, what processes were involved in creating this image? The following sections interrogate the life of the positive image of Afghanistan in the periods before and after its public presentation to elucidate unequal power relations.

Government optics

The positive image of Afghanistan and the liberal progress that it represented served economic and political purposes for various Afghan and non-Afghan *state* actors. US reporting on ANIM's 2013 tour to the east coast of the United States highlighted the way in which the school's director

and ANIM's collaborators in the US State Department explicitly viewed and framed the tour as an opportunity 'to showcase what a decade of [US] investment has achieved' (Boyle, 2013) and ultimately strengthen US public support for the military intervention in the country:

> One of the major ideas behind the tour of the United States is to show the taxpayers who have been supporting the army in Afghanistan — people who supported the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan, people who have been eager to help the Afghan people stand on their own feet — to show the investment … is not gone (Ahmad Sarmast quoted in Druzin, 2013).

> We wanted Americans to understand the difference their tax dollars have made in building a better future for young people, which translates into reduced threats from extremists in the region (Eileen O'Connor, US State Department, quoted in Boyle, 2013).

Simultaneously, the Afghan Government used ANIM's concerts as an occasion to thank the US for their investment and to pledge its commitment to their bilateral relationship. During his pre-concert speech at the school's performance at the Kennedy Center, Ambassador Hakimi listed at length the educational achievements—of which ANIM was a shining example—in Afghanistan since 2001 before adding

> we couldn't have achieved all these success [*sic*] without the support we receive from the United States of America. We are grateful for that. Looking ahead, our vision is to be a reliable partner to the United States in that part of the region. Like Japan, South Korea, Turkey, and Germany, Afghanistan will be a partner with the United States to overcome all the challenges that we cherish[278] together (Gharanai, 2013: 09:48).

[278] Transcribed verbatim from concert video. The word 'cherish' may have been a mistake.

The timing of ANIM's tour to the United States could not have been more significant; at the end of the following year (2014), the United Nations-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan—of which the United States was a major component—was to officially end, at which point the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) would take over full responsibility for the security of the country and the number of international troops stationed there would be drastically decreased. While the Afghan National Youth Orchestra impressed audiences at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, ongoing negotiations over the Unites States' post-2014 role in Afghanistan were taking place. Thus, there was an urgent need for the United States and Afghanistan to demonstrate both to the public and to policy makers what kind of non-militaristic benefit the United States' presence in the country was having on the people of Afghanistan and what was at risk of being lost should the intervention end prematurely.

Likewise, a narrative about the UK government's commitment to girls' global education was built around the Zohra Orchestra's performances in London in 2019. For the tour's primary organiser, the original impetus for bringing the orchestra to the UK was 'professional development' and an 'educational experience' (Claire, interview, March 20, 2022). The Zohra Orchestra were primarily in residence at Somerville College, University of Oxford, and collaborated with professional musicians from the Orchestra of St. John's and students from the University of Oxford who mentored the Afghan girls musically during the week. However, as more fundraising was done and more stakeholders became involved, 'the tour ended up being quite politicised' (Claire, interview, March 20, 2022). The UK government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)[279] recognised that the tour embodied their priorities for girls' global education and offered to financially support the tour with a grant of £9,600 through the Global Britain Enabling Fund and secure the group's visas. As the following quote from one of the minister's involved suggests, the tour offered the FCO political capital:

[279] In September 2020 the FCO was renamed the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

> The young women in the Afghan Women's Orchestra […] have demonstrated sincere bravery as they work towards an enriching education whilst living amidst a war-torn and challenging environment. Promoting girls' education and reducing the impact of conflict on women and girls are key priorities for the FCO in Afghanistan and throughout the international community. The achievements of the Afghan Women's Orchestra embody the values at the core of these priorities (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon in Zohra Orchestra, 2019: 10).

As a condition of their support for the tour, the FCO hosted a Zohra concert at Lancaster House—a central London property managed by the FCO—which was attended by 'VIPs and VVIPs' through invitation only. Reflecting on the event, the tour organiser felt it 'was clearly [for the FCO] to showcase what the UK has been doing in Afghanistan with its aid. You know, how [the FCO have] been able to make a difference and look at this amazing thing these girls have been able to do' (Claire, interview, March 20, 2020). Thus, their involvement in and support for the tour offered the FCO an opportunity to publicly action its commitment to girls' education which, in turn, served as an apposite prelude to the department's announcement a year later of their five-year global action plan for girls' education (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2021).

The 'taxpayers' and 'girls' education' narratives are examples of ANIM offering 'donor governments strong optics by providing an appealing and emotional visual representation of change in Afghanistan, and a musical metaphor and embodiment of the desired future' (Howell, 2017: 272). Yet the unabashed politicisation of Afghan music education inherent in the state actors' framing of the events ultimately hijacks and operationalises the educational success of young Afghan musicians as a symbol of wider geopolitical objectives, which is then used to justify continued intervention. At this point, an important question should be asked: to what extent is it

the responsibility of young Afghan children to help justify the USD$955bn[280] spent by the United States on the war in Afghanistan since 2001? This query becomes all the more pertinent when one considers that the US State Department (through the US Embassy, Kabul) has been one of ANIM's primary donors since 2010. Echoing the centuries-old phrase 'sing for your supper', Afghan students were, to some extent, put in a position where they needed to 'play for their education' (or at least the money used to fund it). Such a sentiment was expressed by an ANIM teacher, quoted in Howell (2017), who felt that 'so many obligations [rested] on the shoulders of these little kids' (273). In sum, the above narratives show how the 'positive image of Afghanistan—as an assemblage of multiple social identity formations and microsocialities—was mediated by institutional processes. The co-opting of the students' self-representation by state actors for geopolitical agendas raises broader questions about East-West power relations which will be explored in the following section.

Re-Orientalism and the 'positive image of Afghanistan'

While the 'positive image of Afghanistan' suggests that ANIM's musicians had seized the power of representation and the ability to challenge Orientalist narratives, the musical material they presented was still in large part refracted and mediated by Western discourses, frameworks, and systems of knowledge. Where Orientalism concerns the way in which the West references its own superiority by essentialising the East, re-Orientalism—also described elsewhere as 'self-Orientalism' (Iwabuchi, 1994; Ko, 2019; Kobayashi, Jackson & Sam, 2019; Schäfer, 2009)—explores Eastern self-representation based on Western points of reference. There is an inherent tension within re-Orientalism in that 'while challenging the metanarratives of Orientalism, re-Orientalism sets up alternative metanarratives of its own in order to articulate eastern identities,

[280] The total military expenditure (US Department of Defense) from October 2001 to September 2019 was USD$825bn in addition to the USD$130bn spent on reconstruction projects (US Department of State) (BBC News, 2021d).

simultaneously deconstructing and reinforcing Orientalism' (Mendes & Lau quoted in Lau, 2014: 3).

Lisa Lau (2014) outlines two angles in re-Orientalism theory which are worth exploring in ANIM's case. First, 'the *process* of representation, although now self-representation by the East of the East, continues to be filtered through Western lenses (in very similar style to Orientalism) and to reference the West as "Centre" in framing the representations and anticipating the audiences' (5)[281]. Indeed, the *process* of creating the music through which ANIM's students presented the 'positive image of Afghanistan' and the frameworks in and through which it was articulated, brings to light certain opacities in terms of how Afghan musicians' narratives are musically constructed and mediated. The self-representation of ANIM students is first problematised by the fact that all the Afghan and Afghan-Western hybridised music presented by the school's large ensembles[282] during overseas tours was filtered through the creative lens of the (mostly white) Western faculty (including myself) who selected and arranged the students' repertory. Foreign faculty members transcribed and arranged Afghan folk and popular songs for orchestra, translating their traditional modes, textures, and ornamentation into the language of Western classical music. During the two years I was Artistic Director of the Zohra Orchestra, I aurally transcribed and orchestrated several Afghan folk and popular songs—in addition to songs from Iran, India, and Pakistan—and the resulting musical products were, to a large extent, influenced by my Oxbridge musical training. Broadly speaking, then, the musical representation and image of Afghanistan which ANIM

[281] Applications of self-Orientalism theory tend to look primarily at the substance of self-Orientalism, such as the recoding and reappropriation of stereotypes and Orientalist images (c.f. Hosokawa, 1999a; Ko, 2019; Mitchell, 2004), rather than interrogating the underlying processes and divisions of labour which inform and produce self-Orientalism.

[282] Here I am referring to ANIM's hybrid orchestras, including the Youth Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra, and Zohra Orchestra. It is worth noting that over the past decade, some of ANIM's male students, such as Arson Fahim, Qudrat Wasefi, and Qambar Nawshad, developed sufficient skills in orchestration to be able to arrange popular folk songs and Western classical pieces themselves. However, these arrangements were mostly performed at concerts in Kabul or were recorded for patriotic videos primarily directed at domestic audiences. In this sense, they served as tools for internal cultural diplomacy which sought to unite Afghanistan's ethnically and tribally fragmented population through the promotion of liberal ideologies (see Chapter 4). Conversely, the orchestral music which was presented overseas was arranged by the foreign [Western] faculty, evidencing a prioritisation of Western arrangements over Afghan arrangements.

students offered their Western audiences was largely interpreted for, or even given to, them by the West, for the former to then perform back to the latter[283]. This creative model reflects Ashis Nandy's (1998) observation that

> […] there is a major, powerful, ongoing, official dialogue of cultures in the world. […] In this dialogue, the key player is naturally the modern West, but it also has a series of translators in the form of persons and institutions whose main job is to either interpret the modern West for the benefit of other cultures or *interpret other cultures for the benefit of the modern West*, both under the auspices of the West (emphasis added, 129).

The foreign faculty at ANIM formed a group of Nandy's 'translators' who were simultaneously translating Western musical forms for their Afghan students whilst also interpreting Afghan musical cultures for Western audiences. However, this was not always viewed as problematic. Referring to the fact that ANIM's foreign faculty were primarily responsible for arranging Afghan songs for the orchestra, one teacher who was 'born and grew up in the West' believed that

> what we do in Zohra Orchestra is cultural appropriation, but it's still doing overall good. […] cultural appropriation is problematic in certain cases, where that cultural appropriation ends up reinforcing stereotypes and reinforcing a more simplistic view of that particular culture. In the case of Afghanistan, where I don't think anyone or very few people in America have any idea of what Afghan culture even is, and so any degree, no matter how watered-down of Afghan culture that you can get people to listen to, that you can get white people to listen to […] is going to expand their knowledge of Afghan culture (Robert, interview, May 20, 2020).

[283] It should be noted here that this analysis refers to ANIM's orchestral performances and not performances by traditional ensembles, the latter of which are directed by Afghan or Indian staff members.

Despite the power imbalances inherent in this creative arrangement, Robert felt that the translation of Afghan music into Western musical forms was still beneficial for challenging stereotypes and simplistic representations of Afghan culture and expanding the West's knowledge of the country.

One example of the representation of Afghan culture by a foreign faculty member is William Harvey's[284] composition *The Four Seasons of Afghanistan* (2010)[285], which recasts Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* 'in a thoroughly Afghan context' (see Appendix D for programme notes). In a blog post written shortly after composing the piece, Harvey explained that 'I call it a re-imagining rather than an arrangement because I added numerous Afghan tunes, changed keys, wrote new sections and entire movements, and even changed the meters' (Harvey, 2010). Harvey's choice of the word 're-imagining' suggests an idealised and hyperreal portrayal of Afghanistan which has been constructed in the composer's conscious imagination. The piece infuses Vivaldi's original composition with direct quotations from various Afghan folk melodies—such as *Pesta Frosh* in 'Spring: #3: Pistachios' (Figure 12) and *Anar Anar* in 'Autumn: #1, Pomegranate Harvest' (Figure 13)—and highlights the *rubāb*, *sarod*, *sitār*, *ghichak*, and *tabla* as soloists rather than a violin solo. The multi-concerto structure is, however, retained; each programmatic movement introduces and portrays a different aspect of Afghanistan's culture, history, or landscape—such as the country's cultural festivals and sports, food and agriculture, weather, and war—and manages 'to capture with precision one or another feature of [Afghanistan] or, at the very least, give a sense of how [the country] […] feels to a visitor from abroad' (Locke, 1998: 106). Many of Harvey's movements correspond thematically with Vivaldi's movements: an Afghan dust storm replaces the storm in 'Summer', while Vivaldi's hunt in movement three of 'Autumn' is substituted with a game of Buzkashi ('goat dragging'), the Afghan team game in which horse-mounted players compete to

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284 Harvey was one of the first foreign teachers at ANIM and led the establishment of the school's early orchestral programme.

285 The piece was performed at the Institut Français d'Afghanistan (Kabul) in February 2011 and February 2013 and at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall (both United States) on 7 and 12 February, respectively.

seize and retain control of a goat carcass[286]. Within these movements, Harvey chooses to label each section with the Afghan term *naghma*[287] signifying a fixed instrumental piece or section. Therefore, rather than simply offering a performance of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* by a hybrid Afghan orchestra, *The Four Seasons of Afghanistan* completely transforms and disciplines the original work within an Afghan context. Although the composition emphasises Afghan culture and music traditions, the piece is still the work of a Western, classically trained faculty member who evoked and represented Afghanistan within a framework of classical and symphonic music—the West retains the role of exoticiser and the East (Afghanistan) is still exoticised. While these representations may not essentialise Afghanistan negatively, the entire musical narrative is still framed by the subjectivity of the Western composer, resulting in a situation where the East was once again represented by the West.

[286] Until the twentieth century, Buzkashi represented one of few team sports in Afghanistan and was only played by men. More recently, team sports for both men and women, such as cricket, football, and basketball, have flourished.
[287] Baily (1988) describes four categories of *naghmeh*; *bāzi*, *chahārtuk*, *kashāl*, and *klāsik*. See also Sarmast (2007).

Figure 12. Excerpt from Spring: #3 Pistachios, *The Four Seasons of Afghanistan*, Harvey (2010)

revised July 25, 2012

Autumn: #1, Pomegranate Harvest

William Harvey, after Vivaldi

Figure 13. Excerpt from Autumn: # 1, Pomegranate Harvest, *The Four Seasons of Afghanistan*, Harvey (2010)

In the case of Zohra, often hailed as 'the voice to many, many voiceless girls' (Context, 2021: 07:08) in Afghanistan, the orchestra's musical voice was in many ways provided for the ensemble by their Western mentors, reaffirming the idea that Afghan (and Third World women in general) need to be given a voice and that the West is in a position to do so[288]. One Zohra member explained how decisions about the orchestra's repertoire were made almost exclusively by ANIM's director and the foreign faculty, but on occasion, after the music was selected, the orchestra's student conductor would be asked if she liked the song and whether she thought it was a good choice for the ensemble (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021). Students were, to a certain extent, comfortable with not having control over the ensemble's repertoire because 'the [foreign] teacher knows the music and knows what is good, so we prefer like ok, our teacher will choose what we will play, because they know better than us' (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021). This creative framework yields a form of self-Orientalism in which Afghan students unquestionably received and accommodated Western representations of Afghan culture as their own. The idea that ANIM students were 'given' music was expressed in a report by the United States' Office of the Spokesperson ahead of the school's 2013 US tour which stated that 'many of the teachers at the Institute are private American citizens who have chosen to live in Kabul in order to *bring the gift* of music to these young children' (emphasis added, Office of the Spokesperson, 2013).

However, while it may be argued that the music—in its hybridised form—was largely dictated to the orchestra by foreign faculty, the students felt they assumed ownership of the music through the process of rehearsing and the hard work that went into preparing for a tour:

> [We felt that we owned the music] because we practised it and we worked hard on that, so yes, of course, we are feeling that this is *our* music and we learnt it. You remember how the practise was hard, doing sectionals and learning note-by-note, because we were not good at

[288] During an address in November 2001, Cherie Blair declared that 'we' need to help Afghan women to 'give them their voice back' (Ward, 2001).

> that, but we worked hard on that to learn [the music]. Like we practised for a month, we practised for two months to learn that. So yes, it feels like ok, this is my music because I work hard on it and to perform that music. It feels like that, that this is our music we're playing, because we worked hard on that (Aziza, interview, January 7, 2021).

This conceptualisation provides an alternative perspective of musical ownership which is not centred on the composer/arranger or a physical score. Rather, ownership of the music materialises in and through the *process* of rehearsal. This alternative interpretation of musical ownership suggests that while processes of re-Orientalism may have shaped and informed ANIM students' self-representation and positive image of Afghanistan, this process did not impact on the students' perceived ownership of the music.

The second ambiguity surrounding ANIM musicians' self-representation is the authority of Western systems of knowledge and frames of discourse in the context of their overseas musical activities. In Western contexts[289], for example, the orchestral nature of ANIM's ensembles was viewed as culturally valuable and essential to the legibility of the school's music for Western audiences. According to an interlocutor from the World Economic Forum—the hosts of Zohra's first international tour in 2017—the fact that the ensemble sonically and visually resembled a Western orchestra (as opposed to a solely Afghan traditional group) played a crucial role in facilitating cross-cultural understanding between the Afghan musicians and their foreign audiences:

> I think [the orchestra] had a huge impact because it was a way for the Zohra to come halfway to the understanding of the music that this audience is used to. It was an invitation to say, "come and learn from our music". But if it had been framed as like a super-traditional concert,

[289] This may also be the case in non-Western contexts where ANIM's orchestras have performed, such as India and Pakistan. However, on most occasions when ANIM has been invited to perform in non-Western countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, South Korea, and China, small traditional ensembles travelled.

> then you run the risk of people, either you need to be an ethnomusicologist or you have to have some sort of relationship with Afghanistan. At the same time, if it's only like Western classical and kind of classical instrumentation for everything then it feels like ok, this is kind of ok, but when I go to a festival and I see a European orchestra, it sounds better. So it had a way of being true to who these young women are and what they are actually learning in the school. […] So I think that was very important in kind of creating a bridge for audience to be engaged in it (Jacques, interview, March 29, 2021).

Yet from a critical perspective, the orchestra also neatly packages the minority culture of Afghanistan within the majority culture of the European audience, illustrating the desire of Western cultures to have non-Western cultures translated into Western categories to be able to come to terms with them. This practice resonates with Homi Bhabha's (1990) notion of the 'containment of cultural difference':

> […] although there is always an entertainment and encouragement of cultural diversity, there is also a corresponding containment of it. A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that 'these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid' (208).

For Western audiences, their own 'grid' is defined by the grammar of Western classical music and the sonority of the Western orchestra, within which cultural difference can be experienced and understood. While presenting Afghan music within the physical, harmonic, and sonic framework of Western classical music may help audiences access Afghan music, this framing provokes a distinct form of re-Orientalism in which the music 'speaks as much *to* the West as *for* the East – rather than necessarily focusing on addressing the East' (Lau, 2014: 4). That is, the self-representation of Afghan music is manipulated for the benefit of Western understanding rather than solely for the benefit of Afghan representation.

Adopting the orchestra as the main vehicle for presenting Afghan music also impacted, to some extent, the sonic agency of the Afghan and north Indian instruments within the orchestra. Although Zohra attempted to portray East-West cooperation sonically and visually through the inclusion of Afghan traditional, Hindustani Classical, and Western instruments, Howell (2020) observes that 'the heft of Western sonic scaffolding intimates a broader-socio-political architecture in which Western dominance is retained' (17). Indeed, the voice of the Afghan instruments was often overwhelmed by the sonic power of the Western instruments—which accounted for two-thirds of the orchestra—thus diminishing their sonic presence in the orchestra's collective sound. However, this imbalance was a concern for the faculty who, like me, were tasked with arranging music for the orchestra. At moments when I needed to highlight the Afghan instruments, I would adopt one or more of the following techniques to overcome the sonic imbalance: score the whole traditional in section unison; drastically reduce the number of Western instruments playing at the same time; and/or use other techniques such as pizzicato in the strings (see Figure 14, bb. 21–27 from *Zindegi Akhair Sarayat* and Figure *15*, bb. 2–9 from *L'Epice d'Asie*) which also complement the percussive quality of the plucked instruments. As such, there are many moments in Zohra's repertoire where the Afghan instruments are supported by, and overcome the sonic dominance of, the Western instruments. That being said, the overall, collective soundscape of the ensemble is still distinctively Western.

Figure 14. Excerpt from *Zindegi Akhair Sarayat* (Ahmad Zahir, arr. Braithwaite)

L'Epice d'Asie

Shin-Itchiro Yokoyama
arr. L. Braithwaite

Allegro ♩ = 132

A

Flute I
Flute II
Oboe
Clarinet in B♭ I
Clarinet in B♭ II
Trumpet in B♭
Bass Drum
Cymbals
Triangle
Glockenspiel
Piano
Piano
Sitar
Rubab/Qaskarcha
Dutar

Allegro ♩ = 132

A

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello

pizz.

mp

mf

Figure 15. Excerpt from *L'Epice d'Asie* (Yokoyama, arr. Braithwaite)

There are, therefore, two different but intersecting grids at play in ANIM's presentation of a 'positive image of Afghanistan'. The first is the West's narrow, Orientalist grid and the second is the West's musical grid. Arguably, both function as ways of understanding and containing other cultures and are equally rooted in colonial practices and East-West power relationships. However, what the lens of re-Orientalism elucidates is that in trying to challenge and decolonise the West's Orientalist grid, Afghan musicians necessarily situated themselves within and complied with the West's musical grid.

The second aspect of re-Orientalism outlined by Lau (2014) concerns the fact that 'representation is still largely in the hands of a very few, a select elite, mostly an English-speaking and Western-educated group of Orientals' (4). This group may be referred to as the 'comprador[290] intelligentsia' (Appiah, 1991) or 'comprador intellectuals' (Constantino, 2000; Dabashi, 2011), and constitutes 'a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery' (Appiah, 1991: 348). As I have described above, ANIM's musical offerings were very much controlled by a handful of Western-educated and classically trained English-speaking foreigners. In turn, these artistic outputs were entirely mediated and policed by the school's director, Ahmad Sarmast, who constitutes one of Afghanistan's post-2001 comprador intellectuals. A dual national of Afghanistan and Australia, Sarmast studied his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Russia before receiving his doctorate from Monash University, Australia, becoming the first Afghan to receive a PhD in music[291]. Having left Afghanistan during the communist takeover in the 1980s and returning in the mid-2000s to write a report on the status of music after the fall of the Taliban (Sarmast, 2006), Sarmast forms part of the international community, aided by exilic intellectuals, who were tasked with rebuilding the country's educational and cultural institutions. Within ANIM, Sarmast sits at

[290] The term 'comprador' first originated in economic spheres, describing the group of native merchants in imperial China who distributed foreign goods from western ships and brought local products to these vessels (Constantino, 2000: 424).

[291] Ahmad Sarmast is commonly referred to by most (including students) as 'Doctor Sarmast', affirming his academic achievements and his elite position in Afghan society.

the centre of what Howell (2020) describes as the school's 'concentric circle of power' as the primary decision-maker in the ANIM hierarchy.

As the founder and director of what was often portrayed as the only specialist music school in Afghanistan[292], Sarmast was, and continues to be, one of the primary contemporary cultural gatekeepers for Afghan music and its representation in the West. In his omnipotent leadership position at ANIM, Sarmast ultimately regulated and prescribed what was taught to the next generation of young Afghan musicians at the school. Moreover, on account of ANIM's augmented public and media presence in comparison to other music education institutions in Afghanistan, Sarmast was well positioned to influence not only which aspects of Western music were introduced to Afghan society, but also which forms of Afghan music were presented to audiences overseas, enabling him to engage 'in a dialectical traffic between the center and the periphery' (Dabashi, 2011: 41). Sarmast indicated a certain degree of power, and to some extent ownership, over music in Afghanistan when at Monash University's 2019 Graduation Ceremony he addressed the audience with 'today I'm standing here in front of you as Dr. Sarmast, the man who is widely acknowledged nationally and internationally as the man who brought music back to Afghanistan' (Monash University, 2019: 04:32). This narrative has been reproduced elsewhere, both in the media and in scholarship: 'He was the saviour of Afghan music' (Rasmussen, 2015) and '[he] waited for an opportunity to bring music back to his homeland' (Tunstall & Booth, 2016: 267). Such a discourse not only overlooks the important work carried out by other musicians, ethnomusicologists, and cultural and education initiatives to revive Afghan music in the years preceding and succeeding ANIM's establishment, but also diminishes the agency of the Afghan musicians who continued their musical activities in secret under the Taliban regime and the Afghan musicians who 'brought music back' from exile in Pakistan, Iran, and other countries.

[292] In Chapter 3, I argued against this designation and demonstrated that several institutions in Afghanistan served to teach music in various forms.

In this section I have problematised the 'positive image of Afghanistan' by scrutinising how it was created, and subsequently used by, state actors to raise issues of unequal power relations. Returning to Born's fourth plane of social mediation—that music is entangled in the institutional forms that enable its production, reproduction, and transformation' (Born, 2012: 266–267)—I argue that ANIM, by virtue of its heavy reliance on foreign educators, frameworks, and models, 'proffers a set of social-institutional conditions that afford certain kinds of musical practice' (Born, 2012: 262). The representation of Afghan music was, and continues to be, mediated in large part 'through Western lenses, within Western frames of discourse, and via Western knowledge systems' (Lau, 2014: 5). In presenting Afghan music to the West using the language and frameworks of Western orchestral music, ANIM practised a form of re-Orientalism in which the centrality of the West and the 'Otherness' of the East was maintained. Hakima (2011) argues that the universal presentation of non-Western identities through orchestrations is 'based on a pre-judgment of the superiority of Western classical music and on its complex aspects of harmony and counterpoint' (69). Moreover, substantially delegating to Western faculty the creative work to produce ANIM's music yields further tensions and ambiguous outcomes. On the one hand, this process enabled the orchestra to present Afghan music in a form which resonated with Western audiences, and which therefore increased the legibility of the musicians' positive narrative about Afghanistan. On the other hand, proclamations of self-representation and countering Orientalist narratives are complicated on account of the fact that the students' musical representation was significantly interpreted by Western eyes. Ultimately, these processes ensure that the apparent greater self-representation of Afghan musicians continued to be Western directed and controlled, thus maintaining the West's 'advantageous position as "Centre"' (Lau, 2014: 5).

Music Education and US Public Diplomacy

This chapter has so far explored the actor-led musical diplomacy of ANIM students who were operationalised as, and assumed the role of, cultural ambassadors to promote a positive image of Afghanistan globally. I would now like to explore another agenda of cultural diplomacy which was briefly touched upon earlier in relation to the 'taxpayer' and 'girls' education' narratives surrounding ANIM's overseas tours; that is, the way in which outside states utilise cultural diplomacy in order to fulfil their own national agenda and to achieve specific overseas politico-military outcomes. The mobilisation of musical works and practices in diplomatic activities is intimately linked to the issues of the pursuit and exercise of power (Velasco-Pufleau, 2019), and although cultural diplomacy is founded on the exchange of ideas, information, art, culture, and language between two (or more) nations to foster inter-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding, on occasion such interactions are co-opted to serve wider geopolitical agendas. For the United States government, cultural diplomacy is viewed as the 'linchpin of public diplomacy' and has become a crucial tool in the country's bid to enhance national security, improve its international standing, and reverse the erosion of trust and credibility induced by the war on terror (US Department of State, 2005). In a short statement released in April 2021 which celebrated the impact of US cultural diplomacy, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken noted that

> America's arts and culture are a major source of our national strength. Our musicians, filmmakers, artists, writers, and athletes captivate the world. Their work can get people to see each other's humanity, build a sense of common purpose, change the minds of those who misunderstand us, and tell the American story in a way that no policy or speech ever could (US Department of State, 2021).

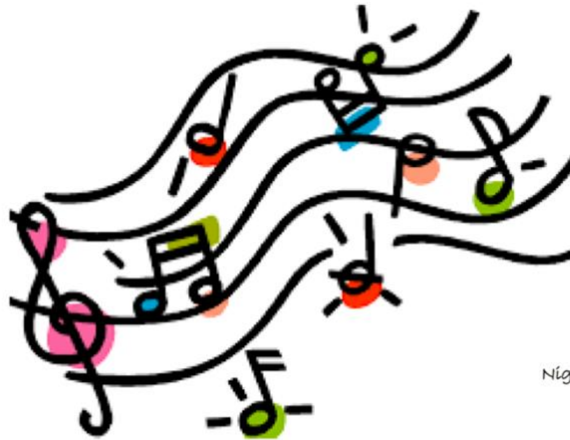
In Afghanistan, US Army Music was operationalised to assist with enhancing host nation relations and communicating national values and beliefs as part of what is known as 'defense support to

public diplomacy' (DSPD) (Harmon, 2009). DSPD encompasses 'those activities and measures taken by the Department of Defense components to support and facilitate public diplomacy efforts of the United States Government' (Harmon, 2009: 7). In Afghanistan and Pakistan, '[US] public diplomacy […] includes long-term efforts at communication and understanding through such instruments as educational exchanges, cultural programs, English teaching[293], and the cultivation of interpersonal relationships' (Smith, 2011: 58). During the past decade, students from both ANIM and the music department at Kabul University were invited on several occasions by the US Department of State (US Embassy, Kabul) to engage in educational workshops and performance collaborations with different US Army bands deployed in Afghanistan. The events ranged from one-day to multi-day workshops which combined workshopping, rehearsals, and group discussions. The musicians stayed on site for the whole day, allowing time for non-musical encounters and exchange over lunch and other free time.

The two bands involved in these programmes were the United States Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) Band, 1st Cavalry (stationed at Bagram Air Base[294]) and the US Air Forces Central Command (AFCENT) Band (based in Qatar). The mission statements for both bands emphasise their diplomacy roles: the AFCENT band is 'tasked with using music to develop trusting relationships with America's emerging partners and motivating coalition forces in the region' (US Air Forces Central Command Public Affairs, 2017) while the USFOR-A Band 'is committed to building strong, lasting relationships with partner nations, their armed forces, and communities' (Dvids, 2017). In November 2016, a group of ANIM students and staff collaborated with the USFOR-A Band to perform a joint concert hosted by the Public Affairs section of the US Embassy in Kabul[295]. The concert included individual performances by ANIM's ensembles and the USFOR-A Band's ensembles, and joint performances of Dizzy Gillespie's *Night in Tunisia* (1942), Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* (1972), Victor Eijkhout's *Bubble Machine* (n.d.), and *Afghan People* (see Figure

[293] It should be noted that the US Embassy, Kabul, also funded ANIM's English Language Program.
[294] Bagram Air Base was a US military base located near the city of Bagram, Parwan province, north of Kabul.
[295] I participated in this concert as a flute player.

16). The following year, ANIM students participated in a similar group workshop and concert event in celebration of Afghan Mother's Day, this time with the AFCENT Band (Bosch, 2017). The two groups of musicians played for each other before collaborating on an arrangement of Aryana Sayeed's song *Mādar-e-Afghan* ('Afghan Mother'). The USFOR-A Band also conducted a three-day workshop with faculty and students from Kabul University Music Faculty in 2017 (Music Department of Kabul University, 2020). The ANIM musicians involved in these collaborations varied depending on the programme and the size of event, but the group usually included both Western and Afghan traditional instruments.



Welcome

Ambassador P. Michael McKinley

Introductions

Public Affairs Counselor Terry Davidson

Afghan National Institute of Music (ANIM)

Dr. Ahmad Sarmast

Mr. Kevin Bishop

USFOR-A Band, 1st. Calvary

Second Lt. Philip D. Tappan

Program

National Anthems:

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

United States of America

ANIM Chamber Ensemble

USFOR-A Brass Quintet

ANIM Traditional Ensemble

USFOR-A Jazz Combo

Joint Selections:

Night in Tunisia

Written by trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie while playing with the Benny Carter Band in 1941-42, it has become a jazz music standard.

Clapping Music

Written by Steve Reich in 1972, it is performed entirely by clapping of the hands. Reich is one of "a handful of living composers who can legitimately claim to have altered the direction of musical history."

Bubble Machine

Victor Eijkhout, a composer and computer scientist living in Austin, Texas makes his music available for free.

Afghan People

A traditional song performed by the Brass quintet plus traditional ensemble instruments.

Dedication:

This concert is dedicated to Samiullah Sarwani, or "Sami" as he asked his friends to call him. Sami was a member of ANIM for many years and traveled with the group on international tours, representing Afghanistan with humility and extraordinary talent. Sami, who was among those tragically killed on August 24, 2016, was a recipient of an U.S. Embassy-funded scholarship and was a freshman at the American University of Afghanistan. His love of music, culture, and the people of this land, combined with his wish to preserve Afghanistan's traditional music into the future for more youth, greatly impressed everyone who knew him.

Today we honor Sami, his dreams, and the dreams of the other young people in ANIM. It is one of the ways we are healing as a community, working with resolve and perseverance towards our goal of a better future for the Afghan people.

The joint performance of the USFOR-A Band, 1st Cavalry soldiers and the ANIM students symbolizes the truth that *"Music is a world within itself. It is a language we all* (young and old, American and Afghans) *understand."* As Sami posted his Facebook page when he started at AUAF, we are *"Looking forward to a beautiful and bright future."*

Produced by The U.S. Embassy in Kabul

"Music is a world within itself.
It is a language we all understand."

A Concert by

The Afghanistan National Institute of Music and the USFOR-A Band, 1st. Cavalry, Bagram Air Base

Hosted by

Cultural Affairs—English Language Programs
Public Affairs Section
United States Embassy

NOX Multi-Purpose Room
Tuesday, November 8, 10:00—11:00a.m.

Figure 16. Concert programme, ANIM and USFOR-A Band, 1st Cavalry Joint Concert, 8 November 2016

Taking place deep within the Green Zone's[296] fortified blast walls and with audiences made up mostly of US Embassy staff and Afghan Government officials, these events were as much political performances as they were intercultural exchanges between musicians. Viewed as the latter, the events fulfilled the Army's mission to foster friendship and cooperation through music in order to build trust, improve understanding and communication, and pave the way for increased cooperation between nations (Department of the Army, 2015). However, for the Embassy staff and Army musicians, the musical performances were also grounded in and shaped by American national interests. According to the US Army Music doctrine, music performances and exchanges are seen as 'a low-threat opportunity to shape opinions and attitudes of local civilian populations' (Department of the Army, 2015: 1-1) and to 'create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of US interests, policies, and objectives' (Department of the Army, 2015: 1-2). Within this framework, music becomes a soft 'power resource' (Nye, 1990) and is used to shape others' ideas and preferences to be aligned with one's [political] agenda. Mario Novelli (2011) argues that, in the post-Cold War/post-9/11 era, international development assistance, and education therein, is increasingly becoming reconceptualised as a tool for fighting the war on terror. However, this political agenda can be problematised on two levels. First, as David Hebert (2015) cautions, 'music should be used wisely on behalf of all that is positive and admirable in [the United States], in ways that are globally appreciated' (82), raising questions about whether, in a society which was becoming increasingly tired of active conflict and foreign occupation, Army music was the best vehicle through which to promote American cultural values and ethics. Second, we should question to what extent these cultural exchanges and collaborations can change the 'hearts and minds' of the civilian populations given the fact that the audiences at these events were primarily US diplomats, embassy staff, and Afghan government officials, or members of the public

[296] Walled-off enclave, also known as the 'foreigner bubble', in the centre of Kabul which was home to a high concentration of foreign embassies and newsrooms.

who were already willing to engage with the US administration by entering the highly fortified embassy in the first place.

The following discussion focusses solely on the collaborative concerts involving ANIM students.

Socialities of cultural diplomacy

As sites of cultural diplomacy, the concerts held at the US Embassy between US Army musicians and ANIM students engendered multiple different and intersecting planes of social mediation (Born, 2012). These planes are reflected in interlocutors' opinions about the perceived purpose of, and reasons for participating in, these collaborations, and in turn articulate both the interpersonal and geopolitical nature of public diplomacy efforts.

Students primarily experienced the concerts as opportunities to engage on a personal level with musicians from other musical and cultural backgrounds, reflecting Born's first plane of social mediation: 'the intimate microsocialities of music performance and practice, the social relations enacted in musical ensembles, and the musical division of labour' (Born, 2012: 266). When asked to reflect on their experience of the US Army collaborations, Afghan students emphasised interpersonal human connection with the US musicians rather than the need to communicate a particular message to audiences (as was the case with ANIM's overseas performances). As one ANIM musician put it, 'we are not kind of robotic, to just have our goal and just go on the stage and play music and that's it. No, whenever we are getting together, we are exchanging thoughts and ideas. […] [We want] to have a good relationship and be communicative with each other' (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021). This social aspect was also echoed by one of the US Army band members who explained how the band was seen 'as a tool to work with people on a more human level. You know, we join [the army] with the hope that we can use music for good' (Paul, interview, September 9, 2020). These comments highlight the people-to-people approach to public

diplomacy and 'a commitment to build a relationship with the targeted public [ANIM musicians] through grassroots encounters' (Payne, 2009: 579).

Afghan and US participants articulated the idea of human sociality and developing social links between the two groups of musicians in several different ways. Students expressed a desire to share ideas and gain new experiences from their collaborators, to build relationships with musicians from other cultures, and to foster a sense of community between the two groups. For them, an important aspect of the events was their cross-cultural dimension and how the musical collaborations afforded ways of getting to know the 'Other':

> For this collaboration concert, I think for me it was wonderful that Afghan culture students, like from a biography of Afghan culture, and then the Western culture, they came together. Like they are from different religions, from different cultures, different thoughts and even different ideas. The come together, they learn music together, and they share the stage together. Always that's a wonderful idea for me whenever people are playing from different culture and different religion (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021).

> If we have more of these kinds of events, where we represent our culture and they represent their culture, it will be a good thing for getting to know each other. Outside of Afghanistan, people think bad things about Afghans but when you go there, [Afghans are] totally different people, it's a different type of culture and they are so kind. For us as well, we think another thing when we see Americans from near, like we saw them in the concerts, and how they behave in music, it's totally different. So it's really good to have more of these events, knowing both cultures, it's really helpful for both sides (Basir, interview, June 2, 2021).

Within these comments, two further planes of social mediation are activated. On one level, the students imagined themselves as one global music collective, an imagined community based on musical identification as described by Born's second plane of social mediation. Yet, at the same

time, the students still discursively distinguished the two groups of musicians by nationality and locality, indicating music's ability to '[refract] wider social identity formations' (Born, 2012: 266). There is, therefore, an interaction between the first, second, and third planes whereby the socialities of performance were simultaneously traversed by an imagined musical community and formations of nationality and race. The music helped to create a spatial proximity by bringing together musicians who rarely got to interact with each other musically or otherwise, thereby enabling them to overcome perceptions of difference through a shared musical experience. The second comment also alludes to the way in which this spatial proximity allowed the two groups of musicians to challenge misconceptions of the 'Other', this time between two groups of musicians rather than between performers and audience, as described earlier in this chapter. From a cultural diplomacy perspective, these narratives highlight the fact that 'nothing works better than the people-to-people approach, that is, two or more individuals sharing a conversation in an effort to further *understand what they share in common*, as well as developing a mutual respect for their respective differences' (emphasis added, Payne, 2009: 580). Rather than a spoken conversation, the musicians found common ground through a musical conversation in which differences were negotiated and overcome to find a shared musicality. One Afghan participant explained how 'I learned that there's not that much difference between the type of music we play and the American people play. Their music, for me, it's quite the same, like I know what they are playing, I can feel their music' (Darius, interview, May 23, 2021), thus suggesting that the experience animated for him an imagined or real community based on a shared 'musical feeling'. This idea was echoed by another Afghan musician who explained how 'it's all about feeling, music has no borders' (Basir, interview, June 2, 2021). For another Afghan performer, this coming together through music was manifest in the type of music created in the event which he described as 'a 'fusion' concert, kind of fusion group. Some instruments were Afghan traditional and some of them were European instruments. So it was kind of fusion, it gave us a fusion feeling' (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021). Jafar's use of the word 'fusion' suggests a coming together of two musical styles/genres to make something new, thereby

highlighting 'music's […] capacity to destabilize and re-orchestrate […] criteria of belonging and affiliation, and therefore new collective solidarities' (Born, 2012: 267).

Another important intimate microsociality discussed by both Afghan and US interlocutors was mutual learning and musical development. For one Afghan student, his reason for participating in the event was 'to play with the professional musicians and learn from them' (Basir, interview, June 2, 2021) while another explained how the learning was reciprocal between the two groups: 'we learned something new from them and they also learned traditional instruments for maybe one hour, they took our instruments and played. […] It was a good experience for all of us that we learned lots of new things from them' (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021). One acoustic guitar student explained to me that he benefitted from learning some skills on the bass guitar from one of the US musicians because the instrument was not taught in Afghanistan at the time (Basir, interview, June 2, 2021). Indeed, one of the primary concerns for the US band's leadership was to facilitate collaborations based on informed musical dialogue and exchange and that ensured equal recognition of both musical cultures. To fulfil this vision, the band's leader organised a multi-day workshop for the US soldiers on Central Asian music prior to their deployment in Afghanistan so that they would have an idea of the similarities and differences between the two musical cultures and how Afghans think about and approach music:

> What I really didn't want to do was make us seem like the cultural overlords, like we don't know anything about your music and all we're gonna talk about is our music. So that's why I […] developed the training course for my soldiers before I left so that we would be at least slightly fluent in the music that [the students are] used to, or their traditional music and their popular music. […] And if my musicians had a slight knowledge of how to communicate to them on their terms, then we might be able to even build upon that and maybe share performances that were more than just like… you know, something that people might actually remember (Paul, interview, September 9, 2020).

This concern for the musical culture of the Afghan musicians also extended to the choice of music for the 2016 ANIM/USFOR-A Band collaboration mentioned above. The inclusion of Steve Riech's *Clapping Music* in the concert was apparently due to its shifting rhythm cycles and its similarity with the rhythmic way of learning music in the region: 'there was something about that that spoke to the rhythm cycles in the Central Asian music culture and showed that we [Army band] were caring about stuff that they [Afghan musicians] would be able to relate to' (Paul, interview, September 9, 2020). The US Army band's approach to educational collaborations challenges the dominant narrative surrounding US cultural diplomacy which emphasises the communication of US values and culture first and foremost, and instead foregrounds cultural understanding and mutual dialogue between the two groups of musicians. The US Army musicians' efforts to understand and engage with Afghan music were acutely felt by the Afghan musicians:

> They want to listen to our music, listen to our feeling, how we feel to play music. And the good thing is that after we played the music, after we finished the event, both groups came together and we had questions about our facilities in the school and what Afghani instruments are like; they had questions about how it is played, how I learn, how long it takes to learn it. So yeah, for them, the Afghani instruments were really interesting (Darius, interview, May 23, 2021).

> The *rubāb* and *tanbūr* was amazing for them, they were asking us to play, 'please play this instrument so we can hear the sound of these instruments, these are completely new sounds for us' (Jafar, interview, April 15, 2021).

> [The US musicians] introduced a new kind of music for us and we also introduced Afghani music to them. And that's good for them also, it's a cultural exchange of course, the exchange of cultures. So it's really for the benefit of both (Basir, interview, June 2, 2021).

These educational moments elucidate an interaction between the first and third planes of social mediation. The learning of national instruments simultaneously engendered intimate microsocialities between the two groups of musicians while also refracting and articulating the wider social identity formations of nationality and locality. The US Army musicians' commitment to emphasising Afghan musical traditions translated into an opportunity for the ANIM students to present their skills and share the music of Afghanistan with non-Afghan musicians. Ultimately, this brought feelings of pride to the Afghan performers: 'For me, when I introduce my instrument, my music, I really feel proud and I feel really comfortable that oh, they like my music, they enjoy my music. That's why I was really happy at that moment' (Darius, interview, May 23, 2021).

Although the events were largely perceived by both the Afghan and US participants as fruitful musical collaborations, the events were still driven by wider political interests and inextricably linked to the US State Department's mission in Afghanistan. In addition to facilitating people-to-people cultural diplomacy, the concerts afforded spaces in which the US State Department could practise and promote public diplomacy on an inter-governmental (rather than interpersonal) level. This manifested itself both practically and symbolically. First, the concerts functioned as networking and relationship-building tools, as illustrated by the following quote:

> So for these concerts […], the State Department invited very high level government delegates to these concerts and it was a reason to pull in people, to develop trust, to… sometimes you just need a reason to have an in-person conversation and so they kind of used us in that sense (John, interview, September 15, 2020).

By bringing together an audience consisting of mostly US Embassy staff and Afghan Government officials, the concerts helped the US Department of State generate vital media coverage (Paul, interview, September 9, 2020). My interlocutor also explained that in environments such as Kabul,

where the movements of diplomatic staff are heavily restricted, these types of concerts offer diplomatic personnel an alternative to 'DFAC diplomacy' or 'dining facility diplomacy'[297] which is usually the only option for engaging with other political players. Similarly, the Zohra Orchestra's closed, VIP-only concert at Lancaster House described earlier was also used as a pretext for public diplomacy by the UK government. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, then Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations, described the concert as 'an opportunity to bring together key contacts from around political and civil society' (emphasis added, Zohra Orchestra, 2019), hinting at an auxiliary agenda behind the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's financial and political support for the tour.

Second, the narrative of US-Afghan relations that these collaborative concerts constructed and presented was highly valuable to the US Department of State's mission in Afghanistan:

> Ultimately, you know, if [the State Department and the Defense Department] can bring in government ministers and show that this is a tangible experience about US and Afghan cooperation… and here we are both sitting on carpets together[298], here are our US military members that normally in the community you never see without their full battle gear on and a weapon, and here they are sitting, unarmed, cooperating together. That's a very powerful picture and a message to send to the government officials saying, you know like let's carry on down this road (John, interview, September 15, 2020).

As previously mentioned, these events were essentially private—held within a highly fortified and militarised embassy—and not put on for the benefit of the wider Afghan public. The message of US-Afghan cooperation, therefore, was directed towards and only heard at a political level.

[297] DFAC is a US Army acronym for 'dining facility'.
[298] In the performance, US musicians sat on chairs (not on carpets) and the Afghan musicians sat on carpets. This recollection suggests a degree of idealisation of the event and the creation of a certain image.

Although not explicitly framed in this way, the Afghan musicians I spoke to recognised the geopolitical significance of the events:

> So the purpose of the first concert [I played] was for US Independence Day, but it was not just that, they can perform their music and they don't need us to play there. But I think their idea and their thought was to show the relationship of Afghan and US people, I think this was the purpose. Because they invited Afghans as well as US [embassy] staff that were there. So, the most important thing [for them], from my point of view, was showing the strong relationship between Afghanistan and US (Jafar, interview, April 4, 2021).

> Maybe we came together there to show that we have good community with each other, both sides, maybe to American people and also to Afghan people, to show that we can have good relationship with each other and to love each other and to find some experiences with each other (Aman, interview, May 25, 2021).

The above comments reflect the first of three approaches to US public diplomacy in Afghanistan as outlined by Jorrit Kamminga (2013); that 'culture is often used to create a narrative for the American interaction with the Afghan people, ultimately aimed at achieving foreign policy objectives'. Clearly, the image of US Army musicians and Afghan musicians together performing arrangements of both Western and Afghan songs was presented and perceived as a sonic and visual symbol of US-Afghan interaction, friendship, and cooperation. The musicians, their musical instruments, and the music they played, all symbolised their respective countries, and their coming together on the same stage became a metaphor for political cooperation. The musical collaboration therefore conjured up and animated an 'imagined community', as described by Born's second plane, an image which could then contribute to the fulfilment of certain foreign policy objectives. From 2001 onwards, 'the primary U.S. objective in Afghanistan [was] minimizing the chance that Afghan territory would again be used for attacks on the U.S. homeland, people, and assets' (Felbab-

Brown, 2021). From the perspective of the US Army bands, music education was believed to have the potential to contribute to counter-insurgency efforts:

> I think where our stance was is that we were fighting insurgency and so how could we use a band to help fight insurgency? […] I mean my bottom line was that […] if you could establish or help establish or give any sort of energy to re-establish a thriving arts community in Afghanistan, that would probably be the single most effective indicator that you have countered terrorism (Paul, interview, September 9, 2020)[299].

This quote alludes to the larger recalibration of the United States' counterinsurgency defence strategy in Afghanistan in 2006—in response to US and NATO failures which enabled the Taliban to regain strength—which united 'development, diplomatic, and defence' and prioritised gaining the support of the people through stabilisation programmes. Recognising that success in conflicts could not be determined by military might alone, the US military employed 'hearts and minds' strategies to gain the population's support and to provide viable economic and social alternatives to insurgency, 'thus persuading the civilian population—upon which insurgents depend—to support the government and reject insurgency' (Burde, 2014: 89–90). Therefore, a 'thriving arts community in Afghanistan' not only provides members of the civilian population with an alternative to insurgency (work, education, and training opportunities), it is also an indicator of a society in which terrorism is not a threat to the cultural fabric of the country.

While these collaborative concerts were viewed and experienced by the participating musicians as acts of people-to-people musical diplomacy, they were also used by the US Department of State both as displays of, and as pretexts for practising, public diplomacy at broader political levels. For the US Embassy, the concerts not only functioned as spaces to 'bring people

[299] Ahmad Sarmast ascribes to a similar belief that 'it's arts, culture, and education which can serve as a strong alternative to the ideology of extremism, to the ideology of the Taliban' (Talks at Google, 2022: 12:46).

in' and carry out high-level public diplomacy and relationship-building exercises, but they also offered the US Department of State a spectacle of US-Afghan relations which could be promoted in the media[300] and ultimately contribute to achieving foreign policy objectives. These observations exemplify Born's fourth plane of social mediation, where 'music is entangled in the institutional forms[301] that enable its production, reproduction, and transformation' (Born, 2012: 266). In the current context, these institutional forms were: first, the network of national and international state actors and geopolitical powers which were involved in Afghanistan's reconstruction (such as the US Government); and second, ANIM and the national and international institutions with which it was affiliated, such as the Deputy Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and Teaching and the World Bank, respectively, which sustained institutional music education in the country. The authority of the former in enabling these events to take place was highlighted to me by one of the US Army musicians who explained 'you have to know where you nest within the people that control the resources and all that kind of stuff. And I knew what we had to offer could be used by the State Department and the Defence Department' (Paul, interview, September 9, 2020).

Conclusion

The two distinct agendas of musical diplomacy described in this chapter indicate that in the context of Afghanistan's reconstruction, ANIM's ensembles and students were regarded as cultural diplomatic tools by different state and non-state actors that could be used to achieve distinct social and political objectives. In response to concerns about national image, bilateral relations, and foreign policy, music education was manipulated and framed by stakeholders to present specific

[300] Immediately after the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021, the US Embassy removed all online images, videos, and posts about ANIM and other musicians they had worked with over the years in order to protect their identity and to avoid any potential retaliation by the Taliban. As such, records of these events are no longer accessible to the public.

[301] In her original theory, Born (2012) includes among these institutional forms 'nonmarket or market exchange, elite or religious patronage, public or subsidized cultural organizations, or late capitalism's multipolar cultural economy' (266).

images of Afghanistan and its people. These different, and often opposing, agendas were manifested through the idealisation of the musical relationships performed on stage. For example, while ANIM students wanted to present a positive and peaceful image of Afghanistan, this same narrative was co-opted by foreign governments to justify their ongoing intervention in the country. Similarly, the positive experience of Afghan and US musicians collaborating and engaging in cross-cultural dialogue through music was also a politically valuable tool for the US government's mission in Afghanistan. Aside from bringing people together across cultural and political difference, music education was seen as a vehicle for making real, in the present moment, idealised projections about Afghanistan's social and political future.

As these differing agendas suggest, ANIM's musical diplomacy efforts were always situated at 'the nexus of power politics and culture' (Gienow-Hecht, 2012: 19). This was seen in the co-optation of musical performances by international state actors to increase their political influence, power, and reputation in Afghanistan and at home, and in the East-West power imbalances which prompted the presentation of a positive image of Afghanistan. Even behind the hybrid orchestras' polished arrangements of Afghan folk and popular songs and the students' brightly coloured Afghan concert dress, paradigms of power persisted in the creative processes which privileged Western models and voices. Regardless of their original intention, ANIM's musical diplomacy activities were inflected by the broader context of Afghanistan's foreign intervention and its social relations and modalities of power.

In interrogating some of the more uncomfortable aspects of ANIM's musical diplomacy, it is important not to diminish the benefits they offered students, such as engaging in cross-cultural dialogue, developing skills, and building mutual understanding across borders. However, when musical diplomacy practices are analysed and understood critically within their social, political, and ideological contexts, certain unequal power relations and neo-imperialist agendas are brought into sharp relief. In the context of post-2001 reconstruction in Afghanistan, the interplay between educational programmes and broader political agendas underscores the importance of reflecting

upon ethical pedagogical practices, especially when there are financial, political, and military implications.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

"There's no prospective for music and music education in Afghanistan"[302]

Introduction

This thesis has captured a crucial and unique episode in Afghan history during which institutional music education was used to engender social, cultural, and political changes aligned with the liberal peacebuilding agenda. However, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, and the immediate silencing of music, represents a stark change in reality that undoubtedly has implications for both the material discussed in this thesis and the future prospects of institutional music education in Afghanistan. This conclusion, therefore, addresses two distinct but related time periods: first, the liberal peacebuilding era discussed in the main body of this thesis; and second, the new era of 'Taliban 2.0' (Ahmadzai & Ghosn, 2022). Returning to the central aim of this thesis, I first consider institutional music education's various roles and place during Afghanistan's recent reconstruction. Following this, I explore the critical findings of this study, focussing on ANIM's public image and unequal power relations within and beyond the institution. Finally, I reflect on the immediate impact of the Taliban's return on institutional music education and the implications of this historical event on the findings of this thesis and the future of music education in Afghanistan.

The Role of Institutional Music Education in Afghanistan

The findings of this research suggest that during the inter-Taliban period, institutional music education in Afghanistan played two distinct but interrelated roles within Afghan society. These

[302] Ahmad Sarmast speaking in Wilson (2021).

functions, in turn, were associated with different aspects of the liberal peacebuilding agenda. First, music education contributed to and implemented some of the concrete political, social, and economic aims of the reconstruction, such as poverty alleviation, promotion of education, establishing democracy, gender equality, ethnic unity, and instilling liberal values. These areas encapsulated the representational hopes of the international community and segments of the Afghan population. Second, music education articulated and embodied the liminality and future-oriented perspective of the peacebuilding period and, in many cases, afforded a projection into an imagined utopian future. This utopian image of Afghanistan—which was manifest in ANIM's outputs and public-facing activities—presented many of the representational hopes described above as lived reality in the present moment.

Reconstruction

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, existing literature emphasises institutional music education's role in reviving the country's musical heritage and offering healing to war-afflicted Afghans following decades of conflict. The present research suggests further ways in which ANIM and its external stakeholders used music to contribute to non-musical issues, specifically agendas that related to the foreign-backed liberal peacebuilding agenda. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 relate to three distinct roles that music education played during the country's recent reconstruction. First, I have argued that ANIM was both an apparatus of and a mouthpiece for the foreign-backed government—and by extension the liberal peacebuilding agenda—and attempted to instil liberal values such as individualism, democracy, and freedom within Afghan society through an engagement with music. This observation resonates with James Williams' (1997) argument that 'the modern school is a mechanism of the state' and that 'whatever the political system—liberal democracy or people's state—education plays a leading role in its promotion' (124). While ANIM's hyper-liberal environment offered a space in which the liberal individual could develop, the school used music videos to espouse freedom as a political ideal. Second, music offered a platform for

ANIM actors to promote women's agency and freedom in Afghanistan and for its female members to become role models for other young Afghan girls. Aligning themselves with the liberal accent of Afghanistan's contested multiaccentual public sphere, ANIM's musicians presented an image of the female public performer which privileged the liberal model of female agency and emancipation. Music, therefore, was used as a vehicle for increasing women's visibility and participation within both Afghan culture and public spaces. These first two functions share a similarity in that they were both allied with and promoted a universalising vision for Afghanistan and Afghan women which failed to consider the heterogeneity of lived experiences among the population. Likewise, promoting individualism and public-facing female performers was, under some circumstances, in conflict with other social and cultural norms embedded within Afghan society. Third, various state and non-state stakeholders used music education as a vehicle to engage in cultural diplomacy and present optimistic images of Afghanistan and its bi-lateral relations with other states. While ANIM often used musical collaborations as a way of engaging in cross-cultural dialogue and developing mutual understanding, the school also wanted to use music performance to present a 'positive image of Afghanistan' to counter orientalist narratives about the country. At the same time, this image was sometimes co-opted by foreign governments to demonstrate political achievements in the country's reconstruction. As the case study of the ANIM-US Army collaborative concerts demonstrates, music education also functioned as a site for various forms of public diplomacy.

As these roles suggest, ANIM contributed its musical voice to help shape and influence Afghanistan's social and political landscape and to address certain issues within Afghan society which the school felt the need to prioritise. While ANIM's public-facing activities and outputs may not have always been explicitly political, they were always aligned with the liberal accent of the country's public sphere and sought to promote the values that the West wanted to foster. However, towards the end of the inter-Taliban period, the school's alliance with the Afghan Government became unequivocally clear. As civil unrest began to take hold and the Taliban slowly

made territorial gains across the country, ANIM pushed itself once again into the public limelight by releasing two patriotic songs entitled *Ay Sarbaza Yara* ('Beloved Soldier') (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2021b) and *Pa Meen De Watan* ('For the Love of Country') (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2021c). According to the school's official statement, 'through these songs, we boldly stand with the Afghan people, the progressive forces, and brave men and women of the Afghanistan security forces who are standing to preserve the rights and gains of Afghanistan during the past twenty years' (Afghanistan National Institute of Music, 2021e), explicitly aligning the institution with the pro-government forces and by association, US-NATO forces. However, one faculty member who performed on the videos expressed a certain level of discomfort in releasing such politically charged material at a time when the Taliban were in the early stages of reclaiming control of the country: 'This is not the time to be making videos supporting the army and the government. The Taliban don't like these kinds of actions' (Sultan, personal communication, July 5, 2021)[303]. After the announcement in April 2021 of the imminent withdrawal of US troops (and by proxy, all other foreign troops) from Afghanistan, the Taliban rapidly expanded its power, and by the time ANIM's patriotic songs were released in July 2021, the group controlled approximately 54 percent of the country (Maizland, 2021)[304]. In the same month, at least 335 Afghan security forces and 189 civilians were believed to have been killed (Faizi & Timory, 2021). Against this politico-military backdrop, the 'enemy' and 'enemies' mentioned in *Ay Sarbaza Yara* ('an ode to the Afghan National Security Forces') should be read as a direct reference to the Taliban:

> 'Dear selfless soldier/Ascend to the duty of protecting motherland'
>
> 'Praise be upon your bravery don't let go of enemy/Strike them (enemy) with severe blows, aim straight at the target'

[303] Such concerns were founded on the knowledge that the Taliban were known to take reprisals against individuals and institutions who support the government.

[304] The day the songs were posted on YouTube, 12 July, 2021, Taliban fighters surrounded the city of Ghazni (Reuters, 2021).

> 'Riddance our pure land from every trace of enemies/Pierce through their sight with a mere glance'[305]

Later, when the Taliban eventually did take power and the videos were littered across social media, another ANIM musician admitted that he wished he'd never agreed to record the videos. Although music education was already vulnerable under the Taliban's regime—on account of what happened during the late 1990s—ANIM's explicit patriotic support for pro-government forces during the Taliban's offensive clearly made members of the institution feel uncomfortable. The teaching and promotion of patriotism (and nationalism) within music education is already a contested topic (Hebert, 2012, 2015; Hebert & Kertz-Welzel, 2012; Jorgensen, 2007; Kallio & Partti, 2013; Keller, 2012), but when this takes place within the context of an active and rapidly escalating conflict, questions about the 'misuse of music education for ideological purposes' (Hebert & Kertz-Welzel, 2012: 1) are raised. While expressions of 'constructive patriotism' (Kallio & Partti, 2013) may be able to engender group cohesion and shape national identity, in a politically volatile environment such as Afghanistan, they also have the potential to exacerbate existing tensions. Producing provocative musical outputs—such as those described above—as part of ANIM's programme points not only to a misuse of music education but also to the exploitation of the students' faith that the school has their best interests and safety as a priority.

The idealised tomorrow

Shaped by the liminal temporality of the liberal peacebuilding era, ANIM's musical activities also offered a site for imagining and projecting into the future. ANIM's educational programme constituted a utopian impulse which responded to Afghanistan's historical and contemporary social and political problems by offering an alternative visionary future characterised by new cultural, ideological, and political processes. Among other things, ANIM's utopian impulse

[305] English translation taken from original YouTube video.

critiqued the country's gender relations, poverty, ethnic divisions, conservative attitudes, extremism, and Orientalist narratives from the West. The present research identified two configurations of futurity within ANIM's educational programme. First, institutional music education was used as a vehicle to project images of a not yet realised alternative imagining of Afghan society. That is, ANIM constituted a 'utopian project' which offered an engagement with the principles and workings of a radically different society (Sites, 2012). In many ways, the school embodied several of the principles the West wanted to see develop in Afghanistan, such as freedom of speech and expression, gender parity, democratic practices, ethnic cooperation, and was therefore seen as a model for what Afghanistan could potentially become[306]. Through its musical activities, ANIM attempted to render the workings of this alternative future in enough detail so as to make this vision persuasive enough to inspire action among Afghans in pursuit of its realisation. This process was most compelling in the Independence Day songs (Chapters 4 and 5) which encouraged Afghans to embrace and unite around a form of liberal nationalism. However, while these 'alternative imaginings' were arguably experienced, to some extent, within ANIM's hyper-liberal bubble, they were not yet reality in Afghan society as a whole. Second, consistent with previous research on music and utopias (Anderson, 2002; Beckles Willson, 2009; Den Tandt, 2012; Levitas, 2010; Saffle & Yang, 2010; Sites, 2012; Sprengel, 2018) and education and futurity (Dryden-Petersen, 2011; Holland & Yousofi, 2014; Howell, 2021), this study suggests that on an individual level, institutional music education was used as a tool to inspire and encourage future-oriented thinking among students, Afghan citizens, and international audiences. ANIM's students and family members were encouraged to invest in the future individual (Chapter 4); the liberal value of freedom was presented as a framework for future Afghan unity (Chapter 4); and female musicians positioned themselves as role models to encourage other girls to shape their own futures (Chapter 5). Finally, audience members were invited to experience Afghanistan's future in the

[306] Similarly, Olson (2017) argues that *Afghan Star* 'models a vision of what Afghanistan could be in the future' (v).

present moment through the 'positive image of Afghanistan' (Chapter 6). Overall, ANIM's utopian impulse expressed *representational*, rather than *non-representational*, hope (Cook & Cuervo, 2019) in that it presented concrete images of Afghanistan's possible future.

Yet, while ANIM's students *performed* Afghanistan's utopian future, their lived experiences on-the-ground indicated a more ambiguous reality. Although ANIM's utopian impulse afforded some students hope and the ability to imagine future lives as musicians and educators in Afghanistan, others lacked confidence that the country's music industry could support a career in music. These two contrasting perspectives are explored in the following sections.

'There's a lot of hope'

Many ANIM students and graduates interviewed for this research demonstrated a desire to imagine their idealised musical futures in Afghanistan. These interlocutors believed that 'there [was] a lot of hope in Kabul that young people can work in music' (Jafar, interview, September 15, 2020) and saw the gaps in the country's nascent music industry as spaces within which they could create their own opportunities:

> I believe that working in music industry in Afghanistan is a good opportunity, you know. […] There are a lot of areas that can be done to music in Afghanistan. There are no orchestras as compared to other countries such as UK, such as US. There are no professional orchestras like National Orchestra that belongs to our country. There is no copyright community or organisation to control copyright. There are no musical unions, musicians' unions. A lot of areas are empty in Afghanistan. So, the chance of finding a job in Afghanistan is very high (Jafar, interview, September 15, 2020).

Some of the most common goals for ANIM students and graduates were establishing a music school or becoming a music teacher in the country. As described in Chapter 5, female students

felt a strong commitment to expanding educational opportunities for Afghan children, a sentiment which was also shared by other peers:

> I'm thinking of like in the long term, my dream is to have my own music school. And I really, really thought about it, I don't want my music school in Kabul, it's going to be in Bamiyan[307]. So that my students don't have to worry about bomb attacks and everything, at least Bamiyan is safer. And only have children from like a young age, like 3, 4, 5, 6. And like having good teachers. If I can't have good teachers, I'll start with just a piano school and then once I have enough students then I will find other teachers and other instruments (Hussein, interview, January 24, 2021).

> My biggest wish is, like I hope I will want to do it, is I go back to Afghanistan and teach music, that's one thing. And at least I want to bring like, maybe help girls in [my province] to get educated. That's the most important thing to me (Arezo, interview, January 11, 2021).

> I really hope to become a concert violinist, of course, that's one of my dreams. I think after that I can help a lot of musicians in Afghanistan to become professional musicians. So it's a really good opportunity, not only for me but for the upcoming generations too (Basir, interview, June 2, 2021).

These visions for the future are centred around a tangible scenario or goal, illustrating a form of 'representational hope' (Cook & Cuervo, 2019) which is centred upon a 'concrete utopia' (Levitas, 1990). The students present themselves as 'actors prepared to act in the […] future and in opportunistic ways oriented to change' (DeNora, 2021: 106) and are consciously aware of their potential contribution to the future of Afghan education. Even though all three participants were at the time studying at a tertiary level *outside* Afghanistan, they imagined and idealised their futures

[307] Province in central Afghanistan.

within Afghanistan, evidencing a strong commitment to imagining and contributing to Afghanistan's future. ANIM's utopian impulse, therefore, is not geographically confined to Afghanistan and can be cultivated elsewhere. Interestingly, Hussein's vision for the future is still framed by conflict: while he didn't envisage Afghanistan descending into chaos (or the banning of public music), his comment suggests that he also didn't believe that peace was imminent. That his 'long-term' dream needed to account for bomb attacks and students' safety suggests that Hussein viewed the conflict itself as an 'endless present' (Hartog, 2015).

While the content of the hopes of ANIM students described above and elsewhere in this thesis reflects a mostly 'positive engagement with the future' (Howell, 2021: 362), no evidence was found for Howell's other suggestion that individuals used hope as a 'source of meaning in the precarious present' (Howell, 2021: 364). Although female interlocutors emphasised their hopes that Zohra could play a role in improving other girls' futures (see Chapter 5), they never explicitly suggested that this hope enabled them to cope with their own present hardships. If anything, it was their own past and present struggles which shaped their visions for the future, rather than their future hopes influencing their present lived experiences. Resonating with Holland and Yousofi's (2014) observation that education was viewed by aspiring Afghan youth as 'the primary way to avoid repeating the past' (244), ANIM female musicians used institutional music education as a platform to fight for Afghan women's rights so that they wouldn't have to 'return to the dark days' of the Taliban. Therefore, while I do not dismiss the possibility that hope did help some ANIM students cope with the precarious present, it was not primarily framed in this way.

'There's no future'

In contrast to those who saw opportunities in Afghanistan's nascent music industry, another group of student and graduate interlocutors viewed the country's struggling music industry as evidence that they had no future career in music in Afghanistan: 'Right now, whoever is getting out of ANIM, the boys even, like most of them have no future. Like most of them are in Turkey or have

migrated. [My friends], they are playing in weddings. They have nothing to do' (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021). This story resonates with an earlier report by Ekhtyar and Habib (2014) which found that the deteriorating security and increased religious conservatism meant that musicians in Jalalabad and Kabul were struggling to find work and were considering emigrating. This perspective gained further momentum with the commencement of the intra-Afghan peace talks in September 2020 during which the social and cultural freedoms which had been cultivated in the previous two decades looked increasingly fragile. Recounting conversations with his peers at ANIM, one student told me that 'they just say like "there is nothing to do with music in Afghanistan, how will we make a living?" That's another reason why people just decide to go abroad' (Hussein, interview, February 25, 2020). Indeed, since ANIM was established in 2010, several students have intermittently sought asylum whilst on school tours overseas. The most publicised of these incidents was when four members of the Zohra Orchestra absconded while on tour in Slovakia in 2019 (Radio Free Europe, 2019), while another three members sought asylum in Australia later in the year[308]. Sarmast viewed ANIM students' migration as an indicator of a wider despair caused by 'the government's inability to give hope to the new generation' (quoted in Howell, 2021: 368). Ultimately, argued one former foreign teacher,

> ANIM is trying to prepare kids to be professional musicians and teachers and rebuild music in [Afghanistan] but there's no music scene for it nor is there any money for a music scene. [...] Basically, it's just very temporary. There's so much emphasis on these one-off events, one-off big tour, one-off concert. But creating a sense of permanence for the students and then a sense that there's something there for them if they get to a certain level and stay motivated (Kayla, interview, May 12, 2020).

[308] Howell's (2021) research suggests that students 'running away' could '[deplete] hope from the collective' and leave their 'schoolmates feeling more negative about their own future prospects' (368).

This lack of 'permanence' resulted in a situation where the school's former students had 'all either quit or run away' (Richard, interview, June 22, 2020) or were 'all either married or out of the country, none of them […] doing music' (Kayla, interview, May 12, 2020). There was a clear disjunct between the school's vision for a talent pipeline and the music industry into which its graduates were meant to be entering.

Overall, a combination of discrimination against musicians, a lack of well-paid jobs, and 'no support and no sponsorship' (Aimal, interview, June 18, 2020) meant that several ANIM students felt that they 'couldn't really earn money and have a future with music [in Afghanistan]' (Edris, interview, May 4, 2021). My interlocutors complained that musicians' incomes were precarious—Radio Television Afghanistan, for example, only offered yearly contracts for positions in its orchestra, while earning money through playing at weddings and parties was unpredictable. Although many interlocutors felt that the strong international presence in Afghanistan offered significant performance opportunities at embassy and NGO events, they also recognised that they would eventually dry up when the number of foreigners in the city diminished. One former ANIM student also believed that the school's heavy focus on orchestral musicianship meant that graduating musicians were not equipped with the skills necessary to make a living in Afghanistan's music industry:

> ANIM students graduating, they should be a shopkeeper, car washer, like this work. Because there is no other way to continue music. It's difficult, in Afghanistan. They don't have other choice because they can't go anywhere in parties, in weddings, just they know how to play in orchestra or in band. But there is no orchestra and no band (Aimal, interview, June 18, 2020).

The experiences of these students suggest a matrix of challenges which some viewed as barriers to building a future in Afghanistan. That anxieties about job opportunities and financial security undermined students' ability to imagine possible musical futures in Afghanistan resonates with

Dryden-Petersen (2011) and Howell's (2021) findings as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. However, another male graduate of ANIM—who had a successful career as a freelance musician and teacher—strongly dismissed this attitude and stressed that there were plenty of opportunities available to musicians if they were willing to work hard for them. Responding to his peers who told him that 'we cannot find job with the music', Hasib explained that 'you should play in cafes, you should play in wedding parties, you should play in the street, you should play everywhere, you can teach everywhere' (Hasib, interview, November 27, 2020). Paradoxically, however, he also recognised the fragility of his career in music and, amidst the uncertainty of the peace talks, began to plan for a non-musical future in Afghanistan. In an interview a year before the Taliban takeover, he explained to me that 'If I'll be in Afghanistan, I need to learn another field. For example, I also started my BBA [Bachelor of Business Administration] in Afghanistan, that maybe the situation will be bad and I can change my field. Not music. Maybe the Taliban comes to Afghanistan, they don't let us to play music, so I can work and I can support myself' (Hasib, interview, November 27, 2020). While he saw potential for a musical career in the present moment, his doubts about his future were based on an expectation that Kabul, and the rest of the country, might erupt into chaos. Other interlocutors also explained that they always had 'something else' lined up because a career in music in Afghanistan was very fragile and never certain. Their narratives, therefore, elucidate an ambiguous relationship with the future which remains simultaneously hopeful yet pessimistic. Indeed, alongside anxieties about future career opportunities within the country's music industry, some voiced scepticism about the future of music itself in Afghanistan. In June 2020, while intra-Afghan peace talks were taking place, Kabul University's Chancellor sent a memo to members of the Faculty of Fine Arts, specifically mentioning the music department, saying 'you need to figure out how to conceal, dispose of, hide your instruments' (Kate, interview, June 15, 2020). In an interview a year before the Taliban takeover, one foreign educator working in Kabul told me 'I don't know that anybody's thinking that there's a future for music in this country, at this point' (Kate, interview, June 15, 2020).

How can we understand such divergent perspectives on musical futures within the context of Afghanistan's liberal reconstruction period? The two narratives presented above evidence what Ghani (2020) describes as the dual sides of Kabul in recent years, 'one of hope and one of fear, reverberating with a sense of expectation' (2). While both groups of musicians possessed a long-term orientation towards time, their visions for the future differed: the first anticipated a future Afghanistan that would support music education and music making and in which they could fulfil their goals, while the other had little faith in the country's musical landscape, and, by extension, their own musical futures. The latter, in fact, intersected with a conjecture that the Taliban might return and ban music. Ultimately, being able to imagine a future in music relied on having faith that Afghanistan and its music industry would continue to support music and that the country's political environment would not drastically worsen.

The Place of Institutional Music Education in Afghanistan

Despite its increasingly prominent role in Afghan society during the past two decades, this thesis has demonstrated that institutional music education's place in Afghan society was, and still is, contested. In the context of Afghanistan's reconstruction, institutional music education was not automatically regarded as a priority. Set against 'priority areas for development', such as '[general] education, roads, water and power, rebuilding government buildings […], water and sanitation in cities, and rural development' (Marsden, 2003: 96), institutional music education needed to earn and prove its place in Afghanistan's development efforts. Marika Vicziany, director of the Monash Asia Institute from 2000–2013, for example, faced difficulties in gaining financial support for the ANIM project from the Australian government: 'music is not a priority for rebuilding Afghanistan. Rebuilding roads is perceived to be much more important and music education must take a lower priority than general education and literacy' (quoted in Baily, 2018: 35:06). Similarly, as the

following comments posted on Ahmad Sarmast's Twitter page suggest (Sarmast, 2019), Afghans did not unanimously agree that music should be a priority in the country's ongoing reconstruction:

> User (Dari original): Mr Sarmast, we are starving for peace, not music [17/04/19].

> User (English original): With a bomb blast almost every other day and so much ignorance music shud [*sic*] be the last thing on an Afghan's mind [01/05/19].

This national and international ambivalence towards developing music education in Afghanistan may be a possible reason why the school's director and the public narratives surrounding ANIM emphasised music's utilitarian potential, especially in healing war-wearied Afghans and contributing to civil society. In order to gain and retain vital international funding and national support, the school needed to demonstrate that institutional music education was doing something other than providing entertainment and training musicians. In the media, Sarmast often underscored the potential contributions music education could make to Afghan society:

> Whether people consider music an entertainment or an art form, many are ignorant about its economic potential (Sarmast quoted in Pellegrinelli, 2010).

> I think the role music can play in this country is to […] contribute to poverty reduction, in creation of job opportunities for people (Sarmast quoted in Rowbotham, 2009).

ANIM's emphasis on music's utilitarian potential resonates with broader discourses which stress the non-musical outcomes of musical engagement in order to justify the inclusion of arts and culture in humanitarian efforts in (post-)conflict contexts (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010; Haskell, 2011; Howell, 2018; Pruitt, 2011; Taee, 2002).

The silencing of music with the return of the Taliban regime is also a demonstration of how Afghan institutional music education is intimately tied, and extremely susceptible, to the country's political and religious climate. In a lecture given at SOAS University in March 2018, Baily noted the 'close relationship […] between the place of music making in Afghan life and the ideology of those in power' (Baily, 2018: 02:50). Likewise, Kamin Gol, former head of the Singers' Union for eastern Afghanistan, contends that 'two things have always been fallen [*sic*] prey to political games in Afghanistan – the Afghan people and their music' (quoted in Ekhtyar & Habib, 2014). As described in Chapter 3, throughout the last 100 years institutional music education has been celebrated, restricted, manipulated, and silenced according to the values, beliefs, and ideologies of successive ruling regimes. Under the recent foreign-backed Afghan governments, institutional music education resonated, and aligned itself, with the vision of the country's reconstruction. However, when the liberal framework departed, music education was left without the ideological scaffolding that supported it. Thus, while it may be argued that music as an artform and social activity will always hold an important place in Afghan culture and society—despite numerous attempts to silence it—institutional music education does not appear to have an unconditional place in the country's educational landscape[309]. Rather, institutional music education in Afghanistan only thrives and survives when it aligns with the ideologies, and is convenient for the goals, of the incumbent rulers and their allies.

As discussed in Chapter 3, there is a disjunction between Afghans' desire to listen to music and their unfavourable attitude towards music and musicians. Although institutional music education eventually came to be celebrated and supported by many in the Afghan government, international community, and Afghan society, the lived experiences of ANIM's members described in this thesis suggest that learning music was also a challenging endeavour. Interlocutors

[309] This situation is not unique to Afghanistan. Aróstegui (2016) discusses the decline of music education in the majority of national curricula around the world. In the UK, research suggests that as a result of funding cuts and a focus on 'core subjects', the future of music education and A-level music is uncertain at a national level (Burland, 2020; Whittaker, 2021). Although this example is not as extreme as Afghanistan, it demonstrates that support and demand for music education fluctuates with political decisions.

faced discrimination in many aspects of their daily lives on account of their musical activities, including name calling, workplace discrimination, verbal and physical threats, and social separation, despite attempts by the ANIM community to create a new class of musician distinct from other groups. In some instances, the expectations and values upheld by ANIM were in tension with the beliefs and cultural norms of the students' families, communities, and the wider public. This can be seen clearly in the promotion of individualism described in Chapter 4 which required students to negotiate their position within Afghanistan's collectivist society. Likewise, the contestations around Afghan female musicians discussed in Chapter 5 made it very hard for some female students to learn music without significant repercussions.

In sum, the findings of this research indicate that institutional music education in Afghanistan can only exist and thrive under certain political and social conditions. Institutional music education holds a tenuous and vulnerable place in Afghan society and students' access to music education can be eroded and eliminated by several social and political factors. This latter point is also gendered: while female music students may have been prioritised when entering ANIM, they arguably faced more challenges than their male counterparts in remaining in school. Although the two decades of liberal peacebuilding in Afghanistan afforded a relatively fertile environment in which institutional music education could be developed, it was not immune to the contestations surrounding music and exactly who should be playing it.

Image and Power

At the start of this thesis, I depicted a scene in which a young female percussionist performed a short piece on marimba for ANIM's director and the Swedish Ambassador during the latter's official visit to the school in 2018. The spectators' contrasting stances and facial expressions, I argued, illustrated two very different perspectives on music education: "rescuing" and training the

poor, and discipline and profit[310]. I view this dichotomy as illustrative of a wider discrepancy between positive public representations of music education initiatives and the urgent need to critically examine the means through which these representations are produced and reproduced. ANIM's public narratives and media coverage, for example, espoused the perceived 'power of music' not only to alleviate poverty and bring peace to Afghanistan, but to heal conflict wounds, transform lives, and prompt social change within Afghan society. By contrast, this research has challenged dominant assumptions that ANIM's educational practices and outcomes were *a priori* positive and predictable—that by simply engaging in music education, a child's life and future prospects would automatically be transformed for the better—and demonstrated that in the context of liberal peacebuilding, 'music education is far more ambiguous morally than might be thought' (Matthews, 2015: 238). In doing so, this study has made visible some of the more uncomfortable and problematic aspects of institutional music education and its related activities in Afghanistan which until now have been conveniently overlooked. As Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) argues, 'claims about the power of the arts to inspire, to liberate, or to transform tend to obscure both the complexities and the possibilities that lurk within experiences with the arts in education' (214). That being said, this critical evaluation does not deny the possibility that music has transformative powers in the Afghan context—indeed, this thesis has presented substantial evidence that this was sometimes the case—but rather underscores the importance of not taking these discourses as self-evident at the expense of critical enquiry.

It's all in the image

Working within the foreign intervention's broader narrative of transformation, ANIM actors were often preoccupied with presenting various images of social change through music; students lifted

[310] In the case of ANIM, 'profit' denoted not only financial gain but also encompassed the acquisition of other forms of capital such as political support and media coverage. The students, presented as symbols of the school's success, were instrumental in gaining further support.

out of poverty, empowered women, an ethnically and politically unified Afghanistan, and gender equality. However, the findings of this research suggest that this endeavour was not without its costs, as alluded to by a former ANIM student who claimed that 'we were more into making the image better rather than the quality' (Zarlasht, interview, January 9, 2021). By 'quality', Zarlasht was referring to the music produced and the students' overall professional development which she believed to be inadequate for the challenges faced by graduates. As briefly mentioned in the introduction to Chapter 2, during my time at ANIM I felt my capacity to teach effectively and dedicate time to my students' musical and personal development was undermined by a constant need to produce polished performances. Other former foreign faculty members expressed similar concerns, that 'there were so many interruptions, so many requests and requirements made that it felt like students just couldn't settle down into just a steady flow of learning without all of these interruptions' (Richard, interview, June 22, 2020). Another explained how he wanted 'to give the kids some kind of structure because they're so used to this system, they have this piece of music just thrown on their stand, whether it's level appropriate, age appropriate, whatever, it doesn't just matter. You play this for this fancy diplomat' (Mark, interview, June 23, 2020). Both comments evidence an unease with the school's priorities and the pressures placed on the students and teachers.

This thesis has explored various instances where there has been some degree of separation between the narratives and images presented to the public and the students' lived realities. This was particularly evident when looking at the experiences of female musicians who, in the context of Afghan reconstruction, were viewed and presented as symbols of progressive ideas (see Chapter 5). The experiences of one of ANIM's female conductors, for example, suggest that concealed behind the image of a female leader—who symbolised Afghan women's empowerment and gender equality—were processes of control and coercion which undermined the student's agency and confidence. Likewise, the image of empowered and corporeally free female musicians presented in ANIM's musical outputs obfuscated the challenges and lack of agency faced by many of the

musicians in their daily lives. Finally, by selectively promoting the school's 35 percent female student body, ANIM was able to disguise the uncomfortable fact that graduation rates for female students were almost zero. These findings correlate with broader critical discourses on the West's appropriation of Afghan women's bodies, experiences, identities, and basic human rights as symbols of political and ideological ends in the 'War on Terror' (Bergner, 2011; Berry, 2003; Chishti, 2010; Chishti & Farhoumand-Sims, 2011; Cloud, 2004; Fluri, 2009; Hunt, 2002; Rich, 2004; Stabile & Kumar, 2005).

Furthermore, the various public images presented by ANIM and its students were often co-opted by politicians, the press, and other stakeholders to serve broader political agendas associated with Afghanistan's reconstruction and global development. Unlike their counterparts attending regular state schools in Afghanistan, ANIM students were, from a young age, placed into the public limelight. For female students, especially, this was an uncomfortable experience given the risks associated with being seen to play music in public (see Chapter 5). During my time working at ANIM, I observed instances where media came to the school to film or photograph rehearsals and some female students attempted to cover their faces from the camera. Moreover, once their image was in the public domain, they had little, if any, control over how they and their activities were presented and re-presented by other actors. As described in Chapter 6, ANIM's performances were framed and reframed to justify US taxpayers' money in Afghanistan, to showcase the UK government's aid work in the country, and to present an image of positive US-Afghan relations. The appropriation of students' achievements and right to education for other purposes raises issues about students' agency and their control over their own representation.

The findings of this research suggest that a fixation on public image can potentially be detrimental to students' lived experiences of institutional music education and erode their agency within educational spaces. Moreover, the experiences of female students indicate that certain marginalised groups are more vulnerable to being used in potentially harmful ways to further ideologies and agendas. These concerns are especially pertinent in contexts where public image

and media exposure are vital mechanisms for increasing awareness and gaining funding, support, and further opportunities.

Unequal power relations

Scholars have argued that Afghanistan's liberal peacebuilding project was characterised by a neo-colonialist mentality which enabled the 'powerful' West to intervene in the affairs of a 'less-powerful' failed state (Ayotte & Husain, 2005; Dabashi, 2009; Emadi, 2010; Gregory, 2004; Richmond, 2011; Rubin, 2006; Spears, 2021; Stabile & Kumar, 2005; Stewart, 2004). As an apparatus and mouthpiece of the Afghan government and its foreign allies, it was not surprising to discover that institutional music education was subject to, and in some cases perpetuated, unequal and hegemonic power relations. Power relations and hierarchies within music education contexts have been considered in relation to educational policy, curricula, and social interactions within higher education, schools, classrooms, and between individuals (Bull, 2021; Conway, Rawlings & Hibbard, 2018; Giroux & Penna, 2012; Richerme, 2021; Wagoner, 2015). This body of literature stresses the importance of considering how wider power relations and hierarchies shape power imbalances within the music education institution, and how the music education institution may contribute to the maintenance of existing social inequalities. In liberal peacebuilding contexts, where certain institutions and actors have greater control over resources and decision making than others, these considerations should be addressed as a priority.

This research found unequal power relationships within ANIM as an institution, between the school and the rest of the Afghan population, and between ANIM and its financial donors. Within the institution, wider social inequalities were manifest in the dominance of males in creative leadership positions at ANIM and the way in which they made decisions about women's opportunities (Chapter 5). The public image of female musicians in symbolic 'leadership' positions, however, obscured these inequalities and the lack of female agency in creative processes. Likewise, in Chapter 6, I argued that the dominance of Western creative voices and models in the creation

of the 'positive image of Afghanistan' undermined, to some extent, students' self-representation and re-asserted the centrality of Western musical models. That ANIM's foreign faculty were financially remunerated over 10 times more than their Afghan colleagues and were more heavily involved in the school's development and sustainability plans (on account of their English language and other skills), further contributed to imbalances within the institution. In sum, the hegemony of the West's presence in Kabul was mirrored in the music education space.

In its relationship with the rest of society, I argued that ANIM's totalising narratives about women's empowerment (Chapter 5) and liberal nationalism (Chapter 4) risked imposing a preponderant authority of Kabul's political ideals over the needs and interests of the rest of Afghan society. Similarly, as described in Chapter 3, ANIM wanted to establish a professional hierarchy by creating a new class of musician distinct from others in society by virtue of their academic institutional training. While institutional music education has the potential to be used as a positive tool for promoting social and political change in countries such as Afghanistan, this thesis has shown that such agendas must be sensitive to, and accommodate, a range of perspectives and lived experiences, or else risk establishing further inequalities.

Finally, ANIM and its actors were subject to power relations by virtue of the school's position within a broader financial hierarchy. As the following quote suggests, ANIM was 'indebted' in some way to the institutions that provided its funding: 'If [a supportive embassy] wants us to play a concert then yeah, we're going to play that concert… because that's where the funding is going to come from. And because people have to see that we're doing stuff… We can't say "No"' (ANIM staff member quoted in Howell, 2017: 270). Likewise, to gain vital funding, ANIM needed to fulfil World Bank objectives and address certain issues which aligned with the mission of the foreign intervention. These expectations risk ignoring the needs of the students, as actors at each level of the institutional hierarchy work to meet the needs of those at the level

above[311]. In showing that the school was 'doing stuff', the educational and personal benefits for the students became ancillary considerations, as described by organisers of Zohra's UK tour (Chapter 6). Therefore, in contexts where music education interventions require significant external funding and support for their operation, the financial and political gains of a performance opportunity should also be considered against the potential benefit for and impact on the student performers.

The findings of this research highlight the urgent need for a more critical and thorough understanding of institutional music education in conflict-affected and development contexts. This includes looking beyond dominant media and public narratives to interrogate the processes and structures which are inherent in institutional music education programmes. As Baker (2021) notes, 'it is not enough to know whether a program achieves certain goals; it is also necessary to interrogate the validity of those goals and consider cultural, political, philosophical, and ethical questions they raise' (20). The complex nature of liberal peacebuilding, with its unpredictable entanglement of interactions between actors and competing political and social agendas (Randazzo & Torrent, 2021), further highlights the dangers of looking only at outcomes and not paying attention to the processes behind, and the meaning of, those outcomes.

The Future of Music Education in Afghanistan

Nearly 20 years after they were ousted by US-NATO forces, the Taliban overthrew the incumbent Afghan government in Kabul on 15 August 2021. After they captured their first provincial capital, Zaranj[312], on 6 August, the Taliban's lightning offensive saw them take control of the entire country in less than 10 days. By the end of August, all US and other foreign troops had withdrawn from

[311] For example, in preparing for an embassy concert (as mentioned in the comment above), ANIM faculty worked to produce a polished performance at the request of the school's leadership who were, in turn, obliged to produce a performance which fulfilled the expectations of the host institution.
[312] Zaranj is the capital of Nimruz province.

the country—Figure 17 outlines the timeline of events which preceded the fall of Kabul. While abruptly ending 'America's longest war', the takeover also effectively silenced music and music education in Afghanistan. Musicians in Kabul and across the country immediately hid their instruments, deleted music videos and posts from social media, and went into hiding[313]. As a former teacher of ANIM, I was immediately inundated with requests from friends, ex-students, and ex-colleagues to help them escape the country. Reports of instruments being destroyed and Taliban soldiers visiting the homes of musicians and other cultural artists began to flood social media[314]; two grand pianos and various other Western and Afghan instruments were allegedly smashed by the Taliban at the studio of Radio Television Afghanistan. The day after the Taliban entered Kabul, Ahmad Sarmast stated that 'if I will be considering the prospective of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music in light of what Taliban have done to music back in 1990s, I can immediately say that yes, there's no prospective for music and music education in Afghanistan' (Wilson, 2021: 04:56). This forecast became reality nine days later when the Taliban released a statement banning music in public places because they believe it is 'un-Islamic' (Farmer et al., 2021)[315]. Once a hyper-liberal bubble in which ANIM had flourished, Kabul had become a 'cultural battlefield' where 'evocative street murals [were] painted over with Islamic verses, girls' secondary schools [were] shut, stirring music no longer course[ed] through shops and alleys' (Doucet, 2021d). In the following weeks, media narratives on ANIM shifted from the hope, bravery, and determination of the students to uncertainty, broken dreams, and shattered futures.

[313] At this point, musicians' self-censorship was not in response to an official statement by the Taliban on the status of music in the country, but rather a measure to help protect themselves from potential reprisals from the group.
[314] See Foschini (2021) for a detailed report on the state of music in the three months after the Taliban regained power.
[315] The Taliban haven't, until now, officially banned music: 'Music is banned again in Afghanistan. Not officially... but in reality, music is suppressed in Afghanistan. Musicians are forced to give up their jobs, to give up their ability and skills, and music education programmes are suspended - so-called suspended, but in practice it's banned' (Sarmast quoted in Peplow, 2021).

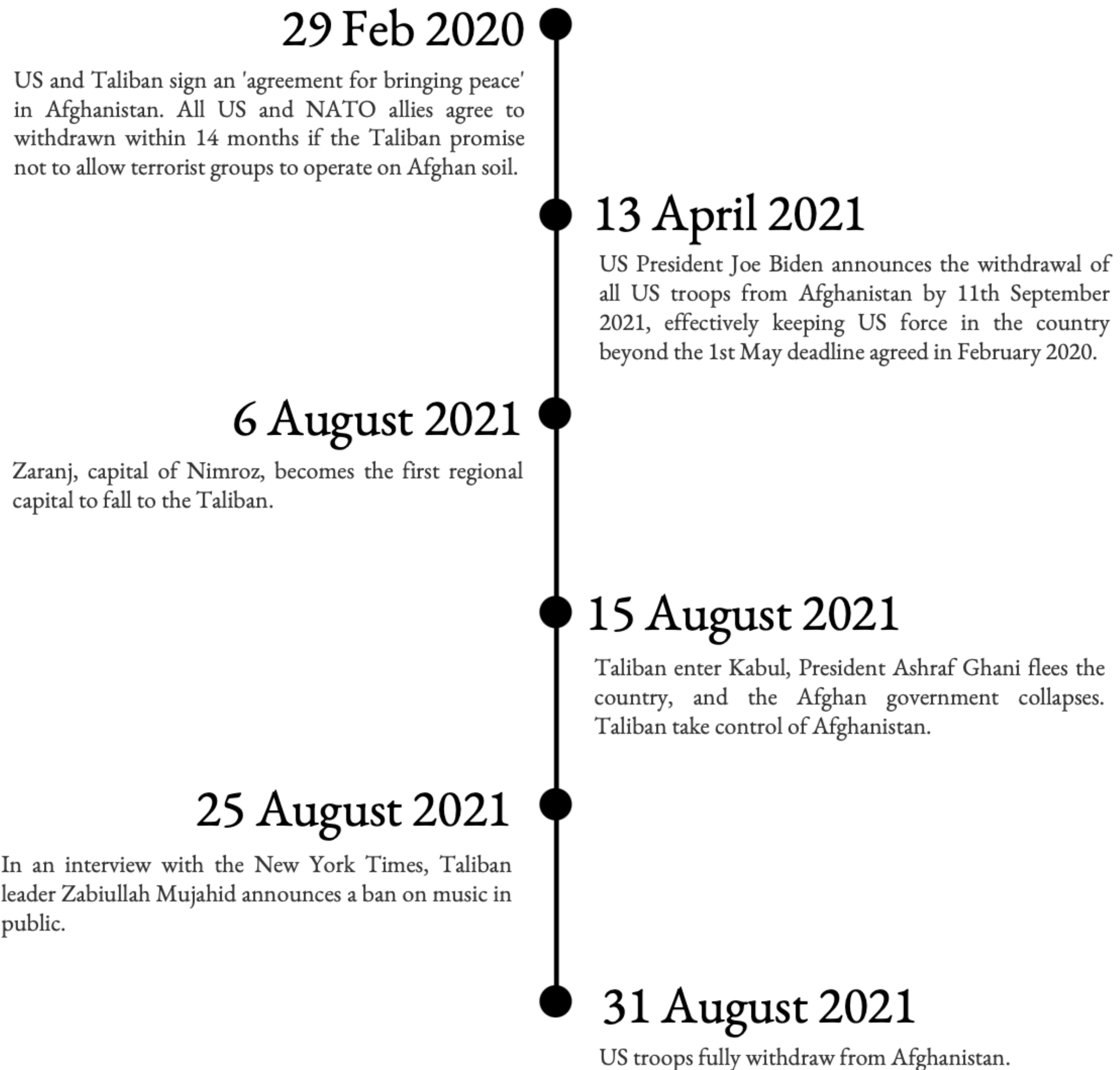


Figure 17. Timeline of events leading to the return of the Taliban to power and the withdrawal of US troops

While music and music education in Afghanistan were silenced overnight, the symbolism of the music produced during the inter-Taliban period was transformed. Two months before the Taliban returned to power, ANIM musicians participated in a cross-cultural collaboration performance, organised by the Northern Ireland-based organisation Beyond Skin, of John Cage's *4'33"* with musician groups from over 20 other countries, in recognition of Make Music Day, 2021 (Beyond Skin, 2021). The three-movement composition instructs players not to play for its

entirety, and in this rendition, a group of nine ANIM students (percussion, clarinet, cello, viola, two violins, *dutār*, *rubāb*, and *tabla*) are seen standing still in a leafy courtyard, COVID-19 face masks on, holding their instruments with slightly bored expressions on their faces. Watching the video after the events of August 2021 is uncomfortable—the video has become, in retrospect, a prophecy of what was to come and is a stark reminder of the lived reality of Afghan musicians who remain, in silence, in Afghanistan.

How can we understand ANIM's utopian impulse in light of the Taliban's return to power? As I have argued here and in the rest of this thesis, institutional music education was used as a vehicle for imagining, presenting, and projecting into Afghanistan's idealised tomorrow. The futurity which pervaded so many aspects of ANIM's educational programme was grounded in a belief that the country was finally emerging from decades of war and that music had a role to play upholding the values necessary for the country's prosperous future. With the benefit of hindsight, however, we can see that institutional music education could *only* survive long-term under the utopian conditions it was projecting into. ANIM's futurity and utopian impulse were not, therefore, a mundane exercise in hoping or dreaming of a better future; they were actually tools for its survival.

Rather than delivering an 'idealised tomorrow', the present reality which is now being played out in Afghanistan is experienced as a movement back to the past. As Sarmast lamented, 'we never expected that Afghanistan will be returning to the stone age' (Zemaryalai & Geddie, 2021), alluding to the Taliban's treatment of women, judicial punishment, and attitude towards music and culture. However, the Taliban's return did not signal the death of Afghan musicians' utopian impulses or the absolute end of institutional music education in Afghanistan. In the immediate aftermath of the takeover, the media's narrative on ANIM was pessimistic and foreboding, reporting that the school 'faces uncertain future' (Gay, 2021) and that its musicians 'silently await their fate' (Graham-Harrison, 2021). On a broader level, the media questioned if this was the 'end of music in Afghanistan' (Context, 2021) and whether Afghan music could survive (CNN, 2021). While these

narratives reflect the hopelessness, fear, and loss that was felt by Afghan musicians at the time, they overlook the fact that Afghan music thrives in many communities across the globe and has survived over four decades of conflict. Indeed, once the school began its evacuation plan in October 2021, the media narrative experienced a tectonic shift and the utopian impulse re-emerged from under the shadow of the previous few months. Quotes from ANIM students in these later reports suggest a defiant optimism:

> It doesn't matter if the Taliban have taken over Kabul or not, we continue our battle because we learned to be strong for our nation, for our country (Khan, 2021).

> I want to make a music school in Afghanistan and that's still my dream. One day when Afghanistan is safe enough for us to go and make music there, we will be ready (Doucet, 2021c: 26:36).

> My huge dream is to go back to Afghanistan... It's a huge dream. I believe that I'll go back... and teach the younger generation (Demony & Pereira, 2021).

Despite the overnight disappearance of public music making in Afghanistan and having been forced to flee their country, students' imagined futures are still situated in Afghanistan. They continue to be driven by a commitment to their country's future and the roles within it which they envisage for themselves. Although there may be 'no prospective for music and music education in Afghanistan' in the present moment, these comments suggest the hope that one day they will return. The utopian impulse has not been lost or reconfigured; rather, it has been taken overseas[316] by Afghanistan's musicians where it continues to be nurtured in exile.

[316] Others who remained in Afghanistan may also continue to nurture a utopian impulse.

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Appendix A: Media Sources pre-August 2021 and post-August 2021

Media Sources pre-August 2021

Headline	Date	Source	Location
Online and print articles			
'Harmony and hope rise from the rubble'	2009	*The Age*	*International*
'New music to Afghan ears'	2009	*The Australian*	*International*
'New music school teaches street children in Kabul, where music was illegal a decade ago'	2010	*Associated Press/Fox News*	*International*
'An Upbeat Afghan Story'	2010	*The Wall Street Journal*	*International*
'Afghan Music Institute Holds Year-end Festival'	2011	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Music School Looks to 'Heal' War-Weary Afghans'	2012	*Radio Free Europe*	*International*
'Afghan academy seeks to ease pain of war with music'	2012	*Reuters*	*International*
'Afghanistan revives its musical traditions'	2012	*Deutsche Welle*	*International*
'Afghan junior musicians bring joy to people'	2012	*Xinhua General News Service*	*International*
'Concert of Afghanistan Music National Institute's Artistes Opened'	2013	*Bakhtar News Agency*	*National*
'Orchestrating Change'	2013	*Washington Post*	*International*
'In Afghanistan, teaching music to overcome war's percussion'	2013	*Stars and Stripes*	*International*
'Remarks by Deputy Secretary of State William Burns to the Ensembles of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music'	2013	*Federal News Agency*	*International*
'Young Afghan musicians in NY for date at Carnegie'	2013	*Associated Press/San Diego Union Tribune*	*International*
'Afghan orchestra set to hit the right notes'	2013	*Al Jazeera*	*International*
'Afghan street kids, orphans to perform at Carnegie Hall as music struggles to revive; Young Afghan musicians to tour US'	2013	*Associated Press/The Canadian Press*	*International*

'Weaving magic with Mozart: Afghan musicians prepare to tour the US'	2013	*Associated Press/The Nation*	*International*
'Afghan musicians enthrall [*sic*] Washington audience'	2013	*Pajhwok Afghan News*	*National*
'Afghan Music Mentor Ahmad Sarmast Is Radio Azadi's 'Person Of The Year''	2013	*Radio Free Europe*	*International*
'How Do You Get to Carnegie Hall? Start in Kabul'	2013	*The New York Times*	*International*
'Making Music Against the Odds'	2013	*The Wall Street Journal*	*International*
'Young Afghans Face Backlash Over Music'	2013	*The Wall Street Journal*	*International*
'From Kabul to Carnegie Hall'	2013	*The Wall Street Journal*	*International*
'Afghan Students Head to Carnegie Hall'	2013	*The Wall Street Journal*	*International*
'Afghan Orchestra Heads to US'	2013	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Kerry Welcomes Afghan Orchestra as 'Peace Ambassadors''	2013	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Afghan Orchestra Returns to Kabul'	2013	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'US Ambassador Meets Young Afghan Musicians'	2013	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Afghanistan's music institute to perform in Oman'	2014	*Al Arabiya*	*International*
'The Students of Afghan National Institute of Music Perform Concert In Oman'	2014	*Bakhtar News Agency*	*National*
'Promising Afghan musician wants to perform globally'	2014	*Pajhwok Afghan News*	*National*
'Counter melodies in Kabul'	2014	*Financial Review*	*International*
'Afghanistan National Institute of Music's (ANIM) Winter Academy Gala Concert'	2014	*Targeted News Agency*	*International*
'The Day Afghan Music Didn't Die'	2015	*Radio Free Europe*	*International*
'Girls find their Place in Afghanistan's Music Institute'	2015	*Khaama Press*	*National*

'A Music Teacher Keeps Playing After a Taliban Attack'	2015	*The New York Times*	*International*
'He was the saviour of Afghan music. Then a Taliban bomb took his hearing'	2015	*The Guardian*	*International*
'National Institute of Music Promotes New Image of Afghanistan Abroad'	2015	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Life Changes Tune in Kabul – School Hits Right Note for Street Children'	2016	*AFP/Arab Times*	*International*
'Orange County musician teaches guitar to girls in Afghanistan to help them heal'	2016	*The Orange County Register*	*International*
'Afghan teenager braves threats, family pressure to lead women's orchestra'	2016	*Reuters*	*International*
'The guitar school for street children in Afghanistan'	2016	*BBC News*	*International*
'Musician Lanny Cordola and Peace Jam III bring healing through music'	2016	*Los Angeles Times*	*International*
'Afghanistan: where playing music can cost you your life'	2016	*Reuters*	*International*
'Music Transforms Lives of Disadvantaged Youth in Afghanistan'	2016	*The Pak Banker*	*International*
'Defying death threats, Afghanistan's first female orchestra to play Davos'	2017	*AFP/News 24*	*International*
'Female Afghan orchestra tune out discrimination'	2017	*AFP/The Straits Times*	*International*
'Afghanistan's first female orchestra performs in Davos'	2017	*AFP/Hurriyet Daily News*	*International*
'Afghanistan's first female orchestra set to perform at WEF in Davos'	2017	*AFP/Hindustan Times*	*International*
'Afghanistan's first female orchestra set to take Davos by storm'	2017	*AFP/The Hindu*	*International*
'Afghan women's orchestra risk lives to play Davos'	2017	*AFP/eNCA*	*International*
'Afghan female orchestra strikes closing note at Davos'	2017	*AFP/Daily Mail*	*International*

'Afghanistan's first all-girl orchestra ready to perform at Davos'	2017	*Dawn*	*International*
'Afghan female orchestra strikes closing note at Davos'	2017	*Al Arabiya*	*International*
'Afghan ensemble Zohra is a reflection of the transformative power of music'	2017	*Hindustan Times*	*International*
'The art of listening helps children tune into their potential: Arts therapy Music lessons help children through tough times'	2017	*Financial Times*	*International*
'Afghanistan's first female orchestra to play at closing concert in Davos'	2017	*German Press Agency*	*International*
'Striking a chord: meet Afghanistan's first female orchestra'	2017	*DPA/Albawaba*	*International*
'Afghan orchestra puts women's rights center stage at Davos'	2017	*Reuters*	*International*
'Facing Down The Taliban, One Orchestra Performance at a Time'	2017	*Foreign Policy*	*International*
'The Zohra Orchestra: teaching young girls to play the music of their dreams in Afghanistan'	2017	*The Hindu*	*International*
'From 'Full House' to Afghanistan: an American teaches street children music'	2017	*The Christian Science Monitor*	*International*
'Afghan Women Orchestra (Zohra) chosen winner of Freemuse Award 2017'	2017	*Khaama Press*	*National*
'Kabul street kids strum with Beach Boy'	2017	*The Sunday Times*	*International*
'Young Afghan women risk their lives to play music'	2017	*USA Today*	*International*
'The Afghan girls defying death threats to pursue their passion'	2017	*Huckmag*	*International*
'Facing Death Threats, Afghanistan's First Female Conductor Plays On'	2017	*VICE*	*International*
'Lanny Cordola, the guitar god of Kabul'	2017	*The Times*	*International*
'US rocker uses music to bring healing, hope to Afghan children'	2017	*Fox News*	*International*

'Afghan female orchestra faces DEATH THREATS for 'dishonouring families' over Davos concert'	2017	*The Daily Express*	*International*
'WEF Annual Meet closes with Afghan orchestra'	2017	*Press Trust of India/Business Standard*	*International*
'Afghan All-Girl Orchestra Performs Before World Leaders At Davos'	2017	*Radio Free Europe*	*International*
'Zohra: Inspiring sounds of music in war-torn Afghanistan'	2017	*Mint*	*International*
'Despite threats, Afghanistan's first all-girl orchestra showcases music of courage at Davos'	2017	*Scroll.in*	*International*
'Girl's Orchestra Welcomed Home After Swiss Tour'	2017	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'First Afghan women's orchestra tries to change attitudes'	2017	*Associated Press*	*International*
'Orchestra tries to change attitudes; Music seen as immoral by many in Afghanistan'	2017	*Associated Press/Dayton Daily News*	*International*
'Despite death threats, this Afghani all-female orchestra continued to rock at WEF meeting'	2017	*Think Change India*	*International*
'Long Beach man moves to Afghanistan to bring music to kids'	2017	*Long Beach Press Telegram*	*International*
'Afghan Women's Orchestra Wins Freemuse Award'	2017	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Afghan Women Orchestra wins the Freemuse Award 2017'	2017	*Wadsam*	*National*
'Music is stronger than weapons in Afghanistan'	2018	*CE Noticias Financieras*	*International*
'See Brian Wilson Sing 'Love and Mercy' With Young Afghan War Survivors'	2018	*Rolling Stone*	*International*
'Afghanistan National Institute of Music Wins 2018 Polar Music Prize'	2018	*Bakhtar News Agency*	*National*
'Afghanistan's National Institute of Music Receives Prestigious Polar Music Prize'	2018	*MENAFN*	*National*
'Afghan Orchestra Flourishes Despite Violence, Social Pressure'	2018	*MENAFN*	*National*

'National Institute Of Music Awarded Prestigious Polar Prize'	2018	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Afghanistan Music Institute Wins Polar Music Prize'	2018	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Members of first all-female Afghan orchestra missing in Slovakia'	2019	*France24*	*International*
'Afghanistan's all-female orchestra is hoping to revive music banned under the Taliban'	2019	*SBS News*	*International*
'Afghanistan's first all-female orchestra Zohra visits the UK'	2019	*BBC News*	*International*
'All-female orchestra to perform their first UK concert'	2019	*Harrow Times*	*International*
'All Female Afghanistan Orchestra Coming to Sydney'	2019	*Sydney Arts Guide*	*International*
'Women pluck away at Taliban hate'	2019	*The Sunday Times*	*International*
'Afghan people 'should not be silenced again''	2019	*Thomson Reuters Foundation*	*International*
'From Kabul orphanages to the Opera House: All-female Afghan orchestra debuts in Australia'	2019	*SBS Dari*	*International*
''We Won't Be Silenced,' Afghan Female Musicians Tell Taliban'	2019	*Bloomberg*	*International*
'All-female orchestra braves threats to revive Afghanistan's musical heritage'	2019	*EFE*	*International*
'Afghan Orchestra Plays World-Class Opera House'	2019	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Four members of Afghan all-female orchestra disappeared from Slovakia'	2019	*The Slovak Spectator*	*International*
'Afghanistan Among 10 Finalists of 2019 Global Pluralism Award'	2019	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Four members of Afghan Orchestra missing in Slovakia'	2019	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Afghan All-Female Orchestra Performs in Australia'	2019	*TOLOnews*	*National*

"'To show the beauty of Afghanistan': All-female Afghan orchestra challenges tradition'	2019	*The Sydney Morning Herald*	*International*
'Afghan girls of Zohra Orchestra offer harmony with music'	2019	*The Australian*	*International*
Online and televisual videos			
'Music in the War Zone; Rebuilding Traditions'	2009	*Good Morning America (ABC News)*	*International*
'National Music Institute Offers Winter Classes in Kabul'	2010	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Music school strikes chord with Afghan street kids'	2012	*CNN*	*International*
'From Afghanistan to Carnegie Hall'	2013	*CNN*	*International*
'Person of the Week: Afghanistan National Institute of Music'	2013	*ABC News*	*International*
'Afghan students in tune'	2013	*Al Jazeera*	*International*
'Afghanistan National Institute of Music Student Report'	2013	*Salsaal News/NBC News*	*National*
'Learning 'songs of peace and hope''	2016	*BBC News*	*International*
'Lanny and the Miraculous Love Kids of Kabul'	2016	*Euronews*	*International*
'UNESCO prize awarded to Afghan musician'	2016	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Institute of Music Plans To Create a National Music Group'	2016	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Afghan music institute forms first girls' orchestra'	2016	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Music Institute Unveils Sorod-e-Dukhter'	2016	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'6th Winter Music Academy Launched'	2016	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'National Institute Celebrates 6th Winter Festival'	2016	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Women's Anthem Launched'	2016	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Winter Music Festival Launched in Kabul'	2016	*TOLOnews*	*National*

'Afghanistan's first female orchestra set to take Davos'	2017	*AFP*	*International*
'Girls Perform Concert To Raise Funds For Kabul Orphanage Children'	2017	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Afghanistan women's orchestra closes global forum'	2017	*BBC News*	*International*
'This all-female orchestra in Afghanistan isn't going to let Taliban death threats silence them'	2017	*Channel 4 News*	*International*
'Afghan Orchestra Performs At Davos Session'	2017	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'These young women from Afghanistan aren't good girls, and they're proud of that fact'	2017	*Humankind (USA Today)*	*International*
'Girls Welcomed Home After Swiss Tour'	2017	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'First all-female Afghan orchestra braves Taliban'	2018	*France 24*	*International*
'Afghan Orchestra Flourishes Despite Violence and Social Pressure'	2018	*VOA*	*International*
'Afghan Pianist Plays Music to Honour Fallen Journalists'	2018	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'News report'	2018	*Hum News*	*International*
'Lanny Cordola Healing Kabul Children Through Music'	2019	*DD News*	*International*
'Afghanistan's first all-female orchestra'	2019	*SBS News*	*International*
'Orchestra Zohra the only all-female music group of Afghanistan will soon travel to Australia'	2019	*SBS Radio*	*International*
'The National Institute of Music Celebrated the End of its Winter Training'	2019	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Concerns About the Future of Women and Girl Artists in the Country'	2019	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'The Afghanistan Institute of Music is in the Final Round'	2019	*TOLOnews*	*National*

'Afghan All-Female Zohra Orchestra in Australia'	2019	*TOLOnews*	*National*
Radio programmes			
'From A Land Where Music Was Banned – To Carnegie Hall'	2013	*National Public Radio*	*International*
'An American Rock Musician Teaches Guitar To Kabul's Street Kids'	2017	*National Public Radio*	*International*
'All-Female Orchestra From Afghanistan Is A Force For Change'	2017	*National Public Radio*	*International*
'The Zohra Orchestra is touring Australia for the first time'	2019	*SBS Pashto*	*International*
'When does the Zohra orchestra make their artistic trip to Australia?'	2019	*SBS Pashto*	*International*
'Afghanistan's Best School Girl Musicians are Touring Australia'	2019	*The World Today (ABC)*	*International*

Media Sources post-August 2021

Headline	Date	Source	Location
Online and print articles			
'How Afghan musicians are fighting for their heritage'	2021	*gal-dem*	*International*
'After the Taliban seized their school, Afghanistan's all-female orchestra tried to flee. Only some escaped'	2021	*The Washington Post*	*International*
'As Taliban return, Afghanistan's female orchestra fears the future'	2021	*Thomson Reuters Foundation*	*International*
'Afghan National Music Institute Folds, Last Members Leave Kabul'	2021	*TOLOnews*	*National*
'Afghan orchestra musicians, music students and teachers have escaped the Taliban'	2021	*National Public Radio*	*International*
'Afghan music school falls silent under Taliban rule'	2021	*BBC News*	*International*
'Afghan orchestras in peril: 'I cannot imagine a society without music'	2021	*The Guardian*	*International*

"I pray we will sing again' — the bleak future for musicians in Afghanistan	2021	*The Times*	*International*
'Afghan music school with Boston ties faces uncertain future under Taliban'	2021	*The Boston Globe*	*International*
'Will the Taliban Stop the Music in Afghanistan?'	2021	*Wall Street Journal*	*International*
'Polarprisade Skolan är en måltavla för talibanerna'	2021	*Expressen*	*International*
'A Celebrated Afghan School Fears the Taliban Will Stop the Music'	2021	*The New York Times*	*International*
'Afghanistan's Music School Falls Silent, Its Future Is Uncertain Under The Taliban	2021	*National Public Radio*	*International*
'Musicians Flee Afghanistan, Fearing Taliban Rule'	2021	*The New York Times*	*International*
'Kabul music institute, oasis for Afghan youth, falls silent'	2021	*Daily Sabah*	*International*
'Taliban may force closure of Afghanistan National Institute of Music, says founder'	2021	*The Australian*	*International*
'The day the music died: Afghanistan's all-female orchestra falls silent'	2021	*Reuters*	*International*
'Afghan musicians silently await their fate as Taliban's ban looms'	2021	*The Guardian*	*International*
'"Music is already fading away": future of Afghanistan's women's orchestra in doubt'	2021	*ABC*	*International*
'1,200 Miles From Kabul, a Celebrated Music School Reunites'	2021	*The New York Times*	*International*
'Fifth Successful Airlift Completes Rescue of Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM)	2021	*21C Media Group*	*International*
'Saving an Afghan Success Story'	2021	*Linkedin*	*International*
'All members of Afghanistan National Institute of Music now evacuated from Kabul'	2021	*ABC*	*International*
'Afghan musicians land in Portugal with hopes of rebuilding famed arts school'	2021	*Euronews*	*International*

‘Members of famous music school were airlifted out of Afghanistan. The coordination effort took place in Otis’	2021	*The Berkshire Eagle*	*International*
‘Portugal: Afghan music students granted asylum’	2021	*The Pie News*	*International*
‘Yo-Yo Ma plays Mozart with Afghan refugees in Portugal’	2022	*Associated Press*	*International*
‘Why Afghanistan’s exiled all-female Zohra Orchestra are determined to keep playing’	2022	*Express*	*International*
Online and televisual videos			
‘BBC Newsnight’: Interview with Ahmad Sarmast	2021	*BBC*	*International*
‘Afghanistan’s all-women orchestra falls silent under Taliban’	2021	*CBC News*	*International*
‘They restored music to Afghanistan. Can it survive?’	2021	*CNN*	*International*
‘Is the Taliban’s return the end of music in Afghanistan?’	2021	*Thomson Reuters Foundation*	*International*
“I’m alive but the Taliban took my soul’: Afghan musicians mourn abandoned instruments’	2021	*France 24*	*International*
‘For Afghans, a bittersweet escape from a music school gone silent’	2021	*Los Angeles Times*	*International*
“Afghanistan once again a silent nation,’ says founder of Kabul music academy’	2021	*CNN*	*International*
Radio programmes			
‘Music Matters’: Interview with Ahmad Sarmast	2021	*BBC*	*International*

Appendix B: *Azadi* Score

Azadi

(Freedom)

Samay Hamed

Arson Fahim

March (♩.=c.120)

Voice

f

So rod e sar za min e mast A za di a za di a

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet in B♭

Clarinet in B♭

Alto Clarinet in E♭

Horn in F

Trumpet in B♭

Trumpet in B♭

Trumpet in B♭

Snare Drum

Bass Drum

Cymbals

p *f*

Piano

mf

Sitar

March (♩.=c.120)

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

13

Voice

za di Ta ra na e za min e mast A za di a za di a za di A za di Roh e a dam o sho gu fa o pa rin da

Fl. Ob. Cl. Cl. Alto Cl. Hn. Tpt. Tpt. Tpt. S. D. B. D. Cym. Pno. Sit. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

mf *f*

26

Voice

ast A za di sa da e ab shar e sher o khan da ast A za di Sho ko e koh e mast A za di Ta ja som e sho

Fl.

f

Ob.

Cl.

Cl.

Alto Cl.

Hn.

mf

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tpt.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

Sit.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

40

rit.

A tempo
Freely

Voice

ko e mast

Fl.

cresc.

Ob.

Cl.

cresc.

Cl.

cresc.

Alto Cl.

cresc.

Hn.

cresc.

Tpt.

cresc.

Tpt.

f

cresc.

Tpt.

f

cresc.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

espress.

Sit.

rit.

A tempo
Freely

Vln. I

cresc.

Vln. II

cresc.

Vla.

cresc.

Vc.

cresc.

52

Voice

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Cl.

Alto Cl.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tpt.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

Sit.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

64

Voice

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Cl.

Alto Cl.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tpt.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

mf

Sit.

Vln. I

p

Vln. II

p

Vla.

p

Vc.

p

76

(♩=𝅗𝅥) 7

Voice

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Cl.

Alto Cl.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tpt.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

Sit.

(♩=𝅗𝅥)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

88

Voice

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Cl.

Alto Cl.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tpt.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

Sit.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf f mf mf mf mf f mf mf f ff

March (♩=c.120)

95

Voice

A za di san gar e ba ra e razm e ma A za di Kha na e ba ra e bazm e ma

Fl.

Ob.

mf

Cl.

Cl.

Alto Cl.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tpt.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

mf

Sit.

March (♩=c.120)

Vln. I

mf

Vln. II

mf

Vla.

Vc.

mf

108

Voice: A za di So rod e me li e ta mam e rod kha na hast Az a di Mau ji par cha mi sa da e mast

Fl.
Ob.
Cl.
Cl.
Alto Cl.
Hn.
Tpt.
Tpt.
Tpt.
S. D.
B. D.
Cym.
Pno.
Sit.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.

120

1. 2.

Voice

So rod e sar za min e mast A za di a za di a za di Ta ra na e za min e mast A za di a za di a

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Cl.

Alto Cl.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tpt.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

Sit.

1. 2.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

132

Voice

za di So rod e sar za min e mast A za di a za di a za di Ta ra na e za min e mast A za di a za di a

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Cl.

Alto Cl.

Hn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tpt.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

Sit.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

144

Voice

za di A za di a za di a za di A za di a za di a za di

Fl.

cresc.

Ob.

cresc.

Cl.

cresc.

Cl.

cresc.

Alto Cl.

cresc.

Hn.

cresc.

Tpt.

cresc.

Tpt.

cresc.

Tpt.

cresc.

S. D.

B. D.

Cym.

Pno.

cresc.

Sit.

cresc.

Vln. I

cresc.

Vln. II

cresc.

Vla.

cresc.

Vc.

cresc.

Appendix C: *Zanan-e-Sarbuland* Score

Zanane sarbuland

Ustad Shefta

100

Flute 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ II

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Side Drum

Snare Drum

Triangle

Djembe

Xylophone

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Voice

Za - nan za - nan - e - sar - be

Piano

Sitar

Rubab

10

Flute 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ II

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Side Drum

Snare Drum

Triangle

Djembe

Xylophone

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Voice

land ___ za-nan za-nan - e - ar - ju - man ___ ze dast - o - pay - e - tan ba dur ba dur ta-nab - o - al - qa - o - ka

Piano

Sitar

Rubab

mp f

20

Flute 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ II

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Side Drum

Snare Drum

Triangle

Djembe

Xylophone

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Voice

mand Za - nan za - nan - e - sar - be - land za - nan za - nan - e - ar - ju mand

Piano

Sitar

Rubab

30

Flute 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ II

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Side Drum

Snare Drum

Triangle

Djembe

Xylophone

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

div

Voice

ze dast - o - pay - e - tan ba dur ba dur ta - nab - o - al - qa - o - ka mand.

Piano

Sitar

Rubab

39
Flute 1, 2
mp
mf
mp
Oboe 1, 2
mf
Clarinet in B♭ 1
mf
Clarinet in B♭ II
mf
Trumpet in B♭ 1
mp
Side Drum
mf
Snare Drum
mf
Triangle
mf
Djembe
mf
Xylophone
Violin 1
mf
Violin 2
mf
Viola
mf
Violoncello
div
mf
Voice
Du - rud - e - ma ba ma - da - ran ba khwa - ha
Sho - har - e - ma ba - ra - ba - ri ba - ra - da
Ne - zam - e - na ba - ra - ba - ri ne - gun - o -
Piano
mp
Sitar
Rubab
mp
mp

48

Flute 1, 2

mp

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ II

Trumpet in B♭ 1

mp

Side Drum

Snare Drum

Triangle

Djembe

Xylophone

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Voice

ran ba dokh - ta - ran
r - o - khwa - ha - ri
sar she - kas - ta - bad

Ba - ham - sa ran - e meh ra - ban
Ba har du jins - e - ham sa - far
Dar - e - ta - fa - wot - o - se - tam

Piano

mp

Sitar

Rubab

mp

57

Flute 1, 2

mp

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ II

mp

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Side Drum

Snare Drum

Triangle

Djembe

Xylophone

Violin 1

mp

Violin 2

mp

Viola

Violoncello

Voice

ba in kho - jes - ta ham - ra - han Du - rud - e - ma ba ma - de - ran ba khwa - ha - ran ba dokh - ta -
ya - ga - na - ghi - o - ham - sa - ri Sho - har - e - ma ba - ra - ba - ri ba hars du jins - e - ham sa
ba dast - e - ha - dil bas - ta bad Ne - zam - e - na ba - ra - ba - ri ne - gun - o - sar she - kas - ta -

Piano

Sitar

Rubab

65

Flute 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ II

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Side Drum

Snare Drum

Triangle

Djembe

Xylophone

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Voice

ran Za - nan za - nan - e - sar - be - land za - nan za - nan - e - ar - ju - man ze dast - o - pay - e - tan ba
far Za - nan za - nan - e - sar - be - land za - nan za - nan - e - ar - ju - man ze dast - o - pay - e - tan ba
bad Za - nan za - nan - e - sar - be - land za - nan za - nan - e - ar - ju - man ze dast - o - pay - e - tan ba

Piano

Sitar

Rubab

74

Flute 1, 2

Oboe 1, 2

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ II

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Side Drum

Snare Drum

Triangle

Djembe

Xylophone

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Voice

dur ba dur ta-nab - o - al - qa - o - ka mand
dur ba dur ta-nab - o - al - qa - o - ka mand
dur ba dur ta-nab - o - al - qa - o - ka mand

Piano

Sitar

Rubab

Appendix D: *The Four Seasons of Afghanistan* Programme Notes

The Four Seasons of Afghanistan (2010)
by William Harvey
(b. 1982)

For Afghan instruments and symphony orchestra

Performance History:
Afghan Youth Orchestra*
Conducted by the composer
*Main ensemble of Afghanistan National Institute of Music
Founded and directed by Dr. Ahmad Sarmast

Institut Francais d'Afghanistan (Kabul): February 2011 and February 2013
Kennedy Center: February 7, 2013
Carnegie Hall: February 12, 2013

Program Notes:

Just as Astor Piazzola re-imagined Antonio Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" for Argentina, this work recasts the great masterwork in a thoroughly Afghan context. It is scored for five solo Afghan instruments (rubab, sarod, sitar, ghichak, and tabla), accompanied by an orchestra of clarinets, trumpets, xylophone, glockenspiel, djembes, zirbaghali, snare drum, bass drum, crash cymbals, suspended cymbals, triangle, guitars, bass guitar, three violin sections (the third of which should consist of young Afghan girls), violas, cello, and piano (four hands).

Spring

I. Nawruz

After the trumpet solemnly intones the rhythm of "Bismillah Al-Rahman Al-Rahim," a joyous celebration of the Persian New Year in Babur Gardens begins with the tabla (*kerwa* rhythm) leading the full orchestra into Vivaldi's theme. The solo Afghan instruments imitate the birds, followed by the piano playing the famously difficult virtuoso motive. Cadenzas for rubab and ghichak follow before the movement draws to a close. *D Major, 4'15"*

II. King's Palace

Guitar, sitar, and bass guitar accompany a solo clarinet, which quietly plays Vivaldi's mournful melody during a wistful springtime tour of the ruined palace of King Amanullah. *D Minor, 2'20"*

III. Pistachios

The original 12/8 becomes a fast 7/8 (Afghan *mughuli* rhythm) and the melody is rearranged in this spirited celebration of a favorite Afghan snack. The spotlight here goes to the third violin section of young Afghan girls, the future of this country. They ask their father (represented by the rubab) for pistachios, so he takes them to the Pistachio Seller (the rubab and orchestra play the famous Afghan tune of the same name). In the coda *(gehdah),* the 7/8 becomes an even faster 8/8 as the rubab and sitar drive the work to its conclusion. *D Major, 3'30"*

Summer

I. Heat

Vivaldi's poem describes "languishing in the heat," which happens often here. The xylophone, clarinet, and ghichak ominously predict the coming storm. *G Minor, 2'45"*

II. Dust

Dust whirling in the wind precedes many a storm in this country. The sitar plaintively plays Vivaldi's static melody, while guitars interrupt with the sound of thunder. *G Minor, 1'45"*
III. Storm

The original 3/4 becomes a very fast 7/8 (*mughuli*) and a chance to feature the tabla between the orchestra's angry interjections. Rubab and sarod cadenzas (played with the tabla) form the bulk of the movement. In the coda *(gehdah),* the 7/8 becomes an extremely fast 8/8 as the tabla brings this season to a brilliant, exciting ending. *G Minor, 4'45"*

Autumn

I. Pomegranate Harvest

Vivaldi's orchestral introduction becomes rhythmically transformed into 6/8 (*dadra* rhythm) in order to prepare the way for the rubab to play the famous Afghan tune celebrating pomegranates *(Anar Anar).* The music fades away quietly as an eerie introduction to the next movement.
F Major and A Phrygian, 3'00"

II. In Memory of Heroes

Scored for sarod only, this movement is dedicated to the memory of the many heroes who have died defending Afghanistan. *C Minor with raised 6th, 3'00"*

III. Buzkashi

Vivaldi's hunt in the original becomes a buzkashi game in *kerwa* rhythm. The trumpets signal provide a fanfare inspired by Baba Qiran's Katagani, an Uzbek song closely associated with buzkashi. Tremolo violins and solo cello depict the milling horses. Sarod and rubab compete to see who will emerge from the pack with the goat carcass, but the humble ghichak emerges as the victor! To celebrate, the trumpet sounds a triumphant fanfare. *F Major, 3'00"*

Winter

I. Badakhshan

The ghichak is the prominent instrument here, depicting the icy cold of a winter in Afghanistan's most remote province. *D Minor, 3'30"*

II. Khana

The strings quietly accompany the ghichak as it plays Vivaldi's most beautiful melody, before the whole orchestra warmly joins it in an affirmation of coming home (*khana)*. The movement proceeds immediately to the next without pause. *F Major, 2'20"*

III. Salaam

The rubab closes the "Four Seasons of Afghanistan" with a cadenza improvised over a soft, held major chord. The cadenza becomes a prayer for peace. *F Major, 0'45"*

Appendix E: Ethics Approval, Participant Information Sheets, and Consent Forms

16 January 2020

Lauren Braithwaite
(Faculty of Music)
Linacre College
St Cross Road
Oxford

Dear Lauren

Research Ethics Approval Ref No: R66936/RE002

Title: DPhil Thesis

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (IDREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to the IDREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly approval has been granted.

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project, which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application, you should submit details to the IDREC for consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Rebecca Bryant
Research Ethics Manager

cc:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) Approval Reference: **R66936/RE002**

Researching the place of music education in Afghanistan

1. Why is this research being conducted?

Music is an important part of Afghan society and music education institutions and programmes play and important role in continuing Afghanistan's rich musical heritage while offering Afghan citizens the opportunity to utilise music's positive social and personal well-being benefits. This research is looking at how music is currently used in Afghan communities and how music education practices are perceived by society. By interviewing a range of participants, I aim to understand the challenges facing music education in Afghanistan and suggest ways in which they may be overcome.

2. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you are either a student or a teacher at a music education institution/programme, a family member of a student, or are involved in some way with music education in Afghanistan. You may also have been invited to take part because you are a member of Afghanistan's religious community or a member of/affiliated with a Government ministry.

3. Do I have to take part?

No. You can ask questions about the research before deciding whether or not to take part. If you do agree to take part, you may withdraw yourself from the study at any time, without giving a reason, by advising me of this decision. Any data given prior to your withdrawal will be immediately destroyed.

4. What will happen to me if I take part in the research?

If you are still happy to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form **OR** give oral consent if you do not feel comfortable or able to give written consent.

After giving consent, you will be interviewed either at your place of study or work, online via a platform such as Skype or Zoom, or at another mutually agreed public location. I may contact you at a later date for a further interview(s) or to speak to you over Skype/FaceTime when I am out of the country.

Before beginning the interview, I will discuss with you the topics I wish to cover and will ask for your feedback about any concerns you may have or limitations to what you can discuss. If the interview is being conducted in Dari, a translator will be present; if you do not feel comfortable having a translator present, the interview can be done just between yourself and the researcher, and in the case of minors under 18 years of age, with another adult present (such as a parent/carer, teacher).

The interview will take no more than one hour unless you wish to discuss a certain topic further. You can also ask to pause or stop the interview at any time. With your consent, I would like to audio record our conversation because I will need an accurate record of our interview to refer back to when writing up my research.

5. Are there any potential risks in taking part?

While there are no direct risks involved in taking part in this research, due to the controversial nature of music in Afghanistan, its historical censorship, and its relation to sensitive issues such as religion and politics, there are some potential risks involved with discussing this topic. As the researcher for

this project, I will be undertaking a number of steps to minimise the risks to your safety as a participant and the safety of myself and the translator. As explained below in more detail, all data collected during the research will be fully protected, anonymised and encrypted and any direct quotes (used with your consent) or sensitive data references will be fully anonymised. During the interview you can decline to discuss any topic or issue which you feel puts your safety at risk or undermines your position. You may also, if you wish, use code words or pseudonyms when referring to certain people or organisations. Finally, all interviews will be carried out in places where there is no risk that the general public may overhear the conversation and wherever possible, the interviews will be done at the music institutes themselves or at your place of work.

It is important that you discuss with me any concerns you may have about taking part in the study and any potential risks you think may arise from being interviewed.

6. Are there any benefits in taking part?

There will be no direct or personal benefit to you from taking part in this research other than having the opportunity to discuss issues you feel strongly about or have an interest in.

7. What happens to the data provided?

The information you provide during the study is the **research data**. Any research data from which you can be identified (personal information, audio recordings) is known as **personal data**. This includes more sensitive categories of personal data such as your racial or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs.

Personal / sensitive data will be anonymised and stored safely and confidentially in password-protected files which will be stored on the researcher's personal computer start-up disk, which itself will be fully encrypted. When data needs to be moved from the collection site to the researcher's computer, it will be stored on an encrypted USB or external hard drive. The data will be stored for three years after publication or public release of the work of the research. All files containing participant data (audio recordings, interview transcripts) will be labelled with a participant number and any identifiable data will be coded.

Consent forms will be digitised and stored for three years after publication or public release of the work of the research. Hard copies will be immediately destroyed after digitisation.

Only I, the researcher (Lauren Braithwaite), and my supervisors (Professor Samantha Dieckmann and Professor Eric Clarke) will have access to the research data. Responsible members of the University of Oxford may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the research.

I will ask your permission to use direct quotes (anonymously or attributed to you name with your consent) in any research outputs.

8. Will the research be published?

The research will be written up as part of my DPhil thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives to facilitate its use in future research. If so, the thesis will be openly accessible. The research may also be published in academic papers or used in part for conferences papers; in these cases, only direct quotes or written transcriptions will be used (using pseudonyms and coding direct identifiers) unless you give explicit permission for other data (such as audio recordings) to be used.

The University of Oxford is committed to the dissemination of its research for the benefit of society and the economy and, in support of this commitment, has established an online archive of research

materials. This archive includes digital copies of student theses successfully submitted as part of a University of Oxford postgraduate degree programme. Holding the archive online gives easy access for researchers to the full text of freely available theses, thereby increasing the likely impact and use of that research.

9. Who has reviewed this study?

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee **R66936/RE002.**

10. Who do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact Lauren Braithwaite, lauren.braithwaite@music.ox.ac.uk and we will do our best to answer your query. I/we will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

Chair, **Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee**; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

11. Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the study.
The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest.
Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from https://compliance.web.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

12. Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Lauren Braithwaite
Faculty of Music
St Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1DB, United Kingdom
Lauren.braithwaite@music.ox.ac.uk

صفحه معلوماتی برای اشتراک کنندگان

مرجع تصویب کمیته تحقیقاتی اصول اخلاقی پوهنتون مرکزی R66936/ RE 0002

تحقیق در مورد جایگاه آموزش موسیقی در افغانستان

۱.چرا این تحقیق انجام می شود.
موسیقی یک بخش مهم جامعهٔ افغانی است و انستیتوت ها و پروگرام های آموزش موسیقی درادامه دادن میراث غنی موسیقی افغانستان رول مهمی را ادا می‌کند چون ازین طریق به شهروندان افغانستان فرصت مهیا میسازند تا از مزایای مثبت اجتماعی ورفاه شخصی موسیقی استفاده نمایند. این مطالعه در مورد اینکه در حال حاضر از موسیقی در جامعه افغانی چگونه استفاده می شود و چگونه درک در مورد شیوه های آموزش موسیقی در جامعه موجود است تحقیق می کند. هدف من از مصاحبه با اشتراک کنندگان فهمیدن در مورد چالش های که در راه آموزش موسیقی در افغنستان موجود است می باشد و راهکار های را برای بیرون رفت ازین چالش ها پیشنهاد نمایم.

۱- چرا من برای اشتراک دعوت شده ام؟

شمابه این دلیل دعوت شده اید چون شما متعلم و یا هم استاد در انستیتوت/ پروگرام آموزش موسیقی هستید، و یا شما عضوی فامیل یکی از متعلمین، و یا هم به نحوه در بخش آموزش موسیقی در افغانستان شامل هستید. شما همچنان امکان دارد برای اینکه عضوی اجتماع مذهبی افغانستان هستید به این برنامه دعوت شده باشید و یا هم ا گر شما عضو/ وابسته به کدام وزارت خانه در دولت هستید دعوت شده باشید.

۲- آیا من باید اشتراک نمائیم؟

نخیر، شما میتوانید پیش ازاینکه در مورد اشتراک نمودن و یا ننمودن تصمیم بگیرید سوالات را در مورد تحقیق از ما بپرسید. اگر شما موافقه می نمائید که اشتراک نمائید، شما میتوانید بدون ارائه دلیل فقط با اطلاع نمودن من هر زمان که خواسته باشید مطالعه را ترک نمائید. هر معلومات را که شما قبل از ترک نمودن مطالعه به ما اراپه نموده باشید ما آنرا از بین میبریم.

۳- اگر من درین مطالعه شرکت نمایم با چی مواردی مواجه خواهم شد؟

اگر شما به رضایت خود می خواهید شرکت نمائید، من از شما می خواهم تا یک فورمه رضایت را امضا نمائید و یا هم اگر شما با امضا نمودن فورمه احساس راحتی نمی کنید و یا قادر به دادن رضایت نامه نیستید می توانید رضایت خود را شفاهی بدهید.

بعد از رضایت شما برای شرکت نمودن در مطالعه، با شما یک مصاحبه آنلاین در جای آموزش و یا جای کار شما ت وسط سکایپ، و یا زوم و یا هم با رضایت هر دو جانب در یک جای عامه انجام خواهد شد. وقتی من بیرون از کشورباشم امکان دارد توسط سکایپ / فیس تایم با شما مصاحبه دیگر نمایم .

قبل ازینکه مصاحبه آغاز گردد، من با شما در مورد موضوعات که میخواهم آنرا تحت پوشش قرار دهم صحبت خواه م کرد ونظرشما را درمورد موضوعی که در مورد آن
نگران هستید و یا هم کدام محدودیت های در صحبت های تان دارید خواهم پرسید.

اگر مصاحبه در دری می باشد ما کمک ترجمان را خواهیم داشت، اما اگر شما با بودن ترجمان راحت نیستید ما می توانیم مصاحبه را بین شما و تحقیق کننده انجام دهیم، و در صورت که سن شخص از ۱۸ سال کمتر باشد میتوانیم با کمک شخص بالغ دیگر والدین/سرپرست و یا معلم مصاحبه را انجام دهیم.

به غیر از آنکه شما در مورد کدام موضوع خاص گفتنی داشته باشید، مصاحبه بیشتر از یک ساعت طول نخواهد کش
ید. شما همچنان می توانید هر زمانی در جریان مصاحبه درخواست وقفه
یا هم درخواست بکلی توقف نمودن آنرا نمائید.

با رضایت شما، من می خواهم گفتگوی ما را ثبت نمایم، بخاطریکه من به ثبت دقیق مصاحبه ما بعداً وقتی مطالعه تح
قیقی را می نویسم نیاز خواهم داشت.

۴- آیا کدام خطر بالقوه در نتیجه شرکت درین مطالعه موجود است؟

درحالیکه با شرکت درین تحقیق با کدام خطر مستقیمی مواجه نمی شوید اما بخاطری ماهیت بحث بر انگیز موسیقی د
ر افغانستان، تاریخ سانسور آن ، و رابطه آن با بعضی مسایل حساس مانند دین و سیاست بعضی از خطرات بالقوه
با بحث در مورد این مساله وجود خواهد داشت.

بحیث محقق درین پروژه من بعضی از اقداماتی را عملی خواهم کرد تا خطر برای شما بحیث اشتراک کننده و خطر
برای من و ترجمان را تا به کمترین حد کاهش دهم. همانطوریکه در ذیل بیشتر واضح شده است، هر معلوماتی که د
ر جریان تحقیق جمع آوری می شود ما آنرا به طور کامل محفوظ، ناشناخته ، و رمز گذرای خواهیم کرد و هر صح
بت مستقیم از شما (که با رضایت شما) و یا معلومات حساس را ناشناخته خواهیم کرد.

در جریان مصاحبه اگر شما در مورد کدام موضوع خاصی که شما فکر می‌کنید شما را با خطر مواجه می کند و یا
موقعیت شما را تضعیف می نمائید صحبت ننمائید. شما همچنان اگر بخواهید می توانید وقتی در مورد اشخاص یا مو
ضوع خاصی صحبت می کنید از رمز های خاصی استفاده نمائید. و بلاخره تمام مصاحبه ها در جاهای انجام خواهد
شد، که خطر شنیدن آن توسط مردم عام نه باشد و در صورت امکان همه مصاحبه ها در انستیتوت موسیقی مربوط
ه و یا هم در جای کار شما انجام خواهد یافت.

این مهم است تا شما با من در باره هرگونه نگرانی که در مورد اشتراک درین مطالعه را داشته باشید و همچنان در م
ورد هرگونه خطر بالفعل که به فکر شما با مصاحبه شما ربط داشته باشد در میان بگذارید.

۵- آیا شرکت نمودن درین مطالعه کدام مفاد در پی دارد؟

با اشتراک درین مطالعه تحقیقاتی به شما کدام نفع مستقیم و یا شخصی ازین تحقیق نخواهد رسید بدون آنکه به شما مو
قع مهیا خواهد شد تا در مورد مسایلی صحبت نمائید که در مورد آن احساس عمیق و یا در آن علاقه خاص دارید.

۶- به معلومات که مهیا شده چی خواهد شد؟

معلوماتی را که شما در جریان مطالعه ارائه نموده اید **معلومات برای تحقیق** نامیده می
شود.از هر معلوماتیکه برای تحقیقباشد و شما از آن شناخته شوید (معلومات شخصی، و یا صدای ثبت شده) به حیث
معلومات شخصی نامیده می شود.
درین بخش کتگوری های بیشتر حساس معلومات شخصی مانند اصل و نصب نژادی و قومی و اعتقادات مذهبی
و سیاسی شامل است.

معلومات شخصی/حساس
هویت این معلومات دهنده نامشخص شده و در پرونده های که حاوی رمز بوده به شکل ایمنی و پنهان نگهداری می
شود، این معلومات در کمپیوتر شخصی محقق نگهداری شده که مکملاً رمزگذاری شده است. وقتی معلومات از جاهای
جمع آوری شده به کمپیوتر محقق انتقال داده می شود این معلومات در یو اس بی و هاردیسک های رمگذاری شده
ذخیره می شوند. معلومات فقط برای سه سال بعد از نشر کار تحقیق نگهداری می شود. تمام پرونده های که حاوی
معلومات اشتراک کنندگان (ثبت صدا، نوشته مصاحبه ها) بذریعه یک نمبر مشخص اشتراک کننده نامگذاری خواهند
شد و تمام معلومات که قابل شناسایی است کد گذاری خواهد شد.

رضایت نامه ها دیجیتالی خواهند شد و بعداز نشر کار تحقیق برای سه سال نگهداری خواهند شد. کاپی های اصلی بعد از دیجیتلی شدن سریعاً از بین خواهد برده شد.

تنها من محقق (لارین بریتویت) و سوپروایزر (ناظر) من (پروفیسور سمنتا دیکمن و پروفیسور ایریک کلارک) به معلومات تحقیق دسترسی خواهیم داشت. اعضای پوهنتون اکسفورد امکان دارد برای نظارت و بررسی این تحقیق اجازه دسترسی به آن را حاصل نمایند.
من جهت استفاده مستقیم حرف های شما در تحقیق که در آن هویت شما نا مشخص میماند از شما خواهم پرسید.

۸.آیا این تحقیق منتشر خواهد شد؟

این تحقیق به حیث یک بخشی رساله دکترا من نوشته خواهد شد. بعد از تسلیم نمودن موفقانه رساله تحقیق، این رساله به شکل چاپی و آنلاین در ارشیف پوهنتون برای استفاده آن در تحقیقات بعدی موجود خواهد بود.
اگر این طور باشد این رساله به عموم قابل استفاده خواهد بود. این تحقیق امکان دارد دربعضی از اخبار اکادمیک چاپ شود و یا هم در بعضی از کنفرانس ها از آن استفاده شود. درین صورت فقط از حرف های مستقیم و از بخش نوشتاری آن استفاده خواهد شد (با استفاده از اسامی مستعار و کدگذاری مستقیم) اما در صورت که شما اجازه صریح استفاده از معلومات دیگر (مانند صدای ثبت شده) را بدهید ما از آن استفاده خواهیم کرد.

۹.این مطالعه تحقیقاتی را کی بررسی نموده است؟

این مطالعه توسط کمیته مرکزی تحقیقاتی اصول اخلاقی پوهنتون آکسفورد R66936/ RE 0002 بررسی و اصول اخلاقی آن تصویب شده است.

۱۰. درصورت که من در مورد تحقیق نگرانی داشته باشم ویا هم بخواهم شکایت نمایم با کی به تماس شوم؟

لطفاً هرنوع نگرانی که در مورد هر بخش این مطالعه دارید با تماس با تحقیق کننده، خانم لارین بریتویت Lauren.braithwaite@music.ox.ac.uk با ما شریک سازید تا ما بتوانیم به اسرع وقت به نگرانی شما جواب قانع کننده ارائه نمائیم. من/ما به نگرانی شما در 10 روزکاری رسیدگی خواهیم کرد و کوشش می نمائیم تا با شما در مورد حل آن به تماس شویم. اگر شما باز هم راضی نیستید و می خواهید شکایت نمائید، می توانید با رئیس کمیته تحقیقاتی اصول اخلاقی در پوهنتون آکسفورد به تماس شوید تا آنها بتوانند به زود ترین فرصت ممکن مساله را حل نمایند.

ایمیل رئیس کمیته تحقیقات اصول اخلاقی بخش علوم اجتماعی و علوم انسانی: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk
آدرس: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

۱۱. نگهداری معلومات

با توجه به معلومات شخصی شما، پوهنتون اکسفورد مسوول کنترول معلومات می باشد و همچنان نحوۀ استفادۀ معلومات شخصی شما در تحقیق را بررسی می نماید.
پوهنتون معلومات شخصی شما را به طوری که در بالا مشخص شده در روند تحقیق استفاده می نماید. تحقیق کاری است که برای مفاد عامه راه اندازی می شود.
معلومات بیشتر در مورد حقوق شما به حیث ارائه کننده معلومات شخصی را میتوانید از لینک زیردریابید.
https://compliance.web.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

۱۲. معلومات بیشتر ومشخصات تماس

اگر میخواهید در مورد تحقیق قبل از آغاز آن صحبت نمائید (ویا هم بعداً سوال داشته باشید)، لطفاً به آدرس ذیل به تماس شوید:

لارین بریتویت
فاکولته موسیقی
St Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1DB, United Kingdom:آدرس
Lauren.braithwaite@music.ox.ac.uk

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) Approval Reference: **R66936/RE002**

Researching the place of music education in Afghanistan

Purpose of Study:
Music is an important part of Afghan society and music education institutions and programmes play and important role in continuing Afghanistan's rich musical heritage while offering Afghan citizens the opportunity to utilise music's positive social and personal well-being benefits. This research is looking at how music is currently used in Afghan communities and how music education practices are perceived by society. By interviewing a range of participants, I aim to understand the challenges facing music education in Afghanistan and suggest ways in which they may be overcome.

		Please initial or thumbprint each box
1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or penalty.	☐
3	I understand that research data collected during the study may be looked at by authorised people outside the research team. I give permission for these individuals to access my data.	☐
4	I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.	☐
5	I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	☐
6	I understand how this research will be written up and published.	☐
7	I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	☐
8	I consent to having information about my ethnicity, religious beliefs, or family circumstances collected	☐
9	I consent to being audio recorded	☐
10	I understand how audio recordings will be used in research outputs	☐
11a	I consent to having a translator present during interviews	☐
11b	I consent to having any audio recording of myself translated and transcribed at a later date	☐
12a	I give permission to be quoted directly in research outputs but only fully anonymously **OR**	☐
		☐

12b	I do not wish to be directly quoted *(please sign* ***either*** *12a* ***or*** *12b, not both)*	
13	I agree to take part in the study	

If you do want to take part, please write your name below, or place your thumb print in the box.

	dd / mm / yyyy	
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
		Thumb print

	dd / mm / yyyy	
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

صفحهٔ معلوماتی برای اشتراک کنندگان

شمارهٔ مرجع تائید کمیته مرکزی شیوهٔ تحقیق پوهنتون: R66936/ RE 0002

تحقیق در مورد جایگاه آموزش موسیقی در افغانستان

هدف تحقیق:

موسیقی یک بخش مهم جامعهٔ افغانی است و انستیتوت ها و پروگرام های آموزش موسیقی رول مهمی را در ادامه دادن میراث غنی موسیقی افغانستان ادا می‌کند چون ازین طریق به شهروندان افغانستان فرصت مهیا میسازند تا از مزایای مثبت اجتماعی ورفاه شخصی موسیقی استفاده نمایند. این مطالعه در مورد اینکه در حال حاضر از موسیقی در جامعه افغانی چگونه استفاده می شود و چگونه درک در مورد شیوه های آموزش موسیقی در جامعه موجود است تحقیق می کند. هدف من از مصاحبه با اشتراک کنندگان فهمیدن در مورد چالش های که در راه آموزش موسیقی در افغانستان موجود است می باشد و راهکار های را برای بیرون رفت ازین چالش ها پیشنهاد نمایم.

لطفا هر خانه خالی را امضا نمایید و یا هم

۱	من تصدیق می کنم که صفحه معلومات برای تحقیق فوق الذکر را خوانده و فهمیده ام. من فرصت کافی برای ارزیابی معلومات ، برای پرسش سوالات را داشته ام و جوابات قانع کننده را بدست آورده ام.	☐
۲	من این را درک میکنم که اشتراک درین تحقیق اختیاری بوده و من می‌توانم آزادانه هر زمانی که بخواهم از شرکت درین تحقیق صرف نظر کنم، بدون آنکه کدام دلیل ارائه نمایم، و بدون آنکه عواقب نامطلوب داشته باشد.	☐
۳	من این را درک می کنم که معلومات که در جریان تحقیق جمع آوری شده شاید در اختیار افراد مجاز بیرون از تیم تحقیق قرار داده شود. من به این افراد اجازه دسترسی به معلومات خود را میدهم.	☐
۴	من این را میدانم که این پروژه توسط کمیته مرکزی شیوه تحقیق پوهنتون آکسفورد ارزیابی و مجوز اصول شیوه تحقیق را دریافت نموده است.	☐
۵	من این را میدانم که کدام اشخاص به معلومات شخصی ارائه شده دسترسی خواهند داشت، چگونه این معلومات ذخیره می شود و در ختم پروژه به این معلومات چی خواهد شد.	☐
۶	من این را میدانم که چگونه این تحقیق نوشته و چاپ می شود.	☐

۷	من این را میدانم که چگونه ابراز نگرانی و شکایت خود را درج نمایم.	☐
۸	من تصدیق می نمایم که معلومات در مورد ملیت، اعتقادات مذهبی، و وضعیت فامیلی را به رضایت خودم ارائه نموده ام.	☐
۹	من رضایت دارم تا صدای من ثبت شود.	☐
۱۰	من این را می دانم که صدای ثبت شده من چگونه در تحقیق استفاده می شود.	☐
۱۱الف	من رضایت دارم تا در جریان مصاحبه ترجمان حاضر باشد.	☐
۱۱ب	من راضی هستم تا صدای ثبت شده من ترجمه و نوشته شود.	☐
۱۲الف	من کاملا اجازه استفاده مستقیم همهٔ معلومات ارائه شدهٔ و گفته های خود را در تحقیق میدهم اما هویت من باید پنهان بماند و یا	☐
۱۲ب	من نمی خواهم مستقیماً از حرف های من استفاده شود. (لطفاً از ۱۲الف و یا ۱۲ ب یکی آنرا نشانی نمائید نه هر دوی آنرا)	☐
۱۳	من موافق هستم تا در تحقیق اشتراک نمایم.	☐

اگر شما راضی هستید تا در تحقیق اشتراک نمائید، لطفا در ذیل اسم تانرا بنویسد، و یا نشان انگشت تانرا در خانه خالی ذیل بگذارید.

اسم اشتراک کننده	تاریخ	امضا
____________	dd / mm / yyyy	____________

نشان انگشت

☐

dd / mm / yyyy

اسم گیرندهٔ رضایت نامه   تاریخ   امضا

ORAL CONSENT SCRIPTS

Type 2: Full Oral Information Giving and Consent Seeking Process

Record this consent process using a digital recorder (if participant has consented to this) or by using a Record of Consent Form.

[Oral information giving stage]

Hello, my name is Lauren Braithwaite. I'm doing some research and I wondered if you'd be interested in being involved. I'm currently doing my PhD at the University of Oxford in the Faculty of Music. My research is on Music Education in Afghanistan. Can I tell you more about the study? *[Await confirmation]*

In my study, I want to find out about people's experiences of Music Education in Afghanistan and understand its place in society. I'm interested in talking to students, students' families, music teachers and other community members. If you choose to be a part of this project, here is what will happen:

After you give consent, I will have a conversation with you either at your place of study or work, or at another mutually agreed public location where I will ask a range of questions about you experiences of Music Education in Afghanistan and your views on music. The information you give will be used as part of my PhD thesis.

Before beginning the interview, I will discuss with you the topics I wish to cover and will ask for your feedback about any concerns you may have or limitations to what you can discuss. If the interview is being conducted in Dari, a translator will be present; if you do not feel comfortable having a translator present, the interview can be done just between yourself and the researcher, and in the case of minors under 18 years of age, with another adult present (such as a parent/carer, teacher).

With your consent, I would like to audio record our conversation because I will need an accurate record of our interview to refer back to when writing up my research.

The University of Oxford is responsible overall for ensuring the safe and proper use of any personal information you provide, solely for research purposes. Further information about your rights to information you provide is available from the University's data protection web: https://compliance.web.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

The information you provide during the study is the **research data**. Any research data from which you can be identified (personal information, audio recordings) is known as **personal data**. This includes more sensitive categories of personal data such as your racial or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs.

Personal / sensitive data will be anonymised and stored safely and confidentially in password-protected files. These will be stored on the researcher's personal computer start-up disk which will be fully encrypted. When data needs to be moved from the collection site to the researcher's computer, it will be stored on an encrypted USB or external hard drive. The data will be stored for three years after publication or public release of the work of the research. All files containing participant data (audio recordings, interview transcripts) will be labelled with a participant number and any identifiable data will be coded.

Only I, the researcher (Lauren Braithwaite), and my supervisors (Professor Samantha Dieckmann and Professor Eric Clarke) will have access to the research data. Responsible members of the University of Oxford may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the research.

I will ask your permission to use direct quotes (anonymously) in any research outputs.

While there are no direct risks involved in taking part in this research, due to the controversial nature of music in Afghanistan, its historical censorship, and its relation to sensitive issues such as religion and politics, there are some potential risks involved with

discussing this topic. As the researcher for this project, I will be undertaking a number of steps to minimise the risks to your safety as a participant and the safety of myself and the translator. As explained below in more detail, all data collected during the research will be fully protected, anonymised and encrypted and any direct quotes (used with your consent) or sensitive data references will be fully anonymised. During the interview you can decline to discuss any topic or issue which you feel puts your safety at risk or undermines your position. You may also, if you wish, use code words or pseudonyms when referring to certain people or organisations. Finally, all interviews will be carried out in places where there is no risk that the general public may overhear the conversation and wherever possible, the interviews will be done at the music institutes themselves or at your place of work.

It is important that you discuss with me any concerns you may have about taking part in the study and any potential risks you think may arise from being interviewed.

You don't have to agree to take part; you can ask me any questions you want before or throughout; you can also withdraw at any stage without giving a reason. If you do choose to withdraw, the information I have collected from you up to that point will not be used in the research.

With your permission, I would like to make an audio recording of our discussion to make sure I'm getting an accurate record of your thoughts. I may want to re-contact you to clarify information you gave me in your interview. In that case, I will ask you if you have time to answer some more questions.

The research will be written up as part of my DPhil thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives to facilitate its use in future research. If so, the thesis will be openly accessible. The research may also be published in academic papers or used in part for conference papers.

If you have any complaints or concerns please feel free to contact me in the first instance. You can reach me at lauren.braithwaite@music.ox.ac.uk.

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee **R66936/RE002.**

If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

Chair, **Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee**; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

Do you have any questions?

[Oral consent seeking stage, after participant has had sufficient time to think about whether s/he wants to take part]

Do you give your permission for me to interview you? Do you give me permission to audio record you? Do you give your permission for me to re-contact you to clarify information?

Are you happy to have a translator in the room during interview?

Are you happy for me to collect information about your ethnicity, religious beliefs, or family circumstances?

Do you give permission for anonymised quotes from yourself to be used in research outputs?

Are you happy to take part?

Ok, thanks, in which case let's start.