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reported from New York, and Reem Makhoul from Beit Jala, West Bank,
and Jerusalem.

For young flutist, a new life calls in the West

Palestinian seizes rare offer at prestigious European music school

A little more than three years ago she was a quiet, serious-minded 16-year-old flutist in the West Bank with posters of the Berlin Philharmonic flute soloist Emmanuel Pahud on her bedroom wall. Travel restrictions made it a struggle to go for lessons in Jerusalem. Finding space to practice in an apartment crowded with four siblings was difficult. Despite her hard work, her prospects seemed limited.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RINA CASTELNUOVO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Dalia Moukarker in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, above, and at home, below.

“There was an energy in her playing that I have heard as a teacher maybe five or six times in my 45 years of teaching,” a teacher said.

But teachers from Israel and an outside foundation recognized her talent and gave her lessons. She was the star performer at a West Bank master class taught by none other than Mr. Pahud.

Now the young woman, Dalia Moukarker, is on the cusp of a rare opportunity: the chance to study music at an important European music school. The conservatory of Karlsruhe, Germany, has offered her one of four spots for flutists this fall, along with financial aid. Ms. Moukarker has only to receive her German visa. If approved, she will become one of just a handful of West Bank Palestinians who have moved to the West to study as professional musicians.

"I love Palestine," she said in a recent interview at her home in the village of Beit Jala. But, she added, "I have big dreams in music, and maybe Germany will be a better chance to make these dreams become true."

Ms. Moukarker, 20, is a determined young woman with an independent streak, who began calling herself Sol to symbolize the start of a new life (borrowing the name from a beloved pet canary that flew away). Featured in a 2009 New York Times article about classical music study by young Palestinians in the occupied territories, she has attracted many loyal supporters.

After the article and an accompanying Web video appeared, a Columbia University professor, Katharina Pistor, was moved to send Ms. Moukarker the flute of her dead sister, and the two began an e-mail correspondence. When Ms. Moukarker later said she needed an instrument of higher quality to improve, Ms. Pistor bought her a used flute.

"She brings the best out of all of us," Ms. Pistor said in an interview by telephone. "You get the sense through her life about the hassles for a young person who has nothing to do with the political situation but whose ambitions are constrained by where she came from."

Ms. Moukarker took lessons from European teachers brought in by the Barenboim-Said Foundation, which promotes peace in the Middle East through classical music. She also traveled to Jerusalem, passing through checkpoints, for lessons with an Israeli teacher, Raanan Eylon, who said several Israeli supporters fought to help her gain permission to enter the city. When she could not get to Jerusalem, he went to Beit Jala.

"There was an energy in her playing that I have heard as a teacher maybe five or six times in my 45 years of teaching," he said. "It was the energy of freedom."

Next, a German woman who lived in the West Bank and gave Ms. Moukarker early lessons took her to Germany in the summer of 2011 to help her find a place to study. (The woman declined to be interviewed or identified because of difficulties arising from her years in the West Bank.)

One of her stops was Kapfenhardt, a village in the Black Forest where Renate Greiss-Armin, a flute teacher at the Karlsruhe conservatory, has a country house.

"You knew exactly when you saw her, she will do something interesting," Ms. Greiss-Armin recently said by telephone from Kapfenhardt. When the teacher asked her to play, Ms. Moukarker performed the first movement of Bach's A minor Partita for unaccompanied flute.

"This is one of our masterpieces," Ms. Greiss-Armin said. "She played

it with her whole will power and temperament." The teacher said she made suggestions, which Ms. Moukarker quickly absorbed. "With this girl I had the feeling she understands," Ms. Greiss-Armin said.

Ms. Moukarker went back to Germany in July to take the entrance exams. One of 50 flute auditioners, she played well but failed the ear-training test, partly because of her difficulty in understanding German, Ms. Greiss-Armin said. Nevertheless, conservatory officials decided to give her a chance, with the support of several flute students who served on the jury.

"We have to look at what she is able to do when she gets good teaching later," Ms. Greiss-Armin said.

The conservatory's director, Hartmut Höll, said that admitting Ms. Moukarker was also a way of showing support for Arab populations that may not have a high level of classical music training available.

"It's worth supporting them to make the dream come true," Mr. Höll said. He said the conservatory arranged for a grant of €800, or \$1,028, a month for Ms. Moukarker to live on and will try to find lodging for her.

Ms. Moukarker now has to study for another ear-training exam.

"I am not sure if I am strong enough," she said. "But I believe in myself."



Playing music gives her a sense of liberty, Ms. Moukarker said, explaining: "Music for me is my voice. It helped me to speak." She said she learned that "if you speak, you will live better."