



Persepolis resounds with music, friendship as 1.2m tune in to Armenian orchestra

Tehran, Yerevan step into fresh phase of cultural ties: *Minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Armenia began a “new phase” of cultural relations, Iranian Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi Amiri said on Sunday, as the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra celebrated its centenary with an open-air concert at Persepolis that drew 1.2 million online viewers within hours.

The historic performance on Saturday was staged beneath the ancient columns of the UNESCO World Heritage site near Shiraz. Ambassadors and diplomatic representatives from 17 countries attended in person, IRNA reported.

Among them were envoys from Brazil, Mexico, Kenya, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Denmark, and Serbia, alongside representatives from Sri Lanka, Nigeria, South Korea, Italy, Norway, Germany, and two UNESCO officials.

“Their presence underscores the event’s significance as a celebration of friendship and cultural diplomacy,” Salehi Amiri said.

The orchestra’s 110 musicians opened with Iran’s national anthem before performing works including Aram Khachaturian’s ‘Symphony No. 2’ and the patriotic Iranian anthem ‘Ey Iran’. When Armenian artists performed ‘Ey Iran,’ the audience applauded for a full minute, celebrating the centuries-old cultural bond.

“The echoes of friendship

between Iran and Armenia resounded through Persepolis,” Armenia’s ambassador to Iran Grigor Hovhannisyan said. “Just as our ancestors offered tributes here millennia ago, today we bring the gift of music, history, and creativity.”

The concert site was approximately 50 meters below the Apadana terrace, framed by moonlight and artistic lighting that highlighted the stage. The setting evoked the Gate of All Nations, where 2,500 years ago, delegations from 23 nations with diverse cultures gathered to mark the New Year and express commitment to peace. Local Armenians joined the Iranian audience, creating a vivid display of shared cultural heritage.

“This gift of music is our modern tribute,” Hovhannisyan said. “It reflects our history, independence, creativity, and enduring existence. It is a unique beginning for future collaboration.”

Speeches followed from Fars Province Governor Hossein Ali Amiri, Salehi Amiri, Armenian Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Zhanna Andreasyan, and Iran’s Minister of Science. All emphasized music as a universal language of peace and cooperation.

“Civilizations endure through culture and knowledge, not the sword,” Salehi Amiri said. Andreasyan described the performance as “a statement of universal values, peace, and

peaceful coexistence among nations.” Governor Amiri called the concert a symbol of “peace, friendship, and solidarity” between nations.

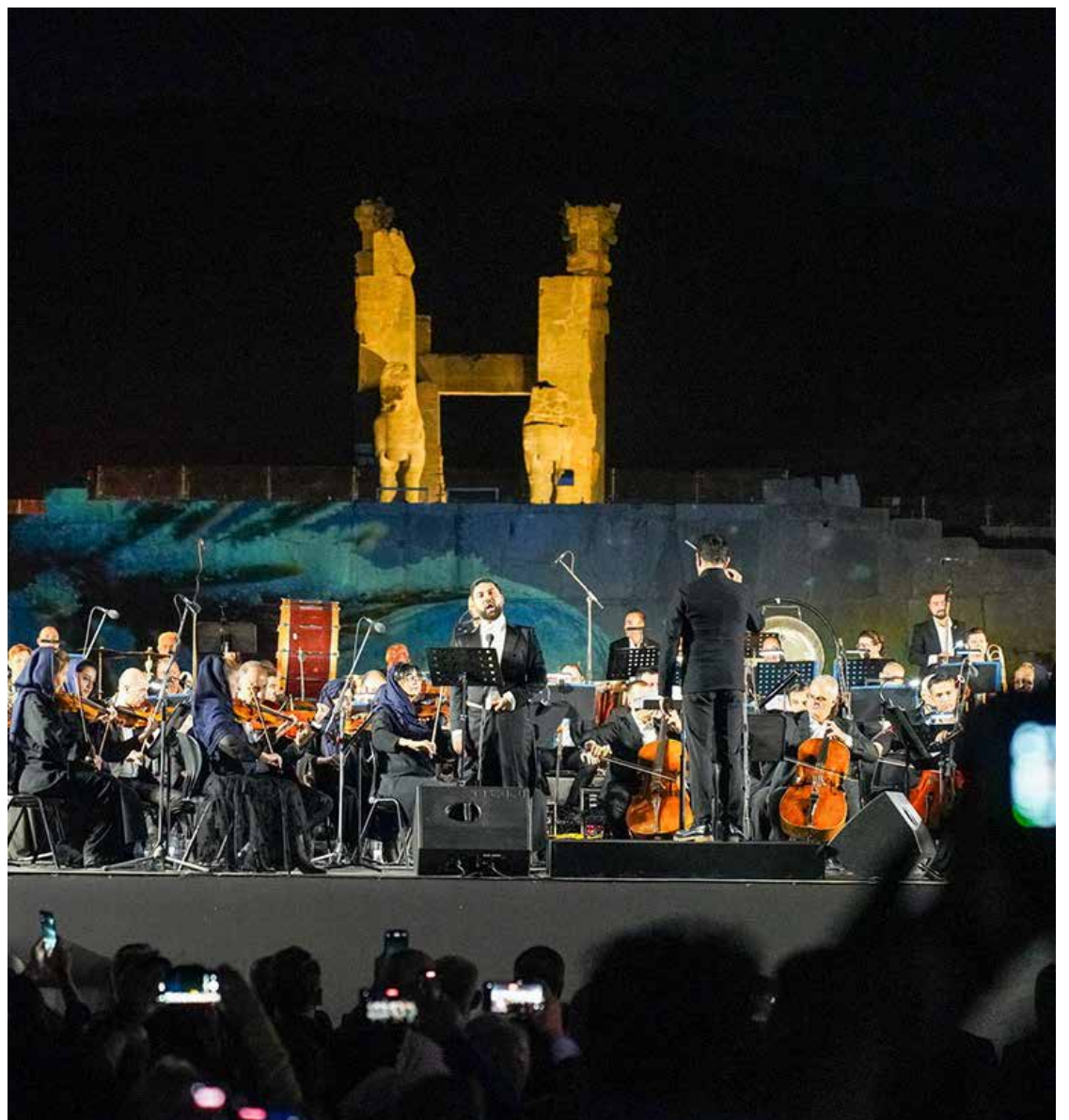
The gathering brought together local and visiting Armenians, Iranian music enthusiasts, and cultural figures, from classical musicians to maestro Abdolhossein Mokhtabad.

Cultural cooperation between the two countries extends beyond performing arts. Salehi Amiri highlighted operational measures including national museum collaborations, handicrafts exhibitions in Tehran and Yerevan, and joint UNESCO submissions for tangible and intangible heritage, with restoration training programs planned shortly.

Iran exported \$500 million in handicrafts in 2024, and Tehran has offered to restore Armenia’s Qajar-era Blue Mosque and develop joint tourism circuits. Tourist flows surged 53 percent in 2024, with 263,000 Armenians visiting Iran and 213,000 Iranians travelling to Armenia.

The Armenian orchestra last performed in Iran 25 years ago, staging Loris Tjeknavorian’s opera ‘Rostam and Sohrab’ in Tehran.

This centenary concert now sets the stage for continued cultural cooperation, joint festival registrations with UNESCO, including Tirgan, and strengthened tourism links, as both countries pursue a path of shared heritage and lasting friendship.



Members of the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra perform under the baton of conductor Eduard Topchjan at the ancient site of Persepolis, in southern Fars Province, Iran, September 6, 2025.

● MIZAN

Restored ‘Bashu, the Little Stranger’ wins Venice Classics award

Gaza film ‘The Voice of Hind Rajab’ takes Silver Lion after record ovation

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian director Bahram Beyzaie’s ‘Bashu, the Little Stranger’ claimed Best Restored Film at the 82nd Venice International Film Festival, while Tunisian-French filmmaker Kaouther Ben Hania’s ‘The Voice of Hind Rajab’ secured the Silver Lion Grand Jury Prize after a historic ovation.

The dual honors reflected Venice’s standing as both a guardian of cinema’s heritage. From Beyzaie’s story to Ben Hania’s harrowing Gaza tragedy, the awards underscored the festival’s role in reviving forgotten voices and amplifying the cries of the present.

Restored by Roashana Studios with support from Kanoon

and presented by French distributor MK2 Films, the film returned to global screens through Venice Classics.

If Beyzaie’s film reached back into the past, Ben Hania’s docudrama carried the raw immediacy of Gaza’s current conflict. ‘The Voice of Hind Rajab’ recounts the final hours of a five-year-old Palestinian girl killed in January 2024 after a desperate phone call to the Palestine Red Crescent.

Using authentic audio, the film captured her pleas from a bullet-riddled car. At its premiere on September 3, the screening drew a 23-minute 50-second standing ovation, the longest in Venice’s history.

Accepting the Silver Lion, Ben Hania dedicated the award to Red Crescent first responders,

calling them “heroes”. She said Hind’s words were “a cry for rescue the entire world could hear, but no one answered”. She added, “Her voice will continue to echo until accountability is real, until justice is served.”

With producers including Brad Pitt, Joaquin Phoenix and Alfonso Cuarón, the film is also Tunisia’s official submission for the 2026 Oscars. Industry observers expect strong momentum despite uncertainty over a US distributor.

The festival’s top prize, the Golden Lion for best film, went to American director Jim Jarmusch’s ‘Father Mother Sister Brother’. Wearing a badge reading “Enough”, he also signaled his opposition to Israel’s ongoing offensive in Gaza.

Tabriz nominated as D-8 tourism capital for 2026

Social Desk

Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said on Sunday that Iran northwestern city of Tabriz was nominated to represent the country as candidate for the title of 2026 tourism capital of the Developing Eight Organization (D-8).

The D-8 grouping – which brings together Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt and Nigeria – launched a call earlier this year for members to put forward cities to compete for the title, inn.ir reported.

The nomination, officials said, aims to boost regional cooperation and shine a spotlight on cultural assets across the Islamic world.

Moslem Shojaei, head of foreign tourism marketing at the ministry, said Tabriz was chosen after securing the “highest score” in assessments carried



out by a national committee. “After evaluation of the cities proposed by provincial departments, Tabriz came out on top,” he said, adding that the proposal was supported by a promotional video and a detailed plan.

The D-8 secretariat has listed several benchmarks for selection, including sustainable infrastructure, protection of cultural heritage, innovation, safety of visitors, marketing reach, intercultural exchange and wider social impacts. According to Shojaei, Tabriz per-

formed strongly across these indicators.

The historic northwestern city has long been a cultural and commercial hub, famed for its traditional bazaars, carpets and architecture. Iranian officials hope that winning the 2026 title would draw international travelers and give fresh impetus to the country’s tourism sector, which has been seeking new markets. Final results will be announced by the D-8 secretariat after evaluating nominations from all member states.