Dear Reader,

Music in the Middle East. This makes me first think of the rhythm of drums and the melodies of Arabic songs. Music full of poetry and passion. Before my inner eye I see young people dancing the dabke, a traditional folk dance, and jumping ever higher out of pure joy.

But music in the Middle East is much more than that. The Arabic world today is a mixture of the most varied music influences, as our feature clearly shows. For example, the Lebanese singer Hiba al Kawas sings Arabic songs in the style of Italian opera. At the Schneller schools the pupils play the recorder or listen to Arabic rap.

We may be inclined to think that the musical influence flows more from west to east. Totally wrong! History proves the opposite. For instance, the home of the lute so typical of European music lies by no means on French or English soil. It was originally an oriental musical instrument called the oud. From the oud - in Arabic, al’Oud – it became “la Oud” in the West, in other words, the lute. However, the cradle of the oud lies possibly even further east, in China, where the “pipa” is played to this day. For oud player Marwan Abado, this is probably of secondary importance – he decided against the Western guitar and in favour of the main instrument in the Arabic orchestra, the oud.

In conclusion, a question: did you know that the organ originally came from Alexandria? If you didn’t, the article by Ulrich Kadelbach on the organist Elisabeth von der Decken will certainly be an eye-opener for you.

We hope you are eager to find out about the musical world of the Middle East.

With heartfelt greetings,

Yours

Andrea Alippersbach
(Chief Editor)
The Aeolian harp, also called the wind harp, is an instrument that is not played by humans. The wind is what activates its strings. For Ulrich Kadelbach it is therefore a symbol for everything creative that is inspired by God another world. Only gradually did he discover that the north wind was making the strings of his instrument sing.

In many cultures the winds are revered as messengers of the gods who wish to spread their messages. "He makes winds his messengers" are the words of Psalm 104:4. The tower of the winds in Athens is called the Temples of Aeolos to this day. Homer names Hermes, messenger of the gods, as the inventor of the Aeolian harp. He stretched strings across the large shell of a turtle. Aeolos, the god of the winds, began to play on it. Even the Koran knows that God can reveal himself to humans through the winds: "Among His proofs is that He sends the winds with good omen..." (Sura 30:46).

All creative people start with hearing and listening. For the Romans musical and religious inspiration come from the same source. Winged creatures are the informers. No mortal has any influence over them. Inspiration, impulses, ideas, brainwaves, intuition, enlightenment, enthusiasm are gifts that come upon a person. But the willingness to resonate is the precondition to allowing oneself to be moved by this stimulation. Many poets have made the Aeolian harp into a symbol for the art of poetry. Even Goethe, Lenau, Kerner and Mörike have honoured its memory in verse. But words are only echoes of the truth and ideas. They can only touch deeply if they are inspired from the deep. But not only words are transparent for the realities hidden behind them, things are too. Joseph von Eichendorff expressed it in an incomparable refrain that will never die: "Sleeps a song in things abounding that keep dreaming to be heard: Earth’s tunes will start resounding if you find the magic word."

All creative energy comes from the depths of being. Each time a person is touched, it comes from the breath of creativity. Magic words are not a delusion but musical keys. It is they which permit the tuning of an instrument, singing and rejoicing. "O had I Jubal’s lyre and Miriam’s tuneful voice," sings Achsa, Caleb’s daughter, in Handel’s Joshua Oratorio. Jubal "was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ," it says in Genesis 4:21. And whoever can not handle a musical instrument shall give his voice free reign. Sing whomsoever was given the gift of singing and to whom justice was given. "I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me," rejoices the psalm of David (Psalm 13:6). If you want to give your children or grandchildren a special pleasure, go with them to Weinsberg near Heilbronn and hike up to the Weibertreu castle ruins. There Justinus Kerner has installed Aeolian harps in the windows of the round tower. In addition, the web provides instructions on how to make an Aeolian harp. The wind waits for its opportunity around every corner of a house, on every balcony.
Marwan Abado is a Palestinian and grew up in Lebanon. The oud player is much in demand. He is married to Viola Raheb, an Evangelical theologian, and lives in Vienna. His music is based on the classic forms of Arabic music, taqsim, which is nonmetric and is dependent on the inner impulses of the musician.

Andrea Aippersbach asked Abado about his instrument and Arabic music.

Marwan Abado, how did you come to play the oud?
My interest in music started when I was still very young. We Palestinians were refused admittance to the music academy in Beirut. So I started to teach myself two instruments, the oud and the guitar. In 1985 I was 18 years old and I emigrated to Vienna where I started taking guitar lessons. During my first school concert at the music academy I lost my feeling in my left hand. After a few seconds which felt like an eternity, I was able to continue playing. When I left the stage, I realised the guitar was not my instrument. I was lucky to find the Iraqi oud maestro Asim Alchalabi. With him I was able to deepen my technique in playing the oud. What place did Arabic music have in your youth?

It may surprise you but I first came across Arabic music when I emigrated. Lebanon is a melting pot between the West and the East. In the middle of the war, I was very interested as a young person in Lebanese songmakers. All of them with only few exceptions played the guitar. These young musicians wanted to sing music with a message. Arabic music then only had an entertainment function that did not appeal to me at all.

What is so special about Arabic music?
From its structure, Arabic music is very melodic and its expression is highly melancholic and emotional. It moves within two octaves and has a fascinating wealth of variations in its melodies and rhythms. There are also many different traditions depending on the country. The oriental octave has more notes than the Western octave and therefore there are more scales. This is where the music obtains its basis. Finally, the Arabic language is a decisive factor, as in all arts in Arabic countries. By this I mean poetry and the close relationship between music and language. There are two contrary poles in the structure of this music. A strict tone system that does not permit any Western harmonies and an open tone system that creates access to different influences. There is a similarity with jazz: Arabic music is rich in improvisation and was mainly played by small ensembles.

How do you play the oud?
Oud is a fretless instrument. The double strings are plucked with a long pick. This instrument is played in a sitting position and is used as an accompanying instrument, solo instrument or as an instrument for teachers and composers. The oud is the main instrument in Arabic music. An Arabic ensemble consist of: lute (Arabic: oud), violin (Arabic: kamanja), zither (Arabic qanoun), flute (Arabic nay) and tambourine (Arabic rig). The lute has the same importance as the piano in Europe. It is played by men and women and in between there are also small lutes for young talents.

How is your music accepted in Europe?
Of course its different nature is highly appealing and interesting to European audiences. At the same time, the scales are sometimes so different that people even speak about wrong notes. Men and women can only perceive them when they depart from stereotype images and allow themselves to enter into the musical moment.

In September, Marwan Abado and Viola Raheb are going on a concert reading tour together. On Monday, 22 September, the EVS in co-operation with the Jerusalem Association is organising an evening at the Stuttgart Hospital Church. More at www.evs-online.org.
Even Hiba al Kawas, Lebanon’s dramatic soprano, cannot let go of Beirut. When she sings “I knew Beirut”, she is fighting against the nightmare. She wants to hold on to the old attitudes toward life. She was marked by the civil war and this influenced the shrill dissonance of her compositions. But during her studies in Italy Verdi tenor Carlo Bergonzi introduced her to the melodious sound of belcanto and Franco Donatoni taught her to transform her feelings into composition.

Italian opera is Hiba al Kawas’s passion. When she is back in her homeland, she sings in Arabic. She takes up Arabic singing traditions but chooses operatic singing techniques from Europe. One day she wants to compose an Arabic opera.

The young 35 year old Hiba al Kawas is full of ideas for a libretto. “Don’t forget we are a country of legends.” Lebanon was always a place where so many roads intersect. In one direction are the roads that lead to the Orient, to the Muslim Arabs and the Syrian Christians. Other roads lead to the north, to the Byzantians and Turks. In the west is the sea.

Arabic music, she says, is more than what we know from the past hundred years. It is much richer. Hiba finds traces of Arabic music in Turkish and Persian traditions, and especially in Spain. “That is real Arabic music,” she muses. Music in Arabian countries stagnated and this is still going on. Before, the Abbasids had orchestras with six hundred musicians. They could not have played in unison.

As expected Hiba found a treatise on the theory of harmony and polyphony written by the great Arabic philosopher and sage al-Farabi (870 to 950).

Nowadays she no longer wants to resign herself to the instruments which have shaped Arabic music for the past hundred years. In fact she challenges her critics, “Why should I be content with fewer instruments when they are so many beautiful ones?” After all the West does not reject the zero just because the Arabs invented it. The fact that mathematics and medicine belongs to no nation should also apply to music.

In her concerts Hiba al Kawas only sings her own songs and arias. She chooses lyrics from great poets, such as Mutanabbi and Hallaj, Adonis and Mahmoud Darvish, and of course contemporary lyricists such as Unsi al Hage, Abdalaliz Khoja and her girlfriend Nada al Hage. When she sings “Njoum eddini” (Give Me The Stars) and “Asra biqalbi” (Let My Heart Wander At Night), her coloraturas string together like pearls on a necklace. And when she picks up the classic love theme in “Habibi” (My Beloved), she whispers into the microphone in a typically Arabic way “Uhibbuk” (I love you).

Rainer Hermann, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung of 2.6.2008

The article was abbreviated for the Schneller Magazine. The full version in German is available at www.evs-online.org.

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UM URGUN – MOTHER OF THE ORGAN

Choirmistress Elisabeth von der Decken, 1935 – 2007, was former organist from 1987 at St George's Cathedral, church of the Anglican diocese of Jerusalem. Sent there by the Association of Churches and Missions in South Western Germany for this mission, she initially saw her job as an instructor and helping accompanist to her many Palestinian pupils learning the organ in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. This article by Ulrich Kadelbach is an abbreviated version of his contribution to the paperback "Elisabeth von der Decken – Briefe aus Jerusalem" (Elisabeth von der Decken – Letters From Jerusalem) recently published in Germany.

When Isma'il ibn al-Hadi heard the organ for the first time, he was so captivated that he realised all the rumours were right – that you would have an overwhelming desire to die from sheer delight as soon as you heard its sound. That was a Byzantine organ in the year 820 or thereabouts. When Elisabeth von der Decken played the organ, it seems to have left a similar enormous impression on many Palestinian girls and boys as they put their names down in large numbers for organ lessons with her. They gave her the endearing and flattering nickname of "um urgun – mother of the organ".

In the mid-1980s, she realised her life's dream of becoming organist in Jerusalem. First at the Dormition Benedictine Abbey on top of Mount Zion and then at St George's Cathedral belonging to the Anglican Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East. "Elisabeth has fallen in love with Jerusalem and Jerusalem has fallen in love with her," as Bishop Samir Kafity put it. He had elicited her assistance in tutoring young people to fill the post of organist at his church. The reservoir of well trained organists was in danger of drying up. The few organists still remaining when Elisabeth started her duties had all been trained before World War II at the Teacher Training College of the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem.

Having a woman sitting at the organ took some getting used to for most people in this part of the world. It was long forgotten that the first organist was also a woman, according to the writings of the grammarian Athenaios (Athenaeus) in his "Deipnosophistae/Scholars at Dinner" (also called Banquet of the Learned), namely the wife of Ktesibios (Ctesibius), who invented the organ in Alexandria in 246 BC. The Babylonian Talmud also mentions a legendary instrument resembling an organ, the "magepha". It used to stand in the Temple of Jerusalem. It could be heard from the Mount of Olives and even as far away as Jericho. The sound of Elisabeth's organ playing certainly did not quite reach Jericho. But her reputation unquestionably travelled much further away.

Let us look back at the triumphant progress of the organ that began in the orient. Organ playing was already so widespread during the first century of the Christian era that there were even public organ competitions that were followed by ceremonies honouring the winners. Finally, the organ also became known in the Western Roman Empire. Presumably it was Cicero who first became acquainted with one on a trip to Greece. He was so beguiled that he compared the sound of the organ to the pleasure of smelling the scent of rose and smoked eel. The sound of the organ was to be heard during parades and gladiator combats. Although some of the emperors in Rome attempted their hand at playing the organ, any spectacular success seems to have eluded them.

In the end, the organ slipped into oblivion in the West. Quite the opposite to its success in the Orient. In Syria it was a very common musical instrument on the streets in the 5th century. Later it was also found in Islamic countries. How often did Elisabeth ask herself the question whether it was responsible to impose the culture of Western organ music on the Arab world, alone due to the totally different tonal systems. A look at history may allay such scruples. In 1260, the Emperor of China received an organ from the "Muslin kingdom", presumably from Baghdad. It is reported that the organ tuned to the Arabic scale was retuned to the Chinese scale.

Elisabeth von der Decken giving organ lessons at St. George’s Cathedral, Jerusalem

When you hear the melody of Beethoven’s “Freude, schöner Götterfunken” (Joy, beautiful spark of Gods) on Sundays in the Christ’s Church at the Theodor Schneller School or when “Gloria, in exelsis deo” resounds in the small culture room at Christmas time, it is not the Germans who have taken over at the school. No, it’s the school choir rehearsing for Christmas. Since the 2007/2008 school year, this is offered as a free time activity and the children take it up with great enthusiasm. A musical education – reading music is also taught in the choir – is not available at school or at home.

School choir and rap in Jordan

Despite this “gap in one’s knowledge” music rates highly among the boys at the school. In the end it is not a question of knowing a lot or singing perfectly. It is more about fun and the feeling of being part of a community. It is not rare that at the end of school festivities, a trainee grabs the microphone and simply starts to sing. This encourages other boys with the result that it does not take very long until someone gets out a drum and the others start to dance the traditional Arabic dance, the “darbkeh”, together. While the younger children prefer to watch and clap, the older ones try to outdo each other by dancing the most difficult step sequences.

Songs of praise for the country of Jordan and King Abdullah II are extremely popular. And whoever can listen to the latest Arabic pop songs on his mobile or MP3 player. But listening to love songs all the time is boring. Sometimes it’s fun to look around for other styles of music. This is how the fan club of Arabic rap among the boys is gradually becoming larger. And there is also tough competition from the western world. For when Celine Dion sings “My heart will go on” from the film “Titanic”, everyone goes soft.

Within a short period of time in Jordan, this musical taste, even with its breaks in style, has enthused and thrilled me. And so I am sitting here in front of my computer. In the background is the music of Egyptian singer Tamer Hosny, and my foot – it’s tapping to the rhythm.

Katrin Kaltenecker was a participant in the “Ecumenical Volunteer Programme” of the EMS at the TSS from August 2007 to June 2008.
FOOTBALL SHIRTS FROM GOMEZ

Khirbet Kanafar/Amman. In time for the European football championships, the Schneller Schools received two eagerly expected parcels from Germany. They contained signed football shirts and photos from VfB Stuttgart star footballers Mario Gomez, Serdar Tasci and Andreas Beck. Helmut Hekmann from the management committee of the Schneller Foundation had contacted the sportsmen (see our article in Schneller Magazine 2/2008). The Johann Ludwig Schneller School in Lebanon organised competitions in the German lessons to distribute the football trophies among the pupils. Some of the pupils wrote thank-you letters to Germany or designed presentation displays in German on the topic of football.

NEW KEY-FOBS

Khirbet Kanafar. The joiner’s workshop at the JLSS has produced a new key-fob in the form of a dove. Another dove pendant can be used for decoration or as decorative neckwear. The pendant costs 2.50 Euros. Please order from the EMS, see pages 22/23.

MEMORIES FROM SCHNELLER ALUMNI

Khirbet Kanafar. During preparations for the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Syrian Orphanage in 2010, the JLSS has set up a section for former Schneller pupils on its website. To prevent the loss of recollections from the early years of the schools, the school directors request former pupils to write down their memories and submit them together with photos. Also those who worked at the school, their dependents and all those who have experiences linked to the Syrian Orphanage, the Schneller Schools and those who worked there are invited to support the project. More at www.jlss.org/alumni_memoirs.htm

FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT DURING THE EUROPEAN FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Amman. Infected by the enthusiasm for the European Football Championships in June, the Theodor Schneller School in Amman organised a football tournament with three other Jordanian schools in cooperation with the embassies of Switzerland and Austria, the Goethe Institute and the Ministry of Culture. The Goethe Institute donated the winner’s cups for the football tournament. Mr Franz Hörlberger, emphasised that sport was an important means to peace education and cross-cultural understanding.

DUAL-SYSTEM JOINER’S APPRENTICESHIP POSSIBLE

Khirbet Kanafar. According to the Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ – German Technical Cooperation Agency), it is possible to expand the dual-system training courses to include the joiner’s workshops at the JLSS. This will make the JLSS into the first dual-system training centre for joiners in Lebanon. Before introducing dual-system training for industrial electricians, large investments for equipping the electrical workshops are required. So far, the JLSS has provided training for industrial fitters and car mechanics using the dual system. As soon as approval is given by the Ministry for Education, the training courses for joiners will also be rearranged.

TSS STARTS OFFICIAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Amman. Starting this year, trainees from outside the school will be able to attend occupational training courses at the TSS. The first course for welders took place with fifteen young men. The Ministry of Labour certified these fee-paying courses offered by the TSS and supplies trainees.

MORE GERMAN LESSONS

Khirbet Kanafar. German lessons have taken an important place at the JLSS during the last school year. Starting in the third grade, pupils of German receive at least four lessons of German a week. To assess the performance independently, twelve pupils sat a German test which the Goethe Institute held at the JLSS. Eleven pupils passed.
A RABBIT CAN LISTEN
Educational work with animals at the TSS in Amman

For the first time in his life, little Samir (name changed) just stroked a cat. Musa Al Munaizel, educational consultant at the Theodor Schneller School (TSS) in Amman held his hand the first time, but a few minutes later, he was able to do it alone. Samir was proud and all smiles this morning at the farm of the Humane Center for Animal Welfare (HCAW) on the outskirts of Amman. The well-known Jordanian animal protection organisation which also has an animal clinic was this year’s partner of the TSS for the fourth school environmental week. With the support of the Hanns Seidel Foundation (Amman office), Musa Al Munaizel intends to expand the sensitisation and educational programme on the topic of “The relationship between animals and humans”.

Little Samir has witnessed violence, comes from a very difficult family background but has made an enormous personal development step by stroking a little cat. At the end of his visit he goes to Nadia Hamam from the HCAW and asks when he can visit the farm with his parents. Thomas Gebhard, new manager of the Amman office of the Hanns Seidel Foundation, was also impressed by the effect of animals on children. “This visit was very important and amazing. It will have a lasting impression on me and a few other children,” says Musa Al Munaizeil in his initial conclusion about the environmental week which started with slide shows by Nadia Hamam at the TSS. The photos of sick, needy and injured animals sparked off a lively round of questions from the children. The content of the questions confirms the assumptions of the educational consultant, “The way children handle animals shows what is happening in their souls. When a child maltreats an animal, we often find traces of cruelty in the child’s life. When we work with peace education, we must instil new values. We have to explain that an animal also has feelings and feels pain. In this way we can sensitise children for their own lives. And then we can also process the trauma they have felt as the result of violence and aggression.”

Why does an animal abandon its young?

When a picture of a beaten animal was shown, one child asked the speaker, “What does an animal feel in this situation?” This child had also experienced violence himself. “Why does an animal abandon its young?” This question was asked by a child whose mother had no contact with him. “What happens to animals when they hunger?” was the question from a child who comes hungry to school after a long weekend because he has had nothing hot to eat at all. All these examples show that animals can have a positive effect when used as a motivator, says Musa Al Munaizeil.

The environmental week ended with a workshop for teachers and educational workers. Nadia Hamam from the HCAW explained how animal therapy can be integrated in educational work. The environmental week is only the prelude for the TSS to more in-depth training events during which guests from other schools in Jordan will be invited, as at this workshop.

The aim is then to set up a small petting zoo at the TSS in Amman with donkeys, sheep, goats, rabbits and some hens. “When a child takes over responsibility for an animal, it can transfer this to the school community and also onto its later life,” explains Musa Al Munaizeil. A child can also place its trust in an animal. “A rabbit can listen, a rabbit has a soft coat and can be stroked.”
SCHNELLER HISTORY

In 1860 after the pogroms against Christians in Lebanon, the St Chrischona Pilgrim’s Mission was intending to start an orphanage in the Holy Land. As a result, Johann Ludwig Schneller (1820-1896) separated the orphanage legally from Swiss ownership and placed it in German hands, with all the resulting consequences.

So it was inevitable that – after Palestine was transferred to the protection of Great Britain – inspector Theodor Schneller (1856-1935) was dismissed on 1 July 1921. Only a few days before the outbreak of civil war conflicts, the eleven members of the group returned to Switzerland. Apprentice media technicians Lukas Gut and Luca Lehner were also part of the group. During their stay at the Johann Ludwig Schneller School in Lebanon, they checked the hardware and software in the training workshops, made updates and carried out other maintenance work. Their hard work was highly appreciated by the school staff. The association hopes to repeat visits and practical trips of this kind in future. More at www.schnellerschulen.org.

THE SYRIAN ORPHANAGE AND THE FOUNDING OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL IN 1948

As announced in Schneller Magazine 2/2008 featuring “60 years of Israel! And what about Palestine?” Dr Jakob Eisler, scientific co-worker at the Archives of the Regional Church in Stuttgart (Landeskirchliches Archiv Stuttgart) and Arno G. Krauss will provide an insight in this article into the events that took place at the Syrian Orphanage at the time of the founding of the state of Israel.

In 1860 after the pogroms against Christians in Lebanon, the St Chrischona Pilgrim’s Mission was intending to start an orphanage in the Holy Land. As a result, Johann Ludwig Schneller (1820-1896) was commissioned to set up this (Syrian) orphanage in Jerusalem. Spurred on by his son Ludwig (1858-1953) he broke the institution away from the Pilgrim’s Mission and placed it under the tutelage of a board of trustees in Germany. He was not to know that he was laying the foundation for the complete dissolution of the institution in the Holy Land. What he in fact did was separate the orphanage legally from Swiss ownership and placed it in German hands, with all the resulting consequences.

So it was inevitable that – after Palestine was transferred to the protection of Great Britain – inspector Theodor Schneller (1856-1935) was dismissed on 1 July 1918 from his post as manager of the Syrian Orphanage which was in German hands. It was a concession by the British civilian government appointed by the League of Nations that he was allowed to resume his office in July 1921 supported by the "Evangelical Association for the Syrian Orphanage" in Cologne.

The attitude of the orphanage managers towards National Socialism was ambivalent after Hitler’s seize to power in 1933. Rev Ludwig Schneller did not join the NSDAP in Cologne whereas his nephews Ernst and Hermann belonged to the political leadership of the “NSDAP Local Group” in Jerusalem. As a result, the first conflicts in Palestine between...
the Jewish immigrants fleeing from Nazi terror in Europe and the members of the NSDAP in Jerusalem were preprogrammed. During these years it was considered selling the orphanage in Jerusalem and purchasing a site near Bethlehem for a new “Syrian Orphanage”. This plan failed to materialise since the war broke out in 1939.

At the end of August 1939, the German consulate advised all Germans in Palestine to leave because of the imminent threat of war. Many used this last opportunity to board the ship leaving the port of Haifa for Germany on 31 August. On 2 September 1939, the German army marched into Poland and on 3 September Great Britain declared war on Germany. For the co-workers who remained at the Syrian Orphanage the subsequent actions of the British mandatory powers in Jerusalem naturally had drastic personal consequences. Headmaster Hermann Schneller and senior teacher Leonhard Bauer (1865-1964) were provisionally imprisoned in Christ Church and then in the prison of Akko, while school lessons at the Syrian Orphanage were continued by Arab co-workers almost without interruptions. On 15 October, Leonhard Bauer was released from the Akko prison due to his age (74 years old) after several entreaties. On 25 May 1940, he gave his last school lesson and the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem was closed. The Germans remaining in Palestine (priests, deaconesses and Templers, among them the Bauer family) were first interned in the Syrian Orphanage and later in the Templar colony of Wilhelma. The Syrian Orphanage and its grounds were expropriated as enemy property by the English mandatory government and were used as barracks until 1948.

In July 1941, the British repatriated the older persons and women while about 310 persons from the internment camp were transferred by ship to Australia. Among them was Hermann Schneller. A new internment camp was set up for them in Tatura, Australia. Leonhard Bauer and his daughter were released at the beginning of March 1948 (his wife Maria, née Schneller, died in 1946) and they moved immediately to Lebanon. The British left the Syrian Orphanage they had occupied on 17 March 1948 and shortly after a 50-man strong division of the then Jewish militia (Haganah) moved in. After foundation of the State of Israel the grounds continued to be used as barracks.

In 1951, negotiations started between the State of Israel and the Lutheran World Federation concerning the restitution of properties belonging to German mission societies. The Israeli army removed the sacred objects from the church in the Syrian Orphanage, the church windows and the orphanage library and handed them over to the Lutheran World Federation in the Auguste Victoria Foundation on the Mount of Olives. A dozen lorries left the grounds of the orphanage in 1951.

Five lorries contained only books and paintings. The Israeli army also removed the church bells and the large organ and handed them over to the Lutheran World Federation. Part of the archives and schoolbooks came through Hermann Schneller to Khirbet Kanafar in Lebanon where the Johann Ludwig Schneller School was officially opened in 1952. The glass windows stored at the Auguste Victoria Foundation were brought to the newly founded Theodor Schneller School in Amman in 1961 and installed there. A large part of the library was kept in the cellars of the Auguste Victoria Foundation on the Mount of Olives but was destroyed by water damage in 1965. Only a small part of the library and the remainders of the archives reached the Archives of the Regional Church in Stuttgart (Landeskirchliche Archiv Stuttgart) in Stuttgart in 1980 which is the repository of the archive of the Syrian Orphanage and the present-day Schneller Schools.

The Landeskirchliche Archiv containing the Schneller Archive is located in Stuttgart-Möhringen. They are open to visitors for research purposes. Interested parties are requested to apply at tel.: 0711 21 49-373 or archiv@elk-wue.de. Together with the EVS the Landeskirchliche Archiv is planning to organise events to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Schneller Schools in the year 2010.
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For the past eight years, students from Germany have had the opportunity to spend a year studying at the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut, Lebanon as part of the study programme entitled “Study in the Middle East” (SiMO). Ulrike Spring and Hanna Reichel were at the NEST from October 2007 to June 2008. Andrea Aippersbach asked them about their experiences.

What experiences do you remember most during your study year?
Spring: The close-knit living and study community at the NEST. Every day after lunch, for example, we drank “ahwe” (Arabic espresso), which integrates newcomers or guests into the community. Before lunch on work days, we all met in the chapel for devotions. Of course there was tension now and then. When you live together with people from the Middle East for long, you notice how deeply they are rooted in their culture, their associated system of values and their rules of behaviour. Honour and insults to a person’s honour or how to deal with hierarchies are things that German students must become aware of.

Did your time in Lebanon change you?
Spring: Of course a year in a totally different country at a university with a totally different teaching system and finally a city with an “explosive atmosphere” – as we sued to say sarcastically – is bound to leave its mark on you. You realise the priceless value of peace in a completely different way. You come to value things we take for granted in Germany more, such as health insurance or social benefits. On the other hand, you also learn that it is possible to live under different circumstances.

What did the study year teach you theologically?
Reichel: I acquired a solid basic understanding about Islam. Theologically, working together with people from totally different churches taught me a lot. Discussions widened my perspectives on what Christianity is all about, but it also challenged my own position.

What new impulses will you take into your church life in Germany?
Spring: For me it was very interesting to experience the Christian presence in the Middle East, in particular in Lebanon. Here, the slogan seems to be “showing your colours”. Many churches have an illuminated 3D cross at the highest point of the church; there is a fish at the back of the car; inside there are various Christian symbols, and most Christians wear a cross around their neck. Christians here have a different self-awareness and religious affiliation is also a mark of your identity. It became clear to me that the churches in the Middle East are often forgotten by the churches in the West or they feel themselves neglected.

How would you encourage theology students in Germany to want to take part in SiMO?
Spring: Just wanting to is not enough, in my opinion. Instead you should read up on the history and find out what is going on today in Lebanon and the neighbouring countries, and also about the possible incidents, shootings, conflicts that are similar to civil war, as we found out in May 2008, or even bear in mind the possibility of war. Lebanon is a wonderful country and from there you can travel to Syria or Jordan.

Reichel: Besides academic specialisation in Islam and Eastern Churches, the programme offers a change of perspective: living together with theologians and non-theologians from totally different countries, denominations and cultures, Christianity can be experienced in a way that is not European, not Western and above all not as a majority culture. I would say to any one interested that SiMO offers a great opportunity and challenge at cultural, theological and personal levels.

Information on the study programme “Study in the Middle East” and detailed reports from the two former SiMO students Ulrike Spring and Hanna Reichel are available on the EMS website at www.ems-online.org/159.html. EMS Middle East Liaison Officer Andreas Maurer is available for questions at tel: 0711 636 78-37 or maurer@ems-online.org. Closing date for applications for Study Year 2009/2010 is 15 December 2008.
Old "Schnellerhof" in Nazareth

According to the Israeli architect Gil Gordon, the municipal authorities in Nazareth are willing to keep the former Galilean orphanage in Nazareth. The buildings of the former Galilean orphanage are to be refurbished.

Churches From 40 Countries Participated in Middle East Action Week

Churches in over 40 countries participated in this year's week of "International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel" organised by the WCC (World Council of Churches). Peace prayers, seminars, concerts and festivals were some of the events that took place between 4 and 10 June. A "human clock" in Bethlehem commemorated the 60 years since the "nakba" (flight and expulsion of the Palestinians). In Australia, church leaders distributed a "toolbox to raise awareness" in their congregations.

A cross-party parliamentary group composed of representatives of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths met in Scotland. In Germany, Pax Christi and the Association of Churches and Missions in South Western Germany among others spread the WCC's call for "It's time for Palestine".
Erratum

In Schneller Magazine 1/2008, page 20:
Hartmut Brenner, EVS member of the management board, is doctor of theology and was ordained pastor, not a religious educator.

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