# What Is Flying Carpet?

Flying Carpet is a volunteer-based collective of world-class musicians, circus artists, visual artists, designers, and visionaries who believe in the power of music and arts as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of vulnerable and refugee children in war-afflicted regions of the world.

The Flying Carpet Children Festival is an intensive learning platform for artists and vulnerable children alike to create a harmonious experience through music, circus, dance, light, beauty and truth. We organize festivals specializing in forward-thinking design, music and art dedicated towards educating children who need it most. The festival selects artists, musicians and visionaries from all over the world with the common goal of creating the best possible educational experience for vulnerable children traumatized by war and conflict.

www.flyingcarpetfestival.org

# What Is The Philosophy Of The Carpet?

Cultural and artistic opportunities in modern societies form a large portion of social activities and are available to the citizens of those countries on a massive scale. However, the problems that such societies are mostly suffering from on a global scale such as terrorism, violence and delinquencies come from societies where cultural opportunities and exposure to beauty is rare to non-existent. Therefore, it is necessary for more privileged communities to invest in the cultural activities of deprived societies in order to educate and generate productive members for the world.

Children are the future of every community and by investing in their education and in their access to beauty and light, we are moving towards a brighter future on a global scale. Our carpet, as a portable platform, flies to the most disadvantaged regions of the world in order to engage and connect with the most disadvantaged youth of every community. We engage them in artistic process, which in our opinion functions as spiritual healing for those who have experienced darkness and horrendous incidents and are dealing with unimaginable challenges in life.

# Where Does The Carpet Fly To?

The Syrian civil war has created an immense educational crisis for the Middle East as a whole. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that less than 40 percent of Syrian refugee children are enrolled in formal education. Not only is education of individual Syrian children under threat, but also the future of Syrian and host communities. The stability and prosperity of the region will depend on ensuring that school-age children receive the education they require in order to be resilient to the challenges they face, and in order to be able to provide for themselves and their families.

While Syria’s future depends upon its children, a lost generation has emerged. Given the numbers of Syrian refugee children currently not receiving formal education, the strained capacities of host countries, the political considerations and the risks posed to children and society at large, there is an urgent need to alleviate this situation with innovative educational strategies to coordinate efforts, share knowledge, make evidence-based decisions, improve efficiency and/or effectiveness and solicit resources.

# How Was The Carpet Woven?

The festival was initiated in 2018 by the Iranian-American composer, Sahba Aminikia (www.sahbakia.com), under the umbrella of the social circus school, Sirkhane (www.sirkhane.org), based in Mardin in southeast Turkey, where millions of Syrian and Iraqi refugees are resettled. Sirkhane Social Circus School helps restore confidence in refugee youth by providing them with circus arts. Their mission is to provide a safe, friendly and embracing environment for children who are affected by conflicts, to replace their damaged childhood with joy and enrich their imagination through the colorful pedagogy of social circus.

# Who Are The Carpet Riders?

Every year, the Flying Carpet Children Festival gathers and hosts around 30-40 composers, performers, circus artists, dancers, multidisciplinary artists and designers in order to create the most magical experience possible through a two-week residency in the city of Mardin. The collective performs in cities and remote villages in southeast Turkey, where cultural and educational opportunities for children are scarce.

The artists are curated and chosen by festival founder Sahba Aminikia and Sirkhane founder, Pinar Demiral, through an open call on social media and on various websites. The festival lasts throughout the entire summer, holding hundreds of workshops and the most innovative educational experiences, incorporating technology, art, music and circus. The last two weeks of the festival are dedicated to preparing for one week of performances throughout the region during the last week. After artists’ arrival, they are paired and assigned to one another and to local child artists in order to form artistic collaborations and enrich their performances and their art. The performances are put into a unified context through storytelling techniques and will be taken to remote locations as one unified production.

# Where Has The Carpet Been To?

The festival began and was held between September 1st and 15th, 2018 by holding 8 major concerts, 150 workshops, reaching out to 1,500 through workshops and more than 7,000 audience members in three cities across the region. In 2019, the festival expanded to 7 different cities and villages and held performances every night in a different location through the week of performances between August 18th and 24th. The number of invited artists also expanded from 30 in 2018 to 40 in 2019. The workshops were held in the course of two months instead of two weeks in 2018.

# Who Are The Carpet Weavers?

The Flying Carpet Children Festival is produced through multiple local and international partnerships, sponsors, private donors and crowdfunding. Private donors and crowdfunding establish the core of the action. Mardin Museum has been a keen partner since the very beginning and sponsors such as the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Mardin Governorship, Mardin Municipality, Nusaybin Municipality, Derik Municipality, the US Embassy in Adana and the Italian Institute have also supported the festival. Our sole fiscal sponsor, ARTogether, based in Oakland, California, has enabled us to raise tax-deductible funds in the United States.

# The Future Is Bright

We intend to sustain our Flying Carpet for the years to come, in order to create an example for the entire world and for the artistic community – an example that empowers artists from all around the world to form their own initiatives and engage with the public and those without access to beauty and light. The carpet exists to teach artists what it means to work in difficult circumstances and to preserve the fire of hope for thousands of years as spiritual leaders of the world.

[www.flyingcarpetfestival.org](http://www.flyingcarpetfestival.org)

[www.sirkhane.org](http://www.sirkhane.org)