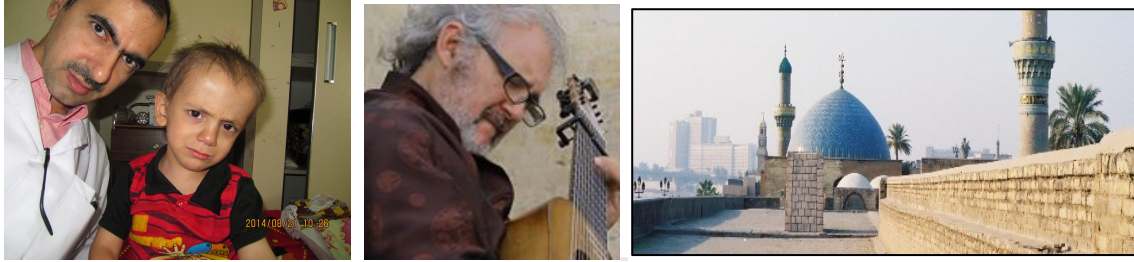


## The Iraqi Children's Art Exchange Presents



### Bach to Baghdad

**What:** A concert with Peter Blanchette, internationally acclaimed musician and composer, performing Bach on his archguitar. Responding from Baghdad will be Drs. Mazin Al-Jadiry and Dr. Salma Al-Hadad from Children's Welfare Teaching Hospital.

**When:** Sunday afternoon, September 28 at 2:00 p.m.

**Where:** The Arts Trust Building, 33 Hawley St. in Northampton, MA.

The concert is inspired by the famous Christmas Truce of WWI and by Vedran Smajlovic, the "cellist of Sarajevo", who went out with his cello to perform amidst the rubble and terror of the war zone created by the siege of Sarajevo during the Bosnian war. And by ICAE's long-time partner Dr. Salma Al-Hadad, Director of the Pediatric Oncology Unit at Children's Welfare Teaching Hospital in Medical City Baghdad.

This has been Dr. Salma's "war zone" where she and her colleague Dr. Mazin Al-Jadiry have struggled to combat a chronic health crisis created by decades of war and instability. They have faced ever-increasing numbers of children with serious cancers while Iraq's medical resources and capacity have plummeted.

In March 2013, with a visiting team of doctors from Italy and the US crowded into her small, stuffy office to process a challenging day of training, lectures and patients, Dr. Salma turned on her cell phone and offered a powerful antidote to the weary frustration they were experiencing at the Baghdad hospital: Pavarotti filled the room.

After many years of advocacy, working in partnership with Iraqis, Claudia Lefko founding director of the Northampton-based ICAE does not know what to say about the current crisis in Iraq. She has run out of words, and so have the doctors. "The hard times I passed through over the years made me silent most of the time. I find no comment because sometimes when you say the words they lose their meaning (an Arabic aphorism)." Dr. Salma wrote recently.

But we are not out of music. Teaming up with her neighbor, internationally acclaimed musician and composer Peter Blanchette, Lefko hopes the music is just beginning. "Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent," wrote Victor Hugo. It is in that spirit that we offer Bach to Baghdad. We want our concert to inspire others in the U.S. and internationally. Perhaps there will be Blues to Baghdad in Berlin; Puccini to Baghdad in Milan; Ragas to Baghdad in Mumbai.

Conditions permitting, Dr. Salma and Dr. Mazin will be at the concert and available to talk with us via SKYPE from Baghdad.

**Claudia Lefko** is a long time educator and advocate for children. She is the founding director (2000) of The Iraqi Children's Art Exchange. ICAE has engaged hundreds of children/ youth and adults in Iraq, in Jordan and throughout the US in art-inspired projects that help participants begin to understand each other, beyond the stereotypes on both sides. ICAE has exhibited in hospitals, schools, galleries, libraries, community centers and museums, including at KidSpace at MassMoCA.

Ms. Lefko is the coordinator of *Baghdad Resolve: An International Project to Improve Cancer Care in Iraq*, an extension of the work of ICAE. Begun in the fall of 2012, Baghdad Resolve seeks to create opportunities for international partners to work with Iraqi doctors, hospitals and civil society organizations in developing and sustaining projects and programs that identify and help meet the needs of pediatric cancer patients, their families and the doctors, nurses and medical staff who care for them. [www.iraqichildrensart.org](http://www.iraqichildrensart.org)

**To schedule an interview: (413) 584-0068; [iraqichildrensart@verizon.net](mailto:iraqichildrensart@verizon.net)**

**Peter Blanchette** is the inventor of the 11-string archguitar. "Blanchette is an ace on this, his self-designed instrument," says Billboard Magazine. His repertoire of unusual and internationally acclaimed arrangements and compositions spans from medieval to contemporary to ethnic. A recipient of the MCC Artist Grant in Music Composition, Blanchette is a veteran performer of such high profile venues as NPR's "A Prairie Home Companion," and The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. His classical/jazz concept recording, "Had Miles Met Maurice" (DORIAN #dor-93198) was selected by AudioPhile Magazine as a "Top 100 Jazz CD of 2001."

In 2009 Blanchette received grants from New England Foundation for the Arts "Meet the Composer," and the Northampton Arts Council to complete the trio of Keaton's masterpieces by composing a multi-instrumental score to the 1928 comedy, Steamboat Bill, Jr. which he premiered, along with master classes in film scoring, to resounding success at the Dingle Film Festival in Ireland in September 2009, and Amherst Cinema Arts Center in October 2009. In 2011, he received New England Public Radio Foundation's Arts and Humanities Award for outstanding individual artist. As a composer, he has contributed to such television programs as HBO's "Sex and the City," USA Network/NBC's "Royal Pains," and PBS' "Inside the Tuscan Hills." Among other film work, Blanchette worked extensively with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer William Bolcom and director John Turturro on Turturro's film *Illuminata*. [www.archguitar.com](http://www.archguitar.com)

He is also the founder and Artistic Director of the critically acclaimed Happy Valley Guitar Orchestra ([hvgo.org](http://hvgo.org)).

**To schedule an interview: (413) 259-5965; [archguitar@gmail.com](mailto:archguitar@gmail.com)**

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**Bach to Baghdad** is a project of the Northampton-based, Baghdad Resolve: An International Collaboration to Improve Cancer Care in Iraq, a project of the Iraqi Children's Art Exchange.

Tickets General Admission: \$15 cash/check at the door  
For more information or advance tickets: [www.nohoarts.org](http://www.nohoarts.org)

