

Afghan musicians look to recreate famed school in Portugal

LISBON, Portugal, Dec 14. (AP) — Students and faculty members from the Afghanistan National Institute of Music arrived with their families Monday in Portugal, where they are being granted asylum and where they hope to rebuild their acclaimed school.

The 273-person group, including some 150 students, flew into Lisbon, the Portuguese capital, from Doha, Qatar. Their departure from Afghanistan was staggered in five airlifts to Doha over six weeks in October and November.

"The arrival of the (institute's) community today means that the first and most important step of saving lives and insuring freedom is now over," said the institute's founder and director, Dr. Ahmad Sarmast.

Governments and corporate and private donors met the group's evacuation and resettlement expenses.

"From now on, (the institute's) musicians will be a symbol of courage and resolve, not only for Afghan artists, but also for the people of Afghanistan, in their struggle against the oppression and tyranny of the Taliban," Sarmast said.

The musicians are among tens of thousands of Afghans, including many from the country's sports and arts community, who have fled since Taliban fighters seized Afghanistan in August, when the US and NATO ended their 20-year military presence.

The Afghanistan girls' youth soccer team has also resettled in Portugal, a country of 10.3 million that has taken in 764 Afghans since

the summer.

Afghanistan has a strong musical tradition, and a pop music scene had flourished there over the past two decades. But many musicians fear for their futures under the Taliban, which rules according to a harsh interpretation of Islamic law.

The Afghanistan National Institute of Music, founded in 2010, was renowned for its inclusiveness. It became a symbol of a new Afghanistan, with boys and girls studying together and performing to full houses in the United States and Europe.

The school's campus in Kabul is now occupied by a Taliban faction. Its bank accounts were frozen and its offices ransacked, according to former school officials.

The plan is to recreate the school in Portugal, allowing the students to continue their educations, as part of a wider Lisbon-based center for Afghan culture that will welcome exiles.

The National museum of Afghanistan is open once again and the Taliban, whose members once smashed their way through the facility destroying irreplaceable pieces of the country's national heritage, now appear to be among its most enthusiastic visitors.

The museum in southwest Kabul, which hosts artifacts from the Paleolithic period to the 20th century, reopened recently for the first time since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in mid-August amid the

chaotic withdrawal of US and NATO troops.

Its director, **Mohammad Fahim Rahimi**, and his staff have so far been allowed to continue in their positions although they, like many of Afghanistan's civil servants, haven't received salaries since August. Only the security guards have changed, Rahimi said, with Taliban now replacing the police contingent who used to guard the building and providing women security guards to check female visitors. Currently about 50-100 people visit the museum each day.

Power cuts are frequent and the museum's generator has broken down, leaving many of the exhibition rooms plunged into darkness. Earlier this month several Taliban, some with assault rifles dangling from their shoulder, were among visitors using the lights of their cellphones to peer into display cases of ancient ceramics and 18th-century weapons.

"This is from our ancient history, so we came to see it," said Taliban fighter **Mansoor Zulfikar**, a 29-year-old originally from Khost province in southeastern Afghanistan who has now been appointed as a security guard at the Interior Ministry. "I'm very happy," he said of his first visit to the museum, marveling at his country's national heritage.

Zulfikar said he had spent 12 years in Kabul's notorious Pul-e-Charkhi prison, Afghanistan's largest. While there, he said, someone had told him about the museum and he dreamt of the day when the Taliban would rule Afghanistan again and he would be able to visit the museum.

Lifestyle

Variety



Red Sea International Film Festival Chairman Mohammed Al-Turki poses with British model Naomi Campbell during the closing ceremony of the Red Sea International Film Festival, in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, Monday, Dec. 13. Saudi Arabia is holding its first ever film festival three and-a-half years after the first movie premiered in cinemas in the kingdom. The festival featured a red carpet with women in floor-length ball gowns, a stark departure from past years when females had to wear the long flowing robe known as the abaya in public. (AP)

Globes

'Belfast,' 'The Power of the Dog' lead noms with 7 apiece

Golden Globes announce nominations

NEW YORK, Dec 14. (AP) — After widespread criticism forced the organization that puts on the Golden Globes to lose its televised award show and overhaul its membership, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association nevertheless went ahead announcing nominees for film and television awards on Monday despite a skeptical entertainment industry.

Just as it's done for many years, the HFPA gathered reporters at the Beverly Hilton to announce its picks for the 79th Golden Globes. But this time, there was no nationally televised morning-show live spot or any immediate celebrity celebrations. Hollywood mostly shrugged.

The HFPA, which usually has a handful of movie stars make their announcement, turned instead to Snoop Dogg, who read the nominees behind sunglasses and a red hat during a live stream on the Globes' YouTube page. The majority of studios, public relations firms and A-list talent haven't engaged much this year with the group, which dropped its usual requirement that films be submitted for consideration. Critics have said it's too soon for the HFPA to return to business as usual. Some would rather see the Globes be gone for good.

But the press association tried to maintain its perch in awards season on Monday, spreading nominations around to the likes of Will Smith ("King Richard"), Kristen Stewart ("Spencer"), "West Side Story" breakthrough Rachel Zegler, Leonardo DiCaprio ("Don't Look Up"), Denzel Washington ("The Tragedy of Macbeth"), Ben Affleck ("The Tender Bar") and Lady Gaga ("House of Gucci").

The nominees for best picture, drama, went to Jane Campion's gothic Western "The Power of the Dog," Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi epic "Dune," the family drama "CODA," Reinaldo Marcus Green's tennis biopic "King Richard" and Kenneth Branagh's autobiographical "Belfast."

The comedy or musical picks for best picture were: Adam McKay's apocalyptic comedy "Don't Look Up," Paul Thomas Anderson's '70s ode to San Fernando Valley "Licorice Pizza," Steven Spielberg's "West Side Story," Lin-Manuel Miranda's "Tick, Tick ... Boom!" and Joe Wright's "Cyrano."

"Belfast" and "The Power of the Dog" tied for the most nominations with seven apiece. Netflix dominated the film nominees with 17 nods in total. HBO's "Succession" led the TV side with five nominations, including nods for best drama and best actor in a drama series for recent New Yorker profile subject Jeremy Strong.

Normally, such honors would set off a flurry of de-

light from early-roused nominees and their studios — an awards triumph to be trumpeted on social media and in calls with reporters. On Monday morning, no nominee immediately celebrated — publicly, at least.

The press association claims that in the nine months since its 2021 show, it has remade itself. "HFPA 2.0," recently elected president Helen Hoehne has said. The group has added a chief diversity officer; overhauled its board; inducted 21 new members, including six Black journalists; brought in the NAACP on a five-year partnership; and updated its code of conduct.

"This has been a year of change and reflection for the Hollywood Foreign Press Association," Hoehne said Monday.

Boycott

All of that came after a Los Angeles Times' expose detailed some of the HFPA's unethical behavior and revealed that its 87 voting members didn't include one Black journalist. Studios said they would boycott the Globes and more than 100 PR firms said their clients wouldn't participate until the HFPA swiftly implemented "profound and lasting change." Tom Cruise returned his three Globes to the group's headquarters.

NBC, the Globes' longtime telecaster, has said it won't air the 2022 Globes because "change of this magnitude takes time and work." The Globes have still set a date of January 9 but haven't shared any details about what kind of ceremony that would be.

The Critics Choice Awards have sought to fill the void, even seeking to secure the Globes' usual home at the Beverly Hilton for its telecast. That bid failed but the Critics Choice Awards will likewise take place on Jan. 9, airing on TBS and the CW. The Critics Choice Awards also announced their nominees Monday, with "Belfast" and "West Side Story" leading with 11 nods each.

Much of the Globes' power has always resided in its lively telecast, regularly one of the most-watched non-sports broadcasts of the year. The Globes also serve as a promotional tool for many of the awards-hopefuls hitting theaters in December. But this year, few expect to see ads and TV commercials trumpeting a film's Golden Globes nominations.

But there were also some signs that the Globes boycott was thawing. The Walt Disney Co. promoted "Cruella" nominations from both the Critics Choice Awards and the Globes.

A partial list of nominees for the 79th Golden Globe Awards:

Movies

- Best picture, drama: "Belfast"; "CODA"; "Dune"; "King Richard"; "The Power of the Dog."
- Best picture, musical or comedy: "Cyrano"; "Don't Look Up"; "Licorice Pizza"; "Tick, Tick... Boom!"; "West Side Story."
- Best actress, drama: Jessica Chastain, "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"; Olivia Colman, "The Lost Daughter"; Nicole Kidman, "Being the Ricardos"; Lady Gaga, "House of Gucci"; Kristen Stewart, "Spencer."
- Best actor, drama: Mahershala Ali, "Swan Song"; Javier Bardem, "Being the Ricardos"; Benedict Cumberbatch, "The Power of the Dog"; Will Smith, "King Richard"; Denzel Washington, "The Tragedy of Macbeth."
- Best actress, musical or comedy: Marion Cotillard, "Annette"; Alana Haim, "Licorice Pizza"; Jennifer Lawrence, "Don't Look Up"; Emma Stone, "Cruella"; Rachel Zegler, "West Side Story."
- Best actor, musical or comedy: Leonardo DiCaprio, "Don't Look Up"; Peter Dinklage, "Cyrano"; Andrew Garfield, "Tick, Tick... Boom!"; Cooper Hoffman, "Licorice Pizza"; Anthony Ramos, "In the Heights."
- Animated: "Encanto"; "Flee"; "Luca"; "My Sunny Maad"; Raya and the Last Dragon."
- Non-English Language: "Compartment No. 6," Finland, Russia and Germany; "Drive My Car," Japan; "The Hand of God," Italy; "A Hero," France and Iran; "Parallel Mothers," Spain.
- Director: Kenneth Branagh, "Belfast"; Jane Campion, "The Power of the Dog"; Maggie Gyllenhaal, "The Lost Daughter"; Steven Spielberg, "West Side Story"; Denis Villeneuve, "Dune."

Television

- Drama series: "Lupin"; "The Morning Show"; "Pose"; "Squid Game"; "Succession."
- Comedy series: "The Great"; "Hacks"; "Only Murders in the Building"; "Reservation Dogs"; "Ted Lasso."
- Limited Series: "Dopesick"; "Impeachment: American Crime Story"; "Maid"; "Mare of Easttown"; "The Underground Railroad."
- Actress, drama series: Uzo Aduba, "In Treatment"; Jennifer Aniston, "The Morning Show"; Christine Baranski, "The Good Fight"; Elisabeth Moss, "The Handmaid's Tale"; Michaela Jaé Rodriguez, "Pose."
- Actor, drama series: Brian Cox, "Succession"; Lee Jung-jae, "Squid Game"; Billy Porter, "Pose"; Jeremy Strong, "Succession"; Omar Sy, "Lupin."

NEW YORK: US Senate candidate Mehmet Oz will end his "Dr Oz" syndicated talk show next month, and producers will replace it with a cooking show featuring his daughter.

The "Dr Oz" show, in its 13th season, will air its last episode on Jan 14, Sony Pictures Television said on Monday.

The heart surgeon and talk show host is running for the US Senate as a Republican in Pennsylvania. Television stations in Philadelphia, New York City and Cleveland that are seen in Pennsylvania had already taken "Dr Oz" off the air, for fear that the Federal Communications Commission's "equal time" rules would allow rival candidates to seek similar air time.

In many parts of the country, "Dr Oz" will be replaced by "The Good Dish," a combination talk-cooking show where hosts Daphne Oz, Gail Simmons and Jamika Pessoa will serve up a dish of the day. Producers boasted it would be "the most fun you can have in the kitchen without having to do the dishes."

The show is an outgrowth of a weekly segment on "Dr Oz," much like Oz's television career got an early boost from Oprah Winfrey.

Sony said it has commitments to air "The Good Dish" in stations representing 90% of the nation's population. (AP)

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka: A gem company in Sri Lanka has unveiled a rare and massive gemstone weighing 683 pounds (310 kilograms) that has been certified as one of the biggest corundums ever found in the country.

Sri Lanka's National Gem and Jewelry Authority says it has done a series of gemological tests on five samples taken from the rock.

"To our knowledge this specimen is indeed a rare specimen and not recorded in the geological literature," read an authentication letter given by the authority to the owners who unveiled the stone on Sunday.

When the outer layer was removed for inspection, the interior showed a silky blue patchy appearance, the letter said, suggesting the stone is a blue sapphire.

Shanka Ruwanditha, a director of the company that currently owns the massive stone, the Gemological Institute of Ratnapura, told The Associated Press on Monday that the owners plan to obtain the services of a local or foreign gem valuer soon to determine the price of the rock.

Sri Lanka and especially its southwestern city of Ratnapura, or the Gem City in the local language, has been known for centuries for mining gems and precious stones. (AP)

NEW YORK: The Metropolitan Museum of Art is dropping the



Winfrey



Oz

Sackler name from seven exhibition spaces amid growing outrage over the role the family may have played in the opioid crisis.

The New York museum and the Sackler family jointly announced that the institution and their once-deep-pocketed benefactors would part ways, removing the Sackler name from the iconic building,

including the wing that houses the Temple of Dendur. The wing is named after brothers Arthur, Mortimer and Raymond Sackler, who donated \$3.5 million for it in the 1970s.

"Our families have always strongly supported The Met, and we believe this to be in the best interest of the Museum and the important

mission that it serves," Sackler descendants said in a statement.

Arthur, Mortimer and Raymond Sackler have all died, but descendants of Mortimer and Raymond Sackler currently are principal owners of Purdue Pharma, the company that developed OxyContin, a widely prescribed and widely abused painkiller. (AP)

Features

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