

This is the tenth year of the Adalar Youth and Children's Orchestra: a decade is an obvious time to consider its achievements and future ambitions, and to reflect about its purpose and value. To succeed, artistic, organisational and human skills all must function harmoniously. The Orchestra's founders have been consistent and determined in their vision to offer music education and the joy of performing together to as many Adalar children as possible. It takes endless hours of voluntary time and commitment: the reward is seeing the young people working hard together and making music.

This is not an ephemeral project for Instagram, but for real life. Not only are the young people learning specific musical skills, but life lessons in balancing personal expression with listening to each other and with mutual respect, creativity and discipline, and I hope learning music's power to express parts of being alive that we can never put into words.

Practically, the Orchestra's musicians and the project overall have made great progress. Playing an instrument in an ensemble is very limited without developing fundamental musical skills: it is essential to teach children to be musically literate, enabling them to access music as a language independently for themselves, not through rote-learning. It is possible to get a group of children to be able to play tunes by repetition. This gives the impression of being an orchestra, and offers nice photo opportunities, but developmentally it leads nowhere. To help enable musicianship and maximise participation we have brought singing - the most fundamental form of musical expression - into our teaching, which I hope we shall expand. Two specialist strings tutors from London visit regularly to coach and bring their educational expertise to help the children, alongside our deeply valued resident teachers. This summer, performing in the Caddebostan Kültür Merkezi was especially important: only a professional venue enables the musicians to achieve their best performances, and for audience to enjoy music without distractions.

Not every child will become an advanced musician reaching the capacity to enter a conservatoire or become a professional. While it is important our education offers this possibility, for the majority of participants the objective is to achieve a standard of meaningful musicianship, knowledge and general life skills which will enhance their lives permanently - ones that I hope will also offer friendship, fulfilment and joy.

The Orchestra's significance extends beyond its musicians: they are part of a wider community of family members, supporters and audience, all being brought together by music, performance, and a shared pride in the achievements of our young people. At the end of Voltaire's novel *Candide*, after the protagonists have endured and survived endless adventures and misfortunes around the world, they make their home on the shores of the Sea of Marmara, concluding that 'il faut cultiver notre jardin'. In our own small way, I hope we are achieving this.

Dr James Ross, July 2026