

# Somewhere in Nowherestan the world's a better place

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BEIRUT: Ever heard of a land called Nowherestan? A country of anarchists and gypsies where people wear what they want and make music of all styles?

No neither had we until Wednesday's International Day of Peace concert by the National Orchestra of Nowherestan at the UNESCO Palace in Beirut.

The group of 23 musicians consisted of gypsies or nomadic peoples ranging from as far and wide as Hungary, Bulgaria, Egypt, Cuba, Palestine and of course Lebanon. To a packed

crowd they performed an eclectic mix of salsa, traditional folk and other songs in the "Nowherestan" style.

Of course, Nowherestan does not exist - though it does

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have a national anthem played with gusto by the orchestra. It is a nation dreamed up by Lebanese record producer and owner of Beirut cabaret club

Music Hall, Michel Elefteriades, and one that seemed to be fully supported by the United Nations in Lebanon and Lebanon's Culture Ministry, under whose patronage the concert was held.

"Nowherestan is a country that doesn't exist anywhere but where everyone from every type of race and culture connects together, people who are not the same," Elefteriades said.

"It is all in the name of peace, but a very anarchistic place; the people are anarchists. It is not serious. People have long hair. Someone who works in a bank for instance could not be from Nowherestan."

A noble idea and one the audience responded to with rounds of applause for the orchestra, which included the BBC World Music Awards-nominated Palestinian oud players The Chehade Brothers. The music included popular Lebanese songs played in the Nowherestan style as well as original compositions by the Chehades and Elefteriades.

The concert marked the end of a day of special events such a workshops to address topics such as inter peace, nonviolent communication, conflict resolution and human rights in Lebanon - a country where more than 144,000 people, mostly civilians, were killed during two decades of conflict.



Music for peace: Gypsy sights and sounds from the anarchistic Orchestra of Nowherestan.