

Anjelika Akbar



A jubilant woman, a role model for musicians

She is one of the most hardworking people one could ever meet and, moreover, one of the most talented. Anjelika Akbar, who was born in Kazakhstan, raised in Russia and now lives in Turkey, has lots of stories to tell.

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That is why the famous composer and musician, who has more than 400 compositions, decided to launch a project that includes her stories, compositions and performances. "It all started with the idea of publishing a book,"

Akbar told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review. She always carries a notebook with her wherever she goes to take notes of the things that happen in her life and the new Turkish words she learns.



The famous composer and pianist Anjelika Akbar, who chose to be a Turkish citizen 18 years ago, launches a project that includes a book, written by her, an album, comprising of her compositions and a series of concerts. She named her project 'The Turkey in Me,' which explains her feelings for Turkey

When she filled up the notebook, she decided to make it into a book. Akbar had a few names in her mind for the project but they were only suitable for the book and not for the accompanying album she hoped to release along with the book. The project includes a series of concerts around Turkey as well as the book and album. Describing herself as a sincere person, she resolved to tell about Turkey and her life in this country in the most honest way possible.

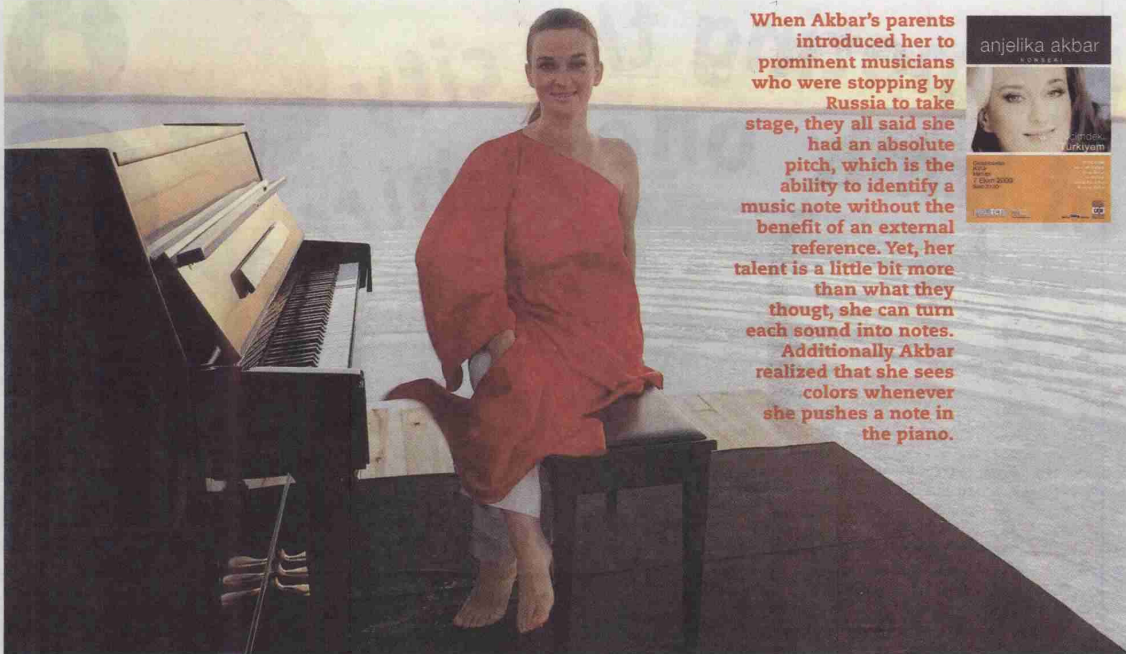
Akbar's aim is to describe the Turkey that she knows – that is why she named her project "İçimdeki Türkiyem" meaning "The Turkey in Me" in English. "The name explains that I adopted the culture of this country and I became a mom here but still I feel like a daughter of this country," she said.

She started her project with a concert series, the first of which was on Oct. 7 on the Anatolian side of Istanbul. She played the compositions that she wrote with the inspiration she received from this land's people, events and her experiences in Turkey. She also played the compositions of prominent Turkish composers during her concert.

In a few months, the book by the same name will appear on bookstore shelves. The reason why the book is being published after the concerts is that she wants to add her concert tour experience to the book. Akbar wrote the compositions in the album which she plans to release at the same time as the book, although the book will also include a few genres of literature. "There is a biography, short, true stories and some philological research on Russian and Turkish. The short stories are funny anecdotes from my life," said Akbar, who will not be concerned if the book is criticized and added, "I am not a literature master, I was frank while I wrote my stories and a few columnists read most of my book. They loved it."

The philological research is a comparison between the two languages she knows. This will be Akbar's second book. Her first book was a children's book explaining life's realities through simple language. ➔





When Akbar's parents introduced her to prominent musicians who were stopping by Russia to take stage, they all said she had an absolute pitch, which is the ability to identify a music note without the benefit of an external reference. Yet, her talent is a little bit more than what they thought, she can turn each sound into notes. Additionally Akbar realized that she sees colors whenever she pushes a note in the piano.



Akbar, after her concerts in Istanbul, will take the stage in Izmir, Eskişehir, Ankara, Denizli, Antalya, Kars, Van, Hatay and Gaziantep. She thinks the profile of the audience changes in each city, especially in rural areas. "The audience in my concerts mostly comprises of youngsters and women. I like to have youngsters as audience, they cheer me up and I think women come because they are curious about me and the music I make," Akbar said.

She receives hundreds of e-mails and mails from her fans each day. "I guess as much as I adopt the traditions and culture in Turkey, the people of this land adopt me," she said.

Some women even consult her about their marriages. She tries to answer each letter or e-mail she receives.

Although she has many fans writing her about their lives and how much they admire her, people do not recognize her in the streets. Some tell her how much she looks like Anjelika Akbar, some tell her she looks like someone but they cannot quite remember. "I walk freely in the streets probably because I appear different on TV – a little bit fatter maybe – while I also look different in photos," she said.

Although she can walk freely in the streets, she has a colorful life. She has faced many hard times during her concerts, writing about them in her book. During one of her performances in an open-air stage in Antalya her dress started burning. "It was a cold evening and all the audience came prepared with coats but I was wearing a dress with a long tail. After some time I could smell something burning and it was the tail of the dress that had gotten stuck in the electrical heater. At another concert of mine in Ankara there was a piano on stage but no chair. There were only a few minutes left before the start

of the concert when they found a piano chair from a high school and brought it to the stage," Akbar said.

Being so talented and managing everything by herself is in Akbar's genes. Her father is an orchestra chief and a philosophy professor while her mother is also a musician. She started listening to music while she was in her mother's womb. When she was only a few months old, Akbar's parents placed her bed next to the piano. Her parents also took her to many concerts and operas when she was just two years old. "Music became my life," she said and added, "my parents realized I had the talent. I knew music notes at the age of two. And, at the same age, I started making improvisations. I wasn't able to read back then, but by looking at the pictures, I was able to tell the books' stories by playing the piano."

She describes her childhood as fun. When her parents introduced her to prominent musicians who were stopping by Russia to take the stage, they all said Akbar had an absolute pitch, which is the ability to identify a music note without the benefit of an external reference.

"My talent was a little bit more than what it was because I could turn each sound to notes. I can hear the notes in mechanic sounds, in a building construction or in a woman's heel knocks. Each sound in the universe is music for me," Akbar said.

She also realized that she sees colors whenever she pushes a note in the piano. She thought each musician had the ability to see the notes with their colors, but she was only imagining. Because of all these talents, she never thought of doing anything else other than music.

While she also maintained an interest in philosophy, she started composing and was influenced by her father.

She was further trained by the best music teachers and entered the conservatory.

Akbar thinks she was born as a composer because composing is a talent; it is not something that one learns with training. She started taking the stage at the age of five. After she finished her studies in the conservatory, she did her master's and doctoral degrees in Turkey on composing and orchestra leadership.

Akbar's only planned on coming to Turkey for a temporary period of time. She originally came to Turkey with her former husband while shooting a movie on ecological problems under the auspices of UNESCO. She composed the music for the film while her former husband was the scriptwriter and painter. They traveled through many countries and stopped in Turkey as well. At the time, Akbar was pregnant and, because the baby was due two months afterwards, her doctor forbade her from traveling.

Her first son, named Yürek, was born in Turkey. At that time, the Soviet Union was falling apart, so she thought it would be safer to stay in Turkey and become a citizen.

"The people I met in Turkey were amazing. They were intellectual, good tempered and smart. That was a reason for me to stay. It is also the country's history, which impressed me. Contrasts and conflicts also inspire composers; actually that's what they need – good or bad incidents and events," Akbar said.

She never thought of moving to another country for the last 18 years even though they offered her so many advantageous things. She settled in Istanbul and now she has a four-member family, two sons and a husband. She enjoys her life by spending time with her family and with music. **DNO**

