



Few in the audience were perhaps less stereotypically Nordic, than Arta Ghavami and Amir Ghomi, when the Nordic hymn was unveiled by a choir and an orchestra at a gala evening of the Nordic Council in Copenhagen during its annual session on 1 November.

The aim of the Nordic Hymn is to unite the five Nordic countries by emphasizing their shared values and experiences.

Despite their lack of blond hair and blue eyes it was this couple, political refugees of Iranian origin, who were the people behind the Nordic hymn. Arta Ghavami, a classical pianist and Amir Ghomi, a music producer, were both raised in Denmark in the Zoroastrian faith and speaking to them they feel as Danish as the Little Mermaid, Tivoli or a bottle of Carlsberg.

When the couple first presented the idea of the Nordic Hymn, many were surprised and even sceptical that a Nordic identity – if it existed at all - could be portrayed artistically.

The five Nordic countries that cooperate within the Nordic Council look quite similar to the outside world, although there are also obvious differences. Four of the official languages spoken, share the old Norse or “Viking” origin, but the fifth, Finnish is not even a close linguistic relative. And then there are minority languages spoken in Greenland and by the Sami of northern Scandinavia.

However, the Nordic nations tend to emphasize their differences rather than the similarities that are so striking to outsiders.

This is precisely why the couple Amir and Arta, wanted to convey in music and words in a common Nordic hymn.

But if not linguistic, then what is the Nordic identity? Perhaps it takes someone who is both on the outside looking in, and the inside looking out, like Amir and Arta to see what it means to be a part of the Nordic family.

To prepare the project Arta and Amir gathered a discussion-group of musicians, journalists, intellectuals, and officials (including an UNRIC representative) who met in Reykjavik 3 years ago to try to define the Nordic identity.

“The politicians speak constantly of a special national identity in Denmark and the same can be said of the other Nordic countries. But they forget that in reality we are a part of a unique Nordic fellowship, which is raised on trust, equality and security. This is what the hymn is meant to honour,” Arta Ghavami told the UNRIC Nordic newsletter.

Arta, who came to Denmark as a toddler, visited Iran for the first time seven years ago and had, what she calls an “existential shock”.

“It was in Iran that I became conscious of my double identity, until then I used to say “I am a Dane from Iran, just like someone else said he or she was from different regions in Denmark.”

She started asking herself who she was and what shared and did not share with Danes and Iranians. At this point she met Amir who had been working on a pan-Nordic rap festival. The hymn was the solution he proposed. "It is the Nordic," he told her. "You can find your identity in the Nordic spirit."

The result of this search for identity which started in Teheran, was unveiled on 1 November in Copenhagen at the Award Ceremony for the Nordic cultural and environment prizes, when an orchestra and a choir featuring Danish, Icelandic, Faroese and Greenlandic singers premiered the Nordic Hymn, with lyrics by the award winning Danish-Norwegian author Kim Leine, and music by the Faroese composer Sunleif Rasmussen.



In attendance at the live on TV event, were the Crown Prince of Denmark and the Prime Ministers of the five Nordic Countries who witnessed this positive contribution of Arta and Amir to the country and region that gave their families international protection from persecution in their home land. An excellent example of the values of the TOGETHER Campaign, launched by the UN Secretary-General last fall that aims to change negative perceptions and attitudes towards refugees and migrants.

Additional links:

- [Together: Respect, Safety and Dignity for all](#)
- [More information on the Nordic Hymn](#)