



The Hills Are Alive...

EDUARDO CARPENEDO (2)



Festival teachers, like Yoni Battat (CFA'15) (left), and students perform outdoors in and around Bendada.

...with the sound of the Bendada Music Festival, which is leading the charge to revitalize Portugal's villages / BY DEVIN HAHN

It's a warm

July evening here in the village of Bendada—a tiny enclave of terra-cotta roofs and whitewashed concrete walls in the mountains of northern Portugal—and the residents are gathered at a hilltop *cruzeiro* for a concert. Beyond, the Portuguese high country stretches for miles to the west, olive groves and farmhouses breaking up the rocky landscape.

Standing in front of the crowd, 18-year-old Duarte Andrade bows feverishly through the fugue from Bach's Violin Sonata in G minor, a piece he's been practicing all day. His cousin Inês Andrade looks on, attentive to his technique. She is the reason they are all here. She is the founder of the Bendada Music Festival, which for the past three years has brought aspiring young musicians from the region, as well as from the United States and Europe, to this village for an intense week of instruction and performance.

For eight days, the baroque sounds of classical music echo through these hills and bring to life an otherwise sleepy rural village. Modeled on educational summer music programs like the BU Tanglewood Institute, the festival includes private instruction for students ages 8 to 24 in violin, viola, cello, flute, clarinet, guitar, piano, and voice, as well as daily small, often intimate, concerts throughout the area.

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Pianist Inês Andrade (CFA'18), who grew up in Lisbon and regularly traveled to Bendada to visit relatives, conceived of the music festival as a Doctor of Musical Arts student at the College of Fine

Arts. "I always knew I wanted to do more with music than just perform concerts," she says. "I wanted to create something that could make an impact on a whole community."

She enlisted the help of her chamber music group Virtuoso Soloists: pianist Edoardo Carpenedo (CFA'19), who grew up in Venice and likes to wax poetic about the rock-star lifestyle of 19th-century piano virtuoso Franz Liszt; violist Yoni Battat (CFA'15), who is from Connecticut and recently returned from a year in Israel studying and performing Arabic music, Mizrahi Jewish music, and klezmer; and cellist Gracie Keith (CFA'19), who comes from Texas and has even the Portuguese kids saying "y'all" by the end of each festival.

Inês Andrade and her BU colleagues teach the festival courses, along with five instructors from conservatory programs in Portugal and the United States. Most of the students are from Portugal, but this year they also hail from Italy and the United States.

It may seem extraordinary that students would travel hours from the major coastal cities of Lisbon and Porto to a town so small that it has no supermarket. But Bendada is particu-



ONLINE: Hear the sounds of the Bendada Music Festival in videos at bu.edu/bostonia.



Students perform a piece of choral music at the Castelo de Belmonte, a medieval castle near Bendada (above). Most of the students participating in the Bendada Music Festival, such as Duarte Andrade (top right), are from Portugal, but this year, they also hail from Italy and the United States. A big

draw is the number of public concerts they perform during the week. Unlike other festivals, which may hold one concert at the end, Bendada students perform every day.



DEVIN HAHN (LEFT), EDOARDO CARPENEDO (RIGHT) TOP AND CENTER), JASON KIMBALL (BOTTOM)

larly well equipped to host a music festival. The village has an active local woodwind ensemble, the Sociedade Filarmónica Bendadense, which first played in 1870. (Inês and Duarte's great-great-grandparents were among its founding members.) And in 2015, Bendada's rich musical legacy led to the opening of the Casa da Música da Bendada, a well-appointed music school built with funding from a European Union grant. The building, with its soundproof practice rooms and a modern concert hall overlooking the valley below, is the home base for the Bendada Music Festival.

Throughout the week, the Casa da Música stairwells and the cobble pathways around the school are full of the sounds of practicing students, from a guitar player quietly strumming the opening chords of Roland Dyens' *Fuoco* to a violinist playing Bach to a pair of woodwind students working through *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*.

"It's unbelievable how a small mountain village in a remote region has such good conditions to make music," says Inês Andrade.

Another draw for students is the number of public concerts they perform during the week. "In other festivals, you have just one concert at the very end," says 18-year-old Catarina Costa, a violin student from Lisbon. "But at Bendada we have concerts every day." They play in nearby towns and all over Bendada—in the mountains, in the village square, at a retiree's home.

The villagers are ardent supporters of the festival, taking in students and preparing meals.

The villagers are among the festival's most ardent supporters. They house students for the week, participate in an adult choir that performs alongside the students,

and even prepare daily meals for the festival participants. They enjoy the vitality the festival brings to the village. "The older people in the village especially, it's hard for them to go anywhere else," Inês Andrade says. "So we try to bring the world to them, even if it's just for a week."

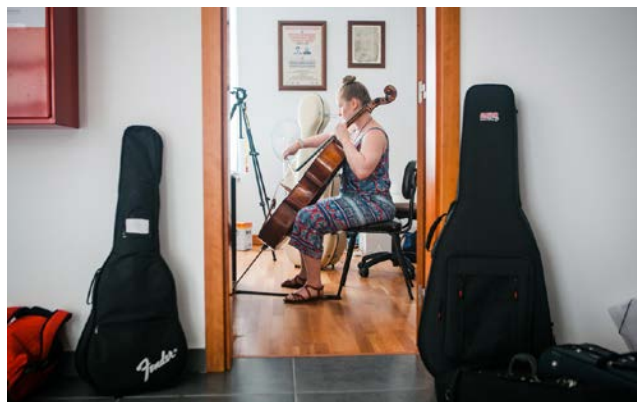
"Really," she says, "the festival could not happen if there weren't such a welcoming community that was willing to help and collaborate with everything."

"The village is the hero of the festival," Carpenedo says. "I think Bendada is the hidden jewel of northern Portugal. You get this sense of authenticity that is both humbling and peaceful to experience."

Inês Andrade hopes the event will rejuvenate the town and others like it. Over the past generation, Bendada and other small villages of Portugal's mountainous interior region have suffered crises of depopulation and economic stagnation.

Town native Vítor Andrade is an economics reporter for *Expresso*, Portugal's largest newspaper. "When I was a child here," he says, "Bendada had almost 2,000 people. Now we don't have 200."

This year's festival brought much-needed attention to Bendada. On the fifth day, a crew from SIC Television, Portugal's major broadcaster, arrived to film a segment for a feature on the importance of music to the country's small villages. That same day, Ana Mendes Godinho, Portugal's secretary of state for tourism, came to hear the students perform. She believes cultural events like the Bendada Music Festival are key to im-



Throughout the week, students practice in stairwells and on cobble paths outdoors, and in the town's music school, under the attentive eye of teachers like Edoardo Carpenedo (CFA'19).

proving the area's economy. "This is an amazing event, because it shows the potential to bring life back to a village that had been abandoned, using music and culture," Godinho says. "Bendada is a case study that everyone in Portugal should be looking at."

Inês Andrade belongs to the generation whose parents were born in Bendada, but left to pursue greater economic opportunity elsewhere. "I hope the festival will grow," she says, "but mainly I hope the festival will help the region grow as well."



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Pianist and festival founder
 Inês Andrade (CFA'18)
 (top) hopes the event will
 rejuvenate rural villages
 like Bendada (bottom).

FACING PAGE: JASON KIMBALL (TOP, CENTER), DEVIN HAHN (BOTTOM); THIS PAGE: DEVIN HAHN (TOP), EDOARDO CARPENEDO (BOTTOM)