

**11 February 2011**

**Beethoven Symphony Unites Americans for Pakistan Flood Recovery**



The "Beethoven for the Indus Valley" concert raised money for Pakistan flood survivors such as the father and son shown in the image by Acumen Fund's Jacqueline Novogratz.

**By Carrie Loewenthal Massey**  
**Special Correspondent**

New York — As the exultant lyrics of Friedrich Schiller's "Ode to Joy," set to Beethoven's beautiful orchestral accompaniment, filled New York's Carnegie Hall, images of Pakistan's flood survivors, treading through waist-high waters, flashed on the wall behind the performing musicians.

The contrast was striking: pure devastation to pure joy.

But artistic director and conductor George Mathew purposely chose Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony" for the January 31 concert, which benefited the flood survivors of Pakistan's Indus Valley. Floodwaters inundated Pakistan in the summer of 2010, covering one-fifth of the country at one point and affecting 21 million people, leaving many without food, shelter or livelihood.

Through Beethoven's music, Mathew sought to convey the idea that "we become more human and more ourselves when we concern ourselves with the well-being of others," he said in the *Playbill* for the concert.

The concert, called "Beethoven for the Indus Valley," helped raise awareness of the ongoing need to assist the Pakistani flood survivors. It was sponsored by Music for Life International — Mathew's nonprofit organization, which brings musicians together for humanitarian causes — and the American Pakistan Foundation. Proceeds benefited

Acumen Fund, a New York-based nongovernmental organization that invests in long-term solutions to poverty in Pakistan.

While he is grateful for the money raised by the concert and for the continued donations it is generating, Mathew said he is most thrilled by the social impact of the event, which he witnessed in different ways.

First, the makeup of the orchestra itself "was in fact a microcosm of the world," Mathew said in an interview. He gathered musicians from nearly 40 major American ensembles and conservatories, bringing together volunteer performers of several nationalities, including "Asian and Indian ... Arab, and Israeli, just the most amazing thing to see," he said. "And more than that, they were pouring out their hearts and souls for Pakistan."

Mathew, who divides his time between New York and Bangalore, India, also recognizes the social impact of his role as an Indian-American conductor.



Conductor George Mathew, an Indian American who helped organize the concert, said, "At the end of the day we're all South Asians."

"I know that there is a value in my coming forth as an Indian myself and saying we have to be a voice for these people who are suffering in Pakistan. We're connected," said Mathew. "Even though what's highlighted are the differences ... we speak the same languages, have the same literatures, eat the same foods. At the end of the day, we're all South Asians."

Mathew sees the concert as "a powerful example of human solidarity," which is the "only antidote to the kinds of things that divide us today," he said.

"Beethoven for the Indus Valley" launched Music for Life International's humanitarian efforts, which evolved out of Mathew's three previous concerts for global causes. It was Mathew's second concert for Pakistan; the first, "Beethoven for South Asia," in January 2006, supported the survivors of the 2005 Kashmir earthquake. Mathew also organized "Requiem for Darfur" in 2007 and "Mahler for the Children of AIDS" in 2009.

ACUMEN FUND: LASTING CAPITAL FOR SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Mathew chose Acumen Fund as the beneficiary of the concert's proceeds because he supported its mission to invest in businesses that change lives in Pakistan and their work on sustainable development and long-term solutions, he said.

Acumen Fund supports local entrepreneurs, nonprofits and businesses working to improve the lives of the poor by increasing access to housing, clean water and health care and enhancing agricultural practices. The organization provides these ventures long-term investment, managerial assistance and access to government and other partnerships.

"We invest in businesses that provide critical goods and services to low-income markets. Through that we seek to effect change by focusing on the social impact that comes from these goods and services," said Misbah Naqvi, Acumen Fund's business development manager, in an interview.

Since 2002, Acumen Fund has invested more than \$11 million in Pakistani ventures, according to the organization's website. Jacqueline Novogratz, founder and chief executive officer of Acumen Fund, traveled to Pakistan shortly after the floods to see the effects firsthand and explore opportunities to support the recovery work Pakistanis were doing on the ground.

"The world generally gets to see only one perspective of Pakistan," Novogratz said. "But there is a hidden story — that of its many citizens who want to see positive change and are willing to do something about it. And while the journey ahead is long, there are signs of progress."

Hoping to further this progress by raising awareness of the flood damage, Novogratz said Acumen Fund "felt lucky" to be a part of "Beethoven for the Indus Valley." Since the concert, the organization has seen increased traffic to its donation website, according to Naqvi.

In addition to its work in Pakistan, Acumen Fund invests in social enterprises in India, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.