

The Violin Channel recently caught up with Grammy Award-winning Armenian-American violist **Kim Kashkashian** on her rapidly growing concert series **Music for Food**, a “musician-led initiative for local hunger relief”. Music for Food events are donation-based fundraising concerts where all presenters and artists pledge to donate all proceeds and fees to local food banks and pantries. Inspired by fellow violist Carol Rodland’s Rochester-based “If Music be the Food...” food drive concerts, Kim launched Music for Food, which is currently celebrating its 7th season in Boston, having provided over **335,000** meals in 10 U.S. cities and internationally.

We sat down with Kim to discuss this project, its beginning, and what she sees in its future.

How did Music for Food get started?

“Music for Food started over the dinner table, surprisingly enough. My colleagues and I were discussing how we could help our wonderful, professional-grade students be good citizens in the world and use their gifts and talents to do so.

We thought that the nourishing aspect of music and the nourishing aspect of food went together very well if we used music as an ineffable but powerful thing, creating concrete food for people in need, and if we used the idea that an artist needs to be rooted and grounded in their own community and therefore responsible to those around them that we could start something beautiful.”

What does a Music for Food concert entail?

“Every community finds its own way to create Music for Food events. For example, Sharon Robinson does house concerts in Cleveland, and in New York, we have a series at Broadway Presbyterian Church, and in Boston, we have a series that now involves four institutes of higher learning... it can be anything, and in fact it can also be one individual musician, anywhere in the world, who decides ‘I want to be part of Music for Food’... the only thing that has to happen is an ad - ‘This is a Music for Food event’ - it means the artist is contributing their fee to a local food pantry. This is the beautiful aspect of it, that wherever it happens, it’s a beautiful community event...”

You mentioned before that this was great for students as well?

“They are learning how to organize, how to get an audience, how to make programs - all kinds of things that come with being a musician in today’s world! What used to be called being a Renaissance Man - basically, learning how to live in the world.

Is there a playing standard expected?

“That’s a great question! A Suzuki school could do this. A group of amateurs. So - yes, amateurs, yes, young children, anybody... somebody recently asked me, if I had one word to describe what we do, it would be *include*.”

Is there anything else that you’d like our readers to know?

“In the United States, there are 42 million Americans who go hungry every night... it’s a silent disease that affects every community, and we don’t always know... The power of music to help that situation is enormous. We find that students and professionals alike find that playing a concert for this dual purpose - to make beautiful music and also to make good for the community in a concrete way - has an incredibly powerful, beneficial effect on the way we make music. The little stuff stops mattering... am I going to make this shift, am I going to play in tune, will I be heard... it all dissipates into the fact that you are playing to create food.”

For more information on **Music for Food**, including how to participate or donate directly, please visit their website at <http://www.musicforfoodboston.org/>.