Artists squeeze in sights on tour

By Jae-Ha Kim
Tribune Content Agency

The work of Arakl's Jonathan Miron and Philip Sheegog is influenced by what they hear on the road. **SHERVIN LAINEZ**

As the duo Arkai, violinist Jonathan Miron and cellist Philip Sheegog have earned accolades for the album "Brightside." The electro-acoustic string duo vividly remembered how hard they worked for their first professional gig almost eight years ago in front of an audience that included global leaders.

"We had a five-minute slot to perform at the Peace First summit hosted by Barack Obama's sister, Maya Soetoro-Ng, in New York City," Sheegog said. "This summit brought together incredible change makers, peace builders and industry leaders from around the globe (that included) Parkland students (and) Gandhi's grandchild. We had never composed a piece of music before, but decided that our first gig ever would be the time to try this out. We had a very tight timeline to execute! We were blissfully ignorant and had no idea what we were doing, but gave it our all and successfully composed our first piece of music. That was the moment where we thought, 'Hmmm, maybe we have something here.'"

This interview with Miron and Sheegog has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: What trips do you have planned for 2026?
Sheegog: We're headed to Los Angeles for the Grammys, Dubai in April and then some U.S. dates. We're in the process of finalizing our 2026 tour.

Q: Have you written or worked on any songs while you were on the road?
Miron: Always. Last year, we were on a global tour while creating our album "Brightside." We spent a lot of late nights and early mornings in hotel rooms creating, listening and tweaking tracks. During crunch time, I was listening and giving notes from a hotel lobby in Slovenia and Philip even implemented adjustments while walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain!

Q: What untapped destination should people know about?
S: Ljubljana, Slovenia, is a hidden gem. It's this small medieval city. No cars in the main square, live music everywhere, great food and totally walkable. It's a charming, magical place.

Q: What was a trip you took as a child that stands out?
M: I loved going to Indonesia as a kid. The beaches, the fruits, the monkeys! S: My family took a few trips up to Yosemite. The first time became belovedly infamous because of a somewhat challenging hike to Vernal Falls. My two sisters and I were running on fumes by the end.

Q: Does the music you hear in a particular city or country inspire your own work?
M: Our music is the product of so many influences – western classical, pop, rock, cinematic, jazz, electronic – so the things we hear on the road inevitably influence our work. When a musical idea comes to mind, we'll often record voice memos. Our phones are filled with recordings of sounds from around the world and melodies that come to mind wherever we are. When we actually sit down to write, we're bringing our personal music vocabularies, everything we've absorbed along the way, making our music this big melting pot of all the different influences that we love.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?
M: Anywhere in the tropics with a beach with some yummy local flavors and a good drink. I grew up in Taiwan and Singapore, two very humid and hot foodie cities in the world.
S: One definite standout is Iceland. It's full of otherworldly natural wonders.

Q: Do you enjoy being a tourist in new places you visit?
S: We do! We try to carve out time to see some of the local wonders when we're not sound checking or performing. Most of the time, we're in a city for such a brief window that we don't get to actually see much of it, but we love getting to experience each place through the energy of its audience and make a point to enjoy the local cuisine.

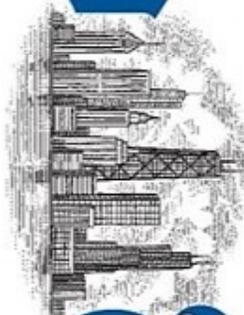*For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.*

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