ANNUAL REPORT 2016

WAR DIVIDES, MUSIC CONNECTS

Musicians without Borders
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Foreword

For us, it was easy to say: without borders. Eighteen years ago, with doctors, reporters and clowns for inspiration, we chose a name that expressed our goal and the ideal of our profession: Musicians without Borders.

Over the years, we have learned that when we succeed in reaching across borders to connect through music, we can free voices, break through isolation and empower new change-makers and peace builders.

But we have also become humble about this name. We have traveled to places where musicians know how easily people can be divided, and how even music can be perverted and used to create borders between people.

2016 was a year of growth for Musicians without Borders: our sources of funding expanded, interest in our training program and projects increased, we were invited to speak and present our work at international conferences and gatherings, and new partnerships developed. For us, it was a year of building new bridges.

At the same time, the world around us built more walls. The devastation of the now permanent wars in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere seemed unstoppable. In ‘safer’ regions, legal and physical fences and walls went up as the voices of xenophobia and exclusion dominated the public narrative and refugees were increasingly marginalized, demonized and refused shelter and safety.

As new borders are drawn and old ones reinstated, excluding people fleeing from war, poverty and climate change, those words become all the more powerful: without borders.

We celebrate every doctor, reporter, clown and musician who connects across lines of race, religion, politics or history to stand with fellow humans everywhere. We might have to work harder to deserve our name.

We will.

Laura Hassler, Director
Programs

Palestine Community Music

Over the past nine years, Palestine Community Music has grown organically into a multifaceted program that empowers youth to express themselves and serve their communities. In 2016, we expanded our Musical Playground program to reach some of the most disadvantaged schools where children would normally not have access to music education. The program emphasizes musical skill building through learning songs, raps, body percussion rhythms, and playing simple instruments, resulting in large-scale community performances.

We also extended the reach of our program to collaborate with international musicians, organizations and festivals, including:

- **The BRAVE Festival** (Poland): Four music workshop leaders, one of them deaf, gave workshops and performances in which they combined rap, singing, signing (Palestinian sign language), qanun and Arabic percussion.
- **Rappers Across Borders**: An exchange program between Dutch and Palestinian rappers, in which 85 children from refugee camps, villages and an orphanage, as well as children with chronic diseases received a series of rap workshops, recorded their songs and performed them;
- **Music as Therapy International**: We continued our intensive distance learning course, implementing several series of Music as Therapy sessions for children with special needs in al-Azzeh refugee camp, House of Hope and Beit Jalla school for special needs.
- **Sounds of Palestine**: We also expanded our partnership with the El-Sistema-inspired organization and participated in several exciting music events, including the Palestine Choir Festival.

Additionally, we trained 55 people in Music and Nonviolent Leadership, including 15 social workers and music teachers from Sounds of Palestine, 10 musicians and youth leaders, and 30 kindergarten teachers from villages and refugee camps in the Bethlehem area. We have now published a Musical Playground Manual in Arabic and English so that more workshop leaders can be trained, both in Palestine and abroad.
Rwanda Youth Music

In 2016, the impact of our work in Rwanda spread across the country, reaching thousands of young refugees who have escaped mounting conflict in Burundi.

In April, we concluded our training program in Mahama refugee camp with 30 young people who now proudly claim the role of Community Music Leaders in the camp. They have led music-making activities with 35,000 refugee children, providing musical support to this extremely vulnerable population.

Our team of MwB Community Music Leaders, based in Kigali, Rwanda, have facilitated 23 outreach events for children and youth affected by HIV and young people living as refugees in Rwanda. They have worked at Kiziba, Mugombwa, Gihembe, Nyabiheke and Kigeme refugee camps; Nyanza and Bugesera reception camps; and in Kigali with the urban refugee population. Thirty young music leaders have been employed by Musicians without Borders to do this work and over 3,000 children and youth have participated.

150 young people have benefited from therapeutic music-making, including clinical music therapy and community-based groups led by trained Rwandan facilitators.

“I have seen people coming from hell to become heroes; depressed youth becoming ambassadors of hope; refugees developing hope for tomorrow; orphans becoming the voice for the voiceless; and unhappy young people becoming sources of happiness.”

- Allison Shyaka, project assistant
Mitrovica Rock School

2016 initially proved to be a challenging year for the Mitrovica Rock School, due to a lack of steady funding and a real threat of closure. The time was ripe to make a radical change to the way we work: we shifted our inter-ethnic band activities out of "neutral territory" and back to Kosovo. The change has been a big success: all year, our mixed bands rehearsed in Mitrovica and held eight performances in Kosovo. Gradually, we are seeing a new youth culture taking shape in the very city where a shared passion for rock music once prevailed over ethnic differences.

The Mitrovica Rock School also caught the attention of NYC-based experiential marketing agency Pop2Life. In May, our ethnically mixed band the Artchitechts was invited to NYC by Pop2Life and met with industry experts and musicians. We will continue to work in partnership with Pop2Life to help increase MwB’s U.S. supporter base and online presence.

At the end of the year, we said goodbye to Dafina Kosova Wels, director of the Rock School since January 2013. She will be succeeded by project managers Emir Hasani and Milizza Kosova.

Beneficiaries in 2016:

- **113 Rock School students** (63 north, 50 south), ages 11 to 26, who participated in the daily lesson program
- **10 mixed bands with 46 members** (24 north, 22 south), seven of these bands participated in our 9th annual summer school in Skopje, Macedonia
- **176 parents and friends** from north and south Mitrovica attended mixed band concerts in Pristina, Gracanica and Skopje together
- **17 staff**, 10 of whom are former students: 5 junior teachers, 3 student trainees; 6 senior teachers, 4 management team members from north and south Mitrovica
Welcome Notes

With an unprecedented 65 million refugees worldwide, the eyes of the world turned to Europe, as hundreds of thousands of fleeing people struggled to reach the ‘safety’ of European shores. With the ‘refugee crisis’ unfolding close to our home base, MwB considered how we could best contribute. Among the thousands of volunteers wanting to provide both a welcome and practical help to refugees, were many musicians, many of whom had no experience delivering appropriate music programs to people in dynamic, insecure situations.

Based on our work in conflict regions, we launched a new project training musicians to lead music workshops in refugee centers in the Netherlands. MwB’s Welcome Notes training offers musicians practical skills to create safe musical spaces for people living with grief, loss and uncertainty. This year, we trained 37 musicians, with a third training planned for February 2017. Our trainees have led a total of 25 workshops in refugee centers across the Netherlands (Haarlem, Almere, Alkmaar, Zaanstad), reaching approximately 500 refugee participants.

Based on the success of the project, we’ve now been invited to adapt our Welcome Notes training in Italy and Germany while we develop a new collaborative project for refugees in the Balkans. In 2017, MwB will join the Dutch music training center, Akoesticum, in a collaborative initiative with the Landesmusikakademie NRW (North Rhine Westphalia, Germany). We will share our expertise on using music to support the integration of immigrant and refugee children, in the context of mixed school classes in the Netherlands and Germany. MwB director Laura Hassler and trainer Marion Haak Schulenburg initially presented our work to the Landesmusikakademie on November 24 and will subsequently participate in two Expert Meetings on February 9 (Netherlands) and March 16 (Germany), 2017.
Community Partnerships

Community Music for Community Health (Uganda)

In the fall of 2016, Musicians without Borders began a new partnership with Keep a Child Alive and Alive Medical Services, called “Community Music for Community Health” in Kampala, Uganda. The training is assisted by Rwandan community music leaders, and is based on our ongoing program in Rwanda. In September and December, we trained approximately 30 young people who will become Community Music Leaders at Alive Medical Services. They will learn to use music to support the health of over 1,000 children and youth affected by HIV, building on existing support provided at Alive Medical Services. Our trainees have set-up bi-monthly music support sessions, and incorporated music into the children’s clinic days as well as the clinic’s food days, benefiting around 500 children and youth in 2016.
Music Bridge (Northern Ireland)

In September, we completed the second training cycle of the Music Bridge program in Derry-Londonderry, with 15 newly graduated trainees across two training levels. Our trainees reached over 900 people (youth, teens, adults and families) across Northern Ireland through music workshops during the training year.

The 2016-2017 training program, which began in November, offers three levels of training: an introductory level course, an advanced course for returning trainees and a third year course focused on reaching specific target populations (divided communities, prisoners and other hard-to-reach groups). In addition to our returning trainees, we’re delighted to be reaching eight new individuals, who hail from Derry-Londonderry, as well as the Republic of Ireland and England, broadening the impact of the program into different communities.

Since the start of the program in 2014, we have trained over 50 Community Music Leaders, reaching over 1,500 youth and adults through 150 workshops in the greater Derry-Londonderry region, across Northern Ireland and the Republic.

“I experienced the power of opening up – to music and collaboration and trust. It’s not an easy process, but it’s an affecting one.”

- Dónal Kearney, Music Bridge trainee
Advanced Community Music Training

**Academic Partnerships**

This summer, MwB was invited to lead two trainings for professional musicians and music students, in partnership with academic institutions.

In June, MwB embarked on an unprecedented two-week collaboration with SIT Graduate Institute and the CONTACT Summer Peacebuilding Program. This year, CONTACT celebrated its 20th anniversary training professionals in methods of conflict transformation. This was the first year that the program included a special focus on music within their curriculum. We trained 14 musicians in methods of music for community building, including a young woman who plans to begin her own program in South Africa and an Armenian woman who is running after-school music programs in Baltimore serving refugees, unaccompanied migrants and at-risk youth.

In July, MwB led a four-day training in community music and peace-building for 30 local and international musicians as part of the SOAS Summer Music School at the University of London. Participants were eager to learn practical activities alongside theoretical knowledge about our work, leaving us with the impression that four days was simply not enough to address the needs and interests of such a diverse group of music practitioners. We hope to replicate and expand both training opportunities in 2017.

“During one of my first graduate classes at SIT in the field of Peace Studies, we were invited to imagine a social space where all parties’ goals are met, as a way for transforming conflict...The training that I received from Musicians without Borders was joyful and inspiring, and it is clear to me that the work they are doing...is contributing toward the formation of that social space that is necessary for transforming conflicts.”

-Marisa Massery, student, SIT Graduate Institute
Training of Trainers, the Netherlands

In October, we welcomed 46 musicians from around the world to the music training center Akoesticum in Ede, the Netherlands, for our second annual Training of Trainers, an advanced community music training for experienced music workshop leaders. For six days, we provided an intensive overview of MwB’s working principles and workshop approaches developed from our long-term work in training young people as music workshop leaders in Palestine, Rwanda and Northern Ireland. This year, we were delighted to be able to invite some of our assistant trainers and teachers from these regions to take part in the advanced training, with the aim to enhance their skills in running music workshops in their own communities. We also included a lecture and panel session to further discussion and debate around music as a tool for peace-building.

Organization

With the generous support of a private foundation, we were able to increase our organizational capacity and stabilize operations in our head office in Amsterdam this year. This additional support allowed us time to focus on the development of our training curriculum as well as administrative policies and procedures, including a Child Protection policy. In addition, the increased capacity of our core team made it possible for MwB to engage more actively in advocacy, participating in international conferences, and delivering speeches and presentations (see Advocacy and Events below).
Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

In December, MwB project managers and director came together for a three-day expert meeting at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) to share ideas, experiences and innovative approaches to MEL, focusing on our mutual work with arts-based interventions in challenging social environments. Participants included Miriam Nabarro (Artist-in-residence, Development Studies SOAS), Leslie Bunt (Professor of Music Therapy, University of the West of England), Katie Bruce (Streetwise Opera/Music in Detention), Simon Glenister (Noise Solution), Craig Robertson (University of Leeds), Nick Wilson (Youth Music, UK), and Elke Selter (UNESCO consultant). The meetings were presided over by Katrina Duncan (Freelance arts consultant) and Angela Impey (Senior Lecturer in Ethnomusicology, SOAS).

Our organizational objectives were to define the MEL needs unique to each MwB project as well as those common across the organization; and to create an action plan involving the development of an organization-wide Theory of Change as well as project-based reporting tools. An initial follow-up step was made at our annual December meeting, in which our team developed an initial draft of our Theory of Change, which will inform the development of future MEL tools.

Communications & Fundraising

This year was marked by a significant increase in income compared to the year 2015; the organization’s result exceeded the budget. The organization, working under cost restriction until mid-2016, through the efficient use of existing staff, volunteers and interns, succeeded in meeting its fundraising goals for 2016 and additionally allied with a strategic partner willing to invest in general organization development.

The new strategic partner’s financial support resulted in a slight increase of the staff capacity, as well as critical support for existing and new projects and activities. During the last quarter of the year 2016, it was therefore possible to slightly increase the hours of the current personnel, already understaffed, and to stabilize the work of our project managers and external professionals. The search for a strategic partner was important for the organization in order to strengthen its overall capacities and work, to ensure a better level of financial sustainability, especially through the creation of a continuity reserve so that in case of a funding shortage the organization and its operations are not immediately affected.

The total income for 2016 was € 587,069 (2015: €410,067), generated by the organization’s own fundraising activities, augmented by merchandise campaigns and benefit events in the Netherlands and around the world. Of the total income, 64% (€375,469) was granted for projects and the remaining 36% (€211,600) was raised as general income. Of the total income in 2016, 75% was spent on objectives. Please refer to our Financial Report 2016 for more details.

In November, we hired a part-time professional fundraiser, Esther Arp, significantly increasing our capacity to reach out to new institutional donors as well as to further personalize ongoing donor engagement. We diversified our sources of income through partnerships with Helpfreely.org and Webfaction as well as with merchandising through BandCamp and Teespring. We also witnessed a 13% increase in online donations (2015: EUR 34,104; 2016: EUR 38,473).
MWB’s e-newsletters and social media outreach continues to grow. This year, our Facebook followers increased by 32% (2015: 17,377 followers; 2016: 22,870 followers); Twitter: 57% increase (2015: 1,504 followers; 2016: 2,355 followers); Instagram: 115% increase (2015: 694 followers; 2016: 1,492 followers). Our newsletter subscriptions grew by 41% (2015: 6,608 subscribers; 2016: 9,304 subscribers). In December, Director Laura Hassler hosted MwB’s first-ever live Q&A on Facebook, reaching over 300 followers.

Press Mentions & Publications


April 18: “Leon Bridges rounded off the European leg of his tour with a secret charity gig at Under the Bridge in Fulham last night.” RoryOConnorTV. https://roryoconnortv.com/2016/04/18/if-vibe-could-be-bottled-leon-would-make-his-fortune-from-merchandise-rory-reviews-under-the-bridge-gig/


Advocacy & Events

March - May: Series of five benefit events presented by award-winning venue Under the Bridge, featuring Lianne La Havas, Leon Bridges, Jack Garratt, Rodrigo Y Gabriela and La Roux; London, UK.

March 2: MwB director Laura Hassler speaks at RASA/World Blend Cafe on the topic of using music as a tool for promoting freedom of expression for migrants and refugees; Utrecht, the Netherlands.

April 2: Lief Langedijk benefit event for MwB’s initiatives for refugees in the Netherlands; Langedijk, the Netherlands.

April 8: People 2 People benefit for MwB; Barcelona, Spain.

May 6: Canadian Music Week, keynote speech by Laura Hassler at the 9th annual Global Forum Networking Breakfast; Toronto, Canada.

May 19: Speech by Laura Hassler at University of Padua as part of a series of seminars on Music and Human Rights, organized by Musicians for Human Rights; Padua, Italy

May 21: Laura Hassler speaks at TEDx Mines; Nancy, France. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu6t3KP7q0

June 2: MwB trainer Danny Felsteiner Mekori presents at Spotify office; Stockholm, Sweden.

June 21: World Wide Music Day: over 20 benefit events around the world for MwB, ‘Voices for MwB’ concert at Splendor; Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
June 25: Paragon Singers 40th anniversary concert as benefit for MwB; Bath, England.

July 3: All We R Saying flash mob at Amsterdam Roots Festival; Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

July 10: Musicians from MwB’s Palestine Community Music program perform at BRAVE Festival; Warsaw, Poland.


September 23: MwB benefit concert produced by Louis Larocca, Ariel Yerushalmi and Jeff Krasner Productions; Long Island University, NYC.

October 4-7: Laura Hassler as panelist at ‘Música y Transformación Social’ conference organized by Fundación Nacional Batuta and the British Council; Bogotá, Colombia.

October 23-27: Five-day training led by two assistant trainers from Rwanda for the students of Centre Scolaire Am Sand in Niederanven, Luxembourg.


November 16: Laura Hassler gives keynote speech at world music summit Mundial Montreal; Montreal, Canada.

November 17: Danny Felsteiner Mekori speaks at Spotify Mindshare Huddle, London, UK.

November 24: Laura Hassler and assistant trainer Marion Haak-Schulenburg present on our work at the general meeting of the Landesmusikakademie NRW, as part of a year-long collaboration on the topic of arts and social integration.

December 8: Benefit event for MwB at Croydon College; London, UK.

December 13: Live Facebook Q&A with MwB director Laura Hassler.

**Musicians without Borders – The People**

**Ambassadors**
Eva-Maria Westbroek  
Shura Lipovsky  
Yori Swart  
Fearless Rose  
Matthew Wadsworth  
Helen Botman
Supervisory Board
Johan Dorrestein - Chair
Laila Abid
André Buitenhuis
Lynn Kaplanian-Buller
Jeske Remmers
Eduard Nazarski

Executive Board
Laura Hassler

Head Office, Amsterdam
Laura Hassler - Director
Ilaria Modugno - Financial manager
Danny Felsteiner Mekori - Communications, strategic development, IT, website
Wendy Hassler- Forest - Strategic development, fundraising
Meagan Hughes - Project management, communications
Esther Arp - Fundraising
Anna Rose Swinkels - Events, communications
Laura Visser - Graphic design
Miguel Ortega - Volunteer, communications, fundraising
Joe Chapman - Volunteer, communications, events
Sophie Dorsman - Volunteer, donor relations
Irma Kort - Volunteer, Instrument Fund
Brigitte van Hagen - Volunteer, events

Project Management/Regional Representation
Wendy Hassler- Forest - Program Manager, MwB Rock School
Program/ Regional Representative South East Europe
Fabienne van Eck - Project Manager Palestine Community Music, Music Coach/ Regional Representative Middle East
Chris Nicholson - Project Manager Rwanda Youth Music/ Regional Representative Central Eastern Africa
Meagan Hughes - Project Manager Music Bridge (Northern Ireland)
Anna Swinkels - Project Manager Welcome Notes (The Netherlands)

Local Management
Dafina Kosova - Mitrovica Rock School, Director
Ahmad Al’azzeh - Palestine Community Music, Field Coordinator
Allison Shyaka - Rwanda Youth Music, Project Assistant
Josie Nugent - Music Bridge, Music Coach

Trainers
Marijke Smedema - music, didactics, theory, dance
Otto de Jong - music teaching, singing, body percussion, didactics
Sherwin Kirindongo - percussion, body percussion
Hanno Tomassen - community music, didactics, improvisation
Chris Nicholson - music therapy
Chris Colleye - percussion, body percussion
Danny Felsteiner Mekori - music & dialogue, songwriting
Fabienne van Eck - music pedagogy, children’s workshops
Ruud Borgers - rock music, band coaching
Eric Wels - rock music, didactics, band coaching
Keren Rosenbaum - composition, community events
Yaara Barbash - percussion
Amanda Koser-Gillespie - assistant trainer, music pedagogy
Marion Haak-Schulenburg - assistant trainer, music pedagogy

Consultants
Dr. Leslie Snider- Psychological First Aid
André Oostrum - Safety and Security
Lilian Peters - Fundraising, Palestine program

Partners & Donors

PARTNERS
Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR-USA) US Fiscal Partner
Musicians for Human Rights
NBE- Netherlands Wind Ensemble
Splendor Amsterdam
Pop2Life
Palestine Community Music

**Partner**
Katherina Werk Palestine

**Donors**
- Stichting Kinderpostzegels (until June 2016)
- Doopsgezinde Wereldwerk Foundation
- Apeldoorn Doopsgezinde Gemeente (Pieter Kat)
- Weeshuis der Doopsgezinden Foundation
- GVC
- Prelude Foundation
- Stichting Cekate
- Stichting Dowilvo
- Stichting Pro Pal

Rwanda Youth Music

**Partners**
- WE-ACTx for Hope - Kigali, Rwanda
- Oakdale Kigali Music School
- PLAN International

**Donors**
- Fondation Alta Mane
- Transpetrol Foundation
- Anonymous foundation

Mitrovica Rock School

**Partners**
- Fontys Rock Academy, Tilburg - the Netherlands
- CBM (Community Building Mitrovica) – Kosovo

Donors
- German Embassy Pristina – Stability Pact Fund (through NGO MRS)
- Austrian Development Agency (through NGO MRS)
- UNDP (United Nations Development Program) (through NGO MRS)
- Culture for All - Phase III (EU funded through Interarts) (through NGO MRS)
- Haella Foundation
- Anonymous

Welcome Notes (the Netherlands)

**Donors**
- Stichting Dioraphte
- Triodos Foundation
- Gravin van Bylandt Stichting

Community Music for Community Health (Uganda)

**Partner & Donor**
- Keep A Child Alive

Music Bridge (Northern Ireland)

**Partner & Donor**
- Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin

In Kind Donors
- Google (AdWords)
- Spotify (free ads)
- D’Addario Foundation (donations of music accessories)
- YPMA Pianos (occasional benefit concerts)
- Chordastic (music software)
- Institut Français du Rwanda (use of studio for recordings)
- Hogan Lovells, legal counsel
Contact Information

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