



Established in May 1999 by founder and director Laura Hassler, and registered as a charitable foundation in 2000, **Musicians Without Borders** is the world's pioneer in using music for peace-building and social change. Laura mobilised her network of socially-conscious musicians to create an organisation dedicated to using music to bridge divides, connect communities, and heal the wounds of war.

The organisation's first long-term project, the Music Bus, brought music, dance and theatre to children in Srebrenica and nearby towns and refugee camps. Following the success of the Music Bus, Musicians Without Borders was invited to conferences and cultural events in Kosovo and in Palestine. This would later lead to two of its key initiatives, the Mitrovica Rock School and Palestine Community Music. In the years that followed, Musicians Without Borders has expanded its work into Central Eastern Africa, Central America, and Europe, frequently in appalling conditions such as refugee camps in the Middle East, the Gaza Strip, and El Salvador. This work is not without its hazards; regrettably a Palestinian educator was murdered.

MWB has been active now for 20 years, and they have been able in some places to establish groups of young musicians who have gone on to produce a CD. Clearly a lot of the music centres on group participation, and involves singing and dancing and the use of simple (cheap) percussion instruments. It is not their intention to foster Western classical music, but to bring out the joy of music-making in everyone, whatever the location and local troubles. MWB is at the other end of the spectrum from Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which concentrates on Arabs and Israelis working together in the Western classical tradition.

In 2016, in response to the increasing numbers of refugees arriving in the Netherlands, MWB launched a year-long pilot project to train musicians to run music workshops in refugee centres. Over the course of a year, the organisation led three training weekends with a total of 62 trainees, and organised forty workshops in several refugee centres. In 2017-2018, another series of training weekends was set up for professional musicians, experienced workshop leaders and music teachers to become active as music workshop leaders in refugee centres or refugee communities in Europe.

MWB is currently active in Kosovo, Palestine, Greece, Northern Ireland, Germany, Rwanda, Uganda, El Salvador, Italy, and the Netherlands. Setting up programmes in new areas, and continuing the work already established, requires funding even if most of the personnel involved are volunteers.

"War divides; music connects." For more information, please see www.musicianswithoutborders.org.