

Guest Author Music as an Agent of Change – Experiences from Intercultural Communication and Development Cooperation In the field of Music and the Arts

Tom Gravlíe⁺ (Norway)

Abstract

The article describes 30 years of cultural activities in the field of music in Norway. From a small start multicultural music programs and intercultural communication has become a significant factor in the music field in Norway. The activities have also been of interest for several countries in Africa, Asia, South America and Middle East, which has led to several long-term music cooperation programs with Norway, as a part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Development Aid Program. Children and youth have been a major target group, and the schools have been an important arena to show the power of music as an agent of change.

Keywords

Live Music, Multiculturalism, Immigrants, Festivals, Exchange, School Concerts, Music Cooperation, Intercultural Dialog, Teaching, Racism, Change of Attitudes

⁺ Tom Gravlíe, International Department, Concerts Norway (Rikskonsertene), Gullhaug torg 2 0484, Oslo, Norway. voice: +47 90 73 88 86 fax: +47 22025901 email: tom@concert.no website: www.rikskonsertene.no.

Introduction

Far away gets nearer day by day. Internet, media, ease of travelling and growth in trade and business are all contributing to the fast-growing globalization process that makes the world smaller, and give people access to cultures from different parts of the world. The world today is facing more rapidly changes than ever before. One of the most significant changes is the big movement of people across borders and between cultures. These changes create challenges that need to be met both by politicians, institutions and individuals.

In this process culture is an important factor that should get a far more attention than so far. In Norway, Concerts Norway, a governmental music institution- started working with multi-cultural music programs in the late 80s.

“The Resonant Community” (1989-1992)

We saw that racism towards people from other cultures were rising in Norway, and we wanted to see if we through music and arts could be a counterweight against this.

So, we started a 3-year music program named “The Resonant Community” (1989-1992) using the following structure:

Main Goal

- To contribute to a change of attitude towards immigrants among Norwegian elementary school children.

Participants

- A total of 18 schools in Oslo and surroundings participated in the scheme that involved 720 pupils from 10 to 12 years of age. The same pupils followed the project through the 3 years of operation.

Model

A-model	B-model	C-model
7 cultural programs a year	2 school concerts a year	No activity/Control group

Selection of Schools

- 3 schools in the city of Oslo with many immigrants
- 3 schools in the outer parts of Oslo with some immigrants
- 3 schools in Oslo without immigrants
- 3 schools in urban milieus near refugee stations
- 3 schools in urban milieus away from refugee stations
- 3 schools in the countryside

Cultural Areas

The project involved presentations of live music from three continents:

- Asia: China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran
- Africa: West-Africa, East-Africa, Southern Africa, North Africa
- Latin America: Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentine

Evaluation by The University of Oslo

- Preliminary and concluding questionnaire survey for all pupils
- Preliminary and concluding questionnaire survey for teachers and school leaders.
- Consecutive discussions with participating teachers and annual reports
- Collection and evaluation of essays, together with other reactions from pupils involved
- Discussions with the participating artists
- Observations of the individual initiatives (concerts, workshops etc.)
- Video registration of the individual initiatives
- Concluding visits in all classes, with evaluations through role play and group discussion
- Evaluation of teaching materials

Conclusions

- Less bullying, better social relationship and less ethnic conflicts
- Positive effect on the attitudes towards immigrants
- Strengthening of self-image and cultural identity among the immigrant pupils

These results were so important that the minister of culture granted us money earmarked to continue the important work, and we started “Norwegian Multicultural Music Centre” in 1993.



Figure 1. African music activities in kindergarten.

Norwegian Multicultural Music Centre

Through this department within our organization we continued our work by creating “Ethnic Music Cafés” where the immigrant musicians could present their music every second Wednesday. This contributed to paid work as well as contact and cooperation with Norwegian musicians.

The musicians also started to present their music for school children through Concert Norway’s school concert activity that reached out with two concerts to every Norwegian pupil in primary school through 10 000 concerts yearly. This is still going on today and are now being supplemented with other art forms like theatre, literature, film and more. Undoubtedly this contributes to a greater understanding and respect among the young generation of the values that lies in other cultural expressions than the western. At the same time, we started “Oslo World Music Festival” presenting the best of music from Africa, Asia and Latin America for a slowly growing audience.

Along with our work on music, other organizations took up the intercultural dimension in their work as well. *Nordic Black Theatre*, *Intercultural Museum*, *Centre for African Culture* and others contributed to cultural activities in their respective fields, and the authorities both on national, regional and local level contributed by fundings of different size.

Also, *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)* started to include culture in their strategy for development aid with the main goal: “To strengthen the cultural sector in the countries in the south” building on UNESCO Human Rights Declaration Article 27: “All people have the right to culture, and culture has an intrinsic value in itself.”

The ministry had a different strategy for implementation of the activities than Great Britain and Germany’s, building up the “British Council” and “Goethe Institute” in many countries with their own buildings and substantial staffs.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs took on a different path. They started supporting Norwegian professional institutions and organizations to operate and implement their cultural strategy through long term contracts within given economic frames, which meant predictability for the institutions. This made long term planning possible for participating Norwegian institutions, and they could select reliable partners in the cooperation countries to implement the activities. Thus, both understanding and respect for each other through exchange programs and competence building was made possible, as well as securing the money going to activities rather than administration.

Concerts Norway soon became one of the leading actors in this field starting to operate long term music programs as part of the Norwegian development cooperation in Asia, Africa and South America, as well in the Middle East.

In addition to the Article 27 we took notice of IMC’s (International Music Council) “Musical Rights” for our activities:

- The right for all children and adults to express themselves musically in all freedom.
- The right for all children and adults to learn musical languages and skills.
- The right to have access to musical involvement through participation, listening, creation and information.
- The right for musical artists to develop their artistry and communicate through all media, with proper facilities.
- The right for musical artists to obtain just recognition and remuneration for their work.

The programs we elaborated together with our local partners were mainly based along these two fields:

- Musical Exchange
- Institution- and competence building

Through the years we had cooperation with a total of 11 different countries as shown in the below table:

MUSIKKSAMARBEID 2000-2016 MED STØTTE FRA UD																	
ÅR	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
SØR AFRIKA																	
PALESTINA																	
INDIA																	
KINA																	
6 SADC LAND																	
NEPAL																	
PAKISTAN																	
SRI LANKA																	
BANGLADESH																	
JORDAN																	
BRASIL																	

Figure 2. Music Cooperation 2000-2016 Supported by Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Our role in the cooperations were in *initiating, planning, implementing and operational as well as advisory*.

All our programs were supporting *peacebuilding, human rights, women, equality and the fight against corruption*.

Short Summary of the Programs in Different Co-Operative Countries Sri Lanka (2009-2016)

Development goal

“Strengthen the music sector in Sri Lanka and thereby contribute to reconciliation and inter-ethnic harmony.”

Reconciliation is the main aspect of the project. The component of bringing together individuals and groups of different origins and working for peace and harmony

between human beings shall permeate all the below-mentioned outcomes and activities. Especially important are the festivals in Galle and Jaffna, the concerts and training programs across ethnic and religious boundaries. Other important areas for reconciliation activities are the Oriental Music Orchestra and the Junior Symphony Orchestra, who both brings together talented youngsters from different ethnic groups and thereby promote inter-ethnic community cohesion and dialogue. In addition, all the other activities will be open for participants from all Sri Lankan communities and thus also contribute to the reconciliation process. The overall intention of the music cooperation is to contribute to the reconciliation process and interethnic harmony in Sri Lanka through strengthening the music sector.

Project goal

All ethnic groups have access to musical activities in Sri Lanka and professional actors in the country's music sector are empowered

Outcomes (*Expected results*)

- Audiences across ethnic, religious and national boundaries have increased opportunities to meet regularly and jointly experience live music performed by Sri Lankan and regional artists
- The Sri Lankan Folk Music Conservation Library has improved skills and technical equipment to record, safeguard and disseminate the national folk music heritage (all ethnic groups included).
- Sri Lankan sound- and light engineers from all ethnic groups have improved professional skills and increased their job opportunities across the country.
- Musicians and music-related professionals have improved their live music skills and communication skills towards young audiences.
- Sri Lankan professionals related to music have increased their visibility, networks and collaborative projects in the SAARC region.

Activities

- Use the main festival alternating between Jaffna and Galle as a powerful catalyst in generating musical activities yearly.
- Facilitate in depth interactions with local target groups
- Strengthen existent and build new relationships with Sri Lankan cultural and art-related institutions
- Improve skills and technical equipment of the Sri Lankan Folk Music Conservation Library to safeguard and
- Disseminate folk music heritage (all ethnic groups included)
- Contribute to a regional identity by enhancing cooperation between partners in the SAARC region
- Promote Sri Lankan music regionally and internationally through participation at regional or international events

The implementation of this project has taken into cognizance the focus by Sri Lanka on mainstreaming and enabling access to women, youth and marginalized groups into activities, programmes, platforms and forms of participation in

all spheres of society. This approach is also underpinned by the Article 7 (1) (a) of the UN Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005, which states that *“Parties shall endeavour to create in their territory an environment which encourages individuals and social groups to create, produce, disseminate, distribute and have access to their own cultural expressions, paying due attention to the special circumstances and needs of women as well as various social groups, including persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples.”*

India (2002-2017)

Goal

“To strengthen the independent music sector and music education in India, and strengthen competence, infrastructure and exposure of both countries`music and musical life.”

Outcomes (Expected results)

- Improved opportunities for children and youth to experience and participate in live music activities.
- Improved skills amongst Indian musicians and teachers in music education and tuition.
- Improved skills in communication towards children and youth amongst Indian musicians.
- Improved quality of sound engineers in India
- Improved job opportunities for Indian musicians locally, regionally and internationally.
- Increased visibility of marginalized music genres.
- Enhanced ongoing cooperation between Indian and other partners and institutions in South Asia through increased capacity for cooperation, professionalism and quality.

Activities

- School concerts in India and Norway
- Public concerts in both countries
- Study trips, workshops, skill training and conferences,
- Starting new activities in India: *India Music Week, Strings of the World Festival*

NEPAL (2005-2012)

Goal

“To stimulate the musical performing arts in Nepal by providing learning and performing opportunities for musicians, students and audiences, and by increasing interactions with the international music scene.”

In order to obtain this:

- A music school for children and youth established
- Stronger exposure of Nepali folk music
- Preservation and documentation of folk music through regional research
- Contribute to the strengthening of people’s beliefs in their own identities,

creativities and values.

- Support programs or activities that promote understanding between the ethnic groups in Nepal
- Contribute to institution- and capacity building in the musical milieus in Nepal.
- Contribute to peace and understanding.



Figures 3 & 4 above and below. Exchange of competence in Nepal. Norwegian/Nepali Big Band perform “Peer Gynt” jazz-suite for 5000 people at Durbar Square, Kathmandu.



China (2005-2017)

Goal

“To strengthen the cultural cooperation and exchange between China and Norway with a special focus on live music for children and youth and competence building”.

Activities

- School-concerts in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou
- Cooperation between «Children’s Palaces» (Cultural schools) i Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou and Norwegian Music Schools
- Festival Cooperation and visits
- Capacity building for sound technicians, “Teachers in residence” program
Workshops and seminars

Pakistan (2006-2012)

Goal

“Enhanced cross-cultural understanding, based on the universal principles of peace, tolerance and harmony between Norwegian and Pakistani people.”

Activities

- School concerts in Pakistan – also for girls’ schools
- School concerts and family concert in Norway
- Workshop for sound technicians in Pakistan
- Cooperation with Lok Virsa to create musical meeting places beyond borders.

Bangladesh (2011-2015)

Goal

“To promote cross-cultural understanding and strengthen the dialog between people through various musical activities.”

Activities

- Concerts in Bangladesh and Norway
- Regional exchange of musicians and expertise in South
- Digitizing and documentation of music
- Support to SUNO- baul singers in northern area and knowledge and use of traditional music in rural districts
- Study trips to Norway for partners

South Africa (2000-2018)

Goal

“To stimulate live music in South Africa through collaboration and catalytic initiatives.”

Activities

- Create Concerts Circuits in South Africa and give musicians working possibilities Inclusion of Norwegian and musicians from SADC countries in the activities
- School concerts in Norway and South Africa
- Exchange of competence
- Network and partner cooperation



Figure 5. Traditional artists happily performing.

Jordan (2012-2015)

Goal

“To increase opportunities and environments for music-making and music learning within Jordanian schools as well as within the community, and enriching the society with live music with a specific focus on school concerts for children and youth.”

Activities

- Stimulate and strengthen music education in primary schools in Jordan
- School concerts in Jordan and Norway
- Training of Jordanian musicians in communication skills towards young audiences
- Musical summer schools for children
- Establishing local music clubs for children and youth

Brazil (2012-2015)

Goal

“To strengthen the cultural cooperation and exchange between Brazil and Norway with a special focus on live music for children and youth.”

Activities

- String education of children and youth in schools in favelas (slum districts)
- Establishing of a chamber orchestra with children and youth in the favelas
- School concerts in Brazil and Norway
- Exchange of specialists, workshops and seminars

Palestine (2002-2018)

Goal

“Increased opportunities and environments for music-making and music learning within schools as well as within the community, and an enriched national curriculum as well as enriched non-classroom activities with music and live performances for children in the Palestinian Territories.”

Activities

- Institution building
- Stimulate and strengthen the use of “music in education” in 150 governmental, UNRWA and Latin Patriarch primary schools on the West Bank in cooperation with the Ministry of Education
- Teacher training program for teachers in the participating schools
- Elaborate teaching materials
- School concerts and community concerts
- Musical summer schools for children
- Establishing local music clubs for children and youth

Achievements

Through my work with Development Cooperation in the field of music for decades I have experienced the power that lies in music as a changing agent. I have seen how musical activities and meetings have made a difference for thousands of people. Especially rewarding for me is what these cooperation programs has meant to children and youth, giving them joy and good experiences in a rather turbulent and difficult situation.

Reports from Palestine has shown that The Ministry of Education has taken on music in education as one of five pillars for learning – with very good results. The drop out from schools has decreased a lot and the general learning process in other items has improved.

Music has strengthened their national identity through songs, and it has contributed to gender-balance by including girls in Music Clubs. I was also told by a

teacher in Nablus that a little girl without language, dissocialized with no friends, slowly started to talk and socialize with friends after a long time with music in the education.

In India the Organization Spic Macay has taken on school concerts for hundreds of thousands of pupils, and also in China many schools have taken on school concerts after models from our cooperation through many years.

In Sri Lanka music has contributed to the reconciliation process. Especially important are the establishing of festivals in Galle and Jaffna, the concerts and training programs across ethnic and religious boundaries. Other important areas for reconciliation activities are the Oriental Music Orchestra and the Junior Symphony Orchestra, who both brings together talented youngsters from different ethnic groups and thereby promote inter-ethnic community cohesion and dialogue.

In Brazil music has kept children and youth in the favelas away from criminality by teaching them to play an instrument in favela schools, and they have even started a small chamber orchestra! And there could even be much more to be mentioned.

Lessons Learnt and Conclusions

Culture is a necessity for the development of the human race and the communication skills between peoples. Cultural experiences together with other people create a base for human contact.

Within the area of cultural expressions, music has shown to have unique possibilities to create contact and understanding between people from different cultures. All cultures have their own musical expressions, their own styles of music and their characteristic instruments. But all music also has roots that touch and even cross the roots of other musical expressions. And this is exactly what makes music so exciting and touching – wherever you may be in this world.

Music is one of the most effective media for a society to tell its story and relate its traditions. Most societies want to preserve their musical roots, as they play an important part in fostering pride and dignity among their people.

A nation is best known through its folk art. Simple, natural and free from inhibitions just like its people are. Folk music represents something in all of us that stems from the core values of the very country we roam.

In the past years the music arenas have changed, and music traditions from the whole world meet far more often than before. It is more important than ever to create meeting places where musicians meet, and audiences get exposed to art expressions from different cultures. This creates nearness and understanding among people. And through this nearness we can share, and we can give without losing - we can receive without stealing from others.

To cross the musical borders, you don't have to have passport neither a visa - just a small portion of curiosity and interest!

Tom Gravlíe Ex. Director of International Department, Concerts Norway

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