# The Bi-ComMusic e-Toolkit

**Bi·ComMusic**

Projects for Peace
THE VISION OF KATHRYN W. DAVIS

RESET

# Bi·ComMusic

## Contents

# 1. Introduction

This Toolkit has been developed in the context of the project 'Bi-ComMusic: Bi-Communal Musical Dialogues for Peace in the only divided capital of the world' awarded under the US Davis Projects for Peace Initiative.

The Toolkit is a result of the project's Bi-Communal Musical Dialogues which was an initiative that engaged Musicians and Peacebuilders from both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot Communities in Cyprus. To ensure a co-creative approach to the formation of this Toolkit, we have used the main themes that emerged from these dialogue workshops to build on the ideas, challenges, suggestions and best practices that will be included in this Toolkit.

## Scope of Toolkit

- To provide resources for peacebuilders and musicians on ways that music can be used as a peacebuilding tool in conflict-ridden, bi-communal contexts

- To encourage wide applicability of best practices identified from bi-communal contexts, such as in Cyprus from Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot musicians and peacebuilders.

- To identify ways of creating long-term impact for sustainable change towards peacebuilding.
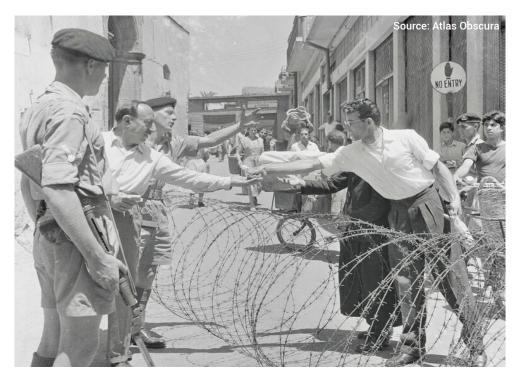
## Who can use this Toolkit

- Musicians
- Peacebuilders
- Youth workers
- Educators
- Arts professionals
- Anyone interested in the use of music towards peacebuilding

**Short description on history and current situation in Cyprus.**

Situation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Cyprus is a unique case in peace operations, with its capital city being the only remaining divided capital in Europe and in the world (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2021). Since the 1974 Turkish invasion, which resulted in the occupation of half the island, Northern Cyprus is still occupied by Turkish Cypriots. The utmost issue in Cyprus today, is that there is no common ground or effort from either group to meet in the middle and make peace. This has resulted in long-standing disappointment for the UN and the people of Cyprus who have lived in constant conflict for almost 40 years.


Source: Atlas Obscura

**Project Description**

Creative approaches and dialogue processes are important to help build positive social change, transform complex issues, and foster a culture of peace (Parker, 2015). Pruitt (2011) puts music on the spotlight in terms of its successful capacity to promote peacebuilding. In fact, the young people in his study reported that they would not have shown interest in peacebuilding dialogues if the intervention was not music-oriented. Not only, music empowered them to continue peacebuilding processes even after the end of the program. Our project aims to, for the first-time ever, initiate peacebuilding efforts through the use of music between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities.

# 2. What is "Peacebuilding"

Creating and maintaining peace before, during, and after conflicts is referred to as peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is a protracted process of promoting communication, mending bridges, and reshaping institutions. Everyone impacted by a harmful conflict must be involved in the process of establishing peace for positive change to last.

To stop violence, relationships must be transformed. That entails comprehending the underlying causes of conflicts, coping with them, and identifying solutions. This holds true whether there is conflict between societies, inside communities, or between the government and the general population.

Around a quarter of all people live in countries affected by conflict and violence.

Over 68 million people alive today have been forced to flee their homes. This is the highest it's been since the end of the second world war.

Conflicts drive 80% of all humanitarian needs.

By 2030, it is predicted that half of the world's poorest people will be living in conflict-affected places.



Source: Conciliation resources.com

"Making peace ultimately requires the firm commitment and extraordinary courage, on the part of all sides, to ensure a permanent end to violence."
Kofi Annan

## 3. The role of Music in Peacebuilding

> "Music doesn't lie. If there is something to be changed in this world, then it can only happen through music."
>
> Jimi Hendrix

Music is an art often performed in ensembles. It provides opportunities for people to see humanity in one another, helping them to break down barriers and find common ground. Music provides a vehicle through which they can express emotion and build empathy.

The power of music to build empathy was illustrated by a fascinating study in which children were given group games to play that promoted contact, imitation, memory, sharing, and flexibility. The games of one group had a musical component, while those of the control group did not have music. This study showed that the children with the musical component to their interaction had a greater increase in empathy over the children without music (Tal-Chen, Cross & Burnard, 2012).
It's crucial to understand, though, that while music can bring people together, it can also create divisions. It has been used to incite hatred and fear, and to unite one group against another in violent opposition. Contrary to popular belief, music is not necessarily a universal language. Although the "alphabet" of music is largely universal, various people might have quite diverse interpretations of its syntax, lexicon, and context.

Source: Photo from the Bi-ComMusic Open Dialogue Event, 2022

For instance, a song that makes one person happy could sound depressing to someone else who hears it in a different social, cultural, or personal context. This song would "translate" across situations, producing the same emotion and meaning if music were truly a universal language. Music, all by itself, therefore does not make for peace. This is why empathy and practices of nonviolence are always needed to ground the creative work of music in the service of peace.

Below we list of ways that music can be used to foster cooperation and empathy and build peace in everyday life. While this will not cause international geopolitical change, by bringing people together through music, finding common ground, improving empathy, and encouraging constructive dialogue, we can all be more active and effective participants in peacebuilding. This is important because we know that changes made at grassroots levels can have much larger impacts.
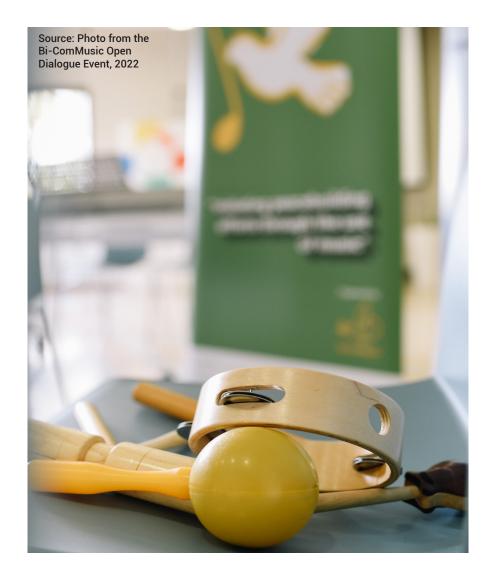
## 4. Bi-ComMusic Dialogue – Workshop

An Open Dialogue Workshop was carried out on the 29th June 2022 at the Home for Cooperation in Nicosia, Cyprus. A total of 25 Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot Musicians and Peacebuilders attended. As a result of the workshop the following themes emerged:

**Theme 1: Music as a Political Responsibility**

**Theme 2: Barriers to peacebuilding**

**Theme 3: Prioritising humanitarian ideals over history of conflict**

**Theme 4: Encouraging action-oriented peace building efforts**



Source: Photo from the Bi-ComMusic Open Dialogue Event, 2022

### Theme 1: Music as a Political Responsibility

Music was referred to as a non-political form of medium but that it also carries a sense of responsibility in the political sector. Participants spoke of the important role that musical artists have to apply their art as a form of:

*"counter speech against the inhumane rhetoric of division and separateness".*



Source: Photo from the Bi-ComMusic Open Dialogue Event, 2022

Participants clarified that although music has a political speech, it cannot be politicized. Rather it is important to talk about the internal truth that each one carries within themselves.

*"Through Music we have the power to develop lines of water that can create river of change"*

*"Music as an essence is an energy that carries all of humanity principles and ideals, such as democracy, justice, peace. Peace comes from the ancient word 'Ηρώ' (Iro) which refers to forgiveness."*

### Theme 2: Barriers to peacebuilding

Participants referred to a range of barriers that can prevent peacebuilding from taking on a more sustainable form. Some of these include:

- Participants referred to a range of barriers that can prevent peacebuilding from taking on a more sustainable form. Some of these include:
- One-sided history of the country: On each side of the island there is a one-sid-

ed version of the history and the War that is still being shared with children in schools, creating thus a biased understanding of the island's past on either side of the island. This is causing a mental and psychological block towards any efforts related to reconciliation and peacebuilding.

- Limited access the public-school system: There is a current challenge to overcome the public educational system in regards to implementing and raising awareness on youth bi-communal efforts and initiatives.

- 'Normalisation' of the division: After the opening of the borders for free movement of the people between the two sides of the island, the existence of this division has become normalised. It is no longer a physical obstacle. However, participants stated that this very situation does not resolve the conflict, but rather tries to 'normalise' it and silence the need for concrete resolution and solid unification of the island.

- Differences in language: The differences in languages between the two sides results in fewer initiatives being planned due to the need of a translator at physical and online meetings. This is another barrier related to conflict-resolution dialogues between the two sides.

- Intergenerational transmission: "A charged silence may have brought the war into the lives of later generations in a compelling way, creating space for their imagination to fill and prompting or indeed forcing a vicarious relationship with that past…" (Argenti & Shramm, 2010). Societies that went through war often come across the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission. Intergenerational transmission refers to the transfer of individual abilities, traits, behaviors, and outcomes from parents to their children. Inter-generational relations play a key role in the formation and shaping of memory and with it transmission it reproduces new generations of witnesses; witnesses who did not live the happening but are re-living it through storytelling. The new generations may have the same perspective as the older generation but simultaneously they have a completely different viewpoint. For example, they did not live and witness the time when Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots lived together in harmony. The new generations is mostly aware and hear the dreadful side of the story since naturally it becomes the most memorable one. Hence, the mentality of new generation in many cases is fixed on what they have been taught. Which brings up Hirsch's question of how the social memory can affect individual experience of the issue before individual experiences shape the social memory? (Hirsch, 1997)

Source: Photo from the
Bi-ComMusic Open
Dialogue Event, 2022

### Theme 3: Prioritising humanitarian ideals over history of conflict

Participants spoke of bi-communal musical events before the borders opened:
*"It was necessary to do something to keep all Cypriots together."*

Some participants spoke of the 'unnatural' nature of the Cyprus problem. They went on to say that:
*"A human being is born to be peaceful and free. I am optimistic that this problem will be resolved because it was always unnatural and continues to be unnatural. I may not be alive to experience it, but I want my son to at least be able to say that my dad fought for peace."*

Representatives of the Cultural Movement of Cyprus spoke of the importance of handing down the power to the young musicians of today. As stated:
*"They cannot divide Cyprus everywhere. They can divide it legally, but in our hearts, in our friendships and in our minds, we have a united Cyprus. This is how we are connected"*

A Greek-Cypriot Musician-Theologian elaborated on this by adding that:
*"When I started working with a Turkish-Cypriot band, I felt more Greek-Orthodox and Christian than ever before. And it was because I saw the impersonation of Jesus Christ in these people"*

Spoke of the first bi-communal choir for peace in Cyprus. Through this we created a community that we called second family of Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots. Even in times of heightened conflict as in the year 2000 the group was committed and determined to meet at Pyla, Cyprus every 2 weeks. Despite the fact that there was no venue to host them, they met at coffee shops just to make sure we did not lose contact with each other.

Dance for Peace- a Bi Communal Dance group expressed their following experiences which are aligned with prioritising humanitarian ideals over the island's history of conflict:

*"Cypriot music is the same, and almost the same customs across the island, despite it being divided. Music is one of the most important pillars that unites us."*
• Traditional music must not be lost

Symbolic resistance to the division was indicated by the Group by its act of refusing to dance if either side had their countries flags on the dance stage.
*"If there was a flag of the occupied side we refused to dance and perform. And if there was a flag of Greece in the Southern side, we refused the same. We only accepted the Cyprus flag."*

Even if in the face of adverse challenges, such as the presence of law enforcement agents at these events the Dance Group insisted that *"We are a family and this is how we will remain".*

Source: Photo from the Bi-ComMusic Open Dialogue Event, 2022

## Theme 4: Encouraging action-oriented peacebuilding efforts

Despite the sharing of ideals and principles that are shared between the two members of the communities, there was also a dominant discussion on the importance of acting for actual change. Some of the suggestions made by the participants for sustainable and concrete peacebuilding were as follows:

- Creation of educational curricula that encourages critical thinking, reconciliation and peacebuilding strategies among youth
- Development of a social/political group that represents bi-communal ideals and principles
- Establishing and implementing more frequent bi-communal events
- Creation of a Coordinating Council that can gather people's ideas for bi-communal peacebuilding and help implement these on both sides of the island.
- Additional dialogue initiatives. This is also supported by Albaryak (2017) who in the context of reconciliation between Turkish and Greek Communities in Cyprus, states that "reconciliation requires dialogue" (p.323).

## 5. Best Practices

1. **The "Music for Peace"** project used the convening power of music as a vehicle to create international and cross-cultural relationships between young people all over the world. Through music, MfP aims to bring individuals from all backgrounds and social statuses together and create a relaxed and natural environment in which they can succeed. To find out more please see here *www.music-peace.com*

2. **EXPLORING SACRED MUSIC, WORSHIP, AND THE ARTS, The Yale Review.**
   This initiative offers specific techniques as follows:
   - Sing Together
   - Teach a song by note
   - Go around a circle
   - Group breathing exercises
   - Drum circles
   - Encourage creativity through exploration of sound

   To find out more please see here https://www.ismreview.yale.edu/article/building-peace-through-music/

3. **GUNS AND MUSIC -UMBUMBULU PEACE-BUILDING CASE STUDY, Berenice Meintjes, Zandile Nhlengetwa**
   The dynamics of violence in the rural community of Umbumbulu presented a difficult challenge to Sinani / KwaZulu-Natal Programme for Survivors of Violence. The organisation was first invited to work in the area by unemployed, non-schooling youth. What followed was a series of fairly ad hoc interventions over the course of several years, guided by the community partners. The peace-building intervention provided valuable learning for the organisation and this paper represents an effort to document some of the experiences and lessons gained from the partnership. For the link to the paper please see here: https://www.medico.de/download/report26/ps_meintjes_en.pdf

4. **Understanding the role of music and sound in conflict transformation: The Mozambique Case Study**
   The dynamics of violence in the rural community of Umbumbulu presented a difficult challenge to Sinani / KwaZulu-Natal Programme for Survivors of Violence. The organisation was first invited to work in the area by unemployed, non-schooling youth. What followed was a series of fairly ad hoc interventions over the course of several years, guided by the community partners. The peace-building intervention provided valuable learning for the organisation and this paper represents an effort to document some of the experiences and

lessons gained from the partnership. For the link to the paper please see here: https://www.medico.de/download/report26/ps_meintjes_en.pdf

5. **Music Can Help Us Understand Peace and Conflict | David LaMotte | TEDxAsheville**

   The elements of creating music and building peace are often analogous In his 2017 TEDx Asheville talk, LaMotte explores the metaphors associated with making music and shows how they offer framework for understanding peace work. Listening, practice, interrupting the script and striving for harmony (rather than unity) are just a few examples. To see the video, see here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdwip2_gM8M

6. **Bi-Communal Choir for Peace**

   The Bi-communal choir for Peace in Cyprus was established in May 1997, after an initiative of the Bi-communal Citizens' Group for Peace in Cyprus. The choir repertoire consists mainly of selected songs from the tradition of Cyprus in both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish – Cypriot dialects as well as newer songs in Greek, Turkish and any other language as long as they send messages of peace, love, solidarity and reconciliation, messages that conform with our aims and visions. For more information on their work please see here: https://choirforpeace.weebly.com/

7. **Inter-Communal Children's Choir**

   The Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR), the Home for Cooperation (H4C), Cyprus Turkish Teachers' Trade Union (KTOS) and Proodeftiki Primary and Pre-Primary Teachers' Movement announce the continuation of the Inter-communal Children's Choir (ICC) for school year 2019-2020 believing in the need for innovative peace initiatives by organizations, groups and citizens for the promotion of a Culture of Peace. For more information please visit here: https://www.ahdr.info/images/Choir_Application_Students_ENG_2019_.pdf

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