

LUTHIERS SANS FRONTIÈRES UK HAITI 2017 - MISSION REPORT

OFFICIAL SPONSOR : AUBERT LUTHERIE
DICTUM
THE SOUNDPOST UK

Introduction :

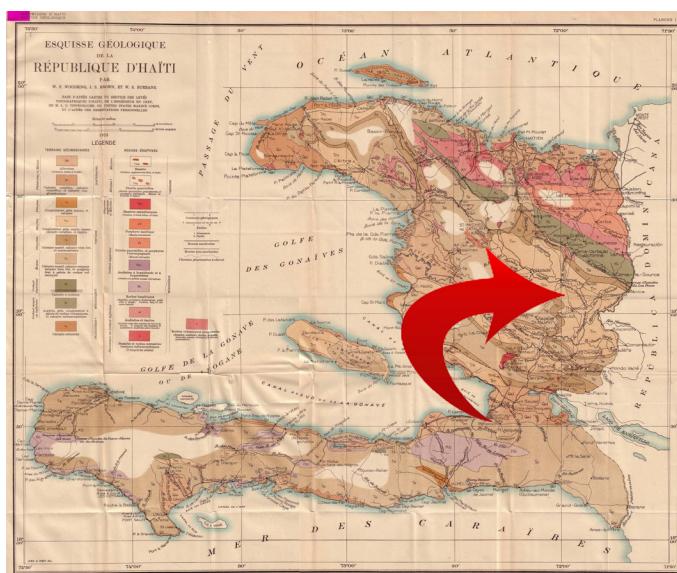
Those past three years, at the end of every single mission to Haiti, our students have requested our presence for the following summer music camp, and every year more students attend to the luthier program. It is quite impressive how the luthier project from LSF UK is having a significant impact on the music schools in Haiti, instruments are in much better condition than few years ago and more schools are getting involved with the program. That was the reason why we wanted to go back this summer and improve our students skills and train new people. Indeed, after last year's mission that brought together 13 training luthiers from 11 different music schools, this year was quite a challenge with 18 students from 16 different music schools. Incredible !

As Monika Gapinska (volunteer the past 2 years) couldn't come this year, a new volunteer joined Julie Folio for this July 2017 mission. Svavar Garri Kristjánsson is a former student from the NSVM now working at Tim Toft Violins (UK).

Unfortunately, Tchoupy couldn't meet us to help with the teaching as he was still teaching music in Cemuchca. Indeed, this year was a bit special, because of the Hurricane in October 2016 most of the courses and school exams have been rescheduled, that's also why one of our student had to join the class in the middle of the luthier training.



Anyway, the country seems to have got back on its feet quite quickly after that disaster called Matthew and we were able to go back to Cange (which is the same place where we went 3 years ago) at the music camp organized by Ste Trinity school (PAP). Good point is that this year we had quite a good space to set up the workshop : a whole classroom with many low tables, shelves to store tools and instruments, a blackboard, good light even with no electricity and a door that we could lock at the end of the day to keep everything safe.



Personnel :

Julie Folio : French luthier employed at Koplins Violins, York (UK)
Svavar Garri Kristjánsson : Icelandic luthier employed at Tim Toft Violins, Stone (UK)

Equipment :

We took about 50kg of tools and supplies overseas, mostly donated by Aubert Lutherie and The Soundpost UK for fittings and strings, tools were mostly coming from previous years donations, some bought

thanks to a great discount from Dictum (which sent us a large amount of donated tools but received too late to take with us to Haiti but will surely be helpful for the next missions).

Cost : (approximate)

Air fares : £1600

Equipment purchased : £700

All internal transport, food and lodging were provided by our hosts i.e the Music Schools.



Mission's progress :

First, this journey from UK to Haiti has been quite dreadful as it can happen sometimes, we guess. Our plane from London was overbooked and for an hour or two, we had no idea about how and when we'll get to Haiti regarding our connection flight in JFK. But finally we could get in a plane 2 hours later than the one we should have taken which was perfect. We then spent the night in the airport and flew to PAP in the morning. But once arrived, our luggages never appeared on the baggage carousel... We've been told our luggage MIGHT still be in NY and as there is only one flight a day we'll probably will get them back the next day or later. So we made our way to the camp. The first tool-



free day gave us some time to establish the rules of the workshop, giving them french and english vocabulary of the components of a violin/cello, and lots of measurements. At the end of this long day, surprise ! Tools arrived and we could finally start working ! Garri taught mainly bow rehair/repair to the students, all of them have done at least 2 bow rehairs each and some of them managed to do and watch the process of more advanced repairs like recambering,



face plates... We think for the next mission it would be worth preparing more materials and lectures for the bow 'course'. Later, as the donation from the support of the music school in Hinche never came to us as we expected, we got short on bow hair and couldn't really keep working on bows. Instruments wise, students learned as usual how to set up an instrument (pegs/new soundpost/new bridge), a few neck fitting, neck repairs, making a bridge from scratch, cracks and studs, button patch, new bottom blocks.

What a nice surprise when one of the students (Kervins) brought his own project, a violin that he started repairing, he unglued crack that have been badly repaired in the past to have them levelled again, re enforced the broken edges, replace a missing part of the violin in his own quite funny way, but such a good job !

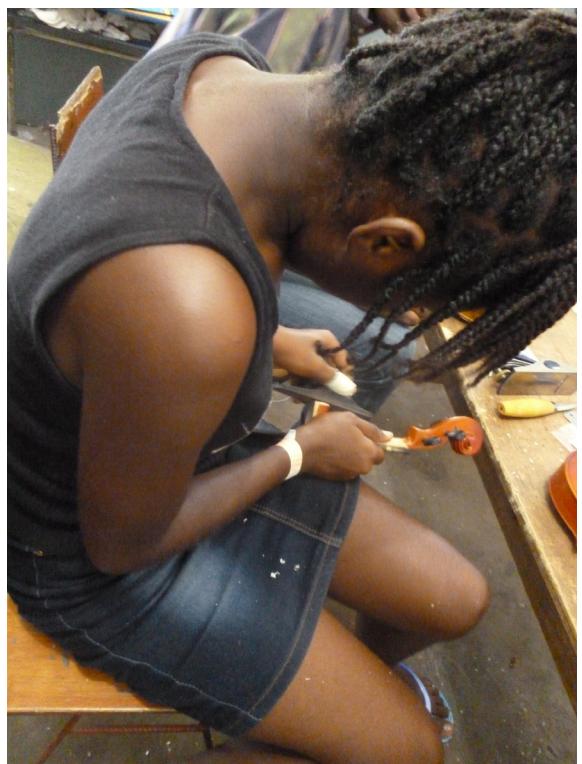


As we established the previous year, the most experienced students could help the ones that needed to most. We had a lecture day at the end of the course where every student had to explain a work they've done, something they were really good at so they could teach the others, after that day students knew exactly who to ask questions to regarding the job they were doing during the course and after.



Also, this year we thought it was quite important to focus a bit more on the sharpening. We give and spend a lot of money on tools that are not taken care of, so for this year we spent a good part of the budget in sharpening stones to make sure most people can sharp their tools and know how to do it.

We've managed to respect last year project by using mainly local wood for repairs and soundposts.



The quick expansion of the project :

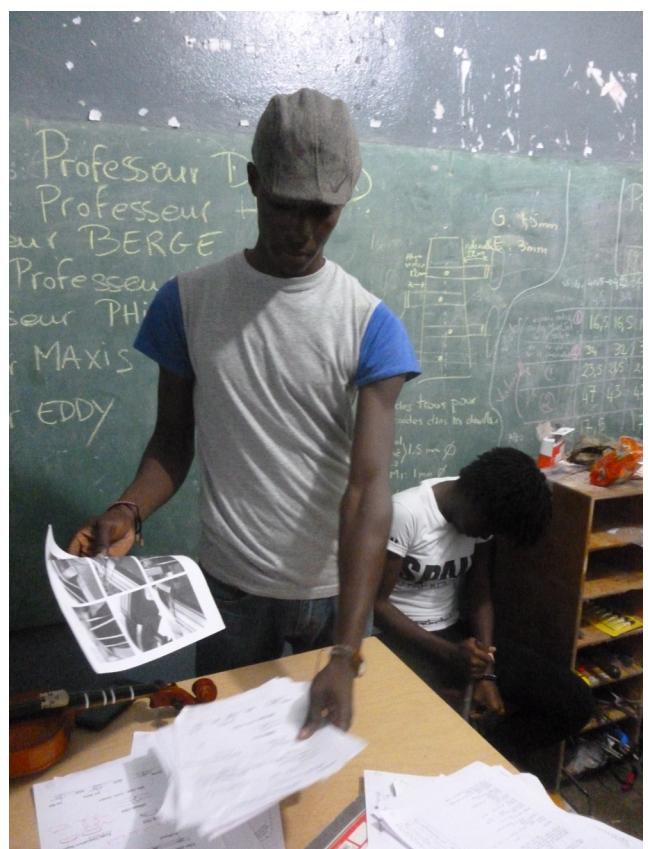
As we've explained at the top of the report, the project begins to increase in scale which is great but it starts to get out of hands in a way. The number of students has been quite hard for us to deal with and it is true that we expected a 3rd teacher (Tchoupy), but it might increase again. As it is complicated to send more volunteer, new rules might have to be applied to get into the course but we need to think about them. For example we've had new students this years who have been sent to the luthier program to be trained in order to help the current luthier of their

school that we previously trained. In that case it would have been more interesting to keep training the current luthier for them to be able to teach to someone else from their school as it is easier and more interesting for us to improve someone's skill years after years than starting all over with someone new, and the level will not get better in that one school. Tchoupy seems to be pretty busy to keep teaching everywhere in Haiti. Anyway we would love to find a way to keep training those students and more of them but the question is how.



Summary and recommendations :

- The future of the project needs discussing to know in which direction we want to go, if we should take more new students etc...
- Because we haven't seen Tchoupy, we're not quite sure if this sending him to Newark project is still on the table.
- Kervins starts to teach and help out other schools in the south of Haiti
- Garri and Julie are keen to go back to Haiti next summer if it is possible
- As Julie stops working next year, she's thinking about going there for a longer period of time mainly by her own means if she has to, in order to train someone as much as possible.





Conclusion :

It is amazing to see how much music is important in this country and how important it is for them to have people able to fix their instruments. The Haitians training luthiers show a great motivation and enthusiasm in learning and practicing and it will always be a pleasure to teach them and be part of the development of the music schools in Haiti. We know it is complicated to fund every mission every year but we still think that we should not give up on this project as it working amazingly well.

Thanks to LSF UK, Aubert Lutherie, BLUME Haiti, Dictum, the Soundpost UK and all of our supporters and donors to make this mission possible.



Further information, including previous mission reports, can be seen at :
<http://www.lsf-uk.org/> // <https://lutheriehaitilsf.wordpress.com>
Further enquiries to : info@lsf-uk.org

Julie Folio and Svavar Garri Kristjánsson
September 2017