LUTHIERS SANS FRONTIÈRES UK
HAITI 2016 - MISSION REPORT

OFFICIAL SPONSOR : AUBERT LUTHERIE

Introduction :

After several missions to Haiti since 2008, many music schools in Haiti have opened a workshop in their premises in order to repair instruments and maintain them in good condition. For every mission each school send us one or more of their student so we can teach them bow rehairing, setting up, advanced repairs and how to preserve instrument from damaging.
Last year mission brought together 12 training luthiers from 8 different music programs. All the volunteers (Robert Cain, Monika Gapinska, Julie Folio) agreed to say that this mission was a success : student were incredibly motivated, skilled and learning fast, so as Monika and Julie were taking over the Haiti project, they've decided to go back the following summer to teach again. Going back one year later was the key to maintain a good training program by trying to bring back the student from the previous mission to improve their skills, for them to not give up the project and doing a proper job for their schools. In the end, this year mission was attended by 13 students : 7 from the 2015 mission and 6 new future luthiers, in total 11 different music schools.

We've also decided to take one of our previous student as a teacher this year. He's been trained by LSF UK for several years now and even had a work experience in Cremona.
Hylaris Grafield (alias Tchoupy) is the key to the Haitian luthier's project.

The LSF-UK 2016 mission was based in Grand Goâve, West department of southwestern Haiti where we stayed for two weeks. We set up a workshop in the covered terrace of the Guest house where volunteers were staying, extended to the shaded part of the garden.

Personnel :
Julie Folio : Luthier, working in York.
Monika Gapinska : Luthier, working in Zurich.
Hylaris Grafield : Luthier, working in Cap Haitien.

Equipment :

About 50kg of supplies including tools, wood, fittings, bow hair, strings... all donated by : Newark students, Barnes and Mullins, Rod Ward, Helen Michetschlaeger, Tim Toft violins, and other luthiers from UK and Switzerland. But the biggest donation was from Aubert Lutherie (France), it would have been more than difficult to prepare this mission without their help. Thanks to them, we managed to buy more tools and supplies for Haiti.

Cost : (approximate)

Air fares : £ 1500
Equipment purchased : £ 450
Expenses in Haiti : £ 50

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

Work :

The first day we've been organizing the workshop with our students so they could organize their own work space. Then we've had some talks about health and safety, respect of others and tools and how everyday is gonna look like. We started the first week making two different groups : one advanced group with the students that came the previous year and the other one with the beginners. Thanks to this organization we could re evaluate our first group, see how much they've been practicing in a year, what they remembered and teach them more advanced repairs and more precise work. The other group was kind of a introduction class to push them up to the first group level. The second week, once again, we've split them into two different groups but advanced student with beginners mixed together. The aim of this second week was teaching them how to help each other regarding the work they had to do.

We had a lot of different project during those two weeks, violin in a thousand pieces (linings, ribs, neck, joint of front and back, bass bar... UNGLUED), set up on different instruments, repairs on a viola da gamba, even a saxophone and a bassoon, re gluing bottom block in a cello, making brand new bridges etc...

There was two important things for us (Julie and Monika) this year :

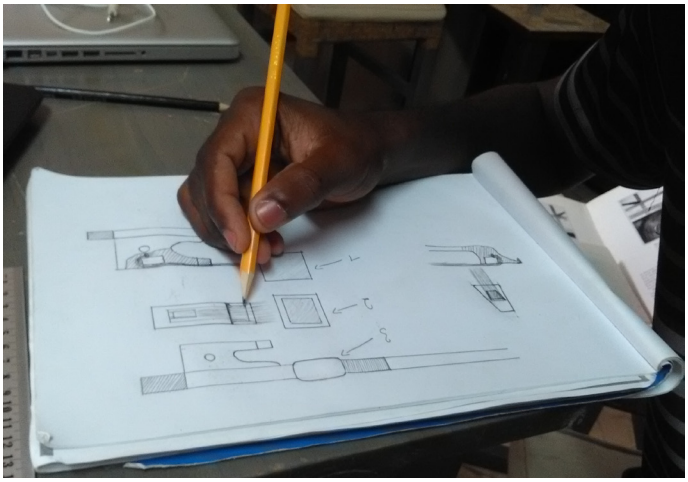
Origin of the supplies and delegating teaching :

- One of the main problem for luthiers in Haiti is buying tools, European wood and other equipment. So what we've tried to do this year was using mainly local wood for repairs (mango tree, leaves...) even for soundposts, and using local materials or things they could find easily to make tools. Tchoupy has been teaching students how to make a few tools like the closing clamps, show them how use bike inner tubes to close cracks or glue things together. We also brought a great glue warmer designed by Robert Cain (Teacher at the Newark School of Violin Making) made out of tin cans and working with candles. All of this was to make them understand that they need to be creative to do this job, and that local materials are working too. There will always be tools that we'll have to bring from Europe with us I guess, but we want them to be independent as much as possible.

- During the whole mission, we were teaching few things to one student, and few other things to another for them to teach the next student who's gonna need this information. In one hand, it was a way for us to stop running to answer all the questions and then having more time with each student to improve their skills, and in the other hand this is the best way to learn for them. We thought that the aim of LSF is not only teaching people how to do things and come back every year because there would be no point, the aim is making sure that Haiti doesn't need us anymore, at some point. Regarding violin repairs, that would mean that the ones who know the most are still practicing and teaching the ones who know the less, that they are working together, asking question to each other, that there would be more local training and teaching, that the LSF mission in Haiti could stop one day because it has been successful.

Summary and recommendations :

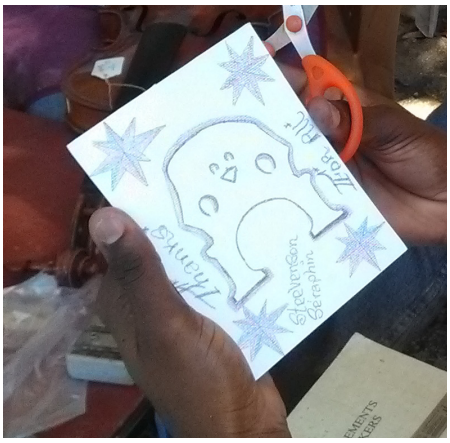
-The workshop was a bit too small for all of our student but we still manage to make it work by extending the workshop in the garden
-Our idea about delegating the teaching has been well established from day one, it is really hopeful for the project to see one student asking advice to an other one
-Taking Tchoupy as part of the teaching team was successful, he was really happy to teach and gave special lectures in the evenings
-During the past year, Tchoupy has been travelling through Haiti, teaching violin repairs and set up to different music schools. Some of our new student this year had already a bit of experience thanks to him which is great.



-Blume Haiti is seriously thinking about sending Tchoupy to Newark, at least to make a violin (his dream) this coming year, we should keep in touch with Janet to organize something nice for him (using school building ? sleeping accommodation ? find a student job ? work experience in UK ?)
-Next project : Monika is thinking about going to Haiti during the year (not summer) to teach in one of the school with a few students. Still need to define the best time and best fundraising strategy. Julie's thinking about going back to Haiti still using the summer music camp and if Monika can't make it during the summer, maybe having another Newark student coming.

Conclusion :

The LSF Haiti project is growing fast now that there is some teaching from Tchoupy in the country. We hope going back as much as possible to teach them more and helping them repairing all the donated instruments. This year mission has been amazing and truly positive regarding the future of the project and made us want to push it further.



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

Julie Folio
September 2016

Further information, including previous mission reports, can be seen at :
http://www.luthierssansfrontieres-lsf.org
Further enquiries to : info@lsf-uk.org