

The Prozor Project
Bosnia and Hercegovina
Colorado College
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Section I:

Members of the Prozor Project traveled to the town of Prozor, Bosnia and Hercegovina in early July to use music education as a force to unite Bosniak and Croat children leading entirely separate lives outside the classroom. By bringing instruments and the ability to teach the skills necessary to explore the expressive and collaborative potential of music, the project aimed to diminish the influence of a war now years in the past on the day-to-day life of current children in Prozor.

By the time the entire team had assembled in Bosnia, the most important order of business—order and delivery of the instruments—had already been completed. All interested students met at Prozor High School on the first Monday, and we explained the schedule, dates, times, and our expectations. After a brief description of the available instruments, and ensuring that the students could sign up for multiple instruments if they so desired, we compiled a list of how many students were interested in each instrument. On the guitar, about 35 – split into beginning and intermediate. For bass, about five students signed up, for drums, about 10, and for piano, about 20. The next day, lessons commenced in a room at Prozor High School. On Monday through Friday afternoons the space played host to guitar, bass, drums, and keyboard lessons that strived to strike a balance between the merits and flaws of both individual and group instruction. Across the board, the 70 children—aged six to 16—made laudable progress.

Three guitar courses met for an hour on alternating days, providing ample time for practice and the study of other instruments. Due to the small number of bass students and the likeness of the two instruments, bass students joined the guitar courses. Piano pupils took individual, half-hour lessons two days a week and met for a group lesson on the third. Only one drum set limited the time of individual lessons, but the group lessons, which occurred three times a week, allowed the students, armed with only drumsticks and a hard surface, to grasp the fundamentals necessary to fruitful instruction on the set itself.

We quickly saw improvements in the students' musical abilities. Absolute beginners who had never touched the instrument began to develop a familiarity and fondness for it, and those at a more advanced level encountered new techniques and ideas to further enhance their abilities. Occasional frustration surfaced, but the students displayed an admirable level of perseverance and desire to improve.

The improvement of Bosniak-Croat relations was just as valuable as the musical instruction and the inspiration imparted by the team members. Because Prozor is such a small town, many students already knew one another. As the project progressed, they learned more about their peers, and began forming new friendships. Every day before lessons, students could be found outside the school, talking and joking, with no student excluded. Often after the workshops, an impromptu game of soccer would form, with both Bosniaks and Croats taking part.

Our work to foster interaction between the Bosniak and Croat children did not stop at the end of the lessons. Music students also had the opportunity to explore two other programs working in the same space at different times and dedicated to similar goals: an art program and a drama course. In addition to this collaboration with other, like-minded artistic education opportunities, the project also put on concerts and hosted movie screenings. Open to all and advertised throughout Prozor, these evening events further promoted the goals of the project.

Few unanticipated difficulties presented themselves. It initially proved more difficult than expected to attract Bosniak children to the lessons and events, but creative outreach and perseverance soon assuaged this concern. Language and cultural barriers, while felt at some level by English-speaking team members, were greatly diminished by the assistance of translators and fellow instructors who became fast friends with members of our team.

While more financial resources would have meant even more instruments and equipment available to the students, the project experienced no severe budget constraints and we feel confident in both the quality and quantity of musical equipment left in Prozor for the children to enjoy. Appropriate

allocation of resources and a dedication to bringing “the most music for the mark” figured prominently in the planning and purchasing stages of the project.

The principal beneficiaries of the project – the schoolchildren of the town – will find themselves able to take full advantage of the resources left by the project for years to come. In addition to the actual instruments, the theory and techniques disseminated to the more advanced students can easily find their way to those students at a more basic level. It was not uncommon during the large guitar classes to see students take it upon themselves to teach their peers if an instructor had not yet made it to their group. In this way the project acquired a degree of sustainability, and its impact will easily last as long as the instruments stay in good condition and there are still students willing to learn.

Section II:

It might be presumptuous, as a team of students from U.S. colleges with only one member from Bosnia, to define peace in a country that has experienced so much internal conflict as a result of external influences. A facile definition of peace would be the absence of war or conflict; cynics might call peace the period in between two periods of conflict. The Prozor Project took a somewhat different approach to what peace means. Rather than focus on negative denotations, the team members adopted the philosophy that peace comes when the most growth is possible, the fewest obstacles to progress exist, and the future finds itself free from the absolute grasp of the past.

Applying such a definition to the project’s work in the town of Prozor provides an opportunity to determine not only how the project contributes to peace but also the ways in which it hopes to ensure its continued existence. By creating an opportunity for musical education, which has been shown to contribute to academic success, the project provided, and will continue to provide, a space for growth that had not existed before. Music offered a new arena in which Bosniak and Croat children can grow together outside the reach of any violent influences.

Similarly, progress in the amount of interaction between the different groups has been made easier with the availability of a positive, constructive environment. The opportunity for the children to play music and engage with others is readily found at the end of the walk up to Prozor High School. Obstacles, including longstanding cultural barriers that cannot fall in a matter of weeks, will continue to exist, but the team members strongly believe that the project effectively introduced an integral catalyst to improving relations: the existence and availability of a space to communicate and connect positively. Bringing Bosniak and Croat children together in the music program both to study and have fun begins to elucidate the separation between the devastation of the past and the possibility that is inherently part of the future. The students learned and laughed together; there is no reason they cannot be the ones to put the past behind them.

After spending considerable time in Prozor and making the occasional weekend trip to other sights in Bosnia, the project members report some modifications of their worldviews, if not the adoption of entirely new ones. Time and time again team members encountered similarities between persons in Bosnia and those back in the U.S. or Canada that seemed remarkable at the time, but upon reflection seem only natural. The differences team members encountered were not enough to make meaningful interaction impossible. Children exhibited familiar characteristics – sass, intelligence, and dedication; translators and fellow instructors pursued similar interests at the university level. Understanding each other was only made difficult by the presence of the language barrier. But since the project promoted the study of an incredibly powerful lingua franca, these difficulties quickly disappeared when instruments were in hand. And they will continue to be at hand for those in Prozor for many years to come.

To say that music is the universal language is to speak a platitude; to teach the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary and bring examples of the language’s use is to risk failure in the hopes of achieving something meaningful. The Bosniak and Croat children of Prozor can now communicate with each other and perhaps even the wider world with this language and its resources, bringing a message of possibility they so effortlessly brought to us. --Antonio Skarica

Budget for Colorado College’s Prozor Project

The average currency exchange from USD to BAM is 1 : 1.38359.

Item: **Cost**

Instruments

Electric Guitar	\$443	
Bass Guitar	\$529	
Electric Amplifier	\$567	
Bass Amplifier	\$493	
Drums and Accessories	\$1,652	
Sound system	\$2,148	
- 16 channel mixer		
- 4 speakers + 1 monitor		
- 4 speaker amplifier		
Microphones	\$520	
Desktop PC + Printer	\$798	
Music accessories	\$256	
(guitar strings, picks, cables)		
Subtotal for Instruments		\$7,406

Food

	\$538	
Subtotal for Food		\$538

Lodging

Team members stayed with Antonio Skarica's family		\$0
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Supplies (and Refreshments)

(Paper, Pens, White Boards, Drinks, Snacks, Games, Movies, etc.)		
Subtotal for Supplies		\$585

Traveling Expenses

Antonio	\$1,560	
Melissa	\$1,720	
Joel	\$1,525	
Sam	\$1,468	
Subtotal for Travel		\$6,273

TOTAL: **\$14,802**

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Personal Funds **(\$4,802)**