



Malawi Music Fund

Newsletter no. 3 December 2017



Welcome to the third newsletter of the Malawi Music Fund

2017 was a special year for Malawi Music Fund and Likhubula Children's Choir since it represented ten years since the start of our activities. A project which began with the aim of using music and the arts to improve the lives of orphaned children has developed over those ten years to become a means of providing educational opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people who have seen their life-chances transformed.

We felt that our first ten years were worth celebrating and in August we held an Anniversary Concert to which we invited a variety of local performing groups. The hall at Limbe Church on the outskirts of Blantyre was an appropriate venue since a catalyst for the project had been the visit of the Limbe Choir to Orkney back in 2006, and musicians from Limbe have remained involved ever since as tutors in singing, dancing and drumming.



A capable team from Limbe church took care of the arrangements: the government minister for children, gender and social welfare was invited as guest of honour, an anniversary cake was baked, mattresses were hired from a neighbouring church and six local choirs were invited. For the children, the expedition to Limbe on 12th August was hugely exciting as some had never previously travelled beyond their local rural area. In true Malawian fashion the event started an hour late as it was necessary to wait for the arrival of all the invited choirs and the guest of honour. But things eventually got underway and a host of splendid performances culminated in the cutting of the



anniversary cake by our two youngest children, Lewice and Ishikar. Then the Limbe congregation generously presented



each child with a plastic bucket containing a blanket, salt, sugar and soap.

I had asked two of our oldest choir members, David M'chingama and Liness Biliati, to each speak briefly about their experience of being part of Likhubula Children's Choir.

They spoke well and movingly, in English. Here is part of David's speech:

No words can best describe how grateful and happy we are. When the group was starting we did not know its vision was beyond our imagination. Today we have young men and women who, without this help, would not have gone far with their education. Not forgetting the cultures that have been learnt – works of the hands and boosting of the talents such as music. It is a group that has resurrected goals and ambitions in many of us, it is a parent to us, it gives us joy and draws a map of smiles on our faces.



A huge thank you to everyone who has supported us over our first ten years.

Glenys Hughes

Our anniversary year in pictures



In April, Glenys plus two Malawian colleagues visited five primary schools to consult with the headteachers and recruit new members for the Children's Choir. Nine children, all orphans between the ages of 9 and 12, were invited to join us. They've settled in well and are already enjoying the benefits of being part of the group.

Four of our young people, Kondwani, Nelson, Beatrice and David, 'graduated' from the Children's Choir. They will now join our newly formed Youth Choir.



Asiireni Michiru, pictured left with her guardian, has been with us since 2007. Now 19, she was offered a place at Mzuzu University in northern Malawi. The generous support of Kirkwall East Church has enabled us to meet these costs and in October Asiireni began a BSc course in Fisheries. Our first university student!



Kirkwall Library very kindly donated bags, pencils and crayons which were received by delighted children. There were so many bags that we were able to distribute some to other needy children in the Likhubula valley.

We enjoy a thriving relationship with Green Malata, the charitable organisation which provides vocational courses for disadvantaged young people. In August we were invited to provide entertainment for Green Malata's Open Day. We performed to an audience of over 100 international visitors, some of whom were keen to join in with our drummers!





Henry Chimtengo and Sydney Manyowa have completed their welding courses at Green Malata and have been supported to open their own small business – the ‘Together as One’ Welding Shop. Two other young people are currently undertaking vocational courses in tailoring and catering.



We run our residential weeks in the foothills of Mount Mulanje, Malawi’s highest mountain. In April the dry weather allowed groups of children to enjoy a half-day’s hike to the waterfall.



As an art activity the children designed Christmas cards which were professionally printed and were sold in Orkney, raising almost £800 for MMF.



We provided bicycles for those in their final school year who were having to walk long distances to and from school. They have now all passed their MSCE (Malawian Secondary Certificate of Education) and hope to continue into further education. A new funding challenge for us!

In December 2016 we expanded our activities to include drama, with a Nativity Play devised entirely by the children. Uninhibited, hilarious and at times verging on pantomime, the performance delighted the children’s guardians and did, at least, end with the traditional tableau.



Dance teacher Jo Davies left her *JustDance* studio in Orkney to travel with Glenys to Malawi in August. Jo writes about her experience of working with the Likhubula Children's Choir.

My trip to Malawi in August was the best experience of my life so far. People I spoke to beforehand who had also been to Malawi explained what an amazing time I would have. But I don't think you can truly appreciate the country until you have been there yourself.

As soon as I arrived I was greeted with such warmth and enthusiasm and after a few magical days seeing some amazing wildlife at a national park I got to meet the children at Likhubula.

What struck me first were the beautiful surroundings and the views of the mountain. Once the children had all arrived and we had been introduced we had a fun ballet class on the lawn. What fun they all had, learning very strange positions and leaping about! I was immediately struck by their energy and eagerness to learn. As the week went on I taught the children acrobatics, more ballet, gave them a demonstration of tap dancing and created a Scottish country dance with colourful ribbons which they would perform as part of the 10th anniversary concert back in Limbe.

Each child also got to take home their very own pair of ballet shoes, kindly donated by pupils from my school. This caused great excitement as a new pair of shoes of any kind is a rare event!



Whilst at Likhubula I went shopping at the local market, was taken along to Sunday church in the village and met some of the children's guardians at the small performance we put on for them at Likhubula House. My time at Likhubula went far too fast and I loved every minute of it – apart from when I found a huge spider on my pillow!

My final days in Malawi were spent back in Limbe helping to put on the concert for the 10th anniversary. The children, plus invited choirs, performed a huge variety of singing, drumming and dance in which my dance also featured. People were cheering and clapping them on. I'm delighted it went down so well with the crowd!



It's so hard to write a brief account of my trip as there were so many highlights. But I think my favourite part was experiencing the culture of singing and dance. One seems not to exist without the other - and the boys are eager to sing and dance too! They were so respectful and well-behaved and were a delight to teach.

The children supported by the Malawi Music Fund lead tough lives and have very little in the way of material possessions. It was obvious that their choir weeks at Likhubula House were very special times for them.

I made great friends among the other teachers and still keep in regular touch with them. I would like to thank the Malawi Music Fund and of course the children and all the teachers and staff at Likhubula House for making my visit so amazing and rewarding. I can't wait to go back..... if they'll have me!

Malawi Music Fund seeks to transform the lives of some of Malawi's most needy and vulnerable orphaned children. We are supported by donations from individuals, fundraising activities and grants from trusts and foundations. If you would be interested in helping us by funding a secondary school bursary or in any other way, please contact Glenys Hughes – malawimusicfund@gmail.com; tel 01856 872952

Web www.malawimusicfund.org.uk.

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