

# Weaving Words and Music: Fostering a Meaningful Intercultural Exchange through Music Composition<sup>1</sup>

By Mary Ellen Hauptert\*

*"Weaving Words and Music," is the product of a year-long study funded by Viterbo University's D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership. The study included faculty research and a course-embedded music composition, which broadened students' understanding of global conflict by incorporating personal experiences of Palestinians living in Bethlehem. Music theory students read human stories of Palestinians caught in conflict from the Arab Educational Institute's publication, "The Wall Museum,". The students' compositions were part of a Humanities Symposium that significantly impacted and deepened student learning. The benefits and outcomes of this meaningful endeavor are the focus of this paper.*

## Introduction: Values-Based Creative Composition at Viterbo University<sup>2</sup>

*"Flying in the face of the behaviorist, who tied motivation directly to the receipt of tangible rewards, researchers now believe that learners are best served when their motivation is intrinsic: when they pursue learning because it is fun or rewarding in itself, rather than because someone has promised them some material benefit."<sup>3</sup>*

Howard Gardner, *The Disciplined Mind*

For the past several years, I have explored music composition as a powerful tool for unlocking creative potential. The work began as a way to engage and motivate sophomore music theory students, but mushroomed into papers and original compositions that have been presented and performed at choir concerts, recitals, and conferences. Embedding composition into the theory curriculum had immediate benefits because it required application of the basic elements of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, texture/timbre, and form) in a creative and personal manner. Music composition developed both theoretical knowledge of the elements and gave the students an "insider's view" into the world of the composer. The positive outcome was that they began making decisions regarding melodic shape, harmonic choices, and musicianship details

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1. Project presentation: *Conference for Visual and Performing - Athens Institute for Education and Research*, May 30 – June 2, 2016.

2. Viterbo University is a private, Franciscan, Liberal Arts University in La Crosse, Wisconsin, USA.

3. Howard Gardner, *The Disciplined Mind* (New York: Penguin, 2000).

(dynamics, articulation, tempo designations, etc.), not to mention discovering their old scores with fresh eyes.

Motivating creativity, however, in university students to sustain a long-range project can be a daunting task, so it was necessary to find a project that was intrinsically motivating and had no wrong answers—a project generated by an interesting concept or based on a meaningful experience. Past projects include *Earthtones* (2009), *Peace by Piece* (2010), *Lifenotes 1 & 2* (2011 & 2012), *CCECHS Mates* (2013) and *Rumi-nations* (2014). Each project had a values-based concept that was broad enough to encourage student creativity, while maintaining a common class focus. Since 2008-2009, most of the projects<sup>4</sup> have been inspired by three distinct foci: I) content from Viterbo University's Humanities Symposia, II) humanitarian work (i.e. Greg Mortenson's "Pennies for Peace" campaign), and III) interaction with groups culturally distinct from their own:

Academic Symposia:  
Earthtones (2008-2009) and Rumi-Nations (2014-2015)

Sophomore music theory students were asked to write a piece of music that would be performed at Viterbo University's *Good Earth Humanities Symposium* (2009) and *Saint and Sultan Humanities Symposium* (2015). Student compositions for the 2009 symposium emulated woods, beaches, thunderstorms, sunrises, etc., and were performed as *Earthtones* in the closing event of the symposium. The *Earthtones* project offered broad and relevant options for composition, in addition to reflection in the context of an academic symposium dedicated to sustainability and resource management.<sup>5</sup>

The *Saint and Sultan Humanities Symposium* (2015) offered students the chance to reflect on the mission of Viterbo University. Students researched Franciscan poets, but ultimately chose the work of St. Francis' sufi-mystic contemporary Rumi. It had a loose connection with the plenary talk by Fr. Michael Cusato of St. Bonaventure University, which delved into the meeting between St. Francis of Assisi and the Sultan Malik al-Kamil in Egypt (1219). The peace-making between the two leaders inspired all who attended the symposium, which was reflected in the students' compositions. Two fine examples were pieces based on "unity" texts by Rumi – "Behind Each Eye" by Cameron Henrickson and "One Song" by Stacy Humfeld.

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4. *LIFENOTES* (2010-2011) and *LIFENOTES 2* (2012-2013) - Students chose mothers, grandmothers, teachers, neighbors, and mentors to honor in these dedicatory musical compositions. These projects did not demand research that stretched students beyond their worldview.

5. Mary Ellen Hauptert, "*Peace by Piece: Taking the Fear out of Music Composition*" (presentation, International Conference on Education and New Technologies, Barcelona, Spain, July, 2011, 1.1.7).

Humanitarian Focus: *Peace by Piece* (2009-2010)

Greg Mortenson ("Three Cups of Tea") presented his humanitarian work at Viterbo University in the fall of 2009. Particularly enticing was the "Pennies for Peace" campaign that Mortenson launched for the girls' schools he was building in Pakistan. Students attended Mortenson's presentation and wrote inspirational words, phrases, or ideas that caught their attention, knowing these "sparks" would ultimately be used in their compositions.<sup>6</sup> The value of the "Peace by Piece" project was that it had a global humanitarian dimension, as well as the layer of empathy for Pakistani women and children that it stirred within our students.

Mixing Ethnicity and Culture: *CCECHS Mates* (2013-2014)

The first project that brought together two culturally distinct populations was a collaborative venture with Matt Haupert's<sup>7</sup> *Poetry & Poetics* students at Community Charter Early College High School in Los Angeles, CA: The *CCECHS Mates* project (2013)<sup>8</sup>. Most of Matt's students came from families that did not value education (many of their parents did not have high school degrees), so his mission as a *Teach For America* teacher was to inspire students with creative-based projects that might pave the way to higher education. Viterbo University students were enthusiastic about the possibility of writing music based on poetry composed Haupert's *Poetry and Poetics* class. The quality of the poems was less important to the Viterbo students than the prospect of getting to know the high school students from CCECHS. Matt Haupert summarized his students' initial reaction to the project:

*"They were excited about the prospect of having their poetry set to music. The concept of this project engaged the students more in the class than they had been previously. Because someone else was going to be using their work and doing something with it, they were more interested in producing something of high quality. It motivated students to work hard and focus on what was going on in class – it gave the study of poetry meaning because there was an exciting end goal in sight."*<sup>9</sup>

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6. Ibid, 1.1.6.

7. Matt Haupert is Mary Ellen Haupert's son.

8. Haupert, "*Creativity, Meaning and Purpose: Mixing Cultures in Creative Collaboration*" (presentation, International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation, Seville, Spain, November 17-19, 2014).

9. Ibid, 4.

Despite communication challenges, three of the CCECHS students maintained regular contact with their Viterbo University composer. Karen Cortez and Isaac Pulchinski were in regular contact, while CCECHS student Jasmine Guzman asked Viterbo student Megan Mellenthien to arrange the piano part in "The War"<sup>10</sup> (which was based on her poem) so that she could play it for her family. Toward the end of the project, Jasmine told Megan, "You're my inspiration." Distance did not prevent four poet-composer relationships from forming relationships; those who were really engaged communicated via email.

### Mixing Ethnicity and Culture: *Weaving Words and Music* (2015-2016)

Similar to the CCECHS project, the "Weaving Words and Music" project was meant to be collaborative. Viterbo University alum Sonja Larson networked with Shereen Daniel and the Jaffa-based "Voices of Peace," Syrian composer Wassim Ibrahim, and English storyteller and Peace Studies scholar Victoria Biggs. Biggs, in turn, arranged for Sonja Larson and me to stay in Aida Camp in July 2015, introduced us to local teachers and arts practitioners, and organized a music workshop (with Mary Ellen Hauptert) at Shuafat Camp with their English teacher, Soma.<sup>11</sup> Syrian composer Wassim Ibrahim, Shereen Daniel and the Voices of Peace, and the Shuafat School English teacher have all been affected by violence in the Middle East, and were willing to share their stories with me. Networking was the essential catalyst for meaningful context in the "Weaving Words and Music" sophomore music compositions.

"Weaving Words and Music" was accepted for sponsorship, fulfilling the criteria for the Research Fellowship Grant for the *D. B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership*, "The purpose of the research fellowship is to increase the amount and quality of research conducted at Viterbo University related to ethics in leadership. The increased research will serve to enhance the reputation of the university as a whole and help to improve the quality of teaching in both undergraduate and graduate programs."<sup>12</sup> Viterbo University's endorsement of this proposal acknowledged the mission of the Arab Educational Institute, which is to "promote peace and justice in Palestine, as well as the building of a free, democratic and culturally pluralistic Palestine."<sup>13</sup> AEI supports artistic endeavors

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10. YouTube recording from the CCECHS project: "The War" by Megan Mellenthien and Jasmine Guzman, [goo.gl/rbJzAO](http://goo.gl/rbJzAO); also see "Confused" by Chloe Gorman and Denise Saucedo, [goo.gl/zulqBB](http://goo.gl/zulqBB).

11. Name changed.

12. Viterbo University *Institute for Ethics and Leadership* Research Fellowships – Description of Purpose.

13. The Arab Educational institute (AEI) website: <http://www.aeicenter.org/> - "AEI-Open Windows is a Palestinian organization that furthers education, peace building and dialogue in the Palestinian cities of Bethlehem, Ramallah and Hebron. After the

(music, art, and theater) as a means of empowerment and healing.<sup>14</sup> In particular, the "Wall Museum," (which was used as source material for the "Weaving Words and Music" project) features personal stories of occupation, which are displayed on the barrier wall near the checkpoints leading into Bethlehem.

### "Weaving Words and Music" – A Network of Meaning

*"A work of art cannot contain itself. Once he has completed his work, the creator necessarily feels the need to share his joy. He quite naturally seeks to establish contact with his fellow man, who in this case becomes his listener. The listener reacts and becomes a partner in the game, initiated by the creator. Nothing less, nothing more."<sup>15</sup>*

Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*

"Weaving Words and Music" took shape in La Crosse, Wisconsin as Sonja Larson (Class of 2014, Fulbright Polska) generated a virtual choir and commissioned an original work ("Hallelujah!" by Mary Ellen Haupt) that was premiered at *TedxKasimierz* in Krakow, Poland.<sup>16</sup> Sonja's networking, advertising, and broad musical friendship base was key to the production of the virtual performance of "Hallelujah!" A tutorial video was available online, which encouraged participation and included directions for submission.<sup>17</sup> Sonja's virtual choir of 134 voices (from six different countries) succeeded in breaking cultural boundaries for its diverse group of singers through inclusion in a choir. Participants from across the globe could see and hear themselves sing "Hallelujah!" with acute awareness of the way music brought people together as the *United International Virtual Choir*.<sup>18</sup>

Another facet of Sonja's Fulbright work included the establishment, recruitment, design, and implementation of the *YACHAD* (Hebrew for "unity") *International Choral Exchange*<sup>19</sup> program, which ran concurrently with

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institute's creation in 1986 its locality in central Bethlehem was used for providing classes to Palestinian youth on a broad variety of subjects, including computer programs, business administration and languages. While being forced to intermittently close and open during the first Intifada, the AEI provided complementary and remedial coaching programs for youth while schools were closed."

14. The heart of Biggs' work in Palestine has been to use story telling as a tool to promote emotional health, education, and communication among the people.

15. Igor Stravinsky, "Poetics of Music" (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 131.

16. Sonja Larson's *TedxKasimierz* talk (May, 2015), [goo.gl/mvf5Kj](http://goo.gl/mvf5Kj).

17. Yachad International Choral Exchange, Conductor Video, [goo.gl/CvGeZz](http://goo.gl/CvGeZz).

18. United International Virtual Choir, [goo.gl/0XCesv](http://goo.gl/0XCesv).

19. Yachad International Choral Exchange 2015, [goo.gl/gxZVnS](http://goo.gl/gxZVnS).

the *Jewish Culture Festival* in Krakow, Poland (June 28-July 7, 2015). This program, in partnership with the Jewish Community Center and Jewish Culture Festival, brought students from the United States, Poland, Israel, and Rwanda together for music and storytelling. The purpose of YACHAD was to foster international and multicultural dialogue through music, as well as to encourage peace and mutual understanding across global borders. Shereen Daniel from the *Arab – Jewish Community Center* in Jaffa, Israel brought three students from the community center's *Voices of Peace*<sup>20</sup> choir to Krakow to participate in the *International Choral Exchange*.

### Shereen Daniel and the "Voices of Peace"

*"Crafted by musical pedagogues Idan Toledano, Shereen Daniel, and Mika Dani, AJCC's choirs endow singers with professional music training in order develop their talents to a standard of excellence. Each choir's song repertoire reflects its unison of cultures -- melding together Arabic, Eastern, Western, and Jewish influences and language. The choirs' unique, beautiful sound is praised by audiences in Israel and around the world."*<sup>21</sup>

Shereen Daniel is a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship. She is married and has raised four children in Jaffa, a small coastal city within walking distance of Tel-Aviv. The beachside towns that hover around Tel-Aviv cater to tourists and offer restaurants, boutique shops, excellent food, and a level of tolerance that is unique to Israel. Shereen believes that the only way to make peace between Palestinians, Christians, and Jews in Israel is to create opportunities where youth can interact without threat of violence. In order to do so, the *Arab – Jewish Community Center* in Jaffa sponsors three different choirs that span all age groups. Shereen's newly-formed *Nitzanim* (Hebrew for "buds") is made up of small children up to the age of twelve, *Voices of Peace* is comprised of high school-aged children, and *Shirana* (Hebrew "shir" – song; Arab "rana" – song) gives women a venue for collaboration. All the groups participate in multicultural and empowerment workshops. They are in demand for diplomatic performances and

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20. "Voices of Peace is a youth choir made up of 20 Christian and Muslim Arab and Jewish adolescents from Tel Aviv-Jaffa. The choir's multi-cultural repertoire is unique in Israel, as it is the only youth choir that features songs in Arabic, Hebrew and English. By transcending preconceived notions of cultural and ethnic division through song, the youth of Voices of Peace are able to show to themselves, their community and the world that Jews and Arabs can, and do, live together peacefully-regardless of the political pressures surrounding them," [goo.gl/X2A5cl](http://goo.gl/X2A5cl).

21. *Ibid*, [goo.gl/X2A5cl](http://goo.gl/X2A5cl).

have sung for President Barack Obama and former Prime Minister – President Shimon Peres.

Dialogue and conversation during the YACHAD workshop offered all participants perspective on politics in the Middle East. *Voices of Peace* participants in the *YACHAD Multicultural Choral Exchange (July, 2015)* added an Arab perspective to the *Jewish Cultural Festival*, which broadened understanding of the greater story. Activities for the YACHAD workshop included a visit to Auschwitz, one of the most brutal of the Nazi death camps, located outside of Krakow. When asked for feedback at the end of the tour, the Arab girls said that the experience did not evoke empathy, explaining that the ironic juxtaposition of Hitler's brutality to the Jews and the way Arabs are treated in Israel today, only churned up deep-seeded resentment. Shereen said that schools start taking children to *Yad Vashem* when they are five years old, but that Palestinian history has been ignored. She made an especially good point at dinner that evening, "Israel needs to stop educating its young Jews to become victims!" Because they are brought up in fear, they are more prone to suspect neighbors of different faith and racial backgrounds. She emphatically stated that *ignorance and fear of the other is one of Israel's more formidable cultural obstacles*.

Shereen and her students made a big impact on all the participants in the *Multicultural Choral Exchange*. They shared their impressive artistic accomplishments<sup>22</sup> with other participants at the workshop and continue to correspond with me to this day. The trip to Israel the following winter allowed me to meet more of the girls (both Jewish and Arab) from *Voices of Peace* in a two-day music workshop sponsored by the AJCC. From my journal, January 16, 2016:

*"Everything went better than expected at the Arab- Jewish Community Center. I worked with Voices of Peace in a three-hour workshop on Friday afternoon and another three-hour workshop on Saturday morning. Shereen Daniel plans to have her group sing the "Bou 'u n'asheer" ("Come, Let Us Sing," commissioned by Voices of Peace) at the Musica Sacra International Festival at the Musical Academy in Marktoberdorf, Germany in February 11 - 15, 2016. It is heartwarming seeing Jewish and Arab youth hug, kiss, and sing together at AJCC."*<sup>23</sup>

### **Composer Wassim Ibrahim – Modeling Humanity**

*"Engagement that involves reciprocity would be experienced as learning and teaching, and guiding and following, as informed and reflective individuals give back*

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22. May Grabli's art was exhibited in the Fine Arts Center Atrium during the Humanities Symposium.

23. Hauptert Journal entry, January 16, 2016.

*in meaningful ways to the community. The experiences afford spaces for growth and transformation of the individual and community to deeper levels of understanding.*"<sup>24</sup>

In an extraordinary stroke of luck, Sonja Larson made the acquaintance of Wassim Ibrahim,<sup>25</sup> a Syrian composer - graduate student at the Music Academy in Krakow, while attending a concert that featured a premiere of one of his works. A Syrian graduate student living and working in Krakow, Poland, Ibrahim taught Jean Saladino and me some of the fundamentals of Middle Eastern music theory when they first arrived in Poland (June 22-24, 2015).

The session with Ibrahim was the highlight of their first few days in Krakow. He shared his personal life with us – telling us that he considered Damascus (his home town) one of the most beautiful places on earth and that if we ever visited, we would never want to leave. At that time, his family was still in Damascus - advising him to build a life outside of the country. The unfolding of his complicated and frustrating story opened all of our hearts to the plight of the Syrians. Ibrahim was not allowed to take part in the *Jewish Cultural Festival* because there was fear of what might happen to his family if he was associated with anything Jewish. We were grateful for the hours he spent demonstrating Arabic *maqam* on his *oud*. The quiet apartment in Krakow provided an environment that fostered both personal and professional exchange. He also shared his latest symphonic work ("Behind the Death"), a work dedicated to his family trapped in Damascus.

I was so impressed with Ibrahim's musicianship and generous humanity, that I invited him to the United States to share his life and work at the same time that I would be in Israel to conduct workshops and gather information for the "Weaving Words and Music" project. Ibrahim was in residence at Roncalli Newman Center and made guest appearances in classes at Viterbo University from January 8-25, 2016. He was originally set to work with sophomores on their composition projects, but was restricted by the parameters of his travel visa from doing so. It was impressive to see how quickly he

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24. Betty Anne Younker, "Enacting the vision: Creating and Sustaining Meaningful Composition Programs," in *Composing our Future: Preparing Music Educators to Teach Music Composition*, ed. Michele Kaschub and Janice P. Smith (Oxford University Press, 2013), 345.

25. Wassim Ibrahim - Biography. Wassim Ibrahim was born in Damascus, Syria in 1978. He graduated from the *High Institute of Music* in Damascus 2010 (Theory Division), where he studied with composition with Prof. Serge Kopperanov, theory and choral studies with Prof. Bella Tagezieva, conducting with Prof. Victor Babenko, and Maestro Missak Baghboudarian (the Syrian Symphony orchestra conductor). He has composed and arranged several works that have been performed in his homeland, as well as abroad (performances for solo cello and piano were premiered at the Ehrbar Saal in Vienna; commissioned work by New York-based *Cantigas Women's Choir*). He is currently studying composition at the Music Academy in Krakow, Poland (where he met Sonja Larson, Viterbo University on a Fulbright Polska).

expanded his circle of friends and admirers at both Roncalli Newman Parish and Viterbo University – developing relationships that were culturally enlightening and respectful.

Ibrahim had dinner with a different La Crosse family every evening, often bringing along his *oud* to entertain his hosts. Families had the privilege of hearing his personal story of the Islamic State's occupation of his homeland, Syria. Even though he told his story over and over, he was enthusiastic about the opportunity to meet new people and collaborate with American musicians, most notably, Jean Saladino and the Viterbo University Concert Choir. Wassim's passion for using music to promote peace prompted the organization of a *Syrian Refugee Resettlement Benefit Concert*<sup>26</sup> at Roncalli Newman Center on January 24, 2016 for which Jean Saladino and the Viterbo University Concert Choir performed several of his works, to acclaim.

Ibrahim's impact on the community is evident in the following reflection by Monty Christopherson, a student in my VUSM Serving the Common Good class:

*"Anyway, I'd like to say a little about what Wassim has meant to me. When he spoke to us that first day of class, it was my first experience with the Syrian Refugee crisis that didn't come from the media. I have to admit, the media's agenda and the political rhetoric has painted the issue of refugees in a negative light. I was for not letting them into the country unless they could be vetted. I wasn't the only one who felt this way. Many of my friends and family shared similar feelings. My views have since changed.*

*Now, I have to rant for a second. Why does it take crimes against humanity before people take action? Were we not worried about how people were being treated until they started dying? It seems like a common thing for our country's problems these days. We wait for tragedy and crisis to rear its ugly head, then we act. It's too late by then. Could we not have been more proactive? I realize that there are several other problems that the general public has no knowledge of, but common sense tells me we could have done more. Anyway, back to Wassim.*

*He told us the story about how he would love to go back to Damascus and see his parents but he can't. He told us stories of his friends and neighbors and how some of them were shot in the streets. He told us how beautiful and historic his nine-thousand-year-old culture was and how it was being destroyed by the chaos. He said there was no hope there. Syrians are seeking refuge where there may be hope of a better life, but bordering countries are cautious and turning them away for fear of terrorist posing as refugees. It was heartbreaking to hear.*

*I was touched in ways that covered a spectrum of emotion. He told his story, we listened, and his message was heard. Spreading the word is something I can do to*

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26. WXOW coverage of Syrian Refugee Resettlement Benefit Concert, [goo.gl/Hii5iJ](http://goo.gl/Hii5iJ).

carry on Wassim's mission. I'd like to thank everyone involved with Wassim's journey to our city and to our classroom. It was a moving experience that I will never forget."<sup>27</sup>

### Victoria Biggs – The Essential Story

*The Holocaust and the Contemporary World*<sup>28</sup> conference in Krakow, Poland offered Sonja Larson the chance to meet University of Manchester graduate student Victoria Biggs.<sup>29</sup> Biggs' talk, "Reading Anne Frank Under Occupation: Space, Empathy, and Holocaust Memory in Israel/Palestine," inspired Sonja to arrange a Skype® conversation with me to discuss the possibility of collaboration. Biggs challenged my hope of mixing Viterbo Students (who she described as "privileged") with Palestinian students – articulating the cultural differences between the two groups, as well as the political, "red-tape" difficulties that the project might encounter.

While the collaborative work that began in Krakow, Poland (Shereen Daniel and "Voices of Peace," Syrian composer Wassim Ibrahim) was easily facilitated through email and Facebook, the connections with our *Aida Camp* hosts could not have been made without the help of [V.G.]. As mentioned earlier in this paper, Biggs agreed to help facilitate meetings between me and people engaged in humanitarian work in Bethlehem. Collaboration with Biggs was integral to the success of the "Weaving Words and Music" project because the storytelling activities sponsored by AEI (Arab Educational Institute<sup>30</sup> - *Sumud Story House*) would become source material for the sophomore composition project. I knew that even with financial support from the *Institute for Ethics and Leadership*, it would be a challenge to establish contact with Palestinians without Biggs.

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27. Monty Christopherson, *Reflection on the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Benefit Concert*, WXOW.com, last modified January 24, 2016, [goo.gl/FwLeAs](http://goo.gl/FwLeAs).

28. Online conference programme: <http://holocaustworld.ug.edu.pl/en/programme/>.

29. [V.G.] - University of Manchester, England; Ph.D. Student - Storytelling, Folklore, and the Anthropology of Violence.

31. The Arab Educational Institute (AEI) website – Mission Statement: ([goo.gl/1SuSY4](http://goo.gl/1SuSY4)) - "AEI-Open Windows is an Arab-Palestinian NGO affiliated to *Pax Christ International* and established in Bethlehem in 1986 by a group of Palestinian educators. Working with youth, women, and educators, it is engaged in the field of community education to contribute to the general causes of participation in public life and in peace and justice; the building of a free, democratic and culturally pluralistic Palestine, and the sharing and communication of the daily life reality of Palestine with broader audiences."

Larson and I were introduced to the director and former director<sup>31</sup> of AEI on July 9, 2015. Business cards were exchanged as both parties expressed interest in working with one another on the sophomore music composition project. I envisioned regular communication with Palestinians that might be an improvement over the CCECHS Mates project from two years earlier. We were looking for a human connection that might broaden the minds of Wisconsin university students, while eliminating stereotypes of Americans that Middle East teenagers were getting from television sitcoms and Internet YouTube postings.

The initial email exchanges between me and the AEI director were very positive. I left a copy of her D. B. Reinhart ethics grant proposal with the director, not realizing it had a fatal flaw. Under Israeli military law, Israelis are not permitted to enter Bethlehem, and AEI could be penalized for hosting them. Before this law was imposed, AEI did facilitate mixed activities, but its staff became disillusioned and decided that such activities often whitewashed rather than challenged injustice by implying parity between the participants that does not exist.

The following sentence from the proposal raised suspicion: "Victoria has worked with *both Israeli and Palestinian populations* and recently received permission from the Arab Educational Institute to establish an exchange with our Viterbo University sophomore music theory students in the *Weaving Words and Music* project."<sup>32</sup> I replied to AEI with a modified text, but did not receive an answer.

### **Learning Environments Enclosed in Cement and Barbed Wire**

*"The schooling system [in Shuafat Camp] is poorly covered for the camp's children. UNWRA<sup>33</sup> established two schools inside the camp, one for boys and another for girls. But these schools only have classes between 1st and 6th grades, and cannot provide education for all the camp's children."*<sup>34</sup>

The following journal entries describe the trip that Larson and I made to the Middle East in July 2015, as well as my return visit in January 2016. They enjoyed Arab hospitality while getting to know families in Aida Camp and villages surrounding Bethlehem. Their workshops at Shuafat Camp School

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31. I did not get permission to use their names for this report.

32. D. B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics and Leadership Grant Proposal, April 30, 2015.

33. UNRWA - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East.

34. International Solidarity Movement, "Life inside the Shuafat Refugee Camp," January 18, 2016, [goo.gl/wPlqqL](http://goo.gl/wPlqqL).

inspired dedication for a teacher whose environment is more like a prison than a school.

#### Hauptert Journal Entry - 7/06/2015

Victoria Biggs, our contact in Bethlehem, speaks Hebrew and Arabic, having studied both languages in school and spent significant time living and working in the Middle East. She met us at the bus station across from Damascus Gate, after-which we ate at a Jewish vegan restaurant. When the conversation switched to Jewish - Arab relations, Victoria became uncomfortable as she felt that other customers were listening, and reminded us that we needed to avoid such references during times of high friction.

We took the bus to the nearest stop outside the Bethlehem wall and walked to the checkpoint. There were several young men in an argument with one of the soldiers. They looked as if they were smashed against the iron fence, just trying to get through. Garbage was strewn all over the streets as we made our way toward Vicky's apartment. (Tomorrow we are planning to stay at one of the camps in town).

#### Hauptert Journal Entry - 7/07/2015 to 7/08/2015

We had a fine morning with Vicky, hearing about all her exploits has been eye-opening, indeed. She told the story of Mohammed Abu Khdeir, a 15-year-old Palestinian who had been kidnapped from his Jerusalem neighbourhood and burned alive by settlers. She had recently attended a memorial ceremony for him. It irritated her that the Palestinian officials at the ceremony tried make it sound like he died honorably - fighting back. She described their coping as suppressing all feeling and trying to hold onto what little pride they have in themselves and in their country (what little they have left). We did get a lot of advice from her, as well as some of her personal story. We also made a stop at Bethlehem University and were welcomed by Brother Stephen Tuohy, who is the Vice President for Development. After coffee with Vicky and visits to the Church of the Nativity, Milk Grotto, and Bethlehem University, we are back at Vicky's packing our things for the rendezvous with the coordinator for the Noor Women's Project stay in Aida Camp.

The irony of this place is disguised in joy - the children, their families, and the generosity of our hosts. I would recommend staying in Aida Camp to anyone, even though I cannot fathom friends finding their way around. None of the streets are marked, yet worries are diminished because the people are so hospitable and welcoming. Our hosts are incredible. [They] have six lovely children, yet found room for Sonja and me. They have several small apartments in a large complex that houses hundreds of people. In addition to having guests

stay in their home, Islam teaches cooking classes on a regular basis and is accustomed to serving large groups of people.

This evening, we helped her prepare the *iftar* meal and enjoyed learning some Arabic from her daughters. The eldest daughter, is fluent in English, while the other family members know enough to have a conversation and share some laughs. Their guests for this evening's *iftar* included the International Director from Notre Dame, along with their satellite directors from Chile, Ireland, and England. They were meeting at *Tantur Ecumenical Institute* and made arrangements through their onsite coordinator for this very special *iftar*. She shares her earnings with other members of a cooperative of women with special-needs children, the Noor Women's Empowerment Group.<sup>35</sup> I was most impressed by Islam's eldest daughter. She speaks several languages, is caring and respectful to all members of her family, and is dedicated to her studies. I am impressed by the laughter and genuine kindness of these people.

Later: It is 11:30 pm in Aida Camp and *everyone* is still roaming around. I have decided that they never sleep during Ramadan. When we arrived this evening from our dinner out, we took a wrong turn into the camp and got lost. It does not help that there are not any road signs to mark one's way - just skinny alleys separating the compressed cement. We stopped to ask for help at a carpenter's house (who was working in the evening) and he led us to a small shop for assistance. The proprietor had a brother who spoke English and had a cell phone (that worked, unlike ours), so we were able to contact our hosts. [Our "father" host] had to come and fetch us because there really is nothing to mark one's way in this camp. It is curious that I was never worried about our safety.

#### Hauptert Journal Entry - 7/08/2015

The next day, we met Vicky at the Intercontinental Hotel at 7:00am to catch the bus to Jerusalem where we met her teacher-friend (and Bethlehem University graduate) [Soma]. She teaches English at the Shuafat Camp School and made arrangements for us to work with children as the creative component for their summer school program. So, with some teacher support, I taught three classes, each with about thirty ADHD seven-year-olds in a room that was not much bigger than my kitchen. The kids were wild, but in a fun sort of way. We were doused with water during recess, but they seemed generally happy that we

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35. Noor Womens' Empowerment Group website: "Islam is the Project's Coordinator and the soul of Noor WEG. She lives with her husband and six children in Aida camp. She follows up on the children and families' needs, heads the meetings with the rest of the women and she always welcomes anyone who wants to know more about the project. She continuously advocates for the rights of disabled children with a big smile on her face. Mohammad, her eldest son, is 14 years old and has cerebral palsy and epilepsy," [goo.gl/2v7UE9](https://goo.gl/2v7UE9).

were there. Both Vicky and [Soma] said that it is good to have people come from the outside to do things because it helps them forget they are forgotten.

After the sessions, [Soma] took us for a walk through Shuafat Camp.<sup>36</sup> There was garbage strewn all over - a real dump - and I could only wonder how the people endure this day after day. I learned so much from the teachers and kids at that school; the memory of a group of kids walking out the gate (into that God-forsaken mess) wearing their orange summer school shirts and matching baseball hats, is burned into my brain. When we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre later in the day, my heart softened just enough to cry heavy tears for the children and families trapped in Shuafat Camp.

#### Hauptert Journal Entry – (Six Months Later) 1/19/2016

I dreaded the Shuafat Camp experience. Remembering how we entered the camp last summer, I was less than enthusiastic about taking the No. 207 from the Nablus Road bus stop to Shuafat, and then having to walk from the stop through garbage and Israeli soldiers who were sure to ask me questions. No, taking a taxi is the only reasonable option.

I was prepared for the soldiers and garbage when the taxi driver dropped me off; two soldiers eyed me as I walked through the iron camp gate. I checked in at the office, where they showed me the room that [Soma] was teaching in. The camp school does not have any green space, so anything to add color is welcome. Since last summer, faculty and staff painted some of the cement structures outside a palette of colors, which left a more positive impression. Even so, the color cannot cover up the cement, the barbed wire, the guards, and the overall feeling that I was entering prison, not school. I was told that people in the camp feel invisible.

The classrooms were as dilapidated as I remembered them - cramped and pot-holed dins that were more conducive to storage than to learning. Yet, teachers know that education is the healthier part of their students' lives. The truth is that most of the 700 + Shuafat Camp School kids go home past piles of

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36. Shuafat Camp - Shuafat Refugee Camp has a population that is estimated between 60,000 to 80,000 Palestinians. These numbers are only an estimation since the Israeli Municipality, which is responsible for the Camp's administration, has not carried out any census of its residents. But the Municipality's negligence of the Camp is further seen in the everyday life lack of basic services such as picking up the garbage in the streets, and insufficient water and power supply, giving way to frequent water shortages and power cuts. All this happens regardless of the fact that Palestinians living in the Camp pay all their taxes, which are equal to the tax amounts that Israeli citizens pay. In contrast, all Israeli resident areas and illegal settlements in Jerusalem receive these services without interruption; having no water shortages or power cuts, and enjoying perfectly clean streets. [goo.gl/wPlqqL](http://goo.gl/wPlqqL).

stinky garbage, drug dealing, and the probability of a fight, each and every day. Teaching is both hopeless and hopeful. There is no choice but to try.

Soma, a young teacher and graduate from Bethlehem University, was thrilled when I arrived. Her class of ALL boys numbered about 40 (in a space designed for 20); they acted like caged animals. Kids were laughing, fighting, and talking; no one was listening. Try as I might, the first class seemed like a complete failure. I needed to be more prepared. With the help of Soma's 10-year old niece, I created "A-B-C" 8.5 X 11 drawings that I could use as props for the next two classes. My goal was to keep them engaged, while reinforcing what they knew. "My name is Mary Ellen. What is your name?" Introducing myself to them one-by-one, while looking them square in the eye and shaking their hands, was already an improvement over the previous session. They seemed like such good kids, really.

There was not a dull moment in the next two classes. We sang melodies using *solfege* and a "made-up" song, "A-B-C, A-B-C, A-B-C for you and me." The drawings served as prompts for a picture quiz (holding up one of our alphabet pictures and having them say the English word for the picture), which was interspersed with the new "A-B-C Song." When they started jumping on each other or climbing the walls, we sang the song. Gradually, they understood that the "A-B-C Song" was a call to order. There was one little boy who looked earnestly at me, as if defying the wild behavior of his classmates. His steely determination to learn something new was astounding, not only because he could maintain concentration, but because he was raised in an environment of concrete, garbage, and barbed wire. He showed me that even though there is no green space in Shuafat, there certainly was a will for learning and common decency.

The last part of our singing English lesson was memorable. I improvised tunes on the recorder while each student drew something beautiful. Their camp experience was reflected in their drawings – cement, planes, occupation, which were later hung in the Viterbo University Fine Arts Center atrium as part of an ART of PEACE exhibit during the Humanities Symposium (February, 2016) – worlds away from their prison home. At the end of the day, plans were made to continue communication with a books project sending English books for a library, as well as supplies for art projects.

### Coming Home – Sustaining Relationships

*"The purpose of the research fellowship is to increase the amount and quality of research conducted at Viterbo University related to ethics in leadership."<sup>37</sup>*

D. B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics and Leadership

I exchanged several emails with both Soma and our teenage host from Aida Camp. Correspondence has been ongoing with Soma, but stopped with R.A.O. on September 28, 2015. Camp occupation does not change the fact that R.A.O. is a normal teenage girl with hopes and dreams of a better life (Example 1). I had asked R. if she had seen the "blood moon," in Example 2. She refrained from signing her name, using "Palestine" in red letters.

**Example 1.** *Email from R.A.O., 17-year old from Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem*

9/26/2015

Hi,

*I hope you're OK and now I'm like you alone at home but it looks good, and everything fine as you said so calm.*

*Everyone good, My Mum studying English for her project and for the others they are doing what they want to do any time, I like their life, they don't care about anything just they want to do what in their mind without thinking...*

*I like every subject even I studying them so hard also they took a lot from my time but I believe one day I will be very proud of myself and I will say then all the respect for my school so I don't want to lose this moment.*

*I'm very good in physics and chemistry but the disaster is that I hate mathematics.*

*I wish your good and also send my regards for your family also for your student.*

*Hug from Palestine*

**Example 2.** *Email from R.A.O., 17-year old from Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem*

9/28/2015

Hi,

*Yes, I saw it last night the moon was red, I was little afraid from it.*

*So you did a very good party with your team, keep going I know you are amazing and you love it.*

*You know I would like one day to be like you, really thanks God that I met you.*

*With all my regards,*

*Palestine*

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37. Viterbo University, *Institute for Ethics and Leadership Research Fellowships – Description of Purpose.*

I will never know if the end of their correspondence was because of lack of power, the loss of their family computer, or pressure from occupied forces. An article in the *Middle East Eye* (Example 5) reveals some of the horrors of occupation in Aida Camp.

**Example 3. Newspaper Excerpt (Middle East Eye – 29 October 2016)**

**BETHLEHEM, Occupied Palestinian Territories** - Yazan Ikhlayel, 17, was at a community centre in Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem when Israeli forces stormed the camp. Ikhlayel was using his iPhone to film as Israeli jeeps rolled by on one of the camp's main roads, shooting off tear gas, when a soldier began issuing a message to residents from one of the jeep's loudspeakers. "People of Aida refugee camp, we are the occupation army," the message began. "If you throw stones, we will hit you with gas until you all die - the youth, the children, the old people, you will all die." The soldier continued, speaking in Arabic and issuing more threats and insults to the people of Aida camp. But Ikhlayel says it was the first line that really shocked people. "The most important thing I want people to see when they watch this video is to realise what the Israeli "democracy" really is," Ikhlayel told *Middle East Eye*. "They have said it for us now, they are an occupation - they said "we are the occupation army." It is proof, this is an apartheid country, it is not democratic at all."

"Everyone in the camp tonight is sitting around talking about this, no one is talking about anything else tonight but what the [Israeli] soldiers said and what they did here," Huessni said.<sup>38</sup>

Correspondence with Soma, as well as projects devoted to increase literacy in the camp, are ongoing and in progress. Beverly Hall, mother of my sophomore music theory student Abigail Hall, is a librarian at *Wabasha Public Library* in Kellogg, Minnesota. She collected several storybooks that could be sent to *Shuafat Camp School* to support the learning in [Soma]'s English classes. Beverly Hall will continue collecting books as the library turns over its holdings. In like manner, Jennifer Yaccarino from Mary Ellen Hauptert's *VUSM 300 – Serving the Common Good* course, chose to work on a literacy project to culminate her work in the class. She interviewed English teachers and collected books with active learning activities. Materials for the camp will be sent summer 2016.

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38. An Israeli military jeep rolled through Aida Camp in the occupied West Bank city of Bethlehem late on 29 October 2015 (*Middle East Eye* screengrab) - See more at: [goo.gl/1Dfd6Y](http://goo.gl/1Dfd6Y).

### Victoria Biggs – "Behind the Wall"

*"One example of how forbidden history can penetrate a society is through creative writing, storytelling, and the arts to foster a very, very empathetic response that doesn't yet exist on the public level."<sup>39</sup>*

Victoria Biggs, "Behind the Wall"

The culminating event for the "Weaving Words and Music" project was [V.G.]' inspiring talk at the *Viterbo University Humanities Symposium* on Wednesday, February 25, 2016. Biggs is in the final stages of working on her humanitarian and conflict response studies, researching storytelling, community, and memory among Israeli and Palestinian youth. Her many years of work with a Palestinian cultural and creative arts center in Bethlehem, gave depth to personal details about each of the "story tellers" whose words the sophomores set to music.

### Notes from [V.G.]'s Presentation

Biggs shared her work with an audience of about 300 faculty, students, and community members on Wednesday, February 25, 2016. A gripping performance of my choral piece, "The Wall," by Jean Saladino and the Viterbo University Concert Choir prepared audience members for hearing about the darker side of the barrier wall that was built around Bethlehem only twelve years ago. Biggs explained how quickly it separated Palestinians from their relatives, schools, and farms and that many Palestinian farmers lost their livelihood when it went up. People were so traumatized by it – the checkpoints and watch-towers – that they would stay in their homes out of fear. It was a lonely existence that was breaking down neighborhoods.

Story telling was one way to draw people out of their homes and help them process the occupation. It was mainly women who took part in the initiative; it was not easy for them at first. When people are told to "shut up" over and over again, storytelling becomes a political act – an act where *sumud* (Arabic for steadfastness or resilience) comes into play. Biggs named the *dual narrative* approach as one technique for understanding both sides of the conflict. In *dual narrative*, each side should come to understanding of the others' story. Because Palestinians living in central Bethlehem have had a very different experience than those living in Aida Camp, Biggs presented the idea of multidirectional memory as a more effective approach to history, mainly because it can be taught as a mosaic of different stories. *Dual narrative* approach shows two sides, each in conflict, which can obfuscates power imbalances and suggest a false symmetry.

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39. [V.G.], "Behind the Wall."

The mosaic model promotes a more nuanced understanding of history, memory, and power by highlighting the unique experiences of its constituents.

Biggs offered a perspective that was similar to Shereen Daniel's statement that *ignorance and fear of the other is one of Israel's more formidable cultural obstacles*. She stated that Israeli children are terrified of Palestinian youth, just as the Palestinian youths are scared of Israeli youth. She remembered sitting with two Israeli girls and asked, "What comes to mind when you think of the word Gaza?" They answered, "unfinished houses." Palestinian kids struggle to imagine Israeli kids on the other side of the wall. All they know are the soldiers. One boy answered, "There are others. Some of them speak French." Some of the children she worked with in Aida Camp drew soldiers without faces. There was one child, however, who drew a soldier with a face. His response to her was, "I hate them when they do what they're doing here, like now, but I think they're like us when they go home." "Storytelling helped this child get beyond the block of imagining the life of a soldier. Biggs also used fairy tales to help kids go beyond the block because symbolic vocabulary has a way of unlocking the children's deep feelings.

The forbidden history of Palestine – *Nakba* (which is the Arabic word for "disaster") – refers to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948.<sup>40</sup> No textbooks that mention the *Nakba* are discussed in Israeli schools; all have been withdrawn. One Palestinian student with Israeli citizenship told Biggs, "The *Nakba*, we carry it." She explained that Jewish-Israeli students, on the other hand, have a similar experience with the Holocaust because many students have relatives who survived or perished in the camps. It is unfortunate that respective histories in Israel and Palestine are currently combative; both sides fear that the telling of the others' story will diminish the depth of their own. Biggs said that Israeli students think that if they begin to talk about the *Nakba*, they will jeopardize their own history. Palestinian students show the same reluctance to embrace the Holocaust,<sup>41</sup> which was overturned at one Bethlehem high school during the Second Intifada, when a teacher asked her ninth-grade students to read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Biggs said that Palestinian students were so profoundly moved by Anne's diary entries that parents requested their own copies of the book and one girl began addressing her own diary to Kitty. Biggs stated, "One example of how forbidden history can penetrate a society is through creative writing, storytelling, and the arts, and foster a very, very empathetic response that does not yet exist on the public level."<sup>42</sup>

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40. Refer to Ilan Pappé's *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* for an authoritative account of the *Nakba* in Bibliography [Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Israel* (One World Publications, 2007)].

41. Recall the reaction of the Arab girls who toured Auschwitz during the YACHAD workshop.

42. Biggs, "Behind the Wall."

Biggs mentioned that there is hope in the few schools that are integrated. Students and faculty acknowledge that both Jews and Arabs have families who have lost something that they will never get back. The fact of the matter is, according to Biggs, is that no matter what we do for justice, we can never get these loved ones back. She said that the important thing about storytelling is that youth can feel hate and love almost simultaneously, allowing them to acknowledge and be honest about all they carry. She added that we cannot change the world by this story telling, but can give youth a way to imagine a better future.

### The Wall Museum – Human Stories

*"The "Wall Museum" is not intended to become permanent. It is in fact our hope that the "Wall Museum" stories contribute to cracks in the Wall, to its breaking down, and in fact to the collapse of all Walls around us and around the Palestinian people in particular. In other words, we hope that the "Wall Museum" by its very success will once destroy itself. In this context, human stories shown on the posters cannot have but a very special meaning. The fragile, human, personal stories stand in a stark and comprehensive contrast to the concrete Wall. The personal story humanizes, opens up, asks for human understanding, whereas the Wall kills the environment, closes up, takes away the human horizon, "warehouses" people behind the Wall. By preserving human memory, the human story is a challenge to the Wall."<sup>43</sup>*

Arab Educational Institute

Using stories gathered from women in the neighbourhood, AEI mounted the Wall Museum, an endeavor to humanize the plight of Palestinians under occupation . Without further contact with AEI or R.A.O. from Aida Camp, I changed the project focus to stories from the "Wall Museum," which offered plenty of material for the project. Students worked on their compositions in the fall and had the opportunity to meet Biggs when she came to speak at the Humanities Symposium in February 2016.

*"The 'museum' presently counts 100 stories, which were attached to the Wall at Christmas 2011, September 2012 and September 2013. They are stories of Palestinian women and youth from the three neighboring towns, Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, but also from villages around Bethlehem and other places. The stories express a rejection of the Wall, but show also people's sumud or steadfastness; and the human longing for the healing of home and the creation and preservation of life over destruction. Moreover, the stories give a sense of history and suggest the possibility of change. Again, this is in opposition to the Wall, which somehow*

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43. AEI Website: [goo.gl/GRBm6P](http://goo.gl/GRBm6P).

*suggests by its very appearance that change is impossible. Last but not least the display of the human stories points to the will to reclaim the Palestinian story. This story, as we all know, has long been denied by the many stereotypes surrounding Palestinians, in a second layer of seemingly impenetrable walls."*<sup>44</sup>

### **Weaving Words and Music – Inspired by the Wall**

*"Learning is a social process, a collaborative process.  
Music learning experiences should be structured to build on this quality and enable learners to benefit from peer mentoring, coaching, thinking, ideas, processes, approaches, reactions, and so forth.  
Making space for these kinds of interactions to occur means planning for them to occur."*<sup>45</sup>

### **Beth Marzoni and Mary Ellen Haupt: "The Wall"**

As part of Biggs' introduction at the Humanities Symposium, I composed a work based on a poem by Viterbo University English professor Beth Marzoni. Beth is a highly-respected colleague in the English Department at Viterbo University who took some interest in my ethics grant work. I shared the AEI publication, "The Wall Museum,"<sup>46</sup> with her and asked if she would compose a text that might be set to music. I used her evocative poem, "Dirge for Rachel's Tomb," for my choral work, "The Wall." Her poem is an amalgamation of several images from posters featured in the book. As mentioned earlier in this paper, "The Wall" was premiered at the *Humanities Symposium* by the Viterbo University Concert Choir under the direction of Jean Saladino and was also included in the Spring Choral Concert on May 1, 2016.

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44. AEI Website: [goo.gl/GRBm6P](http://goo.gl/GRBm6P).

45. Jackie Wiggins, and Michael Medvinsky, "Scaffolding Student Composers," in *Composing Our Future: Preparing Music Educators to Teach Composition*, ed. Michele Kaschub and Janice Smith (Oxford University Press, 2013), 113-114.

46. Arab Educational Institute, "The Wall Museum."

**"Dirge for Rachel's Tomb" by Beth Marzoni**

A wall was built,  
but first the digging & the dynamite.  
A wall was built.  
Little earthquakes shook our roots.  
A wall was built.  
I was just putting up my laundry.  
A wall was built.  
Now night's a fearful country.  
A wall was built.  
The soldiers come & come.  
A wall was built.  
The bells, they won't stop ringing.  
A wall was built.  
Home: a heap of stones.  
A wall was built.  
Now the day's a locked door.  
A wall was built.  
The street's for cats & dogs.  
A wall was built.  
Like cattle, the machine takes us.  
A wall was built.  
Tanks follow my boy home.  
A wall was built.  
How will the world reach us?  
A wall was built  
& it divides me from my life.  
A wall was built.  
We ask God to accept our fasting.  
A wall was built,  
so we crawl through the sewers.  
A wall was built.  
How else can we reach the world?  
A wall was built.  
Please take me with you.  
A wall was built.  
Something's closing in my heart.

### The Sophomore Music Compositions: "Behind the Wall"

Students presented and performed their composition projects at both the Viterbo University Humanities Symposium ("Behind the Wall") and Scholars' Days<sup>47</sup> presentations. Last fall, students read the stories displayed on the wall<sup>48</sup> and chose one story to set to music. Four months later, they received feedback from Victoria Biggs on their compositions, as well as personal details about each of the "story tellers" that were not in the book. Biggs' first-hand experience took the place of collaboration with "real people" and helped them approach the material in a more personal way.

The students enjoyed the opportunity to share their struggles as first-time composers and celebrate the completion of their compositions. Stretched in surprising ways, students not only expanded their knowledge of music theory, they reflected on what it would be like to live with a cement and barb-wired wall obscuring their views. Interactions with Syrian composer Ibrahim and peace activist Biggs gave the students unfiltered accounts of human being, not so different from themselves, but who have learned how to live with hope in dire circumstances.

Three student compositions (I. "Under the Boots," II. "Trapped under the Wall," and III. "Baking Bread") contained graphic images of Palestinians under siege from *The Wall Museum*:

#### I. "Under the Boots" for Soprano and Piano by Arianna Day

*It was summer then,  
Summer vacation in Palestine.  
Anger infused the air!  
Shouting, soldiers firing tear gas at  
Youths throwing stones.  
They beat him all over his body,  
Boots on his head,  
My son, my son.  
Please God, are you there?*

Based on "Under the Boots" from the Wall Museum by Rana, Bethlehem

"This project opened my eyes to a world of conflict I knew very little about; however, it was not just the bad things we learned about, but the amazing and inspiring stories of the people living in these terrible conditions. I also learned things about myself, as I was immediately drawn to the heart-wrenching and

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47. Viterbo University Scholars' Day, April 22, 2016.

48. Arab Educational Institute, "The Wall Museum," selected stories.

most unbelievable story instead of one that had an obvious sense of hope, subconsciously as a challenge to find that hope."<sup>49</sup>

Arianna Day, April 25, 2016

## II. "Trapped under the Wall" for Soprano and Piano by Claire Olson

*The Wall is a mark upon my heart.  
I cannot move beneath its gaze,  
No, I'll never be alone.  
Red eyes staring, ever glaring, chase me down in dreams.  
My heart opens, can't control it,  
This fear is what keeps me alive.  
The Wall is a shadow 'cross my heart,  
I am one of the innocent.  
Yet, all the blood is on my hands,  
For this wall was built by man.*

Poem inspired "The Wall on My Heart" by Melvina, Bethlehem

"Music connects us all. Even though there are others across the world that are thinking thoughts and feeling emotions that we could never fully understand or feel, music guides us in the right direction towards understanding them better. We can tell their stories through music. Melvina (the woman whose story I took from the Wall) may have passed on from this world, but her thoughts are still hers. The least I can do is make her story heard."<sup>50</sup>

Claire Olson, April 26, 2016

## III. "Baking Bread" by Abigail Hall

*We will find a way.  
We will not let our children starve.  
"Go, tell your leaders: no matter what you do,  
No matter what restrictions you impose on us,  
We will not let our children starve!"  
We will find a way to bake bread.  
What God has created, no one can destroy!*

Jean Zaru, "Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks"

"I learned a great deal about the oppression of Palestinians in Israel from the "Weaving Words and Music" Project. Through composing a song based on a story from the Wall Museum, I was able to create a connection with people

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49. Arianna Day to Mary Ellen Hauptert; April 25, 2016.

50. Claire Olson to Mary Ellen Hauptert; April 26, 2016.

struggling on the other side of the world. The Humanities Symposium performance allowed me help others in the community to learn more about an issue that is not typically talked about. Music has a powerful ability to connect people across the world."<sup>51</sup>

Abigail Hall, April 26, 2016

### Artistic Conclusions

The "Weaving Words and Music" ethics proposal produced outcomes well beyond experiences to support the sophomore composition project. The varied experiences of choral singing, international artistic exchanges, storytelling, and music composition gave me the opportunity to work with teachers and musicians from the Middle East. Each experience brought depth to my classroom teaching, having a profound impact on the sophomore composition project. I learned that an honest story or beautiful choral work can counteract political tension by exposing vulnerability while providing a safe common ground for its participants.

Government mandates have prevented Arabs and Jews from working together (AEI, Example 2), yet Shereen Daniel has Arab and Jewish girls singing side by side in the choral groups at the *Arab – Jewish Community Center* in Jaffa, Israel. Ibrahim was not allowed to participate in the *YACHAD International Choral Exchange*, but continues to spread a message of peace through his passionate and hopeful compositions, many of which have been written to bring relief to the Syrian people. [Soma] teaches young children in a prison-like setting, yet works to improve their outlook through education. Finally, the humanitarian work of Biggs and the *Arab Educational Institute* (AEI) proves that story telling is a powerful tool for helping people on both sides of conflict to better see the perspective of the other. AEI has laid bare the suffering of Palestinian women by placing their stories on display – a non-violent expression of their anguish, hope, courage, and strength.

This research begs the question of whether or not artistic expression can bridge cultural differences. The answer lay in knowing that our universal and unrelenting quest for peace can only be achieved through empathy and mutual agreement. The work of Biggs helped us to understand that a mosaic of stories or abstract expressions of art might be the best way to initiate a conversation about peace and justice. . "Weaving Words and Music" showed how storytelling and music composition helped diverse groups of people gain perspective and respect for one another.

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51. Abigail Hall to Mary Ellen Hauptert; April 26, 2016.

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