

## The project

### Kosovo 2023

Kosovo has a population of less than two million people and has been recognised as an independent country since 2008 following many years of conflict with neighbouring Serbia.

In early 2023, LSF-UK was approached by Geneva-based Julie Tompkins-Wagner who, since 2008, has run the [Kosovo Musical Project](#). Julie has supplied many instruments to various institutions in Kosovo but there are no luthiers to maintain them. Here's a quote from Julie:-

*"The hardest part, over the years, is not just the physical rebuilding (of the infrastructure), but helping to counteract the feeling that Kosovo, after the war and no longer in the headlines, has been forgotten. As much as music organisations need the materials; the students, teachers and people of Kosovo also need hope. Hope that they are not forgotten in today's fractured world; and what better way, than through the language of music which speaks to everyone and makes the spirit soar?"*

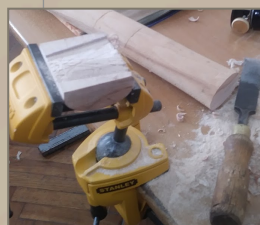
This is what LSF-UK exists for and we were on board straight away.

There are no string instrument repair facilities in Kosovo. Those musicians who have the means, have to send their instruments and bows to Albania or further afield. Julie determined that Ferizaj, 30km south of the capital, Pristina, would be the right place for our two-week training workshop. Julie also found four trainee luthiers for us, three from Ferizaj and one from Pristina, an hour away. All of them are string players and three are teachers.

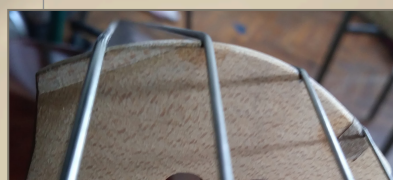


We set up our workshop at the [Art and Music School Cesk Zadeja](#) which was on vacation. Our aim was to teach bow re-hairing and repair to two trainees and instrument set-up and repair to two more. They had the option of swapping at the half-way point but they decided against this, preferring to

share their skills later. LSF-UK's aim on an initial visit is to teach trainees to get instruments and bows into a functional state. The standard can always be improved with practice and with additional visits from LSF-UK, if appropriate. We have an excellent record of success in 20 missions and Kosovo was no exception.



Part of the fun of LSF missions is in doing things differently e.g. using an axe handle found on the market, to make a bridge holder. We brought a hand-powered grinding wheel which is a much safer option than an electric one.



We used part of an old violin bridge to repair a cello bridge that was too low.



## Numbers

*The mission cost approx. £1600. About half of that comprised travel and related expenses. The rest was spent on tools and other equipment which we brought with us or purchased in Ferizaj.*

*We also brought with us, 50kg of donated tools, bow hair, about 60 sets of recycled strings which we sorted before we arrived. This amounts to an additional £1000 in value.*

*In the course of teaching, around 12 violins and two cellos were brought back into service along with 15 bows. Many of these had been obtained by Julie via the Kosovo Music Project.*

*Our accommodation and food were met by the Municipality of Ferizaj.*

*Thanks to all our generous supporters who make this work possible.*

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If you would like to contribute to our work.  
Please contact us.**

**For more info about our work, visit our website.**

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Report written by Robert Cain:  
volunteer luthier and Chair of LSF-UK

As with every LSF mission, there is always so much more that we could have done if we had had the time but two weeks of intensive training is about as much as most people can take (we worked 9-6 for 12 days on the trot). We managed to leave the trainees with knowledge, skills and equipment they didn't have before, and an open door to develop those skills when the time is right.

## What happens next?

We left the tools in the custody of the trainees who are working on a plan to set up a permanent workshop in Ferizaj. They can work at home in the meantime. A building has been identified and all the signs are very positive. LSF-UK will continue to support the trainees in every possible way including with on-line resources, advice via WhatsApp and maybe a subsequent visit when things start moving. We wish them well.



Initially, our focus is to help bring the Ferizaj workshop into being. Gentian, our one male trainee is from the capital, Pristina and we would also like to support him in a second workshop when resources allow.



In many ways, this was the perfect LSF mission. The work ethic of the trainees was impressive and the overwhelming kindness of the trainees and wider community was very humbling. We also managed to bring with us, everything we needed for the two weeks which is quite a task on a new mission. In the end, LSF's work is about connecting with people and empowering individuals.

We came away knowing that we had played a small part in regenerating cultural opportunities in a community recovering from trauma and we look forward to seeing how that develops.



Leona, Sarah, Dore, Rob, Ftese and Gentian.