

Luthiers sans Frontiere

India report on the “Ghandi-Ashram-School” project in 2009

Missions of violinmakers in 2009:

- 28.April-4.Juni: Alexis de Pauw
- 4.Mai-4.Juni: Thibaut Dumas
- 3.Juli-4.August: Regina Stütze
- 3.Juli-2.September: Dorothea Stumpf
- 24.August-5.Oktober: Anke Knautd
- 22.November-17.Dezember: Silke Lichtenberg

Work which was done during their missions in the year 2009:

- Improving the equipment of the workshop (work-benches were built, a sharpening machine was bought, ...)
- The violinmakers did necessary repairing at the violins, violas and cellos of the school, also a double bass was brought back to life!
- The main work in the last year was to introduce the 2 apprentice into the basics of violinmaking

My work during my mission in November 2009:

This time, more than during my stay in the year before, I spend my time with getting a feeling of the situation, getting important contacts and planning the future of how to continue the project. I spend 2 days in Delhi to visit the Austrian Embassy, mainly because they were such a big help by transporting the 5 cellos in their containers to India. In the Austrian Embassy the responsible person of the cultural sector got to know about the project of Ghandi-Ashram-School and I spend a whole day in the embassy... The second important contact I had planned to meet were the 2 companies in Kolkata who produces the ebony parts of bowed stringed instruments – so that the school can start to order things by themselves. Then finally after the search of the last 3 years I found a place where to get spirit, for varnish and polish close to Kalimpong in Siliguri.

And of course I spend a lot of my time with the director of the school to discuss future plans and to get a feeling for what the school and the people there really want. How things shall continue and be

organized. Unfortunately there was not very much time left over for the work in the workshop and the work with Vivien and William the two trainees.

What was the development in the year 2009?

In the last year there was an enormous development of the situation in the workshop of the Gandhi-Ashram-School. Just regarding the equipment of the workshop the changes were huge. Every single one of the violinmakers who came there during the last year brought some missing tools and materials. With the equipment we have at the moment in the workshop and the tools we will still get from Kolkata and from Germany there now really is built up a well organized workshop, that offers more and more better repairing methods.

Vivien and William the 2 trainees are doing a great job. Especially Vivien is doing his work very seriously and give a lot of his free time for the workshop. He is absolutely reliable and trustworthy. With him we found somebody who has the characters to continue the work in the workshop after a sufficient guidance. He is patient and a person who can work alone by himself. William is doing good work and tries to come to the workshop when he has no other work to do. One problem is that he already is 57 years old and so he is not the kind of person we would need for long-term. We will need to find somebody else to include into the training.

Nice to see was also that they both already started to do some repairing by themselves during the time in autumn when no violinmaker was there in Gandhi-Ashram, even though they still need a lot of corrections.

All of the violinmakers who had been there during that last year enthusiastically came back and everybody would like to go again back to Kalimpong. They all have been well received and got many impressions to bring back home. As they all have never been before in India, one of the main challenge for all of them was to cope with the cultural differences, especially with their short stays of 4-8 weeks.

What is happening at the moment in the Gandhi-Ashram-School?

On the 4th of march Regina Stütze, one of the violinmakers who had already been there in july 2009, returned to Kalimpong for a 4 months stay. During her time she is mainly continuing the training of Vivien and William.

Plans for the future:

For the following 2 years the plan is to continue the training. As it was in 2009, it shall continue that violinmakers are going to the Gandhi-Ashram-School in regular terms, like it was in 2009. If the school can take 2 violinmakers at the same time needs individually be found out. After these 2 years we will decide how to continue afterwards.

Another important step will be to find 1 or 2 other interested candidates and include them in the violinmaking training.

And then of course it will be necessary to organize the structures and contacts, that the work in the workshop can continue without the help of regular volunteers.

Solutions need to be found for example– where will they get the materials they need? which of the materials are possible to get in India? Which companies in India can be of help?

Questions about the organization need to be answered together with the headmaster of the school. Who shall pay for repairing of their instruments – if these are not instruments of the school?

Also there was a big interest of some companies in Kolkata and of the cultural section of the Austrian Embassy to include people from other places into the training...

Music in the Darjeeling District:

There seems to be a big interest of several people to increase the number of children who play an instrument and to increase the level of teaching music. But from the interest to a change there might be still a very long way...

Helpful new contacts and ideas for the future:

Ideas:

- Building contacts to other music project in India and connecting the existing efforts for classical music to learn from each other
- The Austrian Embassy seems to be interested in organizing a music teachers training in India. Maybe some of the Ghandi-Ashram-Students could be included and after that training one or the other would maybe come back and help to increase the number of music teachers at the school.
- Contacts to other social music projects worldwide, for example Paraguay?

Contacts:

- Austrian Embassy in Delhi: They already have been a great help by transporting 5 cellos for the Ghandi –Ashram –School to India in one of their containers – just for free!!!
- World Business Overseas in Kolkata: it's a company, which produces all ebony parts of bow stringed instruments
- N.N. Mondal & Sons: the oldest violinmaking workshop of India – they gave me a list of their prices as an orientation and they could give me some helpful advises where to get some pigments and spirit
- Siliguri: hardware shop – for important tools and materials. Spirit is there available!
- Firma Thomastik-Infeld, Wien: gave a big donation of violinstrings and would be interested in supporting
- Firma Dick, Metten: since the beginning of my work in India, they regularly supported the project with donations of tools and materials.

- Firma Holfter, Aachen: gave a very spontaneous donation of some small things like Micromash, Super Nicko,...
- Susanne Gebhardt, violinmaker in Hechingen, Germany: donated a box of leftover tools from a workshop closure
- Austrian Airlines, who would have been that helpful by transporting 5 cellos for free!!! If there wouldn't have been the problem with the fees...

Equipments needed in the workshop and the Ghandi-Ashram-School for the future:

- Small cellos (1/8, ¼) and 4/4 cello
- Small and normal sized violas
- Viola and cello bows
- Materials as bridges, soundposts, bow hairs

Repairing pricelist of a violinmaking workshop in Kolkata:

60 – 65 Rps ~ 1 €

New fingerboard	300,- Rps
New Indian bridge	100,-Rps
New European bridge	250,-Rps
New (Indian) pegs	100,-Rps
Strings	100,-Rps
Bow rehairing	300,-Rps
All round check up	1500,-Rps
New Indian violin	2000 – 16000,-Rps

New German bow

800 - 7000,- Rps