

Teen Displays a Heart for Godly Arts

God turned Malachi's* life around when he survived an accident that could have killed him. The commitment that he had made as an American teenager to follow Christ suddenly became serious; so did using his musical gifting for God.

During a trip to Montenegro, Malachi heard about a one-year Bible school in Albania and decided he should attend. In 2007, he was invited to visit neighboring Kosovo.

"God began to bond my heart with the people here," Malachi said. "When Kosovo declared independence in 2008, I saw the unveiling of the 'Newborn' monument in the capital, Pristina. That moment God gave me a vision to facilitate a spiritual new birth in the new republic as well. Jesus told His followers to be one so that people would know they came from the Father. I felt the church in Kosovo needed to work together in unity.

"Kosovo is in a time of transition. "Young people make up the majority of the population, and they are going to change, but in what way? The Western influence is very heavy here."

Convinced that music and the rest of the arts could be a powerful influence for the kingdom of God, Malachi began by basing himself with a church in the southwest and inviting artists to be part of events he arranged. These occasions grew to include outside groups and performers that eventually partnered with churches in every city.

In 2009, Malachi joined OM, feeling the ministry could flourish more under the umbrella of OM Arts. He also worked with TACO, Creative Arts Europe and other groups.

"Because Kosovo has a Muslim majority, we generally promote our events as cultural rather than spiritual," Malachi said.

“Some cities are more difficult than others, but music and art can often go where other things can’t. We have a good relationship with the national church network, and we’ve come a long way in getting churches to help us get permission for our events.

The No. 1 challenge is getting them to follow up on contacts we make. Some are good about it, but we’ve given names to others and they haven’t followed up. So now we are trying to develop a more efficient street team to help with this aspect.”

Malachi, who plays drums and hammer dulcimer himself, admits it’s been an uphill battle these first years of laying the framework and getting people on board. But many concerts have resulted in at least some people starting to attend local churches. And, several performances have led to people receiving Christ into their lives.

“I love to incorporate all the arts!” he said, mentioning his hope of seeing a film made about Kosovo. “We’ve even had a Christian unicyclist here. God’s creation declares who He is, and He also uses individuals to display His invisible attributes.

“Back in Exodus, the Bible mentions a man named Bezalel who was gifted to create artistic works in the temple. I believe with all of my heart that God is raising up a Bezalel generation with gifts in the arts to construct a spiritual temple for God. Peter talks about it in 1 Peter 2:5, and literally revolutionizes nations. I feel deeply passionate about every country having an arts-based ministry.”

Malachi’s immediate goal is to establish a Christian arts and performance centre where Kosovar young people can be exposed to truth in a creative way. Training also will be offered in every art form.

He expects to be raising funds for the centre during the next

year and will hopefully make the place a reality, at least in a small way, in the summer of 2013. An organization named Global Impact is contributing a load of music instruments and gear next year, including a van for tours. They also will be giving humanitarian goods to distribute.

Although OM Arts is yet to have housing in Kosovo, it very much exists in a different format. Over the last two summers it has put on over 50 shows during seven tours, giving more than 20,000 people the opportunity to hear the gospel in every city in Kosovo as well as many small towns and villages. They also have just finished leading their first arts training camp in Kosovo.

“We’d like to use mainly nationals in the first Kosovo-based band, then get other bands going,” Malachi said. “We already have most of the musicians we need; we’re just looking for a singer. We also want to encourage and inspire Kosovar songwriters. My teammate, Vincent,* is planned to do a first recording of new songs in September.

“This ministry is a good option for people who want to use their gifts for God in a powerful way. Vincent has a degree in computers and information technology and initially looked into OM’s IT opportunities, only casually mentioning his interest in playing the guitar. Music is my passion. But, I’d given up any idea of using it full time.

Vincent started talking with Malachi on Skype, and ended up joining him in Kosovo last January.

The two men hope that Christians in other countries will ask God to use the arts in Kosovo to the extent He desires.

“Pray that we can harness the power of that medium while it is needed and wanted,” Malachi said. “Pray that He will blind the eyes of radicals who would want to harm us or what we are doing—and that I will keep His love for people, staying focused on Him and not on the problems. So much has happened

already/ I know God is going to take it the rest of the way!"

*Name changed

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