

Open Piano for Refugees

Association for the promotion of
public interaction, integration and charity



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1. Open Piano for Refugees – What? How? Who? Where? When?

What?

„Open Piano for Refugees“ is an association for the promotion of public interaction, integration & charity. In the pursuit to fulfill this goal we place freely accessible pianos in the public space: “Everyone is welcome to play. Everyone is welcome to listen.” In this process, as well as through concerts of (partly refugee) music artists, we generate donations. These donations serve for the preservation and the expansion of our initiative, the support of external music projects and for setting up and persevering our “Piano School for Refugees”.

How?

Through cooperation with piano stores on the respective locations the pianos are provided free of charge. We coordinate permissions, transport of the pianos, buildup & teardown of the location (partially with seating possibilities), the personal attendance as well as the organization of concerts or flash mobs. Moreover, we contact local refugee accommodations and use our existing network with organizations in the field in order to motivate refugees to pass by, play and linger around. During the night, in case of missing store opportunities we safely cover the pianos in a waterproofed and temperature-isolating manner.

Where?

We generally prefer pedestrian areas and famous cultural squares such as the “Museumsquartier” in Vienna, but switch to shopping malls during the winter season. Particular interest is given to cultural festivals (e.g. the „Bregenzer Festspiele“), as experience has shown an increased interest and interaction of pedestrians as well as increased donations. Most important to us though is a cozy atmosphere with calm surrounding and seating possibilities in the best case. Furthermore, we depend on good weather, a bit of shadow on outdoor locations during spring and summer. (For past locations see „Results“)

Who?

We are outgoing, open-minded and motivated people, united through having pleasure in the course of social engagement and music. Besides the two founders who act as main promoters, we count on the help of 6-7 friends from Afghanistan, Austria, Germany and Nigeria.

When?

We initiated the project intensely in April 2016. In average, our open pianos stand freely accessible for four days for all pedestrians. Occasionally a grand piano is set up for a single evening for an open-piano-session with upcoming concert of a famous artist.

2. Goals, Results and Funding of the Initiative

Goals of our Initiative

We like to describe our open pianos as creative platforms of interaction and integration, where people connect through music while language and words become redundant. We aim to remove fear of contact and build up mutual understanding. We revive public space artfully and promote the solidarity in society as well as the societal partaking of minorities. Through piano concerts of refugee music artists, we highlight their potentials and serve for a positive presence of refugees in public. Moreover, we involve refugees in our project actively in the long run in attendance & organization of our locations. Additionally we provide them with and arrange partly paid concert possibilities. Our „Piano School for Refugees“ teaches piano, promotes and builds up talents, lets refugees believe in their potentials and offers permanent, sustainable opportunities of integration.

Results of our Initiative

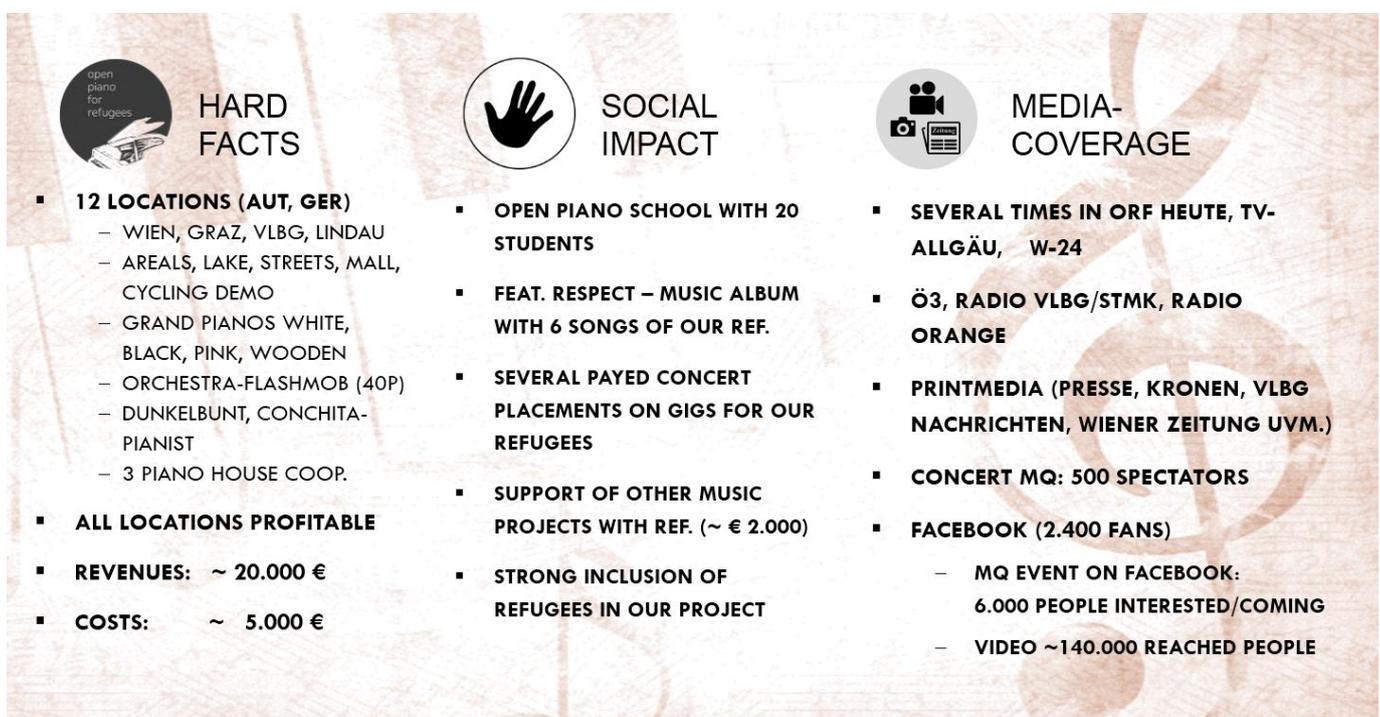


Abb. 1 – Ergebnisse unserer Initiative

Funding of our Initiative:

Our initial investment for posters & stand, flyers and donation box amounted to EUR 150. Since then, our revenues from donations have always outweighed costs by far. All of our 12 locations were profitable and left us with revenues of approximately EUR 20,000 in total. Most of all for the transport of pianos, the attendance, as well as poster and flyer we had total costs of about EUR 3,000. What is more, we supported the exemplary refugee music project “Building Bridges” with EUR 2.000. In due time we calculate with further expenses of around EUR 500 Euro for our “Piano School for Refugees”. As a result approximately EUR 14,500 remain for our further plans.

3. Project analysis by means of the criteria

Innovation in the project idea - novelty

Our project started exactly in the phase of the refugee streams where the vibe about refugees in Austria in society and media seemed to have switched from a positive, welcoming culture to a fearful attitude of rejection. Exactly in this phase, we started our efforts to take the modern idea of open pianos and that uses music to build bridges, and adapt its concept in a way that focuses on the positive presence of the potentials of refugees.

Innovation in the contact with the target group

With the „Piano School of Refugees“ we aim to close the cycle, as our students are also able to play on our open pianos, can attend them and earn some pocket money, or even give piano lessons themselves in the future. The school provides hope and encourages refugees even in tough times to believe in themselves and their potentials. Already, three refugees from Afghanistan and Nigeria are actively involved and many more in steady contact with us that have benefited from the project through concerts, songs on a music album, financially and on an integrative and personal level. We are proud being able to say that we have built new friendships.

Innovation in the implementation - Impact

Others shall evaluate, if it was brave, but in overcoming challenges („Let it be, I ensure you, you will not be able to do that in Vienna“) with permission, we tried to stay bold. Our projects work on two levels of impact: On the direct level we build locations of active interaction and integration, where Open Pianos with their harmonic sounds manage to create oases of smiles and beautiful gestures. This makes a calming experience for every pedestrian and brings together people from all walks of life that pass a good time together and build up spots of lived integration (see pictures). On the second level of impact we generate donations which are reinvested in other refugee music projects and our „Piano school for Refugees“.

Innovation to the effect on the environment – role model

In the beginning, only the close cooperation with the „Klaviergalerie“, „Piano Schick“ und the „Klavierhaus Fiedler & Söhne“ made our open pianos possible. Equally as a connection to the leading authorities of the 7th district who helped us getting our first permission. Furthermore, the „Musischee Zentrum Wien“ has to be mentioned housing our Piano School for Refugees. On top of that a cooperation with Casio allowed us to ensure that all three accommodations of our refugees are provided with opportunities to play the piano (E-pianos/ pianos).

We adapt regionally to our locations and depending on the respective location we are in contact with important institutions for us such as the Museumquartier in Vienna, or the Kulturamt and the Festspiele in Bregenz. On all locations we are in contact with refugee accommodations and/or respective organizations. Last but not least we are happy to be of increased interest for regional and national media. (ORF Bundesland heute, W-24, TV-Allgäu, Ö3, die Presse, Radio Bundesland, Wiener Zeitung, Kronen Zeitung, Radio Orange, Schwäbische Zeitung, Vorarlberger Nachrichten, and many more.).