Global Campus of Human Rights

SOUNDS OF JUSTICE PODCAST

Episode 8

Sounding Justice: Practicing human rights through music

BRUCE ADOLPHE, MAI KHÔI and KELLY HALL-TOMPKINS

in conversation with IGNACIO SAIZ

Ignacio Saiz: Welcome to Sounds of Justice, the podcast on music and human rights brought to you by the Global Campus of Human Rights. I'm Ignacio Saiz, and in this final episode of the series, we're exploring the role musicians can play in advancing human rights. And they do so in more ways than we might think.

[MUSIC: Bobi Wine, Freedom]

Some musicians, like Victor Jara in Chile or Uganda's Bobi Wine, are prominent dissidents who face repression themselves. Others use music to bear witness to injustice or to make change at the community level. And as Julian Fifer reminded us in the first episode, many musicians model human rights values in the way they rehearse, collaborate, and perform together in choirs, orchestras, or bands.

In this episode, we'll meet three musicians whose work embodies different ways of sounding justice. Together, they invite us to think more broadly about what it means to practice human rights through music.

My first guest is Bruce Adolphe, the internationally renowned U.S. composer, author, and educator, whose work has long engaged with questions of human rights. His recent work Thakla is a moving response to the death of countless children in Gaza. As we'll hear, his work spans subjects from the Holocaust to the human cost of contemporary conflicts. Bruce, welcome to Sounds of Justice.

Bruce Adolphe: It's good to be here, thank you, Ignacio.

Ignacio Saiz: Bruce, what experiences or influences in your life first led you to think of music as a way of engaging with questions of human rights?

Bruce Adolphe: Well, when I was a child during the '60s, human rights was a huge part of growing up in America. And as I was deciding to become a musician and eventually a composer, I was also living through one of the most difficult times for human rights in

America, and I saw the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and all of the Black Panther movement. I saw Leonard Bernstein's involvement in that, and I think it was just a natural thing for me to take what I grew up with and the things that mattered to me as I became a musician and put them together.

Ignacio Saiz: Was there a particular work of yours where engaging with human rights became a more conscious part of your composition or has this been a kind of gradual evolution in your work?

Bruce Adolphe: Well, I think the first time I wrote something of significance that dealt with human rights was an opera that I wrote in 1982 about Solomon Mikhoels, who was a famous Yiddish actor killed under Stalin's orders. It necessarily brought me into issues of human rights from the story itself and how to portray musically the things that were happening in the opera, which was the story of a very difficult time in the Soviet Union.

Ignacio Saiz: A lot of human rights advocacy depends on the spoken or written word. It depends on testimony, on argument. Yet much of your work addresses human rights in purely musical terms. How does wordless or instrumental music express something as specific as injustice?

Bruce Adolphe: Well, I think that music is more specific than words in certain ways. It goes deeper. It goes to the heart, to the core of how we feel about what we think about. If we're concerned with injustice, it's possible for music to present conflict, to present a feeling of violence, of sorrow, of outrage. If the architecture of the piece brings those things into conflict with each other, but also in an order, in a pattern that we recognize, we can feel what it's about. You can pit a soloist against an ensemble, and you feel that either the soloist is a leader or a victim. You can make an instrument, a soloist, into a victim of abuse by how the other instruments treat that instrument. Also, music takes the both the emotion and the speed and the energy of action and portrays it in a way that's recognizable more deeply than just words.

I always feel that music speaks past language, so that people of different opinions and different worlds and different even worldviews can relate often to the same music. And it lasts longer too, the music holds on to the root, which is the emotional impact and the sense of despair or hope that we have - that stays.

Ignacio Saiz: I know you yourself have been moved by many situations, including the intolerable human suffering that we've been seeing in Gaza. And your most recent work, Thakla, I understand, premiered in Minneapolis recently. Can you tell us what prompted you to write this piece and how you went about crafting a musical response to what we're witnessing?

Bruce Adolphe: It was really a private journal of my outrage and sadness, and so I had music that was definitely sorrow, and music that was definitely grief. And I found the Arabic word 'Thakla', which means a parent's grief over the death of a child. And that seemed like exactly what I was writing.

It starts with a gesture in the cellos, and then a melody unfolds in the violins, which feels like rocking, and so I tried to capture the sense in the beginning of a few melodic arcs of sadness and a few gestures of grief.

[MUSIC: Bruce Adolphe, Thakla]

Bruce Adolphe: This is a kind of emptiness in the harmony, and it becomes more filled in, and then it becomes filled in even more until it's tense. And because texture is one of the composer's tools with harmony, there's texture and density. And you can have a very open quality, which may feel empty and numb, and you, as you fill it in, it can become richer and darker and then almost unbearable. And I try to use that spectrum in the course of the piece.

I divide the ensemble into two sections, high and low, basically, and the high wailing of the four violins are the humans suffering and the two violas and two cellos, the violence there is obviously the bombs dropping and other weapons.

[MUSIC: Bruce Adolphe, Thakla]

Bruce Adolphe: Yes, it's music and there are no words, but things such as wailing and crying, and the violence has a physical reality that can be manifested in sound. And it's like it's imitating those things, only it's trying to go inside.

The third section is the only place in the piece where there is suddenly a recurring rhythmic pattern that evokes the sense of rocking back and forth, the way people all over the world in different cultures do when they're grieving. I wanted to bring in a sense of that.

[MUSIC: Bruce Adolphe, Thakla]

Ignacio Saiz: I'm curious to know how people have reacted to hearing the piece, particularly people who may be more, even more directly affected.

Bruce Adolphe: There were a lot of people who came up to me afterwards. One man said, 'I want to thank you for writing that. I speak to you as a musician and as a Jew', because, you know, in the US right now, the right wing is trying to convince people that to criticize Israel - even the bombing of Gaza and Iran or whatever - is somehow antisemitic. And this man was referring to the same thing. He said: 'You know, this is horrible, what's happening', and the music helps say that and it helps you confront the pain.

Ignacio Saiz: This brings me to another piece of yours that I really wanted to discuss, which is, 'I will not remain silent'.

Bruce Adolphe: The title is a quote of Joachim Prinz. Joachim Prinz was a rabbi who was in Berlin during the Nazi period and managed to get out and come to the United States, and he was very outspoken against the Nazis. When he was in the US, he became involved with Martin Luther King's movement. And so, I structured the piece in two movements. The first

movement is about Nazi Germany, and the second movement is about the American civil rights movement of the 1960's. Joachim Prinz is represented throughout the concerto by the violin. The violin has a kind of Jewish cantorial quality in it most of the time. The violin is speaking it's kind of truth to power, which again a concerto is perfect for that, the soloist, the solo voice against the masses.

[MUSIC: Bruce Adolphe, I Will Not Remain Silent]

Bruce Adolphe: Now, for example, at the end of the first movement, the violin as Joachim Prinz makes a kind of impassioned speech about human rights, the sound of the orchestra tries basically to crush the voice of the violin. And there are 21 unpredictable orchestral slams against the violin. And by unpredictable I mean there's no rhythmic pattern you can discern.

[MUSIC: Bruce Adolphe, I Will Not Remain Silent]

Bruce Adolphe: It's deliberately constructed to be unpredictable and therefore more violent. But the violin remains. So, the voice of the violin, the voice of Joachim Prinz, the voice of truth, the voice of the individual, is sustained through the violence of the orchestra.

Ignacio Saiz: So, Bruce, I understand you're now working on a war requiem. What prompted you to write it?

Bruce Adolphe: Well, I don't remember which war that is now raging started me on this. I don't expect that the piece will solve war. But it reminds people of who they are, and that we're human, and that we have a life to live that's brief, and that there are children involved. And in this case, there is a text. A poet friend of mine, Parini Sundaralingam, who grew up partly during the Sri Lankan civil war, she wrote basically all of the text except for the last poem, which is by Langston Hughes. And the text adds a layer of immediacy and of contemporary context, but the music goes deeper. And this piece has chorus, chamber orchestra, a soprano soloist and a violin soloist, and I think it's important in the context of what we're talking about to mention that the violin soloist is there instead of another voice, because I wanted the wordless aspect to be there. So, the two soloists, one soprano has words and the violin does not, and the violin and soprano are equally present. And the violin will take a passionate or outraged passage that's in the voice of the soprano with words and take it much further, you know, the kind of range and the passion that can have a string instrument in its complete virtuosic state, something unsingable, basically. And so, there's a lot of the message stays unvoiced and without words, even though I am very pleased with this beautiful text by Parini.

Ignacio Saiz: Bruce, as you know, one of the aims of this podcast is to bring the worlds of music and the world of human rights into closer dialogue with each other. As someone whose work bridges both of those worlds, what do you think that deepening that dialogue might make possible?

Bruce Adolphe: Well, I just recently attempted that myself by producing a concert for an organization in the U.S. called 'We Are Casa', and they are an immigrant rights organization.

So, I think that's at least one thing, which is to bring the artists together to perform for an organization that we believe in and that is doing something for human rights.

I do three or four family concerts at Lincoln Center every year. Many of them are about music education. Some of them have messages of human rights. There's a piece called "The Purple Palace" that I wrote for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, which also has a text by Louise Gikow, I mean it's human rights in the sense that the colour purple takes over the world, and we have to try to get all the colours back into the land of Chromatica. And the instruments in the orchestra do also represent colours just the way they really do in terms of sound. So, it's fun, it's music educational, but it also delivers a very serious message about equality and diversity. So, these stories, and there are quite a few, they bring children to think about morality through a fun, entertaining context, but also with a message that will hold and last with them over time because they hear it through music.

Ignacio Saiz: Finally, Bruce, Lei Liang is quoted in the chapter that you wrote for the *Routledge Companion* as saying that 'composers can create a world of sounds to resist the violence of injustice', which I think is a beautiful way of framing the power of composers to bring about change.

Bruce Adolphe: You know, it's important to say that music is not going to stop war, it's not going to end violence. But music reminds people of their humanity, their frailty, and it helps people identify with each other and with people that they might be blocking off or not even want to think about. And the power of music to unite people and to draw them into the deepest, most important part of being human: the sensitivity, the sense of frailty, of life and death, that we're all in this together, it's very important.

The people who go to hear music that speaks about human rights, that draws them into their humanity, this is a powerful force in society. And of course, in the right circumstances, with people listening, if it affects them, they can go out and they can change the world.

Ignacio Saiz: Thank you, Bruce, for the powerful and the richly chromatic work that you do at these intersections of music and human rights, and for sharing your work with us here on Sounds of Justice.

Bruce Adolphe: Thank you, Ignacio.

[MUSIC: Mai Khôi, Innocent Deer]

Ignacio Saiz: Vietnamese artist Mai Khôi rose to fame in 2010 after winning Album of the Year on Vietnamese TV. But in the years that followed, her increasing activism for human rights made her a target of repression in the one-party state, and she now lives in exile in the US.

[MUSIC: Mai Khôi, Innocent Deer]

Ignacio Saiz: Her latest album is called Five Years in Exile, and the track we just heard is called ‘Innocent Deer’. As The Economist magazine once said of her: 'If music alone could break chains, this would be the music to do it'. Mai Khôi, welcome to Sounds of Justice.

Mai Khôi: Thank you for having me.

Ignacio Saiz: Those opening lines, I looked at the translation: ‘People are falling into the pit of hatred, the deer are dumbfounded at the sad news’. What's the song about? And what led you to write it?

Mai Khôi: ‘Innocent Deer’ tells the heartbreaking story about the three Vietnamese men on death row. In jail these three prisoners are not allowed to say they are innocent, so they made deer sculptures from plastic bags that they collected in the prison and secretly added letters A, O, N on each sculpture and sent them out like gifts to their families. We found the message when we put the dear sculptures standing next to each other, because all O, A, N is OAN, it means innocent.

I wrote the song in that week when I heard that Lê Văn Mạnh will be executed. I felt the deep pain inside me and the hopelessness, and I wrote the lyrics on the perspective of the parents who have [known that] their sons will be killed soon. When I record this song, I really feel that pain. I can't explain by word, just only music can express that emotion. The video is telling the story by helping these parents to appeal justice for their son.

Ignacio Saiz: You talked about not being able to express in words, but in music the sadness and the anger that you felt. The piece is... it’s incredible because it moves from what we just heard, that very sad, very spare piano and voice, and then it just erupts.

[MUSIC: Mai Khôi, Innocent Deer]

Ignacio Saiz: To me that sounds like rage. What did you want listeners to feel, the journey in this song?

Mai Khôi: First, I hope that this music and this video could find empathy from the new President who could pardon the other two prisoners, Ho Yi Hai and Wen Bang Chun. The second, I want the listeners feel the pain, suffocation, feel the frustration for the parents and for the innocent prisoners.

Ignacio Saiz: The second piece that we just played comes after you sing, in Vietnamese, of course: ‘Why does anyone have the right to take someone's life? Who gave them the power to kill my child?’

Mai Khôi: Through this music video, I wish to call for abolition of the death penalty in Vietnam.

Ignacio Saiz: What's happened since you released the song? Has it had any positive impact in Vietnam?

Mai Khôi: When the video released, more and more people paid attention about the case. Even though the Vietnamese government limit the visibility of my post on social media, this video still got 1.7 million views in 24 hours. So, we can see the power of music, right?

But this morning one of my friends said because he shared this video, the police call him to the police station and investigate him. When people share videos or post on social media, the police know, and for one post, they could get fined like 70 million down, which is, which is $3,000 dollars...

Ignacio Saiz: You were an incredibly successful, a commercially successful artist in Vietnam. You were invited to sing at official events; you were big in the pop charts. What led you to engage with social and political issues?

Mai Khôi: Working under the censorship system in Vietnam was not easy for me. There was one time I will never forget when I was singing in a dress rehearsal for five censors, one of them suddenly stood up and shouted at me: 'Stop, get changed, or I will ban you from singing forever'. That moment made me turn a dissident artist. I don't want to stand the censorship system anymore.

My lyrics were censored many times before that. From that moment, I stopped asking for permission from the government and I started to hang out with dissident artists. The more I hang out with them, the more I found the community and the support from the dissident artists. And we created an election campaign, that was when I nominated myself for the National Assembly election as an independent candidate. I still had a lot of followers, so I could use my fame and my music to raise awareness for people about their rights. I joined some protests, and I witnessed the cruelty of the police in the protest, so all kind of these things make me want to engage in activism.

Ignacio Saiz: You were quoted as saying 'one of my biggest questions in life is whether I'm an activist or an artist'. How do you think about that question now?

Mai Khôi: I'm still thinking about that question. I think first I am an artist; I had to become an activist to protect my right to be an artist. I was not trained to become an activist at all. We all should be activists, even though you are a bad activist, like me, but at least you do something to keep your rights.

Ignacio Saiz: Why do you call yourself a bad activist? You even have a show, your autobiographical show is called 'Bad Activist'.

Mai Khôi: Yeah, I think I am a bad activist, because I was not trained to be a professional activist. I just do whatever I can to help for the movement. At the beginning, some activists doubt about me being an activist because they think I was not having enough skill. But other artists also think I should just focus on making music. Some people think social art is not having good quality so they will ignore my music right away.

Ignacio Saiz: By classifying you as a social artist they're not seeing the full artist that you are?

Mai Khôi: Yes.

Ignacio Saiz: I want to listen to another piece from ‘Five Years in Exile’, and this very powerful song is called ‘Burn’.

Mai Khôi: The song ‘Burn’ is about climate change, the ignorance from people about climate change and about the stories of four climate activists who were thrown in jail.

[MUSIC: Mai Khoi, Burn]

Mai Khôi: I like this song a lot. When I performed this song live, people really feel the burn, feel the heat.

Ignacio Saiz: You even gave it a subtitle: ‘Burn: Everyone knows, yet everyone acts as if they don't know’. You're really calling out people's wilful ignoring of climate change. The interplay between the music and the words, it's very jazzy and loungey, and then you come in, and it's kind of like a rabid rap...

[MUSIC: Mai Khoi, Burn]

Mai Khôi: Yes, so in this song, my bandmates are playing a role of ignorant people, they play jazzy, playful melodies.

[MUSIC: Mai Khoi, Burn]

Mai Khôi: I am making the sound of the people who doesn't have enough oxygen to breathe.

[MUSIC: Mai Khoi, Burn]

Mai Khôi: So, I make that sound and try to warning my bandmates, like ‘pay attention, this is the end of the world, you cannot be ignorant like that', but they still play forward.

Ignacio Saiz: I have to say, your musical style is just totally unclassifiable.

Mai Khôi: The word I want to use for our music is anti-genre.

Ignacio Saiz: Mai Khoi, what are you working on now?

Mai Khôi: I'm working on an opera cooking show.

Ignacio Saiz: Wow, wow.

Mai Khôi: Yes. In this project, I will cook and sing at the same time. The show will be about immigrant’s issues. This is a big issue here in the US right now.

The opera cooking show is called ‘Rau Muong/The immigrant vegetable’. In English, people call it water spinach. This vegetable is banned from growing in some states in the US. Most of the states, they classify this vegetable as noxious.

Ignacio Saiz: I can see where you're going with this. It's a very powerful metaphor, right?

Mai Khôi: Yes, but we are eating this vegetable, rau muong, every day. When I was growing up, all Vietnamese eating it with no problem, but here the US call us noxious.

Ignacio Saiz: Mai Khôi, I hope you never resolve the question of whether you're an activist or an artist, because it's obvious to the rest of the world that you're both and we wish you more power to your work.

Mai Khôi: Thank you very much.

Ignacio Saiz: Welcome back to Sounds of Justice. I'm Ignacio Saiz, and in this episode we've been exploring the many ways in which musicians have used their voice, their craft, their artistry to advance human rights, whether directly confronting state repression, as we heard with Mai Khôi, or bearing witness to injustice, as we heard with Bruce Adolphe. But musicians are also making change at the community level in ways that may be less high profile but are no less transformative.

[MUSIC: Wynton Marsalis, Rhapsody: first movement of violin concerto in D major]

My next guest is Kelly Hall-Tompkins, the internationally acclaimed violinist who has performed in concert halls around the world, and whom *The New York Times* has described as ‘the versatile violinist who makes music come alive’. She's also the founder and executive director of ‘Music Kitchen: Food for the Soul’, a pioneering initiative, which for more than 20 years has brought top-level concert performances to homeless shelters, using music to recognize and to affirm the dignity of people society too often relegates to the margins. Kelly, welcome to Sounds of Justice.

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: Thank you so much. It's great to be here with you.

Ignacio Saiz: Kelly, the piece we heard, which is Wynton Marsalis's violin concerto, you have an intimate connection to that work, which I understand you've played more than 25 times in concert halls around the world. What significance does it have in your repertoire, and in your life?

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: The first time I heard that piece, when it was proposed to me to play, it strikes this chord of passion, of love, of familiarity, and yet of exploration at the same time. I don't think that I would have been ready earlier in my life to play this particular piece, because it encompasses so large an array of voices from the American and African American diaspora.

So, this piece is something that demonstrates the really prodigious knowledge of the composer, Wynton Marsalis, for the classical canon, while also giving voice to the evolution, the natural evolution of that canon here in the Americas, where the African American voice

really informed and was the foundation of every kind of music that we have here. It's just such a joy to play.

Ignacio Saiz: At what point did you begin to feel that your work as a musician needed to engage with the injustices that you see and saw in the world around you?

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: I'm a compassionate person that has always wanted to help. When I was a teenager, I wanted to try to develop, a food program whereby you could go to restaurants where, at the end of the day, just simply because the food didn't get served, it would get thrown out, that you could save this food and make it available to people who really needed it. And then, as I'm a young person thinking about a career in music, and I'm the first person in my family to do such a thing on a professional level, I had this unflappable knowing that it would be something that I would do. I was naive enough to think that that musicians couldn't contribute to the world in a substantive way. What I really evolved to realize to create 'Music Kitchen for the Soul', that there's nothing further from the truth, it was such a joyful discovery for me to realize I can contribute to the world, and I can give back to my community and to society. And also, quite honestly, inspired by the example of my grandmother, who her entire life was such a humanitarian. Until her 86th birthday, I believe it was, she and a group of church friends would serve the homeless, they would cook big piles of breakfast food and they would go to the local park and serve the homeless. So, I think it's just in my, my bones. But when you decide in life to be a musician, you're not entirely sure that there's anything substantive that you can create, and of course, I experienced an entire paradigm shift in realizing what the true power of music is, and that we absolutely are really at the center of helping humanity find its direction.

Ignacio Saiz: Tell us about what happened in those first performances where you brought these, you know, top-level musicians to perform in homeless shelters. What happens when shelter clients encounter those performances?

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: The first performance that gave me the idea was by happenstance in a way. I was looking for a place to run through some solo music that I was about to play. I was a volunteer at my church's shelter, and I just, in a pinch, I ended up playing for the people of the shelter. Before I went there, I felt terribly guilty about it, because I thought: 'oh, who can stand to hear a violin concerto with no accompaniment? Only other musicians'. And their reaction was so profound. I had never met these people before, and yet we had this bond between us through the music. They asked me if I would come back the very next night, and I said, 'Well, I leave in a few days for my concert, so I would be playing the same music'. They said, 'We don't care, we want to hear it again'. And so I came back the next night, and I played the very same music, and the bond between us deepened.

And so I had this idea, I obviously have to create a program, I have to do this properly, not have solo music, but chamber music, the music of community, the music, of grand expression in a small package, and invite, you know, my great colleagues. And the very first concert that we played in 2005, the volunteer cooks for that day hadn't shown up, and we came prepared to play Brahms quartets, and we found out that there was no food available, and we quickly put our instruments aside and improvised a meal from the ingredients in the kitchen and then turned to playing Brahms quartets. And people absolutely loved it, that first official concert of 'Music Kitchen Food for the Soul'. In that one concert, the kitchen part of it really came to full fruition. But really we are an organization that offers top-level classical

musicians. And the responses since then have just been really mind blowing and inspiring, and they are the fuel that keep me moving forward with it.

Ignacio Saiz: And it's been going for more than 21 years.

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: 21 years. We've played 145 concerts, engaged over 200 top artists, and reached an estimated 30,000 shelter clients, mainly in New York, but some cities across the country, including Los Angeles, and one in Paris, France.

Ignacio Saiz: Can you say a little more about how shelter clients react to the music?

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: The reactions run the gamut, it's really quite amazing. I remember one guy, when I brought in a Renaissance vocal ensemble, he first described it as millionaire music, as if he couldn't relate to it, but by the middle of the performance he went up to join them. There's one young woman she said, 'I am forever changed because you came here today'.

We have others who say even in the darkest moments these strings bring hope back in. But they sometimes say just really profound things about the actual music, even if they have zero experience with classical music, it seems to touch them, and the thing that shocks all of us musicians is that they find a verbal expression that gets to the heart of the experience of the music, sometimes so far beyond traditional ticket buying audiences. The music approaches just the core of their souls and they speak from that place.

Ignacio Saiz: And this leads us to 'Forgotten Voices'. Can you tell us how you turned those reflections into a song cycle?

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: So, I fortunately had the presence of mind from the very first concert to offer the listeners these coloured note cards and invite them to share their impressions of the experience, something about how the music makes you feel. And therefore 15 years into things, I thought, what do I want to do to celebrate our 15th anniversary? And we have a body of work, this incredible and unusual and rare body of free form human expression, like an archival wailing wall of human experience. And I thought, in our field of classical music, we typically venerate poets and famous writers to commit their words to music. I think now is the time to do something groundbreaking and invite top level composers to choose among this enormous feedback and turn it into a song cycle, composite song cycle. I had the idea that I wanted to have one composer for every year that we were celebrating, so 15 composers, 15 songs.

Because these are people who find themselves last in society's estimations and because their life force had inspired this experience, I resolved right away to premiere the songs one per month in the shelters first, and once heard in the shelter community, then we could start to let the public in on it. It was another way to give dignity and voice and elevation to this unseen community. I really wanted to bring the piece together, the grand work together in in a public hearing, world premiere of the work, and I am forever grateful to Carnegie Hall, through the chaos and uncertainty of a global pandemic, they kept their commitment to 'Forgotten Voices', and we had a wonderful sold-out world premiere of 'Forgotten Voices' in March of 2022.

Ignacio Saiz: Let's listen to one of the songs from the song cycle. I think this is song number nine, and it's called Badass, and the composer, I believe, is Kevin Puts, and I believe you're also playing in this recording, is that right?

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: Yes. On all the songs.

[MUSIC: Kevin Puts, Badass from 'Forgotten Voices']

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: It really shows the breadth of feelings that can come through the experience of these concerts, and that is a funny one.

Ignacio Saiz: It's profound and funny at the same time. Let's listen again to the kind of culminating piece of the song cycle and it's called 'Music is Love'.

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: It started with the young woman whose comments it's based on. The soaring and poetic yet prose language it already had this incredibly potent energy, so I was really thrilled when composer Paul Moravec, chose those words to set to music. The music that he wrote is so valedictory, so affirming, in its energetic resonance, and so I asked Paul if he would be so kind as to reorchestrate it for now the 10 artists involved, so four singers and six string players that are involved in the entire song cycle. The end result is just magical.

[MUSIC 3: Paul Moravec, Music is Love from 'Forgotten Voices']

Ignacio Saiz: Kelly, one final reflection, I'd love to hear from you. Your work, in a way, embodies an unusually deep merging of two identities that people think of as very separate, like a musician and an artist on the one hand and a human rights defender on the other hand. How do you see those two identities coexisting in you?

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: Yeah, for me they are very mutually reinforcing. For a while after I created Music Kitchen, I tried to keep them separate, one is a 501(c)(3) and the other is my career, but inevitably presenters that hire me as a soloist ended up being very attracted to the idea of this work that I do and the typical community engagement that goes along with a public solo appearance. In that way, I'm literally being a soloist and a community social justice activist in a single engagement.

More than ever at this point in my life I realize the incredible power that is music. The soul is ultimately unsuppressible, but there are realities in this world that we find ourselves in that can temporarily hold us back from the knowledge of that. But I think music ignites that spark and with that spark, anything is possible. I've seen it in the work that we have done, both in Music Kitchen and in the concert hall. What musicians can do in the world with the powerful energy that is music is transformative, and I think we should never regard it as anything less than that. I think it's a really important time to lean on community and to lean on the power of those things that inspire us to our full potential.

Ignacio Saiz: Absolutely. Kelly Hall-Tompkins, thank you so much for nourishing our souls, through your words, through your music, through the incredible work that you do in the concert hall and beyond it. I'm going to play the final minute of 'Music Is Love', which resonates really beautifully with what you've just said about music connecting to our souls. Kelly, thank you so much.

Kelly Hall-Tompkins: Thank you.

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[MUSIC: Paul Moravec, Music is Love]

Ignacio Saiz: *Sounds of Justice* has been a journey of discovery for me. It began with a desire to understand the many ways music has animated struggles for human rights — and an intuition that tapping into its connective and generative power might help us rise to the challenges we face today.

So, I'm deeply grateful to the twenty guests who've shared and discussed music with us, in so many different keys: the key of resistance and liberation, of identity and community, of memory and healing. Our conversations have left me more attuned to the power of listening as an ethical stance, as a way of understanding our relatedness to each other, and to other living beings with whom we share the planet. I hope they've stirred something similar in you.

[MUSIC: Busi Mhlongo, Yehlisan'umoya Ma Afrika]

At the start of this episode, we heard Freedom by Ugandan musician and opposition activist Bobi Wine.

Bruce Adolphe guided us through excerpts from two of his works: Thakla and I Will Not Remain Silent. And Mai Khôi took us inside her songs Innocent Deer and Burn.

We then heard Kelly Hall-Tompkins playing the Rhapsody from the first movement of Violin Concerto in D by Wynton Marsalis, and two pieces from the Forgotten Voices song cycle she commissioned: Badass by Kevin Puts and Music Is Love by Paul Moravec.

Threaded throughout the series has been our signature tune, Yehlisan'umoya Ma Afrika, by the South African singer, Busi Mhlongo.

This podcast would simply not have been possible without the extraordinary dedication of Angela Melchiorre and Weronika Grelow at the Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice, the invaluable guidance of series advisors Angela Impey and Julian Fifer, and the skillful editing of Savino Cancellara.

You can find all eight episodes of *Sounds of Justice* – along with other great resources on the issues we've covered – on the website of the Global Campus of Human Rights.

I'm Ignacio Saiz. For me, this exploration of music and human rights – and the deep connections between them – has really only just begun. So, thanks for being part of the journey so far. As the anthem says, *'A luta continua'*... and so does the music!

RELEVANT LINKS:

BruceAdolphe.net

Mai-Khoi.com

Global Campus of Human Rights

KellyHall-Tompkins.com | Music Kitchen – Food for the Soul