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COEXISTENCES / DECEMBER 2019

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**2019, another full and effective year thanks to those who unreservedly offer their time and energy at Coexistences! Three festive evenings organised to replenish our funds, three successful host projects this spring and summer, a new secretary and a different distribution of our information assemblies: a meeting in autumn to present the projects and the budget for the following year (it took place this year on 29 October and you can read a complete feedback in our next newsletter in January 2020) and a Statutory General Assembly on 25 February 2020 with the publication of the annual report and presentation of the accounts.**

**These new procedures will enable all of us to take the time needed to examine the proposed projects and together assess the work which was accomplished in Coexistences.**

**Until then, we hope the year 2020 will be for you one of peace and hope and we thank you wholeheartedly for your fidelity and generosity.**

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### «PETIT NOUVEL AN» GRAND BALL

**Already our 12th ball! On Friday 11 January 2019, with their vitality and warm harmonies, the Orchestre Jaune led the «Petit Nouvel An» Grand Ball in favour of Coexistences which was once again a success.**

filtered the entrances. Because of this, we feared reducing the number of participants, but that fear was unfounded: 520 people came to dance, leaving a profit of more than 6600 francs in the coffers of the association. And since the public was better spread out across the evening, there was more room to dance, raid the buffet of mezzes and desserts and invade the bar.

At the cash desks, the buffet and the bar, the volunteers from Coexistences and their friends waltzed, jerked, twisted, swayed, boogied with as much pleasure as the public on the dance floor and everyone is looking forward to the next ball, on Friday 31 January 2020. Why so late? Next year the town of Lausanne is organising the Youth Olympic Games 2020 and needs «our» festival hall on the usual dates. Never mind, we will dub it the (utmost) “Petit Nouvel An” Grand Ball...

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### FUNDRAISING DINNER IN FAVOUR OF COEXISTENCES

16.06.2019

**Year after year, Dominique Benmuvhar spends remarkable energy to prepare a fundraising dinner which is not only gourmet, her cooking talent is reputed, but festive.**

This time, she had the excellent idea to ask Manu Tarabay (guitar and voice) and Sebastien Pit-tet (double bass) to give us a concert in the image of Coexistences. They didn't just mix klezmer music and traditional Arab songs but found tunes from the same geographical region: thus they drew from the Middle-East repertoire and delighted us throughout the meal with popular songs in Hebrew and in Arabic, celebrating universal themes such as love, exile and peace. A very beautiful musical dialogue, refined, intelligent and inventive.

And the meal you may ask? It also mixed the two cultures and our taste buds were more than gratified. Just take a look at the menu: Moroccan courgette salad, Ottolenghi eggplant salad

Beetroot puree, hazelnut goat's cheese Hummus, Fresh spinach salad and pine nuts, Chick pea salad, Chicken and mashawia pastilla, Baklavas, muhallebi, basbussa, fruit, mint tea, loukoums.



Thank you Dominique and the musicians for having offered us this journey to the Middle-East, a wonderful way of collecting funds and allowing our middle-eastern guests to come here. Rendez-vous next spring and we bet that Dominique will surprise us once again on her tenth fundraising dinner.

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### WOMEN OF THE CRACKS

26.03- 3.04.2019

Accompanied by Ulfat Haider from Beit Hagefen (Arab-Jewish Cultural Centre) and Rina Boberoglu from Natal (Israeli Trauma and Resiliency Centre, in favour of victims of terrorism and war), Arab and Jewish participants from the group of women from Haifa arrived on 26 March in Cointrin. After a short stop by the lake to stretch their legs and have a bite to eat, the PC bus drove them directly to the Marecottes where they spent 4 days.

This group which comprises women of mixed ages, origins and very different backgrounds has been working together for four years. During their bi-monthly meetings, the members have intensified their bonds and built up a mutual confidence allowing them to broach painful questions linked to family and national narratives. After one particularly painful meeting, a participant remarked that these had created cracks in her certitudes. That is how they chose the name «Women of the Cracks», showing that they all have cracks, fissures, trauma both personal and in their community (Nakba, Shoah, attacks, etc.). They quoted the words of a song by LeonardCohen in which he says «There is a crack, a crack in everything / That's how the light gets in».



During their stay in a holiday chalet for youngsters, they alternated promenades, mountain walks and numerous internal sessions. If some of them had already participated on hikes with Ulfat Haider, others had never even seen snow. It was impressive to observe the good spirits, the solidarity and mutual aid these women brought to one another, some in their sixties and seventies, during the difficult climb to the Creusaz on snowy paths. On Saturday, on the way back, the merry band spent 3 hours at the Thermal Baths of Lavey. Magical and enchanting, some exclaimed: «I'm dreaming». Indeed, the sun and the blue sky, the mountains, the different pools, the jacuzzi and the hammam charmed them. It was on the premises of the CSP (Protestant social centre) Frat' that took place the meeting with the host families around refreshments. Then each pair of women went home to «their» family.

On Sunday, the families' free day, there were coincidental meet-ups alongside the lake in Lutry or those organised between Montreux and the Château de Chillon which gave rise once again to hugs and joy.

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### MEETING

On Monday, back to basics. In the morning we were invited in the company of Ada Marra, member of the National Assembly and Vice-President of the Swiss Socialist party, to visit the Vaudois Parliament, then in a room made available for us, Ada Marra explained the Swiss and Vaudois political system. She spoke both of her professional background, her commitments, the national political stakes, the existing dissensions sometimes from each side of the « Röstigraben » (tensions between the German and French parts of Switzerland), of the difficulties faced by the most vulnerable populations, the immigrants, the refugees. She was as we know her open, generous, an assertive and caring woman. Our warm thanks to her for this moment of sharing. The participants asked a multitude of questions concerning political and social issues. They understood that if in Switzerland the rights of minorities are firmly rooted in the different political processes, in Israel pragmatic solutions are often proposed for problems which in Switzerland require long debates through the institutions. As the sun was shining brightly, the group ate their picnic on benches in the old city.



### APPARTENANCES AND WOMEN'S CENTRE

In the afternoon they were received at the Psychotherapeutic Consultations in Appartenances (Belongings) and the Women's Centre. These presentations were translated into Hebrew by Ruthi and Daniela. Due to short notice, it wasn't possible to have an Arab-speaking interpreter in order to respect both languages of the group, one of the founding principles of Appartenances. After a presentation of the Women's Group of the Cracks one of the participants, Nathalie Bennoun, psychologist and psychotherapist presented the Appartenances Association. Anne-Dominique Ovaert, physiotherapist, explained the corporal approach complementary to psychotherapy. She also presented one of Appartenances' therapeutic groups, the Women and Body Group.

The women were impressed by the multiple offers and by the fact that, contrary to what happens in Israel, here everything is reunited in the same place. The presence of Liridona, one of Anne-Dominique's patients and Marie-Corinne's ex-patient, moved them. Her story illustrated in a personal and real-life way the support and therapeutic work done by Appartenances. The women and the facilitators saw in the exchange between Liridona and her therapists, the respect and human quality of the bonds expressed through the « body language ». They were very interested by Nathalie's presentation on psychological trauma and collective violence, and several women expressed, on the side, a resonance with their own experience. Rina and Nathalie noted strong convergences in the concepts and therapeutic work tools between Appartenances and Natal. Anne-Dominique proposed a small exercise of relaxation and emotional regulation which aroused the assembly. In the second part of the afternoon, they were received by the person in charge of the Women's Centre, Annie Piguet who presented them with the different activities

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proposed and showed them around the premises. The women remarked the wealth and multiplicity of the activities... with a tinge of « jealousy » they told us. A heartfelt thanks to Nathalie, Anne-Dominique and Annie for their warm welcome and their captivating presentations.

### DISCOVERING LAUSANNE

On Tuesday, the women started their day in the woods of Sauvabelin. They were surprised to learn that the lake used to serve as an ice rink. They climbed up to the top of the wooden tower, then came down to the charming path leading to the cathedral, which they visited in company of our guide. A short tour of the old city, a stop at the animated clock in the Place de la Palud at midday on the dot. A welcome halt at the creperie of the Chandeleur and it was time to make our way to the Museum of Art Brut. Unfortunately time was short and we had to leave too early as we had to go Prilly refuge where they were to assess their stay and prepare the final evening. In actual fact, this year the farewell evening was not on the last day but the day before because Rina, one of the two facilitators, and one of the participants had to leave the next day. The families and some members joined us and it was around a magnificent potluck dinner (the best ever) that once again hugs, thanks, promises to meet again soon were exchanged, with this year an anniversary, a very moving moment.



A film resuming the group's activities, then a short presentation of an art exhibition they had organised in Beit Hagefen. Each of these small groups comprising 3 to 4 participants present their work, illustrating by drawings, photos, events on the beach their desire, their hopes, their future projects. And it is the friendship, tolerance, caring, and support of the group which invigorates them.

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### AND GENEVA

The next day, Wednesday, gone the sun and it is under the rain that, after visiting the Red Cross Museum, the group toured the Old Town of Geneva before returning to Lausanne, and – at last – did some shopping. In the evening it started snowing and they left their Lausanne home at 6 a.m. under 10 cm of fresh snow for a final rendezvous at the Riponne where the PC bus (who we thank once again) was waiting for them.



After this trip the group has several future projects including walking together along the Israeli National Trail, as well as creating Arab/Jewish twosomes to mentor small groups (4-5) of new recruits, and these twosomes would be supervised by Rina and Ulfat. Some of the host families also said they would like to visit the group in Haifa and the response was enthusiastic.

We would like to thank the Juchum Foundation for its support for this project

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### JERUSALEM YOUTH CHOIR

28.06-4.07.2019

«Ambassadors of song and dialogue », resumed their Choir Master Micah Hendler. 21 girls and boys from East and West Jerusalem, Jews, Arabs – one of whom is blind, and even a German girl and a Chinese girl, temporary residents in this town -, all aged between 14 and 21, who, at the beginning of July, came here to experience an intense moment, united by song and dialogue. Accompanied by four facilitators, they succeeded in their commitment through their contact with the other.



First of all they went to Fribourg, welcomed by the Saint-Michel College Choir conducted by Philippe Savoy who explains that this was a happy alliance: « We often organise meetings between choirs, but we usually concentrate on questions relating to the performances, more related to technical questions. We do not face such conflicts and our singers find it more difficult to let themselves go. I was impressed, for example, by the commitment and choral quality of the young blind boy. ». Later in the day, in the lecture hall of this traditional college where we were warmly received by the rector Mr. Wider, the members of the Jerusalem Choir tried to understand how listening and dialoguing, notwithstanding long secular conflicts, led to Helvetic Federalism, « a system as complex as clockwork » according to the speaker, Nicolas Schmitt, Professor at the Swiss Institute of Federalism.



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### A GALVANIZING CONCERT

Two days after the last rehearsals and in the space of two concerts held in less than 24 hours, firstly in the United Nations in Geneva at midday, then in Saint-Laurent Church in Lausanne in the evening, the Jerusalem Youth Choir had the public spellbound. All of them were received by host families in and around Lausanne and Vevey to whom the association expresses their gratitude. In Lausanne, capital of the canton of Vaud, led by the Choir founder conductor, Micah Hendler, they gave an exciting performance during more than one and a half hours. Fiuna Seylan Ongen, President of Coexistences, declared in Saint-Laurent Church how « this is a unique project. To my knowledge, there is no other choir which does such work and performances where dialogue rises above the conflict. Here, singing is used as a vector for meeting and coming together, propitious to discussion. » And she adds: « In Jerusalem, even if they sometimes meet in workplaces, people do not really dialogue around the conflict. The Choir endeavours to create a space in which its members aspire towards a society founded on empathy and equity. » The observations of two Jerusalemite who participated in the 2019 version of this song tour in French-speaking Switzerland are equally enriching: « The choir taught me patience and how to listen to the other ». Her comrade went on: « After a year's work, we all look upon ourselves as brothers and sisters, a real family. We all like Micah Hendler, he's a really good guy. »



### A PROFOUND EXPERIENCE

In his report that Coexistences received not long ago, Micah remarks: «The visit united the choir by fully integrating all the singers. They put into practice in real terms the values around which they had worked a lot such as equity and listening, and experienced coexistence round the clock, seven days out of seven, between themselves and with their host families in Lausanne.» They were received in mixed pairs. He goes on to say: «The week-long trip constituted their most intense experience of coexistence. The fact that they represented the choir in front of institutions as important as the United Nations also reinforces their esprit de corps, and above all intensifies what unites them. The visit was a genuine success and they are all extremely motivated for the coming year.»

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The concerts took place in Fribourg, the United Nations in Geneva and the Saint Laurence church in Lausanne.

We wish to thank the Loterie Romande of the Canton of Vaud and that of the Canton of Fribourg, as well as the Foundation for Dulcimer Music for their support of this particular trip.

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### BREAKING THE ICE

20.08- 3.09. 2019

Once again this summer, Coexistences invited a group of students from Haifa University for an Alpine trek of several days. There were eleven students, six Jews (three boys and three girls) and five Arabs (two boys and three girls). Originally they were twelve but one Arab participant was unable to come at the last minute due to sickness in his family. Accompanied by their loyal facilitators, Ulfat Haider and Asaf Ron, the students arrived in Switzerland on 20 August and left on 3 September. According to a well-established "blue print" (this is the tenth version of « Breaking the Ice »!), the first two days were spent in La Fouly in the chalet of the Kohler family, to whom we express our heartfelt thanks. Then the group left on the trek for nine days, came back to La Fouly on 30 August and travelled to Lausanne on 2 September, the last but one day of their trip.



### A DIFFERENT TREK

For several reasons the organisation was more complicated than the previous years. Firstly, because the Civil Protection services were no longer free of charge, at the beginning of the year we decided to assume the road transport ourselves. In the spring, the authorities granted an exemption to Coexistences but it was too late to go back. Luckily, Ahmad, the head of the Valentin Catholic School, provided us with his institution's 16-seat bus and with another two private vehicles our needs were covered. Secondly, our guide, Nadja Schmid, had set up with us in April a trek itinerary. However, at the beginning of August, this route had become impracticable due to the danger of falling rocks at a critical passage. Therefore, a week before the arrival of the group, the trek had to be rerouted. In haste, Nadja carried out an intense reconnaissance, and finally redirected the trek to the Chamonix-Trient region.

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Yet another setback: due to the cancellation of a flight, the group landed in Geneva eight hours later than scheduled and three pieces of luggage were lost. Thus, two participants found themselves without their hiking equipment. However, this gave the opportunity to observe the group's solidarity: each of them immediately proposing one a pair of socks, one a jumper, one a bonnet... Even so, their equipment had to be completed by renting two pairs of shoes, and a rucksack at the sports shop in Fouly. The owner, Jacques Cloutier, was as usual a great help, lending us part of his personal material.



### GOOD WEATHER

The hike started in the Chamonix Valley. After a loop in the Aiguilles Rouges massif, the group spent two nights in the Argentières camping site, then they moved on in direction of Switzerland, through Trient and ending in Martigny. The weather was mainly dry, sunny and hot and we enjoyed spectacular views on the Mont Blanc massif, and were able to spend each night under the tent. The group dynamics was perfect as regards the mutual aid required for camping as well as for the dialogue activities. «Hot» subjects, linked to the narratives, were dealt with in the same in-depth way. Discreetly but appropriately monitored by Ulfat and Asaf, the participants were able to develop their active and compassionate listening capacities and also learn to express their point of view without being afraid of hurting the other.

The end of the stay was marked in the evening of 31 August by an aperitif offered by the municipal authorities in La Fouly, followed by a meal – a raclette – with the participation of some members of Coexistences. In the morning of 2 September, transport to Lausanne, midday meal offered in the canteen of the Valentin Catholic School, free time to visit the town in the afternoon, and a festive final evening in the great hall of the Diablerets section of the Swiss Alpine Club.

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### A COMMITMENT ON RETURNING HOME

Similarly to the groups of the past years, this one returned home with the commitment to carry out a community project, outlined during a last discussion with the facilitators. The idea is to transmit something of the experience acquired during the trek to a wider circle by organising in the coming months two events (a ramble, concerts, meals, etc...) to which they will invite their families, friends or colleagues. Modest but doable in view of their busy agendas, this extension of the trip (the execution of which will be monitored by Ulfat and Asaf) multiplies the value of the project: it encourages the participants to keep in contact with one another while creating opportunities to come together between communities.

Our thanks to the Sandoz Foundation and the Société Sécurité for supporting this project.



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### SHAI MAESTRO CONCERT

13.10.2019

**It was in the Théâtre de l'Oriental in Vevey, kindly made available for us, that Shai Maestro gave an exceptional concert in favour of Coexistences. The public was charmed by the quality of his improvisations, his delicate touch, his musicality, his easy and fluid phrase, his creativity at once sensitive, powerful and interiorised and the warmth with which he addressed the audience. He was given a standing ovation at the end of the one and a half hour long concert.**

Shai Maestro (1987) is one of the most talented pianists of his generation. Since his beginnings with his own trio in 2011, Shai has forged a strong and unique personal identity and has developed an amazing musical fluidity giving birth to one of the most powerful and harmonious groups in present-day jazz.

At the age of 19, he joined the Avishai Cohen Trio with the drummer Mark Giuliana. He recorded four albums with the Cohen Trio: Gently Disturbed (2008), Sensitive Hours (2008), Aurora (2009) and Seven Seas (2011). Shai Maestro started his career as the leader of a group in 2011 and released four albums with his own trio: Shai Maestro Trio (2011), The Road to Ithaca (2012), Untold Stories (2015), The Stone Skipper (2016). 2018 marked a turning point for Shai. He signed with the famous jazz label ECM with whom he recorded his first album The Dream Thief, in which Shai appears for the first time as a solo pianist. Over the last few years, in international tours, the trio has performed in the largest festivals and in the most renowned scenes.

Shai Maestro, with great generosity, offered his vibrant energy and his concert to Coexistences because, born in Israel, he is sensitive to relations between Israelis and Palestinians. This support is dedicated in particular to the Breaking The Ice, group who, every year since 2010, brings together at the end of the summer Israeli and Palestinian students from Haifa along with their two escorts, for a strenuous trek in the Swiss Alps. A magnificent opportunity to discover each other and establish a dialogue of peace. These young people prepare this event for months and commit to sharing their experience around them once they go back. As a reminder, the very first group in 2010 reached the summit of the Mont Blanc, a genuine exploit highly symbolical of confidence in the other in an Israeli-Palestinian ascension. This concert would not have taken place without the irresistible energy of Sophie Kaelin and that of the preparation group for 10 years of the Breaking The Ice project.

Many thanks to you all!



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### NEWS ABOUT THE SECRETARIAT

Looking for someone to take the place of Elsa Skorecki who alas died on 8 October 2018, we are very pleased to announce that Nastasia Binotto volunteered to take up this key role.



Nastasia has a Bachelor degree in Political Science from Lausanne University and a Masters in Development Management from the SOAS, School of Oriental and Asian Studies, London. In addition she was charged with administrative responsibilities and fundraising in another association in Lausanne and is very interested by the Middle East region.

We are very happy to welcome her. She has become a member and has attended our committee meetings since May 2019, gradually assuming the different secretarial tasks, and she will also join the fundraising group.

Her candidature and her official integration, as well as her right to vote will be proposed at our next General Assembly in 2020, on 25 February

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### THANKS

In the name of COEXISTENCES, a huge and warm THANK YOU to all those who enabled this 13th year of actions in favour of dialogue and peace.

- The many volunteers who do not count their time in organising and accompanying the different visits in Switzerland
- The host families
- Our different work groups: travel organisation, communication, Petit Nouvel An Ball, fundraising dinner, fundraising, verification of the accounts and the committee
- Our reporters: Carole, Daniela, Marie-Corinne, Edgar, François and the others
- Alain Kissling for the sound and images
- All the individual and institutional donors, including the donors in kind
- And finally, but above all, the women and men, Palestinians and Israeli Jews, who bravely overcome their fears and commit themselves to the path of dialogue

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### TAKE UP YOUR AGENDAS

We look forward to seeing you next year and in the meantime please make a note of these dates:

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#### PETIT NOUVEL AN GRAND BALL

Friday 31 January 2020, Casino de Montbenon, Lausanne

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#### STATUTORY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 25 February 2020, the place will be communicated at a later date

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THE COMMUNICATION GROUP AND THE DIFFERENT PROJECT LEADERS