

NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR H.E. DESIGNATE GJERMUND SÆTHER  
FORWARD TO *DIGITAL FUTURES TWO: TAKING MUSIC ONLINE IN SOUTH AFRICA 2022*



Norwegian Embassy  
Pretoria

Dynamite comes in small packages but has a massive impact. The same has been true of Concerts SA (CSA), which in 2023 will celebrate ten years of Norwegian and SAMRO investment in southern African live music.

Dynamite was patented in 1867 by inventor Alfred Nobel who was born in the then-United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway. The explosive power of even small sticks of this blasting agent made its creator wealthy. In his will, Nobel directed that his wealth establish a foundation to reward groundbreaking international research and intellectual achievement through Nobel Prizes in the fields of science, literature and, most notably, peace-making. The first Nobel Peace Prize was awarded in 1901. Four South Africans have won the Nobel Peace Prize: Albert Luthuli in 1961 for his role in leading the non-violent anti-apartheid movement, Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1984 for his consistent, vociferous resistance to apartheid and efforts at reconciliation, and Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk in 1993 "for their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa."

Sustaining those bonds between our two nations, CSA now partners with the Albert Luthuli Museum in KwaZulu Natal, nurturing the spirit of Luthuli and cultural liberation. Others also contributed to the remarkable strides South Africa made from the tyranny of apartheid to one of the most liberal constitutions in the world, among them cultural activists, including musicians. Music was one of the most powerful languages of struggle, in marches and meetings and on stages at home and abroad. In solidarity, Norway supported and hosted progressive performers and arts organisations during the struggle era. We continued that support to contribute to the flowering of democratic musical creativity through a decade of the Mmino initiative and a further ten years through Concerts SA.

That latter initiative, established between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SAMRO, was musical dynamite: a modest idea with a powerful impact in the southern African region. Micro-grants to performers and venues were strategically awarded, based on knowledge derived from both practice and research. Those grants enabled blasts of creativity in live performance, but also ignited audience development and provided data to spark future research projects.

CSA began as a partnership between SAMRO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the auspices of the Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria with Rikskonsertene in Oslo, Norway as the cooperating partner, guided by Tom Gravlie, Anne Moberg, and MFA representative Anne

Lise Langøy. Countless other passionate music advocates shared the work of organising, researching and reporting. The MFA won two Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) Awards for CSA, received by my predecessors, H.E. Ambassador Trine Skymoene in 2016 and H.E. Ambassador Astrid E Helle in 2019. Over the past two years, Concerts SA has arguably had its period of highest impact since its inception in 2013. The annual iterations of the Digital Mobility Fund (DMF) during that period, distributed R5.1 million to 170 projects, enabled the support of concerts at 132 venues, and reached over 500 000 audience members, many online. The fund created 4 756 work opportunities; all steered towards best professional practice.

The 2020 Digital Futures? research created a knowledge framework for the development of CSA's Digital Mobility Fund. This 2022 publication builds on those foundations to explore the dilemmas, risks and opportunities of the "new normal" of live streaming in the post-Covid era. We hear more of the voices of music-makers describing their hopes and fears, and see more hard data about their experiences and day-to-day practice. Like Nobel's little sticks of dynamite, CSA's legacy also rests in the intellectual capital captured in its published research. May it be shared widely to build more sustainability for southern African music.

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