

# M Manhattan School of Music

APRIL 15, 2019 12:00 AM

## Alumni Stories: Paths Taken Part VII

### INTRODUCTION

To the eye of an astronaut, Earth appears as a silent blue orb in a sea of darkness and silence, but here at ground level the planet is a powerful teeming mass of vibrant colors and sounds. Perhaps because our lives are so immersed in music, we tend not to grasp just how powerful a connective medium it is. Indeed, music is a living global culture that flows through every human being in one form or another. It heals, inspires, and has the ability to overcome the all too numerous divisions that separate us. One of the world's great nodal points in this musical web is MSM! As alumni we are the part of its network that radiates outward from the School into all parts of the world. One of the most fascinating characteristics of this network is the sheer variety of ways our lives and careers take shape after starting from this very special place.

– Louis Alexander MM '79 Alumni Advisory Council Chair

## George Mathew Conductor and humanitarian

Harnessing the power of music to focus on areas of human need is something that **George Mathew (PD '03)** has developed a skill for. It all began with a concert he put together at



Carnegie Hall in 2006 to raise money for victims of the earthquake that had occurred along the line of control in Kashmir. That here was a citizen of India raising money for victims who were for the most part in Pakistan gained press attention, and in the process he raised around \$100,000 for Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders).

Not long after, a friend from the Sudan asked if he would do something similar for victims of the genocide in Darfur, and this grew into his concert, Requiem for Darfur. From these strands, George founded Music for Life International (MFLI), which he continues to lead as its Artistic Director. Inspired by the legendary humanitarian concert, MUSIC FOR LIFE, that Leonard Bernstein led in 1987 as a response to the burgeoning AIDS epidemic, George asked Bernstein's children for permission to use the name for his new organization, and they enthusiastically lent their support.

This past January marked MFLI's eighth humanitarian concert, which was entitled Beethoven for the Rohingya. Through these concerts, George has brought together a large number of musicians from orchestras far and wide that have raised over \$3.3M, but more significantly, demonstrated the power music has in furthering values of humanity, and in bringing diverse communities together to experience and reflect on the larger human issues that stretch far beyond national borders. For these efforts, George and Music for Life International received the 2016 Robert and JoAnn Bendetson Award for Public Diplomacy from the Institute for Global Leadership at Tufts University.

His work as a conductor extends beyond MFLI to include many appearances as guest conductor at concerts around the world. George is also a passionate educator and proponent of the social impact that music can have and he has spoken in a variety of venues, including TEDx and INKTalks. To get a feel for George's thinking and passion for the power of music to transform lives, listen to his INKTalk at <http://inktalks.com/discover/35/rhythm-that-resonates>