Merlijn Twaalfhoven (1976, The Netherlands) is a composer working in conflict areas, unconventional locations as well as in concert halls. He recently composed a mini opera based on postcards from Aleppo, performed by members of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Syrian refugees in the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam. He received an UNESCO award and collaborates with The Kronos Quartet and the New York Philharmonic.

His projects explore the richness of cultural diversity and human interaction, often engaging musicians of contrasting styles, local traditions or children in large events on spectacular locations. He engages in unconventional collaborations with artists, cooks, diplomats or idealists. This results in a unique blend of sophisticated music and rough, unpolished sounds.

Merlijn Twaalfhoven strives for a world without boundary between art and society. His goal is to revive the creative and artistic potential in everyone, resulting in new meaningful connections and understanding between people.

Advocating a larger role for artists in society, he presented practical and direct ways for artists to become engaged in global issues of today such as the growing inequality, climate change and disruptive technological change. He wrote the book *Art in the World*, served as a professor on ArtEZ School of arts and presented his vision at conferences such as the European Cultural Forum, Aspen Ideas Festival, TEDx Amsterdam and Alpbach Economic Forum and on universities such as Georgetown, Fordham and Columbia in the USA and GeiDai in Japan.
Musical Postcards
stories of Sustainable Development in music

How might we bring personal and vivid stories about Sustainable Development on the radar of a broad audience?

How can music connect people to the world of 2030?

How can the voices of the generation 2030, that is directly impacted by the 17 Global Goals, become amplified?

The Musical Postcard project establishes direct connections between young musicians and composers over large distances, translating the abstract Sustainable Development Goals into personal experience and direct contact. We develop a practical and inspiring structure of collaboration, bringing professional musicians, teenagers and the most significant topics of our time together.

We work in four steps:

First, we capture a musical story from a child who directly experience the impact of the one of the SDG-related topics. We work with a network of music teachers, from the Arctic to the Middle East, from Japan to São Paulo to capture one-minute video’s with a personal song, melody or poem, expressing a personal vision on for example poverty, injustice, climate change or child labour.

We bring such a “musical postcard” to composition-workshops in schools where teenagers build a larger music piece, inspired on the original video. The results of these workshops are music pieces that will be performed by professional musicians. The recordings of such performances will be send back to the original very young composers.

What we are doing
Currently, we are establishing a rich network for music organisations worldwide that want to engage with teenagers in their region and connect to their peers in other parts of the world, living in other conditions. We develop workshop methods, a vast international network and an online platform to present the Musical Postcards exchanges.

Our ambition is to connect personal stories in music, expressing the point of view of the generation of 2030 about sustainable development, to a large audience.
We seek partnership with organizers of conferences and events about SDG’s as a platform for musicians to present the results of our creative process. We seek collaboration with musicians to include Musical Postcards in their current concert programs.

We invite music educators to take part and introduce a Musical Postcard project in their school.

**Background of the Musical Postcard project**

Musical Postcards is an initiative from Jon Deak of the New York Philharmonic and Dutch composer Merlijn Twaalfhoven. This transatlantic collaboration has engaged and inspired already thousands of teenagers in the Netherlands, the United States and all around the world to compose music, to play music and to communicate with music. This project opens youngsters to their own creative skills and to their sense of empathy to engage to the rest of the world; an asset that is much needed in a fast changing global society.

Over the years we presented Musical Postcards to live audiences in very diverse occasions such as:

- School concerts in traditional concert halls, like the Lincoln Center in New York City;
- School concerts within a school context;
- Conventional concerts where professional musicians/ soloists personally adopt a Musical Postcard and perform a response;
- Special performances during international conferences and lectures (United Nations, TedX etc.).

Our ambition is to further develop our project into an inspiring and effective way to bring personal stories about the SDG topics, told by the generation of 2030, to a large audience.

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