DAISY Music Braille Project:

Q3 update 2020

Reporting on project activity July, August and September 2020

Date: 13 October 2020

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<https://www.daisy.org/project/daisy-music-braille>

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# 1. Interactive end-user music braille tool

**Aim:** At least one improved interactive music braille user tool is available for blind musicians to independently read, write, convert and explore music in accessible ways, in education, for work and leisure.

**Update**: We received four full responses from developers to our invitation to respond to our Requirements and which applied for funding. The Steering Group is carefully reviewing each application against the requirements and DAISY development project philosophies, ready to notify developers of their decision by the end of October. Look out for more news later in the year on this.

# 2. Professional music braille conversion tool

## 2.1 MakeBraille development at dzb lesen

**Aim**: At least one improved tool is available for rapid professional, accurate and automated music braille transcription which produces global formats and is linked to a production workflow. Note that this does not remove the need for skilled music braille staff.

**Update**: Work to extend MakeBraille, from dzb lesen, continued to progress well between July and September, towards our planned development for Q3 and Q4.

## 2.2 Work priorities for Q3 and Q4

1. Running a restricted **trial of MakeBraille-Hodder** to test the latest implementations in real-world settings. We have 21 testers from agencies from the project’s Steering Group and Funders, participating in the trial running September-December. Feedback from this trial will influence our plans for 2021 development and options for making the tool more widely available.
2. Implementing a **‘Setter Tool’** to allow easy customization of the final music braille file ready for embossing.
3. Testing **Percussion MusicXML** import and conversions.
4. Implementing a **conversion progress notification system**, so the user gets feedback on the status of their conversion.
5. Adding **further tutorial/help resources** as required.
6. Making any **immediate fixes** needed e.g. for accessibility, to the MusicXML import or Import Tool, Bar-Over-Bar formatting, country codes.
7. Defining options for an **HTML5 viewer** for the music braille generated by MakeBraille-Hodder, giving users’ flexibility to view/explore different parts of the converted score, and providing customization options not possible through the automated tool.
8. Researching further **country requirements** e,g, for tablature, indentations, contracted braille, groupings, and so on.
9. Working with at least one agency to explore **workflow integration** options (if they’re ready to do so).

## 2.3 Main developments in Q3

### 09/10/2020: Fixes

(BOB = Bar Over Bar)

* Alignment of measure in BOB
  + When there are dot-five-rests.
  + when there are 10 or more compressed rests.
  + when repeat, rests etc. end with words (fine etc.).
  + measure references of form “play measures x till y”.
  + pedal marks.
  + horizontal brackets above/below system.
  + lower case marked letters/words.
* Back-end notification to alert Matthias if the server is blocked so action can be taken.
* Improved cleanup of server.
* Support 256th rests, remove dot 5 256th rests if only used as fillers in a  bar for rounding note/rest durations.
* Nuances marked as 'other dynamics' now supported.
* Confirmation of Configuration setting now returned by email with the converted file.
* There have been mails getting lost under some circumstances when sent from server. These mails will now be attempted several times. Please advise if mails still don't reach you.
* Ornament marks (e.g trill marks) should be on the first note instead of on the interval.

### 02/10/2020: Fixes

Fixed:

* 'Creator' information appears correctly above the notes.
* Mails containing converted files no longer being blocked due to missing date.
* Stabilization of MusicXML files that contain mistakes.
* Recognising multiple words before multiple rests (in Bar Over Bar).
* Bar Over Bar can handle if single lines contain only rests (no notes)
* Improved separation of music pieces by bar numbers, variations and bar lines.
* Recognition of beginning of each measure when bars contain only rests.
* Recognition of variation numbers within a score to separate them appropriately.
* Bug showing 'Dir' instead of tempo marking.
* Bug showing composer name within music text.

### 2020/09/25: Fixes & improvements

Fixed:

* Mistakes if a line only contained rests and no notes/chords.
* Repetition of @ symbols in the list of symbols.
* Repetition of # symbol for 'work-title' in list of symbols.
* Clefs, keys, time signatures incorrectly handled in files containing more than one piece.
* Second time bar endings starting from 0.
* For MusicXML import: additional slur attributes in the MusicXML file (which are irrelevant to Braille) are now allowed.

Improved:

* Clefs added to list of symbols.

Clarification on issues raised in feedback:

* If a list of symbols is selected on the Configuration page, one list of symbols will be provided for each piece with symbols listed in order of appearance. So, if a score has several movements each movement will have its own list of symbols.

### 2020/09/18: Fixes, improvements and new features

Fixed:

* Clefs now correctly supported in Bar Over Bar format.
* Some special symbols are now correctly converted.

Improved:

* Inconsistent measure/bar count in Bar Over Bar format is now accepted.
* More back-end warnings are generated to avoid fatal crashes on the server.
* Back-end processes updated to reduce the chance of empty files being returned (for unsupported encodings, pre-fixes or suffixes for repeats/simile and unknown situations).

New:

* User is now alerted if their score is still being converted and they try to convert it again.
* Converted file is sent by email to the registered account address if the users’ browser timeout prevents the file from being displayed on-screen.

### 2020/07/26: Major update

With an improved look and feel, and lots of conversion improvements it is now even easier to choose your settings and get great conversions into music Braille, including from MusicXML files, and as Bar-Over-Bar formatting. These improvements have been made possible through funding and support from the DAISY Music Braille Project. Here’s what’s new…

1. Look and feel: the design and colours of MakeBraille have been updated in line with dzb lesen’s design. It is still fully accessible.
2. Conversion fixes and improvements: conversions are even more reliable and accurate, including: better handling of instrument names and their abbreviations, improved import of figured bass etc.
3. File Format Handling: you can now upload, order and convert multiple files in a single zip file, including files in different formats.
4. Conversions: you can now convert MusicXML files, as well as scanned CapX (capella) files.
5. Configuration options: new groupings of options on the Configuration page make it easier to set your preferences. Some you’ll only need to set once, others you may wish to set for different scores you convert. You can also have your most common settings displayed on the main MakeBraille page for easy access, and choose where the Configuration button is displayed.
6. Configuration tooltips: expanding tooltips have been added to explain some headings and options on the Configuration page.
7. Formatting: Bar-Over-Bar formatting is now supported for the first time, used in many other countries, though not usually used in Germany. This will be further improved with feedback from users.
8. Country settings: country codes and standards are now listed by country rather than initials, and additional country codes are now supported: Finland, Spain, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Canada, Brazil.
9. Help with foreign languages: an optional pronunciation guide to foreign characters has been implemented, for singers who need help with other languages. Currently available to help with German pronunciation.
10. Help with symbols: the optional key list which explains unfamiliar symbols appearing in the score has been improved. You can choose how much detail this contains.
11. Error-handling: automated error reports are now sent to dzb lesen if a file cannot be converted, and you will also be notified of a problem.
12. Support materials: user guides and tutorials are now available on a secure Wiki in English to suit our new international users.
13. Feedback: you can submit Feedback to us from the login page, e.g. if you find errors or have trouble with a file, do let us know so we can fix things.
14. Trial: from September-December we will be running a trial with a small number of additional blindness agencies from other countries to use MakeBraille to convert scores for their blind musicians. It is already used in Germany at dzb lesen, in Switzerland by SBS, and in the Netherlands by Dedicon.
15. Removed: the option to output as an ‘audit file’ has been removed.
16. Acknowledgements: dzb lesen gratefully acknowledges the DAISY Consortium, funders and project team for supporting our development work during 2020 and 2021, through the [DAISY Music Braille Project](https://daisy.org/activities/projects/music-braille/).

## 2.4 Questions for countries

1. **Contracted country codes:** If you’d be willing to help us with implementation of contracted braille for your country code please let me know, and we will send you a file to convert using your own tools (it takes only a couple of minutes). (Thanks to the UK for doing the UEB file).
2. **Octave Signs in Bar Over Bar formatting:** please confirm whether your country expects an octave sign at the beginning of each measure or at the beginning of each line. We will bind this to your country code (thanks to the UK and Spain for responding so far).

# 3. Related news

## 3.1 The International Council on English Braille (ICEB) 7th General Assembly is NEXT WEEK: 18-22 October 2020

The programme has been published and papers are available to read. Please register as an observer immediately if you wish to participate in this virtual event or receive the papers. The Music Braille strand is on Monday 19 October, including a paper from our project. All info available about the conference, including how to register is at <https://www.ukaaf.org/iceb2020/>

## 3.2 Do you have music braille news to share?

I’ll happily collate other news from around the sector and send it out. Our next update is due out in early January, so please send me your news by **05 January** please.

# 4. With thanks to our funders in 2020

We’re very grateful to the following agencies who are making our activities possible:

* CNIB
* DAISY Strategic Development Fund
* MTM
* NLB
* Norwegian Association of the Blind
* Nota
* ONCE
* RNIB
* SBS
* Vision Australia