DAISY Music Braille Project

News - August 2023

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# 1. We’re still here – with a new ‘Implementation Phase’



Firstly, I’m pleased to announce that we have secured support from our first new funders so that we can continue working in this area for at least another year in an ‘Implementation Phase’ - thanks to Nota, SBS and the Friends of dzb lesen for their contributions.

We’re still looking for funding for the final few months of the proposed 18-month project period, so please do let me know if your organization might be able to help with a month or two of financial support and I’ll send the funding proposal.

This new Implementation Phase starts in September, and we will be able to help agencies in taking up and promoting the resources developed during the first phase of the project, so we can all get more braille scores to more blind musicians around the world in a more timely manner.

## 1.1 Planned activities

We will be focussing on getting take-up of the resources developed so far, with some additional activity to further secure music braille in the sector:

* Helping agencies and end-users to find out about and learn the new tools and resources and embedding them into their working practice.
* Widening the membership of the Music Braille Production Network; supporting the transition to the newly agreed annual chairs (Vision Australia, SBS, dzb lesen, and NLS); and getting our agreed metadata and guidance for international productions and file-sharing via the network and ABC Global Book Service into business-as-usual.
* Promoting the ‘born accessible’ and ‘inclusive publishing’ agenda with mainstream music publishers and supporting engravers to take up our music-setting guidance.
* Contributing to the documentation being prepared for braille manuals by proposing missing guidance and missing country rules.
* Collating, supporting and promoting practical teaching methodologies for music braille.
* Maintaining this global stakeholder dialogue.

## 1.2 Ongoing collaboration

We hope that many of you will continue to engage with these activities and we can maintain the momentum and collaborations we have enjoyed in recent years – watch out for invitations to join specific working groups, or questions which you might be able to help answer.

## 1.3 Website changes

The project landing page (<https://daisy.org/music-braille>) now contains all the final deliverables and outcomes from the first phase of the project, so please use and promote that for reference.

Pages for the Music Braille Production Network (<https://daisy.org/MBPN>) have been updated to include all reference documents agencies need to join and participate in the Network. We will be widening out participation from September onwards so watch out for notifications.

The Latest Developments page from the first phase of the project (<https://daisy.org/activities/projects/music-braille/latest-developments/>)

will be archived, and a new page will be created for the Latest Developments of the Implementation Phase part of the project. This will happen in September when the new phase officially starts.

# 2. Recommendations for discussion groups/forums on music braille and accessible music

We would like to be able to signpost end-users and transcribers to helpful music-braille and accessible music discussion groups and forums so they can support each other. We would also like to be able to engage with them to share news about the tools and resources we’ve developed, and seek further requirements for resources needed.

This DAISY mailing list is currently announcement-only, and we don’t want to turn it into a discussion list when we think that the sector already has sufficient discussion lists, groups and forums (but do let us know if you have a different view).

Can you help us to collate this list please, especially with identifying those which are most useful in your country? Please send your suggestions to [musicbraille@daisy.org](mailto:musicbraille@daisy.org)

We hope to create a directory with something like the following information:

* List/group name
* Description
* Aimed at
* Country-specific
* Level of activity
* How to subscribe

Please do advise us of other groups/lists you feel should be referenced, and thanks in advance for your help. These are on our list so far:

### 2.1 Discussion groups

Blind-Music-Readers, for blind and visually impaired (international, run in New Zealand)

<https://groups.io/g/blind-music-readers>

VI-Forum (UK teachers of B&VI) <http://mailinglists.siforums.org.uk/dada/mail.cgi/list/VIForum/>

Braille music chat (International, run in UK)

[braille-music-chat+subscribe@googlegroups.com](mailto:braille-music-chat+subscribe@googlegroups.com)

Sound Without Sight (international, run in UK)

<https://soundwithoutsight.org/register/>

MusicTLK NFB’s discussion list (international, run in USA) <https://www.nfbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/musictlk_nfbnet.org>

GoodFeel user discussion list

<https://www.freelists.org/list/goodfeel>

SMB user group discussion list

[smcb+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:smcb+subscribe@groups.io)

MuseScore user group discussion forum

<https://musescore.org/en/forum>

Mastering MuseScore Community

<https://community.masteringmusescore.com/c/welcome/>

and Accessibility community: <https://community.masteringmusescore.com/c/accessibility/>

BrailleM: The Braille Music List

<https://brenthugh.com/braillem/>

### 2.2 Facebook groups

Braille Music and Beyond: Resources for Blind Music Students

Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/502473364538565/>

Blind Musicians Worldwide

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/826784694078817>

Musicians’ Forum (not BVI)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mvforum>

Paths to literacy for students who are blind or visually impaired

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ptliteracy>

Braille music chat (International, run in UK)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2573039256293520/?locale=en_GB>

# 3. MakeBraille update

From: Matthias Leopold, dzb lesen, Germany

dzb lesen is responsible for ongoing development and promotion of MakeBraille since the project funding ended over a year ago. It is a professional-level online automated conversion tool for converting MusicXML and capx files into music braille.

Homepage: <https://makebraille.dzblesen.de/MakeBraille>

Since the last report progress has been made in the continuous development of the MakeBraille service. Some points are listed below. For a complete list, please see <https://dzblesen.uber.space/projects/hodder/wiki/What's_New_in_MakeBraille>.

* Reorganization of configuration interface with regard to usability
* Full support of contracted Braille for English and German texts
* Strongly improved BrailleVis (Convert Braille to PDF or MusicXML)
* A very lot of bug fixes, better support for Capella and MusicXML files, improvements on bar over bar

## 3.1 Information on License Model

To use MakeBraille for production purposes, please have a look at <https://www.dzblesen.de/makebraille-information> or get in contact with dzb lesen.

## 3.2 Contact

If there any question to MakeBraille, please feel free to contact dzb lesen at [makebraille-support@dzblesen.de](mailto:makebraille-support@dzblesen.de).

# 4. Sao Mai Braille 23.8 release

From: Phúc Dang Haoi, Sao Mai Centre for the Blind, Vietnam

Sao Mai Centre for the Blind is happy to release Sao Mai Braille (SMB) 23.8, a free and powerful tool to produce Braille materials for literature, math and music.

[Visit Sao Mai Braille software's main page to download.](https://saomaicenter.org/en/smsoft/smb)

## 4.1 Highlights in this release include

* keep all applied styles in print when translating into Braille,
* apply styles in Braille document,
* rewrote functions to better handle Braille text translation,
* add new Malay and German language Braille tables,
* support Vietnamese math Braille translation,
* speak math equations in Spanish,
* updated to SM Music Braille library 23.7 with many new features, improvements and fixes (Details about new features of SM Music Braille translation are written in a separate heading section below.)

## 4.2 About SMB's general features

* Able to apply style directly from Braille document: press Ctrl+shift+s for style list. To hear style info: press F4.
* Same in print document, in Braille, press Ctrl+Shift+u to apply bullet list or Ctrl+Shift+o for number list.  
  Press Ctrl+Shift+. to increase indent/list level, or Ctrl+Shift+, to decrease.
* Cursor location of Braille document is exactly same as in print document when translating.
* Data tables with merged and splitted cells are now converted correctly.
* Added Braille tables: Malay Braille grade 2 contracted, German grade 0 uncontracted and grade 1 partially contracted with capitals.
* Updated English music symbols translation table: use UEB character definitions by default and updated frequently-used French + German + Italian characters. This table is mainly used to translate music direction texts and chord symbols.
* Moved buttons to manage music profile to a new music profiles page in Options dialogue. Added 32 frequently used profiles. See in Options dialogue.
* Improved Score info management dialogue: list all possible staves for custom translation options and allow to use copy/cut/paste keystrokes in Braille 6-key input fields.
* Updated to MathCAT 0.3.1 with basic Vietnamese math Braille support, added Spanish language for speech, and many improvements of speech rules especially for English.
* Screen readers now report page number when cursor moves to different page.
* "Interface language" menu now shows only languages selected from General page in Options dialogue. See from Tools menu.
* Fixed issues: not translate math and graphic's alternate text into Braille, menus disappeared when closing BRF view with Ctrl+F4.

## 4.3 About SM Music Braille 23.7

SMB has been updated to latest version of the library with details below. There is a desktop and online version of the converter.

### New features

* Supported senza-misura time signature.
* Changed to apply tracking dots when having at least 7 spaces (instead of 5) between two measures in same parallel.
* Moved hairpin stop to same voice of its start if not located in duration of a note. Otherwise, keep it in the voice specified by MusicXML.
* Spacing after measure number is aligned for only current parallel, instead of all parallels. So, there's one space between the last digit of measure number and staff name/note.
* Supported rule to force to mark octave sign before note right after a repeat in different octave.
* Checked condition to add dot 3 after volta repeat.
* Additional options for interval and voice writing direction. Choose "auto" to follow settings defined in "Instruments.xml" file. Choose "up" or "down" to ignore settings in "Instruments.xml" and just follow the chosen direction. Custom interval and voice direction option is processed firstly if it exists.
* Added new option to check for voice order by pitch detection or voice-number order. See in SMB's Options dialogue -> Music Braille -> Transcription page.
* Added option to restate accidental of tied note at the beginning of parallel. See in SMB's Options dialogue -> Music Braille -> Transcription page.
* Supported to translate notes in a very low/high pitch (below octave 0 and above octave 8).

### Improvements

* Multiple rests handling is separated from measure-number and backward-numeral repeat options. And improved the translation of multiple measure rests.
* Full-measure, part-measure in-accord modes and stem note application.
* Updated new symbol order list.
* Tempo and system text handling, especially when it has metronome value, key and time signatures at the same location.
* Offset duration for directions.
* Repeats for tremolos.
* Key signature with cancellations.
* Option to restate key signature to not include key cancellation again in next parallels.
* Braille line breaking to the best number of spaces set available with characters per line option.
* Doubling for tuplets when a passage contains tuplet repeats.
* Print page and line numbering when breaking to new parallel in not full measure and changing to new movements.
* Measure numbering for implicit measures and number attribute with letters when translating with measure numbering option of following print score.
* Measure repeat for measure rest appeared in bar with multiple voices.
* Measure repeat in multiple voices: not repeat a measure with only one voice while original measure has multiple voices.
* Stem signs for multiple directions with offset duration, moved in-between note's duration range.
* Multiple single notes from different voices tied to a chord in one voice.
* Texts with dynamics are all in one direction.

### Fixes

* Wrong adding of hidden rests, especially often happen in scores exported by Sibelius DOLET plugin.
* Not repeat some time when having accidentals and barlines.
* Doubling issues for interval in some cases and for articulation of chords.
* Not apply repeat and note grouping in full score transcription mode.
* Line-breaking issue in full score transcription mode.
* Wrong order of slur and tie written after repeat signs.
* Not applied correct instrument abbreviation in full score mode when instrument is changed.
* Normal tie not detected correctly when a pickup measure tied to a next two measures.

## 4.4 Stay in touch with SMB

Subscribe to receive announcements from SMB by sending a blank email to:

[news+subscribe@saomaicenter.org](mailto:news+subscribe@saomaicenter.org)

Please email any feedback or support requests to us at:

[support@saomaicenter.org](mailto:support@saomaicenter.org)

## 4.5 Thanks

Our sincere thanks to ON-NET (the [Overbrook](https://www.obs.org)-[Nippon](https://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/en) Network on Educational Technology) for funding us from the initial development stage, and [DAISY Music Braille project](https://daisy.org/activities/projects/music-braille/) for funding us for the last 30 months to improve and develop Braille music translation engine.

## 4.6 User story – time saved using SMB 23.8

From: Haipeng Hu, BrailleOrch and DAISY Music Braille Project

Haipeng is a professional transcriber of large and complex works which he makes freely available to other blind musicians on his website. He writes:

Using the latest release of SMB (23.8) I have been able to produce Bottesini's Messa Da Requiem in music braille in an amazingly short space of time. It is a large score of 164 pages, for 4 soloists, mixed choir and orchestra with 14 movements. The original file was from [Scores Reformed](https://scoresreformed.co.uk/), and I converted it into music braille using SMB with Orchestral Bar-over-bar profile. This transcription would previously have taken me around 6 days but with SMB it took me only 3.5 days to get a very good production. On the most efficient day I transcribed around 65 pages, which was absolutely impossible before.

# 5. MuseScore 4.1 release

From: Peter Jonas, MuseScore, UK

[MuseScore 4.1](https://musescore.org/en/4.1) adds a number of exciting new features, including the ability to view scores in braille music notation – called Live Braille View. Once enabled, keyboard users can press tab from the main score to access a new braille panel and have the current measure sent to your connected braille display (this works on Windows; it [may not work on macOS](https://github.com/musescore/MuseScore/issues/18357)). Braille dots are also rendered on the screen for sighted users.  
  
Other new features include the ability to add accidentals to ornaments such as trills, turns and mordents, as well as improvements to playback and performance. You can learn more about all the new features in [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWEtevLeAmM) on MuseScore’s YouTube channel, and MuseScore also released [another video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnD5Py4YbfI) that discusses the braille feature in more detail.

(The braille video mentions another feature, 6-key braille input, which is expected to arrive later this year in MuseScore 4.2.)

Please visit MuseScore’s [Accessibility page](https://musescore.org/en/accessibility) for information and tutorials about how to install and use the program.

# 6. ‘Mastering MuseScore’

From: Marc Sabatella, Mastering MuseScore, USA

<https://school.masteringmusescore.com/>

[marc@outsideshore.com](mailto:marc@outsideshore.com)

## 6.1 Courses and forum

My name is Marc Sabatella, founder and director of Mastering MuseScore. I am one of the developers of MuseScore (the world's most popular music notation software), and I have been a pioneer in online music education for over 25 years.

At Mastering MuseScore, we have created a thriving community of musicians interested in collaborating and learning together. We provide free resources such as our popular live streams and weekly newsletter. We also offer university-quality courses on using MuseScore as well as in music theory, composition, improvisation, and other creative music skills. We are leaders in accessibility, and our resources can be utilized by musicians who are blind or visually impaired.

Like MuseScore itself, Mastering MuseScore has become famous for both the quality and value it represents.

Whether you are just getting started or are a power user eager to explore advanced engraving and playback techniques, my flagship courses cover everything you need to know to get the most out of MuseScore. The original course covers [MuseScore 3](https://school.masteringmusescore.com/p/complete" \t "_blank), and now we are proud to do even better for [MuseScore 4](https://school.masteringmusescore.com/p/musescore4" \t "_blank). Going far beyond the basic help that comes with the program, my easy-to-follow demonstrations will take you step by step from entering your very first notes to unlocking your greatest potential.

In addition, *Mastering MuseScore* features a supportive community of musicians, with discussion spaces, weekly live streams, and other related events, courses, and services to help you create your best music.

## 6.2 Invitation to pilot braille / accessible music notation study group

Hello!  For those who don't know me, I'm a sighted music educator and software developer who has worked with blind musicians and has also helped develop some of the accessibility features in MuseScore (free software for standard music notation).  I'm interested in learning more about Braille music myself (I know only the very very basics), helping enable others (sighted and blind) to learn it too, helping other educators work with blind musicians, and helping blind musicians use tools like MuseScore and others to gain access to more music.

With that in mind - and frankly not a whole lot else in terms of specifics - I'm launching a pilot "study group" for musicians interested in learning more about Braille and accessible music notation, and/or helping others learn.  I figure some of us know MuseScore, others know basic music theory, others know Braille music, some of us have other experiences that could be useful - let's all help each out and see if we can come out of it with some useful new skills!

I don't have a set curriculum - I plan for us to mostly draw on the resources that are out there already and rely on the power of collaboration.  My main role here will be in providing some overall guidance and a place for discussions, and organizing some projects to work on together.

This will get underway next week and run through the end of the month or so.  I assume that at least some people might be needing this to prepare for the school year, so now seemed like a good time.  Depending on how things go, I could see doing more of this sort of thing on an ongoing basis, but let's start here and see where it leads.

I will be running this on my website community, [Mastering MuseScore](https://community.masteringmusescore.com).  It's currently free to join - just click the login button to get started if you're not already a member.  I've tried to make the site as accessible as I can within the constraints of the platform it is hosted on (circle.so) but we'll see if there are further improvements I can make there along the way.

Once you're in, head to the Accessibility space, which is where we'll get started.  I've posted [a message there](https://community.masteringmusescore.com/c/accessibility/braille-and-accessible-music-notation-study-group-launching) that you can respond to and let me know you're in.

Feel free to pass this message on to others, and if you have questions you'd need me to answer here before you join the study group, let me know!

# 7. With thanks to our funders

We’d like to express our huge thanks to all our funders for supporting the original project. We are most grateful for your support and belief in the work we’re doing:

* CNIB
* DAISY Strategic Development Fund
* Friends of dzb lesen
* MTM
* NLB
* Norwegian Association of the Blind
* NOTA
* ONCE
* RNIB
* SBS
* Vision Australia

As well as in-kind contributions from the agencies undertaking development work:

* dzb lesen
* MuseScore and
* Sao Mai Centre for the Blind.

And thank you to the following funders for helping to make the Implementation Phase a reality from September 2023:

* Friends of dzb lesen
* NOTA
* SBS