

## Expanding Programs to New Sites

By Anne Fitzgibbon, Executive Director, Harmony Program, NYC

As the El Sistema movement in the United States and Canada matures, more organizations consider the possibility of expanding beyond a single location. To expand successfully requires careful consideration of why and when to grow, as well as an awareness of the attendant challenges and benefits.

Ideally, organizations can anticipate their growth with ample time for planning. In Los Angeles, for example, Dan Berkowitz explains, "The vision for YOLA has always been to have at least three sites in Los Angeles County." In many cases, however, unforeseen opportunities and practical realities are the catalyst for action. In San Diego, the San Diego Youth Symphony was asked to fill a leadership vacuum at three existing afterschool programs, necessitating, in the words of Dalouge Smith, "a rapid response to a changing environment." The New Brunswick Youth Orchestra became a province-wide effort because of the small size of its municipalities. According to Ken McLeod, "We had to expand to other cities to reach a critical mass of kids." Similarly, YOSAL in Salinas expanded "to serve young people who could not make the trip to our main site because of distance," explains Carlotta Mellon. In St. Louis, space limitations forced *Orchestrating Diversity* to grow beyond a single site. As Mark Sarich puts it, "We just couldn't pack another aspect of the program into the arts center!"

Those who have expanded successfully offer several words of caution. Challenges are inevitable, but sound preparation can mitigate them. "It is very helpful to get more experience under your belt before you open a second location. It's not just an incremental change; it's an exponential one," warns McLeod. Sarich paid careful attention to timing, explaining "I knew we were really ready to expand when we had written our pedagogy and could see that it was thorough enough to ensure a faithful execution of our process." Dan Trahey of Baltimore's *OrchKids* emphasizes that while reaching more children is an alluring proposition, administrative capacity must keep pace with programmatic growth.

Once established, multiple sites offer programs valuable opportunities to experiment, collaborate, and diversify. "With more sites," says Berkowitz, "we have more places to experiment, a larger staff of creative people, and of course, more students."



An April 2013 Master Class brought together Harmony Program students from sites in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Photo: Billy Hunter

Sarich reports that expansion "broadens the pool of strategies for solving problems" and "expands educational impact through a variety of approaches." At New York City's Harmony Program, we find that multiple sites provide more opportunities for training new teachers through shadowing and mentoring. According to Trahey, the chance to share repertoire and bring together students from multiple sites helps bridge geographic and cultural divides: "It's not West and East Baltimore; it's one musical community." Berkowitz says, "In YOLA, Latino, African-American, Korean and Filipino students come together to accomplish a common goal – a true orchestra of LA."

While expansion must ultimately respond to the specific priorities of an organization and its community, we are fortunate to share the wisdom born of others' experiences in this growing field:

Mark Sarich in St. Louis: "Expand within your first location before you move to a new site."

Ken McLeod in New Brunswick: "Plan in advance. Know what it is you want to do and when you want to do it."

Dalouge Smith in San Diego: "Be sure expansion is aligned with and connected to long-term goals."

Dan Berkowitz in LA: "Finding the right community partner is essential to sustainability and success."

Dan Trahey in Baltimore: "Trying to make a cookie-cutter program won't work; kids won't respond to it."

And, to sum it all up in the words of Maestro Abreu, "Dream big; start small."

### Adding program sites

Join an online discussion with colleagues and this issue's authors. What are your ideas and questions? Go to: <http://lnkd.in/3J9EvAxxxxxxx>

## FROM THE EDITOR

"Grow without fear." It is one of Maestro Abreu's most famous sayings, and as the North American El Sistema movement heads into its second half-decade, it's an aspiration very much on our minds. Many programs that began by heeding the other half of that famous Abreu maxim – "Start small" – are expanding their activities and opening multiple sites; in this issue, Anne Fitzgibbon and Katie Wyatt bring news of a number of models for expansion.

Having spent time this year with some of the leaders of *Sistema Scotland*, I am reminded of the distinctive expansion model they are in the process of inventing. Unlike most North American programs, which tend to launch in big cities, the Scottish initiative Big Noise began in 2008 in the small community of Raploch, an economically depressed area that lies in a valley directly beneath historic Stirling Castle. Big Noise remained a single-site program for almost four years, concentrating its efforts on going deep instead of wide; it now includes over 80% of the children of Raploch, which was described recently by a local newspaper article as "a tiny place that now teems with tiny musicians."

In 2011, Big Noise underwent a rigorous evaluation by a national social research agency. Evaluators found that the program had "a positive impact on children's personal and social development, including increased confidence and self-esteem, improved social skills and team-working skills." These findings persuaded the local council to continue backing the program. Then, in June 2012, Dudamel and the Simon Bolivar Orchestra arrived to play a side-by-side summer solstice concert with the children of Raploch – and cities around Scotland clamored for a Big Noise project of their own. Thanks to the efforts of community leaders from the impoverished Glasgow neighborhood of Govanhill, a Big Noise center has opened in Glasgow. Starting in a community so small that the orchestra program can include most children, and achieving deep and documented excellence there before expanding – it's a model from which we can draw inspiration. In the words of Sistema Scotland's visionary founder, Richard Holloway: "It works because children know in their hearts how to play creatively, redemptively, if given half a chance: that is the chance we are giving them."

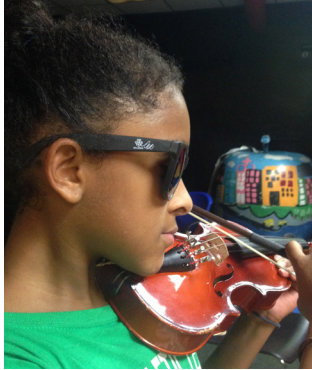
Tricia Tunstall

"We no longer put society at the service of art, but instead, art at the service of society, at the service of the weakest, at the service of the children." – José Antonio Abreu

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE U.S. & CANADIAN EL SISTEMA MOVEMENT

## News Notes

The Youth Orchestra of St. Luke's launches this month in New York City's Hell's Kitchen neighborhood. A new program of the Orchestra of St. Luke's Community and Education Department, in partnership with the local Police Athletic League, YOSL is fully



*A young YOSL violinist sports her new Orchestra of St. Luke's shades, warming up for a final concert at NYC's Police Athletic League summer camp. Photo: Jennifer Kessler*

integrated into the after-school program housed at the Duncan Center. Starting with 25 fourth to sixth graders as a string orchestra, it will grow into a full orchestra in the next few years. Students will have multiple performance and workshop opportunities at OSL's home at The DiMenna Center for Classical Music on Manhattan's West Side. YOSL plans to collaborate with the other NYC programs through coaching sessions with OSL musicians, joint workshops, and seminars. Contact: [education@oslmusic.org](mailto:education@oslmusic.org)

This month, POGO, Play On Greater Olympia, moves from its pilot phase into full a program. Part of the Student Orchestras of Greater Olympia, POGO sprang from founder Greg Allison's experience in a Villanova workshop, sponsored by Play On, Philly (their name credits the grateful connection) in the summer of 2012. They have been working with 15 Washington Middle School students in Olympia WA (expecting to double that this year) for 10 hours a week, half with string sectional teaching artists, and half in large group for rehearsal, music theory, music history and bucket band. All students in the pilot phase were beginners, and they have already performed at Olympia's key performance venues and for County Commissioners. For more information on POGO, contact Greg Allison: [gallison@osd.wednet.edu](mailto:gallison@osd.wednet.edu)

Joe Hamm, Program Coordinator and Teaching Artist at Soundscapes in Newport News VA, realized the U.S. movement didn't have a comprehensive database of programs; so he launched an effort to get consistent

baseline information from every U.S. program, to help track our growth. His effort is now supported by NAESIP – but fewer than half of U.S. sites have completed his survey. So, U.S. program leaders, please complete the survey as soon as possible; available at: [https://docs.google.com/a/soundscapeshr.org/forms/d/1Jfcng60DBPIKikJwqF8Bn-Jm\\_9urQ4lyLd-Mpj9CAcQ/edit](https://docs.google.com/a/soundscapeshr.org/forms/d/1Jfcng60DBPIKikJwqF8Bn-Jm_9urQ4lyLd-Mpj9CAcQ/edit)

## Resources

El Sistema Sweden has produced yet another advocacy-useful documentary film. Centered around an international conference and a Sistema side by side with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, this hourlong film is beautiful in its cinematography, personal moments, and emotional uplift. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzeVhribHyM>

Markers that Matter: Success Indicators in Early Learning and Education by Hallie Preskill, Nathalie Jones, and Afi Tengue is a new report developed by FSG with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The authors distill a set of 48 early childhood indicators that reflect healthy development of young children. The report also highlights 10 emerging themes and areas that are not sufficiently addressed by existing indicators. FSG leads Collective Impact community projects to achieve significant social results, and these indicators help community projects evaluate their impact. <http://www.fsg.org/tabid/191/ArticleId/936/Default.aspx?srpush=true>

The National Endowment for the Arts offers a free live webinar about How to Build Collective Impact Initiatives on September 11, 2013 at 3:00 p.m. (EDT) Collective Impact is a process of engaging local organizations/agencies in a common agenda to solve a complex social problem together. Learn how to lead a coalition to achieve youth development goals. Key speakers will be Gigi Antoni of Big Thought in Dallas, TX, and Denise Grande, Director of LA's Arts for All initiative. To join, register in advance. You can listen to the webinar using your computer speakers or dial in toll-free: 1-877-685-5350, participant code: 739587.

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## New Sight, New Sites

By Katie Wyatt, Executive Director, KidZNotes

At KidZNotes in Durham, NC, we wanted to make a splash in our first year, in a small city. So we needed to branch out quickly. We started with two important partnerships, the East Durham Children's Initiative (modeled on the Harlem Children's Zone) and the Duke University/Durham neighborhood partnership, and with three schools. From there, we grew!

Over the next three years we added two more schools, and created a "hub and spokes" model feeding all five schools into our núcleo in the center of the "Zone," a building that holds Duke University's free clinic, a career and technical center through Durham Public Schools, sports venues through Durham Parks and Rec, and now, KidZnotes. We hold after-school rehearsals in the schools, helping to build school pride in their mini-orchestras; on Saturdays we bring all the kids and families together at the núcleo.

The partnership model has been hugely beneficial for us. Since the majority of all nonprofit startups don't last into their fifth year, I take great comfort in knowing that KidZnotes will continue to be supported by important institutions in Durham. We are proud that the community feels we're too important to lose!

This fall we are piloting a second núcleo in Raleigh, pursuing similar partnership opportunities and building our system of orchestras through the public schools. As we grow, I'm finding that a pipeline of staff talent is crucial to feed this hungry beast. Our kids and parents always want more, and as the kids grow and excel, we're trying to stay a step ahead of them in offering opportunities and challenges.

A big part of our desire to expand KidZnotes is driven by the need to expand our talent pool. Our newly hired Program Director and Development Director are both from Raleigh, and their interest in KidZnotes peaked when we announced our expansion. The 'flywheel' concept of ease of progress as we continue to succeed certainly applies to us, particularly in serving families through offering a life in music.

North Carolina is about one-sixth the size of Venezuela. We're aiming for a presence in every major city in the state...so give us a few years, and we hope to be there!

**"The children of Venezuela are teaching the children of Scotland how to play again."  
– Richard Holloway, Chairman, Sistema Scotland**