

# the world ensemble

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE WORLDWIDE EL SISTEMA MOVEMENT

## The Value of Taking Students Abroad to Perform

By Rey Trombetta, Project Manager, *Sistema England - Young Leaders Programme*

The boy, an effervescent and loquacious musician often described by his teachers as 'a handful,' looked up at me with an expression of alarm and embarrassment. "I've got no clue how to do this," he whispered, gesturing towards his seatbelt. During the flight from London to Milan, his first time on an airplane, he seemed almost terrified. The following day, when we met the young players from Sistema Italy and Angola's *Kaposoka Orchestra*, he looked even more intimidated. "They are huge," he sighed. And yet, a week later, there he was sitting next to them, happily playing repertoire that we had initially thought too advanced for him. All his fear and self-doubt vanished, once he realized he was up to the task. As we flew back to Britain, now with zero emotional turbulence, one of the teachers said, "We left home with a group of children and we are returning with a group of young adults!" That is the power of taking our kids to perform abroad.

There are many benefits to travelling with children's orchestras. Juan Carlos Maggiorani, National Coordinator of *Orquestra Geração*, a Sistema program in Portugal, lists three. Faced with the responsibility of representing their

country in an international event, the children develop a level of commitment and a willingness to push past their (perceived) limits that is not usually seen in everyday practice. That's what Juan Carlos witnessed when he traveled to Vienna with ten young musicians for the *Sistema Europe Youth Orchestra* in 2013. Another benefit is what he describes as "the social aspect." It is great, he says, to see the children overcome language and cultural barriers, learn a phrase or two in another language, and make friends very quickly. And then there is the emotional impact. "The motivation, the team spirit and the friendship that develop within the group, from the very moment we all meet up to go to the airport, are great – because you see the children help and protect each other, and become leaders," says Juan Carlos.

For some Sistema teachers, the key benefits are mostly social. Tina Fedeski runs the Leading Note

Foundation's *OrKidstra Program* in Ottawa, Canada. Playing with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra during the *El Sistema Sweden Side by Side Camp*, in 2015, was a life-changing experience for some of the children, she says. But the most consistent benefits across her group were the powerful team building that occurs when young people travel together and share intense experiences ("the kids start out as friends and return as family," says Tina) and the fact that children get to see that music is truly a universal language.

Other teachers seem more impressed by the musical results of these trips. Sofía Hernández, Music Director at *Ummannaq Children's Home* in Greenland, has been delighted to discover that, months after they traveled to Denmark, some of her kids continue to practice their instruments during evenings. That did

not happen before the trip to Copenhagen, and it shows a level of long-term commitment that has a positive impact on the program. "They are much more focused, and they tell us that they want to play more music," she says. There are also experiences that make groups bond and have fun memories to share. Sofia remembers how the kids, who grew up on an Arctic island with not many species of insects, reacted

the first time they saw a spider. "They were terrified, begging me to kill it! When I got to the spider, it turned out to be the size of an ant! Later, when they learned how big spiders can really be, they all felt a bit embarrassed," she laughs.

Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz, founder of *Ang Misyon*, the Sistema program in the Philippines, traveled earlier this year with the program's Orchestra of the Filipino Youth for a series of performances in New York. He speaks of "an artistic excellence and a social maturity I never saw them reveal while in the Philippines," and advises teachers to organize a very structured and disciplined travel experience for their students, to ensure they learn prudence, accountability and the value of professionalism. "My students have returned home now as leaders," he says, "and are constantly coming to the headquarters, looking for things to do, and seeking out the new kids, so they can pay forward all their blessings."



*Students of El Sistema Japan taking a selfie with visiting students of the Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles, 2015.*  
Photo: Brian Lauritzen

## NEWS

### LATIN AMERICA

*International Seminario in Bogotá, Colombia*  
*Fundación Nacional Batuta* will host an *International Seminario on Music and Social Transformation* from October 4-7 in Bogotá, Colombia. The Seminario will explore the role of the arts in the construction of peace. This exchange is particularly important, given the current peace process... [Continued on page 2 >](#)

### NORTH AMERICA

*2016 Take a Stand Festival in the United States*  
The U.S. El Sistema movement completed the first step of its national orchestra process, in the 2016 *National Take A Stand Festival*. Take A Stand is a partnership of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Longy School of Music of Bard College. The Festival was comprised of two events, one for... [Continued on page 3 >](#)

### AFRICA

*Thinking Outside of the Box at El Sistema Kenya*  
*El Sistema Kenya* invited Matt Kolb from Fieldston School in New York City to share a social skills project with the children at DeBridge School in Waitthaka. Matt used an identity box project to get students to think about the kind of people they are, and list... [Continued on page 3 >](#)

### ASIA

*Sistema Whangarei trains teenagers*  
*Sistema Whangarei* in New Zealand has found that with encouragement and careful training, 13-year-olds can be effective tutors and volunteers, and can gain a great deal from the experience. Sistema Whangarei runs a leadership program... [Continued on page 3 >](#)

### EUROPE

*Side by Side by El Sistema 2016 in Sweden*  
In June, the international jubilee camp "*Side by Side by El Sistema 2016*" gathered 2,650 children in Gothenburg, Sweden, to make music together for five days. The camp was organized by the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra... [Continued on page 4 >](#)

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## Developing a Social Curriculum

By Clark Bryan, Founder of *El Sistema Aeolian*, London, Ontario, Canada; Concert Pianist

As El Sistema Aeolian grows in numbers to one hundred participants this year and opens its second dedicated facility, we've been struggling to define our program within the El Sistema movement and our own community. After five years of experimentation, we can be sure we are on the right pathway only if we continue to believe that "we don't have this right yet."

After attending the first-ever Positive Education Festival (IPEN) this July in Dallas, Texas, I feel that we are just opening the door on Positive Education. I believe we need to consciously build a social curriculum to parallel our music pedagogy. Following are a few examples of how we are attempting this.

El Sistema Aeolian was founded in 2004 at The Aeolian Performing Arts Centre, a legendary and historic facility in London, Ontario. Our students have opportunities to meet and perform with artists like Chick Corea, the Vienna Boy's Choir, and two-time Grammy Winner Matt Alber. Interacting with such outstanding artists allows them to build esteem and develop social navigation. These skills are essential to creating new horizons of choice in their lives.

This past year, we had a performing artist psychologist, Dr. Mario Faveri, coach our students using Mindfulness Techniques, with a focus on Positive Intelligence. The

students began and ended learning sessions with five minutes of Mindfulness, helping them to calm after a long day at school and get ready for new learning. Yes, this was evaluated and has great stats!

Our workshop on Emotional Intelligence has several stages. We begin by asking students to identify different emotional states of people shown in pictures. Then they identify these states in piano pieces I play for them and in pieces they are playing. We introduce new vocabulary to identify emotional subtleties, and we discuss how the skill of understanding emotional states can help them with music interpretation, self-regulation and social navigation.

Peer Mentorship is critical to building leadership skills. El Sistema Aeolian has developed a nine-step peer mentorship program that begins with modeling in the classroom and climaxes in teaching and conducting. Some of our students have evolved into conductors and paid teachers. We also have an adult El Sistema program that our senior youth help to teach. Finally, our students will regularly perform with a newly formed conductor-less orchestra, Rebelheart Collective. El Sistema Aeolian will maintain a lens on both the musical and the social outcomes of this experience.

## FROM THE PUBLISHER AND EDITOR

We have been thinking about all the ways Sistema programs around the world create the group identity and cohesion that make possible the social development that is their ultimate goal.

This issue of *The World Ensemble* is particularly rich in specific examples of ways that different programs intensify group identity. In the Philippines' Ang Misyon, the youth orchestras have wildly active Facebook connections. At El Sistema Aeolian in London, Canada, students study and practice mindfulness and emotional awareness together. And in both Ontario and Manila, students teach regularly; they teach their peers and they teach younger and older students. As in Venezuela, older students are both students and faculty members, committing to both roles and blurring the distinctions between them.

Rey Trombetta's lead article on taking groups of students to other countries points out a powerful way that some Sistema programs forge bonds. As we all know from our own experience, foreign travel immerses one in encounters with the new. As we encounter unfamiliar tastes and smells, small surprises and bigger challenges together, we get to know and rely upon each other, and come to love each other, in fresh and deeper ways. Group travel is a feature of many learning programs. But because of the greater intensity of Sistema norms, the impact can be greater for Sistema programs – as many programs attest.

Almost all El Sistema-inspired programs use a variety of techniques to increase group identity and cohesion. We learned from Venezuela that frequent performances build ensemble cohesion, especially when they are ambitious (rather than repetitive), and tighten the interdependence of young musicians. Wearing uniform clothing (an identifying tee shirt, or white shirt/dark pants) also fosters group identity.

Most programs abound in rituals and routines to build group identity: songs that start and finish activities or lessons, musical ways to invite focus, songs and routines for transitions, formalized greetings. We've seen a hundred variations on these, and marveled at the care and consistency many programs invest in their key routines. We also note how efficient they are for maximizing time and strengthening focus.

But everywhere, the most potent unifier of all is the music itself. "We are making a gang for music," we were told by Obadias Cunha of Brazil's NEOJIBA. He sees musical language as a language that can carry the same kind of "we are different together" identity that helps gangs to cohere. And a great beauty of this language is that it transcends cultures and borders. Ultimately, the "gang for music" can include everyone.

*Eric Booth and Tricia Tunstall*

## NEWS

### LATIN AMERICA

*Seminario in Colombia continued from page 1*

... in Colombia and the history of war and terrorism in the participating countries. Presentations will include Keith Swanwick on music education, Carmen Pardo on music and history, Jessica Grahn on music and neuroscience, and Craig Robertson on music and peace. Participants hail from the United Kingdom, Rwanda, Brazil, Afghanistan, and Paraguay, as well as from various regions of Colombia. The seminario will bring together academics, specialists, public policy makers, arts managers, musicians, teachers, and young people. To learn more, visit [www.fundacionbatuta.org](http://www.fundacionbatuta.org).

*Arpeggio Perú welcomed a delegate from the YOA's* (Youth Orchestra of the Americas) Global Leaders Program for a third time. Jessica Ling, a violinist from California who lives in Germany, visited Trujillo and Chimbote in May, where she gave master classes, led technique workshops, and rehearsed with the orchestras. Jessica's visit culminated in a recital performed alongside some of the master class students. Arpeggio is still seeking volunteers starting January 2017. For more information, contact Tatjana Merzyn at [tatjana@arpeggioperu.org](mailto:tatjana@arpeggioperu.org). Website: [www.arpeggioperu.org](http://www.arpeggioperu.org)

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## GUEST COLUMN

by Tinky Cabanatan Cruz, Managing Director, Ang Misyon, Manila, The Philippines

Traffic is outrageous in the Philippines. Corruption is a contagious disease, and poverty is endemic. How could this have happened to a country rich in natural resources, endowed with 7100 islands, and inhabited by at least 50 million musically inclined Filipinos?

Instead of pondering possible answers, Federico Lopez and Jovianney Emmanuel Cruz put together a team and the financing to improve the cultural situation and offer opportunities for their less privileged countrymen. In 2012, they launched Ang Misyon, our national El Sistema-inspired program.

Ang Misyon began with the 45-member strong national Orchestra of the Filipino Youth (OFY). From 45 members, the Ang Misyon family has grown to 450 – nearly a one thousand percent increase in 4 years. Thirteen satellite programs have been created across the country, where young children engage in ensemble music learning. And there is now a younger national orchestra, the Young Filipinos Orchestra, junior partners to the Orchestra of the Filipino Youth.

It is not easy to be in the OFY. Travel hours plus training hours are brutally long. Franz commutes 3 hours each way from Nueva Ecija to Manila; Wency travels 4 hours from Batangas to get to lessons and rehearsals. Since the young musicians come from different age groups, different provinces, and diverse religions and backgrounds, cultural adjustments can be challenging.

How do we keep our young people enrolled? The OFY members tell us that pep talks from their numerous teachers and mentors can be tough but are always motivating. Team-building activities are organized to help overcome the challenges of being in a family of 450. Music camps, chamber music support programs, social media forums – all these help to build an atmosphere of mutual respect. Kids who began as strangers are now friends. Most important, young people who felt lonely have found purpose.

And for the many kids who were living on \$2 a day, Ang Misyon's assistance with scholarships has meant they can finish high school and even college.

OFY musicians are encouraged to teach kids in the satellite orchestras, as their way of "paying it forward." They feel responsible not only for their music but for the development of their struggling communities as well. They develop a strong desire to share all the benefits and opportunities they have received from Ang Misyon with anyone who wishes to take a step towards a more positive, progressive Philippines. Thus our growing movement for classical music supports a common search for national and personal pride.

## NEWS

### LATIN AMERICA

In Medellín, Colombia, [La Red](#) is organizing a [National Seminario on Music Pedagogy and Didactics](#), to be held October 11-13 in La Casa de la Música in Medellín. In order to offer its teaching artists (TAs) more tools for serving a diverse population, La Red has been looking at neurodiversity – the idea that each individual learns in a different way. La Red TAs have discussed how to adapt the curriculum and shape content delivery to better include those with special educational needs. Also, teaching artists have started to develop content together, in order to reinforce musical and social concepts. La Red has organized workshops where TAs in each subject share their practices with the rest of the faculty, directors, and administration. To learn more about the seminario, contact Nataly Gómez García at [comunicacion.redmusica@gmail.com](mailto:comunicacion.redmusica@gmail.com).

[Sinfonía por el Perú](#) received an important visit from two representatives of [Dubai Cares](#) in July: Sinda Ouertani, Country Program Officer, and Abir Mahmoud, Senior HR Officer. Dubai Cares is a philanthropic organization that works to improve education for children in developing countries. Students at the host núcleo, Edelnor, sang for the visitors together with SPP's pre-youth choir; the Pre-Youth Symphony closed the concert. Contact: Maria Esther Araujo, Communications, [mariaesther.araujo@sinfoniapopereperu.org](mailto:mariaesther.araujo@sinfoniapopereperu.org).

### NORTH AMERICA

[Take a Stand Festival](#) continued from page 1 ... programs in the Western states and one for the Eastern states, both in beautiful, music-rich locations. The Festival West met in June at the Aspen Music Festival in Aspen, Colorado, where the core faculty of ten teachers guided 84 students from 19 programs for four days. The culminating concert was conducted by Juan Felipe Molano (of the Youth Orchestra Los Angeles) and Robert Spano (of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra). The Festival East brought together 84 students from 23 programs at Bard College (home of the Bard Music Festival) in New York's Hudson River Valley for four days in August. That program was conducted by Molano and by Leon Botstein, President of Bard College and Music Director of the American Symphony Orchestra. The repertoire for both concerts included Brahms' Academic Festival Overture and Piazzolla's "Libertango," the latter with the creative addition, in both concerts, of a student-devised variation section.

At the end of the performance at Bard, a student-improvised encore broke out onstage – a surprise even for most of the players, who are not experienced improvisers. In a remarkable display of artistic courage, all the young musicians found a way to join the brass and percussion players who were leading the experiment. Building on the experiences of these two regional gatherings, a national Sistema orchestra will come together in Los Angeles in the summer of 2017, under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel.

On July 1, Katie Wyatt, founder of the Kidznotes program in Durham, North Carolina, became the first Executive Director of [El Sistema USA](#), supported by an expanded 17-member Board of Directors. The organizational transition for ESUSA is in partnership with Duke University's Social Sciences Research Institute and the Office of the Vice Provost for the Arts; this partnership has earned a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to better understand the impact of U.S. Sistema programs. A new ESUSA strategic plan for 2020 includes seven main priorities: data gathering, analysis, evaluation and research; convenings; raising awareness and visibility; increasing membership; professional development of members; fundraising development; and advocacy. For further information, contact [Katie@elsistemausa.org](mailto:Katie@elsistemausa.org)

Earlier this year, New York City's [Harmony Program](#) collaborated with music publishing giant G. Schirmer, Inc. to [commission world-renowned composers Sir André Previn and John Corigliano](#) to write new music for Harmony Program ensembles. The organizations are working on future commissions while making the new repertoire available to other programs. As described by the Harmony Program: "The series, called Living Harmony, was born of our organizations' shared appreciation for the importance of inspiring young musicians with repertoire that is rich and engaging." Website: <http://harmonyprogram.org>

### AFRICA

[El Sistema Kenya](#) continued from page 1 ... their "inside" and "outside" characteristics on the inside and outside of the boxes. The project ended in a presentation by the children to their peers. This project was perfect for children who struggle to interact with adults on a peer-to-peer level and/or have difficulty expressing themselves. This project was able to help students increase their confidence and self-awareness, which is likely to improve their musical performance capabilities.

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## NEWS

### AFRICA, CONT.

After work was halted in July due to a lack of supplies, **Music Enlightenment Project** (MEP) in Braamfontein, South Africa, is now able to continue renovation on a new school building, thanks to a donation of 5,000 maxi bricks from Robert Brooks on behalf of Music is a Great Investment (MIAGI). "This is a great example of how community organizations who have larger capacity support other, less privileged community organizations," said MEP's founder, Adeyami Oladiran. MEP will continue to build up its new space, even as teaching continues. For more information, contact Adeyami Oladiran at [adeyemi.mep@gmail.com](mailto:adeyemi.mep@gmail.com).

### ASIA

*Volunteers continued from page 1*

... in conjunction with the local Girls High School. Positive results include increased enthusiasm for music and a greater uptake of music as a school subject the following year. Through this program, students are encouraged to volunteer to help younger children. Training is given in how to be an orchestra and in musicianship and leadership, through fun theatre games and workshops. To learn more, visit <http://www.sistemawhangarei.org.nz>.

Sistema Aotearoa recently brought together 130 students from four regional Sistema-based programs in New Zealand for a full day of activities, culminating in a concert at the magnificent Auckland Town Hall. This fun and inspiring event allowed students to meet new friends and develop an empathy and understanding of each other's distinct communities. A highlight of the day was the launch of Sistema New Zealand's own "Waiata Maranga rā" song, written by Maori composer Rob Ruha. For more information, visit <http://apo.co.nz/sistema-aotearoa>.

### EUROPE

*Side by Side in Sweden continued from page 1*

... in collaboration with El Sistema Sweden. Participants rehearsed, socialized, and celebrated on the last day of camp with a magnificent concert, playing and singing alongside musicians of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. To learn more, visit [www.elsistema.se](http://www.elsistema.se).

Sistema Europe organized a **Global Symposium on Diversity and Inclusion in Classical Music** at London's Southbank Centre in July, as part of European Sistema

programs reaching out to learn with and from differing forms of social action music practice. Led by the Sphinx Organization, Chineke! (Europe's new black and minority ethnic orchestra), London Music Masters, Sistema Europe, and Southbank Centre, it was an energizing day, bringing together practitioners from Africa, Europe, South America and the U.S. A powerful speaking platform was opened for a new generation of young, articulate and diverse performers. More details are here: [marshallmarcus.wordpress.com/2016/07/20/gsd1](http://marshallmarcus.wordpress.com/2016/07/20/gsd1).

In September, the children and young musicians of **United Kids of Music** (UKOM), run by the Nucleo Associazione ImmaginArte (a part of **Sistema Lombardia** in Varese), went on a **Russian tour**. Thirty-five young musicians from Italy, France, England, and Bosnia played five concerts in Moscow and three in St. Petersburg with young Russian colleagues, in support of friendship and solidarity between countries. The UKOM concerts featured classical orchestral repertoire accompanied by local youth choirs. There were also concerts featuring the most promising young instrumental soloists performing selected repertoire of Vivaldi, Sarasate, Bach and Piazzolla.

The **EUNET/Europahaus "Srebrenica" project** has recently been opened in partnership with **Superar Srebrenica** in Bosnia. The organization is part of a network bringing together 67 "European houses" from 21 countries. This is the first such house in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the main goals of the "Haus der guten Töne" is for many different organizations promoting peace, tolerance and human rights to work together. The opening was attended by Martin Pammer, Austrian Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Camil Durakovic, the Mayor of Srebrenica. "Europahaus" will be a place where young people of Srebrenica can learn more about the European Union.

In July, the **Geração Orchestra of Sistema Portugal** brought all its students together for **two grand concerts** with special conductors José Jesus Olivetti and Ulyses Ascanio. The first concert featured over 500 students from the beginner orchestras, playing with joy, movement, and energy music by Handel, Charpentier, Bizet, and Tchaikovsky. The second concert featured more advanced ensembles performing works by Verdi, Shostakovich, Beethoven, and others. Over 1,000 people attended each performance. Bravo!

## RESOURCES

A scholarly thesis by Mariana Pinto, a leading teaching artist in the Portuguese and Italian Sistema programs, examines El Sistema teaching and learning principles through the framework of the social cognitive theory (SCT) of Canadian psychologist Albert Bandura. The thesis, "**El Sistema and Collective Musical Learning as an Answer to Social Unease in Young People: the Importance of Self-Efficacy**," explores how El Sistema learning environments provide experiences that develop self-efficacy, meaning a sense of control over one's life choices. Written for the University of Florence, Italy. <https://s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/mpintopapers/Pinto.+El+Sistema.thesis.pdf>

Danielle Williams's recent Master's degree thesis for Harvard's Graduate School of Education, entitled "**Music for Peace in the Context of Brazil**," analyzes ways in which peace education is integrated into music education in lower socio-economic communities. Based on research at Brazil's NEOJIBA, the thesis considers the influence of El Sistema on the focal topic. Download at: <http://tinyurl.com/hb25w44>

The new book *Playing For Their Lives: The Global El Sistema Movement For Social Change Through Music* by Tricia Tunstall and Eric Booth, was published in September by W.W. Norton & Co.. Wynton Marsalis says the book, which is based on extensive study of programs in 25 countries, "encourages us all to broaden our concept of the achievable." [www.playingfortheirlives.com](http://www.playingfortheirlives.com)

Author Clarification – also regarding *The World Ensemble* issue #3, Adele Diamond, author of *Developing and Supporting Executive Function*, writes this clarification to one sentence in her piece: "I believe it will be shown that El Sistema-inspired programs provide powerful support for executive functions, although no evidence for this exists as yet."

*"If I were asked to define artistry, I would say that it is a subtle reaction to barbarism and cruelty. By that I mean that in social or national or tribal division or strife, what one finds is imbalance, discrepancy. What one finds in music are infinite subtleties, sensitivities, and an infinite number of gradations, controls, checks and balances." - Yehudi Menuhin, violinist*