

the world ensemble

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE WORLDWIDE EL SISTEMA MOVEMENT

An Orchestra of Young Leaders

By Fiona Cunningham, Chief Executive Officer, *Sistema England*

The *Sistema England Young Leaders* are an orchestra of the most skilled and committed young musicians from six Sistema programmes in England: *In Harmony Lambeth*, *In Harmony Liverpool*, *In Harmony Newcastle*, *In Harmony Telford*, *Sistema in Norwich* and *The Nucleo Project*. These young musicians are building a youth orchestra of high musical potential while becoming a close-knit band of future leaders (in all walks of life, we reckon) who will inspire others to hope, dare, stretch, fight for more.

The selection posed crucial questions. Should we simply choose the technically best musicians? Or should commitment be honored as well? In the end, we asked teachers from all six programs to nominate students for both skill and attitude. We didn't set rigid criteria for instrumental balance; the resulting orchestra is a touch bottom-heavy, but who cared?

We accepted every nominated musician from every program, so our orchestra is a celebration of the nationwide Sistema community.

The 5-day pilot program, with 35 players from London, Liverpool and Norwich, was launched in October

2015, with teachers and mentors from the UK, El Sistema Venezuela and Sistema Portugal and led by Félix Briceño (El Sistema Venezuela) and Juan Carlos Maggiorani (Sistema Portugal).

Once the orchestra was born, any adult deliberation about its continued existence felt simply obsolete. The Young Leaders made that choice for us: "We're not a team, we're a family." Over the next year, as the orchestra grew, experiences included performing at London's Southbank Centre during a Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra residency and attending an intensive 5-day summer camp.

A collective identity is emerging, mostly of the young musicians' own making, but with key inputs from us. Elements of that identity include a supportive 'family' dynamic underpinning all activity; the 'impossible challenge' of setting musical goals just out of reach, for focus and motivation; inspiring and effective leadership, to accelerate progress; emphasis on developing ownership, accountability and reflective practice; and an international teaching team and repertoire for broadened cultural horizons.



Young Leaders Orchestra performs at Epic Studios in Norwich. Photo: Iván González, Sistema England

Our vision is of a Youth Company of 200+ members that holds its own artistically and that pioneers the idea of the 21st century orchestra, with personal development pathways for each member and a strong youth board. The purposes of this orchestra are multiple: to amplify the young people's voices, to accelerate their musical development, and to support their growth as role models who will inspire their 3500+ peers. We hope to draw the gaze of institutions wishing to provide further opportunities, while engaging with the wider music education sector in support of the infinite potential of young people. Finally, through this orchestra, we seek to strengthen England's Sistema and 'music for social action' community for maximum positive impact: even where network leadership meetings can fail to mobilize, everyone can get behind dedicated young people from different parts of the country crossing distance and difference for a shared musical endeavor.

So far, the program has increased trust and kinship between organisations and leaders, and we appreciated these reflections from our colleagues: "Sistema England Young Leaders is essential... it raises the bar for the kids and our tutors in a way we could not; it provides a high excellence opportunity and progression route; it will generate national publicity and help shift perceptions about young people in 'challenging circumstances'; and it has already engaged parents, adding to their perceptions of quality and impact – many were blown away by the final performance."

At the start of the pilot, the young musicians' visions focused on the high profile venues in which they would perform – global domination. Last week I watched the rough cuts for our next film. Now they talk about reaching out to expand their music family and engage with other Sistema programmes around the world – more like a global hug.

The Young Leaders Orchestra is just one example of how taking action with young people can be the best possible course of action for programs trying to build networks and partnerships. A tip from our experience: don't get bogged down in creating a perfect strategic plan that then sits on a shelf. Take a leap, and create something that is authentic, no matter how small or apparently ephemeral. And do it together with the young people you are serving.

NEWS

NORTH AMERICA

[New York Phil Celebrates Very Young Composers](#)

Jon Deak's program, *Very Young Composers* (VYC), has grown this past year, reaching 3,000 students worldwide. At the Catedral Latinoamericana de Composición del Conservatorio de Música Simón Bolívar, El Paraiso, students work with Teaching Artist David Pedroza and his team... [Continued on page 2 >](#)

AFRICA

[LinkUp Concert in Kenya](#)

On 23 October, 327 students from seven economically disadvantaged communities joined the *National Youth Orchestra of Kenya* for a LinkUp Concert, conducted by Levi Wataka; *LinkUp* is a program of Carnegie Hall in New York. The students had been preparing since January, learning to... [Continued on page 3 >](#)

ASIA

[El Sistema in Palestinian Refugee Camps](#)

Al Kamandjati Music School is a program in Ramallah, Palestine that aims to support the education and schooling of children by making music more accessible, especially for those living in refugee camps and villages throughout Palestine and Lebanon. This project encourages... [Continued on page 3 >](#)

EUROPE

[El Sistema Academy in Sweden](#)

The El Sistema Sweden Foundation is inviting music teachers from all over Europe to learn more about El Sistema's methodology, pedagogy, and repertoire at a three-day workshop at the *El Sistema Academy*, on 3-5 February in Stockholm... [Continued on page 4 >](#)

LATIN AMERICA

[Batuta in Colombia Celebrates 25 Years](#)

This year, *Fundación Nacional Batuta* in Colombia is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Earlier this year, it produced a book, "Batuta 25 Años," and an accompanying CD, which has 26 musical tracks as well as an oral history of... [Continued on page 4 >](#)

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Music and Asylum: A Bridge

By Jennifer Kessler, Arts and Education Producer, and former Sistema Fellow

In many parts of the world, families are fleeing by the tens and hundreds of thousands to escape persecution, war, famine or death squads. European countries are struggling to cope with the influx of refugees. In some countries, El Sistema programs and principles are arising within refugee camps as a particularly humane response to the desperate circumstances of refugee children and families.

In Greece, over 62,000 Afghans, Iraqis, and Syrians are stranded, waiting for relocation as refugees or for asylum. Their adoptive country is doing what it can to help these newcomers feel united with other residents.

Enter [El Sistema Greece](#): a new music program focusing first on choral activities that joins major artists and institutions to bring music education to up to 2,000 children living in the Kara Tepe, Lavrio, and Skaramagkas camps, with plans to expand to other sites and to underserved Greek children. Co-founded by Anis Barnat of Askonas Holt and Sophie Lamprou of Impact Hub Athens, the program was designed by Lourdes Sánchez, director of El Sistema de Orquestas in Venezuela.

Barnat describes the projected benefits of the program as similar to other El Sistema programs: "it helps [the children] develop values like leadership, solidarity with

peers, [and] self esteem." Since the duration of a child's time at the camps could range from 2 weeks to several years, Barnat explains that the program is designed to "allow any child to follow the lessons, whether it is for a short time or for long term," with repertoire that includes "Greek traditional songs, in order for the children to learn the language, and lullabies from all the countries of origin, to foster a better understanding of one another's cultures." Instructors include local Greek music teachers, international guest artists such as opera singer Joyce DiDonato, and refugee teachers from within the camps.

El Sistema Greece is creating a way to bridge the gap between "them" and "us." As young people in Greek neighborhoods join the camp choirs for special projects, a cultural exchange occurs that encourages empathy, understanding, and mutual respect. One child may have been born in Lesbos, and another in Iraq, but right now they're sitting next to each other learning the language of Beethoven. If the Iraqi child stays in Greece, she'll already be integrated into a musical community. And if she gets relocated to Berlin, she may be able to join a music program there, and speak the musical language of the children there, even if she hasn't yet learned German.

FROM THE PUBLISHER AND EDITOR

Aspen trees grow abundantly across northern North America, reaching further south in the Rockies. The mountains glow every autumn with the vibrant yellow leaves of these trees, which are often able to survive fires and drought. The secret of the aspens is that each tree is actually a shoot reaching up from one gigantic root system. They look separate, but are invisibly connected by a network that sustains them all and lasts longer than does any single tree.

The global movement of El Sistema-inspired programs shares a common root system – a common set of ideals, values, and goals. Its reach can be hard to perceive, but it's there, and can sustain us when challenges get severe and we get exhausted. We urge you to tap into this vital network. [Sistema Global](#) is one convenient tool to facilitate connection. And this newsletter provides an easy way to connect with colleagues – just click on a hyperlink (the words in purple) in any article, and within seconds you can ask those program leaders the question that will help you learn from their experimentation and success. Please use these tools to access the global root system of Sistema-inspired programs and draw from it fresh inspiration and invigoration.

In our book *Playing for Their Lives*, we ask the question: "Do the Sistema-inspired programs around the world comprise a movement?" Our conclusion, based on our visits to programs in 25 countries and our regular talks with teaching artist colleagues throughout the world, is that yes, we are a movement. Often, it may not feel like one; the sheer arduousness of building and sustaining a single program can be consuming, and there's not much time to look up, look around, and reach out. But we believe that the sense of connectedness is slowly growing. We especially admire the way [Sistema Europe](#) has been accomplishing mutual connection for five years now, with each program contributing to the success of all. We hope you'll make it a habit to think about your work as part of a greater whole.

And more: We hope you'll identify your work that way publicly. Every time you speak about your program, mention that it is a part of a larger network of similar programs that now include almost a million young musicians in difficult circumstances around the world. You will strengthen your own program and make the whole movement stronger – just as the root system of the aspens sustains each tree.

Right now – *especially* now, when the forces of divisiveness, antagonism and fear seem ever stronger across the world – it's time to activate our global movement to greater utility and visibility!

Eric Booth and Tricia Tunstall

NEWS

NORTH AMERICA

[Very Young Composers continued from page 1](#)

... to both play and compose music. Student composer Angie Andrade wrote a piece for VYC's 20th Anniversary concert as part of the New York Philharmonic's 'Biennial,' and it was performed by 10 members of the NY Philharmonic. Angie's work, "El Huracán de la Unión," was powerful far beyond what people might think an adolescent could create. Angie was live-streamed from El Paraíso to hear her work and that of her fellow global composers. For more information, visit www.jondeak.com/vyc.htm.

There is a new regular feature in the newsletter *The Ensemble*, which covers the El Sistema-inspired movement in North America. Called the "[Action for the Month](#)," it is a political action proposed for all U.S. program directors, teachers and other stakeholders to join. Devised in response to the troubling recent national elections in the U.S., this monthly collective action is intended to amplify the political voice of the U.S. El Sistema-inspired movement.

To celebrate its tenth anniversary, the [Youth Orchestra Los Angeles \(YOLA\)](#)... [Continued on page 3>](#)

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GUEST COLUMN

By Kika Materula, Artistic Director and Founder of the Xiquitsi Project / Maputo Classical Music Season, with Stephanie Scherpf, Managing Director of El Sistema USA 2009-2011

I was first introduced to my instrument, the oboe, when I was 13 years old. I was part of a group of students who traveled from Mozambique to participate in a 6-year student exchange program at the Evora Vocational Music School in Portugal. Although I had been fully immersed in music from a young age, I didn't know what an oboe was, because there were not many references for classical music in my country.

I became a professional oboist, and since 2009 I have been a soloist with the Porto Concert Hall Symphony Orchestra of Portugal. But every few years I have returned to Mozambique to participate in classical music festivals. I also travel very frequently to Salvador, Brazil to work with Ricardo Castro's **NEOJIBA**, where I first encountered El Sistema, and I have visited Venezuela as well.

In 2013, I founded Xiquitsi, Mozambique's El Sistema-inspired program. We started with 40 students, and today we have 220, comprising three string orchestras and a choir. My dream is one day to have a full orchestra not just in Maputo but also in every Mozambican city.

Ricardo has been my most important mentor, and I often talk to my Mozambican students about my Brazilian students as well as about young musicians I've met in Venezuela. These young people from the other side of the world are our inspiration and our proof that we can indeed change lives with music as our weapon.

My country is one of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa, but we are rich in our traditional music and culture. Incorporating *Mocambicanidade* (Mozambican-ness) is a principle that guides the work I do with Xiquitsi (named for a Mozambican shaker instrument). We play primarily classical music (particular favorites are Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, and Ennio Morricone's *Cinema Paradiso*), but with a healthy supplement of Mozambican music that has been arranged – often by our students – for the orchestra. In concerts, we always do some type of collaboration with Mozambican musicians, sometimes with players of the *timbila*, which is part of the marimba family.

The magic of teaching music here is to see my students' eyes shining whenever they hear themselves playing beautiful music and have the opportunity to share it with the public. My objective is not to create the world's best orchestra; it's to make the best possible Mozambican orchestra, using our culture, our feelings and our stories to touch hearts by playing music in a way that only we, as Mozambicans, can.

NEWS

NORTH AMERICA

YOLA continued from page 2

... went on a four-city tour of California. The tour culminated in a sold-out performance at the Paramount Theatre in Oakland, with Gustavo Dudamel conducting. The program included Arturo Márquez's "Conga del Fuego" and Danzón No. 2, Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 5, the final movement of Dvorák's Eighth Symphony, and the "Raiders March" by John Williams.

AFRICA

LinkUp in Kenya continued from page 1

... sing songs and play the recorder. For many students, this was their first formal music training, and now several are playing orchestral instruments. LinkUp partners with over 95 orchestras, engaging with more than 380,000 students and teachers every year, in the U.S. as well in 7 foreign countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America; the partnership in Nairobi is the first in Africa. Here is a video of the concert: <https://youtu.be/CtfnhokyQc0>

The 17th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) met in Johannesburg, South Africa, and focused on the regulation of musical instruments that cross borders. The League of American Orchestras and The National Association of Music Merchants co-hosted a special event for delegates, featuring a performance by Kamogelo Mthembu and Camila Lungile Mathebula of the **Music Enlightenment Project** in Braamfontein. The students were accompanied by program founder Adeyemi Oladiran, and the music was described by the hosts as "the high point of the event, by far."

In October, **Ensemble Medici held a fundraising concert in Nairobi for El Sistema Kenya**. A German string quartet, **Ensemble Medici** was formed over 30 years ago by members of the Orchestra of German Pediatricians. All of the quartet members have studied medicine, as well as their instruments, to a professional level. Ensemble Medici also offered free masterclasses for local musicians and a free concert for the children of the **National Youth Orchestra of Kenya, Ghetto Classics**, and El Sistema Kenya. Their concert tour focused on supporting the classical music education for children living in the slums. As pediatricians, they know how music can greatly influence the physical, social, and emotional development of children.

ASIA

Palestinian Refugee Camps continued from page 1

... children to make music and thus transcend the daily hardships due to the Israeli military occupation. Al Kamandjati is currently providing music education to 500 students. An orchestra made up of Al Kamandjati students, teachers, and alumni performed a special Christmas concert in Bethlehem that aired across German national television on Christmas Eve. This concert will host a number of guest artists alongside Al Kamandjati's orchestra, including South Africa's opera star Pumeza Matshikiza, the Vatican's Sistine Chapel Choir, and Russian violinist virtuoso Yury Revich. On Christmas Eve, be sure to tune in to ZDF television station in Germany or see the online streaming to experience this enchanting concert! Visit www.alkmandjati.com to learn more.

The Bamboo School, started as a traditional charitable organization in Vietnam in 2014 by Pablo Yang, is now well into the process of transitioning to become a social enterprise model. In the context of a developing nation, social enterprise models can operate with more integrity, and allow for more time to be spent on quality of programming and services. This will also help the organization make a long-term impact for students. The Bamboo School has moved into a beautiful new space and is poised to renew its commitment to giving voice to all those who are denied it. For more information: pablo@thebambooschool.org

In 2013, the **Butterfly Orchestra was established in Puli**, a small town in the mountainous area of central Taiwan. The program started right after the town was hit by a big earthquake in 1999, when one couple from Taipei started teaching strings to local kids affected by the disaster, to build a community for them. Fourteen years later, the orchestra, which was named after the beautiful butterflies in Puli, expanded its activity in cooperation with the local schools to **launch El Sistema Puli**. On 19th November, seven teenage members from Puli visited Soma Children's Orchestra, in Soma, Japan, for a musical exchange. Soma members first welcomed the guests with two movements from "Concerto Grosso Op.6 No.4" by Corelli, conducted by twelve-year-old Mr. Nakagawa. Then members joined a rehearsal of "New World Symphony" by Dvořák and "The Nutcracker Suite" by Tchaikovsky. These tunes will be performed at the Christmas concert held by the Soma Children's Orchestra in December.

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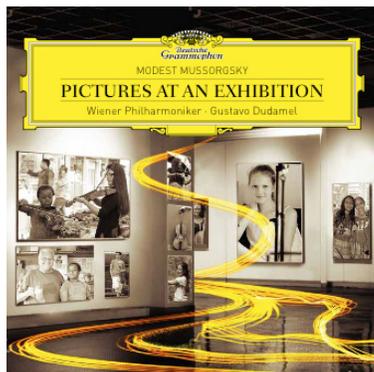
EUROPE

El Sistema Academy continued from page 1

With outstanding teachers and conductors from Venezuela and Sweden, including Ron Davis Álvarez, Birgitta Mannerström-Molin, and Josbel Puche, the El Sistema Academy will offer workshops for orchestra, choir, and paper orchestra. For more information, email: info@elsistema.se. Sign up: <http://tinyurl.com/j436b4c>

This past June, Superar organized the second international Superar Summer Camp for choir and orchestra programs in Vienna. The camp welcomed 140 children from eight European countries. The participants worked on partly joint and partly separate pieces for choir and orchestra with different teachers from the participating programs. At the closing concert, the children presented a variety of repertoire ranging from Kapsberger to Piazzolla, Mendelssohn to traditional music of Bosnia, Peru and South Africa.

Thanks to Deutsche Grammophon, students from Superar Vienna participated in a photo workshop led by Viennese photographer Claudia Prieler. They created wonderful pictures of themselves with their instruments, which were used for Gustavo Dudamel's new album cover of the recordings of Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition," played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. In August, the new album cover and a selection of the best pictures were presented in the City of Salzburg, Hotel Sacher.



The "SONG" initiative, spearheaded by Sistema programs in the Lombardy region of Italy, celebrated its 5th year of activity with an intense "Sistema Week" in Milan, Varese, and Cremona. Piano duet stars Katia and Marielle Labèque performed Saint-Saens' "Carnival of the Animals" with

the advanced FuturOrchestra and held an interactive workshop. An hour-long documentary is being produced by Classica HD featuring each SONG network program.

The next Learning Visit to Big Noise Raploch of Sistema Scotland will be on 23 March 2017. Learning Visits give participants the opportunity to observe the program in action. Attendance is free; however, spaces are strictly limited. For more information: <http://makeabignoise.org.uk/news-events/learning-visits-big-noise-raploch>

LATIN AMERICA

Batuta's 25th Anniversary, continued from page 1

... an oral history of Batuta told by its alumni. Batuta also held competitions to design a new logo for the foundation and to seek a new composition to commemorate the anniversary. Finally, Batuta organized the International Seminario on Music and Social Transformation in Bogotá. Today, Batuta serves approximately 45,000 students per year in 197 locations around Colombia. Its programs include "Music for Reconciliation," "Music at the Border," and "Voices of Hope," which works with victims of Colombia's violence. For more information about Babuta: www.fundacionbatuta.org

In October, Arpeggio Peru's Orquesta de Barro received a visit from the Youth Orchestra of Saxony (Germany). The two orchestras toured together, led by Milko Kersten and Paul Bazalar, and performed "Variations on a Theme by Haydn" by Brahms, "Fuga con Pajarillo" by Aldemaro Romero, and "Pachamama Matrem Virginem" by Mauricio Olivanti. The German guests led improvisation workshops with Arpeggio students. It was a great experience for the young musicians. Arpeggio is still seeking volunteer violinists starting March 2017. For information, contact tatjana@arpeggioperu.org

La Red in Colombia culminated its 20th anniversary year with the "Música Viva" Festival in Medellín. The celebration included an "Experiences Fair," in which each of La Red's 27 music schools shared its identity, history, and the impact it's had on the community. During the fair, "Música Viva" showcased performances by La Red ensembles as well as local artists and La Red graduates. There was also a celebratory concert at the University of Medellín. For more information, contact Nataly Gómez García at comunicacion.redmusica@gmail.com.

The Varkey Foundation recently announced its Top 50, the semi-finalists for the prestigious Global Teacher Prize (selected from over 20,000 applications from 170 countries). Among these 50 is Ron Davis Álvarez, a leading teacher and ambassador from Venezuela's El Sistema, who founded the program in Greenland, now works extensively in Sweden and with Sistema Europe, and has worked in many countries. The winner is announced on March 19th, and receives a one million dollar prize.

RESOURCES

The U.S. Department of Arts and Culture sounds like a government agency, but it is actually a collective artist-activist project to connect artists and communities in cultural democracy. The USDAC recently presented a ten-point platform of short- and longer-term goals that is inspiring many with its progressive vision for the ways an arts-activated populace can create change. Many Sistema programs in the U.S. are signing on to endorse it, and programs in other countries may be inspired by it: <http://usdac.us/platform> You may be interested in the opening keynote speech at their first national conference in November, by Adam Horowitz, the co-founder of the USDAC: <http://tinyurl.com/zpvd4o8>

A small but provocative research study from Canada suggests that group music instruction (even just a year of once-a-week 40 minute lessons) boosts pro-social skills and empathy in eight and nine year olds. No wonder more intensive programs have such a transformative impact on young lives. And the instrument the children were learning in this study? – ukulele! <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0141449>

In The World Ensemble issue #3, there was a mention of a "Conduct Us" concert – some readers asked us what that is. As an answer...enjoy this little film introducing an idea that a number of programs have used in recent years: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_cbnBak8RI

"The true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the social, but from the social to the individual." – Lev Vygotsky, psychologist