

the world ensemble

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE WORLDWIDE EL SISTEMA MOVEMENT

El Sistema Academy – A Next Step in Our Learning

By Malin Claussen, Communicator, *El Sistema Sweden*

As the El Sistema global movement develops and spreads, its future seems to rely on a combination of knowledge from Venezuela and other Latin American countries, on the one hand, and resources from countries with good general educational systems and newer El Sistema programs, on the other.

This is the idea behind the **El Sistema Academy of Sweden**: Sweden offers the opportunity, and Venezuela shares the knowledge.

The first session of the El Sistema Academy took place at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm in February 2017. In attendance were 120 teachers from eight nations. The three-day event offered teachers a choice of three tracks:



Josbel Puche (center) teaching rhythmic songs they use with small children in Venezuela. Photo: Malin Claussen

orchestra, choir, and paper orchestra. The orchestra track was led by Ron Davis Alvarez, the artistic leader of El Sistema Sweden, who grew up in a Caracas barrio and, despite his young age, has worked with El Sistema in 17 countries. Ron focused on how to inspire children to strive for common goals; how to inspire them to love the music; and how to plan and create a practical and stimulating repertoire, for beginners as well as for more experienced students. The assisting manager for this track was Tupac Rivas, a professor of music theory and orchestra management from El Sistema Venezuela.

For those interested in choir, Birgitta Mannerström-Molin, who was named 2016 Children's Choir Conductor of the Year in Sweden, shared her versatile experience with developing musicality in children, including very young children. Birgitta has been involved in the Swedish El Sistema movement since 2010. She provided practical tips and tools for encouraging children to sing and developing their voices from an early age. Accompanied by composer Anna Cederberg-Orreteg, this course also offered insight in composing and creating music for and with children.

Josbel Puche, a specialist in pre-school methodology from Venezuela, was visiting Sweden for the first time. Her leadership of the third track at the El Sistema Academy offered a unique opportunity for teachers working in pre-schools to learn how to use student-created paper-maché instruments in teaching the youngest children how to make music together. Josbel started the "Paper Orchestra" many years ago in the

núcleo La Rinconada in Venezuela, because there was not enough money for real instruments for all the children. She soon came to realize that the handmade instruments were a valuable pedagogical tool as a first step for building an orchestra together. In the Paper Orchestra, children learn how to hold instruments correctly and how to coordinate movements within a

group, elements of playful practice in the routines and norms they will need for orchestra rehearsals later on. Lea Vartiainen, an attending teacher from Finland, said, "It was difficult and took many hours, but we learned many creative ideas and knowledge about how to use paper instruments."

Assisting in this track was Teresa Hedborg,

pre-school teacher and music pedagogue in El Sistema Hammarkullen, the first El Sistema program for pre-school children in Sweden.

Teachers learning the Paper Orchestra method realized the complexity of building paper instruments the Venezuelan way...to the point that one participant even got angry. But, as Josbel Puche pointed out, it has taken Venezuela many years to develop this method. "And there is never just one way to do things," she added.

Attendees at the Academy included teachers from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Italy, Germany, U.K., and the U.S. In a post-session survey, most respondents rated the experience highly and expressed a wish for more in the future. In particular, they wanted more time for informal exchange among attendees in between the official sessions. "It was so stimulating that I didn't want to miss a second," wrote Ulrika Svedén from Sweden, "but there was so much to take in that I was exhausted!" Others expressed similar sentiments: "The workshops were very intense!" "So much to learn!" and "Maybe an extra day?"

Diego Ravetti, from El Sistema in Lombardy, Italy, said, "The Academy gave us an interesting mix of ideas from many countries. I will bring many of them back to Italy."

The next Academy will take place in Stockholm on January 26-28, 2018. Enriched by the learning from this year, it will present a developed program with two levels, one for newcomers and one for those who attended this year and want to build on the experience.

NEWS

ASIA

[Sounds of Palestine's Important Performance](#)

In April, the Palestinian El Sistema program [Sounds of Palestine](#), located in Bethlehem, had the honor to participate in a special event where 13 students from their Al-Majdal Orchestra performed at the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah (the West Bank) for... [Continued on page 2 >](#)

EUROPE

[Sistema Europe's Summer Residency](#)

The [Sistema Europe Youth Orchestra](#) (SEYO) 2017 Summer Residency will be held in Athens from July 20 to August 1. The camp is organized by Sistema Europe, bringing together 231 students and nearly 50 teachers from 20 countries. The final concert will be the closing concert of the... [Continued on page 3 >](#)

LATIN AMERICA

[Batuta Partners with Berklee College of Music](#)

[Fundación Nacional Batuta](#) has begun a collaboration with [Berklee College of Music](#) that will benefit young people and teachers throughout Colombia. After a visit to Bogotá, Roger Brown, president of Berklee, voiced his support of... [Continued on page 3 >](#)

NORTH AMERICA

[El Sistema Leaders/Teachers Honored](#)

Two of the six [Citizen Artist Fellows](#) named by the [Kennedy Center](#) are from the Sistema field: Katie Wyatt (Executive Director of [El Sistema USA](#)) and Vijay Gupta (violinist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Founder of [Street Symphony](#)). [Continued on page 4 >](#)

AFRICA

[El Sistema Kenya and YOA Collaboration](#)

This March, [El Sistema Kenya](#) in Nairobi and [Let It Shine](#) Program in Arusha, Tanzania welcomed two representatives from Youth Orchestra of the Americas' [Global Leaders Program](#). Gabrielle Molina (clarinet) and Nathaly Ossa (violin) organized an instrument petting zoo at Let It Shine and... [Continued on page 4 >](#)

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The First Global Sistema Creative Project

By Ismar Poric, Artistic Director of *Superar Srebrenica*, Bosnia

Our world is shrinking...but it is also becoming an angrier place. In 2016, as I thought about how the tide of fear, hate and discrimination is rising, I had the idea that the children of El Sistema-inspired programs around the world could perhaps have a voice, and make a difference, by singing an anthem of peace for the world. I already had a song that could serve as that anthem – the song “Love People”, written in 2014 and sung by the children of Superar Bosnia in a recording for a project to help victims of a devastating flood in Bosnia. I had the idea of creating a video montage of kids around the world singing this song.

This vision has become a reality. Fifteen Sistema-inspired programs around the world sent recordings of their students singing “Love People”, and we edited them to create a 5-minute montage that we hope will go viral around the virtual world.

What an incredible journey. So many different cultures, so many different beautiful customs, and so many smiling faces in one place...all with the same message: global unity and harmony.

There have been many inspiring stories along the way. In Afghanistan, for example, the choir couldn't make their video recordings outside, because it was too dangerous to leave the schoolyard. Still, they filmed and sent their video material with no problem.

In Venezuela, our partner is the “Niños Cantores de Venezuela” choir. In May, a member of the choir was killed during a demonstration. In spite of this terrible tragedy and the violent conditions that threaten them daily, the choir gathered the strength to continue recording this song about peace and love.

These children, and the other children in the video, are the true ‘fighters’ for a democratic free world and for peace and justice. They show us that there are still beautiful things in life. I hope that this video will send our message of peace to millions of people.

My own childhood was lost, because I grew up during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-95), and later became a refugee in Germany. So I know how it feels to be pushed around, neglected, and unappreciated. Today, I feel obligated to use all my knowledge, connections and friends to help children in need everywhere, so that their voices can be heard.

The hundreds of children in this video represent the millions of children who stand eager and willing to create a better world. From my experience on this project, I can say to you: nothing is impossible. Use your passion, ideas and visions to make the world better. Let's be changemakers together.

Watch, and please share the video widely; share with your students too: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=IWCHNBnuErI>

FROM THE EDITOR & PUBLISHER

The three feature articles in this issue present three innovations in the worldwide Sistema movement. These innovations spring from a common origin – the sense that we can all do better if we make better connections. We are stronger when working together. This core value is hardly a surprise, because it is the basis of what we teach in our ensemble programs. We know this to be true in our teaching and in our music-making lives, and we aspire to it in our organizations, where we know that faculty and staff members who work well together help students succeed better.

Yet as a global field, we give ourselves to it only fitfully. The three projects in this issue offer fresh examples of what can happen if we connect more widely.

We have three propositions at work here. The El Sistema Academy believes that we can raise the level of our teaching and intensify the “El Sistema-ness” of our work by sharing strong practices from Venezuela and the rest of the world. The Love People film project embodies our capacity to use our global reach to make powerful art together that touches the hearts of millions and makes our work more visible. Sistema Connect asserts that we can match our assets and our needs as a global field in a way that helps everyone go deeper and get better.

Although these three innovations are new in significant ways, each one has antecedents that have appeared in organic ways before. These larger-scale, bolder ideas invite us to take the next steps.

We hope the time is right for our field to embrace their value with the enthusiasm we think they deserve. How many programs will send faculty to the Academy to learn from Venezuelans and others, making it even more valuable in the richness of exchange? How much of an effort will we make to share the “Love People” video through social media? – just a little, or will we activate our entire individual networks to enjoy and share it widely? This will make the difference between a thousand viewings and two million viewings of our first global creative project. How many will make the bold life choice to give their time and skills to another program that is struggling harder than theirs – getting an unforgettable life experience in exchange? This will make the difference between getting help for a few programs and stepping into our potential as a generous, active global community.

We urge you to invest your time and attention in these innovations. Break the understandable pattern of staying local. Go global.

Tricia Tunstall & Eric Booth

NEWS

ASIA

Sounds of Palestine, continued from page 1

... 350 people, including the Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister. One teacher's personal account of the experience: “We performed for King's Day, playing the Palestinian and Dutch national anthems as a gesture of continued cooperation. Guest singers were local talent Zaid Hilal and Dutch singer Anne-Marieke Evers. A crowd of proud Palestinian youth, if ever I saw one.” For pictures: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/soundsofpalestine>

El Sistema Japan launched its third project in Komagane City, Nagano. El Sistema Japan also recently launched its White Hands Chorus in Tokyo, a collaboration with the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre and the Japanese Theatre of the Deaf. To prepare, teachers traveled in June to the original program in Venezuela to learn about chorus teaching methods and pedagogy. Lara Somos, a part of the Venezuelan White Hands Chorus, will visit Japan in October to facilitate joint concerts with the children from Soma and the Tokyo White Hands Chorus.

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Existing networks

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GUEST COLUMN

By Graciela Briceno, Executive Director of Josiah Quincy Youth Orchestra Program, Founder of *Sistema Connect*

Peer Teaching at a New Level

When I first started my work with El Sistema, I was eager to share with the world what I had learned and to help others create opportunities for children to thrive through music. I worked with two programs in particular: *Ghetto Classics* in Nairobi and *Sistemang Pilipino* in the Philippines. My time in Kenya consisted of a month-long residency, working with teachers to develop string pedagogy and trying out composition projects with students during general music classes. My work in the Philippines was a structured, one-week teacher training workshop that covered everything from El Sistema philosophy to teaching a song by rote.

It is this work that has led me to create *Sistema Connect* (www.sistemaconnect.org), a website resource where El Sistema programs can request volunteer services and volunteers can sign up to be matched with those programs. Volunteers fill out a form indicating the type of work they can do, and programs fill out a form indicating the type of volunteer services they need. If a match is made, volunteers receive an email with more information about the program, followed up by an e-introduction between program and volunteer.

Signing up does not obligate volunteers or programs to do anything – but if a match goes forward, it might be the beginning of an experience that will impact your life and work for years to come. At this time, *Sistema Connect* does not have funding to support volunteers' travel expenses; however, many programs are willing to provide accommodation. Our hope is that after several successful matches have been made, we can spread the word, gain traction, and eventually find funding to help support volunteers who can't afford costly airfare.

Trips can last a week, month, or even a year. Or perhaps there is no trip at all, and you share curriculum materials or strategic planning advice via email or Skype. You don't have to be a music teacher with ten years of experience to train others. Remember the El Sistema principle: a child who knows three notes can teach a child who knows only two. The same applies for *Sistema Connect* volunteers. Whether you've been teaching for years or you're in your first year of running a program, there is so much that you can offer to others in the field. And for programs, seeking out assistance and being open to new ideas is the best way for us to strengthen our collective work and help more children thrive through music.

NEWS

ASIA

Continued from page 2

Korea Arts and Culture Education Service (KACES) was founded in 2005 as a public agency under the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of the Republic of Korea. Its Regional Innovation Team is in charge of the *Orchestra of Dreams*, an El Sistema program started in 2010. There are 42 núcleos in the country, and over 2,400 participating students. The social inclusion goals bring together children from various economic and cultural backgrounds to become healthy members of the community, maintaining a 6:4 ratio of socially vulnerable and non-vulnerable children. The *Orchestra of Dreams* is built upon Five Principles of Action and Seven Principles of Education. Principles of Action: Operate education programs that reflect local characteristics; improve communication between family and society; maintain balance between education and administration; have understanding and consideration of children; establish a network of local collaboration. Principles of Education: mutual learning & leadership; participation and integration; musical achievement & performances; frequent meeting between students and teachers; practicing together; social change; joy. To learn more, visit their Facebook site: www.facebook.com/pg/orchestrakid

EUROPE

Sistema Europe, continued from page 1

... Hellenic Festival and will take place in the historic Odeon of Herodes Atticus on August 1. There will be a visit to Skaramagas Refugee Camp, where the children will play with children from the camp. The residency is hosted by *El Sistema Greece*, with a main partnership from the Hilti Foundation and with the generous support of Athens State Conservatory.

The *collaboration between Superar Suisse and SONG - Sistema Lombardia* continues to grow! Lugano Arte Cultura (LAC) hosted the second concert on May 21, 2017, including delegations from Lugano, Zurich, and Winterthur in Switzerland; Milan and Varese in Italy; and the Austrian region of Vorarlberg. The commitment of children and teachers provided a lively demonstration of how programs can grow when they are put in focused contact with one another, finding joy in music-making beyond language barriers. The next performance at the Zurich Tonhalle was June 11, sealing this promising alliance.

The *Social Action through Music Foundation* and the *Royal Opera Theatre of Madrid* received international recognition for the success of their joint initiatives. The programs received the "Our Heroes Award" from the Global Gift Foundation, and earned the Culture Award from the Foreign Press Association. The next project from this partnership will be the premiere of the cantata "Somos Naturaleza" on July 4. More than 200 children from the Social Classroom program and the Choirs of Social Action for Music will star in this work alongside such renowned artists as the pianist Rosa Torres-Pardo. You can follow them on Instagram at: [@accionsocialmusica](https://www.instagram.com/accionsocialmusica)

One of the teachers from *Tempo Sistema Finland* has now started "Extra School Activities" in the municipality of Sausset-Les-Pins in southern France, near Marseille. All children from Sausset between 6-11 years old are offered two hours of cultural or sports activities per week, for 7-9 weeks. Starting with five violins, Verna Kaunisto-Feodorow from *Sistema Europe* is giving individual lessons to the children and telling them to pass on what they learn to one another. After 30 minutes, the classroom is full of small teachers teaching each other how to play the violin. At the end of the class, a mini-concert is prepared, presenting what the kids have learned.

LATIN AMERICA

Batuta and Berklee, continued from page 1

... a collaboration between Berklee and various Colombian cultural institutions. As a result, "Berklee Latino" will return for a second time, offering workshops in Latin music, teacher training, and coaching in musical entrepreneurship. The partners will also work together to create opportunities for Berklee groups to perform in Colombia and promote new projects to attract other institutions. The hope is that these initiatives will have a social impact and will strengthen the support for high-quality music, taking advantage of Colombia's extensive musical and cultural heritage. Contact Silvia Sánchez Gamboa at silviasanchez@fundacionbatuta.org.

Arpeggio Perú has welcomed Jonathan Vera from *El Sistema Venezuela* into the community. Jonathan's training has focused on violin performance and pedagogy, composition, orchestral conducting, and nucleo management. In March 2017, Jonathan joined *Arpeggio Peru* as a violin teacher and strings instructor, and is also working as an orchestra conductor at the Montessori International College. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/arpeggioperu.

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LATIN AMERICA

Continued from page 3

La Milagrosa, one of La Red's schools for strings in Medellín, Colombia, is preparing its third neighborhood tour. Students will spend a full day visiting local elderly homes, where they will perform a concert and spend time with the residents, many of whom have been forgotten by their families. The tour enables the students to bring music to those who are immobile, allowing them to attend an orchestra concert and experience joy. This year, the ensemble on tour will be the Pre-Orchestra, made up of students 10-15 years of age. For more information, contact Nataly Gómez García, Communications Coordinator, comunicacion.redmusica@gmail.com

NORTH AMERICA

Leaders/teachers honored, continued from page 1

The 2017 Arts Education Leadership Award from Americans for the Arts was given to Sarah Johnson, Director of Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute. Sarah has been an active Sistema supporter, launching NYO2 and PlayUSA, both of which help to support high achievement in Sistema programs. Finally, the Philadelphia Music Alliance for Youth won a \$2.5 million grant from the Mellon Foundation to build new pathways for music education in their city.

In mid-July, the Take A Stand Consortium (Los Angeles Philharmonic, Longy School of Music of Bard College and Bard College) will gather the first U.S. national Sistema Youth Orchestra of 100 students, ages 12 to 18, from 34 different programs. The Festival will include a three-day national symposium that focuses on Sistema instruction, and will culminate with the orchestra performing at Walt Disney Concert Hall, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel. After three years of preparation, this is the first gathering of a national El Sistema orchestra in the U.S. For more information, visit www.laphil.com/education/take-stand/take-stand-symposium-2017

Lowrider James and Keith Flemming, two students in Baltimore Symphony's OrchKids (also in Peabody's Tuned In) will attend the Alpine Brass Academy in

Innsbruck, Austria before heading to England to participate in Sistema England's National Summer Festival. Dan Trahey (Tuned In's Founder and OrchKids Artistic Director) is on the faculty of the Alpine Brass Academy and will join Sistema England as a guest teacher.

AFRICA

El Sistema Kenya and YOA, continued from page 1

... performed for the local community. In Nairobi, the Global Leaders held a workshop with teachers about El Sistema fundamentals and how programs across the world are developing. They also worked closely with teachers throughout the week in Juja and Kawangware, helping with curriculum development. Gabrielle also helped teachers with instrument repair and brought generous woodwind donations from Brian Gnojek, the Trade Winds Quintet, and the D'Addario Foundation. The entire visit was key to the development of instrument technique for the students, and a confidence boost through well-coordinated individual and group



Global Leader Nathaly Ossa (second from right) with El Sistema Kenya students at Kawangware School. Photo: Faith Syovata

performances. The trip was also an opportunity for the students to learn about and appreciate different cultures through interaction with the Global Leaders.

Xiquitsi in Mozambique celebrated the 130th anniversary of the capital city, Maputo, with the premiere of a Mass composed by one of their own students, Estevão Chissano, and performed by the Xiquitsi Orchestra. This was a historical event for Mozambique, as it is the country's first known classical music composition. The series of concerts was held in Maputo from May 9-14, 2017.

RESOURCES

What the World's Young People Think and Feel is reported in the Varkey Foundation's new study: [Generation Z: Global Citizenship Survey](#) of young people born between 1995 and 2001. The report seeks to understand the lives and values of "Generation Z," a global generation in which only 3% consider fame to be the most important feature of a career, only 17% report good overall physical wellbeing, under a third report good overall emotional wellbeing, and almost two-thirds have friends from a different religion. In 16 of the 20 study's countries, a majority of young people believe the world is becoming a worse place to live in.

The new U.S. research report [Hearts and Minds: The Arts and Civic Engagement](#) (2017, by Nick Rabkin for The Irvine Foundation) finds that [arts participation, particularly art-making \(more than audience attendance\) is strongly related to increased civic engagement](#). This connection is particularly potent in adolescence. Pages 12-15 in the report focus on this connection in young people. A quotation from this research: "People who have built their identities around civic engagement often credit arts experiences as significant to their development." Find it at: <http://tinyurl.com/yd5mgf9f>

The NYO-USA is America's national youth orchestra, founded and led annually by Carnegie Hall. They have now added NYO-U, an alumni-led/produced set of videos offering tips for young musicians from NYO's alums. [Students from around the world are invited to visit NYO-U](#). Check out the playlist [here](#). Many more videos are in the works and will be shared over the course of 2017 and beyond.

[Creative Youth Development](#) (CYD) is an umbrella term in the U.S. for a variety of education programs and initiatives that share values and practices with El Sistema-inspired programs. A national CYD partnership publishes a free newsletter, and now it is possible for anyone to join their mailing list to receive issues: <http://creativeyouthdevelopment.org/join-email-list> In 2020 there will be international CYD conference held in Massachusetts, and the newsletter will be a good way to learn about it.

"Joy is feeling one's power increasing." – Friedrich Nietzsche, philosopher