

Public Funding

By Katie Wyatt, Executive Director of *Kidznotes* in Durham, NC

As Kidznotes begins to explore statewide service across North Carolina, I'm more and more interested in how Sistema-inspired programs are integrating public funding as part of their support. Kidznotes is deeply integrated into the county education districts we serve. In 2015, Durham and Wake County schools will provide \$65,000 in direct salary support for 8 music teachers, as well as after-school bussing for 400 students and rehearsal and office space in 9 schools and 15 classrooms. Without this partnership, we would be hard-pressed to grow to scale or to reach our goal of serving 1,000 students in Raleigh and Durham by 2020.

In a context where states often struggle to protect funding for public education, arts, and health and human services, El Sistema programs have an opportunity to serve as public/private partners, offering services complementary to what the state can provide. Conversely, the infrastructure of government and public services (including schools, cultural centers, arts councils, etc.) can provide much-needed space, salaries and fiscal sponsorship for burgeoning Sistema nucleos.

The San Diego Youth Symphony and the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra are two noteworthy examples of programs that have accessed this engine of opportunity and significantly leveraged public resources for positive social change. The San Diego Youth Symphony's Sistema-inspired [Community Opus Project](#) was

launched in 2010 in the Chula Vista Elementary School district (CVESD) of San Diego, which offered no school music education to its 29,000 students aged K through 6. Founder/director Dalouge Smith and the SDYS saw an opportunity to fill

this void, and they have built a thriving partnership. In exchange for Opus programming for 200 students, the CVESD provides facilities and issues the SDYS an annual \$45,000 check as an independent contractor. Next year the district will more than triple its contract, so that Opus can serve an additional 100 children at a new site.

In addition, the success of Opus inspired the CVESD

to invest \$5 million in hiring full-time music teachers in its schools (many of the new hires started as Opus teachers). Through a strong public advocacy strategy, Opus has elevated the mission of El Sistema, social change through music, to the district level. As a result of Opus's successful public/private partnership, 29,000 students will receive weekly music education as part of the standard course of study by 2020.

Like Opus, [Sistema New Brunswick](#) in Canada is a program launched by a youth orchestra, with the goal of creating a pipeline of wider opportunity and access. The New Brunswick Youth Orchestra (NBYO) founded a pilot program of 50 kids in 2009. Building on the pilot's success, founder/director Ken MacLeod, a former local legislator and fundraiser, invited legislators to partner with him at the ground floor, asking for a mutual commitment to expand across the province.

Entering its seventh year, Sistema New Brunswick now serves 700 students in 5 centers. The NBYO has continued to create programs related to its mission of access. In addition to the local Sistema children's orchestras, it has launched a regional Sistema youth orchestra, a provincial youth orchestra, a professional orchestra of Sistema NB and NBYO teaching staff, and a POPs New Brunswick summer concert festival of three community concerts, performed by combinations of the various Sistema, NBYO, and staff orchestras.

MacLeod states: "If an organization wants a big, robust, sustainable program – meaning at significant cost, multiple days per week over an extended time period, and across an extended population – that will be very difficult to do without public funding." I share his conviction that El Sistema programs can only create the generational change we aspire to through partnership with governments and public servants. MacLeod stresses that public funding opportunities are often established in the same way private funding opportunities are – through relationships. "Governments are people,

and it is people who have power to make decisions to ensure the success of your program," he says. I hope that all Sistema programs in the U.S. and Canada can take these stories into consideration in approaching public servants and "servant leaders" as they launch music for social change programs and sustain these programs into the future.



Chula Vista Mayor (2006-2014) Cheryl Cox and County supervisor Greg Cox with Opus musician Vanessa Zepeda at a 2015 Community Opus Project Scholarship Fundraiser Photo: Ken Jacques

FROM THE EDITOR

"In our Sistema-inspired programs, how often do we prioritize accessing our students' sense of wonder about a particular piece of music?"

This provocative question was put to me last week by Xochitl Tafoya, director of the [iCAN Music Program](#) in Santa Barbara, CA. Xochitl was in New York as one of fourteen participants – the only Sistema-affiliated one – attending an intensive Advanced Teaching Artists' Training sponsored by Lincoln Center Education. She was struck by what she sees as the unexplored potential of teaching artistry for Sistema-inspired programs in the U.S. and Canada.

Many teachers in our programs use the term "teaching artist" to capture their professional identities as both performing artists and educators. But the definition of teaching artistry, as the field has developed over several decades, is considerably richer and more complex than that. From the powerful vantage point of their dual identities, teaching artists work in many ways to help students make personally meaningful connections with works of art. In a word (or two), teaching artists engage in aesthetic education.

In the world of El Sistema, we tend to focus on other goals – specifically, the development of musical skills in a way that also develops social and psychological skills. Of course we care tremendously that our students engage in music with passion and expressivity. But that's not quite the same thing as helping each student explore the personal resonance of a musical work.

Xochitl's insights seem a valuable reminder to our field about what teaching artistry could add to Sistema-inspired work. In particular, she suggested making a priority of helping kids develop meaningful relationships with the pieces they play. "Can we make space and time for kids to simply experience a piece first, maybe through listening creatively and kinesthetically, and reflecting?" she asked. "To say: 'What is magical about this piece for you?'" She also focused on the importance of student-based inquiry, citing her background in Montessori and Orff pedagogies. "On a day-to-day, week-to-week basis," she said, "do we really encourage kids to ask questions? Can we do more to let our students' curiosity drive learning? Yes, I think we can."

The [field of teaching artistry is flourishing](#) these days. I agree that it has much to teach us about how to help students develop, in the Maestro's words, "the aesthetic fiber of their humanity."

Tricia Tunstall

"The youngster who is in touch with the aesthetic fiber of his humanity grows in a world of infinitely precious values. That seed is quickly transmitted to neighborhood and community circles." – José Antonio Abreu

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

News Notes

Joe Hamm, the Chair of the Census and Membership Committee of **El Sistema USA**, has completed his work on the **Census for FY2014**. Key findings cite **117 El Sistema-inspired programs in the U.S.** (although only roughly half that number submitted data-reporting surveys in fiscal year 2014). The most dramatic finding estimates the total student population in these programs at 28,332, more than double the previous year's total. The Report explains the number as a best estimate, taking the hard numbers from the surveys received and adding estimates of participants in the other programs. The Report finds a decrease in the launch of new programs in the past year. It cites the following median numbers: about one hundred students per program, about 10 program hours per week, about 8 teaching artists on faculty, and about 35 weeks per year of programming. The median operating budget is just over one hundred thousand dollars a year, and the median annual cost per student is \$1,400 – which is in line with costs for most ambitious out-of-school-time programming. The largest share of funding comes from foundations (48%) and individual donors (28%), with corporate support (8%) and public dollars (7.6%) far behind. Thanks to Joe Hamm for his tireless efforts and to his ESUSA colleagues for taking responsibility to provide the field with this data footprint. Report available at: <http://tinyurl.com/p5mz4ov>

Mark your calendars for October 6 and 7 for the **Take A Stand Symposium 2015**, hosted by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. There will be planning of the National Festival (a 3 year project culminating in a national Sistema youth orchestra), as well as lots of discussions about repertoire, management, and ways to support our shared goal of youth development. A selected group of teaching artists will join a Symposium Teacher Orchestra that will play with YOLA and Simon Bolivar Orchestra musicians. Find out more at: <http://tinyurl.com/oyee426>

Jerrold Perry, Baltimore City Public School Band Director, and Dan Trahey, Artistic Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's **OrchKids** program, were awarded **Yale School of Music Distinguished Music Educator** Award in June. **OrchKids** and the BSO were honored for their 8-year partnership, which includes in-school and after-school flexibility

and hires as many BCPS teachers as possible in the **OrchKids** afterschool program. Trahey also notes with pride that **ten OrchKids students** (all brass and wind players) **were accepted into Interlochen Arts Camp**, joining students from around the world – a summer experience that was powerful in Trahey's own musical development.

The new **FOX reality TV show Knock Knock Live** featured **Dantes Rameau**, Founder of the Atlanta Music Project, being surprised by his favorite rapper Common to present AMP with a new van, instruments, a \$50,000 donation, and a performance by Common with AMP Kids, in recognition of Dantes personal dedication and the AMP's impact on Atlanta kids. Enjoy the segment: <http://www.atlantamusicproject.org/news-features/knock-knock-live-visits-amp>

Resources

The **U.S. Department of Arts and Culture** sounds like a federal agency, doesn't it? In truth, it's an ongoing government-NON-funded public art project by some of the savviest, wittiest community arts leaders in the U.S. The USDAC invites volunteer participation in "national actions" that spark creative public engagement. El Sistema-inspired programs are invited to become partners in an action this fall that might be a good fit for expanding students' community engagement beyond performing. The action is called *Dare to Imagine*, and involves setting up Imagination Stations in community locations, where members of the public are invited to envision their community twenty years hence in creative ways. Imagination Stations will be in operation around the U.S. during the week of October 10-18. After a modest training, local teams design and lead the project. A two-page description of the project and partnering is available at <http://usdac.us/dare-to-imagine/>; direct questions go to: usdac.us@gmail.com

The National Center for Children in Poverty reports that **22% of U.S. children live in poverty** today, up from 18% in 2008.

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The Power of Composing

By Clara Yang, former teaching artist at Youth Orchestra of St. Lukes, NYC

If I had been exposed to collaborative composition as a young musician, my musical trajectory might have been very different. I might have recruited some friends to create a wild remake of Twinkle Twinkle. I might have started a drum circle in high school. Instead, I experienced music as more about re-production than an opportunity for production, as I dutifully played the written notes and simply marveled at groups who made their own music.

But two years ago, thanks to Jill Collier and Dan Trahey, I experienced the power of collaborative composition. Through composing a collective piece with kids as young as seven and adults whose musical careers had followed diverse trajectories, I saw that the creative impulse is in everyone, and it is a matter of effort, taste, and feedback to hone that creativity into something specific.

Riding on this momentum, I brought collaborative composition to the Youth Orchestra of St. Luke's. With the help of Natasha Zielazinski and Detta Danford, who are seasoned leaders in this work, and a team of musicians, our beginning string students collectively created a fifteen-minute piece on "Maps." Link: <https://youtu.be/6C8uMgY-Wqs>

The trickle-down effect this project has had on our students has been amazing. They've started to spontaneously compose together in small groups during their free time. One day, we listened to Smetana's *Die Moldau* and divided into groups to each create a small piece that reflected an aspect of the masterpiece. Without hesitation, the students discussed the piece and started composing, layering, editing and conducting.

Maestro Abreu is often quoted as saying that the orchestra is a symbol of the ideal community. I believe that students in orchestras do develop positive interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, but I also think that students in creative composition teams develop a special spirit of collaboration with their peers and teachers by starting with them at the very beginning of the process – creating, editing, and exchanging feedback with one another.

We are in the business of developing musicians and conscious citizens, and I think we can use collaborative composition to meet both goals. Making compositional choices gives students greater ownership as musicians. And composing collectively means learning to listen, respond and collaborate – all important attributes for successful citizenship.

"Music is too precise for words." – Felix Mendelssohn, composer