

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE U.S. EL SISTEMA MOVEMENT

Getting Rep, Resources, and Us Together

By Louise Lanzilotti, Chief Executive, Kalikolehua – El Sistema Hawaii

“El Sistema is a process, not a system,” José Antonio Abreu told us at the 2012 Take a Stand Symposium in Los Angeles. “It never stands still but is constantly adapting to the next need.” He reminds us to adapt the inspiration of El Sistema to U.S. realities, and to do so, we need to work together. Sharing our work and developing our resources are essential first steps in the process if we are to become our own kind of “system,” greater than the sum of our parts.

The Rep + Resource Project, a new website, will launch this fall for the use of all El Sistema-inspired programs in the U.S. To help us build a robust, ongoing tool for everyone to use, we invite all U.S. sites to begin sharing repertoire and resource materials now (see sidebar).

The R + R site grows out of a specific need generated by the explosion of programs throughout the U.S.. These share common goals, practices, and philosophy, but since we are not parts of a franchise, we sometimes suffer from a lack of readily available content. Our movement needs a central location to go to for repertoire, articles on El Sistema, ideas about adapting the message of social change through music to the U.S., models of assessment, and general help.

Some sites have already begun sharing repertoire and ideas, particularly when they were planning seminars or other group opportunities for their students. The R + R project builds on these successes. In 2012, Diane Cline founded the Rep Project as a natural extension of the sharing that occurred for the El Sistema Seminario in Philadelphia in May, sharing music through Dropbox files, and collecting over 75 arrangements in a few months. At the same time, not knowing about this project, I was inspired by Dan Berkowitz’s excellent [YOLA Resource Library](#), and decided to begin Open reSource, a website for sharing repertoire and resources among all interested sites. When I called Dalouge Smith (of the San Diego Youth Symphony) to ask him for materials, he sent me to the Repertoire Project, and the two concepts were joined into the Rep + Resource Project.

We are currently a six-person working group from all parts of the country, including Ryan Welsh (Community Opus), Diane Cline (El Sistema Somerville), Sarah Grogan (Miami Choral Academy), Anne Case (moving to a new location!), Sara Zanussi (A.C.M.E. Music) and myself, Louise King Lanzilotti

How to send to the Rep + Resource Project

Email to: submissions@repandresource.org

Attach Finale, Sibelius, pdf and/or MIDI file and links

We are looking for

- + Repertoire (Finale, Sibelius, pdf and MIDI files)
- + String Ensemble arrangements
- + Wind Ensemble arrangements
- + Full Orchestra arrangements
- + Choral arrangements
- + Arrangements of other music unique to your site
- + Technical exercises, music literacy work
- + Lists of published works used in your nucleo

Resources (pdfs and links)

- Curriculum, Schedules, Lesson Plans
- Assessments, Evaluations, Research
- Nonprofit resources
- Mentors, Human Resources
- Reference Articles, Essays
- Other – Announcements, Blogs, Fundraising/Marketing Materials

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(Kalikolehua – El Sistema Hawai’i). We would love more help! If you’d like to volunteer to work with us, or know someone who might, please email connect@repandresource.org.

The group has already collected arrangements and resource information from: A.C.M.E. Music, Conservatory Lab, El Sistema@ Rainey, El Sistema Lehigh Valley, the Harmony Project, Kalikolehua, MY Cincinnati, OPUS/San Diego, OrchKids, St. Lucia String Project, YOLA, and the YOURS Project. Others have promised material soon.

We particularly need Full Orchestra, Wind Ensemble and Choir repertoire, but look forward to all submissions. Lists of published repertoire being used by an individual nucleo would also be valuable.

We also invite volunteers willing to be contacted as mentors in various areas of expertise. I have begun collecting suggestions from the field – please send me your suggestions for mentors, and other thoughts you have about our project: (admin@repandresource.org). Please join us in making this exciting project a reality by sharing your work, ideas, and dreams.

FROM THE EDITOR

It’s a truism, but it’s true: we are a nation of “can-do” individualists. The U.S. El Sistema movement has grown the way the American West did, mostly through the work of small groups of dedicated people building from scratch, creating something where there was nothing, over and over.

Louise Lanzilotti and Dan Trahey remind us in this issue that as our movement grows, we don’t have to reinvent every wheel, every time. It’s a valuable reminder. In Venezuela, the deep habit of sharing resources was born of necessity, in a context of scarcity, and became second nature. Our habits tend toward self-sufficiency rather than interdependence. But the work of building and sustaining El Sistema-inspired programs is so labor-intensive that the do-it-yourself model can lead to exhaustion. So it’s heartening to see a sharing-resources model begin to emerge.

Sharing resources is more than simply load-lightening; it is also an organic way of creating inter-nucleo connectedness. If a version of the William Tell Overture, arranged for varying skill levels and ages, is shared among many nucleos, all those children will be able to play the William Tell Overture together, the very first time they meet. The more music is shared, the broader will be the common musical language of the children of El Sistema in the U.S.

And the more clearly we will give them the message that music learning is most powerful when it’s shared. We want the children in our programs to develop interdependence as a habit of mind; what better way to teach the habit than to model it?

As is so often the case, El Sistema Venezuela models it for all of us. I am reminded of the story of a master class in Caracas, in which the teacher was startled to see kids holding up their cell phones as he talked. Were they raising their hands? Was it a ritual that had crossed over from pop music concerts? “I have my nucleo in Maracay on the line,” explained one boy. “I’m holding up the phone so they all can hear you.”

Tricia Tunstall

“The Sistema is a process ... involving the collaboration of many programs, many experiences, and many generations.” – José Antonio Abreu

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News Notes

Founded by 2012 Sistema Fellow Alysia Lee, **Sister Cities Girlchoir** (SCG) allows at-risk girls to build supportive social networks, develop new skills, and foster healthy habits while fully engaged in a world-class choral training program. SCG is powered by the Girl Effect, the unique social and economic change brought about when girls have the opportunity to thrive (<http://tinyurl.com/cpov9cx>).

The pilot program launched in July with a Summer Camp, where according to the Youth Outcomes Battery Survey, 92% of the campers reported improved friendship, teamwork and independence skills. This fall, SCG rolls out programming for 60 middle school girls at three community sites (serving a total of 180 girls) in North Philadelphia, West Philadelphia, and Camden, NJ. The core classes include vocal pedagogy, musicianship, dance and wellness workshops that focus on leadership, nutrition and goal setting. Also, to engage families and local community members, each site hosts a Women's Choir that rehearses weekly.

Connecting after- and in-school. Knowing how important it can be to learners and to stakeholder network building, many El Sistema-inspired sites have found various ways to connect their after-school programming with ongoing in-school music programs. A significant program was just announced in Canada: the new **In Harmony Music Project** in the Anglophone East School District of New Brunswick is an El Sistema-inspired program embedded *within* the schoolday. IHMP is partnering with Sistema New Brunswick, using its approaches, curriculum and instructors, with SNB teachers teaching two of the five days a week, and also serving as mentors to the school music faculty. Each of four schools will have one Grade 4 class take instrumental music instruction (strings, flute, clarinet) one hour per day, every day for the whole school year. This is a five-fold increase in the amount of music instruction a grade 4 student would typically take. For more information, contact Blair Lawrence of the Anglophone East School District at blair.lawrence@gnb.ca.



In musicianship class, students learn to sing the major scale with Curwen hand signs
Photo: Amp Studios

Two new scientific studies confirm what everyone near one of our programs knows, but the rest of the world requires data to affirm.

1) A University of Chicago study confirms that those who create in the arts or attend regularly are more civically engaged in life, more tolerant, and more

altruistic. Simply put, active arts engagement *does* make for better citizens, as we claim. <http://bit.ly/MNaQoH>

2) Northwestern University research shows that studying music when young not only accelerates neuron development, but also that even a few years of musical study has lasting neurological benefits, measurable years later. The main benefit they studied was enhanced processing of sound which correlates closely with improved "executive function," making for better learners. <http://t.co/xyPjGSOj>

Resources

The Fund for a Just Society (a program of the Unitarian Universalist Association), provides grants for addressing issues of social and economic justice, especially the use of community organizing to bring about systemic change leading to a more just society and to mobilize with those who have been disenfranchised and excluded from resources. Consideration is given to projects that are less likely to receive conventional funding. Requests are reviewed two times per year; the next application deadline is September 17, 2012. <http://www.uua.org/giving/funding/102186.shtml>

The Millennial Impact Report 2012, a research report from Achieve and Johnson, Grossnickle and Associates, details the ways to tap "the millennial generation" (those ages 20-35), also called Gen Y and the Echo Boomers, as donors and volunteers, including what they look for in websites and their expectations for each kind of electronic media platform. <http://themillennialimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/TheMillennialImpactReport2012.pdf>

Hunger & Sharing

By Dan Trahey, OrchKids, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

During the 12th and 13th centuries, troubadours used to tour France spreading news from village to village through song and spoken word. In a world without even the printing press, much less the Internet, person-to-person contact was the only way to disseminate information.

In contrast, we live in a world of seemingly limitless connectivity. Even so, in Venezuela, limited internet access and financial constraints often make it difficult for El Sistema teachers and students to obtain recordings, music repertoire, and method books. In my decade of traveling to Venezuela, I've observed a modern-day equivalent of the troubadour method that is amazingly effective.

I came across an example of this when I introduced a simple four-chord riff called "Sacred Fanfare" to a group of students from multiple nucleos. The group performed the piece at the end of our seminario, and I assumed it would not be performed again. Instead, the students took the new piece (or what they remembered from it) back to their nucleos. Six months later, visiting Venezuela again, I was surprised to hear the piece during a post-concert "jam session" – but in a different key, with different rhythms and different melodic motifs.

The same thing happened at another nucleo. The piece had been transformed into something that each nucleo called its own, without worrying about precedent, and with the beautiful audacity to take what they received and do something more with it.

Another example: at many Venezuelan nucleos, when I pull out a low-brass method book, eyes pop, and the first question is: Can we make copies? Back from the copy store come ten copies of the book...often faded and streaked, but still readable.

This insatiable appetite for new musical information comes partly from the difficulty of obtaining it. But I believe that ultimately, it is the absolute desire to be better musicians that drives the modern-day "troubadours" of Venezuela's Sistema.

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**"At times I feel like the moon, shining because of the light of those around me."
– Albert Oppenheimer, Director of the People's Music School's YOURS Project, Chicago**