

OrKidstra



KidSingers

# The Leading Note Foundation

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## DATES TO REMEMBER:

- June 16, 2010, 5 pm in the auditorium at the Bronson Centre: The OrKidstra & KidSingers year end concert
- June 26, 2010, 2:15 pm at Rideau Hall: OrKidstra & KidSingers at the Teddy Bear's Picnic

## A note from the Executive Director

Here we are in June 2010 and what an exciting year it has been! Our year-end concert on Wednesday, June 16 at 5:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the Bronson Centre is imminent and we are deep into extra full rehearsals. It is wonderful to see the kids' faces and reactions to the sound of a full orchestra playing Beethoven's Egmont Overture and playing and singing Ode to Joy. It is pure magic – as is listening to and watching

the KidSingers sing their hearts out.

September 2009 started with a flurry of activity because, not only did 95% of our past students return, but we started up a new violin group and another band class and registered many new children in KidSingers. Our enrollment reached over 100 and it turns out that among our 100 students some 24 languages are spoken, the 25<sup>th</sup> being the universal language of music, of course!

As for the future, we are excited to announce our plans to start two satellite programs in the fall of 2010. The first will be an after-school program for children ages 5-8 held in York Street School. These classes will be open to all children from the Lowertown area. We will also be starting a program for disabled children in Centennial School. It's going to be a very special year!

- Tina Fedeski



## The year in review

Following registration, the highlight and focus of the fall was the Glenn Gould Prize Celebration of Music Week which is featured in an article here on page 2. Tina was invited to participate on a distinguished panel called "El Sistema Across the World". It was a wonderful opportunity to hear about other programs and to share stories of our students and our experiences. In her presentation, Tina told of the remarkable community support we have received since 2007 – including the youth orchestra mentors, the University of Ottawa undergraduates, our board and volunteers, the many fundraising concerts, financial contributions, instrument donations and invaluable media interest and support.

Active involvement with our wonderful community is a priority for us and we have been busy!

- December 17, OrKidstra & KidSingers Holiday Concert.
- January 14, Members of the Senior Choir opened a special meeting of downtown public school board trustees, "Help Break the OCDSB Budget Icejam," which discussed priorities and budget cuts.
- February 18, Christian Vasquez visiting superstar Venezuelan conductor

for NACO, rehearsed OrKidstra!

- February 7, the Senior Strings and Chamber Choir were honoured to be invited to feature in the "By Youth for Youth" concert for Haiti Earthquake Relief through the Canadian Red Cross.
- May 15, the OrKidstra band and KidSingers performed on the main stage of the Tulip Festival.
- June 11, Cross-Centretown tour. OrKidstra and KidSingers performed in Cambridge Street, Centennial, St. Anthony's and Glashan schools.

Other extra events included:

- Saturday, March 27, our students participated in a very fun afternoon at the "Finding My Rhythm" workshop, playing and performing percussion instruments from all over the world, movement with active music-making and participating in a mesmerizing jungle soundscape.
- Complimentary tickets for many community concerts were enjoyed by the children including the Ottawa Youth Orchestra Academy and NAC Family concerts.

Fundraising concerts included:

- November 15, Robert Gayner Memorial Scholarship Fund Concert.

Robert Gayner was a founding board member, who sadly passed away last year. This very special concert in his memory featured Sandra Graham, Jean Demarais, Leah Roseman, Mark Friedman, Sally Benson, Margaret Munro Tobolowska, Stanley and Kerson Leong and Tu Mach.

- December 16, in another very generous gesture of support, Canterbury High School's music program donated their Christmas concert ticket funds to The Leading Note Foundation.
- January 15, Paul Marleyn (cello) & Frédéric Lacroix (piano) gave a lovely concert, hosted by Wita Schliewen.
- April 14, Senator Tommy Banks O.C. played at the home of our wonderfully hospitable Vice-President, Sylvia Gazsi Gill, where the jazz flowed from her piano with world-class skill, humour and abandon.
- May 17, in the beautiful official residence of Earnscliffe, the British High Commissioner hosted a memorable concert with Paul Marleyn and our own Margaret Tobolowska both on cello, with the magical accompaniment of Frédéric Lacroix on piano.

## Teaching and learning: Meet the mentors

Community partnerships are vital to the success of OrKidstra and KidSingers. One of our valued partnerships is with the Ottawa Youth Orchestra Academy, through which we welcome local high school student mentors. These dedicated volunteers assist our teachers in both group instruction as well as providing additional one-on-one mentoring.

Here, mentors Kyle Burghout and Jonah Poplove reveal they're learning as much as their students. And, we'd be remiss in not thanking Canterbury High School, where Kyle, Jonah and many of our other mentors currently study, for hosting a successful Christmas fundraising concert this past December which raised \$1000 for OrKidstra. Teachers Laurie Hamilton, James Caswell and John Pohran led a variety of instrumental and vocal music performances by Canterbury's senior band and string ensembles, senior chamber chorus, male chorus, senior treble choir, a trombone quartet and a sax ensemble.

As we wrapped up this edition, preparations were well underway for this year's Bows for Butterflies concert, a benefit for the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre's Early Identification and Intervention Program for Youth. Canterbury not only hosted the event (which took place June

5) but the concert featured students from Canterbury as well as other schools.

**Tell me about how you came to be a mentor; when and what was the attraction?**

*Kyle Burghout:* A couple of my friends mentioned that they volunteered at OrKidstra in the winter of 2009 and I was immediately interested in participating as I have always loved teaching and music, and, it's all for a good cause too.

*Jonah Poplove:* I came to hear about the Leading Note Foundation from Tina when she spoke to all the members of the OYO about it.

**How do you feel the students benefit from the program as a whole?**

*Kyle Burghout:* I feel that the students benefit extremely well from the program because they are given one-on-one teaching in private lessons as well as the chance to play with others in group classes. This helps to not only develop their technical ability, but also to develop their ability to play in an ensemble very early on.

*Jonah Poplove:* Aside from the obvious benefit of the students learning an instrument, I believe that the biggest benefit of

the program comes from the group classes in which the children share in the experience of music.

**What are you learning from the experience?**

*Kyle Burghout:* I am learning many new things every week at OrKidstra, including many new and different ways to teach children music. I can then apply what I have learned from OrKidstra to when I am teaching my own private students.

*Jonah Poplove:* Being a mentor at OrKidstra has taught me a great deal about trust and patience, and has helped improve my playing too!

**Any highlights from the experience so far that you'd care to share?**

*Kyle Burghout:* So far the entire experience has been amazing, and there's never a week where I don't enjoy.

I particularly enjoy the concerts put on for the parents, because it allows the students to showcase all their hard work and it also allows me to see what else goes on in other classes besides mine.

*Jonah Poplove:* A highlight for me was this past Christmas concert. My high school, Canterbury, had held a fundraising concert for OrKidstra and I was honoured to present the cheque.

**"With the help of the leading notes I get to be with my friends and when I play my violin I feel really peaceful!"**  
- OrKidstra student

**"I joined OrKidstra because I thought it would be fun to learn something new. I know I have not been doing what I should be doing which is practicing ... please let me stay in OrKidstra and I promise I will practice as much as I can every day."**  
- OrKidstra Student

## Practices, successes shared at Gould award event

This past October, El-Sistema founder José Antonio Abreu visited Toronto, where he was celebrated by the Glenn Gould Foundation and given the prestigious Glenn Gould Award. Leading Note Foundation Executive Director Tina Fedeski was in attendance along with two of our own students, Daniela Armas Kakorina (violin) and Peter Perez (clarinet), and Ottawa Youth Orchestra flute mentor Pegleess Barrios. All four took in a dizzying array of performances and other events.

Also along for the ride was Toronto-based film production company Filmblanc. Filmblanc are making a documentary on El Sistema inspired programs, featuring our own OrKidstra and KidSingers programs.

Among the highlights was a concert by the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra (SBYO) conducted by Gustavo Dudamel in the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts on October 24.

In between, several chamber groups from the SBYO visited high schools in the Toronto region to give concerts and share their message with the children. Our "kids", along with the film crew,

attended several of these events

A symposium entitled The Power of Music: Transforming Young Minds and Lives took place at the newly renovated Royal Conservatory of Music on Bloor St. Along with the founders of similarly inspired music programs in Glasgow and New York, Tina shared the best practices and successes of OrKidstra and KidSingers. Meanwhile, our "kids" were taking in various events, such as the SBYO's rehearsal at the Rogers Centre. Fortunately, they made it back to the Conservatory in time to demonstrate four of our fun Leading Note exercises (complete with audience participation) at the end of Tina's presentation.

Tina and the "kids" attended a perform-

ance of the SBYO's brass and percussion ensemble, including a special appearance by The Canadian Brass. The concert took place in the fabulous new concert hall in the Royal Conservatory of Music building.

The four-day event wrapped up in style with a performance by the Bolivar Youth Orchestra in the Rogers Centre. Over 14,000 high school children from all over Ontario were bussed in to attend. Each piece on the program was led by a different El Sistema young conductor, including Christian Vasquez (see Feb. 18 on page 1). Afterwards, our "kids" and film crew headed down to the stage area and had one last chance to meet with Dr. Abreu again and to receive some coaching.



Tina, Pegleess, Peter & Daniela having fun demonstrating the Leading Notes (photo by Chris Young)

On panel (L-R): Rodrigo Guerrero, El Sistema's International Affairs Officer; Helen McVey, Sistema Scotland; Anne Fitzgibbon, Harmony program in NYC; Mark Churchill, El Sistema USA.

## El Sistema ‘fluid, flexible and always adapting’

The following are edited excerpts from ongoing blog postings by Dantes Rameau. An Ottawa native and McGill University graduate, Dantes is currently an Abreu Fellow studying with the New England Conservatory of Music in conjunction with El Sistema USA. He splits his time between the U. S. and various points in Venezuela, where he has experienced El Sistema, the inspiration for OrKidstra and KidSingers, first hand. The Abreu Fellowship trains post-graduate musicians who aspire to guide new El Sistema programs worldwide.

You can check in with Dantes at: <http://dantesrameau.blogspot.com/>

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I learned my first important lesson about El Sistema this past week [February, 2010]. We all know that "El Sistema" translates to "The System." Well please allow me to reveal to you one of the secrets of El Sistema: There Is No System.

The traffic in Caracas is almost always congested. Motorcycles and mopeds can drive between in the lanes legally and pedestrians make frequent and casual appearances in the roads. In some places the traffic is so slow that vendors easily walk between the lanes selling everything from car chargers to Tupperware.

To an outsider like myself it seems like complete chaos, but ask any Caraqueno and they will tell you that every driver knows exactly what they're doing and where they're going. How they do it though, is always changing, requiring drivers to react in real-time, adjusting to the world around them.

This is how El Sistema functions. Its mission: the democratization of music. Its method: be fluid, flexible and always adapting.

I quickly came to terms with the fact that here, writing anything in an agenda is a futile exercise, so now I just keep my bassoon, camera, note pad, pen and bottle of water ready to go. It's actually quite nice as every day is a surprise.

This is "The System." And I think it's beautiful.

After spending two weeks in Caracas, on March 4 the Abreu Fellows split up into three groups. My group is Stan (trumpet), Jonathan (conductor/French horn) and myself (bassoon). We set out



Rodrigo Guerrero (left), El Sistema's International Affairs Officer, greets Dantes at the airport (note Rodrigo's great wardrobe choice for his first meeting with all of the visiting Abreu Fellows!)

to learn as much as possible about El Sistema in Mérida by observing, learning, teaching and performing. For me, to get a full understanding of El Sistema and Venezuela, it's important to be equal parts observer, musician, teacher and student and I'm really happy that our time in Mérida has turned out that way.

The director of the Mérida nucleo, Jesus Perez, wanted us to get an overview of how El Sistema works in his state so throughout these 10 days we got to see several nucleos all over the state of Mérida in the following cities: La Azulita, Tabay, El Vigia, Mucuchies, Santa Cruz De Mora, Chiguara and of course Mérida. Just to avoid confusion I should probably mention that Mérida is a state and its capital is the city of Mérida. Much of the state of Mérida is in the Venezuelan Andes, so most of the towns we visited are way up in the mountains.

I also love the feel of the nucleos. The feeling of the nucleo reminds me of that of a YMCA or Boys and Girls Club, but for music. It's a place where kids can just hang out before their rehearsals, after their rehearsals; they can drop in whenever they want to practice, or they can drop in just to hang around. The nucleos (at least the ones that have enough staff) are always open even when classes are not taking place. Picture a street corner with a big building that is the nucleo. There's a little snack shop beside the big building with tables outside. It's hot and sunny all day, every day and this definitely helps with the relaxed feel. The corner is swarming with kids: some eating, some playing marbles, some playing instruments on the sidewalk. I could have spent entire days just hanging out

in the lobby. And for me the great thing is that it is always about music. Everyone there is dedicated to the program: the security guards, the nucleo driver, the parents, the teachers; everyone. Hanging on the corner with a violin or a trumpet, waiting for your rehearsal to start sounds so much better than hanging on the corner with nothing to do and nowhere to go. And if kids don't have anything to do once school is done, who's fault is that? I think it's ours (adults), so let's give 'em instruments and music.

El Sistema brings new meaning to the word access. The philosophy is, because music is so good for you, everyone should have the right to experience it. So the programs are available to any child with no initial audition. If a student is talented, works hard and wants to play in a more advanced orchestra then there are many opportunities. El Sistema has city, regional, state and national orchestras and getting in is competitive. In this way nobody is denied but then again nobody is held back. If you just want to play in the nucleo orchestra with your friends you can do that (you still have to do it well though), but if you want to be the next Yo-Yo Ma, then there's a track for you too. There's none of the one youth orchestra per city, only two spots available each year thing. Our professional concert halls are half-empty. It's time to get more kids into youth orchestras so that in the future when they're adults they're actually interested in going to see live music.

Alongside the typical orchestral instruments, some nucleos have Venezuelan folk music programs with instruments like cuatros, maracas, Venezuelan folk harp and more. So while the orchestra is the main ensemble of the nucleos, El Sistema allows room for many other forms of music.

In North America that means our El Sistema-inspired programs can consist not only of orchestras but also of jazz ensembles, bluegrass ensembles, hip-hop ensembles, funk ensembles, rock ensembles and more. In my opinion, if the music is uplifting and requires daily practice in order to master the skills needed to perform, it's legit.

Throughout our stay I also got a chance to teach some private lessons, lead

(Continued on page 4)

**“OrKidstra is when a group of musicians form and play music by having leadership, friendship, teamwork and most importantly respect. They use it to make beautiful music but if even one of those things aren't there the whole orchestra can fall apart - that is why OrKidstra is so important.”**  
- OrKidstra student

*Dantes' Blog (Continued from page 3)*  
some woodwind section rehearsals and perform. I somehow managed to get through all this in Spanish. The students were very patient with me in this regard and often corrected my mistakes, which I was grateful for because it helps me learn more quickly.

I can't say enough about the enthusiasm of the students. They're all so eager to learn and play. Often a showcase would end and they wouldn't leave the stage. They love to perform and they seem to know nothing about stage fright.

At one sectional rehearsal I led in El Vigia, it was extremely hot and we had worked hard all afternoon so I thought I'd give the students a choice: leave 15 minutes early or keep working. All hands went up to keep working. In Tabay, the nucleo showcase lasted 10 minutes. Stan and I then played a few solo pieces for them and thought that would be the end of it. Then they started screaming "otra!, otra!, otra!" So we played more. Then when we ran out of stuff to play for them, we played their music with them...for two hours! They wanted to keep going. Luckily a ballet class kicked us out of the room or I think I'd still be in Tabay

right now. Their enthusiasm is contagious. No matter how tired I was when I got to the nucleos, at the end of the day I didn't want to leave.

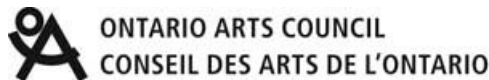


## The Leading Note Foundation in the Press

- Please look out for the July edition of the Canadian Reader's Digest . One of the feature stories is about The Leading Note Foundation!
- Keep an eye out for a documentary on OMNI TV in the fall featuring The Leading Note Foundation. We will send more information once we know when it will be shown.
- Please visit [www.leadingnotefoundation.org/en/media/](http://www.leadingnotefoundation.org/en/media/) to take you to our website for the links to many more stories about The Leading Note Foundation's OrKidstra and KidSinger programs, including the following recent items:
  - "On the Road to El Sistema" – from Symphony, the magazine of the League of American Orchestras, May/June 2010
  - "The Road to El Sistema" – special edition of The Music Scene magazine, Winter 2010
  - "Leading Note Celebrate 10 Years By Giving Back" – The Ottawa Citizen – Steven Mazey, December 2009
  - "How Music Changes Lives" – The Ottawa Citizen – Elizabeth Payne, October 2009

## Thank you to our Sponsors!

Please visit our web site to see a full list of our sponsors and donors.



We would like to congratulate **Guy Harrison** for winning the bronze medal for violin at the International Violin Making Competition in Mittenwald, Germany in May 2010. This is a prestigious luthier competition held every four years and brings many violin makers together from around the world to be judged equally on workmanship and sound.

Guy kindly donates his time to appraise the many stringed instruments that have been donated to The Leading Note Foundation.

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