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# II

# WORLD CONGRESS OF EL SISTEMA

## Volume II



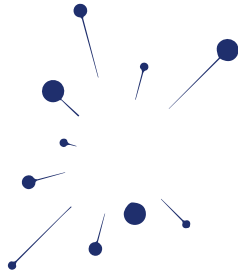




# EL SISTEMA

MÚSICA PARA TODOS





CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN  
Y DOCUMENTACIÓN  
DE EL SISTEMA



II WORLD  
CONGRESS OF  
EL SISTEMA



# REVISTA SISTEMA

**National System of Orchestras,  
Youth and Children's Orchestras  
and Choirs of Venezuela**

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# Presentation

*"It is my most passionate dream that El Sistema interconnects the countries of the world, thus constituting the Global Sistema... The most glorious emblem of the culture of peace."*

José Antonio Abreu.

The second edition of the International World Congress of El Sistema was held to honor the contributions of Maestro José Antonio Abreu Anselmi. His comprehensive and extensive vision encompassed the realms of social, musical, and educational welfare, propelling over 70 nations across the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Oceania to devise musical and orchestral programs modeled after El Sistema's formative paradigm. These initiatives were designed to transform the lives of children, youth, families, and communities through the pedagogy and collective engagement in music. In the context of post-pandemic recovery and with a focus on the future, the global community is confronted with the imperative of cultivating conducive environments for the attraction of talent. In this regard, the II World Congress emerged as a pivotal venue for the exchange of academic experiences and the interpretation of the diverse perspectives and methodologies that contribute to the development of educational models inspired by El Sistema.

The II World Congress of El Sistema convened representatives from 44 countries across five continents, showcasing 88 experiences drawing inspiration from the Venezuelan program. The event also featured the participation of three international organizations: UNICEF, UNITAR, and UNESCO. A significant highlight of the congress was the signing of Agreements of Understanding by over 60 programs inspired by El Sistema, aiming to establish institutional links. These agreements signaled a collective commitment to the pursuit of universal and inclusive access to quality music education. The underlying philosophy emphasizes collaborative learning of music, fostering values of teamwork, and the development of socio-musical intervention initiatives. From September 18 to September 23, 2023, a comprehensive academic program was conducted, encompassing lectures, workshops, academic exchanges, visits to Núcleo, and other activities.

During this program, participants engaged in an immersive experience, acquiring knowledge about the 12 programs developed by El Sistema; the scope of the Núcleo and modules; the artistic level of the professional orchestras and choirs, as well as the methodology used to provide musical education to more than one million Venezuelan students who are currently part of El Sistema in Venezuela. A notable highlight of this event was the debut of the World Orchestra and Choir El Sistema (OCMES), which was held in honor of Maestro Abreu in the fifth year of his physical disappearance. This event served as a tribute to Maestro Abreu and symbolized the aspiration to advance towards the realization of the El Sistema Mundial de Orquestas y Coros (The World System of Orchestras and Choirs).

The OCME represented the most outstanding multicultural expression at the international level. Integrated by musicians between the ages of 16 and 30. The symbol of their union, fraternity, and solidarity became a symbol of the shared commitment between countries to cooperate, educate, and promote the arts in global times. The reflection, diffusion, and dissemination of academic, artistic, organizational, social, and cultural knowledge; as well as the interpretation of the philosophical, methodological, and axiological referents around the inspired programs, made it possible to articulate thematic routes in the academic, social, research, organizational, and artistic spheres addressed by 21 speakers.

The Proceedings of the II World Congress El Sistema allow us to recognize "the intangible" of musical practice in the highly tangible and instrumental results from the perspective of ethics and aesthetics of education and the various initiatives that support community partner organizations to ensure equitable access to music education programs. Furthermore, the characterizations of the dynamics of the Nucleus through ethnographic perspectives, intuition, and the guataca as new research tools have facilitated the analysis of the methodology of El Sistema in diverse epistemic relationships.

The present study aims to explore the correlation between techniques, musicality, and the presence of interpretative and stylistic elements of symphonic repertoires. It also seeks to examine the underlying values of a spiritual nature, the integration of young people from different cultures to the collective practice of music, the experience of refugees, and the practice of improvisation in academic training from the intercultural approach. Ultimately, the study will observe the impact of new ways of conceiving music as an instance of musical and artistic sensitivity. Conversely, the constant transformation that emerges through the collective practice of music in the so-called culture of adaptability makes the nucleus visible as a space for development and happiness.

From this perspective, the interplay among analytical units—comprising social, cultural, musical, and educational dimensions—emerges as a critical lens for interpreting the meanings of El Sistema. This interpretive framework elucidates concertation as a social strategy, instrumental in the formulation and realization of development objectives within a flexible framework. It underscores the capacity to translate the socio-educational and aesthetic signals inherent within the artistic process, thereby fostering a comprehensive understanding of its nuances and implications.

These subjects, among others, were addressed during the four-day presentations by international and national experts at the II Congress. To disseminate the results of this invaluable experience and its impact on the various communities of the participating nations, the Memoirs of the II World Congress El Sistema, Volumes I and II, are hereby shared. The objective is twofold: first, to facilitate a more profound comprehension of the significance of arts education as a domain of opportunity for human development and societal advancement; and second, to serve as an educational resource for the next generation of trainers, musicians, and leaders of El Sistema and its affiliated programs.

This publication serves as an educational resource for emerging generations of trainers, musicians, and leaders of El Sistema and its affiliated programs. It is also a valuable resource for individuals seeking to learn from an intersubjective perspective about the successful experiences of El Sistema as a social program and as an exemplary educational practice. In this vein, the memoirs offer a reflection on the "II World Congress El Sistema" manifesto, emphasizing the importance of a profound examination of socio-musical practices through a pluricultural lens. This examination unveils the intricate web of continuous and disruptive global transformations, facilitating the acquisition and re-evaluation of tools for comprehending the phenomenon of social action through music.





# II CONGRESO MUNDIAL EL SISTEMA

ORQUESTA MUNDIAL  
EL SISTEMA







# Research Topic

# Alix Didier Sarrouy



(Center for Studies in Music and Dance – NOVA FCSH, Portugal)

Sociologist and musician. PhD in Sociology of Art and Culture from the Sorbonne Nouvelle University and the University of Minho. Postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of Ethnomusicology - Music and Dance (NOVA.FCSH).

In 2020, he obtained a highly competitive individual FCT grant for a 6-year research project on “IncArt - Migrants and refugees in Europe: arts as tools for socio-cultural inclusion” (CEECIND/00658/2018). He is currently principal investigator of the exploratory project “YouSound - Music education as an inclusive tool for underage refugees in Europe” (EXPL/SOC-SOC/0504/2021).

Visiting Professor at ESAD, Polytechnic Institute of Leiria. In 2022 Alix Sarrouy published two books: one as author, entitled “Actors in music education: ethnography in the sociocultural programs El Sistema, Neojiba and Orquestra Geração” (Edições Húmus- CICS.NOVA); and a second as co-editor and co-author, entitled ‘The art of building citizenship: youth, creative practices and activism’ (Tinta da China). Together with Chrysi Kyratsou, Alix is co-editing an open call for papers for a thematic issue of the journal Music and Arts in Action, with the title: “Music education among young refugees and migrants: sharing, belonging, inclusion”. (Open until October 15, 2023).

# The Craft of Music Education: Between Method, Innovation, and Evaluation

**I** am a sociologist of art and education. I work at the Institute of Ethnomusicology at Nova University of Lisbon, Portugal. I am interested in the artistic mechanisms of potential education, inclusion, and emancipation of all human beings, regardless of their culture, ethnicity, skin color, religion, political affiliation, physical and mental condition, gender identity, and sexuality. "Music for all!" as El Sistema says.

Openness to the diversity of human beings is fundamental. Venezuela is an extremely rich country in multiculturalism: there are Caraqueños, Maracuchos, Afro-Venezuelans, Llaneros, Andinos, and native peoples such as the Pemones, the Wayúu, and the Añú, among others. This multiculturalism is made visible in its musical richness. We hear Gaita, Joropo, Merengue, Waltz, Andean music, Drums, Tamunangue; but also Pop, Rock, Punk, Hip-Hop, and naturally, Classical music in orchestras and choirs.

Whatever the musical genre, it will travel and transform. The only way to preserve traditions is to allow their continuous growth, their adaptive evolution to contemporary times. All the cultural and artistic wealth, which is not exclusive to Venezuela but present in all countries, complicates the work of researchers. Being a researcher means enjoying complication, complexity; it means facing others every day to try to understand them better.

Research is a form of openness, of eternal curiosity. Over the past fifteen years, this curiosity has led me to conduct research on the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra; El Sistema in Venezuela; the Démos Orchestra in France; Neojibá in Brazil; Orquestra Geração in Portugal; Dream Orchestra in Sweden; and El Sistema in Greece.

I must also say that I do not have a polarized view of music education or the world of music in general. Created by human beings, the worlds of music are full of interesting and foolish people. Neither do I see music as a universal language because it also serves daily to separate people based on the musical styles they listen to or the "symbolic capital" of the musical instrument they play.



Scientific and journalistic research are just two of the many types of research that can exist; all research is characterized by being different from each other and by having strengths and weaknesses. We also count on the daily research that every human being does every day to find ways to survive or live one more day. In this sense, somehow, we are all researchers.

In the research on music, education, and social inclusion, there are many types of scientific disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, neuroscience, history, musicology, and ethnomusicology. All of them complement each other because social realities are multiple and complex; we need them all, we need a constant interdisciplinary dialogue.

Moreover, we have concrete results from research; these rest in books, articles, and reports; they are made known through seminars, conferences, and debates that we hold, or through the teachings we impart to students at the university. We do all this because we must always share the results of our research so that we can be considered and evaluated by other scholars and all other individuals interested in scientific production.

Therefore, it is important to think about the reception of academic results, especially by the general public, because access to scientific production can be difficult; the language can be hermetic; the results of our research work can be very thought-provoking and even generate discomfort among the people and organizations studied.

It is not easy for anyone to accept a proposed explanation of why we are what we are. There is often poor reception or a superficial reception of what social science researchers do. My advice is not to be afraid, not to be prejudiced, and to be interested in everything that is produced. We must read what is written, engage in dialogue with those who produce scientific analyses, confront, and give opinions after making the effort to understand what has been analyzed, thought, theorized, and written.

There needs to be more dialogue between those who carry out daily actions of inclusive education and those who research these realities. Neither is more expert than the other; they are different tasks with complementary analyses and actions. The development of dialogue can begin by deconstructing what scientific work is. It is not about normative evaluation or having the power to say what is good or bad.

Moral judgment is often the enemy of good science. But do not worry, besides feelings, researchers also have a moral sense and must follow very serious ethical principles in their work. A social scientist who studies music education programs with a strong focus on inclusion and social emancipation is someone who spends much time analyzing a social reality and gathering information to examine it.

It is from a wealth of accumulated information and associated sociological theory that I propose an explanation of the complexity of what is analyzed. On the other hand, research can also be a work of eternal recommencement because all social analysis must be situated in space and time. Everything is in constant motion.

Let us not forget, in this regard, the wonderful examples of movement found in the building of the National Center for Social Action through Music thanks to the art of Carlos Cruz-Diez and Jesús Soto. It is not by chance that works of these Venezuelan artists, who were masters of kinetic art, the art of movement, were selected.

Now, this evolutionary movement means that each Program, each Nucleus, each person is constantly capable of improving and at risk of worsening the quality of their actions. In music education research, everything is very sensitive and fragile, since such research is essentially based on human interactions.

Each Nucleus of El Sistema has its own reality; therefore, what works in Caracas does not necessarily work in Maracay, Margarita, Lisbon, Athens, Gothenburg,

Maputo, New York, or Bogotá. Contextualization is always necessary. To advance on this point, I would like to return to the title of this presentation "The Craft of Music Education: Between Method, Innovation, and Evaluation". Why use the word "craft"? I believe that being a teacher and being a student is a daily, meticulous, and delicate job that requires a lot of focus and attention to detail.

The word "craft" is brought up because music education involves working with the raw material that is the body and mind of human beings. El Sistema uses a very interesting metaphor related to this craft; it is the word "mold". To mold deeply, it is necessary to know the "raw material" you work with very well.

Each culture, each nucleus, even each person, molds a certain material in a specific way. However, this molding can also be highly negative, as the dictatorships of the 20th century knew very well how to mold the minds of their populations not only subtly and slowly but also through the use of force and oppression.

It is interesting to see, furthermore, that the "raw material" which is the human being, can teach the teacher to mold in the most correct way. A teacher from the Neojiba program in Brazil once told me: "It is my students who teach me how I should teach them."

The diversity I have been discussing throughout this work has a significant impact on the first point of my subtitle: "method". But what is method in music education? El Sistema does not have a single method. I would say that is one of its strengths. In a world that wants to fix everything, to define solutions prior to problems and idiosyncratic complexities, not having a fixed method, not having the "magic key," is something profoundly challenging.

However, on the other hand, acting "without a formal method" does not work in all parts of the world; a good plan can provide a lot of confidence and security in other cultures. Nonetheless, there is a

method. Let us think about the sequential repertoire, group classes, or many other activities; but, above all, let us think that there is an "attitude"; a propensity for sensitive, hard, daily, flexible work, not only for doing, but for physical and mental survival in contexts that can be so adverse.

My second point is the "guataca". I learned about it and its use in popular music in Maracaibo. Guataca means to play by ear; to "adapt"; to be flexible in the face of what is happening in the musical present. A kinetic attitude, a talent! It is the ability to understand by listening to what is happening; so, each person can shape their own musical actions.

It is a very useful craft to move forward on multiple stages. And I find it interesting that this idea of guataca is a highly developed capability in Venezuela as a survival technique in the face of constant social adversities. I wonder if, just as one plays by ear, one also lives by ear. I think that would be a good research topic for anyone interested.

So far, I have discussed the method or rather the lack of it and guataca as a survival characteristic in musical and social life scenarios. And these two points connect me with the last point I want to address in this presentation, which relates to "evaluation".

How can we evaluate something so malleable, so flexible and unique to each social context? How can we evaluate things that are so sensitive and subtle, often invisible, yet have such a significant impact on daily life and the long term? Using a well-known phrase by composer Gustav Mahler, we could unusually compare a musical score and an evaluation report of a music program. Mahler said that a score contains everything except the essential. Many evaluation reviews tend to contain everything except the essential.

So, how do we include in evaluations the power of a sincere "Good morning!" at the start of each class in a Nucleus? How can we include the power of a very kind look from a teacher towards their students? How can we include the power of a

grandmother's tear at her granddaughter's concert? How can we include the importance of air conditioning in the núcleos when it is forty degrees in Maracaibo? How can we include "guataca" by ear and "guataca" socially? I propose this as a provocation, because the intention is not to minimize music education evaluations; these are important, but it is up to all of us to be more insightful and profound in analyzing human interactions.

In this sense, it is imperative that researchers, journalists, center directors, and teachers work more intensively and jointly with all the actors in each Nucleus, in each Program worldwide. Funders, politicians, and institutions that rely on reports to support or finance also need to be more attentive, spend more time dedicating themselves to in-depth reading of what can be written in evaluations.

We must not limit ourselves to reading titles and looking at photographs and graphs. Evaluations should provide more tools for funders to analyze a social reality, but they should also be useful for directors, teachers, parents, and even for the students who are, as El Sistema says, "the purpose". One of the possible solutions or strategies we should employ is "co-research" and "co-writing".

That is, to research and write with all the actors of music education. In this way, we can continue jointly developing this wonderful craft that is music education in adverse social, economic, and political contexts.

In 2022, I published the book *Atores da educação musical: etnografia nos programas socioculturais El Sistema, Neojiba, Orquestra Geração* in Portuguese; I dedicated it to "The craft of educating by attending to the learning contexts of human beings". With these words, I meant that it is not possible to conduct in-depth research in a Nucleus without including other contexts of daily education: school in the morning, family, the street, places of worship.

But all this possible craft also depends on the structural and financial conditions of a program. It also depends on the conditions teachers have to do their work in any country in the world: I am referring to salaries, labor rights, their physical and mental health, working hours, and the endless bureaucracies that exhaust us.

To conclude, I leave four ideas for reflection: I think that in addition to this II World Congress of El Sistema, researchers should be promoted in Venezuela, in particular, and in Latin America, in general. Venezuela and Latin America have always had great researchers; they are territories very rich in creativity and depth of research in social sciences.

Research in Latin American countries should be supported and included in such congresses. Secondly, Venezuelan researchers of the future should not be limited to studying El Sistema. They should study other national music programs and other artistic forms such as theater, circus, dance, cinema, photography, among others.

Music education has much to learn from other forms of education and through other forms of art. Venezuelan researchers should also be able to travel and study music programs around the world and build on their culture and the existing literature in the Global South.

Thirdly, future Venezuelan researchers should create their own research tools. Can guataca be developed in research? Can one "research by ear"? What are the strengths and weaknesses of something like that; something more kinetic? Finally, it is necessary to develop a constant dialogue with other societies where the scientific culture has a strong tradition; it is important not to turn away and close oneself off, but to open up to the world and deepen inclusive dialogues. Only in this way can science advance.



# Eric Booth



*(Juilliard, Stanford University, NYU, Tanglewood and Lincoln Center Education and The Kennedy Center)*

In 2015, he was honored with the highest accolade in the domain of arts education, the Americans for the Arts, Arts Education Leadership Award, and was recognized as one of the 50 most influential individuals in the United States. He began his career as a Broadway actor and subsequently transitioned into the realm of business, where he established a company that within seven years became the largest of its kind in the United States.

He has authored eight books and approximately 35 published articles, with his most recent publication being *Making Change: Teaching Artists and Their Role in Shaping a Better World* has been widely received as a tool for building the global field, and will soon be released in Spanish. He has held faculty positions at several institutions, including the Gaillard School (12 years), Tanglewood (5 years), the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (20 years), and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (41 years, where he established the Arts Education Development Labs).

He has provided consultation to numerous arts organizations, including seven of the ten largest orchestras worldwide. He has provided consultation to numerous arts organizations, including five national service organizations, cities, states, and businesses across the United States and in 11 other countries. Additionally, he serves as a major advisor to the El Sistema movement in the United States and abroad, having founded *The Ensemble*, the most prominent publication in the field.

# Creating a Greater Impact on Students: Experimenting in the Academy to Achieve Impact through Music (Objective)

“

*“If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”*

*Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, aviator and author of The Little Prince.*

**T**he achievements of El Sistema of Venezuela are unique among many countries and programs that have been inspired by its words to create other programs. As José Antonio Abreu and Gustavo Dudamel mentioned when they spoke in the Scottish Parliament in August: “First, social projects and second, cultural projects.”

Of the hundreds of other programs that exist worldwide, many have had significant success in reaching a large number of young people and having a positive impact on so many young lives. Others are finding their way, inspired by the example of Venezuela, but facing challenges that are different from those in Venezuela. These social and cultural challenges have slowed or limited the steady growth and effectiveness of these programs.

I have visited programs in 25 countries and worked with more than a hundred of them. I celebrate their successes and, perhaps because I am from New York, I am insistent with the hope that they can continually improve. El Sistema of Venezuela succeeded because it adapted and evolved, learning its way forward over decades.

I will speak about Music for Social Action Programs. I use that term because not all descend directly from the Venezuelan model; we need to adapt and evolve in the challenging times that our young people, our program leaders, and our teaching artists face today.

One initiative I work with is bold in its experimentation to find solid ways to evolve the ideas that flourished in Venezuela and other countries. The Academy for Impact through Music (AIM) is an in-depth 15-month fellowship program for 40-50 teaching artists with 8 to 10 associated programs. AIM was founded and supported by the Hilti Foundation. AIM programs are based on four continents: North and South America, Europe, and Africa.

The programs are quite different and together create a rich diversity of practices and strengths: the way teachers, referred to as music and life skills teachers in Brass for Africa (NGO), deliver their program is quite different from how Orquestra Geração does it in Portugal, YOLA in Los Angeles, and NEOJIBA in Brazil.

With financial support from the Hilti Foundation, the Academy for Impact through Music (AIM) focuses on the effectiveness of teachers in these programs, guiding them towards a greater impact on their students and their entire program.

We recognize that all the teachers we work with are good educators, but they face challenges that limit their effectiveness. Because many come from greater privileges and a traditional music education channel that has expectations and assumptions differing from their students' backgrounds, AIM's work involves much unlearning and relearning. To help each cohort of 40 to 50 Firebird fellows, we have developed a series of approaches that differ from the most common professional development practices. I will share three of our key ideas in this talk.

If these ideas interest you, challenge you, or if you simply want to learn more, please

contact AIM. We are deeply interested in learning from and with colleagues around the world. What ideas do you find particularly interesting or concerning? Let us know your contact information, and we invite you to learn more through the website or by contacting us directly. <https://www.aimpowers.com/our-people#form>

My personal experience and observation have allowed me to recognize that many, if not most, of the programs inspired by El Sistema struggle to inspire the kind of unconditional commitment and fierce dedication that leads to changing the trajectory of a young life.

The primary goal of Music for Social Action Programs is to inspire unconditional commitment and fierce dedication that changes the trajectory of a young life, but few are achieving their ambitions. AIM focuses on teaching practices and ways in which programs can support continuous improvement. We attempt to examine common assumptions about young people to find more powerful ways to engage them.

For example, what if we experimented with approaches that respected young people as experts and saw teachers as learners? Is it really true that young people only have valuable and creative musical ideas once they have acquired a certain mastery of an instrument? Is it really true that social development in our programs has to occur outside of musical creation and take additional time? Can we not build intensive and intentional social development directly into solid musical practice?

The Firebird fellows we work with have good skills in teaching their instruments, based on the education they themselves have received and what they have learned through experience. AIM introduces skills from areas outside their expertise that have proven successful among today's youth. We introduce knowledge from highly effective non-arts educators on managing groups of students and lesson design.

We introduce high-engagement practices in music education from outstanding

teachers around the world. AIM is dedicated to experimentation. We do not suggest that we have the answers to the challenges that teaching artists and programs face in their own contexts; they know better than we do. However, we do promote and embody a spirit of continuous improvement by experimenting within our program and empowering Firebird fellows to be experimenters. Here is the first of the great ideas on which AIM is based: to experiment well, it is necessary to have a constant objective. Everyone in Music for Social Action Programs has dreams and goals for their students, and we have heard dozens of them, all good.

AIM recognized the need for a small, consistent set of objectives that everyone could agree on to maintain as a guiding constellation for our direction. Achieving solid agreement around a specific set of objectives was something the music field had never done before.

Join me in a small activity, a mental experiment... [Eric directs a brief activity]. AIM established five pillars, and we have tested and received feedback on these five pillars over three years from hundreds of colleagues on four continents, and they appear to be a reliable set. Of course, they overlap in practice, but each describes an essential priority for our teaching to serve students in the most powerful way.

### **Holistic Development**

### **Intrinsic Motivation**

### **Optimal Agency**

### **Unlimited Art**

### **Community**

These are abstract ideas, so we needed to ground them in more practical teaching priorities to help our fellows experiment with pedagogical strategies that could achieve them more effectively. It could be argued that almost any group activity contributes to building a community.

Therefore, to help them focus on the pillars during their teaching practice, we concentrate on three aspects of each pillar. These are more specific characteristics of the pillars, and teachers can orient themselves towards the growth of these aspects to guide their teaching strategies.

These aspects are measurable; in fact, one can determine if these objectives are being achieved and not leave it to subjective opinions and feelings. Most of our work with the fellows, when we observe their teaching and provide feedback, is based on their experimentation with these aspects.

To help our teachers, we are also developing micro-strategies. These are an extensive list of specific activities and suggestions that teachers can try, which align with the aspects and pillars.

The second major idea in which AIM has invested is action research. We cannot afford to be an academic institution that takes a couple of years to adequately teach musicians how to teach effectively for youth development. There is much unlearning and relearning in this process.

Given that our time does not allow us to fully teach this type of instruction, we focus on helping our fellows become excellent guides of their own continuous improvement so that they can consistently and steadily direct their own development throughout their teaching careers.

We teach them about action research, which is a legitimate form of professional research widely used in universities.

Our fellows learn a slightly simplified protocol so that they can experiment effectively, generate data that they can analyze, arrive at solid conclusions about what works with their students, and continuously improve in achieving student outcomes that align with the aspects and pillars.

These are the basic steps of our action research approach. Each fellow designs

and executes a series of action research experiments aimed at their own improvement. The goal is for them to have internalized these mental habits by the end of the fellowship.

### Key Challenges:

1. Focus on a specific teaching issue or problem.
2. Test a specific experiment repeatedly over time.
3. Generate eloquent documentation that provides evidence of whether the experiment is working.
4. Analyze impact data to reach a conclusion rather than relying on opinions.
5. Launch a new experiment based on new learning. Because fellows go through this action research cycle several times, this thinking becomes a mental habit.

For the rest of their careers, they will identify the most robust outcomes they want for their students and the weaknesses in their teaching that they can address, then experiment, study the documents produced to determine the success of the experiment, and then start again with a new experiment.

**Continuous improvement** works best when in a small group, supporting each other, learning from each other, and being curious together in a laboratory. We require the programs we work with to create a FAR Laboratory, the Firebird Action Research Laboratory. We hope that the feeling of this laboratory, the support, and the excitement of having experimenting colleagues, continues long after the fellowship period.

**The third major idea in which AIM invests is coaching.** It is a particular type of relationship that we foster throughout the fellowship.

Coaching is not the same as teaching or mentoring; it involves listening attentively, drawing out what that person knows, and guiding them towards an active agency to drive their own improvement. We encourage coaching that works peer-to-peer and artist-to-student.

We have found that direct instruction to teachers can yield some results but leads to fairly small improvements and does not foster much ongoing experience.

Therefore, we serve as coaches to train our fellows as passionate learners, rather than the more traditional professional development where they simply acquire a few additional teaching tools. Coaching is different from direct instruction.

It engages the student and guides them to understand more about what they partially know. Allow me to conclude this brief introduction to AIM with a reminder that we are serious in our invitation for you to join us in our effort to find ways to reach today's youth more effectively. We feel that the need is urgent and that we can improve together.

Young people around the world are struggling with increased anxiety and mental health issues for very real reasons.

We have young people with tremendous potential that is not being activated in their schooling. We have a response in Music for Social Action Programs, and we need to make that response work as powerfully as possible to seize this opportunity. If you are interested in what we are learning, or if you would like to share ideas or concerns, contact us:

<https://www.aimpowers.com/our-people#form>

I would like to thank El Sistema Venezuela not only for hosting this Congress to help us all learn from each other but also for its decades of effective experience that have benefited so many people.

For me, personally, El Sistema of Venezuela launched a completely new chapter in my career. I was already older when I made my first trip to Venezuela, but it is so exciting that I cannot imagine leaving it for the rest of my life.

# Franka Verhagen



(Dream  
Orchestra)

Following my graduation from the Maastricht Conservatory in 1985, I undertook a journey of lifelong learning and research. During my 33-year residency in Venezuela, I was presented with numerous opportunities, which contributed to my substantial accumulation of experience. In addition to my artistic pursuits, I served as a professor at the "Universidad Nacional Experimental de las Artes" in Caracas for a period of 23 years (1987–2010), where I held the positions of professor of the guitar and ear training. In this capacity, I developed innovative strategies to enhance the accessibility of ear training and musical analysis to students.

In addition, as the coordinator of the "Pro Música" program, I contributed to the design and configuration of innovative procedures for the accreditation of experience and knowledge. In the El Sistema initiative, I initiated pedagogical activities in multiple "Núcleos" and the Simón Bolívar Conservatory following my arrival in 1986. It was within the framework of El Sistema that, in 2010, an opportunity emerged to establish an academic program designed for young teachers and conductors, underpinned by the andragogic principle.

As a component of this initiative, I spearheaded an extensive administrative and academic team for a period of nine years, during which I had the privilege of training over 1,200 musicians. Following my return to Europe in 2019, I assumed the role of executive director at the nascent NGO "Dream Orchestra (DO)" in Gothenburg, Sweden. In this capacity, I engage with pressing social issues, including integration, diversity, refugee concerns, racism, segregation, and tolerance. In this capacity, I play a pivotal role in the formulation of the business plan and the development of the brand strategy.

In addition, I have published a book on the learning model, which I co-authored with the founder, Ron Davis Alvarez. This book delves into the topic of "Safeguarding" vulnerable children and youth, and I have developed a protection policy for the organization as part of this project. The two books I have authored for DO will be available on our website, [www.dreamorchestra.se](http://www.dreamorchestra.se), in September 2023.

# Reaching Everyone Equally

## Preamble

1.

**G**ood morning everyone. It is a great pleasure to be back here, in what has been my home for over 30 years. I came to Venezuela due to one of those fortuitous opportunities, an invitation to participate in a guitar festival. Upon moving here, I started teaching at the Núcleo de la Rinconada, one of the two Núcleos established in Caracas at that time. I remember being fascinated by the number of children participating together in a class. I had never experienced a space with so much energy where the children moved from my music theory class to rehearsal, to their instrument class, or to choir practice. In the decades that followed this first encounter with El Sistema, I saw many of these children again in the classrooms of the Instituto Universitario de Estudios Musicales, created by Maestro Abreu to offer those motivated to make music their profession a training worthy of a university degree. Later, I had the privilege of working with some of them as colleagues at IUDEM and in the Academic Training Program.

As a teacher or manager, a large part of our work involves monitoring and evaluating the processes carried out in the classroom or in the projects we manage. Honored to participate in this research panel alongside people I have known for a long time, with whom I have had the privilege of working, and whom I admire deeply, I want, in this brief presentation, to share my observations from the experience gained in El Sistema and in the NGO Dream Orchestra in Gothenburg, Sweden, regarding the topic of inclusion, which has repercussions not only socially but also academically and artistically. I will reflect on the support that specific and longitudinal research (in areas such as sociology, neuroscience, music pedagogy, etc.) can provide us to understand and improve the different processes carried out in programs like El Sistema.

Because "Music for All" proposes free access to intensive and high-quality music education in the context of an orchestra or choir, with free instrument loans. El Sistema, in almost half a century, has seen several generations of Venezuelans grow in its orchestras and choirs, in constant expansion, inaugurating more Núcleos across the country, committed to the children and youth of each municipality, offering a safe place to spend their free time and learn to play an instrument or sing in a choir together with their peers. With the Simón Bolívar program attending musical activities during school hours, thousands of children learn about El Sistema and can decide to join a Núcleo in the afternoons and on weekends.



**This commitment to reach everyone requires a massive teaching platform.**

2.

The social and musical success of El Sistema, and the extent to which each of the integral trainers of El Sistema emerge as natural multipliers of El Sistema's learning culture, called for the identification of personal and pedagogical techniques and tools that form the basis of El Sistema's profile. Following the instructions of Maestro José Antonio Abreu, we created the Academic Training Program based on the andragogical principle, forming a network of young leaders, teachers, and conductors, to contribute to strengthening the profile of the musician-teacher-conductor as a true subject of social transformation. Monitoring this process and observing the characteristics of the population served revealed the diversity of human resources working in El Sistema.

Núcleo directors, orchestra and choir conductors, and teachers attended, coming from all corners of the country and bringing different levels of preparation. Nominated by the managers of each state, they represented the human resources willing to carry out daily tasks in their Núcleos. The vast majority grew up in El Sistema. Among them were graduates in Music, Administration, Engineering, Education, Law, etc.; however, most (85%) were high school graduates, most of whom were dedicated to their work in the Núcleo.

The program focused on serving all of them without a selection process, understanding the need to empower each of these individuals, diagnosing their knowledge, and offering training spaces in different disciplinary components. The data collected since 2010 requires analysis to adjust and improve the training process for trainers

3.

Since 2019, I have been working with an NGO in Sweden. Dream Orchestra was founded by Camilla Sarner and Ron Davis

Alvarez, both present here today at CNASPM. From the platform of El Sistema Sweden, of which Camilla was one of the founders and executive director and Ron the artistic director, they saw a need and an opportunity to create a musical learning space in the orchestra for unaccompanied minors who arrived in large numbers to seek asylum in Sweden in 2015.

4.

Here, I want to make a parenthesis and comment on El Sistema Sweden. When Gustavo Dudamel was appointed artistic director of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, a position he held from 2007 to 2012, he showed great interest in the involvement and connection that the orchestra had with the community and in ensuring that existing music education offerings were equally accessible to all children.

The musicians of the orchestra told him that fewer and fewer children were enrolling in music classes at the Cultural Schools (institutions with a municipal presence of more than 100 years, funded by the state, where not only music classes are given but also dance, theater, and visual arts).

In 2009, on Gustavo's initiative, who was keen to find that connection with society, a first visit was organized to one of the most segregated neighborhoods in the city. Here, where numerous immigrants and refugees from the Balkans, the Middle East, and Africa live, the orchestra performed Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in a school sports field. At the end, it received a great ovation from the children and their parents, many of whom had never attended a concert or heard classical music. This performance had great symbolic value for many in the neighborhood and the orchestra.

The first El Sistema Sweden program began in this neighborhood in the fall of 2010. A curriculum was immediately developed from kindergarten to elementary school in collaboration with the district's Cultural School. This new collaboration received much attention and

extended to other municipalities in the country, partly thanks to the possibility of this initiative being funded by a new portfolio of the Ministry of Education.

In 2012, the foundation of El Sistema Sweden was formalized by Gustavo and important members of the symphony orchestra's board of directors, and training courses were offered according to El Sistema's methodology for music teachers. Between 2012 and 2015, several visits to Venezuela were made so that the executives of cultural schools throughout the country could see and hear in person what is possible when children are invited to engage intensively with music. It could be said that El Sistema became fashionable; everyone was very enthusiastic. Initially, El Sistema's methodology was introduced in preschool and elementary school.

In the Cultural Schools, they also wanted to offer orchestral practices as an extracurricular activity for the most motivated children. Today, El Sistema Sweden represents an exemplary implementation of the Simón Bolívar Program, with highly trained music teachers and the possibility of offering activities with orchestral instruments. Likewise, a considerable amount of research by the music education departments of the Universities of Gothenburg and Lund, conducted by professors Monica Lindgren, Eva Saether, and Åsa Bergman, done collectively, in duo, or individually, has identified the difficulties for a successful implementation of El Sistema's methodology as an extracurricular activity.

**Quality Dilemma:** Twelve years after founding El Sistema Sweden, a significant musical/artistic result has not yet been achieved. In general, it can be concluded that children do not receive enough musical challenges and that playing together in the orchestra is mainly a social issue.

**Age Dilemma:** The music education of El Sistema primarily takes place in preschool and primary school, and regarding continuation for secondary school

students, only the quality of work in the cultural schools of Södertälje and Malmö is noteworthy. If you are over 12 years old, you no longer come into contact with El Sistema through school, and it is very common that if you go to the Cultural School at that age to start playing the violin, you are considered too old.

**Talent Development Dilemma:** Not enough attention is paid to guiding talents that manifest from an early age.

**Cultural Dilemma:** The repertoire proposed by El Sistema Sweden consists mainly of Western classical music.

**Economic Dilemma:** Despite government funding, there is not enough money to admit everyone. In certain Cultural Schools, long waiting lists are produced, and if you move from one part of the city to another, it may happen that you initially participated in an El Sistema program, but in the part of the city you have moved to, you appear on the waiting list.

It is worth highlighting the most successful product of El Sistema Sweden, which is the five-day summer camp: Side by Side by El Sistema. The first edition was in 2013, and this year the tenth anniversary was celebrated. Here, children from all over the world (the average participation per year is about 3000 children) can participate in choirs and orchestras, organized at different levels from beginners to advanced, with a symbolic registration fee that allows any child or young person to participate.

5. Now, it is time to talk about Dream Orchestra. In 2015, Sweden had to face the largest wave of immigration and refugees (163,000, of which 35,000 were minors) in the world (in relation to the number of Swedish inhabitants at that time). There was a massive mobilization of the government, but also of the community, churches, sports clubs, etc., to manage the arrival of so many people. Ron Álvarez, director of El Sistema Sweden, having arrived from Venezuela only a few months earlier, and with his life experience of growing up in vulnerable conditions, immediately felt called to contribute. Just

as he had received the opportunity to grow as a musician and conductor from El Sistema, he saw the opportunity to offer a musical activity to these newly arrived youngsters (between 14 and 17 years old).

He visited several houses outside the city where the minor refugees, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and other countries, were staying, and introduced himself with his violin. He asked if they would like to play an instrument. Some had dreamed of it, one even brought his violin, and others thought it was an exotic idea. With the help of university students from the orchestral master's program, the orchestra was expanded with other instruments. A few months after starting with 20 young refugees, the orchestra had already grown to 50 people because the first participants invited other companions. Their first concert was at the inauguration of Side by Side 2017, in true Venezuelan style, just a few months after they started rehearsing.

Since 2015, Ron has become the director in charge of the youth orchestra at this event, which is presented in the grand Scandinavium stadium. When the Swedish children participating in this camp learned that Ron offered an intensive orchestral activity (3 times) each week in a downtown location, they enrolled in the orchestra. In this way, Dream Orchestra has become a multicultural place. The activity is free, you can start without any prior musical knowledge, and you can choose the instrument of your preference on loan at no additional cost. There is no age limit to start or enrollment procedure. All this is to make it as accessible as possible for those who have difficulty integrating somewhere, who do not feel welcome, or who think that playing in a symphony orchestra is only for the elite.

6. With the support of philanthropic foundations, we have been able to establish the brand and an entrepreneurship plan. Now, DO is active in 4 locations, and the central location is the meeting place where children from the other centers also gather each month to play in the orchestra.

The applications and reports for our sponsors require us to collect statistics, monitor participation, and track the students' retention. The constant evaluation of the processes in a collaborative dynamic with the administrative team and teachers helps us adjust the dynamics and respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse group.

Now in 2023, Dream Orchestra is a place where 350 children from all levels of society participate. Here, you can hear 20 different languages spoken by families from South America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. 90% of the participants are second-generation refugees or immigrants. 10% are Swedes for at least three generations. 60% are girls and 40% are boys.

7. Since 2019, we have published three works on our website.

8. The safeguarding policy, today a requirement to apply for sponsorships, dictates the rights and duties of teachers and administrative staff, as well as of children and adolescents.

A protocol, which we formulated together with the "Save the Children" office in Sweden, is evaluated monthly in board meetings. Our team receives training workshops with specialists in the area. After starting with the initial group of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, many of whom suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, we now assist many children and young people who, for various reasons, are marginalized, suffer from bullying, have psychological disorders, or struggle with their gender identity. In the ecumenical community where we carry out our activities, we have the support of psychologists. In the first report of the research work that Dr. Alix Sarrouy developed between 2021 and 2022 in Dream Orchestra, you can read more about this topic.

9. As DO has grown, it is necessary to train teachers in El Sistema's methodology. Sharing strategies with teachers that allow

them to guide each child in their individual development, while enabling them to participate in the orchestra from the beginning by introducing simplified adaptations of certain works (multilevel); peer teaching, an intensive activity 3 times a week, and a sequential repertoire have borne fruit. In 2021, we published the book "Dream Orchestra, a learning model," which is now digitally available on the website. Here, we describe the arrival of the unaccompanied minors and their progress in the orchestra, their motivation to attend and want to learn to play the violin or cello at the age of 14/15, their difficulties, and their joys.

Now, 7 years after its creation, the attention to students has diversified. We serve children from the age of 3 and also welcome parents (who have never played an instrument). The 15 and 16-year-olds, who now plan to attend the Academy of Music and Drama at the University of Gothenburg after high school, have their own projects where they face challenges at their level and come more frequently and for longer rehearsal times than those who are just starting.

As young leaders, they also assist new participants (Side by Side), who are often peers of the same age. In December last year, they played Arcangelo Corelli's "Concerto Grosso Di Natale," and in April this year, they recorded Arturo Márquez's "Danzón 2" in a project with university students.

10. A little over a month ago, we published a second book (also available digitally on the website) that describes the process, dynamics, and observations made throughout a project we developed between January 2022 and June 2023. "Storytelling in the Orchestra."

Working with children from such diverse backgrounds inspired us to create this space where we could learn from each other, get to know languages, customs, music, and traditional stories. For our Afghan students, we sought cooperation with the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), an institute that now operates from Portugal where it received refuge after being banned from making music in their country and where musical instruments have been massively burned.

Starting this orchestra with such a vulnerable population has created a strong commitment within our entire team to reach everyone, especially those who may feel that playing an instrument in an orchestra is beyond their reach. We see DO as presenting a high-quality extracurricular alternative outside of cultural schools, and we are striving to gain recognition from the regional government, to demonstrate the organization's strengths and thus make it sustainable and successful over time and place.

It is important for us that all children and young people from all parts of society feel welcome, to make this space a place of inclusion and integration.

# Mayra León



*(Director of the Simón Bolívar Music Conservatory (2019-2023) and Director of the Research and Documentation Center of El Sistema, Guest Professor at the UNEARTE-FundaMusical-Conservatory Agreement)*

She is a musician, university professor, and researcher in the field of education, neuroscience and music, aesthetics, sociocultural processes, and musical semiotics. She holds a doctorate in Education, a master's degree in Arts, with a specialization in Aesthetics, and is a professor in the field of Music Education. Furthermore, she has also conducted children and youth choirs and orchestras. In the academic setting, her research focuses on the phenomenon of research in the Art UNEARTE and Audiovisual University of Venezuela. She currently serves as a tutor for master's students specializing in development planning and public policies at the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV). At present, she is engaged in the promotion of research activity related to EL Sistema, a program focused on music education, through the formulation of research agendas and its subsequent dissemination through the publication of research booklets, known as ATRIL, and the scientific journal SisTema, a role she fulfills as the Director of the Research and Documentation Center of El Sistema. She is also the Director of the UNEARTE-FundaMusical-Conservatorio de Música Simón Bolívar Agreement. She has served as an Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching Practices at the Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador. She was the Head of the Department of Teaching Practices at UPEL-IPC. She has also served as the Coordinator of Execution of Educational Research Projects. From 2005 to 2018, she served as the Head of the Didactic Instrumentation Department. Concurrently, they fulfilled the role of Director of the Center for Research and Documentation of El Sistema and the Simon Bolivar Conservatory of Music. They are an active researcher at the Center for Research and Development of Experiences in Teaching Practice (CIDEP). Their doctoral degrees include a Doctorate in Education in the line of Public Policies and Educational Innovations and a Doctorate in Latin American and Caribbean Culture. Their publications include Musical Neurodidactics and Learning Processes. From 2005 to 2018, the individual served as Chair of Didactic Instrumentation and as Director of the Research and Documentation Center of El Sistema and the Simón Bolívar Conservatory of Music. The individual is an active researcher at the Center for Research and Development of Experiences in Teaching Praxis (CIDEP), and holds a PhD in Education in the line of Public Policies and Educational Innovations, as well as a PhD in Latin American and Caribbean Culture. The following list includes some of the individual's publications: Musical Neurodidactics and Learning Processes. An Approach to Music Educator Training. UNESCO. IESALC. Superior Education Magazine and Society; "The Undergraduate Activity through Teaching Practice: Educational Research published in the UPEL-IPC Research Journal; The Pedagogical Practice of Music Education Teachers at UPEL Under the Approach of Action Theory." RIEAC Electronic Journal. In addition, the author participated in the 5th Congress-Workshop on Neurosciences, Education and Emotional Intelligence, which was held in conjunction with the Seventh Neuropsychopedagogy Conference in 2015. Buenos Aires, Argentina.

# El Sistema in Perspective: Approach to Academic Studies on El Sistema

**T**he objective is to approach the discursive constructions of the corpus of research on El Sistema that have been developed nationally and internationally. Over its 48 years of history, a broad and interesting body of academic literature has been generated about El Sistema, most of which study the different dimensions, scopes, impacts, benefits, limits, and divergences of what has been called Social Action through Music, Children's and Youth Orchestras Projects, the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Venezuela, the Orchestra Program, or simply El Sistema. In this multiplicity of perspectives, we find a varied treatment of themes and methodological practices in different fields of knowledge.

The Research and Documentation Center, in exercising its Mission, constitutes the observatory of El Sistema, as it records, systematizes, and analyzes scientific production with the aim of interpreting the discursive and epistemic constructions that have taken place. To this end, a database or map of national and international research authors is being created whose function is to expand the storage, retrieval, and dissemination of data towards a structured set of information about El Sistema, available electronically for the majority of users. The registered research spans a temporal period from 1983, when the orchestra program created by Maestro José Antonio Abreu was only eight years old, to 2023.

To facilitate interpretation, we examine our database or map of authors from three fundamental dimensions: themes or topics, analytical perspectives (epistemological and methodological), and critical perspectives (present and absent studies). In our frame of reference, diverse perspectives converge that allow us to address the phenomenon of discursive construction of the scientific text: Van Dijk (1992) and Todorov (1988). There are also current scholars of linguistic, semiotic, and pedagogical trends: Bolívar and Beke (2011), Halliday (1985, 1994, 2004), De Martin and White (2005), Fairclough and Wodak (1998).



Understanding it this way, research texts, as discursive genres (thematic content, style, and composition), admit a set of resources and discursive strategies that give a semiotic character and criteria of scientific truth to textual production. We are motivated by the social representations that derive from the discursive positions of researchers and their impact on social action for music. Therefore, we present an approach to the map of authors and take as a reference the corpus of 223 titles from our Database.

First, we will observe the percentage of research in the global panorama by regions, with Portugal, England, the United States, Colombia, Argentina, and Venezuela being the highest producers of research on El Sistema and programs inspired by El Sistema.

Within the topics or themes according to fields of study, we find:

- Studies in the field of the Sociology of Music
- Music Education (Orchestral practice and quality education, Orchestral practice and group inclusion)
- Public Policies
- Economics
- Architecture
- Clinical Psychology
- Disciplinary Studies: Performance and Orchestral Conducting
- Clinical Psychology and development of human resources or talent
- Cultural Management (Financing processes, Organizational practice, Public management models)
- Comparative studies between El Sistema subsidiaries
- Studies with expressly critical purposes
- Critical studies from the ethnomusicological perspective

We find that the most significant research production on El Sistema occurred between 2015 and 2018.

From the methodological practices perspective, the diversity of proposals refers us to:

- Documentary Studies
- Ethnographic Studies
- Field Studies
- Descriptive Studies
- Cross-sectional Studies
- Studies from Anthropology
- Qualitative Research
- Quantitative Research (experimental, longitudinal, cross-sectional studies)
- Exploratory Studies
- Mixed research
- Experimental studies
- Evaluative studies
- Case studies

Phenomenological, hermeneutic approaches, reviews, and experience reports are also used. The multiplicity of techniques includes non-participant and participant observation, in-depth interviews, surveys, document analysis, content analysis, statistical analysis, hermeneutic analysis, and techniques specific to applied musicology, among others.

Now, as part of the configurations built around El Sistema, we want to describe the social representations and imaginaries constructed as El Sistema is approached as a study object. We will describe this in light of two perspectives: complementary or convergent positions and antagonistic ones, the so-called critical perspectives.

We will then say that the analytical categories emerging from the corpus



position El Sistema, from the Social Action through Music (ASPM), as a model:

### **Music as a tool for social transformation**

There is an immanent relationship between El Sistema and music, as a field of knowledge assumed by El Sistema as a tool for social transformation, as a factor of human development, promotion of values, and restoration mechanisms. This highlights the importance of the social function of music and its impact on the development of societies, democratic life, and the culture of peace. We observe in research by Hairin (2016), Wald (2016-2017-2019), Sarrouy (2017), Cerda and Leiva (2009), UNDP (2015), and González (2018) that they agree in affirming the contributions of music:

"They are evidenced in students through greater well-being, while behaviors, values, civic competencies, and qualities aimed at reducing inequality and the gap of social segregation are instilled in them, achieving the development of a culture of peace." Alarcón (2021), *Study of the Implementation of the Venezuelan System in the Formation and Development of the Educational Project of the Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra* (2021)

"It produces a positive effect on academic training by fostering linguistic advances, spatial perception, memorization capacity, organization, creativity development, and a better attitude towards learning." Alarcón (2021), De Andraca (2017), López and Salcedo (2017)

"However, many of ASPM's favorite phrases — 'from the moment a child is taught to play an instrument, he ceases to be poor'; 'a child who wields an instrument will never wield a weapon'; 'orchestras and choirs are incredibly effective tools against violence' — are seen as simplistic formulas. 'The creation of an orchestra is not only unlikely to be a solution, but it may also hinder more realistic efforts at social change'." Baker (2022). *Rethinking Social Action through Music*.

### **El Sistema as a Sphere of Transformation**

Many of the works on El Sistema describe its social benefits, social meanings, and identity construction. Other works analyze the impact and benefits that El Sistema has generated in the different contexts where it has developed: "In these thirty-six years, El Sistema has become a program of 'massive reach that uses music as a tool for social inclusion, providing participants with training that allows the materialization of new goals and life projects, contributing to the expansion of their opportunities.'" (Giménez Claudia. *Systematization of Fesnojiv*. UNDP. 2008) González and Coll (2011).

At the same time (UNDP, in Venezuela): 'Our number one Millennium Development Goal is poverty reduction, and we decided to continue supporting Fesnojiv because it is the best model that exists to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty. It is a development model in which children have options for a better future where they fully celebrate with all their faculties.' (Fesnojiv Web Press, October 29, 2010). González and Coll (2011).

### **Identity Construction of El Sistema**

#### **El Sistema is recognized as:**

"El Sistema is a world reference in the field of collective music education; it is considered a powerful tool for the social rescue of youth, as its philosophy is based on the incorporation of young people from the most disadvantaged social strata under the principle of gratuity." (Verhagen et al., 2016 in Alarcón).

Thus, since the 2000s, the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras and Choirs of Venezuela has been gaining ground in Latin America and around the world, promoting itself as an orchestral movement that favors social inclusion. (Viviana Alemán, 2018).

"El Sistema has been one of the most disseminated, promoted, and imitated

music education initiatives of the 21st century, and it is the cornerstone of an ASPM field that now incorporates hundreds of thousands of students in dozens of countries around the world." (Baker, 2021).

Simón Rattle has described El Sistema as a "revolutionary" project, considering the "extra-musical benefits" of the symphony orchestra (Viviana Alemán, [Year]).

A program inspired by El Sistema is one that uses collective music practice to achieve social impact (Alarcón, 2021).

Currently, El Sistema as a social program has become stagnant over time. What began as a pioneering and innovative program has fallen into the comfort of remaining with the same formula that has yielded good results for 42 years (Acevedo, 2018).

The Orchestra-School pedagogical model, first applied in Venezuela in the 1970s, resulted in the creation of the Venezuelan musical movement and a global System spread across countries on all continents. The model is reflected thanks to some key areas: collective musical training, reconstruction of social fabric, enjoyment of art by the majority for the majority, and projection at the professional level as a life model (Escalante, 2022).

It is defined as a social development program that offers children and young people the opportunity to improve their living conditions through the teaching of academic music, as reflected by the Foundation itself (González and Coll, 2011).

The project revolves around a series of ideas that could be summarized in the quest to enable access and appropriation by children and young people of a socially valued cultural asset, such as music, against a backdrop of inequality (Avenburg, 2018).

### **El Sistema's Premises**

Under these premises, music acts as a promoter for social change, which according to Jonathan & Govias (2011)

comprises five fundamental principles of El Sistema: social change, ensemble, accessibility, frequency, and connectivity.

It is massively provided for free under principles of work and discipline, with social inclusion programs for thousands of marginalized and at-risk children. This novel method allowed massive access to musical training, as classes are collective and not individualized as was traditionally done.

### **The Conception within Its Mission and Vision**

El Sistema is primarily aimed at the poor and represents a mechanism to save them from drugs, alcohol, prostitution, and crime.

The authors assert that El Sistema is "rescuing' the child and the young person from an empty, disoriented, deviant youth" (Hernández and Urreiztieta 1996, p. 15), a statement that was incorporated into the program's official vision (Baker and Frega, 2016).

### **Socioeconomic Studies**

According to the study "Psycho-Social Impact of the Children's and Youth Orchestras of Venezuela" conducted by Dr. Luis Esqueda Torres of the University of the Andes in 2004, it was estimated that 67% of the beneficiaries of El Sistema belonged to social strata D and E (81% if social stratum C was included) (González and Coll, 2011).

Abreu's proposal did not overlook the labor issue... "There are many professional destinations around the system" (Couve and Dal Pino, 2013).

"To this, one can add job opportunities for those who dedicate themselves to composing and arranging, conducting, instrument making, or teaching specialization courses abroad, as the fame and quality of the musical productions of these orchestras ensure a prominent market" (Couve and Dal Pino, 2013).

## Educational Model of El Sistema and Social Action through Music

Regarding collective musical training, learning is based on the repertoire, guided by an orchestra conductor and the permanent interaction of expert instrumental practice teachers and students. In this way, it can be said that the repertoire is the basis of the entire pedagogical part. The Orchestra-School model is a tool with a large number of advantages in musical training.

"Collaborative learning is the most important aspect of this model because the individual interacts with their peers, forging social bonds that eventually make the orchestra their community".

The route is Núcleo - Academic Center - Conservatory - University. When the student reaches the Conservatory level, they join one of the professional ensembles.

Sergio Jurado (2017) mentions that the music teaching methodology used revolves around what they call "Repertoire Sequencing," in which repertoires are organized in such a way that they are classified according to the technical difficulties they may offer to meet the needs and objectives of the orchestras.

"However, this is nothing more than a model [El Sistema], and a colonial one at that, which places European music (and its notation) and its higher pedagogical processes in a hierarchy above the musical expressions and instructional approaches of many other rich traditions. Should such a model continue in the 21st century, in an era of postcolonial and democratic reconsideration of cultures...?"

In V. Alemán (2018)

"Music Education: old practices have been presented as novel (in fact, widely criticized) and much current knowledge about music education has been overlooked." Baker (Year)

According to Irina Adjemian (2021), the social function of the orchestra within the educational model is to educate in values

of listening, being heard, respecting times, having those who know more teach those who know less, and having those who know less generate strategies so that those who know more do not get bored. It is about collective music teaching that is not the usual model in conservatories. In this sense, the Project promotes spaces for musical and collective construction that work around two fundamental aspects: the social and the musical."

"...in this case, through musical practice, individuals manage to identify with new practices, thus modifying their way of seeing and experiencing the world, changing in turn the way they see themselves and, consequently, the way they are perceived by others. As Vich states, it is a political act: "culture, by transforming social imaginaries, also alters ordinary practices."

"The programs inspired by El Sistema in the United Kingdom, by drawing on Victorian ideas of the 'civilizing influence' of culture, symbolize the hope that the bourgeois social project will continue in the future." Bull (King's College London) El Sistema as a Bourgeois Social Project: Class, Gender, and Victorian Values (2016)

"...the working model on which El Sistema is based has suffered, for some time, from a 'lack of support from rigorous and objective research'." (2014: 5)

**Among other analytical categories, we have:**

- The Núcleos
- Organizations, alliances, and international support
- El Sistema and national and international public policy
- Financing and investment of funds

We will briefly address the category of Social Inclusion and Social Transformation, which are the most studied variables of El Sistema and other programs inspired by it.

Inclusion is described based on the possibilities of participation and the ability to minimize inequalities around access, production, and use of cultural goods.

In another vein, we would say that we are investigating — and are still far from having accurate answers — whether music or certain musical activities can contribute to social cohesion and inclusion, diversity, the construction of collective identities, or collective participation and action, among other things. This is what Barbieri, Partal, and Merino (2011) call the public value of cultural policies (Avenburg, 2016).

There are three fundamental pillars: the inclusive nature of the project, quality or rigor, without discrimination. "The project promotes spaces for musical and collective construction that work around two fundamental aspects: the social and the musical" (Adjemian, Irina, 2021).

Alix Sarrouy (2023) notes: "YouSound: music education as an inclusive tool for minor refugees in Europe".

The academic factors that favor inclusion are: the profile of the teachers and project leaders, who proved to be accessible and helpful, creating positive psychological and emotional reinforcement. A "good teacher" listens and builds connections; the methodology includes group music classes and the "policy of tolerance and respect for the customs and beliefs of the participants' origins in the DO Project".

"P.10: El Sistema is my sustenance, but above all, it is the place where I feel good and identify myself because it gives me peace and tranquility" (Velásquez, 2023).

"P.7: ...the idea of integration is not to ignore a person's disability, but to tell that person that, despite any disability they may have, they can be integrated into society" (Velásquez, 2023).

It also addresses mediation tools, instruments and repertoires, means of mobilization and movement among musical groups, considering risks and benefits, educational alliances and promotional and financial associations that inspire and contribute to the development of this proposal.

Keywords: exclusion, symbolic inclusion, endogenous development, intangible

capital, identity. Velasco (2009) "An Inclusion Strategy. Case Study on the Orchestras of Curanilahue".

1. At the individual level: promote access to opportunities for children and young people in the community. This is intended to be achieved through personal development and excellence in technical-musical training.

2. At the family level: promote family participation in the project. Participation can be understood in two ways. On one hand, collaborating with the learning process of children and young people at home and integrating the parents' and guardians' group. On the other hand, "participation" understood as "access to culture".

3. At the community level: facilitate access for the inhabitants of the Curanilahue community to culture through the knowledge and enjoyment of concert music.

In this regard, we determine the intercultural perspective: In Latin America, a model of Youth and Children's Orchestras (OIJ's) has been consolidated in recent decades that complements music education with social inclusion objectives. Various programs with these characteristics have been implemented in Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Peru, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela, leading some authors to speak of a boom in OIJ's (Villalba, 2010) Escribal (2017).

The processes of social inclusion through artistic practice within the framework of OIJ's are generally valued as highly positive (Escribal, 2017).

"As Wald (2011, p. 2) identifies, his research shows that, beyond concrete results of participation and socialization, these devices impact by integrating "integrable" youth.

The work shows that there are heterogeneous appropriations both of orchestral practice and the space that the projects build. It also shows how orches

tras help build identities among young people from popular neighborhoods (Wald, 2017) "Youth Orchestras with Social Inclusion Purposes: Identities, Subjectivities, and Social Transformation".

"On the other hand, the principle of inclusion implies that the individual can be part of a community, of an Us that can include them at the center of their world" (Velasco, 2009).

"While it is possible to classify such expectations (opportunities, recognition, and prevention of risky behaviors) into three, they could be summarized into one: the expectation of the opportunity for inclusion, through personal development, recognition, the acquisition of technical and social tools, and a change in the way of facing the future, among others" (Velasco, 2009).

### Repertoire

"Ultimately, in international concert halls, young Venezuelans feel empowered through the orchestra, while classical music lovers in the United States see the same empowerment as evidence of the transformative power of a repertoire" (Pedroza, Ludim, 2014).

I reference Pedroza's text because the repertoire, as one of the transversal elements of El Sistema's educational model, is widely questioned by decolonial positions and the critical perspective. At the center of the debate is the repertoire as an instrument and mechanism for reproducing Eurocentric canons and their consequent power relations. From an aesthetic perspective, it is based on idealistic romantic thought, which reflects the idea that music is liberating, unifying, and civilizing. Therefore, the critique argues that most programs are oriented with a strong Eurocentric academic tendency instrumentally.

"The Uruguayan musicologist, composer, and educator Coriún Aharonián elaborated a harsh criticism of the orchestral model promoted by El Sistema regarding the repertoire adopted by its orchestras, which he considers problematic from various

angles. On the one hand, he accuses it of being Eurocentric, for legitimizing itself as the hegemonic repertoire of symphonic practices" (V. Alemán, 2018).

"...contributes to the maintenance of colonial structures, as explained by Geoffrey Baker (2016).

"The image of El Sistema stands out in adaptive versatility, its orchestras firmly rooted in classical music but remarkably capable of speaking with powerful vernacular and popular voices. One must note, however, that nowhere in El Sistema's mission is classical music mentioned as a fundamental element of its objectives" (Pedroza, Ludim, 2014).

"We are particularly interested in delving into what López (2008, p.8) observed, regarding the absence of approaches in the Venezuelan El Sistema to the issue of popular music and the adoption of a primarily musician excellence-focused training" (Escribal, 2017).

"Regarding the repertoire, in both cases, academic and popular works by authors from various countries, including their own, are present, with a difficulty graded to the level of the performers" (Couve and Dal Pino, 2013).

El Sistema's repertoire is selected with a predominance of concert music. Thus, the orchestras that join the El Sistema network usually play that standard repertoire. The SOJ, for its part, brings popular music — recognized as "Andean" — into the symphony orchestra sphere, leading to the transformation of the "final product" presented to the public (V. Alemán, 2018). Indeed, the symphony orchestra, the predominant musical configuration of El Sistema, performs canonical repertoires. In El Sistema orchestras' concert programs, when Venezuelan or Latin American music is played, they are also recognized as belonging to the "local canon," such as the works of composers of musical nationalism, like Ginastera, Villalobos, Chávez, Márquez, among others, who use the notation and rules of concert music (V. Alemán, 2018).



"Jurado refers to Repertoire Sequencing as the strategy that raised the orchestra's level through the development of instrument technique. The conductor's understanding of Sequencing was thanks to the training he received at El Sistema during the 2004-2008 period" (Alemán, 2018).

The repertoire, for example, covers "mainly academic and popular music. Any musical genre is included as long as the arrangements allow all the kids to play" (Children's and Youth Orchestras Project, cited in Avenburg et al., 2015) (Avenburg, 2018). In summary, new spaces are opening up for llanera music internationally, while llanera music spaces within Venezuela are in decline despite local government support. (Re)making Llanera Music: Performance, Circuits, and Transnationalism during the State Crisis in Venezuela. "I invoke the concept of 'spectacle' (DeBord, 1967) to analyze the movement towards new symphonic forms of making llanera music" (E. Sandoval, 2017). Finally, there are significant studies on the benefits and impacts of collective music practice, orchestral practice, and El Sistema itself, as well as the programs it has inspired and their repercussions on musical learning in children and young people. Collective learning through the symphony orchestra, musical skills and competencies such as sight-reading, aural development, memory, and collective performance are some of the proficiencies that have been developed. Additionally, other aspects and values such as motivation, friendship, teamwork, respect, collaboration, responsibility, and socialization are part of the experience within the orchestra.

On the other hand, "impact" is interpreted in most studies mainly in terms of the social, emotional, and educational development of the participants. (AUTHOR\_YEAR). The social transformation of two students in an orchestral program inspired by El Sistema is illustrated by Christine D'Alexander and Beatriz Ilari, University of Southern California (United States, YEAR). In the study titled "Musical Learning: Explorations and Beliefs," it is stated: "Through the experiences of the orchestra, the children learned to play together, grow and learn together through music, and identify individual characteristics about themselves".

"The orchestra has helped me become more responsible, to have perseverance, and it helps with studies," comments a student from the Curanilahue Orchestra. (Children's and Youth Orchestras: How do they impact the development of their students and communities? De Andraca and Morales, 2017). Research conducted in the Curanilahue Orchestra determines that vulnerable students or those with grades between 5.0 and 6.2 who attend the orchestra achieve significantly higher school results than their peers who do not attend the orchestra (De Andraca and Morales, 2017).

"The impact of musical activity on cognitive development is well documented in the fields of psychology and neuroscience: permanent participation in a musical activity promotes auditory development and has effects, for example, on the development of musical motor skills".

"Musical practice is a means to build the personal and group identity of the orchestra members, allowing them to develop and strengthen their social skills, self-confidence, and envision different paths of progress" (Egaña et al., 2010).

Effects of Artistic Activities on the Development of Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills in Vulnerable Students: The Case of the Curanilahue Orchestra. It is necessary to delve deeper into the context of ASPM, programs inspired by El Sistema, and El Sistema itself, to develop quantitative and experimental evidence supporting the theory of social development change promoted by El Sistema. As an Observatory, we are committed to developing extensive fields of research around the practices of El Sistema. We believe that one way to build knowledge about our practices is through a network interconnected with other centers and research initiatives from El Sistema, integrating a global perspective that encompasses programs inspired by El Sistema and other Social Action through Music training initiatives.

# Art Topics



# Igor Lanz



(Berliner  
Philharmoniker)

Igor Lanz (Caracas 1949), choral and orchestral conductor. He entered to the Caracas Superior School of Music at the age of 12, where he studied trumpet with Maestro Rafael Puche and received his musical training from maestros Evencio Castellanos and José Antonio Abreu.

Since the early 1970s, he has excelled in choral conducting, presenting concerts with the CANTV choir, and in 1971 founding the Philharmonic Choir of Aragua. It was in this year that he began accompanying Maestro Abreu in the creation process of what is now known as El Sistema, opening a space for social rescue for Venezuelan youth and children through music.

After graduating with double honors from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, earning a degree in choral conducting and composition, he returned to Venezuela to dedicate the next 32 years to the consolidation of El Sistema. From 1988 to 2013, he was the first Executive Director of the State Foundation for Children's and Youth Orchestras and Choirs of Venezuela. Many projects were achieved during these decades: the multiplication of Núcleos throughout the nation; the artistic projection of the Simón Bolívar Orchestra in international tours and recordings; the selection of the national children's orchestra since the '90s, which today has reached a very high level; the creation of the Superior Institute of Musical Studies; international agreements; and the construction of the Social Action for Music Center in Caracas.

# Renaissance, José Antonio Abreu and El Sistema

**A**s Borges once said, I would like to share with you "what allows for forgetfulness or remembrance." To do this, I will begin by recalling that almost fifty years ago, José Antonio Abreu, who was like a great friend, a father, an older brother, and my teacher, and I went to the office of Evencio Castellanos, also a teacher and mentor to both of us. What happened next surprised me greatly, as the purpose of our visit was to discuss the creation of a youth orchestra composed of the young students of the Superior School of Music, directed by Maestro Evencio. However, Maestro José Antonio sat at the piano with Maestro Evencio and proposed a fugue subject in A minor, and together they improvised an extraordinary four-voice fugue. At that moment, I decided that my life would be dedicated to sharing the emotion that this moment of music produced in me.

Although the title of my presentation is "Renaissance, José Antonio Abreu, and El Sistema," I am actually referring to the Renaissance as that period in which the classical values of Greek art and thought, which made humanity flourish extraordinarily, were deeply explored. I say flourish because it occurred just after the so-called Middle Ages. Naturally, many of the foundations of the Renaissance were applied by Maestro José Antonio Abreu from the beginning.

In this sense, if you analyze the monochord, you will see that it is a vibrating string that produces natural harmonics leading us along the path of the octave, the fifth, the fourth, and so on, to the twelve tones within an octave. I mention this because it constitutes a physical basis that influences music, not only the Central European music but also that which includes percussion, spanning from Africa to China, that is, everywhere; there is an active principle of nature in musical art. From there comes the important concept of the expansion of tonalities.



So, in the repertoire we develop, we see that the repertory sequence of the orchestra applies, in some way, the same principle. The young musicians start by playing Baroque pieces and singing madrigals that range from the time of Tomás Luis de Victoria, through Cristóbal de Morales and Maestro Sojo, to José Antonio. In reality, that world of music expands in a wonderful way. In fact, on more than one occasion, El Sistema has been criticized for being Eurocentric, but I believe we are more like center-earth, because the truth is that the essence of music is present in our genes, in our RNA, and in our DNA.

Now, from a historical perspective, José Antonio Abreu used precisely that Renaissance principle of the master and the apprentice, which consisted of the apprentice working alongside the master, learning-by-doing. And I, on many occasions, experienced it.

José Antonio began his rehearsals on February 12, 1975, and I was responsible for organizing the orchestra's first tour a few months later, I believe in July or August. We went to the International Youth Orchestra Festival in Aberdeen; a beautiful Scottish city at the northern peak of Scotland. There, on that occasion, there were approximately thirty orchestras from all over the world. With the organization of that tour, we learned many things. One of them has to do with the fact that when traveling with so many instruments, there are mechanisms to consider that we were unaware of; for instance, the organization itself had to make a huge deposit to release the orchestra's instruments. In short, these were the tricks of the trade that we improved over time.

During that tour, the Mexican composer Carlos Chávez, maestro of Eduardo Mata and closely linked to the development of our Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, conducted Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture, a symphony of his own and the Indian Symphony. In the end, an orchestra was formed with representatives of all the performers from the different orchestras.

And so we had the largest number of participants in that orchestra. Frank Di Polo was the concertmaster; my dear friend Chuo-Alfonso, the first viola, and many of our musicians participated in that great orchestra.

Then, between the 1980s and 1985, I had to organize a tour of Latin America. Maestro José Antonio, who had already been appointed Minister of Culture at that time, instructed me to seek the necessary resources and support. It turned out to be a successful, wonderful tour. On that occasion, we went to Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil; in Brazil, there had been a presidential election, and the new president, Tancredo Neves, who had been governor of Minas Gerais, unfortunately, died before taking office. Thus, our arrival in Brazil coincided with a very complex political chaos, as there was practically no Executive Power. However, we continued, and thanks to the resources sent from Venezuela, we were able to cover our stay in Brazil. These are interesting anecdotes from this extensive journey we made in this land we inhabit.

I remember that, on one occasion, after the Aberdeen Festival, I had to conduct the orchestra in a concert in Falkirk, a city south of Edinburgh. It was an unforgettable concert. In the first half, we sang, with my great friend Florentino Mendoza, an arrangement of the Quinteto Contrapunto of "Quirpa Ilanera," for which I played the cuatro. In the other half of the concert, the orchestra performed Wagner's Die Meistersinger and Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture.

In short, we have experienced almost everything. Finally, the most important conclusion I want to leave here is that no secret can replace conviction, hard work, clarity of principles, and the consideration that what is truly significant is leaving something for others, for the children and young people.



# Juan Andrés Rojas



He initiated his musical education at the age of 4 with piano lessons and subsequently enrolled in the Emil Friedman School, where at the age of 11 he began studying the trumpet. In 2000, following an audition, he was admitted to the Venezuelan National Children's Symphony Orchestra, with which he undertook tours to Germany, Austria, Italy, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and the United States, among other destinations. In 2004, he joined the trumpet section of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, with which he has performed under the direction of renowned maestros such as Claudio Abbado, Sir Simon Rattle, Lorin Maazel, and Gustavo Dudamel. These performances have taken place in a number of venues considered to be among the most prestigious on the international circuit, including the Berlin Philharmonie, Carnegie Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Southbank Center, KKL Luzerne, Walt Disney Hall, and Teatro alla Scala de Milano. In addition to his performance activities, he has participated in a number of recordings released under the Deutsche Grammophon label. He is also a member of the Simón Bolívar Trumpet Ensemble, with which he has performed in a number of cities, including New York, Rome, Paris, Berlin, Athens, Valencia, Melk, Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Bogotá. In addition, he has accompanied maestros James Morrison, Eric Aubier, Thomas Gansch, and Alexander Baty. The Simón Bolívar Trumpet Ensemble is currently sponsored by the prestigious brand of musical instruments Schagerl. His pedagogical background includes studies with renowned maestros Jairo Hernández, Alexander Barrios, Alfredo D'Addona, and Eduardo Manzanilla at the Superior Institute of Musical Studies, as well as with professors Hernán Quintero and José Zerpa. His pedagogical experience includes participation in master classes with renowned musicians and ensembles such as Wynton Marsalis, Gabor Tarkovi, Rolf Smedvig, Thomas Clamor, Pepe Ortiz, and Max Sommerhalder. He has also collaborated with renowned groups, including the Empire Brass, Canadian Brass, and Spanish Brass. In 2008, he initiated his orchestral conducting studies under the tutelage of Maestro José Antonio Abreu. He has received instruction from distinguished maestros Eduardo Marturet and Pablo Castellanos. He participated as a conductor in the first Teresa Carreño Youth Symphony Brass Festival, as a guest conductor of the Youth Orchestra of Guanare and of the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Chacao, and performed as its musical director in the first Opera Festival of Chacao, interpreting the opera "Gianni Schicchi" by Puccini. In 2018, he was invited to participate as a conductor in the first Youth Orchestras and Choirs Meeting. In the city of Xalapa, Mexico. He has served as assistant conductor to Maestro Gustavo Dudamel. In collaboration with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, he has orchestrated the performance of numerous operatic works, including Mozart's "Idomeneo" and Bellini's "Capuleti e Montecchi." He has also served as their guest conductor during their tour in Italy, where they performed at the International Conference "Religions and Sustainable Development Goals" in March 2019 in the Vatican City, Rome, and in 2022 during their tour to Turkey. He currently serves as musical director of the National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, with which he performed in the city of Vienna in 2018, and of the National Children's Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, with which he made his debut at the Victoria Hall in Geneva, Switzerland in April 2023. In addition, he participated as a member of the jury in the II International Conducting Competition Liria City of Music. He frequently represents El Sistema in a variety of roles, including conductor, workshop leader, and lecturer, at events in America and Europe. In these roles, he presents and promotes the work and social transformation achieved through the collective practice of music. He is currently serving as its Academic Director. In addition to these roles, he serves as the Musical Director.

# The Youth: A Laboratory of Social Innovation

**I** would like to present to you the perspective and experience I have had with the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia. Generally, I do not present it as an orchestra but rather as a laboratory of social innovation. The reason why I call or present it this way will become clear throughout this exposition.

First of all, I must point out that the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia is a project that was created in 2010 by the Fundación Bolívar Davivienda, a corporate foundation in Colombia established by private initiative in response to what had been happening in Colombia over the last twenty years. In 1991, the Fundación Nacional Batuta was created in Colombia, inspired by El Sistema; from that moment on, a great Colombian youth symphonic movement began to emerge. Projects were born, spaces emerged, and musical training for a significant number of boys and girls began.

Then, in 2010, after the creation of the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, it was possible to provide young people, who were already advanced and had been developing a significant trajectory in music education, a space to play orchestral music at the highest level so that, through such training, they could reach great stages, be under the baton of great conductors, and accompany renowned soloists. The project, created fourteen years ago, has evolved and changed. In this sense, today, “La Joven,” the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, is considered a laboratory of social innovation.

As an orchestra, we understand that there is indeed significant work, as approximately one hundred musicians from all over the country audition annually for free; additionally, the participant population consists of young people aged sixteen to twenty-four. Once they join the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, we begin to accompany them in their life projects.

In this sense, we have carried out more than forty-five artistic residencies, eighteen national tours, and seven international tours. Thus, currently, the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, despite being a youth orchestra, is the Colombian orchestra with the most international tours. Thanks to this work, we have been under the baton of

distinguished conductors and accompanied by internationally renowned soloists. It is important to note that over the years, around seven hundred young musicians have passed through the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, auditioning each year; to regain and maintain their position within the orchestra, it is necessary to audition every year.

This aspect has been very interesting, as in the fourteen years of the orchestra's existence, we have realized that while in the early years only 10% of the orchestra was renewed, today more than 45% is renewed each year. This only demonstrates that Colombia is increasingly growing in the field of symphonic music.

However, it is important to contextualize all this information because when discussing the artistic, it is impossible not to talk about the social, the investigative, or the academic; let us remember that, ultimately, everything we do is closely linked. Therefore, we bring up a comprehensive investigation we conducted in 2020, together with the Ministry of Culture of Colombia, on the symphonic sector in Colombia and everything that pertains to this sector of music.

In this investigative process, we discovered, realized, or became aware of the following reality: only 14% of all music-related projects carried out by professionals generate employment. In light of this result, it must be mentioned that in Colombia, there are those who seek to respond to the reality of those who want to pursue music professionally. On the other hand, we had a second major concern about how we have been training and for what kind of jobs we are training; the answer we obtained was that the perception that professional musicians had of themselves was very low, as more than 60% of these musicians were dissatisfied with their work. Therefore, if we want to

support musical life projects, we must consider that a life project is very significant and, therefore, it is not only about knowing how to play well or being part of the orchestra.

A life project is nourished in many ways, so it is very important to consider everything related to aesthetic values, aesthetics and knowing where and what is happening in my world and also where and what is happening in the world of the other. Consequently, if my world is not functioning because I am dissatisfied with my life project in music, then I have nothing to offer the other. Likewise, we were quite concerned about the issue of gender equity.

In Colombia, the symphonic music sector is composed of 85% male and 15% female. Although we will not point out all the reasons and arguments for why this happens socially, we do want to indicate that through our work, we not only deal with the artistic aspect but also, through art and music, we are generating changes in social phenomena such as gender equity. Let us not forget that hegemonically there has always been a discourse about the participation of women in symphonic music.

Now, if we look closely, we can realize that everything that is produced generates a discourse, and the interesting thing is to understand how an aesthetic decision changes existence, as Foucault said. When I make an artistic decision around the project and lead my students to learn a repertoire, I am already generating a change, as we are working on the sensitive; and thanks to that change, I am opening a world of possibilities for them or simply continuing something that is already happening.

To exemplify this last point, we can say that, artistically, this year we have done a great job with Carmen. We performed it again for a classical music festival in Bogotá, but this time we did all the work to understand, among many other aspects, what role has been given to women in symphonic music and the importance of

being able to change those discourses through what we do. To this end, we watched movies, read, discussed, and dialogued about gender equity, which is so important at this time worldwide.

So, it is not just about performing Carmen, but also understanding why we interpret it, what we want to happen with the audience, and what reflection we want the audience to have. Ultimately, this is what we work for, to share, as Jacques Rancière said, the sensible. It is about trying to understand what I am doing and how I do it to awaken sensitivity in the audience, for I must have an intention, and that intention must be nourished by those aesthetic values that, as projects, we are called to generate.

Finally, the last point I would like to mention has to do with the age of the process leaders. In Colombia, more than 63% of projects are led by people over forty years old. However, it is very important for young people to start taking action and get involved with the development of the musical and cultural sectors in our countries. Forming a young population also includes nurturing not only musicians but also great citizens who, in one way or another, will be the future professionals of the musical sector. Therefore, when we ask ourselves how we want our young people to see this project and how we want them to continue this work, these values, and these philosophical foundations that we work on, we respond that what we have sought in La Joven is an integral model that aims to equip them with the skills they need to go out into the world and pursue a real career and a real life project in music.

We believe that the idea is that once the musician leaves our social musical projects, enters the Conservatory, and completes their studies, they do not stop there as has happened to many musicians who, according to what my

seven-year-long research has shown, and after interviewing more than four hundred musicians from Singapore to New York, once they give their graduation recital, they stop playing their instrument for periods of eighteen months or even two years. Many of them, having lost focus, feel the desire to dedicate themselves to something else. In this sense, young people must remember that it is important to have artistic and musical ambitions; and that even when it is a musical project, the most important thing is that they also feel it is a life project.

For this reason, we educate in freedom; that is what aesthetics is for, to educate in freedom, in autonomy that allows young people to make decisions and assume critical thinking about what they are playing, why they do it, and why what artists do and contribute to the world is so important.

With that described profile, it is understood that our working model with the musicians is very comprehensive, as it not only includes musical interpretation but also significant cultural and social entrepreneurship and management in which the musicians who are part of the Orchestra work with seedbeds and institutions throughout the country. The idea is that our artists, who will reach great stages, understand that playing in the Colombian Pacific is as important as playing in the Musikverein in Vienna.

On the other hand, this project has instilled in young musicians the idea that they are agents of change, that is, this new mindset has been fostered in them. Being agents of change includes individual challenges, in their own lives and also in the artistic realm; for this reason, all kinds of repertoires, formative interactions, section rehearsals, different repertoires, and, ultimately, different aesthetics are carried out to allow the musicians to challenge themselves and learn more and more.

# Lourdes Sánchez



*(Director of the Simón Bolívar National Choir)*

Her four-decade career, which includes roles such as chorister, choir director, and solid musical training, has enabled her to assume the commitment to develop and strengthen the choral movement of El Sistema. This commitment is evident in her multifaceted role, ranging from her position as a teacher in Núcleos to her work as a performer with orchestras, as well as her roles as a choir director and trainer of generations of musicians. In this capacity, she has cultivated an extensive program of coordination, dissemination of the a cappella choral repertoire, and leadership of symphonic-choral productions. In this context, she founded The Children Singers of Venezuela and assumed the direction of the Simón Bolívar National Choir. Her professional experience includes roles at CAF's Social Action Project, the Confederation of Choirs of the Basque Country, Symphony for Peru, the Institute of Culture of Yucatan, the UNAM Choral Program, Orchestrating Harmonies, and the Veracruz Institute of Culture in Mexico, Bicentennial Orchestras and Choirs, and the American Choral Forum in Argentina, Sistema Greece, and working with refugee and immigrant communities. She is frequently in attendance at events in Latin America and Europe, where she serves in the capacities of conductor, workshop leader, and lecturer, promoting the voice of El Sistema. In her capacity as choir director, she has received acclaim in national productions and international tours of the Simón Bolívar National Choir. She has conducted at such esteemed venues as Chorfest and the Alte Oper in Frankfurt, as well as stages in Kelkheim, Wuppertal, and Cologne, Germany. In the United States, she has led performances at the renowned Alice Tully Hall of Lincoln Center in New York, in collaboration with the José Limón Dance Company, and at the Eisenhower Theater of the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. She has also appeared at notable venues such as the Teatro Municipal Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and the Teatro Mayor Julio Mario Santo Domingo in Bogotá, as well as the Salzburger Festspiele, which included the Stiftung Mozarteum. Notably, she prepared symphonic-choral concerts with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Gustavo Dudamel in the Grosses Festspielhaus. His participation in the Chorus Festival at the Southbank Centre in London was also significant. Conducting performances in celebration of the Royal Festival Hall's restoration, including performances in Liverpool, Sage Gateshead in Newcastle, and Cardiff, Wales, further exemplifies Maestro Dudamel's diverse artistic repertoire and international appeal. The artistic residency of El Sistema at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan was relevant. Seasons of a cappella, symphonic-choral music and La Bohème brought excellent reviews. Subsequently, he conducted at the Teatro Calouste Gulbenkian in Lisbon, Basilique Sainte Pie X, Cathédrale Notre-Dame, Chapelle Royale de Versailles and L' Auditorium de Radio France. In the city of Vienna, he conducted at the Institute for the Culture of the Spanish Language, the University of Music and the Arts, MuTh Hall and the Vienna Boys Choir. More recently at the Victoria Hall and UNESCO headquarters in Geneva with The Venezuelan National Children's Symphony Orchestra. Peón Contreras Theater and Nezahualcóyotl Hall in Mexico, León Febres Cordero Art Center, House of Music in Ecuador; Juan Victoria Auditorium, Argentina and other venues in Latin America and Europe. She studied at the Juan José Landaeta Conservatory and graduated from the School of Arts of the Universidad Central de Venezuela, where she also studied Latin American musicology. As a harpist, she was part of the Cecilia de Majo Classical Harp Ensemble of El Sistema. She founded the Cantoria Ludus Vocaliter, a female vocal ensemble, and directed the Los Teques Children's Choir



# El Sistema Artistic Development

**T**he training process for children entering El Sistema is constructed from an educational foundation up to a progressive transition into the artistic realm. Our training programs align on a pathway that leads to the progress of the young musician, their human development skills, as well as the measurement of results through their formative progress.

Likewise, our program model includes consistency, repetition, analysis, time optimization, discipline, and teamwork. Particularly, the simultaneous study of academic and artistic experiences, from the micro to macro, involves a process of constant feedback where the student becomes the teacher and the teacher becomes the student. This construction, throughout the various educational and artistic states or levels, follows a method of studying the musical phenomenon in El Sistema. The teacher, instructor, or the director of an ensemble shapes this process from rehearsals, workshops, and technical work up to the concert moment. These conductors-leaders become tutors for the children and young people who join the institution with the desire to become musicians and, in the long term, obtain a profession.

To successfully and consciously reach the artistic process, which is the aspect we are addressing, we must visualize the transition from rehearsal to concert. Regarding this process, there are several elements we cannot overlook; evidently, one of them involves planning, which is crucial for the instructor, as the rehearsal develops under this organization. Both the artistic director and the administrative director—whether a Núcleo director or manager organizing an artistic plan—takes the relevant decisions to ensure effective management to secure the smooth functioning of all the formative structures. This includes rehearsal methods, repertoire selection, concert venues, the presence of guest conductors, and the necessary conditions and resources to allow the primary impact on the musician and their environment.

Another aspect that goes hand in hand with planning is flexibility, a characteristic inherent to the dynamics of El Sistema. Flexibility involves the capacity for adaptability, as it aligns with changes in routine, variations in rehearsals, the entry or exit of musicians, financial resources, the conditions of each Núcleo, or the programming needs of a professional ensemble, as well as institutional agreements or commitments, among many others.

This flexibility shows us the need for decision-making to be harmonized with daily reality in order to redirect the proposed goals. The important question is to highlight that the artistic process is present from the Núcleos to the high-level ensembles. Each will follow its different work rhythms, repertoires, rehearsal conditions, teacher preparation, their leaders' artistic aspirations, and other variables that will result in a different outcome; however, these will remain crucial and important in the musician's formation and their network of social relationships, ranging from the family that attends the Núcleo up to the audience in national and international theaters. All the elements mentioned above are fundamental to El Sistema. They define us. It's our imprint."

Over the years, through practice, national and international exchanges, successes, and mistakes, we have shaped and systematized this experience, which, under the keen eye of Maestro José Antonio Abreu, has borne extraordinary fruit. With the expansion of the Núcleos throughout the country, the need arose to review and generate structures. This demonstrated how administrative management and logistics symbiotically go hand in hand with academic and artistic aspects.

Thanks to this experience, we have created training programs, sequential repertoires, and impact studies. This was nothing more than the wise definition of what became a visionary and unstoppable impulse generated almost five decades ago. According to our mission, we had to start with the driving principle of generating spaces and opportunities for everyone, offering new training options to our youngsters and dignifying them as humans endowed with social rights.

In this sense, the Academic Programs for each discipline—instrumental, choral, special education, popular music, music initiation, and all other items that make up this extensive structure—have been defined, drawing the lines of work directed at the Núcleos and regional ensembles.

Thus, a pyramidal structure and a plan to follow are generated, always considering inclusion, collective experience, and the practice of music through various methodologies. This academic and artistic macro system establishes, from our hands, the professional ensembles comprised of musicians at a level that allows them to tackle major repertoires, devote their daily lives to artistic endeavors, and continue their growth as professionals in different contexts.

This means that it is impossible to plan events, exchanges, and training sessions effectively without working together as a cohesive entity that requires collective effort to achieve the best results. On a professional level, we have a Directorate that, together with ensemble committees and musical directors, that plans the artistic processes, constructing the general event schedule while considering the aspects I mentioned initially: planning and adaptability to encompass all variables.

Professional performers, young directors, and musical interpreters express the need to expand their knowledge and propose projects, thus creating a connection with the artistic context. In some way, this entire process becomes the great laboratory that starts at the Núcleo, interacts with the public, and grows through technical-repertoire study.

Given this dynamic environment, young musicians face artistic challenges. Thanks to the many musicians invited by Maestro Abreu in the early years of El Sistema, to advise on social action projects, today, under the training plan of the Inocente Carreño Itinerant Conservatory, we maintain an open window to the academic and artistic world.

The continuous visits from international maestros allow us to optimize learning and improvement work, as musical directors, soloists, and specialist teachers share their knowledge, while visiting maestros also benefit from our experience and methodology.

In the First World Congress of El Sistema, I advocated for 'The Artistic, the Rehearsal, and the Concert areas,' emphasizing how planning and adaptability enable us, both in the children's and youth ensembles of the Núcleos and the professional ensembles, to establish order and a plan in the following processes.:

1. Maximum time duration for rehearsal.
2. In organizing the periods and formats of work with the respective ensemble: sectional, group, individual, cell, tutti, or general rehearsals.
3. In selecting and training teaching staff.
4. Defining the type of concert with all its variables: audience, type of ensemble, venue, capacity, dissemination, publicity, and others.
5. Selecting the appropriate repertoire: levels of difficulty, methodology, what to work on, and the expected outcome.

It can be considered, that certain processes may generate improvisation, meaning unforeseen events that partially modify planning and cause insecurities; however, these are factors inherent in flexibility and adaptability. It is our responsibility to resolve them with intelligence and objectivity.

Moreover, when talking about these artistic experiences, we could cite numerous occasions where international participation has been involved. In such opportunities, our methodology, from artistic training processes to managerial experiences, has been demonstrated. Planning and adaptability are present in all these processes. The international platform has offered El Sistema unique artistic experiences.

It is worth mentioning just two activities that gave our ensembles and the Institution a significant artistic boost. The first one is the Residency at the Salzburg Festival in 2013, which included the participation of five El Sistema orchestras and two choirs. Another is the Residency at Teatro alla Scala in Milan in 2015, where, for the first time, an opera season, in this case, Puccini's *La Bohème*, was conducted by a non-Italian orchestra, choir, and conductor, but by Venezuelan musicians and singers from El Sistema, led by Maestro Gustavo Dudamel.

These two examples speak of the impact generated by the presence of children and young people in events where such artistic formations are not common; I refer to month-long seasons with the participation of nearly a thousand musicians on each occasion. In projects like these, many determining factors go beyond the musical, generating unparalleled artistic impact and demonstrating organizational capacity (dissemination, management, diplomacy, logistics, administration, etc.). As director of the principal professional ensemble of El Sistema and with forty years of experience in the institution, I could mention some examples where planning and adaptability allowed us to resolve unforeseen events and lead a tour or a significant concert to total success. Maestro Abreu's presence throughout this international process was crucial, with applause from an audience surprised by the interpretative power, organization, and potential of our young people and children for these new audiences.

Particularly, before concluding, I want to highlight the resounding success of our choir in uncommon events. For example, we were the resident choir for an opera season at La Scala, as mentioned earlier; the main choir at the reopening, after restoration, of the Grand Organ at the Royal Festival Hall in Southbank Centre, London, in 2014; and responsible for the immediate repair of the organ in 2012 at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center in New York for a concert with the José Limón Dance Company. There are many experiences of resolution and adaptability.

In this sense, the premise is and will be excellence from the concert of a small children's orchestra, the children's choir, and the special education children's ensemble to our professional orchestras and choirs, and even for those of us responsible for leading the processes and decision-making. Every journey begins with each rehearsal and culminates in our concerts crowned with applause. Day by day, we somehow reaffirm and recognize the artistic success of El Sistema thanks to its teaching method, its ability to make music accessible to our people, to make it at hand, free, and a part of their community; to include Venezuelans, regardless of social class, and to create a professional space for all of us who have grown here. We acknowledge the work and vision of Maestro José Antonio Abreu and confirm that this project, born almost 49 years ago, has also transcended our borders.

# Marshall Marcus



Marshall Marcus, the Founder and President of Sistema Europe, also serves as the Executive and Artistic Director of the European Union Youth Orchestra, the CEO of the International Youth Foundation of Great Britain, an Ambassador for the 101 Europe Program, and an advisor to the National Orchestra For All (NOFA) and its Core. During 2023, Marshall has delivered lectures at the Global Leaders Institute, the Belgrade Heritage Forum "Rethink Reuse Refuse," the 2nd Delos World Meeting of the World Human Forum, El Sistema 2023, and the European Cultural Heritage Summit in Venice. In recent years, he has taught and lectured in more than twenty countries worldwide. Prior to establishing Sistema Europe, Mr. Marshall held the position of Head of Music at the Southbank Centre/Royal Festival Hall in London from 2006 to 2011, and he co-founded, served as President, and led the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment from 1985 to 2006. He has also held positions on the Global System Advisory Board, collaborated with the British Council to establish new international networks of youth orchestras, and served on the Council's Arts and Creative Economy advisory group from 2012 to 2018. He provided guidance and mentorship to organizations such as the Simon Bolivar Music Foundation (where he initiated what would eventually become the Simon Bolivar Baroque Orchestra), the "I, Culture" Orchestra (comprised of musicians from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Poland, and Ukraine), and the Neojiba Project (Brazil). In 2013, he established SERA, the Global Online System Evaluation and Research Archive. In 2014, he established the European Music Campus, a Creative Europe program designed to equip young musicians in the EU with the skills necessary to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Marshall's contributions extend to the European Music Campus, a Creative Europe program initiated in 2020 with the objective of equipping young musicians in the EU with the necessary skills to address the challenges of the 21st century. His research is focused on the development of strategies to enhance sustainability in professional practices and daily lives. In 2022, Marshall served as the general editor for the European Commission's Voices of Culture brainstorming report, titled "Culture and the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities. From 1977 to 2002, Marshall pursued a 25-year career as a solo, orchestral, and chamber violinist, engaging in recording and performing activities in over 60 countries. Marshall's distinguished career also includes membership in the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Caracas Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, where he served as Professor. His international reputation as a violinist has earned him the position of principal performer with the Amsterdam Baroque, leader of the St. John's Smith Square Orchestra, and member and Executive Director of the Endymion Ensemble. Marshall's professional collaborations encompass a wide range of distinguished musicians, including Claudio Abbado, Simon Rattle, and the Moscow Soloists. His diverse repertoire features collaborations with renowned artists such as Baaba Maal and the Michael Nyman Band. Marshall's discography includes a wide array of recordings, such as the Rossini sonatas performed with Chi-Chi Nwanoku, Richard Tunnicliffe, and Elizabeth Wallfisch; the Globokar string quartet Discours VI with Domus; the complete Beethoven symphonies conducted by Sir Roger Norrington; the complete Bach cantatas performed with Ton Koopman; the complete Haydn symphonies conducted by Christopher Hogwood; and numerous film scores. Marshall's academic background includes a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Experimental Psychology from Queen's College, Oxford University, and postgraduate studies in Education Studies from Trinity College, Cambridge University. His violin instructors included the following: Michael Vyner, Eta Cohen, and Frederick Grinke.



# Every child an artist: Ways to unlock the artistic potential of young musicians

**A**s has surely happened in many other cases, I must say that it was thanks to Maestro José Antonio Abreu that I came to know El Sistema. In my case, it was in 1979 when I first met the Maestro; at that time, I was a violin professor with the European Union Youth Orchestra. Also, I clarify that, although I am from Europe, it was precisely in 1979 when I began, here in Caracas, Venezuela, in South America, the most important social journey of my life. This recollection is as significant for me as dedicating, before talking about children as artists, a few words to a great Venezuelan friend and one of the most extraordinary people I have known in my life who, unfortunately, is no longer with us.

I am talking about Paul Desenne, who was a cellist, composer, writer, thinker, philosopher, and a great humanist. On one occasion, Maestro Abreu told me about Paul that he considered him “a Venezuelan intellectual of the highest level. There is no one who compares to him.” So, through my words and those expressed by Maestro Abreu, I want to keep alive the extraordinary spirit of Paul Desenne.

Now, first, I must say that in Europe we have many things to thank El Sistema for. Regarding this, it is pertinent to note that Sistema Europe is not a program but a network of sixty-four programs with members in twenty-five countries and more than one hundred thirty centers. All these programs arose from the inspiration that Venezuela gave us.

In this sense, I would like to share something happening in Europe and to do so, I will talk about four key elements that, in my opinion, function like the faces of a single coin. I use the idea of a coin because in 2009 I was in a room with people belonging to the New England Fellows, along with Bolivia Bottome, an incredible director of International Relations that El Sistema had.

At that moment, she was trying to explain to her colleagues and make them reflect on whether the aim was to make musicians good performers or to socialize and promote social development. She used the example of a coin, and I believe she was right to make such a comparison. In this way, we can say that El Sistema is like a coin with artistic excellence on one side and social development, socialization, which in turn strives for excellence, on the other. In this sense, we can say that El Sistema is based on the idea that culture truly aids social development.

Another coin would be made up of unity and diversity, which are concepts or slogans that come from Europe, from the European Union. Unity means being together while respecting diversity and differences.

And regarding unity, we all know that El Sistema is an expert in this subject; because whether it is a group of four or five performers or a thousand musicians on stage, in both contexts, its musicians achieve unity.

As for diversity, we can cite many aspects. One of them is related to challenges; to understand it better, let's remember the challenges that some people, like those in the incredible White Hands Choir, have to overcome. On the other hand, there is an imperative need to respect diversity, because, as the European Union sees it, it is based on the fact that each individual is different from the other, and consequently, the way to achieve artistic development is by identifying the diversity that exists in each of the spaces where art is produced.

I believe that diversity is the key to motivation and is related to how these young musicians are encouraged to start being artists and how they are guided to sustain themselves as such. In this sense, there are two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. Extrinsic motivation is related to an external fact. It is the persuasion to carry out something but through an external reason. Intrinsic motivation occurs spontaneously and without anything external to the action itself causing it.

Regarding musicians, I think we should let them work from intrinsic motivation. Daniel Pink, in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, analyzes intrinsic motivation in three different areas: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. When it comes to purpose, I can say, as we say in English, that El Sistema has more purposes than many individuals.

El Sistema knows exactly what it is doing and why. However, an excellent question arises: do all the young members of El Sistema also know this?

About mastery, we can say that the entire tradition of El Sistema revolves around the pursuit and struggle for artistic excellence. Now, what really interests me is related to autonomy (to delve deeper into this aspect, that is, about autonomy and how it can be generated in children, you can watch a video by Daniel Pink where this aspect is explained in more detail). What most people know about intrinsic motivation is that there are three components. The first of them is autonomy, as we have to make decisions related to our own training daily.

Remember that when people have the freedom to do things, activities, the results can be phenomenal. However, to achieve such results, tasks, time, techniques, and a team are needed. On this note, let's think about the large companies that, with some sense of limitation, allow their employees to dedicate certain hours of their working day to working on projects they desire. This is how Google and Google Maps started because someone dedicated some hours to thinking about something more. Many people are eager to work on their dreams; therefore, I believe we should think about how to help them achieve those dreams and how we can motivate them to achieve their autonomy.

Now, once again focusing on autonomy, we must ask ourselves how we generate autonomy in children, curiosity, leadership, and belonging. Curiosity, for example, which is one of the most wonderful things we can find, should be attended to when we see it in a child. This will allow us to develop leadership in their development process and will favor the

achievement of positive results. Regarding leadership — although I would prefer to replace the word leader with teacher — Trisha Thompson said in one of her sessions on this topic that a good director motivates and inspires decision-making more than mere study.

To foster curiosity among group members and bring out the best in each person, a good director can distribute power equitably; the director has collaboration skills and, when effective, motivates the ambition of those in vulnerable situations to grow despite errors.

As for leadership, we can see that in Sistema Europe, the work with children and youth has been notably evident. However, the young people are not sure if what has been happening or what they have been experiencing was decided by them. For this reason, in schools in London and the UK, young people are working on programs and participating in discussions on various concepts to be debated. Similarly, Sistema Europe and the new orchestras have developed a program for young leaders.

We find it important to know what these young people have to tell us. In 2022, there was incredible learning because during the annual meeting of Sistema Europe networks, the young people approached us and told us what they thought and what they believe should be done in certain situations. While listening to them, we also noticed that they were very good listeners, making these exchanges of opinions fruitful.

Finally, I want to share that a youth orchestra is nothing more than a group where the performers have a voice. They do not have a conductor, but they work on what they can do and how they can do it. What we should see, then, is an artistic group that is truly working with autonomy. We can appreciate the individual emotion that can occur at any moment, and, at the same time, the freedom with which each child carries out their work agenda with a sense of belonging, ultimately showing that each child is an artist.

# Francisco Javier Romero



He is a musicologist, music educator and specialist in African music who works as a university professor at the University of Alicante. He has taught more than 700 courses in more than 20 countries, being an international reference in the pedagogy of rhythm and neuromotor skills. He holds a doctorate in Musicology from the Alexander von Humboldt University in Berlin, specialized in early music and

He specialized in early music and completed his doctoral thesis on baroque polychoral music under the tutelage of Professor of Musicology Hermann Danuse. Creator of the BAPNE Method, which consists of cognitive, socioemotional, psychomotor and neurorehabilitation stimulation based on neuromotor skills. Using body percussion as a didactic resource focused on the possible stimulation of cognitive functions and executive functions.

# New Research Perspectives of El Sistema

The following discourse will pertain to the subject of research. The following attempt will be made to synthesize the information presented during this presentation. I am affiliated with a research collective that has expanded to encompass over ninety researchers, boasting a rich historical background. Our research endeavors are conducted in numerous regions across the globe. Since 2010, for instance, I have visited Venezuela on multiple occasions to conduct research, as well as in other countries. Notably, Africa has been a significant destination in this research endeavor.

In this vast continent, I have amassed a substantial body of research material. Our research has encompassed diverse geographical regions, urban areas, and cultural expressions across the African continent. The central focus of this research is the significance of movement, both in terms of its study and its inherent relationship with the brain. It is noteworthy that a significant body of research in the field of neuroscience has been dedicated to the study of brain learning. Consequently, our research has encompassed not only the study of dances from diverse regions of Africa but also the analysis of singing traditions, with a particular focus on the Aja genre, which is prevalent in Tanzanian dance songs.

However, the primary objective of this communication is to emphasize the existence of two international databases, Web of Science and Scopus, that are renowned for their stringent standards and credibility. These platforms serve as invaluable resources, facilitating the dissemination and comparison of research findings across the global scientific community. The purpose of this discourse is to underscore the significance of ensuring that El Sistema, its researchers, and its research are adequately represented within these databases.

These databases facilitate the production and comparison of research articles with other publications worldwide. In addition to these search engines, Dialnet is a pertinent resource for Spanish speakers. Additionally, I would like to introduce a tool that can be utilized to measure and quantify the changes or impacts obtained through the El Sistema methodology. This application is designed for use with children and adolescents up to the age of eighteen. This tool is designed to assess potential alterations in various domains, including social, psychological, emotional, and cognitive aspects.

The application in question is Dide.org. It is noteworthy that this application possesses a pre-diagnostic capability, encompassing 35 indicators, which renders it a valuable asset for researchers. Its applications are versatile, catering to both individual and group use.

In conclusion, it is imperative to emphasize the potential for augmenting the corpus of substantiated and reliable data for our research endeavors. Furthermore, I would like to encourage the utilization of technological tools and applications that facilitate the measurement and quantification of data. Finally, it is essential to disseminate the findings of our research through appropriate channels, such as prominent platforms or search engines like Web of Science, to ensure maximum visibility and impact.





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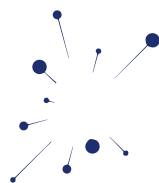
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