

*The National Violin Festival*  
*Tribute to Maestro José Francisco Del Castillo*

**ATRIL**  
RESEARCH BOOKLET

**SPECIAL EDITION**  
**NRO. 9**





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SISTEMA

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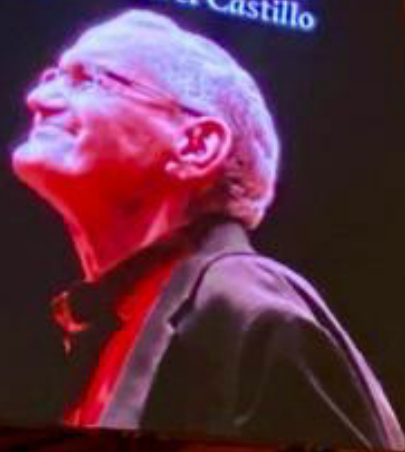
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**Festival Nacional de Violín**  
*Homenaje al maestro José Francisco Del Castillo*

**¡Bravo,  
Maestro!**



*The schools of El Sistema represent the academic and organizational component that fosters specialized attention for the technical and artistic training of all instruments. This component is embedded within a broader model of inclusion, union, participation, and social rescue, which serves as the driving force and defining characteristic of the institution. The schools' approach to music education is characterized by the systematic organization of technical principles for each instrument within the orchestral and choral context, with a focus on collective musical practice. This systematic approach is achieved through the collaboration of teachers, who work together to develop and implement common criteria for teaching and learning. The comprehensive compendium of techniques, knowledge, and procedures that have been meticulously developed over the span of 50 years of dedicated work serves to unify and imbue each of our schools with a distinct sense of identity.*

*It is with great privilege that we present this commemorative booklet, which showcases the outcomes of the event that exemplified the culmination of the concerted and sustained efforts of our Violin School: the National Violin Festival, held in honor of maestro José Francisco Del Castillo, which took place in all the institutions under the auspices of El Sistema from September 2023 to January 2024. maestro Del Castillo, a prominent figure in Venezuelan musical history, demonstrated an exceptional ability to integrate his profound academic and instrumental knowledge, acquired in the most prestigious institutions, with the most renowned masters of his time, to the new dynamics of musical education designed by Maestro José Antonio Abreu. Consequently, a comprehensive repository of knowledge, methodologies, and practices emerged among the members of the El Sistema Violin School, endowing the professional violinist who had received training at our institution with a distinctive sonorous and artistic profile.*

*It is considered a significant accomplishment when students from the school's various levels, ranging from the núcleos to the most distinguished students nationwide, actively participate. A notable observation was the consistent demonstration of academic excellence by students following the El Sistema educational trajectory, which was evident during the closing galas. This finding suggests that the pedagogical approach employed by El Sistema is effective in meeting the rigorous international standards of the most prestigious artistic institutions globally.*

*We would like to express our profound gratitude to the exceptional team at the Research and Documentation Center of El Sistema for the creation of this booklet. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our artistic, academic, administrative, and working communities to the National Violin Festival. We would like to highlight the work of the Violin School, its Academic Committee, trainers and students; the state managers and their academic and operational teams; the Academic Music Directorate and all the national directorates; the academic and operational team of the School Management, program managers and their teams; as well as the Academic Council; and our executive director, Dr. Eduardo Méndez and his close team.*





## PREAMBLE

The National Violin Festival, which was held between October 2023 and January 2024, had as its primary objective to activate and link the academic and administrative entities of the Violin School at the national level. The festival's program encompassed diverse academic and artistic activities, with a focus on fostering the musical development of young violinists. Additionally, it recognized and celebrated the pedagogical approaches employed by each region, underscoring the importance of regional distinctiveness in violin education. The festival was dedicated to *maestro* José Francisco Del Castillo, honoring his leadership and impact on generations of Venezuelan violinists. To this end, a series of concerts were held in January 2024, both at the National Center of Social Action for Music and in various locations throughout the country. The festival also facilitated a diagnostic evaluation of the academic management in various centers, by bringing together the musical results obtained in recent years in a meeting dedicated exclusively to the violin.

The dissemination of this special research booklet, dedicated to the National Violin Festival, a tribute to *maestro* José Francisco Del Castillo, seeks to make public the systematization and reflection on the experience lived during this event. The booklet highlights the cultural relevance and the impact on the participants. During the systematization of the festival, detailed information was collected from each participating state. This was accomplished through the submission of activity records by each state management entity, the compilation of content from the social networks of some of the 121 participating núcleos, and press articles, both from El Sistema and regional media outlets, among other valuable sources. Additionally, interviews were conducted with several distinguished teachers of the Violin School and, naturally, with the maestro José Francisco Del Castillo himself.

The objective of this study is twofold: first, to disseminate and document the experience of the National Violin Festival; and second, to examine its qualitative achievements in musical training and its social impact. The analysis will also examine the participation of musicians, organizers, and the public. Our analysis is focused on two aspects: first, the pivotal role of the Violin Festival in the training and promotion of young musical talents in Venezuela; and second, the social and educational impact of the festival on the broader community of the El Sistema Violin School. Secondly, we highlight the social and educational impact of the festival on the entire community of the El Sistema Violin School. This comprehensive analysis offers a multifaceted perspective on the development and accomplishments of the festival, thereby reinforcing the institution's unwavering dedication to musical and educational excellence.





In a video broadcast at one of the concerts in his honor (2024), *maestro* José Francisco Del Castillo commented on the origins of violin festivals in the 1980s, which were initially directed by *maestro* José Antonio Abreu. Over time, *maestro* Del Castillo has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to fostering the artistic development of his students by organizing numerous festivals dedicated to the violin. These include the first National Academy, later known as the Latin American Violin Academy, which he founded, and the current El Sistema Violin School. Subsequent generations of students have continued this work, ensuring the perpetuation of *maestro* Del Castillo's legacy in music education. Furthermore, *maestro* Del Castillo has cultivated collaborative relationships with various non-academic violin festivals, fostering a diverse network of musical engagement. A select number of these collaborations are worthy of particular mention, including the following:

I National Festival of Young Violinists Recitals, in July 1988.

The integral cycle of Ludwig van Beethoven's sonatas for violin and piano was performed in January 1990.

The V Festival of Young Violinists took place in March 1992.

The third National Festival of Young Violinists in Aragua, held in May 2000, also featured the artist.

The IV Violin Festival of the Andes took place in December 2000.

The V Violin Festival of the Andes took place in December 2002.

The second International Violin Festival of the Caribbean, held in Nueva Esparta, Venezuela, in 2002, is also noteworthy.

The first edition of the Young Violinists Festival took place in 2007.

The Violin Festival of 2013 was a celebration of the 22nd anniversary of the Latin American Violin Academy.

## Maestro José Francisco Del Castillo

José Francisco Del Castillo, a prominent Venezuelan violinist, was born in Caracas on July 11, 1938. He began his musical studies at the Superior School of Music "José Ángel Lamas," under the tutelage of *maestro* Antonuccio de Paulis. Thereafter, he relocated to Europe to continue his musical education at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, Belgium, where he had the privilege of studying under the direction of renowned *maestros* André Gertler and Carlo Van Neste. His academic achievements included first prizes in both violin and chamber music. He further refined his craft by attending *maestro* Gertler's summer courses at the renowned Mozarteum in Salzburg, performing on numerous occasions. Thereafter, he continued his advanced training in New York City under the tutelage of the renowned violinist and pedagogue Ivan Galamian. He participated in the summer courses at Meadow Mount, New York. Upon returning to Venezuela, he solidified his international acclaim through a series of recitals and concerts in Caracas and other regions of the country. Notably, José Francisco Del Castillo has performed as a soloist under the direction of distinguished conductors, providing premieres of significant contemporary violin literature.

In his capacity as a pedagogue, he has provided instruction to numerous violinists in various Venezuelan cities, many of whom hold prominent positions in orchestras and conservatories throughout the country. He has served as the director of the National Violin School of the National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela and has been on the faculty of several institutions, including the Aragua State Conservatory, the University of the Andes, the University of Carabobo, and the Simón Bolívar University. Internationally, *maestro* José Francisco has delivered master classes at institutions such as the University of Buenos Aires, the University of Miami, the Royal College of Music in London, the University of Manchester, the University of Santiago de Chile, the University of Ecuador, and the University of Puerto Rico. His accolades include the 1996 National Music Prize and the 1996 Municipal Music Prize. His accolades also include the prestigious "Andrés Bello" Order and the Honorary Doctorate from the Simón Bolívar University, among numerous others. He is the author of the book *Basic Principles for the Study and Performance of the Violin*, and has recorded three albums with the Mito Juan Pro-Música Foundation. He has embarked on significant concert tours in Europe, the Soviet Union, and nearly all the countries of Central and South America, garnering widespread acclaim from both the public and the critics. In 1980, as part of the 50th anniversary of the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra, he served as the guest soloist, performing Shostakovich's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra during a tour of several Latin American countries.

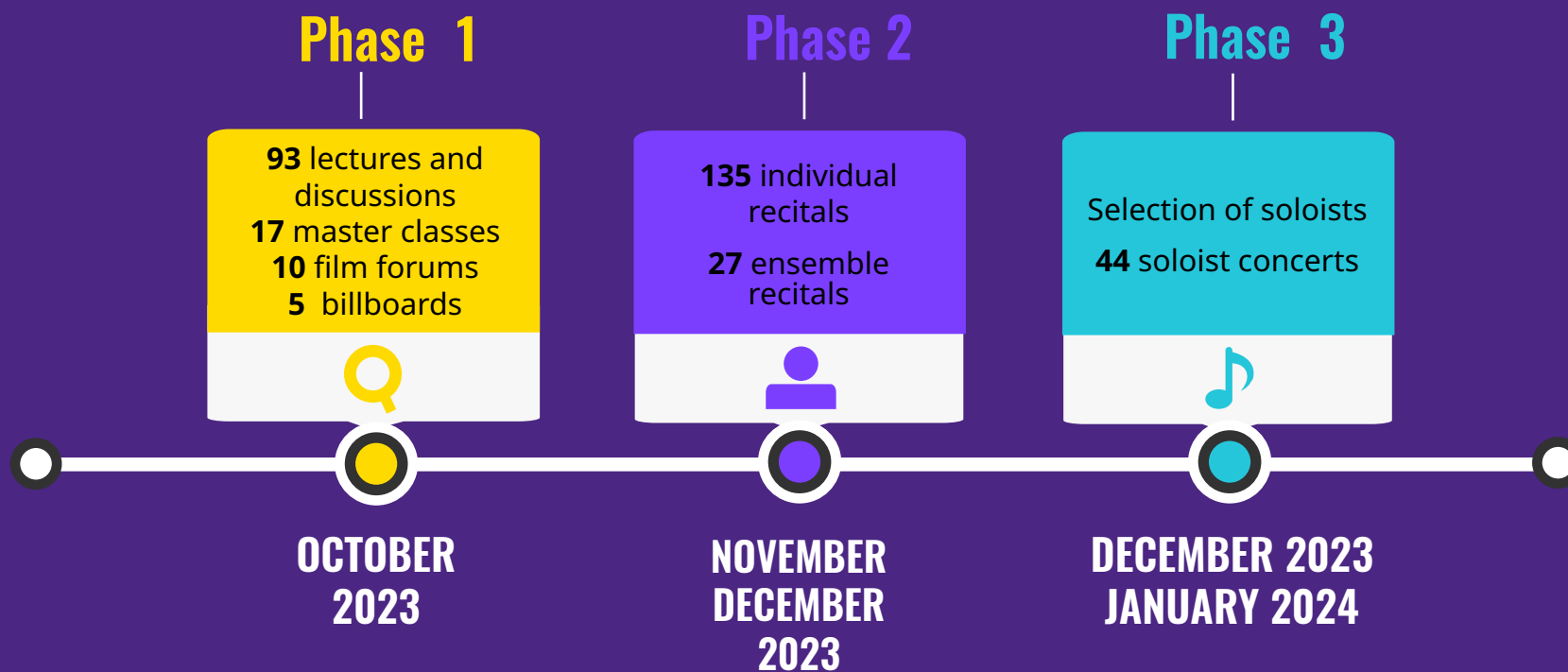
In 1991, he established the Latin American Violin Academy, which is now recognized as the El Sistema Violin School. This institution is affiliated with the Simón Bolívar Musical Foundation. In 2014, a youth symphony orchestra was established under his name, comprising various groups from Caracas. In 2022, he was awarded the "Marylou Speaker Churchill" Award by the New England Conservatory of Boston. Maestro Del Castillo continues to dedicate himself to his pedagogical work at the violin school of El Sistema, while also being a frequent guest instructor at the National Center of Social Action for Music.





*Maestro José Francisco Del Castillo*

## Chronology of events





## The Festival was organized in three different phases:

### Phase I (July - October 2023)

Preparations for the festival began in July 2023, with the sending of a questionnaire to the school's students, whose objective was to learn about the repertoire they had developed, which would be performed during phases II and III of the festival. From October onwards, theoretical activities were carried out, including lectures, discussions, video projections and billboards. Talks on the life and work of *maestro* Del Castillo, lutherie (care and maintenance of the instrument, violin and bow), body management (relaxation, ergonomics), initiation to the instrument for trainers, and the history of the violin. In addition, there were exchanges with violinists interpreters of Venezuelan music, among which was the reactivation of the Núcleo of Tovar, Mérida state. Although the visit of *maestro* Del Castillo to Mérida was not successful, an exchange between the Alma Llanera program and the Violin School did take place. The musical and theoretical activities included concerts, lectures and training of trainers, as well as chamber music recitals at intermediate level to ensure a massive participation.









## Phase II (November - December 2023)

During this phase, there was a cultural exchange of violin music, ranging from traditional to academic. Small chamber ensembles and piano recitals were organized. On November 3, a large recital was held at the headquarters, with advanced repertoire such as caprices by Paganini, sonatas by Ysaÿe and sonatas by Bach. As a curious fact, it should be noted that the participation in the state of Zulia was higher than in the Capital District. In December, in addition to continuing with the recitals, concerts with orchestra began, where the young students performed concert movements in the interior of the country, with some regional orchestras.





### Phase III (Last week of November 2023 - January 2024)

In this phase, young soloists were selected and integrated to participate in concerts with regional and professional orchestras of El Sistema, scheduled for January 2024. For this purpose, a one-week seminar was held in Caracas, given by some of the teachers of the Academic Committee of the Violin School, for potential soloists from different parts of the country.





Between the last week of November and the first week of December, the final soloists were selected. In December, the concerts that would take place in January were planned, with the main regional orchestras of the country and the professional orchestras of El Sistema. Each concert program consisted of three soloists, and there was a mobilization of students from the interior of the country to Caracas, as well as soloists from Caracas to the interior. For example, members of the Juan José Landaeta Orchestra and the Simón Bolívar Orchestra participated in concerts in San Sebastián de los Reyes and in the east of the country.

The culmination of the festival began on Friday, January 19, 2024, with soloists from the interior of the country, and ended in Caracas on Sunday, January 28. During the last week, daily concerts were held in several cities of the interior and in Caracas, closing the festival with a celebration of music and young talent from all over the country. During the concerts, musical and verbal tributes were paid to the beloved maestro José Francisco Del Castillo.

### **Selection of soloists for phase III of festival**

A multi-stage process was used to select the participants for the violin and orchestra concerts of the third phase of the festival:

#### **Registration of Personal and Academic Data.**

Beginning in July, the management of the Violin School sent participants an online form to fill in their data and the piece or concerto they would perform. Approximately, 3800 violinists filled out and submitted this form, whose main objective was to identify the pieces they would be able to perform in December and January. After filtering the data received, 50 concerts (and pieces) were identified. After further analysis, 35 potential concerts were registered. The teachers of the Academic Committee of the Violin School held working sessions in teams to pre-select excerpts from these concerts.

### **Video Submission**

Participants were asked to submit videos of their interpretations according to established guidelines, which included specifications such as horizontal format, presence of a teacher or guide, unedited recording, a single take, and no ambient noise. Approximately two hundred videos were received, from which those that met the established requirements were preselected. In addition, the consistency between the data provided in the form and the recordings sent was verified.

### **Review and Preselection**

Teachers on the committee reviewed the videos based on criteria such as intonation, rhythm, tempo, and interpretation. They recorded their observations and judgments in specific forms, following the methodology of expert judging under academic and musical parameters.

### **Final selection**

In order to determine the final list of participants for the concerts with orchestra, a one-week seminar with master classes was held during the last week of November at Quinta Marilina in El Paraíso, Caracas. A large number of young people from different states of the interior and the metropolitan area participated in this seminar. During the master classes, the teachers evaluated the students' performances and gave them guidance in their interpretations. From this pre-selection and according to the teachers' evaluation, a list of final soloists was obtained in mid-December for the concerts with orchestra that took place in January.

## Organizational: activities performed during the festival

A total of 331 academic and artistic activities were carried out, distributed as follows:

- 93 lectures / talks.
- 93 classical violin recitals.
- 44 violin and orchestral concerts.
- 42 violin recitals of Venezuelan music.
- 27 ensemble concerts.
- 17 master classes.
- 10 video projections.
- 5 informative posters.

The management of the schools, the state management and the academic coordinators, together with the state leaders, the directors of each of the 121 participating centers and the teachers of the Violin School who work in these centers, were responsible for the organization of all the activities during each of the phases of the Festival.

Among the El Sistema programs integrated into the Festival are the Musical Initiation Program, the Academic Orchestra Program, and the Alma Llanera Program.

The directorates involved were the Directorate of the National Center for Social Action in Music (CNASPM), the Directorate of the Academic Center of Lutheria, the Executive Directorate, the Directorate of Academic Music, the Directorate of Orchestral and Choir Management, the Directorate of Communications, the Directorate of Audiovisual, the Directorate of Núcleo, the Directorate of Transportation and the Directorate of Administrative Services.

The logistics of the spaces used for academic and artistic activities were remarkable, as "doors" were opened beyond the Núcleo. These included recitals and concerts in theaters, halls, auditoriums, hotels, town halls, churches, cultural centers, museums, libraries, art galleries, cinemas, squares, schools, acoustic shells and restaurants.

In order to systematize the registration of activities, the Violin School sent by e-mail an Excel format to be filled in and sent by each state administration. This form requested detailed information about each activity, including the name of the state, the name and location of the center, the date, time and person responsible for the activity, the type and description of the activity, the number of participants, the identification of each participant and the audience, both personal and virtual (if applicable).

## Distribution by academic level and by state, according to solo concert repertoire

During the third phase of the Festival, dedicated to concerts with orchestra, the participants performed works from the violin repertoire corresponding to their academic level in the instrument. Based on the information provided by each state, the individual repertoire of the solo concerts was selected as the main source to determine the level of each participant. To this end, we compared the works with the academic program of the Violin School (levels 1 to 4) and relied on the expert judgment of several teachers of the school for levels 5 to 8. Table No. 1 shows the number of participating states by academic level of their students and their percentage of representation with respect to the total number of states (24).

Level	States	Total	Percentage
Level 1	Mérida, Monagas, Nueva Esparta, Trujillo	4	16.6%
Level 2	Distrito Capital, Falcón, Monagas, Trujillo, Zulia	5	20.83%
Level 3	Distrito Capital, Falcón, Monagas, Nueva Esparta, Táchira, Trujillo, Zulia	7	29.16%
Level 4	Distrito Capital, Lara, Monagas, Táchira, Trujillo, Zulia	6	25%
Level 5	Aragua, Falcón	2	8.33%
Level 6	Aragua, Bolívar, Carabobo, Cojedes, Distrito Capital, Falcón, Sucre, Táchira, Trujillo, Zulia	10	41.67%
Level 7	Amazonas, Anzoátegui, Aragua, Distrito Capital, Mérida, Táchira, Trujillo, Yaracuy, Zulia	9	37.5%
Level 8	Amazonas, Anzoátegui, Aragua, Barinas, Carabobo, Cojedes, Distrito Capital, Falcón, Lara, Mérida, Monagas, Portuguesa, Sucre, Táchira, Yaracuy, Zulia	16	66.67%
Level 0a	Amazonas, Apure, Aragua, Bolívar, Cojedes	5	20.83%
Level 0b	Guárico, La Guaira, Miranda	3	12.5%
Level 0c	Anzoátegui, Barinas, Delta Amacuro, Mérida, Monagas, Yaracuy	6	25%

Table 1. Participating States by Academic Level and Percentage of National Representation.





**Date:** January 21, 2014

**Time:** 4 pm

**Venue:** Simón Bolívar Hall, National Center for Social Action for Music (CNASPM).

**Solistas:** Raymar Cumare.

**Conductor:** Adrián Ascanio.

**Orchestra:** Youth Symphony Orchestra of Caracas.

**Program:** Candide Overture by Leonard Bernstein, Dance Macabre by Camille Saint-Saëns, Concerto No. 1 for violin and orchestra by Shostakovich.

**Date:** Thursday, January 25, 2024

**Time:** 4 pm

**Venue:** main entrance of the National Center of Social Action for Music (CNASPM).

Several ensembles performed: the Metropolitan Brass children's ensemble, under the direction of Jonnathan Rivas, played Trumpet Tune by Henry Purcell and Symphony of Fanfarrias-Rondeau by Jean Joseph Mouret; the intermediate level ensemble of maestro Borgan Ascanio performed Concerto in A minor by Antonio Vivaldi; and the Musical Initiation ensemble of maestra Josbel Puche played Orange Blossom Special, by Ervin T. Rouse. Executive Director Dr. Eduardo Méndez and members of the board of directors of El Sistema were present.

**Venue:** Simón Bolívar Hall, the National Center of Social Action for Music (CNASPM), Capital District.

**Soloists:** Gabriel Casanova (Táchira, National Children's Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela), María Laura Duarte (Zulia, National Children's Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela), Rayson Cumare (Lara, Simón Bolívar Chamber Orchestra) and Francisco Fullana (Spain).

**Conductor:** Christian Vásquez.

**Orchestra:** Juan José Landaeta Symphony Orchestra.

**Program:** Concerto in E minor by Jules Lara; Concerto in E minor by Jules Conus, Introduction and Rondo Caprichoso by Camille Saint-Saëns; Concerto No. 1 in F# minor by Henryk Wieniawski; Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor Op. 26 by Max Bruch.

During the concert, a video about the life and work of maestro José Francisco Del Castillo was projected. Carlos Calderón, Venezuelan architect, musicologist and violinist residing in Barcelona, participated in this video and recalled an exhibition he made in Caracas on the violin family tree of maestro Del Castillo, during a concert conference in which he was invited as a speaker. The video also included fragments of concertos performed by *maestro* Del Castillo and some of his reflections.



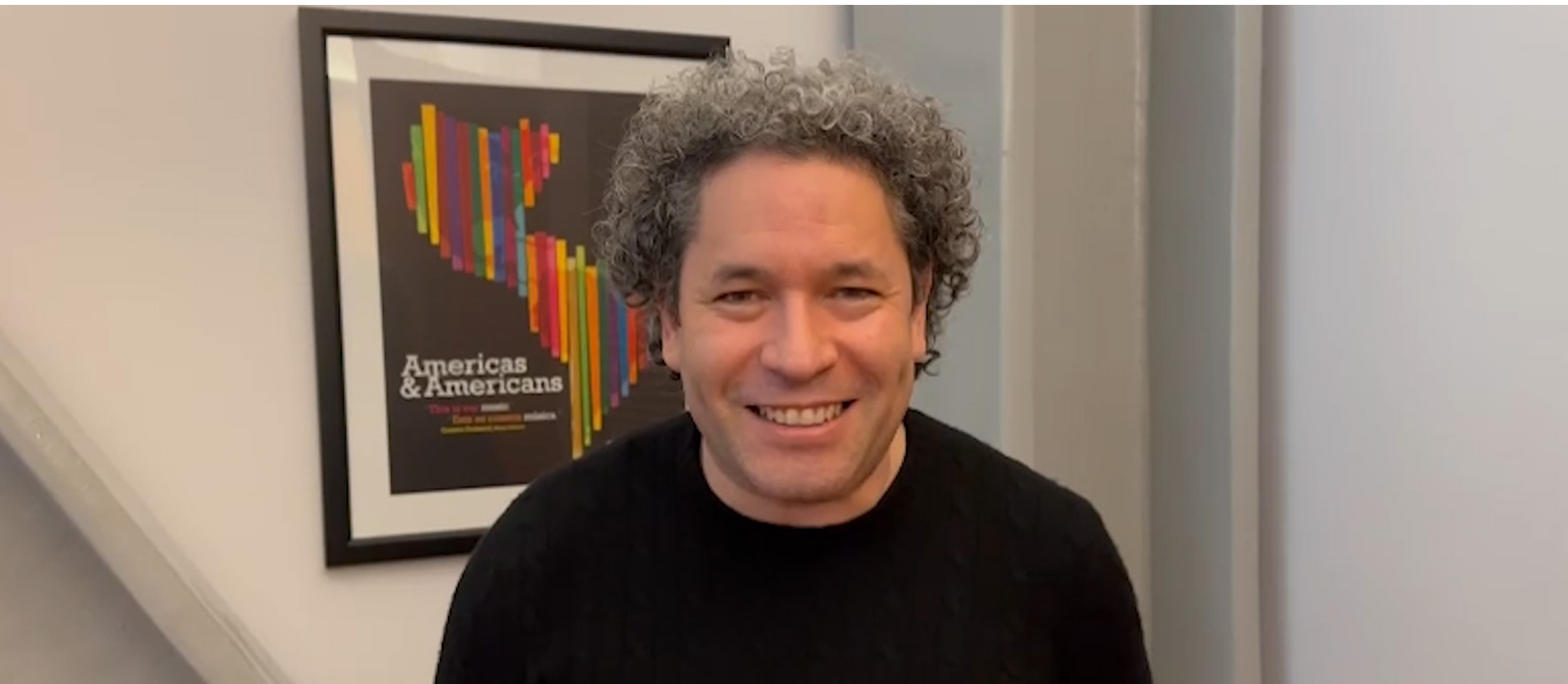


# CONCERTS IN TRIBUTE TO MAESTRO JOSÉ FRANCISCO DEL CASTILLO

The following is a transcription of the words of *maestro* Gustavo Dudamel, musical director of El Sistema and former student of *maestro* Del Castillo, which were part of the video tribute broadcast on stage at the beginning of the concert. This was followed by a transcription of the speech given by Dr. Eduardo Méndez, executive director of El Sistema.

## **Gustavo Dudamel, musical director of El Sistema.**

*My very dear maestro Del Castillo, how wonderful! I would like to express my sincerest congratulations on this well-deserved tribute. I consider myself honored and privileged to be among the students you have nurtured, and I am grateful for the profound impact you have had on generations of musicians, particularly those of us who have had the privilege of learning the violin and music in general. Furthermore, I recall many cherished memories of our shared experiences, which have been instrumental in shaping my musical journey. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to you, maestro, for your remarkable contributions and ongoing dedication to the art of violin and music. Your achievements are truly monumental, and I offer you my sincerest congratulations. I love you very much, maestro, congratulations, and go ahead always, a kiss!*





# CONCERTS IN TRIBUTE TO MAESTRO JOSÉ FRANCISCO DEL CASTILLO

## Eduardo Méndez, Executive Director of El Sistema

*Today, to be brief and conclude, as we approach the end, we would like to welcome maestro Francisco Fullana, a preeminent violin figure of global significance, who has maintained a long-standing relationship with El Sistema. maestro Fullana has participated in numerous El Sistema concerts, conducted by various conductors, including Gustavo Dudamel. He has an illustrious international career in music. His presence is made possible by the generous sponsorship of the María Paula Alonso de Ruiz Martínez Foundation, an organization with a long-standing relationship with us and a significant contribution to the artistic and academic activities of El Sistema.*

*The Foundation has a special collaboration with Francisco, providing spaces for the development of academic activities for many years. These foundations, though sometimes unobtrusive, play a crucial role in supporting our endeavors. I would like to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Karen Hart, who has been instrumental in facilitating this concert with Francisco. I would like to request a round of applause for the Foundation and for Karen.*

*Francisco adjusted his schedule in order to be present today. It must be acknowledged that the invitation was extended rather spontaneously; nevertheless, Francisco accepted it without hesitation and expressed his eagerness to participate. He intended to share his experiences with the children and young people of El Sistema, our musicians, and, most notably, to honor maestro José Francisco Del Castillo. In light of this, let us extend a cordial welcome to maestro Francisco Fullana.*



**Date:** Friday, January 26, 2024

**Time:** 5:00 pm

**Venue:** Simón Bolívar Hall, National Center of Social Action for Music (CNASPM), Capital District.

**Soloists:** Boris Paredes Alzolay, Norman Osío and Liszt Franz Figuera; Bruno García (violin), Marisel Omaña and Alessandro Petroni (oboes), Jorge Carrera and Eduardo Negrín (horns), Samuel Navarro (bassoon), Liszt Franz Figuera (cello); Anna Virginia González, Carlos Luis Perdomo, Alexánder González and Alirio Vegas (violins).

**Conductor:** Boris Paredes.

**Orchestra:** Simón Bolívar Baroque Orchestra.

**Program:** La Cetra: La Cetra, First sonata for four violins, by Giovanni Legrenzi (1626–1690); Concerto for strings in G minor, Rv 156, Concerto grosso in D minor, Rv 565, Concerto in F major for violin, 2 oboes, 2 horns, bassoon, cello and orchestra. Rv 569, Concerto No. 1 in E major, “La primavera” (Spring), Op. 8, Rv 269, Concerto No. 2 in G minor, “L'estate” (Summer), Op. 8, Rv 315, Concerto No. 3 in F major, “L'autunno” (Autumn), Op. 8, Rv 293, and Concerto No. 4 in F minor, “L'inverno” (Winter), Op. 8, Rv 297, by Antonio Lucio Vivaldi (1678–1741).

**Date:** Saturday, January 27, 2024

**Time:** 5:00 pm

**Venue:** Simón Bolívar Hall, National Center of Social Action for Music (CNASPM), Capital District.

**Soloists:** Luis Maita and Reggie Ortiz (violin).

**Conductor:** Andrés David Ascanio

**Orchestra:** Simón Bolívar Chamber Orchestra.

**Program:** The Magic Flute by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: The Magic Flute by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Concerto No. 4 in D major by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Song by Vicente Emilio Sojo, Concerto No. 5 in A minor by Henryk Vieuxtemps.

**Date:** Sunday, January 28, 2024

**Time:** 4:00 pm

**Venue:** Simón Bolívar Hall, National Center of Social Action for Music (CNASPM), Capital District.

**Soloists:** Humberto Jiménez (Anzoátegui, Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra) and Carlos Vegas (Capital District, Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra).

**Conductors:** Rodolfo Barráez and Frank Di Polo.

**Orchestra:** The Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra.

**Programa:** The Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra. The program will feature the following pieces: Spanish Caprice by Nikolai Rimsky Korsakov, Concerto in D minor, Op. 47 by Jean Sibelius, and Concerto for violin and orchestra in D major by Igor Stravinsky. The encores will consist of the following: Sonata for solo violin No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003, Andante, by J. S. Bach, and Concerto in D minor by Antonio Vivaldi.



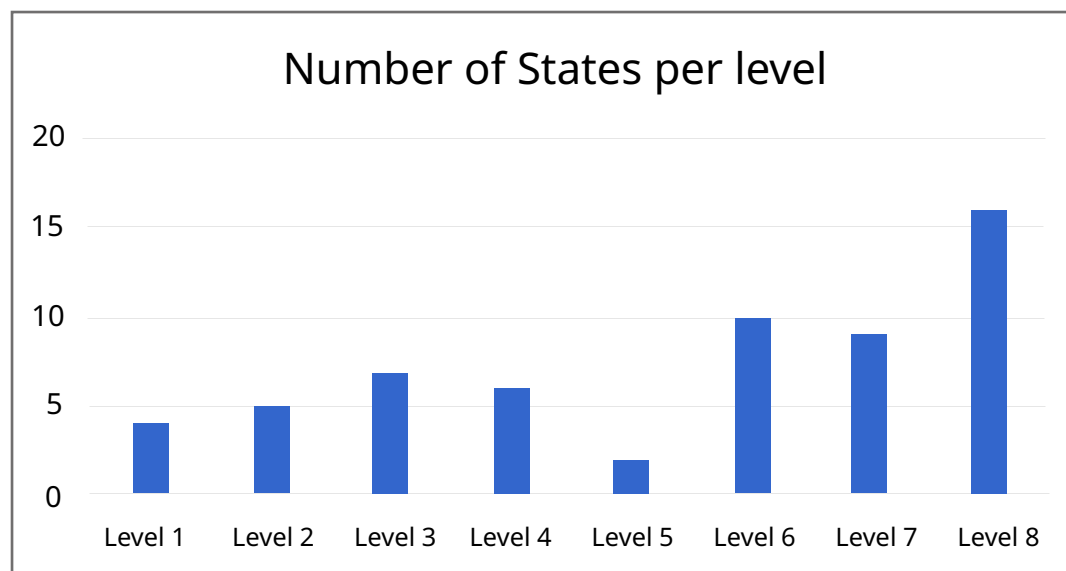


*Soloists: Gabriel Casanova, María Laura Duarte, Rayson Cumare y Francisco Fullana (Spain).  
Conductor: Christian Vásquez.  
Orchestra: Juan José Landaeta Symphony Orchestra.  
January 25, 2024.*



## Participation at the national level

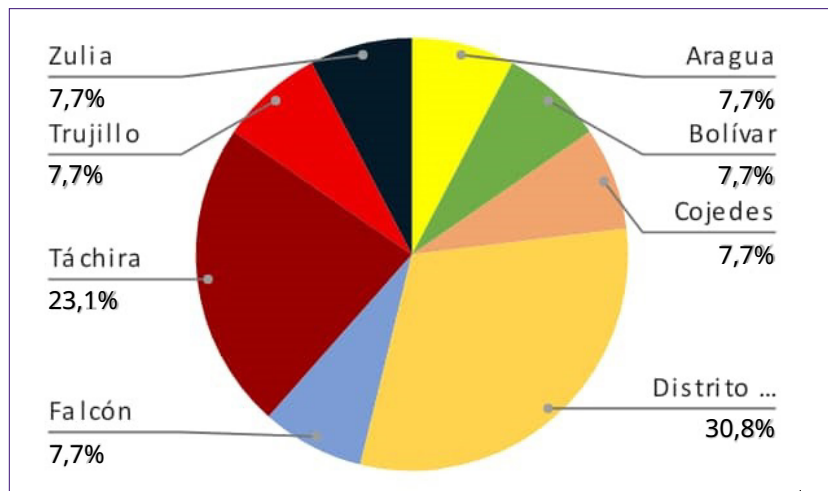
The result can be observed in Graph No. 1, which estimates the percentage of participation by academic level with respect to the total number of states. The graph indicates that the advanced levels (levels 6, 7, and 8) exhibited a notable representation nationwide. This observation does not imply that students from the initial levels in certain states did not participate; rather, it suggests that their performance occurred under alternative formats, such as individual and chamber music recitals.



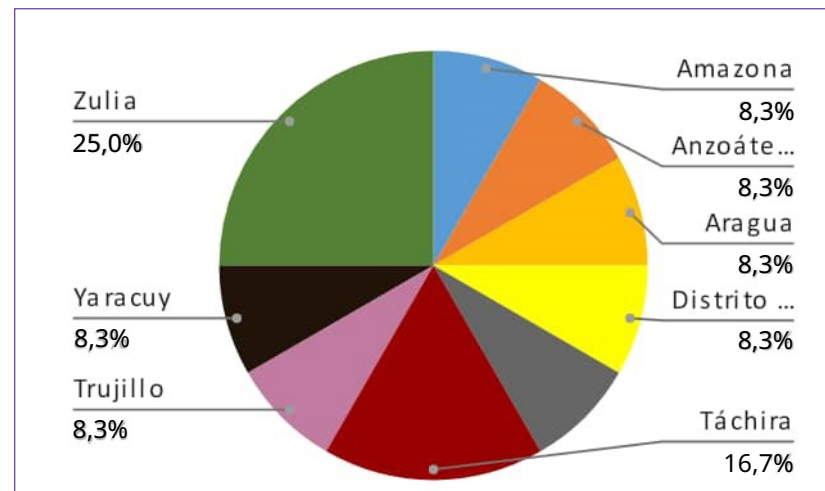
Graph 1. Participation at the national level, by academic level. Palavecino and Álvarez (2024)

Graph 1 corresponds to 81% of the states that participated in the festival, since, at the time of publication of this booklet, no reports were received from some of them. In other cases, the states sent reports, but there were no solo concert performers, or the reports did not include details on solo concert repertoires.

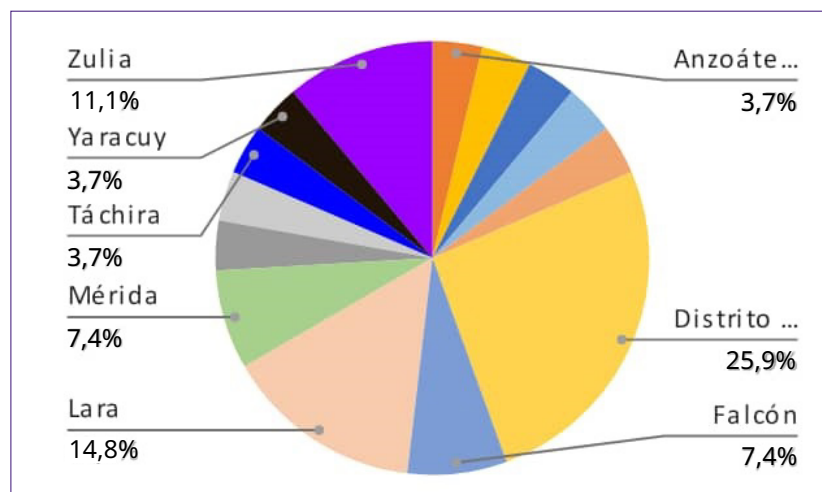
The following is the distribution by state of academic levels 6, 7 and 8, corresponding to the advanced repertoire of the violin and orchestra concertos presented during the festival.



Graph No. 2. Distribution by State, Level 6



Graph No. 3. Distribution by State, Level 7



Graph No. 4. Distribution by State, Level 8

A comparative analysis of the graphs depicting the advanced levels reveals that the Capital District, Lara, Zulia, Mérida, and Falcón exhibited a higher proportion of soloists whose repertoires aligned with level 8. The states of Zulia and Táchira demonstrated notable proficiency in level 7, while the Capital District and Táchira exhibited particular strength in level 6.

## The social impact of the Violin Festival

The social impact of the Violin Festival is defined as the degree of influence that the planning and development of the event had on the participating violin community. This festival was perceived as a valuable opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and experiences, in addition to meeting training and management needs, empowering people from each region of the country, and contributing to the improvement of the community involved. Stakeholder participation played a crucial role in generating this impact. According to Edwards and Meagher (2020)<sup>1</sup>, the social impact can be classified into six categories: conceptual impact, connectivity, strategic impact, capacity building, social change, and environmental change. The first four categories are applicable directly to the community participating in the festival and will be discussed below.

### Conceptual Impact:

The festival featured a series of activities that engaged cognitive aspects, extending beyond the artistic dimension, particularly in its initial theoretical phase, which included lectures, talks, video projections, and the elaboration of posters referencing the event. Additionally, the master classes conducted at various times during the festival contributed to the expansion of technical knowledge and musical concepts among both trainers and participating students.

### Connectivity

The exchange of knowledge among students during activities such as seminars and orchestral meetings with soloists had a direct impact on their artistic and academic performance. For Rubén Cova, "the master classes given by young violinists to others of equal or similar age are, for me, the academic essence of El Sistema" (Cova, R. Virtual interview, November 2024). For instance, there were instances when students from Caracas traveled to the interior of the country, and vice versa, with violinists from the Juan José Landaeta Symphony Orchestra and the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, to participate in concerts in San Sebastián de los Reyes, in the center-east of the country. This exchange proved to be highly enriching for all participants.

### Strategic impact:

The greatest social impact at the logistical level occurred during the planning and execution of the festival. As previously mentioned, rigorous logistics were necessary to communicate the objective of the festival in all states, select soloists for the final stage, prepare the orchestras, and carry out the theoretical activities in the first phase, among other aspects.

### Capacity Building:

The management staff, in conjunction with the trainers and teachers, were tasked with facilitating expeditious growth in the Violin School students, encompassing not only the development of their instrumental skills but also the refinement of their academic study methodologies to accommodate diverse repertoires.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from: <https://i2insights.org/2020/03/03/research-impact-evaluation-framework/>



## The Educational Impact of the Violin Festival

In order to measure the educational impact of the festival on the musical community, several qualitative and quantitative indicators are considered, which allow for a comprehensive evaluation of the festival's impact, not only in educational terms, but also in its ability to engage and educate the community.

### Quantitative Indicators:

**Attendance:** The different activities were attended by the young violinists participating, and by the public, consisting mainly of members of their community.

**Diversity of participants:** As evidenced in the reports submitted by the respective states, a wide range of academic levels was observed, ranging from novice students to those at the most advanced levels.

**Active regional participation:** The reports received from the states indicated which regions offered the most diverse array of activities and participation from the educational community. The festival, in general, was met with great interest in the interior of the country, motivating student participation in group activities, theoretical at the beginning, and collective in the two final phases of the festival, with recitals and presentations of chamber groups and Venezuelan music.

The distribution of levels is indicative of the general level of proficiency of the participating students, as evidenced by the frequency of works of different levels of difficulty. While all states presented soloists at some level, it is evident that some states were more active than others. In general, Capital District, Zulia, Trujillo, Táchira, Mérida and Falcón demonstrated a remarkable level of participation. However, it is important to note that some states that have traditionally been active, such as Anzoátegui, Barinas, and Miranda, did not provide detailed information regarding solo concert activities in their reports. Consequently, it was not possible to accurately determine the level of their participants in the festival. Nevertheless, Anzoátegui, Barinas, Lara, Miranda, and Yaracuy stood out in their participation in violin recital activities, with repertoires corresponding to the beginner and intermediate levels, as evidenced by photographic and audiovisual documentation submitted via email.

### Qualitative Indicators:

The practical application of the knowledge acquired during the festival was reported by the interviewed violin school teachers, who indicated its application in their daily musical practice. According to Rubén Cova, "From the academic point of view, creative spaces for the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and enriching visions of the violin are achieved with these festivals, which results in a higher technical and artistic quality" (Cova, R. Virtual interview, November 2024). (Cova, R. Virtual interview, November 2024).

**Skills development:** The festival facilitated the development of technical and performance skills. According to Elayza Pérez, leader of the Llanos-Andes axis, "these activities serve as a significant motivational and inspirational catalyst for students enrolled in the El Sistema Violin School, fostering the progression and execution of the curriculum. The tangible outcomes of this initiative manifest in the enhanced performance of children and young individuals within the orchestral groups" (Pérez, E. Virtual interview, November 2024).

An analysis of the academic levels of the soloists participating in the National Violin Festival revealed noteworthy findings regarding the distribution of talent at the national level. The Capital District, Zulia, Trujillo, Táchira, Mérida and Falcón exhibited particularly high levels of activity, distinguishing themselves by their proficiency in various levels, particularly the advanced ones. These states demonstrated a notable degree of preparation and commitment to violin training.

In contrast, certain regions exhibited a lower level of engagement in advanced solo performances. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge the active participation of states such as Anzoátegui, Barinas, Mérida, and Miranda in different formats, including individual recitals and chamber music performances. The analysis underscored the significance of empathy and effective communication as indispensable components for fostering successful collaborations. The ability to listen and comprehend others fostered harmonious work environments and the attainment of shared objectives. The festival also underscored the value of diversity, demonstrating how variety enriches both music and life itself, thereby creating a more meaningful experience for all participants.

In summary, the festival demonstrated remarkable success in terms of the number of participants at the national level and the caliber of the violin students' performances. Concurrently, areas for enhancement were identified, including the need for more effective collection and organization of information. These improvements will serve to fortify and optimize subsequent editions of the festival.

### Challenges Faced

During the Festival, several challenges emerged during the festival, testing the aptitude and commitment of all participants. The coordination of schedules, instruments, and scores presented a notable logistical challenge, necessitating meticulous planning and efficient communication. Additionally, the musicians were required to adapt to a variety of styles and repertoires, which complemented their previous training and expanded their musical capabilities. The expectation of delivering a "memorable" concert generated positive pressure among the participants, motivating them to exceed expectations and challenge their own limits. This experience underscored the importance of flexibility and adaptability, essential qualities in music that must be constantly developed and refined.

We concur with the assertion of *maestro* Luis Miguel González, a former student of *maestro* Del Castillo, who currently serves as his associate in the administration of the Violin School. The following proposal is put forth: the cultivation of a national sentiment of musical engagement, thereby eliminating the necessity for individuals to travel to Caracas. This objective can be achieved by leveraging the advanced capabilities of virtual reality technology, thereby enabling individuals to thrive within the confines of their respective homelands. This approach, which we term "decentralization," aims to ensure that individuals do not need to travel to Caracas for musical education and performance opportunities. The system is managed at the national level, and the success of El Sistema attests to the social scope of Maestro Abreu's vision. (González, L.M. Virtual interview, November 2024).







**1. What evaluation can be made from a musical and academic perspective once the festival has concluded?**

The stimulus, the great stimulus for the young people; many of them have performed as soloists, magnificent; I was greatly impressed hearing children from the countryside playing magnificently well, it surprised me immensely, which demonstrates the progress made by the Violin School I initiated many years ago. Recently, I encountered a young boy from Cumaná playing the Vieuxtemps Concerto, and a girl from Maracaibo (Zulia) who left me astounded playing Rondo Capriccioso. This has been impressive: the flourishing of the violin school in a manner that I doubt can be found elsewhere in Latin America and in many parts of the world. Now, musicians from all generations are performing abroad as principal orchestra soloists in the United States and Europe. It is incredible... the beginning I experienced was in 1973, and later in 1975, the Foundation and "El Sistema" were initiated, known as the Foundation (Fundación del Estado para el Sistema de Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela, FESNOJIV). Before, Abreu already had his orchestra. I was the teacher of all of them. I had the pleasure of performing in Trujillo with all those children who were all teenagers, a Vivaldi concert in the Trujillo Cathedral with José Antonio. They were all young lads of 13 years old: Luis Miguel (González), (Carlos) Villamizar, etc. It was at that festival in Trujillo that I met them, wonderful memories... I recall that, following my father's death in 1962, I spent three or four months in Europe. About four months later, I made an effort to return and gave a concert at the Teatro Municipal. The second concert was in Barquisimeto. At that time, it was completely deserted, there was nothing. Additionally, Ms. Renata Tomaselli, the director of the musical youth at that time, invited me to give some classes in Barquisimeto in 1973, at the Hotel Príncipe, with a Polish singer and a pianist. I had the pleasure of teaching there. It was sparsely populated then, and you should see what the state of Lara is like today.

The breeding ground... all the best violinists I have taught come from the state of Lara, except perhaps Alexis Cárdenas, who is from the state of Zulia; but all, all of them, I can tell you, Francisco Díaz left a magnificent legacy, young students who came to me very well-trained for me to continue working with them. Well, all of them, Ana Beatriz Manzanilla is now in Portugal...

The transmission of this school from generation to generation is immeasurable. Students of Ulyses (Ascanio), students of magnificent violinists today, it is impressive. Venezuela is now at the forefront; its orchestras, how those orchestras sound, the Simón Bolívar, etc., professional orchestras, magnificent.

**2. Could you share any particular experience or moment that impacted you during the festival?**

First of all, I cannot help but express my gratitude to El Sistema, particularly to Eduardo Méndez for recognizing this work with such affection and care; I am truly deeply thankful. It impacted me, of course it did; all the soloists who performed were top-notch, truly impressive, every single one of them... Carlos Vega, an extraordinary violinist; my student Rayson Cumare played a brilliant and challenging concerto, Wieniawski's first concerto, an incredibly difficult piece; the young girl from Barquisimeto, students of other teachers, of Luis Miguel González, who has done a magnificent job, has continued my school, he, along with Borgan Ascanio, all those former students have continued the Violin School. Borgan is also doing an excellent job; Ulyses, all of them, all those former students have done an extraordinary job. I was very satisfied with all the concerts that took place, impressed by the progress and growth of El Sistema. It is something extraordinary. God willing, it will continue this way. Everywhere, in every town in Venezuela, there is an orchestra; how it has grown, truly the whole country, it is something effervescent, isn't it? It is truly impressive.

Do you know what I think did a lot of good? The Mérida courses that I conducted, because they attracted young people from all over Venezuela, allowing them to share experiences for fifteen days... There was once a course for teachers, and Carlos Calderón was there, he played the violin and attended my first violin courses in Mérida. He is an eminent man. He gave lectures for 15 days... it is a pity that it did not continue, it ended. It brought together a large number of young people, and not only did it raise their level, but it also provided the stimulation of seeing each other, I observed young people stimulated by seeing others who played well, all of which had an impact.

But those memories will not disappear. In other contexts, they are remembered. One knows who Leopoldo Auer was, a great teacher in St. Petersburg, a great teacher of Jascha Heifetz, of Milstein; Carl Flesch remained a great master in Berlin. George Enescu, the great master in Paris, and so on; this is passed down through generations. All those students I started with, like Francisco Salazar, whom I began teaching at the age of 10, all those young children, it is incredible.

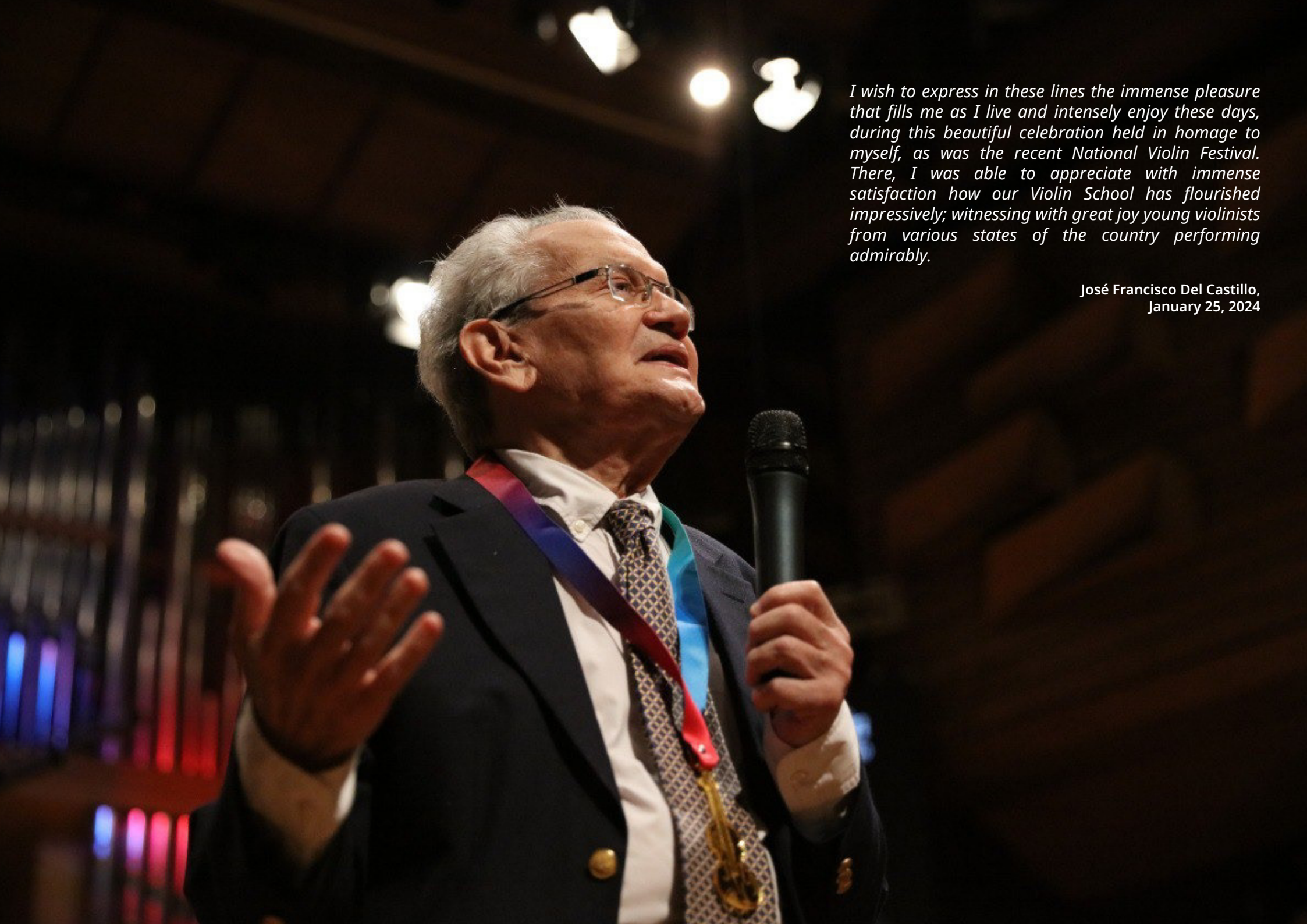
Those young people who are now in Chicago, not only Gabriela Lara and Jesús Linares, José Viera who won the Frank Preuss competition in Colombia, and she won it too, Gabriela. The twins began at the age of 9, they have not expanded, but they play beautifully...

### **3. What aspects of the festival do you think could be improved for future editions?**

I think the festival was beautiful. I really have no objections, it seemed wonderful to me, the young people chosen all through a prior examination, all were very well chosen, all played very well, the orchestras performed fabulously well, the organization, everything was beautiful, it left me with an unforgettable memory; gratitude, a memorable recollection. I don't know what else to say. What I saw, the organization, the prior examinations that took place; everything was very beautiful. When it started, there was a group of young people at the entrance; then I entered, and Borgan's students were there, I have all of this in photographs.





A photograph of José Francisco Del Castillo, an older man with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is holding a microphone in his right hand and gesturing with his left hand. He is standing on a stage with a dark background and some blurred lights. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

*I wish to express in these lines the immense pleasure that fills me as I live and intensely enjoy these days, during this beautiful celebration held in homage to myself, as was the recent National Violin Festival. There, I was able to appreciate with immense satisfaction how our Violin School has flourished impressively; witnessing with great joy young violinists from various states of the country performing admirably.*

José Francisco Del Castillo,  
January 25, 2024



# ATRIL

**NATIONAL VIOLIN FESTIVAL  
SPECIAL EDITION**

