

## More Than the Sum of Our Parts

By Helen Eaton, Chief Executive Officer, *Settlement Music School, Philadelphia, PA*

We start with the premise, "Get comfortable with the uncomfortable." Collaboration is not a simple process – it is so much easier just to insulate your organization and do everything in exactly the way you would like. But then the larger purpose that so many of us are working towards – life-changing opportunities for young people that are made possible by equitable music education for all – will never be achieved.

The [Philadelphia Music Alliance for Youth](#), or what we call "PMAY," went for that larger purpose. PMAY is a consortium of 20 music education providers in Philadelphia who came together for the first time in 2012 in an effort to work collaboratively to best serve students in the region. We are not a separate 501c3. We have kept it simple. The 20 providers range from community music schools to El Sistema programs, youth performing organizations, major performing arts venues, conservatories, professional symphony orchestras and, very importantly, the School District of Philadelphia. We approach our work with youth in different ways, but we have created a shared common purpose. We are all part of a music education ecosystem in the city of Philadelphia that works.

I'm often asked how to get started with collaboration. My answer is always the same. Start with a project. It does not have to be complicated, but you need to learn to work together. Make sure you show up even when you have obligations at your own organization. Do not depend on funding. In-kind from organizations goes a long way. People who dedicate their lives to our field are very smart and resourceful.

We have been able to accomplish a great deal with PMAY as a result of deep collaboration. What started as meetings to share best practices, and a joint festival celebrating youth engagement in music, led to a White Paper studying collective impact models around the country and laying forth ideas and strategies for developing a citywide music education system for all. Most recently, we are working together on a joint project to create shared professional development opportunities among both in-school and out-of-school time music teachers in the Philadelphia area. We are planning our first shared professional development day for January 2019 – the sessions will be developed by teachers, for teachers. We will be taking our first

steps together in sharing what we all know is a limited resource – PD funds – and working towards the common goal of supporting our music teachers.

Simultaneously, a subset of ten PMAY organizations called the PMAY Artists' Initiative started working together over two years ago through the generous support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The Artists' Initiative identifies and supports students grades 5-12 from underrepresented communities along their musical pathways, with the ultimate goal of their becoming professional classical musicians. We completed our first full year of the program with about 75 PMAY Artists, and more have joined this year.

What is so special about the Artists' Initiative is that PMAY has put forward our belief that the best way we can address the lack of diversity in the American symphony orchestra and in the wider classical music profession is to work collaboratively. We are working to change the way the Philadelphia ecosystem operates, and we are doing this through the highest level of collaboration in identifying

and developing music programs, resource sharing, and building student support systems for our PMAY Artists. Every day we challenge ourselves that through this collective work, we will change the way each organization operates, and the way we interact with one another, to create a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment that is fully supportive of these goals. We made a promise to one another never to do "business as usual," and this is no small endeavor.

On a personal note, I have found working with my colleagues in PMAY to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. I have learned so much from my friends in the field, and my own organization has benefitted tremendously as a result.

The second question that inevitably comes up, after how to get started, is how we handle being "competitors." And my answer is always the same here as well. My fellow PMAY organizations are not my competitors. I'm "in competition" with the lack of awareness that music education can be accessible and affordable for all families. It is our duty to work together across the city to make sure that this message is heard loud and clear.



## FROM THE EDITOR

*More than the sum of our parts.* We tell our students that's what an orchestra is. Violins plus clarinets, trombones plus marimbas plus cellos – all those disparate musical essences combined create something that is unimaginable when hearing each of them separately. The whole is of a different order.

Helen Eaton, in her lead article this month, writes about how the Philadelphia Music Alliance for Youth exemplifies this idea. The 20 music education providers who constitute the parts of PMAY are disparate indeed – from symphonies and conservatories to public and community music schools, and many others. What do these very different entities gain by joining together in PMAY? Helen's answers are eloquent, and they all point toward the idea of institutions uniting around a common goal.

Sistema-inspired programs across the country are beginning to see the benefit in coming together with one another around joint concerts and other projects. But I think we may still be slow to see the fundamental advantages in coming together with other kinds of music education organizations. We have a distinctive learning model, and it's a brilliant one. But we also have an ambitious vision: we are dedicated to achieving full and equitable access to music education for all the kids of our communities.

Consider the sheer magnitude of that goal. And consider how partnering with the other music education programs in an ecosystem could make that goal something actually within reach, rather than a matter of wishful thinking. By coordinating and aligning resources with other organizations, we can create more opportunities, more resources, more pathways for more children and young people. We can magnify our capacity for transformative impact.

And Sistema programs can be the ones who take the lead in forging partnerships. In most places, Sistema programs are the younger cousins in the music ed family, the newest ones serving the fewest kids. In spite of that – maybe because of that – it's good for us to take the lead. Taking the lead means reaching out, having lunch meetings, planting seeds and tending any sprouts. If not us, who? If not now, when? It is not an "extra" – it is the only way we achieve our fullest ambitions for Sistema students.

*Tricia Tunstall*

**"In the long history of human kind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed." – Charles Darwin**

## News Notes

Longy School of Music of Bard College is accepting applications for the sixth class of its accredited degree program inspired by El Sistema. [Longy's Master of Arts in Teaching \(MAT\)](#) is based at the Heart of Los Angeles campus (HOLA), one home of the Youth Orchestra Los Angeles (YOLA). The one-year program offers a Master's degree and a K-12 teaching credential, with immersion in music performance, pedagogy, and social justice; 100% of graduates are currently employed in the field. For a field that needs faculty with Sistema expertise, this is a good gateway for musicians who want to impact communities while gaining hands-on teaching skills. The MAT academic calendar runs from July to June and accepts musicians from all backgrounds, including classical, pop, world, folk, jazz, instrumental, voice, and conducting. The deadline for a reduced-price application fee (\$75) is December 1, and the general application deadline (\$100) is January 5. Learn more at <https://longy.edu/admissions/mat>.

The [El Sistema Academy](#) gets bigger every year, and the third annual session will happen at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, January 25-27. In three days, this intensive brings together a distinguished faculty from Europe and Venezuela who will take on an expanded number of topics, including different levels of orchestra (including Paper Orchestra, taught by its founder), family inclusion, eurythmics, pre-school, refugees, and a focus on the exemplary work in Liverpool and Portugal. Registration cost (including meals) is 4,500 Swedish Kroner/434 Euros/US\$501. For information: <http://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/stiftelsen-el-sistema/news/sign-up-for-academy-2019-326897> Registration is limited to 120, so sign up before Dec. 1 to be sure of a place: <https://tinyurl.com/yapkvppj>

## Resources

Take a look at the interesting learning program [Meludia](#), on the web ([www.meludia.com](http://www.meludia.com)) and on mobile (for iOS & Android), which [develops listening abilities and musical awareness in a game-like online process](#). Meludia is based on deep pedagogic

research, and is used by more than 100,000 people in 168 countries. More than 1,500 teachers, schools & conservatoires already complement their music lessons with Meludia. There is a fee to use it, but the developers are already working closely and for free with Sistema organizations in Europe. They are now looking for a few Sistema partners in the USA and Canada, to provide them with free & unlimited access to the platform in exchange for helping them determine its impact in their organization. If you are interested in exploring a partnership, please contact Bastien Sannac: [b@meludia.com](mailto:b@meludia.com).

[Creating Place: The Art of Equitable Community Building](#) is a multimedia collection of explorations, reflections, challenges, and offerings to the national dialogue around creative placemaking, created by ROOTS members – multidisciplinary artists and cultural organizers who live across (and some, beyond) the southern U.S. For a taste of what's offered, check out the ROOTS website: [www.alternateroots.org/creating-place](http://www.alternateroots.org/creating-place). In their 42 years of work on what's now called Creative Placemaking, ROOTS has remained dedicated to highlighting the more ineffable aspects of this work – the human to human connection and sense of shared humanity that art can inspire in us, and that inspires artmaking.

Sistema-inspired programs prioritize [Social-Emotional Learning \(SEL\)](#) for their students; it's part of the very identity of Sistema work. With this priority comes the challenge of assessing the development of these elusive skills. This short article in the ASCD Express – "Six Steps to Effective SEL Assessment" – provides answers to the assessment questions from a leading expert in the field. It also contains links to some of the most commonly used assessment instruments. <http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol14/num04/Six-Steps-to-Effective-SEL-Assessment.aspx>

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## The One American in SEYO

*by Dilon Bryan, Graduate Student in Horn Performance, University of Georgia*

Last August, I had the good fortune to be the only U.S. musician in the [Sistema Europe Youth Orchestra](#). SEYO generously offered me that opportunity because I was born in Birmingham, England – the site of the "SEYO 18" Festival – and was back visiting the city after living in the States for 14 years.

I was musically trained in the U.S. from the age of 11; my principal instrument is the French horn, and I also studied cello and trumpet. I earned my undergraduate degree at Columbus State University. But I never had the experience of being in a Sistema program. So playing with SEYO was an eye-opening and heart-opening experience for me.

Playing with so many people from Europe was a real treat, and I made many new friends. The most striking element of the daily sectionals and rehearsals was the great passion and love they have for this craft. In my own experience, music students in conservatory environments sometimes think they are "too cool" to express zeal. Especially for older students pursuing graduate degrees, it's easy to forget why we do what we do. And we're often afraid to care too much about the music because this puts us in a vulnerable position. However, performing from this defensive position doesn't lend itself to great communication with audiences.

For the young musicians of SEYO, in contrast, there was no holding back: they gave their all, all the time. For example, the way they played "Danzon No. 2" by Arturo Marquez was electric, every time. Sure, there were things that needed to be refined during the earlier rehearsals, but the players never forgot that "Danzon" is a fiesta. The piece opens with a beautiful clarinet solo, and our principal clarinetist found a way to bring out a new color every single time, which inspired us all to play with the same spirit.

In general, I found that the musicians were eager to learn from the orchestra conductors and sectional leaders, who shared their wisdom and artistry with huge energy and no inhibitions. It was also amazing to discover that we could all come together from so many different places, and in playing music, we could understand one another deeply despite verbal language barriers. Playing with the Sistema Europe Youth Orchestra was an unforgettable experience – just the inspiration I needed.

## **ACTION FOR THE MONTH:** Give Thanks to Teaching Artists on Giving Tuesday #ElSistemaGrateful

*Giving Tuesday is November 27 – in addition to asking our networks for financial support, let's highlight our teaching artists, and ask everyone to Give Thanks to Teaching Artists on that day. On and around Nov. 27, please ask students, faculty, Board and community to Give Thanks to your teaching artists in whatever way they like. We depend on them; let them know we appreciate them. For more suggestions look [here](#) and [here](#).*