



Sistema Toronto Upbeat

In Tune with *PLAYING TO POTENTIAL*

December 1, 2011

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A Word from David...

Thank you! If there are to be first words in this, our inaugural Sistema Toronto newsletter, let them be words of gratitude to those whose efforts have, in a very short time, helped to bring this organization into being.

One year ago exactly, I met Toronto businessman and activist Robert (Bobby) Eisenberg and he told me the passionate story how, having first heard musicians from Venezuela perform during the Glenn Gould Foundation's 2009 Celebration of Music Week, he was inspired, and driven, to create a program for the children of Toronto.

We, together with a board of committed, visionary leaders, set out on this very Mission.

I believe the music (and smiles) will now speak for themselves.

David Visentin, Executive & Artistic Director, Sistema Toronto

What They're Saying About Us

Aparita Bhandari of Toronto's CBC Radio One, and CBC-TV's Nigel Hunt are each preparing segments on *PLAYING TO POTENTIAL*. We'll be sure to give you a heads-up when they're airing them.

PLAYING TO POTENTIAL Holiday Concert

Be sure to mark Tuesday, December 20 in your calendar. That's the date of the Sistema Toronto *PLAYING TO POTENTIAL* Holiday Concert, and it starts at 5:00 p.m. at Parkdale Junior and Senior Public School. Of course, the stars of the show will be the kids, and they've been hard at work getting ready for the big day. As *PLAYING TO POTENTIAL*'s inaugural concert, this will be the first time our kids will be performing in public. Call it a world premiere!

The concert will feature both choral and instrumental works. One song in particular that the kids are especially excited about is called *African Lullaby*. It was written for Uganda's Watoto Children's Choir, whose members have all lost one or both of their parents to war or the AIDS epidemic.

This will be the first performance of the song in Canada and the children are looking forward to it because it links them to kids in other lands whose lives are so very different from their own. They are preparing a drumming pattern to *African Lullaby*, and one of our teachers, Lydia Munchinsky, will join them on solo cello.

One of our volunteers, Sarah MacIsaac, deserves special recognition for transcribing *African Lullaby* from a recording of the Watoto Children's Choir – you can [see them perform it](#) on YouTube. To bring this story full circle, Artistic Director David Visentin has given a copy of the Sarah's transcription to Dawn Stride of Victoria, BC, who actively supports Watoto Church. She composed *African Lullaby*, and brought it to David's attention, so it is entirely fitting that we return the favour by presenting her with the first full piano score.

The *PLAYING TO POTENTIAL* Holiday Concert will be a great event for our young performers to show off their talent, enthusiasm and new musical skills. It will also demonstrate all the great work being done by the program's teachers (Laurelle Froese, Greg Gallagher, Hiroko Kagawa, Lydia Munchinsky and Yvanna Mycyk), as well as reward the support that we have received from our valued parents, volunteers, and sponsors.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Worth the wait: a proud and excited musician finally gets her very own violin at the Instrument Ceremony on October 14, 2011

Spotlight on Sistema

As an international movement, [El Sistema](#) is a model for many programs around the world. In Atlanta, Ottawa native Dantes Rameau is the Co-founder and Executive Director of the [Atlanta Music Project](#), which has been attracting a lot of attention since its launch in February 2010. Dantes is an alumnus of the first class of the New England Conservatory's [Abreu Fellows Program](#), and his commitment to the kids in the program and to El Sistema, and his joy in running such a rewarding program sings out in his [blog posts](#). Dantes notes: "If you're building an El Sistema program, especially with limited resources, your key to success will be your teachers' ability to inspire their students to learn, no matter the circumstance."

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Contact Us

Sistema Toronto
67 Mowat Ave., Suite 340
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M6K 3E3
david.visentin@sistema-toronto.ca
www.sistema-toronto.ca



Bring on the Music: the lineup of instruments awaiting "adoption" by their new owners at the October 14 Instrument Ceremony. They were provided to Sistema Toronto through the generosity of Yamaha Canada.

CIBC Miracle Day

Sistema Toronto is excited and pleased to announce that the *PLAYING TO POTENTIAL* program has been selected as one of the organizations that is being supported by this year's CIBC Miracle Day.

On December 7, CIBC Wood Gundy's traders and investment advisors donated their fees and commissions to children's charities. Since its inception in 1984, Miracle Day has raised more than \$60-million for organizations across Canada. In 2010, CIBC Miracle Day delivered 660 grants to over 450 organizations in 125 communities, for everything from after-school programs and subsidized summer camp fees to crisis counselling and children's hospitals.

Now it's our turn. We are indeed fortunate to be selected as one of the organizations to be supported by CIBC Miracle Day. Our heartfelt thanks to CIBC Wood Gundy.

Upcoming Events - "The Light in Their Eyes"

Lula Lounge is the place to be on December 21 for Sistema Toronto's **Holiday Benefit Concert**. There will be performances by *PLAYING TO POTENTIAL* kids, as well as high-voltage host [Dr. Draw](#), Bassmynt, Beetleback, and the [Gadfly Dance Collective](#). There will also be live art by [Jessica Gorlicky](#) and [Natasha Kudashkina](#). Tickets can be purchased in advance for \$25 at www.holidayshow.ca and www.drdraw.ca, or at the door for \$30. A dinner menu is available, and your reservation guarantees seating for the event. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Lula Lounge is at 1585 Dundas Street West, west of Dufferin.

"There is no more important work that is being done in music now than is being done by El Sistema in Venezuela...It is so clear that the orchestra and the work that is being done in music here is not only enriching lives, but saving lives." – Sir Simon Rattle, conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic