

A Word from David...

Two words, actually – *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*.

That's Sanskrit for "the world is a family". Throw in Marshall McLuhan's notion about the global village, top it off with the oft-quoted African phrase "it takes a village to raise a child", and you've got a compelling social equation that's the heartbeat of the Sistema movement.

It's also a clarion call to committed action and social responsibility. Our world is a connected family, and if we truly value our children, then it's our duty to help each other raise them in every one of our villages.

The Sistema movement puts children at the centre of its village and it is leading the world to do the same. The light emanating from Sistema's longstanding commitment to children illuminates our world. To find the magic behind the Venezuelan's performance passion, I suggest you look for it in the eyes of our transformed children.

David Visentin, Executive & Artistic Director, Sistema Toronto

A Night to Remember

The 2011 City of Toronto [Glenn Gould Protégé Prize](#) presented by Leonard Cohen goes to... the children of Sistema Toronto!

Define Your Community: Teaching Diversity



After nine short months, we are a family. In this first year of our program we were taught and given so many things, but the greatest gift we received is the significance of family. Yet, with this beautiful reality comes added responsibility for us as administrators and teachers. The bar has most definitely been raised.

There's no question that we have achieved exciting results. Sistema Toronto has demonstrated significant benefits in the lives of its children. Kids with learning and behaviour challenges show pronounced improvement, and their parents have moving testimonies about the impact on their families. The benefits can be seen in the greater community too. All of this is good news.

A key to Sistema Toronto's success is our teachers, and this past year we have learned just how valuable they really are. Our teachers work in a specialized learning environment where they teach a group of children as a whole, while continually acknowledging and encouraging individual effort. Yet if our teachers are to continue to develop and grow as passionate leaders within the Sistema-model social-learning environment, they will require sustained investment and support.

A big challenge lies beneath the wonderful diversity of our children. It requires our teachers to meet their distinct needs while celebrating their group-centred achievements. On top of their myriad other duties, our teachers must walk the tightrope between honouring a child's uniqueness while guiding their integration into the larger group experience.

A teacher who is sensitive to cultural differences brings real value to the classroom. Kids have different ways of learning, and a good teacher recognizes the ways in which a child's heritage affects those learning styles. Things like housing, food, and dress are part of the identity of the children and their families. Being seen as truly supportive of those cultural anchors makes a teacher that much more effective.

Our teachers are being asked to forge a strong, cohesive collective of children that experiences music as a universal language, while at the same time encouraging individual expressions of artistic personality and culture. Just like any other family, Sistema Toronto is a delicate balancing act. Our success is measured not just by the excellence we achieve musically, but also by our adaptability in meeting larger societal goals.

Or as we like to say: "Define your community, and be defined by your community". Not one or the other – both. We are still learning.

On May 14, this great Canadian artist, recipient of the 2011 Glenn Gould Prize, bestowed this prestigious award on the new Sistema Toronto program.

In the 25-year history of the Glenn Gould Prize, this is the first time the Protégé Prize has been awarded to a group of individuals as young as the children in Sistema Toronto. Past Protégé Prize winners include cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras of France and double-bassist Roman Patkoló of Slovakia. And Gustavo Dudamel!

By giving the award to the Sistema Toronto children, Mr. Cohen instills hope, awakens dreams, and calls forth the potential in every child to be revealed as their futures unfold.

Our Sponsors



Contact Us

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

Celebrated In our Community



On April 19, [Teng Li](#), the brilliant principal viola of the Toronto Symphony, visited the children of Sistema Toronto. Teng played a haunting traditional Chinese erhu melody, and finished with a dance movement by J. S. Bach. Her stories of studying music as a child in a remote town in China held the children spellbound.

On May 6, the Sistema Toronto children rocked out with Randy Bachman. They joined the Canadian rock 'n' roll legend in a performance of Bachman Turner Overdrive's classic "Takin' Care of Business". The kids were among the many artists who took part in the [Children's Aid Foundation's SPARK Gala](#).



Defined by Community: Who and What Are We?

The [Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra](#) should disband. Okay, maybe not. But with all the excitement and acclaim that they generate wherever they go, Sistema program executives and artistic directors seem to spend as much time managing expectations as they do running their programs.

Of course, we all want to see the same passion and joy being spread around the globe by the SBYO shining in the faces of every child in all the programs established outside Venezuela. We can't help ourselves. We want it all and we want it *now*.

Yet we need to exercise caution. It is not difficult to sow division and polarization by emphasizing the drive to develop talent over Sistema's primary goal of building the human spirit through social development. That would be a shame. We may think we have the answers, but we must be very careful if we think we can fast-track what has taken over 35 years to develop in Venezuela.

However, we can't predict the future. Many communities may very well take the Sistema model beyond its original classical European orchestral roots. If we're to avoid forcing a particular orthodoxy on our diverse, culturally rich communities, then we must be creative and flexible enough to allow our programs to evolve.

It comes down to this: listen to your community heartbeat. Learn its rhythms. Then lead it in the growth and celebration of its uniqueness.

Mark Your Calendar

It has been a great year – but it's not over yet! Join us for our **First-Ever-Year-ender Concert** at 5:00 p.m. on June 19 at Parkdale Junior and Senior Public School at 78 Seaforth Avenue. The program will highlight the children's recent work, and we will recognize and thank the many generous supporters who have championed our first-years' baby-steps.

The day before, on June 18 at 6:45 p.m., Sistema Toronto will perform alongside Tafelmusik at the [International ANR Conference](#) on Pediatric Cancer Care at The Four Seasons Centre.

This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple. The philosophy is kindness. - The Dalai Lama