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Embracing Society, Children, and Music: Approaches to Constructing Community-Based Educational Programs

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Abstract

With the implementation of recent immigration policies that have encouraged an influx of migrants into the peninsula, South Korea is evolving into a multi-ethnic state, raising the demand for discussions of how to coexist with immigrants and build a healthy multicultural society. This study focuses on ways to nurture cultural diversity within the youth education spectrum. It examines how the experience of collaborative music-making closely parallels community building practices in terms of embracing and honoring oneself and others, arguing that the implication of collective artmaking in youth education in South Korea may help children's understanding and acceptance of multiculturalism. This study also closely investigated three methods of El Sistema, a pioneer youth orchestra program that opened the door to the possibility of pursuing orchestral education as a transformational agent for cultural improvement in society. Instead of focusing on the musical aspects of the program, it highlights the extramusical components of El Sistema's methods that contribute to social improvement. Finally, the study suggests that South Korea may apply collaborative music-making activities and the El Sistema model as baseline data to strategically plan community-based educational programs that integrate and embrace cultural diversity.

■ **Keywords** : cultural diversity, South Korea, collaborative music-making, El sistema, community-based educational programs

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South Korea has long been identified as an ethnically homogeneous nation. However, since 1982, the nation's fertility rate has consistently decreased, while the average life expectancy of its citizens has risen (Mahmoudi, 2017; Park, 2020; Yang et al., 2010; Yoo & Sobotka, 2018). This trend has caused the country to implement more open immigration policies to allow more migrant laborers and foreign spouses to enter the peninsula. Scholars suggest that as South Korea evolves into a multi-ethnic state, it is imperative that more effort be put into increasing awareness and building political and educational systems that embrace multiculturalism (Cho & Park, 2016; Jun, 2019; J. Kim, Jo, & Kim, 2017; Lie, 2015).

The following numbers support this point. From 2013 to 2021, the percentage of foreign students in South Korea increased from 0.9 to 3.0 percent (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2022). In 2020, 6.0 percent of newborns in the nation were born to multicultural families (Statistics Korea, 2020). Compared to the previous year, in 2021, the multiethnic youth population aged 9 through 24 grew by 8.6 percent, from 147,378 to 160,058 students (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family & National Youth Policy Institute, 2022). This phenomenon is especially significant in that while the multiethnic youth population in South Korea has been growing, the Korean youth population constantly decreased (Mahmoudi, 2017; Yun et al., 2022).

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and the National Youth Policy Institute in South Korea reasonably postulated the youth population in 2060 to be 4,545,000 in number, which takes up only 10.7 percent of the entire population and is 9,664,000 lower than in the year 1982 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family & National Youth Policy Institute, 2022). Meanwhile, elementary school-aged multiethnic children, the youngest age group in the survey, make up about 70 percent of the entire multiethnic youth population (Ministry of Education, 2022), a trend that may well suggest that the percentage of the multiethnic youth population will continue to grow in Korean society. Therefore, it is critical that youth educators and policymakers in South Korea seek to actively

take measures to help the youth population adjust to this shift in demography, for the experience in childhood as multiethnic youth or as natives of Korea will have a deep impact on how each group shapes and envisions the identity of themselves and their community throughout their lives.

Scholars suggest that collaborative music-making for youth could help them shape a positive outlook on their community and society at large (Bartleet, 2012; Cohen, Silber, Sangiorgio, & Iadeluca, 2018; Dillon, 2007; Dyck, 2014; Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2008; Higgins, 2012; Higgins & Willingham, 2017; Majno, 2012; McPhee, 2002; Pruitt, 2011; Rentfrow, 2012; Schmidt, 2005; Veblen, 2007). This paper examines how the intricate process of collective music-making is intrinsically a very social process and how it could be an excellent medium to help people interact and sympathize with each other and express themselves. One of the pioneers of utilizing collaborative artmaking as a social action, El Sistema, will be closely investigated to offer some important insights into creative ways to achieve social empowerment in children.

The Power of Collective Music-Making

Community building involves realizing the place for oneself and those around oneself in the context of society (Hess, 2019; Pruitt, 2013). This requires the consistent practice of recognizing and honoring each other's differences and/or similarities. Such a process is similar to the routine many musicians go through in collective music-making, for performing in an ensemble often requires one to put others' thoughts and conditions before one's own musical preferences or intentions (Cohen et al., 2018). This tendency is widely observed in musicians, primarily in the following two ways, during their concert preparation: 1) understanding the composer's intent and 2) accommodating fellow performers.

Understanding the Composer's Intent

Prior to playing notes on the staff, musicians are trained first and foremost to study who the composer is (Reid, 2002; Rink, 2002). This is because understanding their background provides the necessary knowledge to accurately discern the meaning of the work they are to perform. Hence, musicians research the era the composer lived in, the cultural, political, and societal environment of the time, and any relevant story behind the work (Davies, 1994; Ferrara, 1991). They then proceed to examine the structure of the music (Berry, 1989; Molino, Underwood, & Ayre, 1990). They ensure that the style and particular components in the music, as well as the language displayed on the staff, correlate with the composer's background. This process helps deliver the most logical and reasonable interpretation of music—on the basis of accurately portraying the composer's intent—to the audience.

Accommodating Fellow Performers

Once they come into the rehearsal room with a piece of music with their carefully thought-out interpretation, musicians try to carefully understand who they are performing with (Atik, 1994; Badino, D'Ausilio, Glowinski, Camurri, & Fadiga, 2014; Bastien & Hostager, 1992; Benade, 1990; Bishop & Goebel, 2018; Gordy, 1999; Littleton & Mercer, 2012; Mishra & Fast, 2015; Sawyer, 2008; Seddon, 2005). It is true the recipe for the music has already been provided by the composer, but the cooking, or execution, needs to be done by its performers. In other words, it is up to musicians to make detailed decisions about the dynamics, timing of breaths, rhythm, and other aspects of the piece. It is a collective effort of performers to make decisions most suitable for them and for the artwork.

Once all the musical details are carefully adjusted and in tune with each other, the performers go through a similar process again as they adapt to the acoustics of the hall on the day of the performance (Beranek, 2008; Campbell & Greated, 1994; Gade, 1989; Meyer, 2009; Ueno, Kato,

& Kawai, 2010). For example, some halls do not carry high-pitched sounds very well, which would mean lower-pitched instruments such as the violincello should play a little softer to accommodate the instruments in higher registers. Some halls might have just the opposite acoustic condition, in which case the cello players would have to play out more, the opposite of what they had done before, to maintain balance with the higher-pitched instruments. The fine-tuning never stops until they finish the last note of the concert. A musician's thought process in this stage is as follows:

Since I am now sharing a phrase with the violin part, whose sound is one of the softest in the whole orchestra family, why don't I adjust my volume so the violins feel more valued when they play the main theme? I shall make eye contact with the principal violinist, too, to let her feel that I am aware of the violin section and try not to overshadow their sound.

In such a process, *forte*, a musical term for "loud," used in a section of a piece, might just not have the same volume as *forte* in another place in the same piece, because each instrument part should be constantly adjusting its character according to the condition of the other instruments.

This relational nature of music-making, which encourages musicians to discover and honor the musical value of other instruments, is a process very similar to a community building practice (Campbell, 2010; Mosley et al., 2021; Rentfrow, 2012). It requires musicians to make artistic sacrifices for each other, but they do this with gladness because, at the end of the day, it is a great joy for them to bring to the audience a beautiful, unified picture of the artwork (Graves, 2019; Habe, 2019; Hewitt & Allan, 2013; Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2007). Such a process can directly correlate with community building (Huss, Kaufman, Avgar, & Shuker, 2016; Ruud, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1994). Similar to music making, it requires practice for people to inquire into each other's lived experiences. Thus, people may realize how to contextualize society based on understanding and sympathy (HaCohen, 2001; Turino, 2008; Yamamoto & Miyake, 1999).

This encourages them to come to agreements with each other in most cases, look for alternative decisions when faced with difficulties, and even make sacrifices for each other in cases of deadlock. They do this with joy because they are now community builders who appreciate the mosaic nature of society. This leads us to the next part of our discussion on collective music-making: the social aspect of intrapersonal communication.

Discovering and Honoring One's Own Thoughts and Emotions

While engaging with the composer's intent and fellow musician's musical values within the music-making experience, the artist may also discover one's own unique reaction to a certain musical stimulus (Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1996), that is, feeling the urge to express a musical component in a particular style in his/her solo line. The musician's thought process in this case is as follows:

Why do I prefer an emphasis on this note over the other? Is it because I see the reminiscence of J. S. Bach in this contemporary piece? Was the composer perhaps influenced by Bach in any way? Then, what if I try interpreting the stroke of the upcoming notes in the Baroque style?

Such a process is quite immensely *social* in that it encourages one to engage in intrapersonal communication within oneself (Pavlicevic, 2019; Pellitteri, Stern, & Nakhutina, 1999; Picado Pereira, & Castilho, 2023; Rentfrow, 2012; Resnicow, Salovey, & Repp, 2004; Schäfer, 2013). Intrapersonal development is one of the core elements of social-emotional education, for it helps one become aware of and honor one's own value system and emotions, and ultimately become a responsible decision maker who can articulate his/her opinion in society (Paolini, 2021; Weissberg, 2015).

This musical experience is also empowering because through it one learns to listen to his/her inner self and gain the confidence to process

his/her thoughts and emotions. In addition, through music-making, the artist's ideas and/or opinions are instantly observed by the audience or other artist(s) present, allowing access to their perspective about their musical story. This seemingly personal activity is indeed a social scope of collaborative artmaking, which is similar to the practice of community building.

In sum, by patiently listening to, trying to discover, and analyzing the composer's and other artists' intentions and tendencies, musicians learn to develop sensitivity and appreciation toward different perspectives or points of view regarding the artwork they perform. Collaborative artmaking also allows one to express and honor one's own preferences or thoughts (Brower, 2000), which eventually helps the individual find his/her unique identity in the musical world. By exposing individuals to such an artmaking practice, their musical abilities would transfer to their social life because music is a kind of language devised by human beings to express their mind (Dissanayake, 2001; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). It embodies our culture, and through it, we can learn to find a deeper meaning of our identity and our society (Basso, 1981; Blacking & Nettl, 1995; Cross, 2009) and solve certain topics or dilemmas that may often be too hard to even discuss with words (Hess, 2019).

El Sistema: Providing an Ideal Community Experience for Children

El Sistema is a pioneering program that utilized music to strengthen society. It offers free orchestral education to children, mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds, and seeks to develop not only their musical proficiency but also the skills they need to live as healthy citizens (Alemán, 2017; Creech, González-Moreno, Lorenzino, & Waitman, 2014; Hsu, 2017; Lesniak, 2012; Nemoy & Gerry, 2015; Osborne, McPherson, Faulkner, Davidson, & Barrett, 2016; Simpson Steele, 2017). Some of its core values include: 1) Every human being has the right to contribute to society; 2) every human being should have access to the beauty of

art; and 3) every child can experience art deeply, which can have an impact on the choices they make in their lives (Witkowski, 2016). The program focuses on Western art music, but each center of El Sistema is entitled to incorporate other genres of music, such as folk songs and indigenous music, to suit the needs of the participants in the program (El Sistema Venezuela, 2014).

El Sistema has opened the public's eyes to the possibility of pursuing music as not only an aesthetic means but also a powerful transformational agent that brings cultural unity and improvement in society. As Kuntz said, "...activism requires an imaginative or creative element—the ability to understand ourselves as other than we are... [and through] activism, one might seek to generate new meanings, new ways of considering, and engaging within the world" (Kuntz, 2015. p. 28). El Sistema thus allows youth to look beyond the horizon, to boldly define their world in new ways, and to actively find new meanings of their lives and their community in some of the most devastating times in Venezuelan society (Eatock, 2010; Uy, 2012).

One of the core objectives of El Sistema, which literally translates as "The System" in English, is maintaining the intensity of learning. The frequency of classes speaks for itself. Their system invites children to meet four hours a day for seven days a week (Majno, 2012), which is a significantly larger time commitment than in most youth orchestras around the globe. The result of this intense course plan is not only intensive training in music but also strong social bonding within the group, resembling an extended family.

This social bond is further strengthened when they must overcome arduous musical assignments. El Sistema is known to program some of the hardest orchestral repertoires to encourage young learners to push themselves, instilling in them the belief in hard work, the ability to excel in life, and the tenacity to get themselves out of poverty, out of crime, and out of negligence. Together, these young members of an orchestra strive to go through some of the hardest technical hardships and emotional challenges.

Aristides Rivas, an El Sistema graduate who is currently on cello faculty at California Baptist University in the US recalled: “I was put in an orchestra when I had barely learned to play a few notes on the cello. I had no idea what to do, but I did what I could do. That was the start of my lifelong career as a cellist” (A. Rivas, personal communication, August 15, 2013). Rivas still enjoy life-long friendships with some of the fellow orchestra members of El Sistema who survived the orchestra program together. Assigning young learners to play orchestra in the initial stage of instrument training is another component of El Sistema that helps them become intensive social learners.

Intense learning, coupled with strong social bonding leading to a great sense of accomplishment, was exactly what its founder Jose Abreu intended in the El Sistema program and what the Venezuelan youth needed. The program was fit to promote self-empowerment in children who had been defenselessly exposed to juvenile crime and extreme social injustice (Suh, 2020). The goal of the program was therefore not just to foster skilled musicians but also to nurture a better lifestyle, for El Sistema’s approach to orchestra did not merely symbolize an assembly of children that wanted to pursue music professionally. Rather, it provided a safe “society” for the youth to collectively explore and interpret the meaning of artmaking in their lives. It involved a learning process that contributed to their achieving a positive vision for their lives and the world in which they lived.

As is evident in the case of El Sistema, collective artmaking is a powerful medium that drives people to seek important values and passions in their lives. This encourages us to boldly communicate “our” story through music, which is essentially a way to tell the story of humankind in an aesthetically pleasing form (Goodall, 2013; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018; Purdon, 2002), whereby we humans learn to be aware of, relate to, and gain insight on subject matters that may be too sensitive to discuss in the form of words (Gray, 2001).

The paper will now examine how the following three pedagogical methods of El Sistema helped empower youth through music. It focuses

on the investigation of El Sistema Venezuela and Sistema New Brunswick (NB) in Canada, one of the representative centers of El Sistema-inspired programs.

Peer-Teaching Method

An exemplary teaching method that is widely utilized in El Sistema Venezuela and El Sistema-inspired centers around the globe is peer teaching (Bestvater, 2014). This aspect sets apart the program from other typical orchestral training programs geared toward raising musical professionals. In peer teaching, a peer is supposed to assist another peer in need of help to improve in a certain area or topic, using the knowledge and knowhow he/she has (Ahn, 2020). It allows the peer that receives the instruction to advance to a higher level of understanding of the topic, and the close personal interaction with the teacher-peer may help the student-peer realize that he might have more to offer to the corresponding party than expected. The method is a tool to exchange knowledge, but at the same time, it is a fascinating way for children to interact with and learn about one another (Booth, 2009).

One of the reasons why peer-teaching is so valuable is that it helps not only the “receiver” of knowledge (the student-peer) but the teacher-peer. In particular, it allows the latter to practice delivering their own perspectives in an articulate manner. In this process, he/she may discover that his/her teaching may be slightly different from how it was instructed in class (Ahn, 2020). It would defeat the purpose of peer teaching and would be quite unnatural if the teacher-peer delivered exactly the same information that their teacher provided in class to the student-peer. It gives the teacher-peer a chance to organize their thoughts or opinions in a constructive manner.

During this process, the teacher-peer may also realize some points that have not occurred to him/her before (Delgado, 2014). The thinking process in the teacher-peer would be as follows:

It is interesting that I did not think of that before. I did not

realize that I felt this way about the topic. It is wonderful to discover that my peer thinks so differently about this concept. For example, his experience could be a very appealing story to imagine when I play the Mozart piece in orchestra next time: That story helped me relate to not only my peer but to Mozart in his lonely days as a genius.

In sum, peer teaching may be an excellent way to give the teacher-child a chance to gain a totally different perspective on a topic, a point of view that he/she had never been aware of before talking about it with the student-peer. For instance, if the student-peer has no background in math education, it would be nearly impossible for him/her to understand a certain rhythmic concept through a mathematical calculation of beats. The teacher-peer then needs to find alternative ways to explain this rhythmic concept, such as developing a more intuitive way to sense the duration of beats. This way, peer teaching may cultivate a more thorough understanding of the topic in discussion, and, by extension, it alludes to an important community building aspect that may widen the palette of understanding for the lived lives of co-residents in our society.

Sistema New Brunswick (NB) in Canada, one of the representative centers of El Sistema-inspired programs, motivates all young members of the orchestra, primarily elementary school-aged children, to play a vital role in peer teaching. They provide a chart for both peer teachers and peer learners to sign up voluntarily whenever they wish to participate (McFarlane & Bestvater, 2014). The chart has two main sections: 1) a sign-up section for members who have good ideas to offer, and 2) another section for those who seek help.

According to McFarlane (2014), director of the St. John Center in Sistema NB, the process of signing up is interesting. A conventional way to proceed in any typical volunteer work would be to first collect all the names of people who need help and then assign volunteers or allow teacher-peers to provide help. However, Sistema NB encourages

both parties to sign up at any course of the semester, so there are some students that are “waiting” to share their ideas and insights with their peers.

Such a sign-up activity is a subtle but clever way to allow room for anyone who wishes to help the community to step up. It is also a way of telling the children that it is just as natural for anyone to offer help as to receive help: They both are going to benefit from the experience and are equally important parts of society (Novakowski, 2012).

It is also important to note here that the chart contains a number of non-musical as well as musical components. Non-musical components include topics like “inner enthusiasm,” “fun,” and “class routine,” so children that are not musically advanced could offer to help the orchestra community. It shows the emphasis Sistema NB places on the social engagement of children. Music is used to encourage active engagement in society.

To conclude the examination on peer teaching, it is worth introducing a famous episode regarding Gustavo Dudamel, one of the well-known beneficiaries of El Sistema and a renowned conductor currently serving as the Music & Artistic Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. As his normal daily routine in an El Sistema classroom in Venezuela, young Dudamel, along with his fellow classmates, was waiting for the instructor to arrive that day. Rather than just sitting around until the teacher arrived, Dudamel, a violin student at the time, decided to suddenly come up with the podium and conduct the ensemble. Who would have known back then that this spontaneous act would lead him to become one of the most celebrated conductors today?

This pivotal point in Dudamel’s life would hardly be a coincident considering the amount of peer teaching he would have been exposed to in El Sistema. One may postulate that the willingness to lead his fellow ensemble members was motivated by his firm belief that such was a welcomed behavior in his orchestral society and that the practice of helping and receiving help from peers had been exercised many times.

Look Who's Doing the Right Thing

Look Who's Doing the Right Thing is an activity devised by Sistema New Brunswick (NB), Canada, to encourage a collaborative effort to make their orchestra and their society a caring place (Bestvater, 2014). In the center's main hallway, there is an area open to all with a small basket and tiny sheets of paper, which one could fill out to nominate a person who did a "right" thing, such as sharing snacks, helping someone move a heavy instrument, and holding a door for a friend moving a chair. At the end of the week, teachers would open the basket, go through the nominees, and through discussion choose the recipient of the "Look Who's Doing the Right Thing Award."

The recipients of the award would have their pictures and names displayed in a designated area in the hallway, called the Hall of Fame. In the awards ceremony, each recipient would be given and allowed to wear a necklace for a week, which is hand-crafted with beautiful color papers by the teachers of the center. They would also receive a pencil that says, "Look Who's Doing the Right Thing," which they will use every day in the orchestra to take notes. These are only some of the ways for them to be recognized and congratulated by their peers. They give a fulfilling emotion not only to the recipients of the award but also to those who nominated the awardee. It also lets other members of the orchestra learn to care for their community members, helping them develop a positive outlook on the society they are part of.

Such an activity was a product of teachers' extensive research on the needs of orchestra members, who lived in disadvantaged towns and spent much of their time at home without any caretakers. The educators of the centers worked in close collaboration with the headmasters of local schools to gain such insights into the students prior to their entrance to the program (Serna, 2014). They also made it their priority to accept students with greater needs in terms of emotional and/or social conditions (MacLeod, 2014). They took great pride in their work as they embraced and strengthened those children struggling in society.

Paper Orchestra

Another example of El Sistema's teaching method designed to fit the needs of the community is the Paper Orchestra curriculum (Ahn, 2016). As the name suggests, it is an orchestra composed mostly of paper instruments. Although they are made of paper, the design and size of the instruments, as well as their component parts, are proportioned identically to real instruments (McFarlane, 2014).

The origin of these instruments is intriguing. At the start of a new semester, one of the El Sistema centers in Venezuela, due to financial problems, did not have any instruments ready for the new members of the orchestra (Booth, 2011). After a prolonged discussion, the center's teachers decided to make instruments out of paper. The new students were offered basic instrument training with paper instruments until the real instruments arrived.

However, as heart-warming as the story is, this hardly the reason why the Paper Orchestra curriculum is so widely known in the El Sistema community today. Through their initial encounter with the Paper Orchestra method, educators of the program diagnosed that there were unexpected benefits of using paper instruments, some of which exceeded those attained when using real instruments. The key advantages of the Paper Orchestra curriculum in El Sistema training are as follows.

To Learn Discipline

Discipline is one of the main components of orchestral training for youth (Matesky & Matesky, 1960; Morrison, 1994). For example, sitting in one particular direction and maintaining a straight back for a prolonged period of time, focusing the eyes on the conductor while performing, and always maintaining an appropriate posture for performing are all components of discipline training in orchestras (Lee, 2017), for which students do not necessarily need real instruments. Most of the teachers of the Paper Orchestra curriculum reported that they preferred using paper instruments during the first phase of teaching self-discipline because they

are risk-free even for students who lack discipline. Real instruments are much easier to damage and much more expensive to repair if any accidents occur along the way (McFarlane, 2014).

To Learn about Stage Manners

Using paper instruments, teachers could effectively teach all the necessary stage manners right from the beginning of training, such as how to enter and leave the stage, the process of and manners for tuning their instruments, and how to welcome the conductor and concertmaster to the stage. It is only apt to do so since the El Sistema program emphasizes that beginner musicians participate in orchestra rehearsals almost immediately from the start of instrument training.

To Build Solid Instrument Techniques

Building solid basic techniques is important for any discipline, but is often especially hard to achieve for instrument learners at young ages because: 1) it often involves repetition of the same motion, which can easily cause boredom and fatigue, and 2) the sound that the instrument makes can easily shift their attention away from the strict choreography of building techniques (McFarlane, 2014; Serna, 2014). The Paper Orchestra curriculum is an ideal teaching method in these respects because here, teachers play tunes (they make sound), while the members of the orchestra simultaneously move the appropriate parts of their body to pretend to play the tunes like the teacher does (they do not make any sound).

Many El Sistema educators even alter small components of their paper instruments and/or devise a method that slightly deviates from traditional instrument training so that learners can focus solely on the necessary movement of the arm, tongue, etc. to build solid techniques. For instance, instead of making the whole instrument with paper, a teacher would insert the mouthpiece of an actual instrument on top of the paper instrument so that the young members of the clarinet section could prac-

tice finding the appropriate articulation for what is called “tonguing,” the most basic technique on wind instruments: making just a “tu, tu” sound on the instrument (S. Lee, personal communication, September 17, 2022). Some violin teachers would teach their students to make their bow—which is a stick—lean on the back of the bridge so that the bow moves parallel to it. Bowing, which means drawing the bow on the string parallel to the bridge, is the most essential technique in any string instrument training, and a paper violin helps accomplish this precisely. Such training is physically impossible on a real violin because the tension of the strings blocks the entryway to the side of the bridge (Figure 1).

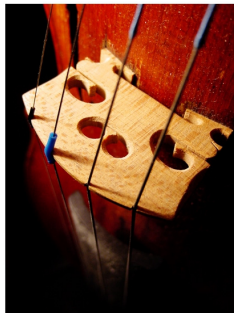


Figure 1. image of bridge

To Gain Basic Musical Understanding

Another important element of the Paper Orchestra curriculum is that it allows children to engage easily in the “sing and play” activity. Singing while playing the instrument is hard to do on any real instrument, but it is the ultimate goal of instrumentalists to “sing” every note on their instruments, as singing is considered the most natural and original form of human expression (Filippi, 2017; Scheiner & Fischer, 2011; Scherer, Johnstone, & Klasmeyer, 2003; Titze, 1991). String players in Paper Orchestras often sing solfege syllables (e.g., do, re, mi) or lyrics that describe their movements in rhythm (McFarlane, 2014). This practice,

which enables them to get naturally acquainted with solfege syllables and musical gestures, is specifically important in El Sistema education because many beginner orchestra players often join the program with barely any prior musical or instrumental training.

To Develop a Positive Representation of Sound

Listening to and watching the teachers constantly perform with them as they simultaneously engage in concentrated repetitive muscle movements on paper instruments helps the young members of Paper Orchestras develop an ideal image of “good sound” that is directly correlated to their physical movements (McFarlane, 2014). In this stage of learning, this experience could be more meaningful than going to a fancy concert hall to observe a symphony because the very act of simultaneously simulating the teacher’s motion in the classroom creates an intimate relationship with sound and motivates the learner to follow the model sonically and physically.

This process closely resembles the stage before babies learn to talk. Babies need a good role model that talks to them and walks them through everyday expressions (Gordon, 1997; Valerio, 1998). A world-renowned soprano performing for them would be advantageous to another degree.

To Gain Appreciation for Real Instruments

Another charming feature of paper instruments is that children can personalize the design of their instruments to some degree (Ahn, 2016; Lee, 2017; McFarlane, 2014). Although they cannot alter the shape and size of the instruments, they can paint their surface with any color they wish, draw pictures on them, or add accessories such as stickers in any way they want. This is a friendly and effective way to help them gain a sense of ownership of their instruments. Most of the children who join El Sistema come from culturally disadvantaged communities, and many of them, without prior exposure to music, have not learned how to appre-

ciate and respect musical instruments (Bestvater, 2014; Serna, 2014). A one-of-a-kind, personalized instrument, which signifies their own persona, makes them appreciate and deeply care for the instrument. This attitude toward the paper instruments would continue as they receive the real instruments after the basic training on the paper instruments is over.

Many centers of El Sistema prepare a very well-thought out, elaborate Paper Orchestra graduation ceremony prior to offering their young orchestra members real instruments (Serna, 2014). It is not only a chance to celebrate their achievement on paper instruments, but also an opportunity to welcome them to a new chapter of learning real instruments. The educators of El Sistema place great emphasis on this ceremony because they would like the children to feel they have earned real instruments (A. Rivas, personal communication, August 17, 2013). Although El Sistema provides free education for all, they try to encourage members to feel that the education they are receiving is a reward to be received with much appreciation and excitement. Each member's name is called out one by one by the director of the orchestra, as if getting a prestigious award, and they each enter the stage to "meet" their own real instrument for the first time (E. Chae, personal communication, August 17, 2013).

To conclude, the Paper Orchestra curriculum evolved from a mere substitute for real instruments to one of the signature methods of El Sistema because educators discovered its value in raising the program's objective to an entirely new level: to empower children (McFarlane, 2014). It is something they would never have discovered had they postponed the start of the semester because of the shortage of instruments. The incredible flexibility, dedication, and community-based mind developed this unique experience for young learners.

Implications for a South Korean Educational Model

As Claudio Abbado, a renowned conductor and avid promoter of El Sistema-inspired education, puts it, "[L]istening is an indispensable element of civil life... [and] there is not only an aesthetic value in making

music: its intrinsic beauty is the source of an intense ethical value” (Radaelli, 2012, as cited in Majno, 2012, p. 62). The examination of collaborative music-making process and the El Sistema methods shows that this “intrinsic beauty” of music can have a profound impact on how children build their lives and their community at change when the musical activities are people-based and rigorously tailored to meet their current needs and conditions.

Through the act of pursuing collaborative music-making, which involves interpreting, seeking the meaning of music, and helping one another to achieve a common musical goal, children ultimately gain a lens to see the value of their society (Gregory, 1997): Music acts as a transformational tool that takes us on a journey to honor our stories together. There is no set form of an ideal society that is perfect for everyone, but it is the very act of reaching out to communities of people that can make a difference.

Important to note here is that the initial purpose of launching an orchestra for Jose Antonio Abreu, the founder of El Sistema, was not necessarily to build an orchestra with social action per se. At first, he just wanted to establish an all-Venezuelan orchestra with its native people as orchestra members because at the time, the orchestras in the country all consisted of European musicians (Suh, 2020). However, Abreu soon saw the needs of the children in his country and decided to shape his orchestra to serve as an agent for social development in the youth.

Orchestra of Dreams

The El Sistema model has migrated to many countries worldwide since it was first established in Venezuela in 1975. Also known as El Sistema Korea, the Orchestra of Dreams, a youth orchestra program supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, was launched in Korea in 2010. It started with just 8 pilot centers and has now expanded to 52 centers in different regions of the country, with one of their main objectives being all-inclusive free education for anyone in need (Ministry

of Culture, Sports, and Tourism & Korea Arts and Culture Education Service, 2023). It has garnered much positive attention from various other government agencies and private institutions in the country that have followed them to commit to all-inclusive youth orchestra education through art to pursue the social empowerment of children.

Of the many noteworthy outcomes of the Orchestra of Dreams, its foremost achievement has been its sustainability. Since it is a government-directed program, which is rare among El Sistema and El Sistema-inspired centers around the world (Booth & Tunstall, 2014), it has been able to consistently provide quality orchestral education for more than a decade. Because there is a central body, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, that oversees certain forms of evaluation and consultation for almost all El Sistema centers in the nation, has been able to provide more or less unified expectations and standards for the education they provide.

Such a quality control process is definitely helpful and encourages educators and administrators involved in the orchestra to maintain the objectives of the program, which would eventually help make the educational system more sustainable and government fund-worthy. However, if educational decisions in the program are made at the initiatives of the government and not by educators or affiliates of the program themselves, it could have a detrimental effect on the quality of education children receive. In such a program, it is critically important that decisions regarding the curriculum of an orchestra be made based on the unique needs of each of the communities it serves.

South Korea does not have a long history of using music or collaborative art practice as a transformational device for social change, but by taking some cues from El Sistema Venezuela or other El Sistema-inspired centers, the Orchestra of Dreams may act as a kind of think tank organization in S. Korea to develop culturally accommodating educational strategies for the multicultural youth population in the nation. Some of the crucial questions it, or any other El Sistema-like organization, may consider are:

**The first five are written for Orchestra of Dreams but could be applied to any other collaborative music-making program settings if needed.*

- What was the initial purpose of El Sistema Korea?
- How well has the purpose been observed?
- Have the objectives been delivered effectively?
- Has there been consistency in carrying out the objectives?
- Does the government guidance limit or help the orchestra?
- How can we use our achievements and knowledge to contribute to a more comprehensive music curriculum?
- How does our program affect the children and adults involved?
- Have any societal values been evaluated?
- Have we offered children the chance to explore personal expression and creativity?
- Are we using children's culture to make educational choices?
- Are we being sensitive enough to children's culture?
- How does children's culture influence their orchestral experience?

Just as Abreu emphasized that El Sistema-inspired orchestras must always adjust their curriculum to fit the needs of the community (Majno, 2012), South Korean educators may apply the El Sistema model as baseline data to strategically plan community-based educational programs that integrate and embrace cultural diversity.

Art exists so that we humans can express and understand ourselves at times to a degree beyond any words can fathom (Hess, 2019). As Custodero (2008) stated, "attention to the local, once again, is necessary to adequately implement any change" (p. 5), and developing people-based, community-based, and children-based artmaking programs would act as a channel for both multiethnic and native Korean children in S. Korea to deeply share their lived experiences. Through this process, they will learn to find a meaningful intersection where they can together celebrate the richness of multiculturalism in the country (Dissanayake, 2000).

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