

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

Travelling Fellowship Report

Innovative Music Education Projects

USA and Venezuela

January 12th - February 4th 2009

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INDEX

Introduction	3
Fellowship Itinerary	5
Part 1: USA	
Jerome Callet and SIMA Trumpet	6
Herbert T Smith and Eastman School of Music	7
Part 2: Venezuela and El Sistema	
Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu	10
History of Music in Venezuela	12
Philosophy of El Sistema	13
Structure of El Sistema	15
Methodology	18
Conclusion	20
Appendix I:	
Methodology Materials	
Appendix II:	
Graphs and Statistics	
Appendix III:	
Additional Photographs	

Introduction

On Sunday 19th August 2007, the Simon Bolivar National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela raised the roof at the BBC Proms. As I watched this world class performance on my television at home, I was uplifted and astounded. The atmosphere at the Royal Albert Hall was electric and, following many reviews in the national press, it felt as if Classical Music in Great Britain was experiencing a revival. In this instance I felt a calling to travel to Venezuela, to learn about their music education system known as El Sistema and to return home with a depth of knowledge of how Venezuela has uplifted literally thousands of lives through music.

A year before I had the good fortune to be a student under two eminent musicians at the Canford Summer School of Music. Tim Reynish and Phillip Scott are Churchill Fellows and their research in to music education and symphonic band repertoire have made an enormous contribution to the music profession in Britain. Phillip Scott's encouragement to develop my ideas through the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust was held firmly in my mind for over a year. The BBC Prom concert in 2007 became an affirmation that symphonic music is for everybody and pointed me firmly in the direction of the most successful music education system in the world today.

I grew up in a musical family. My father is a professional french horn player and my mother is a violinist. Both of my parents grew up in environments where music was an essential part of everyday life. Dad was born in army barracks as his father was in the Tank Regiment band. Mum's family came from the Gorbals in Glasgow where singing and fiddle playing captured a vibrant spirit. From a young age I have always understood music to be at the heart of community life and have always respected the power music has. After all, music is an emotional language and through changing peoples feelings it has an effect on their behaviour.

In our western culture financial and materialistic success has become the motivation for human development. It is in this culture that music has become a luxury rather than a necessity - deemed only for those talented enough or lucky enough to afford individual lessons. In many cases music lessons serve as an opportunity to pass an exam in the hope of gaining extra UCAS points to help towards University entry. Although this has some merit the spirit of music is suffocated and it becomes relegated to being less important.

The first phase of my Fellowship was spent in the USA. I spent a day with Jerome Callet in New York before shadowing trumpet player Herbert T Smith at the Eastman School of Music. This provided me with an opportunity to have a music institution to compare to Venezuela and to our UK system and the week was hugely rewarding in terms of learning about brass teaching as well as observing the various education schemes employed by the Eastman School and Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.

The longer term aim of this report, however, is to explain what El Sistema is, why it has been so successful and how we can emulate one of the greatest phenomena in the world today. With a deep rooted historical background, sound philosophy and a secure foundation supported by firm methodology, there is absolutely no reason why El Sistema can not be applied to Great Britain or indeed any where in the world.

El Sistema was started by Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu in 1975. It's official title is The State Foundation for the National System of Youth and Children's Orchestras - FESNOJIV. This system has created a

generational change saving children from poor neighbourhoods in Venezuela. Around 350 thousand pupils currently attend its music schools for free, there are 125 youth orchestras, 30 professional orchestras and a growing list of acclaimed soloists and world class performers including conductor Gustavo Dudamel. However, the real success of El Sistema lies in the thousands of teachers, plumbers, doctors, and lawyers who have all come through the system and have become good citizens who now take a pride in what they can offer society and future generations.

Joining the system involves daily routine practice in groups and ensembles, and through learning a secure technique on their instruments, pupils develop the facility to be able to play any style of music in any size ensemble. When rhythm, pitch and instrumental technique are perfected a change occurs in the human brain and in the human spirit. Chaos is replaced by an assured certainty and the result is that young people are given a sense of unity and hope. In fact, the greek word for harmony is “harmonia” which means “fitting together” and perhaps it is in this translation that we can begin to understand the connection between musical, intellectual and social compatibility. In Venezuela spirit that music invokes filters through to parents and to the wider community and has a transforming effect on thousands of lives. In short, the children are taught the skills to become talented musicians and it is in the symphony orchestra that children realise that all people are equal and regardless of differences they can work together.

Maestro Abreu’s vision in 1975 of a social transformation through music has grown to bear fruit around the world today. Scotland is leading the way in the UK with Sistema Scotland, a charity lead by the visionary and inspirational Dr Richard Holloway. Dr Holloway formed the Big Noise project on the Raploch Estate in Stirling and is making outstanding progress. In England, Julian Lloyd Webber, internationally acclaimed cellist, has passionately fought for funding to start three projects in estates in Liverpool, London and Norwich called In Harmony which now offer young people the opportunity to learn classical music for free.

During my Travel Fellowship I met many people who looked after me and ensured my safety. At times the journey was exciting and at other times challenging. Venezuela is on the drug trafficking route from Columbia and the Barrios, man made shanty towns, are sprawling dangerous areas. I came close to gunfights between rival gangs on two occasions, a harsh reminder of the difficult and often tragic circumstances that young people find themselves having to grow up in. But perhaps the most poignant aspect of my journey was being with people who, although poor, showed me a richness and generosity I had never known before. My Fellowship was far more life changing than I ever could have imagined and I am reminded of it every day as I see my experience now benefit others.

Itinerary

13th Jan 2009

Jerome Callet - Staten Island, New York USA
Trumpet Teacher and Trumpet Craftsman

Aim: To study brass playing methodology

14th - 17th Jan

Herbert T Smith - Eastman School of Music, NY
3rd Trumpet Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra
Studio Artiste, Classical and Jazz Soloist
Former student of Jerome Callet
Professor at Eastman School of Music, NY

Aim: To advance brass playing techniques and to observe new methods and systems of teaching.

20th Jan - 7th Feb

Conservatorio De Musica Simon Bolivar - Caracas

Regular visits to:

La Rinconada Music School in Caracas

Montelban Music School in Caracas

Maracaibo Music School in Maracaibo

University of Caracas

Social Action Centre for Music in Caracas

Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra

National Trumpet Academy of Venezuela

Orquesta Sinfonica Municipal de Caracas

Jose Lamas School of Music in Caracas

Jerome Callet

Jerome Callet is recognised as a world class trumpet maker and his trumpet teaching is based on an understanding of the history of the trumpet and a lifetime of studying the world's greatest players. On arrival at Mr Callet's home in Staten Island, NY, I was warmly greeted and welcomed to his trumpet studio. From the first moment it was evident that he is a man who is passionate about the trumpet and deeply respectful of the instrument and its music. While listening to recordings of world class soloists I observed a rowing machine and a bench press in the corner. Although Jerome is approaching 80 years old he is a man who takes physical fitness seriously. When he demonstrated his 5 octave range and played the trumpet in the extreme high register for sustained periods of time I became aware that this day was going to be extremely informative.

To avoid repeating myself I would like to explain the methodology of Mr Callet in greater depth in the Methodology section later on in the report. The main reason for this is that I discovered a similarity between the Callet Trumpet Method and the Venezuelan Trumpet Method. A connection was made during my trip when I realised that the Spanish language, spoken in Venezuela, makes use of the tongue in a very different way to English. Jerome Callet often refers to the original 19th century Jean Baptiste Arban Method, Paris 1850, which is recognised universally as the brass players bible. The difference in the UK is that our vocalisation of open phonetics can result in a different use of the tongue than perhaps Arban intended for playing the trumpet. The articulation "Tu" (explained on page 11) sounds very different when a French accent is used. The lips relax and push forwards and the tongue pushes forwards in the mouth. When practised this ceates a different air resistance and enables more efficient playing.

The fundamental aspect of Arban is articulation using air and tongue. The Spanish and French have strong linguistic connections and it was through listening to great players such as Maurice Andre and Rafael Mendez, and making a connection with their latin tongue, that I was able to fully understand later on how the trumpeters in Venezuela are advancing so quickly to such a high level.

For many years Jerome Callet worked for some of the major brass instrument production companies as a craftsman. It was during this time that he began to study the scientific aspects in trumpet design. During the twentieth century instrument makers were producing larger trumpets with larger bore sizes of the tubing to enable greater volumes of sound to fill the ever increasing new concert hall and theatres that were being built. This approach to using large volumes of air has lead to the modern player becoming more like an athlete by having to develop immense muscular strength in the lips and diaphragm.

The Baroque Trumpet

Jerome Callet's philosophy evolved to a stage where he became aware that to progress it was necessary to look backwards in history and so he began to study the natural trumpet used in the baroque era. Originally designed as a military signaling instrument, trumpets were twice as long as they are today. Although they did not have valves, which were only invented in the mid 19th century, notes were available across the harmonic series. These instruments were longer and narrower than modern trumpets with the bell flaring late. This produces a pure regal ceremonial sound, which although it does not have the same volume as a modern trumpet, arguably projects as well if not better and also is capable of greater clarity in the high register.

SIMA Trumpet

The Callet USA - SIMA trumpet is a modern day trumpet in the key of Bb, the standard key for a trumpet. It uses the modern piston valve system which enables the instrument to be shorter than its ancestors. However, it uses similar bore size specifications as a baroque trumpet and is medium bore (as opposed to usual medium large or large bore trumpets). It is only truly effective when used with a smaller mouthpiece. Mr Callet is influenced by mouthpiece drawings and designs by George Frederick Handel's trumpet makers, and the SIMA responds very well when the player articulates using the French "Tu" articulation whilst focusing on air speed rather than air volume. As Mr Callet said, "the future of trumpet playing has arrived". I am sure Monsieur Arban, at the Paris Conservatoire in the 19th century, would have based his new method for the revolutionary small bore piston valved instrument upon previously employed techniques used on the natural trumpet. Arban's virtuosic skills resonate through history and perhaps now the history of trumpet design and methodology has progressed full circle.

Herbert T Smith

Herbert T Smith is 3rd Trumpet in the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Professor of Trumpet and Lecturer at the Eastman School of Music as well as being a studio artiste, classical and jazz trumpet soloist in his own right.

I had become familiar with Herbert T Smith as a result of my interest in the work of Jerome Callet over the last year. It seemed fitting that I should try to spend as much time as possible with Mr Smith for a number of reasons.

Firstly, Mr Smith is an eminent Trumpet player in his own right. Secondly, he has studied with and been hugely influenced by Jerome Callet and also plays the SIMA trumpet. Thirdly, his ability to switch between jazz and classical styles is impressive, and finally he sustains a busy career as an educator and makes a huge contribution to the community through his wide and varied outreach projects.

I spent a great deal of time observing Mr Smith teach individual students and, as a result, was able to begin to understand how Jerome Callet's methods can be applied day to day. During a long day of teaching at the Eastman School of Music Professor Smith demonstrated Arban's Trumpet Method, played excerpts from Mahler's 5th Symphony and performed Enesco's Legende. That evening we went to a Rochester Philharmonic Pops Orchestra rehearsal conducted by Jef Tyzik. The rehearsal was in preparation for a Martin Luther King Celebration Concert and Herbert Smith performed as soloist singing negro spirituals and jazz improvisations in front of the orchestra ending on high A above top C (a very high note on the trumpet!). He then played lead trumpet in a rock arrangement of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus with a full gospel choir and the evening came to an end with Copland's Fanfare for a Common Man. For the entire duration of the day he played all on one trumpet and the same mouthpiece. The most impressive aspect of his playing was that his tone quality was always superb and effortless and his adjustment for each piece was a result of a complete understanding of trumpet playing technique for which he also shares a unique gift in being able to explain with the greatest of ease.

Pathways Scheme

During my time at the Eastman School of Music I became aware of some innovative music education projects which are creating excellent opportunities for young people to become involved in classical music.

The first project that struck me as being outstanding was the Pathways Scheme that is offered by the Eastman Community Music School where Professor Smith is also an instructor. The Pathways Scheme enables children who need financial assistance to have individual instrument tuition. These pupils are discovered by teachers and players from the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra during schools outreach concerts and workshops. It must be noted at this point that the USA is ahead of the UK in this area as their public schools (equivalent of our state schools) have instrumental music as part of their daily curriculum and the majority of students at school learn an instrument as part of an ensemble, usually a band lead by a professionally trained band instructor. This system is excellent and means that nobody is excluded from learning an instrument. The Pathways Scheme is a huge success in that it compliments the school music system by creating an opportunity for children to progress. It also highlights the fact that an individual music instrument lesson is a privilege and not to be taken for granted.

With children having the opportunity to learn in a school band on a daily basis, it becomes evident who the high flyers are going to be. However, the great benefit of the school band is that group music making benefits everyone, differentiation being the basis for all educational band repertoire. For example, a beginner third cornet player can have the challenge of learning a new rhythm alongside the advanced flute soloist has to learn to lead the wind section whilst playing tricky high passages. Everybody is challenged whilst still playing for the same team. Individual instrumental lessons are for those that want to make a dedicated study of their instrument and these lessons have to be earned. The Pathways Scheme supports this and creates an equal opportunity for youngsters to begin a professional training in music.

Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra - Community Outreach

I was most impressed by Herbert T Smith's diverse activity in Rochester. As a trumpeter in the Rochester Philharmonic he is primarily employed as a symphonic classical trumpet player. However, as a result of his versatility as a player, and his additional educational training at the Lincoln Arts Centre in New York, he is actively involved as a workshop leader in the community. His Introduction to the Blues workshops and Jazz Quartet concerts, to thousands of school children, has become a huge advertisement for the RPO. This variety of styles appeals to children and attracts them to see orchestral concerts. Professor Smith also passionately believes that a build up campaign for a concert is not enough. After a successful sell out concert he will travel back to all the schools he visited to ask them for their feedback, what they enjoyed and what they did not understand! This aftercare approach has enabled the RPO's outreach programme to become more refined and to build a better long term relationship with the public.

Pre - Concert Talks

Pre-concert talks have become a vital part of the RPO's concert season. Not only do they give the public an opportunity to gain insight to the evening's performance, but they provide a platform for undergraduate students at Eastman to learn from professional musicians and also prepare a presentation themselves.

Professor Smith is also a lecturer for undergraduate students at Eastman and I had the opportunity to observe him teaching a class and setting them the challenge of having to prepare a pre-concert talk in the near future for an official assessment as part of their music degree. Professor Smith's unique ability to communicate to wide audiences makes him a true asset to the establishments he works in. I noticed that his class was enthused by him and also took away with them the knowledge that to be a brilliant performer in today's climate is not enough. The modern musician has to be able to connect with the audience and these pre-concert talks allow this connection to be made in a less formal atmosphere. In previous talks Professor Smith had put funny words to a Stravinsky melody and as a result newcomers to the concert had gone away understanding the performance and wanting to hear it again. On other occasions, simply asking the audience what they like about music in general, gave him the opportunity to present his knowledge of a piece in a certain way. His advice to ask general questions so as to gain general information on a piece was an excellent starting point. The fundamental key here is that the general public do not understand the detailed technicalities of music and performance and as a result can be easily overwhelmed by an overdose of information. Links between what interests them and the actual piece to be played is an ideal chance to help classical music begin to become the popular language that it deserves to be.

Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu



Thirty five years ago Maestro Abreu had the vision that classical music should no longer be a luxury exploited by the elite classes and that a new era would emerge where classical music may be brought to the people. It would be listened to by everybody and be for everybody, regardless of their social standing, financial status, colour or creed. He believed that music is an emotional language which has the universal power to replace division with unity and hope.

The first music lessons that he taught were in humble circumstances. Two boys from the barrios came to learn music with him in a garage in Caracas. He received criticism from many, as the sounds of old instruments did not resemble an orchestra. Week by week he continued and gradually the children brought their friends as the activity of making music was having a stimulating effect on both their intellect and spirit. Eventually he was awarded a grant from local schools and bought fifty music stands to form the first Caracas

Schools Orchestra to be comprised of one hundred pupils, two to a stand. Only eleven turned up to this first official rehearsal and at this point most people would throw in the towel. However, Maestro Abreu decided to promise those eleven pupils that one day they would become players in the finest symphony orchestra in the world. He gave them a dream and thirty five years later their dream has been realised. Recently, a journalist from the Times asked a conductor who he thought would win the Orchestra World Cup if there was such a thing. The conductor's reply was simply, "Venezuela!"

During the entire duration of my Fellowship I was astounded by all of the musician's and teacher's love and respect of their founder. It seemed as if Maestro Abreu really had touched them in a personal way. From the moment I battled my way through the bustle of the Simon Bolivar airport right up until my departure, I was fortunate to have been looked after by Sergio Rosales, 23 years old and Principal Conductor of the Simon Bolivar Symphonic Wind Band. Sergio, a fatherless only child, left his mother six hundred miles away to come to Caracas to fulfill his dreams as a musician. When he finally had the opportunity to meet Maestro Abreu he was asked what his dreams were. His reply "To become a great conductor". Yet, as he spoke to Maestro Abeu, his eyes began to well up and he burst in to tears saying that he has no father. Maestro Abreu put his arms around the young man and said "God is your Father and He is always with you".

Maestro Abreu has an impressive background. He is an outstanding academic with a degree in economics. He also trained as a professional musician and fulfilled his own personal goals in this area. Born in the western city of Valera in 1939, Abreu was trained as an economist. He holds a Ph.D in petroleum economics from the Universidad Catolica Andres Bello and worked at the University of Michigan. He served as a Deputy at the Chamber of Deputies in the old Congress of Venezuela. After his political career, he also worked as a professor of economics and law at the Simon Bolivar University. He would return to politics briefly in 1983 to serve as Minister of Culture. His academic achievements allowed him to

distinguish himself as a university professor, a planning director and an economics advisor. He held the positions of Planning Director at the Oficina Central de Coordinación y Planificación (the Central Office of Coordination and Planning), Advisor to the Consejo Nacional de Economía (National Economic Council), Minister of State for Culture, President of the National Council for Culture, and Deputy in the Venezuelan Congress.

Abreu first studied music with Doralisa Jiménez de Medina in Barquisimeto. Later, he attended the Caracas Musical Declamation Academy in 1957, where he studied piano with Moises Molerio, organ and harpsichord with Evencio Castellanos and composition with Vicente Emilio Sojo. In 1967, he received the Symphonic Music National Prize for his musical ability. It was in 1975 that he founded El Sistema, formally known as the Foundation for the National Network of Youth and Children Orchestras of Venezuela.

This was an innovative youth education method in which music was the primary avenue for social and intellectual improvement. He received the National Music Prize for this work at El Sistema in 1979. Under Abreu's guidance, El Sistema has participated in exchange and cooperation programmes with Spain, Latin American countries and the USA.

I was fortunate enough to have been able to meet Maestro Abreu at the very end of my Fellowship. On a number of occasions we had missed each other simply due to his busy schedule that, at seventy years old, people half his age would struggle to cope with. Finally we were able to meet in the privacy of his own office at the national head quarters of FESNOJIV.

His passion and his belief in the power of music, and his knowledge of how to teach children from an early age through to professional standard was all evident. But it was his love of each individual he meets and spends time with that simply overwhelmed me. Perhaps this is his greatest achievement and a lesson that should be learnt most of all. Perhaps this is the reason that in all the orchestras in Venezuela there is a totally genuine feeling of mutual love and respect between each individual that resonates through each chord.

On May 12, 2009, José Antonio Abreu was awarded the Polar Music Prize, given by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. Maestro Abreu and Peter Gabriel, who also won, will both be presented with their awards by King Carl XVI Gustaf at a gala ceremony at the Stockholm Concert Hall on 31 August. The Royal Swedish Academy of Music recently said:

The Polar Music Prize 2009 has been awarded to the Venezuelan conductor, composer and economist Maestro José Antonio Abreu. Driven by a vision that the world of classical music can help improve the lives of Venezuela's children, he created the music network El Sistema, which has given hundreds of thousands the tools to leave poverty. José Antonio Abreu's successful creation has promoted traditional values, like respect, fellowship and humanity. His achievement shows us what is possible when music is made the common ground and thereby part of people's everyday lives. Simultaneously, a new hope for the future has been given to children and parents, as well as politicians. The vision of José Antonio Abreu serves as a model to us all.

History of Music in Venezuela

The Jose Lamas School of Music is situated in the political district by Simon Bolivar Square and the Town Hall and is the oldest music school in Venezuela. It was built in 1700 by the Spanish colonials and has a rich tradition of folk and popular music. As a result the syllabus is based on folk traditions leading to symphonic repertoire. I learnt that the teachers and students here believe that in order to understand where they are going they need to know where they have come from and therefore history is a vital part of their study.

Vicente Emilio Sojo lived from 8.12.1887 to 11.8.1974 and was Director of the School. Jose Abreu studied composition with him here at the Lamas School. Maestro Sojo was also an academic, folk and popular musician and his vocation was in researching all the folk songs across Venezuela and notating them by hand using four part harmony, counterpoint and fugue in the style of J S Bach.

As a result of his work, music which would only have been preserved by an aural tradition, was notated and arranged for choirs and orchestras. He formed the first orchestra in Venezuela, Orquesta Sinfonica Venezuela and the first choir, Orfeon Lamas Choir. Initially people performed their national folk music in the orchestra but gradually they began to learn works by Beethoven and Mahler. A national voice was born as a result of Maestro Sojo's dedication to building an historical and academic archive of the national folk and popular music of Venezuela.

At the Jose Lamas School Neccy Salazar is Principle and Rosa Briceno is Vice - Principal. Neccy and Rosa met at the Jose Lamas school when both only aged seven. Since then they have been dedicated to keeping the school alive and maintaining this beautiful and important historical building. They are both passionate about their traditional roots and symphonic music. Rosa is demonstrating the Cuatro, Venezuela's national instrument and performed to me a popular Christmas Carol that is used today because of Sojo's work.

The school is not officially part of El Sistema but the roots of El Sistema can be found here and there is clearly a strong sense of cohesion between folk traditions and symphonic culture. Funding comes from the Venezuelan Ministry of Education. Entry is by audition but pupils who are accepted do not pay fees. Young children receive a general music education and older students study full time to gain a diploma. A number of students travel up to four hours each way to attend the school which opens at 8 a.m until 6 p.m. Students study history, composition, folk music, improvisation, singing and classical solo repertoire. A free lunch is provided daily, usually a sandwich and drink. For many this is their only meal of the day.

Philosophy of El Sistema

“Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for by everybody; I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.”

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

The greatest misconception of El Sistema in Britain today is that it is Orwellian; organized methods of disciplined learning in a classical symphony orchestra appear to lack creativity to those who know little or nothing about music. Yet, through routine training we sharpen our skills, hone our acute senses and become better at what we do, enabling total creative freedom and emotional expression.

Having the aesthetics, music and the arts as a focal point for education systems is not a new concept. Plato designed an ideal education system for the bourgeoisie and aristocrats of ancient Greece. Socrates chose certain scales and instruments exclusively for the elite classes as he believed that they would have an effect on emotional and intellectual well being. Indeed, in the twentieth century Albert Einstein recognized the fact that the vibrations on a violin string created a natural law of physics known as harmonics which produce sound waves that connect our thought patterns to our emotions. It is a proven fact that listening to and playing classical music develops the intellect and benefits the psyche. However, the belief system behind El Sistema strives to go even further.

Man is a unique combination of both a solitary and social being. As a solitary being, man works to protect his own existence and those whom he loves around him. As a social being he seeks to gain recognition and affection of others, to share in joy, comfort them and improve their conditions. However, it is society and its traditions that provides man with food and shelter and therefore ultimately his dependance on society cannot be denied. Perhaps we should ask ourselves what structures in society should be changed to make human life as safe as possible

It has recently been suggested by a number of religious leaders and scholars that we are entering a spiritual crisis. Media pressures, technological advancements, fast food and low cost global travel is leading our younger generations into a state of spiritual poverty and social deprivation. Our global village is now based on fast production and consumption which has resulted in new sets of values. The individual has grown to realise his dependance on society but does not see this as a positive asset or protective force. Rather it has become a threat to his natural rights and economic independence. Thus egotistical drives have become accentuated, at all costs he must use whatever it takes to reach higher levels of success and financial security. As a result his social drives weaken and unknowingly he becomes a prisoner of his own success feeling insecure, lonely and constantly in fear of his competitors' achievements. The economic anarchy that we are experiencing today is quite possibly the root of evil in our society. Workers are the least concern to those who will cut corners and use whatever methods available to achieve faster profits. In the long run this could lead to frustration in the middle and lower classes. Our current music education system continues to focus on competitive individual learning rather than learning in an ensemble. Now, although it is true that competition is necessary to achieve high standards, music is not a competitive sport.

The vital philosophical learning point from El Sistema is that their music education system is not focused on the individual but on the ensemble which as a collective community can achieve a beautiful result. Their ensembles are so fluid that within focused discipline the opportunity emerges for individual achievement. Punctuality and preparation are essential life skills that are instilled yet alongside this is an emergence of empathy for fellow musicians and understanding and acceptance of true beauty.

Far worse than physical poverty is spiritual poverty. Even financially secure people today desire emotional fulfillment. Perhaps I may be so bold as to say this that even greater poverty exists in those in our society who have little or no social status at all. Let us consider the homeless, the elderly, the disabled and those excluded from our day to day life who watch from the sidelines.

Can we believe that scientists today are trying to remove the imperfect genes in the embryo that can cause conditions such as autism? Yet we are all aware that many of the great composers, artists and scientists all had so called imperfections which enabled them to achieve the break-through knowledge that has shaped our modern world. To create a perfect human being would be to create our worst nightmare, where selfishness and greed would become it's only assets. In Venezuela I observed a number of disabled students who were accepted members of an ensemble and were able to make their valued contribution on a daily basis.

El Sistema believes that the symphony orchestra is a perfect educational and social starting point. No other activity can be so positively productive as playing in a symphonic orchestra. I say *symphonic* because this embraces all genres from popular to classical. To learn to play a symphonic instrument requires routine practice which is best achieved in groups where technique and music making can be combined. It is not so much about what music is being played, but instead the act of making music in a group. Playing in harmony is to connect with others in both sound and mind. When a group begins to play in tune and in time together for the first time they begin to connect with themselves and each other in a positive way. Group music making focuses the mind whilst at the same time increases the individuals awareness of their value and importance to others. Each individual is able to develop his own identity along with an awareness of his own innate creative abilities. Through an growth of social awareness comes a confidence in the value of each individuals social status, no matter what their ethnic or religious background. An empathy for others is born and self esteem is raised leading to an inner spiritual fulfillment that is transferred back in to each child's home as their parents are increasingly aware of their achievements. Music being played can transform those with mental and physical illness, and to the blind and deaf, beautiful music can resonate in their being and can dramatically improve their quality of life.

The fluidity in El Sistema allows each person a natural progression to develop as an important citizen in society. Employment opportunities have emerged through jobs in education and management as well as a huge social customer base for attending concerts which in turn supports the growing number of professional positions for orchestral musicians. Crime has been avoided, as children who might once have had no choice but to turn to the streets, have now discovered an activity that can lead them to becoming richer human beings. Their self image is protected from a young age and their future is bright as they now have an attitude of service to their community, leading them to become successful in whatever field they choose.

Structure of El Sistema

The Venezuelan government's Ministry of Culture originally formed a framework entitled The National Music System. This was a cultural development plan aimed at pulling together the diverse strands of society through musical activities and was also created to systematically organize the Venezuelan music community, which covers a broad spectrum of styles across the country. FESNOJIV was an independent foundation formed by Jose Abreu with the primary focus of learning in an orchestra. Over the last thirty five years FESNOJIV has become the major force behind the growth of the governments cultural policies.

It is by having the symphony orchestra at the heart of the National Music System that El Sistema has become a huge success. Without the symphony orchestra central to the system there would be a lack of direction and musical divisions across the country. The symphony orchestra embraces cultural diversity whilst at the very same time unites many people. Essentially, by learning in an orchestra children develop social skills alongside developing a technique on a musical instrument. The development of a technique, learned through disciplined routine, gives each child the ability to become a versatile musician and I was able to see many classically trained musicians in Venezuela using their skills at advanced levels in jazz, dance and folk settings. The benefit of the orchestral base is that all other musical activities gravitate towards it and are supported and connected through it. Socially this has a profound effect with many people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds being united and being part of the same family.

The general objective behind the government's policy is to seek excellency in the managerial and artistic process of the nationwide musical activity whilst promoting Venezuela's distinct and diverse musical expressions.

Specific objectives

- 1) Foster, promote and protect musical creation and to ensure the position of musical creators as a force that contributes to the nation's transformation
- 2) Consolidate institutions, groups and artists that foster the social and cultural development of Venezuela. This would protect and disseminate the indigenous and popular musical heritage of the nation.
- 3) Contribute to the perfection of musical training in Venezuela through professional centers and in the formal and informal education system.
- 4) Establish the music industry as a financial resource that will benefit culture and promote the following industries: video, music, publications and production of instruments.
- 5) Guarantee free access to information about all Venezuelan music.

Country, Music and Social Action

The National Music System is the base of another programme called "Country, Music and Social Action" which was initiated by the Music Directorate of CONAC (Ministry of Culture/National Council of Culture) in 2000. The System gives special emphasis and support to areas with poor musical development to

promote the social benefits that music has upon a community. Funding is provided through the budget of CONAC with contributions from private sector donations, fund raising activities by the institutions and other departmental governmental contributions. There is also a Cultural Funding Programme which artists and creators obtain governmental resources to develop cultural projects in different areas. The Venezuelan oil industry also continues to fund El Sistema.

Structure

The National Music System is based on a structure of 8 Specialist Areas and 5 Professional Platforms. There are a growing number of Networks which I believe to be 23 - one Network in each state. A Network is the title used to describe the complete system that operates in each state.

The 8 Specialist Areas are:

- 1) Traditional, folklore and popular music (with networks of indigenous and urban music)
- 2) Centers of musical training involving professional training and basic education centers.
- 3) Professional Symphony Orchestra
- 4) Juvenile and Infantile Orchestras
- 5) Choirs including Special Needs Groups
- 6) Organizations that support lyrical arts
- 7) Organizations that support community music
- 8) Music Bands (i.e. folk, pop, jazz, salsa etc...)

The 5 Professional Platforms are:

- 1) Musical Creation
- 2) Music Industry Organisations
- 3) Centres for Teacher Training, Research and Documentation
- 4) Concerts, Festivals and Contests
- 5) Performing Arts

Music Network in Caracas

At the time of my Fellowship I saw that the capital city Caracas had:

- 1) 25 Nucleo Music Schools (a nucleo is a beginner school for children between 5 and 14 years old) with each school receiving between 500 and 1500 children for group music tuition on a daily basis
- 2) 8 Conservatorio Schools - for students aged 14 to 22 years to advance their musical training and receive professional individual tuition along with academic and ensemble training
- 3) 5 Professional Symphony Orchestras
- 4) A new state of the art concert hall with multi story parking and rehearsal studios exclusively for professional musicians. No bars or cafes are in this venue, the Social Action Centre for Music's focus is music.
- 5) Many other youth orchestras and ensembles coached by professional musicians

Daily schedules

A typical daily schedule for a young child aged 6 - 14 years would be the following:

- 05:00 Rise and walk to school through Barrios - 1 or 2 hours
- 07:00 School Starts
- 12:00 School ends - Walk home
- 2pm Attend local Nucleo, sandwich and drink provided
(possibly the only meal some children will have that day)
- 6pm Walk home, evening homework to avoid after school detention and missing music

A typical schedule for a student aged between 14 - 22 would be the following:

- 07:00 Leave to travel to University through rush hour
- 09:00 Attend University/College (many are training for other professions in Medicine, Education, Law, Art and Design, Accountancy etc..)
- 14:00 Attend Conservatorio, lunch in canteen followed by individual lessons, bands, orchestras
- 19:00 Homework for University Course/ Private Practice/Study

A typical schedule for a professional orchestral musician would be the following:

- 07:00 Leave to travel to work through rush hour
- 09:00 Attend symphony orchestra rehearsal - working towards concerts at weekend
- 12:00 Rehearsal finishes, travel to Nucleo or Conservatorio to teach
- 13:00 Short lunch break and prepare afternoon classes
- 14:00 Teaching individuals or conducting childrens orchestras or coaching sectionals
- 18:00 Travel to concert hall for evening chamber music rehearsal
- 22:00 Finish and go home

Teaching in their old Nucleo is a possible opportunity for some students to earn some money whilst studying. They may return on a flexible basis or on fixed terms to teach younger children. They have self esteem and status because they have progressed and are still able to contribute positively to the community. Most professional musicians teach at Universities, Nucleos and Conservatorios and so their status is raised, creating aspiration for older students. Professional players that retire are in a prime position for senior management posts.

El Sistema is based on a new and flexible management style in which each sub - system is tailored to the needs of each unique community. Funding is given to support each project and currently over 300, 000 children in the lower and middle classes receive free music tuition. The emphasis is on the vulnerable and endangered social groups with no distinction made. Micro - controlled management does not exist here but is replaced by fluidity, trust and creativity. As youngsters progress through the system they too become able to teach those younger than them. Peer learning is a natural aspect of the system that has enabled music to become an accepted part of daily life.

During my Fellowship I was based at the Conservatorio De Musica Simon Bolivar in central Caracas and was looked after by Maestro Sergio Rosales, Principal Conductor of the Simon Bolivar Symphonic Band.

Methodology

This section outlines the approach to teaching music in Venezuela and brings to attention material that is used by both teachers and pupils. This is an area that I am continuing to research, In many cases I saw that teachers had minimal resources and relied on their imagination to create exercises for their pupils. The other major factor is that they had four hours every day to work with students.

The primary difference in Venezuela is that all children learn in groups. At 6 years old they attend an after school music club at the Nucleo and spend between 6 months to 24 months in an induction class. It is in these classes, of between 15 and 30 children, that they learn to work as an ensemble, learn rhythm to a high level, develop perfect pitch using the solfège method and sing in a choir. They also have to achieve a level of proficiency in music theory and written notation. All of this is achieved before they are allowed to even pick up a instrument.

In Britain music teachers are constantly battling with poor rhythm, intonation and ensemble skills in their teaching. Often many pupils do not want to learn scales. By spending time in an induction period these essential basics of musicianship are grounded and later on mean that children can focus on learning an instrument without struggling.

I gave a trumpet lesson to a nine year old boy called Henry at La Rinconada Nucleo in Caracas. He had been playing for one year and when I gave him a grade 1 solo to sight read he first sung it using solfège and then played it perfectly, first time. This is a piece that in the past has taken me at least one whole term to teach.

Early years children can join a pre - nucleo club that involves singing and dancing and art work. These activities are in preparation for the induction class and are fun and enjoyable.

Following induction children choose an instrument but strings are encouraged the most as this forms the body of an orchestra. Those that show particular interest or have suitable looking embouchures are encouraged to play wind and brass instruments. All instruments are free and children also receive a t-shirt with the Nucleo logo. Instruments are stored at the Nucleo and children do not take instruments home. This is safer as instruments could get stolen. Many of the music schools are in deprived areas and instruments would be targeted by thieves to be sold on the black market. Also, it means all the work is done during the school time. However, each child owns his or her instrument.

Teachers have limited material but many string teachers use Suzuki repertoire. For the most part it simply is that they have four hours a day, six days a week that they can work painstakingly through tuning the class up, sitting correctly, getting stands at the right height and getting correct postures all before learning a scale in unison. This may all seem very simple and obvious, but their emphasis on the basics is the reason for their success. It should also be pointed out that the children seemed to thrive on routine and repetition. For many children these four hours provide the routine and consistency that they are lacking in other parts of their lives.

Brass and wind teachers will often teach all the instruments in their section. Again, the same principle is that their class will be painstakingly slow with attention to each child's embouchure and posture. Long tones and scales are the basis of their routines. Brass teachers use the Arban Method, Herbert Clarke Studies and Walter Smith's Lip Flexibilities. The embouchure is formed saying "Tu" with the tongue being anchored behind or on top of the bottom teeth. Articulation is achieved by tonguing with the flat of the tongue on the roof of the mouth. Generally this is in conjunction with the Spanish language and suits brass playing. This is a connection I made with Jerome Callet's research.

Percussion class will spend long periods on posture, hand position and sub - division routines in unison. When perfect the class will continue and move on to advanced subdivision. Concentration is praised and students seemed to enjoy the focused concentration involved.

A Nucleo schedule will contain a mixture of orchestra, band or ensemble, sectional and group instrumental lessons. The teachers are highly trained performers themselves and although they have grown through the system, many have studied in Europe and have brought back methods of teaching and playing that have evolved through the European Conservatoire system.

At the end of a pupil's time at a Nucleo they will usually want to further their education at a Conservatorio. They must audition and it is up to them to have solo repertoire prepared, along with a complete understanding of scales and technique. I did not meet one 12 year old that did not know all their scales, both major and minor, and were not competent orchestral players!

At Conservatorio they will have one hour of individual instrumental tuition per week with a professional from an orchestra. They will have two hours of symphonic band or orchestra every day and will also have weekly classes in music history and theory as well as additional ensemble playing in big band, jazz improvisation and folk music. Every student has to take a course in national folk music and everyone can play the Cuatro, the national folk guitar, and sing popular songs. Many students are also competent at piano and percussion and singing. This structure is very similar to the early renaissance music system that encouraged a broad development of music making with everybody learning choral and keyboard skills before specialising on an orchestral instrument.

On completion of Conservatorio, students receive a diploma that qualifies them to teach music. They can also audition for orchestral jobs in Venezuela or abroad. Many have also become qualified in other professions and music remains a life long passion and hobby.

Advanced students may wish to audition for a National Academy on their instruments and this will be an advanced specialist class training them for the tough competition to be placed in top professional positions including the Simon Bolivar Orchestra. Conservatorio training is based on scales and technique and learning orchestral and solo repertoire. They then have the opportunity to earn the privilege of having a weekly individual lesson which will help them achieve specialist goals. Meanwhile, playing and learning with their peer groups in ensembles remains the priority, resulting in such confident performances in all their orchestras

Conclusion

As El Sistema has evolved a career in music in Venezuela has become an established pathway. Folk bands continue to provide professional dance music and communities have access to professional centres to further the development of their craft. At the time of my Fellowship, Venezuela had 25 professional symphony orchestras. The Simon Bolivar Orchestra, which is based in the Social Action Centre for Music, employs a large number of musicians on full time contracts. For example, they contract 17 full time trumpet players in contrast to the three or four players that would be employed in a London orchestra on a freelance basis. The players all work on a rotation basis and each week every player will be used in either a symphony, chamber orchestra, smaller ensemble or education outreach project.

The connection that Venezuelan symphony orchestras are able to make with communities is outstanding. Concerts combine national folk music with major symphonic repertoire which gives the public the opportunity to develop a taste and understanding for the language of classical music. The message here is that in a piece of popular music only one emotional world is experienced. In a symphony an eternal universe of emotion is experienced by the listener and the inner being is given nourishment that will result in a sense of fulfillment when returning to daily life. Initially people can only cope with a simple pop tune to start with but once the brain has made the connection with the sound of an orchestra then the melodies of Beethoven and Strauss suddenly become accessible. The diverse spectrum of timbres in the symphony orchestra provide a continual form of intellectual and spiritual sustenance for it's audience.

An equivalent system in Britain would be to have one professional symphony orchestra in each county. Orchestral rehearsals would take place in the mornings followed by community outreach work in the afternoons. Concerts would take place on the weekends and at least one concert a month should be free for the public. Each concert should contain some popular or local folk music that people can easily relate to before performing major repertoire. Concerts should not be too long.

A major lesson learned in Venezuela was that for any educational system to be successful there must be a strong philosophy or reason behind the project. Further to this it is critical that the teachers believe in the philosophy. I experienced unanimous passion and commitment from every teacher I met in Venezuela, possibly the strongest reason behind the success of the system. Finally, it is essential that teachers of musical instruments are of a professional standard and can demonstrate to their classes.

I attended a free public concert given by the Municipal Orchestra in Caracas at the Municipal Theatre on a Sunday morning at 11 a.m. The venue was full, maybe 2000 people, with an audience that spanned the diverse community of Caracas. Young and old, rich and poor sat side by side. The music was Latin American Dances followed by Beethoven's 9th Symphony, with sub titles above the stage, and during the standing ovation and celebrations by the audience after the concert I left feeling in no doubt that symphonic music can and should be brought to the heart of our communities in Britain.

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