

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **El Sistema-inspired programs across New Jersey to perform Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest at NJPAC on June 6**



### **Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest showcase unites student musicians from six El Sistema New Jersey Alliance programs statewide**

**Performance precedes NJSO's 'The Hero's Journey' family concert**

**Sat, June 6, at NJPAC in Newark**

NEWARK, NJ—The El Sistema New Jersey Alliance's second annual Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest will bring together more than 300 students from six El Sistema-inspired music-instruction programs across New Jersey for a special performance on Saturday, June 6, at 1 pm at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) in Newark. The student musicians of NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project) will perform with young musicians from the Paterson Music Project, Sister Cities Girlchoir, Sonic Explorations, Union City Music Project and El Sistema—Trenton. The performance is made possible in part by the Alliance's Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation grant.

Students in each program will perform a featured piece with their classmates; for the concert's finale, all programs will combine for a special joint piece—a mash-up of Bob Marley's "Three Little Birds" and Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" arranged by David Rimelis.

El Sistema expert Tricia Tunstall, author of *Changing Lives: Gustavo Dudamel, El Sistema and the Transformative Power of Music*, says: “By coming together at Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest, these programs are deepening their connections and multiplying their strengths. When kids join forces to make music together, the positive energy is combustible! It’s empowering for them to discover that they can come together from all corners of the state and be instantly in harmony.”

The El Sistema New Jersey Alliance formed in 2014 through the collective efforts of five New Jersey programs inspired by the vision of Venezuela’s El Sistema. Now comprising six El Sistema-inspired programs across the Garden State, the Alliance’s mission is to provide collaborative instruction, performance opportunities and professional development training that empowers participating families to come together in a statewide musical community.

This season, the Alliance has expanded the collaboration last June’s Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest began. The programs presented the inaugural El Sistema New Jersey Week—a festival of free concerts in each program’s local community—in November 2014. The Alliance will pilot a summer camp at the Princeton-Blairstown Center for more than 70 students July 30–August 1, made possible in part by the Dodge Foundation grant.

Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest precedes the NJSO’s “The Hero’s Journey” family concert. NJSO Education & Community Engagement Conductor Jeffrey Grogan leads both Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest and the NJSO family concert, which explores how composers throughout history have used music to celebrate what it means to be a hero; audience favorite Ben Steinfeld brings his trademark humor and theatrics as concert host. The concert features music from Beethoven’s Symphony No. 3, “Eroica,” and *Egmont Overture*, Verdi’s *Nabucco Overture*, Copland’s *Fanfare for the Common Man*, Mozart’s *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, Suppé’s *Light Cavalry Overture* and Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes Forever.”

[Learn more about the first Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest collaboration and watch student performances from the event.](#)

### **TICKETS**

Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest is free to all ticketholders for the NJSO’s June 6 family concert. Concert tickets are \$10 for children and \$20 for adults, available for purchase online at [www.njsymphony.org](http://www.njsymphony.org) or by phone at 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476).

Additional concert information is available at [www.njsymphony.org/family](http://www.njsymphony.org/family).

*Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey sponsors the 2014–15 NJSO Family Series.*

### **THE PROGRAMS OF EL SISTEMA NEW JERSEY**

#### **NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement & Music Project)**

NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project) is an intensive education program inspired by the Venezuelan social change and music education program El Sistema. The program seeks to develop students’ goal-directed behavior and skills to foster social and academic success. It also seeks to improve students’ self-esteem, academic achievement and lifelong character traits like perseverance and leadership as they learn the intricacies of playing a stringed instrument. In the 2014–15 season, nearly University Heights Charter School students in grades three through eight are receiving after-school instruction in violin, viola or cello for up to two hours per day, three days per week. Students have performed with the NJSO and the NJSO Youth Orchestras, at concerts in community settings and at school assemblies. This season, the NJSO received a Getty Education and Community Investment Grant from the League of American Orchestras to further develop NJSO CHAMPS. [www.njsymphony.org/champs](http://www.njsymphony.org/champs).

#### **Paterson Music Project**

Based in Paterson, New Jersey, Paterson Music Project (PMP) is an El Sistema-inspired program of Wharton Music Center that uses music as a vehicle for social change by empowering and inspiring children through the community experience of ensemble learning and playing. PMP provides an intense musical immersion after school for nearly 200 students at the Community Charter School of Paterson and Paterson School 1. Students in grades three–five study a

primary instrument (violin, cello or viola) and participate in six hours of group music instruction, ensemble practice and choir weekly. Students in grades one–two participate in Pre-Orchestra, a preparatory program that meets for two hours weekly. Pre-Orchestra students sing, participate in paper orchestra and play the recorder and buckets. Students perform frequently for the school and community. PMP began in January 2013 with 30 students at the Community Charter School of Paterson, where it now serves more than 100 students. In January 2015, PMP partnered with Paterson Public Schools to open a site at Public School 1. This new site serves 78 first through fifth graders from P.S. 1 and P.S. 26. [www.patersonmusicproject.org](http://www.patersonmusicproject.org).

### **Sister Cities Girlchoir**

Sister Cities Girlchoir (SCG) empowers at-risk girls by building resilience, leadership, mastery and connection through a comprehensive choral training academy that invests in the unique potential of adolescent girls to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and transform their communities. The program is research-based, and although a music program is an uncommon poverty intervention, SCG is modeled on the powerful impact that investments in the lives of at-risk girls make for a city block, a neighborhood, a city ... for the world. SCG is modeled after El Sistema, Venezuela's monumental music education program that is transforming lives and communities. SCG founder Alysia Lee spent a year studying El Sistema and visiting programs in Venezuela and throughout the U.S. through the Sistema Fellowship at the New England Conservatory. The pilot program launched in September 2012, with 75 middle-school-aged girls in three community sites. In its second year, more than 250 girls are registered at six sites in three target communities: Camden, West Philadelphia and Kensington. [www.sistercitiesgirlchoir.org](http://www.sistercitiesgirlchoir.org).

### **Sonic Explorations: Sharing Sounds of Oakwood**

Sonic Explorations: Sharing Sounds of Oakwood is an after-school music program at the Oakwood Avenue Community School in Orange, New Jersey. Since the fall of 2013, the program has provided violin, percussion and creative musicianship classes to students in kindergarten through third grade. Inspired by the Venezuelan El Sistema program, Sonic Explorations aims to provide free music education within a social context for the youth of the Oakwood Avenue Community School. Through building a network of shared resources, values, aspirations and advocacy, this program seeks to inspire youth, increase academic awareness and move the community-at-large towards a more promising future. The Oakwood Avenue Community School seeks to advance both individuals and the community through the transformational power of music.

### **Union City Music Project**

The Union City Music Project (UCMP) is an El Sistema after-school program that uses music as a vehicle for social change by providing intensive orchestral and vocal instruction and performance opportunities for urban children in Hudson County, New Jersey. Through a disciplined, cooperative and fun learning environment that integrates parental involvement, this structured grassroots program inspires academic excellence, enhances life skills and builds community. UCMP was launched in 2012 as the first El Sistema program in the Garden State. It currently serves 70 students ranging from 3–13 years of age by providing them with 24 hours of monthly instruction in violin, cello, percussion, flute, clarinet, trumpet, voice and music theory.

### **El Sistema—Trenton**

The Trenton Public Schools and Trenton Community Music School are collaborating to pilot an El Sistema-inspired Youth Orchestra at Trenton's Grant Elementary School, designed to provide high-quality music ensemble experiences and access to the benefits of group music making for the participating children. The after-school project provides 30 third and fourth graders with violin lessons, as well as musicianship classes, three days per week for 16 weeks. A newly formed in-school string program for fourth and fifth graders developed through an instrumental music grant from the VH1 Save the Music Foundation will share teaching approaches and repertory with the after-school program. Students in both programs will soon be able to play together as a unified ensemble of 100 musicians. The pilot project is one of the Community Partnerships of the Trenton Community Music School and is generously supported by the Trenton Public Schools, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Community Foundation of NJ, D'Addario Foundation, Albin Family Foundation and private donors.

**THE NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Named “a vital, artistically significant musical organization” by *The Wall Street Journal*, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra embodies that vitality through its statewide presence and critically acclaimed performances, education partnerships and unparalleled access to music and the Orchestra’s superb musicians.

Under the bold leadership of Music Director Jacques Lacombe, the NJSO presents classical, pops and family programs, as well as outdoor summer concerts and special events. Embracing its legacy as a statewide orchestra, the NJSO is the resident orchestra of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark and regularly performs at the State Theatre in New Brunswick, Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank, Richardson Auditorium in Princeton, Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown and bergenPAC in Englewood. Partnerships with New Jersey arts organizations, universities and civic organizations remain a key element of the Orchestra’s statewide identity.

In addition to its lauded artistic programming, the NJSO presents a suite of education and community engagement programs that promote meaningful, lifelong engagement with live music. Programs include the three-ensemble NJSO Youth Orchestras, school-time Concerts for Young People performances and multiple offerings—including the El Sistema-inspired NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project)—that provide and promote in-school instrumental instruction as part of the NJSO Academy. The NJSO’s REACH (Resources for Education and Community Harmony) chamber music program annually brings original programs—designed and performed by NJSO musicians—to a variety of settings, reaching as many as 17,000 people in nearly all of New Jersey’s 21 counties.

For more information about the NJSO, visit [www.njsymphony.org](http://www.njsymphony.org) or email [information@njsymphony.org](mailto:information@njsymphony.org). Tickets are available for purchase by phone 1.800.ALLEGRO (255.3476) or on the Orchestra’s website.

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