

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **El Sistema New Jersey Alliance presents screening of *Crescendo: The Power of Music* documentary**

### **Director Jamie Bernstein to speak**

### **Student ensembles from El Sistema New Jersey Alliance programs to perform at free event**

### **Sat, Jan 16, at the Park Theater in Union City**

NEWARK, NJ—The El Sistema New Jersey Alliance presents an orchestral and choral performance by students in its member programs, alongside a screening of a new documentary, *Crescendo: The Power of Music* on Saturday, January 16, at 4 pm at the Park Theater in Union City. Director Jamie Bernstein, daughter of Leonard Bernstein, will introduce the film at the free event, which is open to the public. The award-winning *Crescendo* film follows the journeys of three students in El Sistema-inspired programs, to demonstrate the transformative impact these intensive music education programs have on their student participants.

Performers will include student musicians from five New Jersey programs that are united around the El Sistema ideal of social change through music: Union City Music Project, Sister Cities Girlchoir from Camden, NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project) from Newark, Paterson Music Project and Sonic Explorations from Orange. (The El Sistema New Jersey Alliance also includes El Sistema Trenton.)

The *Crescendo* filmmakers write: “Our film is an in-depth, verité-based look at three kids—two in West Philadelphia and one in New York City’s Harlem—as they struggle to master their instruments, confronting their fears along the way and interacting with their talented, dedicated teachers. We witness the children evolving before our eyes ... Surprises, heartbreak and joy come in big doses as we watch our three young people, and the community around them, responding to the mysterious power of music.” Learn more about the film at [www.crescendofilm.com](http://www.crescendofilm.com).

The El Sistema New Jersey Alliance was formed in 2014 through the collective efforts of New Jersey programs inspired by the vision of Venezuela’s El Sistema, which brings intensive music education to children with little or no access to arts education. The Alliance’s mission is to provide collaborative instruction and performance opportunities for students, offer professional development training to teachers and empower participating families to come together in a statewide musical community.

The Alliance has presented annual Fiddle-and-Fa-La-La-Fest showcase performances at NJPAC in Newark; El Sistema New Jersey Week—a festival of free concerts in each program’s local community; and a summer camp pilot at the Princeton-Blairstown Center, made possible in part by a grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation.

#### **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. Implemented in partnership with University Heights

Charter School in Newark, NJSO CHAMPS seeks to harness the power of music to enhance students' lives. By training students as musicians, the NJSO seeks to develop character traits and skills that may impact students' future success in school, work and life. As many as 60 students in grades 3–8 receive up to 30 weeks of after-school string instruction and performance opportunities. Students have performed with the NJSO and the NJSO Youth Orchestras, at concerts in community settings and at school assemblies. [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 Institute for the Performing Arts 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.

### **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 school-time Concerts for Young People performances and multiple offerings—including the NJSO Youth Orchestras family of student ensembles and El Sistema-inspired NJSO CHAMPS (Character, Achievement and Music Project)—that provide and promote 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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