

外国語科 素材文

Children are carrying musical instruments on the street. This is a familiar sight every afternoon in towns all over Venezuela. They are heading to their music lessons after regular school hours. There are 180 music schools across the country and 350,000 children receive a classical music education for free. Many of them practice six days a week and take part in an orchestra or a chorus.

This educational program is commonly known as El Sistema. It was started in 1975 by Dr. José Antonio Abreu. He is a musician and economist who once served as Venezuela's Minister of Culture. During its history of more than 40 years, El Sistema has produced many excellent musicians, and some of them have become known internationally.

Producing professional musicians is not, however, the main goal of El Sistema. Its mission is simply to give children the chance to lead better lives by using the power of music. "The richness provided by music can beat down poverty," says Dr. Abreu.

El Sistema also serves as a wall to prevent children in poor families from getting caught up in crime. Edicson is one example. For his first nine years he lived in poverty with his family in the crime-filled slums of Caracas. Then a neighbor recommended El Sistema, and that is how he came across a musical instrument he seemed destined to play.

"When I first heard the sound of a double bass," says Edicson, "I thought 'This is it!' I knew it was the instrument for me!" Even before he could read music properly, he was asked to play the double bass part in a symphony by Tchaikovsky. "I thought they were joking, but nobody said that I couldn't manage it. Nobody at the orchestra ever said 'No.'"

After that, Edicson practiced hard every day. He rose to become a top player in the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, the greatest of all the orchestras launched by El Sistema. In the end, he became the youngest player ever to join the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the world-famous German orchestra. Rock music was all Edicson knew before he heard about El Sistema. However, his experience of discovering classical music and performing in an orchestra changed his life completely.

One young boy who needed help was given the chance to start his life over thanks to music and people who believe in the power of music.

His name is Lennar. Because he grew up in a poor neighborhood, it was easy for him to fall into a life of crime. He was arrested by the police and sent to a juvenile detention center. He was sure that nobody would trust him any longer and that society didn't need him. Then one day a music teacher from El Sistema gave him an instrument. It was the chance that let him start a new life.

"The El Sistema program opened a big door for me," says Lennar. "It provided me with everything, from a musical instrument to love. Love was what I needed most. I think everyone should receive this benefit." Lennar carried a gun in his hand before he began to touch musical instruments. Today he is a music teacher at El Sistema himself. He is now introducing the world of music to children who are in an environment similar to the one he used to be in.

"Poverty means loneliness, sadness, and being forgotten. An orchestra means joy, motivation, teamwork, and wanting to succeed." This is how Dr. Abreu expresses the basic ideas of the El Sistema music education program. By working hard together as members of an orchestra and trying to create something artistic, children learn the importance of making an effort and develop a spirit of cooperation.

These children have a good influence on their families and neighbors, too. In one family, for example, the father stopped drinking when he saw his son throw everything he had into music. Also, the boy's brother who had dropped out of high school was encouraged to start studying again. He learned from his younger brother that the key to success is putting your heart and soul into what you do. Circumstances don't necessarily determine your life.

The seed planted by one man in Venezuela has now grown into a mighty tree with strong roots. El Sistema has begun to bear fruit and its seeds have started to grow across international borders. Educational programs modeled on El Sistema are springing up in the United States, Europe, and many countries in Latin America.