



THE LAVERTON MUSIC PROJECT



In August 2008, **Sistema Australia** was established to create a music program to change the lives of Australian children and young people—particularly those within communities suffering from disadvantage and disassociation. In May 2011, our first music pilot began at Laverton, in Melbourne, Victoria, with 30 primary school children...

Especially named, **“Crashendo!”**, the Laverton Music Project pilot is based on the 36-year long social action phenomenon known as “El Sistema” —“The System”—from Venezuela in South America.



*... a music program
to change the lives of
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young people. . .*

Established by a Venezuelan economist and classical pianist, Jose Antonio Abreu, he sought to bring his love of beautiful classical music to children in Venezuela, especially those from the “Barrios” or slums of the major cities there. It grew from the creation of a small children’s orchestra back in 1975, to a Venezuela-wide, 300,000-strong, children children’s and youth orchestra and choir federation—supporting over 250 orchestras and choirs daily.

The System is supported by a range of government and international sourced funding—the Inter American Development Bank (IADB), who financed a \$150,000,000 support program to develop and extend El Sistema within Venezuela, from its current 300,000 to over a million children. The IADB established that for every dollar spent on the program, it yields \$1.34 back in social dividends, staving off future social problems including drug and alcohol abuse, and violent crime prevalent in the poorer parts of Venezuela.

El Sistema has now spread around the world, with pilot programs underway in the USA, Scotland, England, Canada, New Zealand, Spain, Austria and several South American countries. There are over 40 separate projects in the USA alone.

Whilst Australia has quite different conditions from Venezuela, similar issues also severely affect our country—poverty, social inequity and youth disassociation are increasing, particularly in our ever-expanding urban environments, which lead to similar negative effects to those experienced in in many countries around the world, including Australia.

*... the person
who plays in an
orchestra begins to
live the experience
of agreement*



The Laverton music program was established with the following principles:

- the provision of an intensive music program for children, within the community of an orchestra, based on instrument tuition in the context of ensemble and choir;
- making music and the creation of music available to all who want it—being inclusive;
- child-centric and focused;
- learning by doing;
- seeking and expecting excellence in their music making;
- providing a rich and powerful repertoire of difficult music;
- using the natural inclination of children to share and help each other learn things they know—every child is a teacher;
- providing love and joy through attention and application—always encouraging, never demoting;
- providing a safe environment to both fail and learn;
- allowing children of all backgrounds and upbringings to work together in mutual harmony.



*...making music...child-centric
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The Laverton Project is a tribute to collaboration—the Victoria Police, Hobsons Bay Council and Laverton College, along with Sistema Australia have partnered to establish this program. Each bring a financial and or in-kind support to the program. It is a vital and active relationship which has created a significant undertaking to change the face of their community. The Laverton project is also a part of the Victorian Cultural Renewal program set up to develop important cultural ties within the community—to build and develop cohesive and healthy community in Victoria.

The music process is simple yet powerful. We build orchestras and choirs by taking children on a musical journey. This takes them from little or no knowledge of music, to being capable, good musicians who not only can play instruments but in the context of a community of musicians—the orchestra. It subtly develops teamwork, self-esteem, patience, respect, focus, concentration, and all the while building a musician out of the child.

Learning to play a musical instrument and experiencing music through playing also significantly helps a developing child's brain cognitively. It is also understood to enhance children's abilities in other areas of learning—particularly in reading, arithmetic calculations, and in memory. Learning read music and playing an instrument strongly develops the powers of concentration too. Music is a powerful tool and something which is vital to our development as entire, well adjusted and intelligent human beings.

The most powerful thing that this program offers, is its ability to subtly imbue its participants with a level of socialisation unmatched by similar activities, such as sport or youth development schemes—making music is an intrinsic part of being human; making music together forms bonds based on friendship, teamwork, trust, respect, solidarity, harmony, mutual compassion and joy. There are no losers in this game. As El Sistema's founder, Jose Antonio Abreu states:

"An orchestra is a community where the essential and exclusive feature is that it is the only community that comes together with the fundamental objective of agreeing with itself. Agree on what? To create beauty..."



**SISTEMA** *Australia*

Music to fill children's lives with joy

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