

Lisbon, Portugal

Symphony Orchestras for young people : Orquestra Geração

Organising classical musical orchestras in schools with young people from Lisbon's challenging districts and in areas of social exclusion is *Orquestra Geração's* model to engage families, local communities and institutions in a collective movement for social inclusion – a new relationship with schools which opens up new horizons.

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In Lisbon and its surroundings, *Orquestra Geração* ('Generation Orchestra') is a programme for social inclusion through music, primarily focused on children and adolescents who are socially and educationally vulnerable. It is an orchestral programme for young people in mainstream education, prioritising schools with poor attendance and high drop-out rates, together with social problems related to socio-economic and multi-cultural difficulties.

The programme is inspired by Venezuela's youth orchestra programme *El Sistema*, but has developed its own way of involving families and the local community whilst keeping the school as the central strategic point.

It has been operating in Portugal since 2005 in the metropolitan area of Greater Lisbon and in some other towns in the centre and north of the country. There are 16 active orchestras, mostly connected to areas of deprivation, involving more than 800 youngsters attending musical training activities coordinated by the National Conservatory School of Music.

The partnership is very diverse in its makeup and objectives, connecting schools, foundations, government departments, music schools, local communities, local government and technical coordination agencies, as well as volunteers, working together collaboratively to develop the programme and its transfer to other regions of the country.

The programme has been supported throughout its development – from its experimental beginnings to date – by public and private funding – ESF, ERDF, national public funds (central and local government) and private funding from foundations and companies.

One of the winning features of the programme is the communication and marketing strategy which has made *Orquestra Geração* a famous brand name, and a kind of label for programmes of excellence in the field of social inclusion through music. The brand's value is systematically enhanced through cultural events, concerts, shows, workshops and public activities which increase its visibility throughout the school year.

The goal for 2020 is to create 140 new orchestras and to involve 7 000 young people in schools in nine regions of Portugal. In future, the programme will be coordinated by a new association made up of the current partners.

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On Google, there are well over a million results for *Orquestra Geração*: links to concerts in large venues, magazine and newspaper articles, television reports, YouTube videos, institutions of all types, including university scientific studies. Why such an interest in a programme for social inclusion and regional cohesion?

Orquestra Geração is a name used independently of the 16 centres currently using it to cross-reference activities throughout the country. In 2005, it started as a little adventure in an area of Amadora on the northern periphery of Lisbon. In 2012, it is now a solid project ready to expand and to influence Portuguese social inclusion methodology and government policy.



Orquestra Geração A música para todos

Team spirit breeds self-confidence

Orquestra Geração is not simply a programme for learning music at school, but is above all focused on social inclusion and a better quality of life in deprived neighbourhoods.

The formula is quite simple. Helena Lima, the programme's head teacher, describes the orchestras in the following manner: *'Their focus is on social inclusion through music, in particular for children and adolescents who are socially and educationally vulnerable, and on developing an orchestral programme for young people in mainstream education, particularly those schools with a high drop-out rate and difficulties, indeed conflicts, relating to multicultural relations. Its approach is centred on the group to create a strong desire for teamwork where values like collaboration, discipline, effort and respect for each other are essential. Orquestra Geração also aims to build the children and young people's self-confidence, and to broaden their cultural, career and relationship horizons, creating emotional ties with the school'*.

If we consider the experiences of the original Venezuelan model (El Sistema, launched by the Fundación del Estado para el Sistema Nacional de las Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela (FESNOJIV) and called the Social Programme for Music (*Acción Social para la Música*) when it started in 1975 – and of the French School Orchestras programme, we could have doubted the notion that such a barely centralised system, with so much focus on the need for local proximity, would be able to structure projects and partnerships at local level.

The young maestro José Jesus Olivetti, who regularly attends the orchestras' performances outside Venezuela and particularly those in Portugal, agrees: *'The ties that we establish among us are firstly through music, but there are other permanent ties made at other levels. We are all aware that the closeness of us all to each other is essential, for the children, teachers and parents, it's the same thing: trust has to be built as we move forward. The music is of course the soul of this whole*

thing. The maestro José Antonio Abreu says that music is spirituality – it's the most marvellous thing, and that's what we live on a daily basis with these little children whom we work with in Orquestra Geração'.



Helena Lima – National Conservatory School of Music



Maestro José Jesus Olivetti

Today in Portugal, Orquestra Geração involves 846 young people, 16 schools (with 9 650 students) with a presence in 11 towns (Loures, Oeiras, Sintra, Amadora, Sesimbra, Vila Franca de Xira, Lisboa, Coimbra, Mirandela, Amarante and Murça). Four music schools give music lessons (EMCN – National Conservatory School of Music of Lisbon, EMCC – Conservatory School of Music of Coimbra, Esproarte in Mirandela and schools in Vialonga). The goal for 2020 is to reach 154 schools, involve 7 700 students and have a presence in nine regions of the country.

'The Orquestras Geração are so loving' is how Wagner Diniz, a teacher at the National Conservatory of Music, describes the project which he enthusiastically developed alongside Jorge Miranda (at the time working for the Amadora Council) and Luisa Valle (director of the Gulbenkian Foundation).

Even though the concept designers stated that their starting point was precisely to not reinvent the wheel, we can see that from co-creation, new horizons have opened up as well as key ideas:

- Music for all: it was bold to take classical music – traditionally seen as belonging to the country's social elite – and to take music education – previously seen as more of a hobby in schools and not taken seriously – to develop a programme for social inclusion in Portugal. The innovation began with the fact that the needs identified were not exclusive to under-privileged social groups.
- If everyone agrees, it cannot be the answer. The project thrives on combining contrasting and different views. Designers sought examples beyond their normal environments and mind-sets (usually ethnic music, sport, new technology, social networks, etc.), as answers from outside normal paradigm-thinking bring about profound change.
- Being narrow-minded is to forget the 'big picture'. A common point had to be found for the different variables (the young person, his/her family, his/her peer group, the school and local community) and one has to look for complementary aspects to create a balance, so as not to provoke negative reactions through either over-emphasising one area or ignoring another. Take an integrated approach to the whole scenario.
- Excellence creates objectivity, gathers energy and brings people together. Reflecting on developing a child or pre-adolescent's self-worth brought about the need to work locally with different models of excellence (classical music orchestra) and thus the possibility of incorporating ideas from other social and cultural contexts than those of the individual district and its residents. Accessibility, practical experience and living a certain reality bring about profound change.
- Chance helps those who look for it: the model – using classical music and the El Sistema model – came about through chance, bringing together certain individuals at a given time. The

essence of the idea together with the desire to find creative solutions, were already in the consciousness of the programme's founders. It was a chance meeting that strongly united the notion of the emotional elements as well as the need for closeness between all those involved in the project at all levels of responsibility. Informal relationships inspire easy innovation and creativity.

The school as a central point

For a social inclusion model to be centred on the school and involve the local community (and consequently be less focused on individual social development), three levels of innovation were required: socio-environmental mediation (school-district), negotiation with schools to make new space for music teaching in the curriculum, and finally, the collective uptake of a transparency towards young people and their families to manage realistic expectations of the programme and its success.

Realistic expectations had to be managed in terms of future career paths, and to integrate music, orchestral work, ethnicity and the relationships of all involved so that the experience could be contextualised into tools for self-worth and good citizenship.



Isalcino Sousa

Isalcino Sousa is 17 years old and is now a student at the National Conservatory Music School. He has been enthusiastic about the project from the start, and says: *'it wasn't clear at the beginning that music was going to become so important in my life. It was the chance to travel and do things outside the district that tempted me at the beginning. But now I live for my instrument and I want to go further'*.

Isalcino is not alone in overcoming barriers that exist for everyone who wants music to be a starting point for their professional careers. Daria Tofanescu, a young girl who trained with

Orquestra Geração, has just won first prize for flute at the Festival Internacional de Terras de La Salette. There will certainly be other cases in future, but the idea is not to exclude alternatives to classical music; jazz and other styles of music are all possibilities for partnerships with student development. (Hot Club in Portugal, the most famous Portuguese jazz centre, is an example).

Managing the expectations and the professional careers of students in music is becoming very important so as to avoid frustration, and therefore poses fresh challenges. Schools in challenging neighbourhoods must work on the collective competencies of music teachers involved in this notion of social development from within the school, with regard to direction and individual skills; this bias takes on a new technical and educational dimension. Through reforming methodology and valuing the role of mediation in balance with music teaching, a new paradigm of a 'social artist' is created, quite the opposite of the classic profile of a school teacher.

A network of helpful connections and financial support in stages

The pilot project in Amadora occurred because of this perspective of supportive exchange. At the same time that the project was consolidating itself in the original neighbourhood of Boba, a second pilot was started on the basis of the URBACT MILE¹ Fast Track project integrating new aspects of methodology.

The project was also financed by the EQUAL Community Initiative, part of the European Social Fund, in its first post-trial phase. The partnership for the projects included the Council of Amadora,

¹ MILE was an acronym standing for Managing Integration at the Local Level. The project focused on disadvantaged neighbourhoods

the Gulbenkian Foundation, EMCN – the National Conservatory Music School, and other partners like ACIDI – the High Commission for Immigration and International Dialogue. In 2008, another private partner, the EDP (Energias de Portugal) Foundation, got involved and financed musical instruments for this phase of development.

Other foundations and businesses will be giving financial support to performances which will take place after Amadora's first phase, and the Ministries of Education and Internal Administration will be contributing significant resources to enable the project to be continued in schools and disadvantaged neighbourhoods.



Carlos Humberto de Carvalho (Chairman) and Sofia Cid (General Secretary) of JML, the Lisbon–Setúbal Metropolitan Council

With finance from the ERDF Lisbon operational programme (POR Lisboa 2009-2012), the programme has reached a new level of national importance. Finance from a higher national level has enabled the programme to reach a higher status, that of a policy in the public interest, thanks to the current inter-institutional dynamics. The involvement of the Ministry of Education (which decided to finance the music teachers' salaries) is strengthened by the fact that the programme is of public interest and is strategically linked to socio-environmental policies.

In summary, the finance came together in several stages with very diverse support (from public to private, from local to national, to European funds) which successfully found common interests and goals in alignment with each institution's individual profile:

- Local government in the Lisbon region (Amadora, Loures, Sintra, Oeiras, Vila Franca de Xira, Sesimbra, Lisboa) and in other regions of the country (Coimbra, Amarante, Mirandela, Murça). This represents a local government average of €159 500 per year for four years of activity;
- The ERDF contributed through the Lisbon operational programme (€352 490) and gave help to establish a local support group through the URBACT Fast Track programme, which supported the initial transfer of knowledge between districts, and favoured a consistent model for the programme;
- The ESF financed the first pilot phase under the EQUAL programme with €747 850. Public finance totalled €1 004 965;
- The Ministry of Education met all of the programme's music teachers' salaries and the Ministry of Internal Administration financed the programme in three schools in Loures associated with local security contracts;
- The Gulbenkian Foundation, EDP and Portugal Telecom financed specific (and sometimes specialised) aspects with very different amounts (EDP Foundation met the entire cost of the orchestras which had a direct connection with their dam programmes in the north of the country);
- Companies like Centralcer and Chamartin-Dolce Vita financed programmes near their headquarters or aligned with their commercial activities.

A flexible partnership

The basic partnership in the Lisbon-Setúbal region – AML (the metropolitan authority), the EMCN, foundations, ministries, big businesses and local groups – expanded to other regions of the country, and to other organisations and institutions. The profile, though, of participating parties is essentially the following:

- Ministries: the ministries principally finance the human resource costs relating to the music teaching in the schools, that is the music teachers (with the exception of Amarante, Mirandela and Murça).
- Local authorities: AML – the Association of Greater Lisbon and Setúbal – manages the technical and institutional coordination of the programme, the communication budget (website and other multimedia) and carries out optimisation of financial resources, particularly the central purchasing of instruments, which generates massive savings. The local authorities organise their local activities, liaise with the schools and give invaluable logistical support.
- Music schools: they create a curriculum to adapt the global methodology to their local contexts, and are in certain cases directly responsible for the development of the music teaching programme outside the school.
- Mainstream schools (and the Ministry of Education) deal with the legal aspects of the orchestra's extra-curricular activities, and the programme's complementary activities including the financing and teaching of classes in the arts and other fields.
- Foundations and major companies: the notion of corporate social responsibility harnesses not-for-profit bodies such as the Gulbenkian Foundation, EDP (Energias de Portugal) Foundation and Portugal Telecom Foundation along with profit-making companies like Centralcer, the Beers and Chamartin Group and Dolce Vita. The EDP Foundation has its own programme in regions where it operates dams, which makes it a special case in that it finances all the programme's costs and investments in those regions (through the Dam Integrated Programme).
- Universities are involved in specialist tasks: IGOT, the Institute of Geography and Land Management of Lisbon University, is evaluating the programme, while ISCTE, through its Business School INDEG, supports local activities.
- Media partners like the SAPO web portal, RDP and RTP advertise the programme at no cost.



The institutions involved have found ways to participate through informal and easy collaboration, which has characterised the partnership since the outset with the close and engaged relationships between the programme's pioneers – Wagner Diniz, Jorge Miranda, Luisa Valle, Helena Lima, João Afonso and Joaquim Raposo.

A sophisticated marketing strategy

The orchestras' marketing has been based on various strategic pillars. There is a system of media partners, and use is also made of the communication systems of the large foundations and groups of companies who are partners in the project. The website of AML (the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon) plays a role, as does local advertising placed by local authorities in newspapers and online. Events

and concerts have been held in prestigious national and international theatres (including in Brussels). The project has also attracted television and multi-media attention. Some orchestras have won prizes at international competitions, and in 2011 Filipa Reis and João Miller Guerra made a documentary film called *Orquestra Geração*. The EQUAL Community Initiative made large investment in the project's marketing during its consolidation phase, and today social networks enable up-to-the-minute news and exchanges at all levels. Very networked individuals such as key figures of state, the Queen of Jordan and musical maestros have been brought in to reinforce the orchestras' name and the prestige. The orchestras have been awarded the state's 'Prize of Recognition – Education 2010-2011'. Finally great attention is paid to the orchestras' design and image: they share the same colour scheme, and ensure that the focus is on the children and the instruments.



The Queen of Jordan with the Mayor of Amadora and the President of the Gulbenkian Foundation

It took real collaboration to transfer the experience from the first districts of Amadora to others in the Lisbon region and then to towns in the centre and north of the country. This was done in various ways, and four techniques played an essential role.

First, **politics** was brought into play, by linking the solution the project was putting forward – socially and educationally – with the demands of the political situation. The need for integrated, intense and efficient action in 'difficult' districts was the order of the day, as the government at the time had reacted to events in several European towns with a plan called the *Iniciativa Barrios Criticos*, and the project was in line with these concerns, even though its impact was in the medium to long term. The region wanted to increase the plethora of innovative projects to support a national strategy at a time of administrative reorganisation, so the Minister of Education asked schools to put into operation the concept of the 'full-time school', in other words, to organise extra-curricular activities at school. Music was welcome in this would-be reorganisation.

Secondly, **professional values**: by linking the project's activities to structural needs. Given the fragility of musical education in schools, the project won over the music teachers to a cause and at the same time created a professional opportunity for dozens of young teachers who found a salaried role while learning new skills through working on the specific methodology of music teaching.

The thirdly important lever was **methodology and technical know-how**. The practical evidence from the trial period was presented as the fruit of methodology and technical know-how with a more global value and application, which simultaneously opened up the possibility of redesigning the project to integrate new any aspects that might be required. There was a perspective of valuing the basic model and recognising its principles, combined with a spirit of openness and of negotiation to facilitate the inclusion of all wishing to join in and put in place a project in their own area.

Lastly, **social ties**: emotions play a great role in the dynamic involved in the execution of the project. The relationship between the institutional players develops as the results appear, and

nobody can stay indifferent to the first steps of the orchestras and to the collective results which rapidly affect the families and the school as a whole. The arguments for adopting the project are also emotional in nature, and are principally structured around images and moments lived in the past. If we consider the strategic cycle of innovation transfer, we have in this case a strong valorisation of converging aspects, an adaptation dynamic which is less significant as there is a very established basic model, and yet on the other hand, a very consistent appropriation and a shared self-evaluation. Knowing that political support is present, one of the determining factors for the success of the national expansion is that dissemination and transfer be carried out locally with success.

Bridges between people, communities and cities

Some pitfalls of different natures and degrees of importance have already been identified, such as the large amount of finance required for each orchestra, the limits of responsibility, on a large scale, for educational coordination by EMCN (the National Conservatory School of Music), not to mention the need for synchronisation between planned events at different steps of the project, depending on financial flows and the timely adaptation of public administrative procedures. Facing these major difficulties, one could say that the current partners could work on strategies to make the project viable after financial support ends.

The key points of the success of the project are above all: a humanist approach to social inclusion; an integrated strategy which builds bridges between individuals, communities and cities; partnerships based on trust and personal inter-institutional involvement; large and active networks of influence; and a coherent and well supported marketing strategy.

The humanist approach to social inclusion is mentioned here in contrast to 'social interventions' by 'social inclusion consultants' who intervene in deprived areas with established programmes and preventive 'social peace' goals – an approach which is far from having an interest in the development of people and of the very young in particular. Here, the starting point is the need for the emotional engagement and social recognition of each and all, and in particular pre-adolescents who are right in the middle of their socialisation and construction of their attitudes and future behaviours.



Bridges between people, communities and areas are built around a concept of 'sharing of worlds' and an acceptance that young people are at the centre of all action. The mediation which is indispensable at the beginning diminishes as the programme develops.

The project's partners have all gained from its success and expansion. But the key is to be clear that success is represented first and foremost by the young people and their personal projects. When engagement is established on this basis, personalised cooperation builds together into a real collective dynamism, focused on the essence of the programme.

A programme to instil changes in schools, mobilise local authorities, involve local communities and engage powerful institutions needs to be able to exert influence, make arguments to those in power and be heard by those in authority to create favourable dynamics and stimulate those involved. For its success, a mesh of diverse wishes and collaboration is required.

Communication and marketing has been the key tool to rally all dimensions of the project around a single positive and affirmative platform, by communicating simple yet categorical messages: excellence does not have socially privileged boundaries; the egalitarian nature of luck as a starting point which needs to be fed by collective effort and a large personal investment; music and the celebration together of the results of persistent and disciplined work reinforces the identity and opens up horizons with new values.

The project depends on a complex partnership dynamic to build on the core teaching model and the system of orchestras progressing up a ladder from local to national activities. With these aspects in place, the Generation Orchestra should continue to be an excellent platform for social inclusion and local development.

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