

Music City Youth Orchestra  
*A proposal to establish the Harmony Project*

Executive Summary

**What?** Pursuing its mission *to attract and educate the youth of our community about the life importance of music*, the Music City Youth Orchestra (MCYO) will establish an afterschool music education outreach called the Harmony Project. The Harmony Project will be an exemplary program for creating opportunities for low-income and minority youth to enjoy the benefits of learning and performing live music. The Harmony Project is a unique social intervention which builds on the strengths of the community, using an intensive, ensemble-based music program.



The use of a music program as a social intervention to combat the impacts of poverty might not seem to be an intuitive response, but research and experience have shown that it is indeed an effective programmatic solution for the community. Inspired by the philosophy of the musical youth development program, El Sistema, the goals and outcomes of the Harmony Project are *social*, as well as, *musical*.

**Why?** Many Nashville students lack equitable access to the arts – especially music education which is often costly due to the expense involved in purchasing and maintaining an instrument and the need for private instruction. However, extensive research draws strong links between music education and academic achievement in elementary and middle school years that eventually impact a student’s ability to graduate from high school.

Music education brings many benefits to children beyond music competence and appreciation. It prepares students to learn, facilitates academic achievement, and develops creative coping capacities.

**When?** Pilot underway January - May 2016; ongoing program waiting on sustaining funds.

**More information?** Please contact Executive Director LeAnn Austin; LeAnn@musiccityyo.org; 615-200-6296, or Program Director Heather Martin; Heather@musiccityyo.org

**Who will Harmony serve? Starting with elementary schools, Harmony will grow to eventually serve more than 500 children like Neli.**

*Neli is a shy, 12-year-old Cambodian American. Her mother abandoned Neli’s father and the two girls eight years ago; the little family struggles on. Neli’s viola, and her daily time in an El Sistema-inspired program, have become her refuge, where she can always count on warmth, harmony, and freedom from care.*

Profile credit: *El Sistema USA!*  
[http://jamiebernstein.net/el\\_sistema\\_usa.html](http://jamiebernstein.net/el_sistema_usa.html)