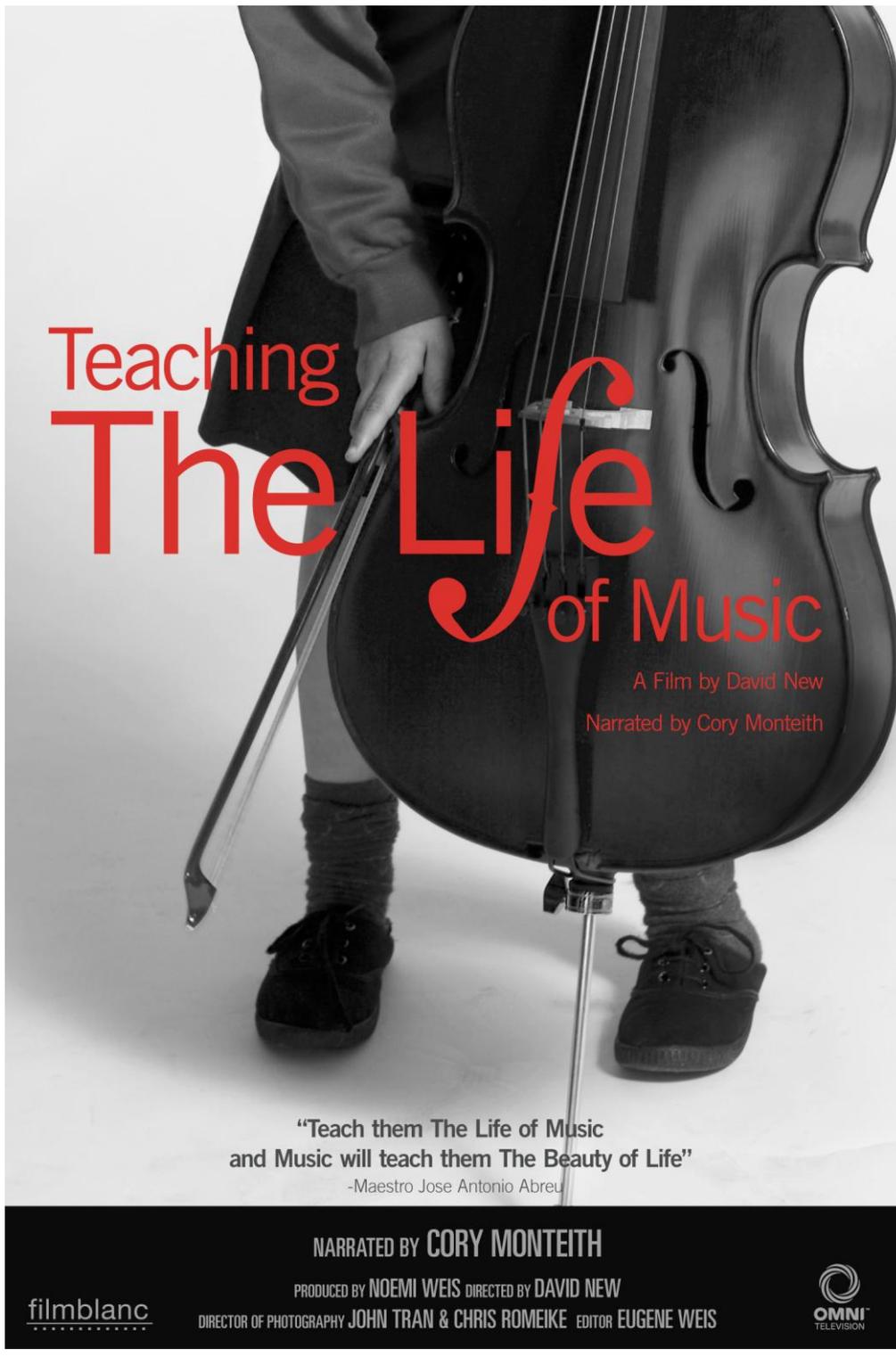


# Teaching the Life of Music



## Teaching The Life of Music

A Film by David New  
Narrated by Cory Monteith

"Teach them The Life of Music  
and Music will teach them The Beauty of Life"

-Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu

NARRATED BY CORY MONTEITH

**filmblanc**  
\*\*\*\*\*

PRODUCED BY NOEMI WEIS DIRECTED BY DAVID NEW  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN TRAN & CHRIS ROMEIKE EDITOR EUGENE WEIS



# MEDIA COVERAGE

### **Five Worth Watching on Sunday**

The Toronto Star/ thestar.com

Debra Yeo

January 20, 2012

Print/Online

Mention

Link: <http://www.thestar.com/article/1118955--five-worth-watching-on-sunday>

**Music to the Soul:** El Sistema has reached more than 350,000 children since it was founded 36 years ago in Venezuela as a way to counteract poverty and violence through music education. The documentary *Teaching the Life of Music* looks at the program's impact in Canada, the U.S. and Scotland, where El Sistema's goals have been applied to local kids and communities. Calgary-born, Victoria-raised Cory Monteith (Finn on *Glee*) narrates (OMNI at 9).

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### **Documentary brings music to the masses**

Insidetoronto.com

Justin Skinner

January 21, 2012

Online

Interviews/photo

Link: [http://www.insidetoronto.com/what\\_s%20on/article/1283121--documentary-brings-music-to-the-masses](http://www.insidetoronto.com/what_s%20on/article/1283121--documentary-brings-music-to-the-masses)

### **Documentary brings music to the masses**

#### **Downtown residents turn camera on El Sistema**



*Teaching for Life*. Founder of El Sistema, Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu is joined by the three kids – Peter, left, Pegless and Daniella – featured in the documentary film *Teaching the Life of Music*. From its humble roots in Venezuela to its latest incarnation in Toronto, El Sistema has helped hundreds of thousands of children enrich their lives through music. The organization, founded in 1975 by Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu, helps at-risk children find a positive outlet and uses music to help them develop in various ways.

Now the organization is the subject of a documentary film, *Teaching the Life of Music*, which was produced by downtown Toronto resident Noemi Weis and directed by Annex resident David New.

The film looks at El Sistema and the impact it has had on children not only in Venezuela but in Canada, the United States and Scotland. It follows the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra on a recent visit to Canada.

Weis, the founder of the documentary film company Filmblanc, first decided to shine the spotlight on El Sistema when Abreu won the Glenn Gould Prize for his contributions to music. "Once I started to read about (El Sistema), I was fascinated by how they were able to do something with these kids before bad things happened to them," she said. "This is preventative; what filled my heart was that it showed how we could help kids."

While Abreu started his work in Venezuela, the template he used could be transplanted virtually anywhere. El Sistema made inroads into Canada when it started up at Parkdale Junior and Senior Public School in September.

"I wanted to show the impact of a Third World country like Venezuela helping a country like our own," Weis said. The producer, whose previous films have tackled heady subjects such as violence against women in *Let's Talk About It* and the lesbian, gay, bi and transgender (LGBT) community around the world in *Gloriously Free*, pointed out the goal of the program is not to create professional musicians, but rather it aims to give children a way to avoid negative influences and build character. "This is about creating better human beings," she said. New got involved with the project once it was already underway. He had volunteered to help out as needed and took on the directorial reins in full once the original director bowed out. The director was aware of the good work being done by El Sistema and found the subject matter right up his alley. "The idea of using the arts to help disadvantaged kids is something I've had an interest in for a while and I worked on a couple of films that dealt with that that didn't end up getting made," he said. "Using music to improve the lives of young people was along the lines of things I wanted to do." New said the film was challenging because there was so much going on when the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra visited Canada. His aim was to showcase the importance of programs like El Sistema - and of music education as a whole - by highlighting the positive impact such organizations have. "It's kind of an advocacy film for music education in schools," he said. "Music education should be for everyone, not just the ones who can afford private lessons." *Teaching the Life of Music* will air on OMNI Television in English at 9 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 22 and in Spanish at 8 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 29.

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### **Impact of El Sistema**

Metro

November 29, 2011

Print/Online

Mention and Photo

Link: [http://reader.metronews.ca/digital\\_launch.aspx?id=1b56e40a-bc8e-42f4-ba84-9044cfd1d64&pnum=6](http://reader.metronews.ca/digital_launch.aspx?id=1b56e40a-bc8e-42f4-ba84-9044cfd1d64&pnum=6)

Music. Education



► "First lady of the guitar" Liona Boyd, left, Jack Lenz of Lenz Entertainment, and Noemi Weis, producer and writer of *Teaching The Life of Music* at the film's screening yesterday at the Isabel Bader Theatre.

## Impact of El Sistema

El Sistema is a voluntary music education program in Venezuela. *Teaching the Life of Music* focuses on its impact in Canada, the U.S., and Scotland, where individuals have started their own organizations to attract kids from the lowest income brackets in their respective countries.

### Teaching the Life of Music

CBC radio

January 20, 2012

Radio/Online

Radio interview

Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/hereandnowtoronto/episodes/2012/01/20/teaching-the-life-of-music/>

### Teaching the Life of Music

Music has been called the universal language. Now, it's transforming the lives of low income children. **Naiomi Weis** is the writer and producer of **Teaching the Life of Music**. It's new documentary that examines the impact of an international movement called **El Sistema** and how it teaches children to do more than read music notes.

[Listen](#) (runs 7:45)

*"Teaching the Life of Music"* airs Sunday night at 9 o'clock on OMNI Television.

### Five Worth Watching on Sunday

Toronto.com

January 20, 2012

Online

Mention

Link: <http://www.toronto.com/article/710841--five-worth-watching-on-sunday>

**Music to the Soul:** El Sistema has reached more than 350,000 children since it was founded 36 years ago in Venezuela as a way to counteract poverty and violence through music education. The documentary *Teaching the Life of Music* looks at the program's impact in Canada, the U.S. and

Scotland, where El Sistema's goals have been applied to local kids and communities. Calgary-born, Victoria-raised Cory Monteith (Finn on *Glee*) narrates (OMNI at 9).

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### **All for the love of film**

Times Colonist

January 29, 2012

Online

Mention

Link: <http://www.timescolonist.com/entertainment/movie-guide/love+film/6069060/story.html>

"Victoria native Cory Monteith of *Glee* fame also has a notable presence at the festival, as narrator of *Teaching the Life of Music*, David New's documentary about how music is transforming the lives of at-risk youths in Venezuela..."

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### **Sisters Role a Glee-ful detour for Monteith**

Times Colonist

February 2, 2012

Online

Mention

Link: <http://www.timescolonist.com/entertainment/movie-guide/Sisters+role+Glee+full+detour+Monteith/6089817/story.html>

"Monteith is also featured, as narrator, in another festival entry close to his heart - *Teaching the Life of Music*. David New's documentary is about El Sistema, maestro José Abreu's celebrated program that provides underprivileged children and at-risk youths in Venezuela with free music education and instruments. It has inspired the creation of similar organizations worldwide.

"It couldn't be more aligned with what I want to do," says Monteith, who has played drums since he was seven and has firsthand experience with the transformative power of music. He has overcome his own problems, including substance abuse and "hooliganism" in his high school years. The onetime Wal-Mart greeter and Bluebird Taxi driver famously landed his *Glee* gig after creatively drumming on Tupperware, glasses and coffee mugs with a pencil on his audition tape. He says he can relate to how people's lives can be changed through the arts, the program's inspiring objective.

"That is absolutely synonymous with everything the show that I am on stands for, and any kind of impact I hope to have on people through my work," says Monteith.

He said he'll do anything he can to promote a system like El Sistema, and hopes the film will inspire others to do so..."

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## **Saving Lives, One Note at a Time**

Digital Journal

Cate Kustanczy

January 22, 2012

Online

Interview/3 images

Link: <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/318298>

Teaching The Life Of Music explores the life-changing (and sometimes life-saving) effects of a music program pioneered in the barrios of Venezuela and brought to Canada.

There was something compelling about investigating the work of [El Sistema](#) on Martin Luther King Jr Day. The inspiring strains of "We Shall Overcome" was an interesting complement to the classical music I'd been listening to moments before, played by the [Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra](#).

The orchestra is a product of the venerable Venezuelan music program, its members coming from some of Caracas' poorest neighbourhoods. [Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu](#) created El Sistema in 1975 as a way of setting underprivileged kids on the right path, away from the violence and poverty that characterized their neighbourhoods, and onto a brighter future, one not necessarily tied to professional musicianship, but to experiencing a sense of community within the context of learning and enrichment on intellectual, social, and spiritual levels. "We shall overcome" became "we overcame" for many students involved with El Sistema.

Currently over 300,000 Venezuelan children are involved in the program. Publicly financed and run entirely by volunteers, the program watches over Venezuela's 125 youth orchestras and formally runs thirty-one of them. The program has met with considerable success outside its native borders, a success explored in the new documentary [Teaching The Life Of Music](#), airing tonight at 9pm on Canada's OMNI channel (it's re-broadcast on Spanish OMNI January 29th at 8pm). The work explores El Sistema's effects within a (mainly) Canadian context, with [Ottawa's Leading Note Foundation](#) (which supports the city's OrKidstra) and its students are featured prominently. Three budding musicians re portrayed in a journey -physical, creative, and spiritual -to see [the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra perform live at the Rogers Centre in Toronto in 2009](#). Maestro Abreu (who at the time of filming been [awarded the Glenn Gould Prize](#)) is also interviewed, and [Glee's Corey Monteith provides narration](#).

Writer-Producer Noemi Weis says El Sistema offers "a sense of community" to children who might otherwise be surrounded by negative influences, helping them become better people and citizens. The Buenos Aires-born Weis has a history of getting behind socially-relevant television and film work through her company, [Film Blanc](#). "Because I work on human rights films and social issues in general, I like to raise awareness," she says. Making films about groups like El Sistema are, for her, part of a solution; The Life Of Music provides initiative for parents and educators to become more involved in their communities and to place greater value on arts programming in schools.

"One of the missions of the film is to show that art is important in the life of a child." Weis explains. "(Art) enriches the soul and gives kids all kinds of possibilities to develop themselves." Weis sought what she terms "an ambassador" to provide narration, someone who could easily identify with the film's mission of music being a lifeline to underprivileged children. "Corey (Monteith) is perfect," Weis says. "He didn't have a happy upbringing, and ...music really helped him through it all. When we saw a small clip I sent over, he felt compelled by the stories and wanted to be part of it."

But just because she produced a movie called Teaching The Life of Music doesn't mean she thinks El Sistema was created to inspire more young people to actually live a real life of (or for) music. "The intention is not to create more musicians -that's not the goal," she says. "I'm not a classical music fan myself. This (film) is inspired by music, (which) is just a tool to make a change and to save kids, to get them off the streets... but music is a byproduct of the whole thing."

That might explain the absence of Maestro Gustavo Dudamel in the film, who is only glimpsed at signing autographs during the Orchestra's visit, but is not interviewed or even mentioned. Currently Artistic Director of the SBYO, he is also the Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Principal Conductor of the Gothenberg Symphony. It's a surprising omission, considering the Venezuelan Dudamel, [with his wavy dark hair and dynamic live conducting style](#), is perhaps [El Sistema's best-known and most widely admired ambassador](#).

"The movie is about the impact of El Sistema outside of Venezuela," Weis states firmly. "In creating this project, what I wanted to do was capitalize on the thirty-six years of (the program) doing this wonderful work and how a third world country like Venezuela can impact a first world country like ours. Dudamel is part of (the film), but not the purpose."

The actual purpose, she says, is to spread the word about the program and its life-changing (some would argue life-saving) effects. She and her Film Blanc cohorts hope that through various domestic and international screenings, new relationships between El Sistema groups can be fostered and cultivated. And there's another effect Weis hopes Teaching The Life Of Music will have.

"We hope the government will take notice of it. It's mistaken to think art should be the first thing to go when there are budget cuts. Art should not be an addition."

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### **Cory Monteith and Omni3 To Host "Teaching the Life of Music"**

LiveJournal

January 21, 2012

Online

Mention

Link: <http://ontd-gee.livejournal.com/1605774.html> <http://www.thestar.com/article/1118955-five-worth-watching-on-sunday>

While CityTV is premiering J.J. Abram's latest mind-bender *Alcatraz*, SPACE is celebrating the return of *Merlin*, and *Four Weddings* is making its big Canadian debut, **OMNI** is going will strike a pose of its own amongst all the mid-season action this January. On Sunday, January 22 at 9 p.m. ET, Canada's first ever multilingual/multicultural channel is set to host the world broadcast premiere of the Noemi Weis-produced David New film *Teaching the Life of Music*. Narrated by actor Cory Monteith (Finn from *Glee*), the illuminating feature centres on the El Sistema music organization, which uses music education to transform the lives of children in violent and impoverished environments by giving them healthy (as well as passionate and discipline-driven) lives. The lessons don't just enrich the students' lives though, their reach extends to the students' communities too. An inspiring group, El Sistema's model has influenced similar programs in Ottawa, Toronto, and other cities across the globe, the combined impact of which is something *Life of Music* captures in spades. To date, the organization, founded 36 years ago by Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu, has reached over 350,000 youths, arguably the most famous is L.A. Philharmonic Orchestra director Gustavo Dudamel. Visit OMNI's official [site](#) for more channel and programming info.

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## **January 13, 2012. Daniel Garber Interviews Noemi Weis Producer of Doc “Teaching the Life of Music”**

Wordpress.com

Daniel Garber

January 13, 2012

Online

Interview (audio)/photos

Link: <http://danielgarber.wordpress.com/2012/01/21/january-13-2012-daniel-garber-interviews-noemi-weis-producer-of-doc-teaching-the-life-of-music-for-ciut-89-5fm/>

A new documentary, “Teaching the Life of Music”, produced by Canadian filmmaker Noemi Weis, explains the international cultural phenomenon known as El Sistema (the system). It’s a social program, originally from Venezuela, that uses music to advance the lives of marginalized and underprivileged youth. Noemi talks about El Sistema and her documentary in this interview.

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## **Back to the future in the key of gee**

James Wegg Review

James Wegg

Online

Review/Photos

Link: <http://www.jamesweggreview.org/Articles.aspx?ID=1087>

Back to the future in the key of gee



Thirty-six years ago economist-musician José Antonio Abreu began the now fabled music-as-social-healer program in Venezuela and the Nepean Symphony Orchestra was laying the groundwork to largely staff the Symphony School and perform dozens of in-school concerts annually in Ottawa.

How absolutely marvellous that David New’s *Teaching the Life of Music* focusses both on the still thriving South American training ground (spawning, most notably, conductor Gustavo Dudamel—**cross reference below**) and the recently established (2007) The Leading Note Foundation which aims to provide disadvantaged inner-city youth in Canada’s capital with an outlet for their musical expression. Realizing that one of the movers and shakers in this ambitious enterprise partook of the Nepean experience all of those years ago conclusively proves that once bitten by the music bug at an early age, lifelong involvement in our most universal art frequently results.

Looking back at my formative years, after-school music classes (group lessons, weekly) were well attended. A paper-only assessment came back with the news that “clarinet” would be best for me (more likely a case of instrumental supply theory). But there was little enjoyment until that magical day in Grade 9 when I had my first private lesson from a senior student

who actually knew how to remedy my considerable deficiencies. In those heady high school years of the '60s, senior bands were typically one-hundred members strong, the annual music festival competitions had more real drama than any season of *So You Think You Can Dance* and international concert tours were not unheard of (in our time, a four-week visit to Europe made an unforgettable impression on a seventeen-year-old ...).

Sadly, for a host of reasons (budget cuts, computer mania, lack of qualified teachers, egocentric arts funding), widely taught serious music withered on the vine, forcing other organizations to pick up the torch and attempt to bring music to the masses.

Throughout the film, for some, there will be an overwhelming sense of déjà vu as the various systems in both hemispheres attempt to mould young minds into pitch-sensitive performers whether destitute, refugees, broken-home survivors or all of the above.

Highlighting the visit to Toronto by the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra in 2009 (where the main event took place not in Roy Thompson Hall but the Rogers Centre) provided many fine moments of orchestral excellence and pizzazz. With their flashy jackets and inventive choreography during the zestier numbers, the mood and feel becomes that of U.S. college football. In place of buxom, chanting cheerleaders are a number of interviews and panel discussions with Abreu, Tina Fedeski (TLNF's executive director), members of the Canadian Brass (Gene Watts giving the quote du jour: "There are really rich kids that need this" spoke volumes), the visiting musicians (~250) and their neophyte admirers.

Let's hope the film is placed on the agenda of every school board, arts funder, education department or social enterprise organization that purports to have the interests of children front and centre in their mandates. If music can be as healing, binding, invigorating and universal as the filmmakers believe, why is it left to NGOs to take on the enormous burden of handing down our most precious art? **JWR**

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### **OrKidstra Documentary on OMNI-TV**

The Leading Note Foundation

January 20, 2012

Online

Press Release

Link: <http://www.leadingnote.com/2012/01/orkidstra-documentary-on-omni-tv/>

Don't miss a wonderful opportunity to see the documentary film "Teaching the Life of Music," which features The Leading Note Foundation's OrKidstra and the amazing story of the Venezuelan youth music program that inspired it.

**Teaching the Life of Music**

**Public broadcast premiere on**

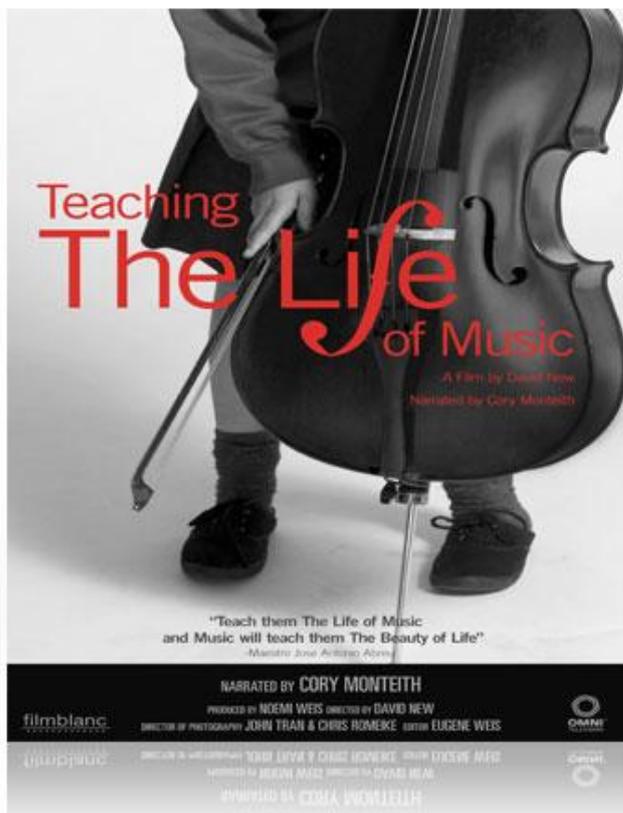
**OMNI TV1 (Rogers Cable 14)**

**Sunday, January 22nd at 9:00 pm**

About the film:

The music education program El Sistema, founded 30 years ago in the barrios of Caracas, now has over 300,000 young people playing in orchestras throughout Venezuela. Ottawa's OrKidstra, five years old and expanding fast, has 200 inner-city children taking free music lessons and making music together in orchestral ensembles and choirs. In this film, the Glenn Gould Foundation brings OrKidstra and El Sistema together... and magic happens!

Don't miss this engaging film about the power of music to enrich the lives of children and create social change.



filmblanc

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**MUSIC EDUCATION TAKES CENTRE STAGE WHEN CORY MONTEITH NARRATES ORIGINAL DOC TEACHING THE LIFE OF MUSIC, PREMIERING JAN. 22 ON OMNI TELEVISION**

Rogers Media TV Access

Nicolas Brancaccio

Online

Press Release

Link: [http://www.rogersmediatv.ca/pr\\_detail.php?id=527](http://www.rogersmediatv.ca/pr_detail.php?id=527)

MUSIC EDUCATION TAKES CENTRE STAGE WHEN CORY MONTEITH NARRATES ORIGINAL DOC TEACHING THE LIFE OF MUSIC, PREMIERING JAN. 22 ON OMNI TELEVISION

– One-hour, original documentary narrated by Canadian actor and musician, Cory Monteith –

**Filmblanc**, 1121 Bay St., Suite 1901- Toronto, Ontario- Canada –M5S 3L9, [www.filmblanc.com](http://www.filmblanc.com)

– Documentary chronicles the work of El Sistema, a venerable music education organization that has influenced the lives of more than 350,000 children –

(Toronto, Ontario – January 10, 2012) Discover music education’s transformative effect on the lives of children in OMNI Television’s original 60-minute documentary, *Teaching the Life of Music*. Narrated by Canadian actor and musician Cory Monteith (*Glee*), the documentary explores the work of Venezuelan music organization El Sistema and its impact worldwide. *Teaching the Life of Music* premieres to English-language audiences on Sunday, Jan. 22 at 9pm ET/MT/PT on OMNI.1, OMNI Alberta and OMNI BC, and makes its Spanish-language debut on Sunday, Jan. 29 at 9pm ET on OMNI.1.

Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu, founder of El Sistema, speaks to music education students as seen in *Teaching the Life of Music*

For more images visit [www.rogersmediatv.ca](http://www.rogersmediatv.ca)

To tweet this release: <http://bit.ly/yCBYbY>

*Teaching the Life of Music* is inspired by the work of Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu – a man with a vision of using the power, passion, and discipline inherent in music education to transform the lives of children living in the most deprived areas of Venezuela. The documentary demonstrates the universal power of music and illustrates the impact of education in Venezuela and beyond, specifically in Canada, the U.S. and Scotland.

Told through the eyes of Maestro Abreu himself, *Teaching the Life of Music* also features individuals who started organizations based on his principles: teaching children from the lowest income brackets a life of music in place of a life of substance abuse and violence.

“Music is a tool that transcends ethnocultural boundaries,” commented Madeline Ziniak, National Vice President, OMNI Television. “*Teaching the Life of Music* offers a unique look at how music can inspire diversity and transform the lives of individuals on local, national and international levels.”

Tremendously successful in its reach, El Sistema was founded by Maestro Abreu 36 years ago and has influenced the lives of more than 350,000 children. One of their most famous graduates is Gustavo Dudamel, the celebrated musical director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, who received the prestigious Glenn Gould Prize in Toronto last fall. *Teaching the Life of Music* gives an inside look at Glenn Gould Prize events as the orchestra and other El Sistema-inspired groups from Ottawa, New York and Scotland gathered in Toronto to celebrate the success and influence of Maestro Abreu’s vision.

*Teaching the Life of Music* is a Filmblanc Inc. production, directed by David New and produced by Noemi Weis.

#### About OMNI Television

OMNI™ is a free, over-the-air multilingual/multicultural television system committed to positive portrayal and broadcast reflection of Canada’s diversity through the airing of inclusive and accessible programming. With five television stations -- in BC; Alberta (Calgary and Edmonton) and Ontario (OMNI.1 and OMNI.2) – OMNI is available to 16.5 million households in major market areas. As well as specializing in Canadian multilingual/ multicultural programming, OMNI carries well-known International series and films – including East Asian Super Cinema and South Asian Bollywood Freetime Movies. OMNI Television is a part of Rogers Broadcasting Limited., a division of Rogers Communications Inc. (TSX: RCI and NYSE: RCI) which is a diversified Canadian communications and media company. For more information visit [www.OMNItv.ca](http://www.OMNItv.ca)

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### **Cory Monteith Narrates 'Teaching the Music of Life'**

iVillage.ca

Robin Shanks

January 11, 2012

Online

Interview/photo

Link: <http://www.ivillage.ca/entertainment/movies/cory-monteith-narrates-teaching-the-music-of-life>



Every once in a while a film comes along that brings you to tears. And last week, for me, that film was the Noemi Weis produced, David New directed documentary *Teaching the Life of Music*. The Canadian-made doc, which features narration by *Glee* star (and Canadian) Cory Monteith follows the influence Venezuelan musician, activist and teacher José Antonio Abreu's youth orchestra model El Sistema is having here in Canada. The free program, which focuses on bringing music and instruments to youth, is built on the foundation of playing within a collective social setting, allowing children to flourish through the underpinning of music. We had the chance to speak with Weis on her involvement in the film and what inspired her to bring this story to light:

***iVillage:*** *How did you get involved in this project?*

***Noemi Weis:*** I had just finished production of *The Forgotten Woman* in coproduction with Hamilton Mehta and was starting to work on the development of new projects when a friend

of mine, Juli Morrow, member of the Glenn Gould Foundation board, sent me a text saying that Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu was just named the recipient of the next [Glenn Gould Prize](#) and she felt there was a story to be told. I began to read about [El Sistema](#) and Maestro Abreu and felt I should get involved.

Having worked on human rights and social issues films for a while, this was a story that filled my heart as it was preventive. We could *actually* do something before it got too late. El Sistema's mission is not to create more musicians, but use music as a tool to help the most vulnerable citizens of our society become better people. And those are the children.

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**iV: Can you discuss how Cory Monteith became involved [as narrator]?**

**NW:** Once it was decided that we were going to use a spot narrator for the film, I thought that I should try to find an "Ambassador" of the message, someone who could identify with the cause and that could help raise awareness of El Sistema and the value it represents.

I spoke to many well-known musicians and artists until one day, my assistant, Stephanie Morano, sent me a link to a story about Cory Monteith, and I felt, he was the perfect one. Cory had a difficult upbringing but music was the tool that helped him overcome his childhood and arrive successfully to be part of Glee. I contacted his agent, sent her a two minute cut of the film and within a couple of days, she said that Cory was very moved by the story and wanted to be part of it. We are delighted to have someone like him be the "Ambassador of our message".

**iV: What was the biggest struggle in putting this film together?**

**NW:** In comparison to the films that I usually produce, this film was not a struggle but a pleasure to produce. I spent a year doing research and looking for funding but always sure that the film would be produced at the end, we were all driven by the cause and the importance of making a difference.

**iV: What do you hope Canadians take away from this documentary?**

**NW:** Our film's mission is to provoke widespread social change by inspiring others with the model of El Sistema and the universal power of music. We call it: preventive medicine. Our goal is to bring awareness to the need for music education in our schools, to motivate individuals and government to recognize that programs of this nature can take kids off the streets. This systematic style of music education teaches children how to listen, it encourages them to work hard and it allows them to feel a sense of pride and community while they learn valuable skills. Music education not only positively impacts their lives, but it also benefits our society.

**iV: Why is it important for you to share the stories of the marginalized to the world?**

**NW:** At [Filmblanc](#), we devote all of our time to utilize our medium to bring the voice of those who need it the most and to raise awareness of issues that people normally don't want to talk about. In doing so, we witness the importance of film as a healing process for the participants themselves. We have seen how the power of their stories can provoke change and the educational value they represent to make sure that the next generation grows up in a less violent world.

[Teaching the Life of Music](#)'s world broadcast premiere airs on [OMNI television](#) January 22, 9 p.m. ET.

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## **Cory Monteith narrates documentary Teaching the Life of Music**

Throng.ca

January 10, 2012

Online

Article/Photo

Link: <http://www.throng.ca/special/cory-monteith-narrates-documentary-teaching-life-music>



Discover music education's transformative effect on the lives of children in OMNI Television's original 60-minute documentary, Teaching the Life of Music.

Narrated by Canadian actor and musician Cory Monteith (Glee), the documentary explores the work of Venezuelan music organization El Sistema and its impact worldwide.

Teaching the Life of Music premieres to English-language audiences on Sunday, Jan. 22 at 9pm ET/MT/PT on OMNI.1, OMNI Alberta and OMNI BC, and makes its Spanish-language debut on Sunday, Jan. 29 at 9pm ET on OMNI.1.

Teaching the Life of Music is inspired by the work of Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu – a man with a vision of using the power, passion, and discipline inherent in music education to transform the lives of children living in the most deprived areas of Venezuela. The documentary demonstrates the universal power of music and illustrates the impact of education in Venezuela and beyond, specifically in Canada, the U.S. and Scotland.

Told through the eyes of Maestro Abreu himself, Teaching the Life of Music also features individuals who started organizations based on his principles: teaching children from the lowest income brackets a life of music in place of a life of substance abuse and violence. "Music is a tool that transcends ethnocultural boundaries," commented Madeline Ziniak, National Vice President, OMNI Television. "Teaching the Life of Music offers a unique look at how music can inspire diversity and transform the lives of individuals on local, national and international levels."

Tremendously successful in its reach, El Sistema was founded by Maestro Abreu 36 years ago and has influenced the lives of more than 350,000 children. One of their most famous graduates is Gustavo Dudamel, the celebrated musical director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, who received the prestigious Glenn Gould Prize in Toronto last fall. Teaching the Life of Music gives an inside look at Glenn Gould Prize events as the orchestra

and other El Sistema-inspired groups from Ottawa, New York and Scotland gathered in Toronto to celebrate the success and influence of Maestro Abreu's vision.

Teaching the Life of Music is a Filmblanc Inc. production, directed by David New and produced by Noemi Weis.

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### **It Takes An Orchestra To Raise A Child: Part I**

Unfolding.ca

Mike Levin

January, 2012

Online

Feature w 2 Photos

Link: <http://www.unfolding.ca/index.php/it-takes-an-orchestra-to-raise-a-child-part-i>



El Sistema's Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra under conductor Gustavo Dudamel. Courtesy of the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra.

This post is meant to convince you to turn on your television January 22 at 9 p.m. and select whatever channel you use to get OMNI1. You'll see a documentary called [Teaching The Life Of Music](#) about a Venezuelan program called [El Sistema](#) that uses music to lift children out of their mean streets. The story is a feel-good archetype, creating hope and optimism where little exists. Also, a chunk of the film is devoted to Orkidstra, an Ottawa-based version run by the [Leading Note Foundation](#) that was the first to incorporate the Sistema template outside South America. The documentary is inspiring, but it would be a mistake to think that it's

simply about music. El Sistema is a socio-political story with a youth-orchestra soundtrack. The politics are progressive to be sure, but squarely aimed at systemic change in the social fabric (first in Caracas and then throughout Venezuela) of a culture with too many marginalized people. It is, to use a cliché, the thin edge of a social wedge because its multi-decade experiment is proving how transcendence is possible when humans link deeply with one another. It's likely that El Sistema's 37-year history and the hundreds of thousands who have been through its programs helped elect President Hugo Chavez for the first time in 1999. Love him or hate him, Chavez is all about change. His government is the organization's biggest financial supporter. El Sistema uses music as a tool, not as a product. [Jose Antonio Abreu](#) started it with the belief that an orchestra represents an idealized social organization (including a strong religious component) but only if its members commit to hard work and collaboration. Training is rigorous; children must attend the program four hours a day, five days a week, and they must be supportive of everyone else. The structure is nothing short of *el camino hacia la revolucion*.



Jose Antonio Abreu speaks to young members of El Sistema. Courtesy of El Sistema.

“Not so much about politics as about change that otherwise wouldn't happen...a story about something that prevents so many problems,” says Noemi Weis, president of [filmb Blanc](#), the Toronto production company that produced the documentary. *Teaching The Life Of Music* took two years to make, and Weis says she's constantly amazed at the effect El Sistema has had on people around the world. There are about 13 international programs based on, but not replicating, the Venezuelan idea. “The impact it had on that country, on the people, is so inspiring.” Abreu's system has had stars emerge, such as [Gustavo Dudamel](#), but moving performers up the musical hierarchy was never the goal; changing lives was. Abreu excelled in one career (economics) before searching for ways to improve the social and intellectual conditions around him. Upon [receiving the TED Prize](#), he borrowed the 2,500-year-old political philosophy of the Greek intellectuals. My purpose, Abreu said, “was to provide a noble identity.” If that doesn't make the hair on the back of your arms rise, then the El Sistema story is just about kids using art to overcome the odds, like so many [Billy Elliots](#). Tina Fedeski is The Leading Note Foundation's executive director. She understood Sistema's purpose from the first moment she saw it in 2006. “Our goal (with Orkidstra) is to create virtuoso people, not virtuoso musicians,” she says in her Bronson Centre office. “Music schools are hugely competitive, and (competition) takes it out of our environment. We're not as rigorous as El Sistema, but the acknowledging of commitment and effort is the same.” It is an easy distinction to miss because all the public sees is children playing instruments. When Sistema New Brunswick started just over two years ago in conjunction with the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra, there were all kinds of problems because each organization had different goals – one to empower youth, the other to produce high-quality

musicians. Fights erupted, directors quit, and only now is SistemaNB distancing itself from the youth orchestra. Enduring social change never follows a smooth curve.

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### **It Takes An Orchestra To Raise A Child: Part II**

Unfolding.ca

Mike Levin

January, 2012

Online

Feature w 2 photos

Link: <http://www.unfolding.ca/index.php/it-takes-an-orchestra-to-raise-a-child-part-ii>



Empowering youth with musical instruments can be more radical than by giving them smart phones. Orkidstra photo by Michael Bell.

*The [El Sistema](#) orchestra program in Venezuela is helping change how that country's social order sees itself by teaching resilience and collaboration rather than just Mozart to marginalized youth. It's become a socio-political movement, and an offshoot in Ottawa called Orkidstra is trying to create the same resonance.*

Tina Fedeski launched Orkidstra in 2007 within the [Leading Note Foundation](#). She isn't all that comfortable with my political analogy for her program but she's right on board with its objectives. Ottawa doesn't have the grinding poverty and drug addiction that prey on youth in the cities like Caracas, but it does have its own obstacles: social barriers for immigrant and marginalized children, families that can't afford traditional music lessons and a growing number of at-risk youth.



Born in Canada, raised in England, Tina Fedeski is an accomplished flautist and social programmer. Photo by Gary McMillen.

Her program focusses on these groups, starting with children at five years old and continuing through the end of high school. Eighty-five percent of Orkidstra members aren't charged the fees asked of families in richer socio-economic categories. But the political motivation goes much deeper. There are [whole herds of studies](#) that show investment and participation in the arts are not only strong economic generators but are also in the top three social-health indicators. There are also murders of studies that show disappearing interest among youth for focussed hard work, delayed gratification and collaboration. El Sistema founder [Jose Antonio Abreu](#) long ago linked these human protocols with theories from his day job as an economist. He understood humans fear failure more than they crave success and that they solve problems much more efficiently in groups than as isolated individuals. He knew we learn best from people we love and that the best way to judge success is not by empirical measurement. Basically he grasped [Behavioural Economics](#) long before [Daniel Kahneman](#) and [Dan Ariely](#) made it today's biggest field of social studies. Abreu's goal for El Sistema was always to make better humans, with discipline but also with creativity that's fun, engaging, inspiring and community building. These qualities make us, and especially the young, believe that real change is possible, that fate is in one's own hands, dispelling the myth that heady individualism is a guarantee of success and happiness. Fedeski nods deeply when I suggest that Orkidstra is part of this community building process. She knows she's helping hone [executive function](#) - the ability to control cognitive behaviour that studies since [Mischel's Marshmallows](#) in 1972 have linked directly to improved personal fulfillment later in life. "I love kids because they're curious; music is a tool to bring that (curiosity) out of them. Our aim is to provide continual access to music making and to inspire them to empower themselves with it. So success is because they want to be here. We're a social program powered by kids," she says. Steve Mazey recently wrote a piece on the [success of the Ottawa program](#) for the Ottawa Citizen. Fedeski loved it, but she has a more-tangible example – the one about a young Karen (Burmese) boy who arrived in Canada in 2007 with his family from a refugee camp on the Thailand/Burma border. He had nervously stepped into Orkidstra's room just after it opened. Within 10 months he was walking up Bronson Avenue every day with a cello slung across his back, mostly integrated into a society whose languages he still wasn't sure of but whose social norms weren't so scary anymore. So on OMNI TV January 22 you'll see a story that is about transcendence; it might even make you cry. Not because someone put a violin in the hands of a child and said "sweetheart, work hard and you'll be famous" but because someone put children in an orchestra and said "sweethearts, work hard and you'll change the lives of yourself, your family and perhaps the

world.” The Leading Note is about to start its first major fundraising campaign to support its own socio-political revolution.

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### **World Broadcast Premiere - Teaching the Life of Music January 22 & 29**

Art & Culture Maven (blog)

Anya Wassenberg

January 15, 2012

Online

Feature w 3 images and video clips

Link: <http://www.artandculturemaven.com/2012/01/world-broadcast-premiere-teaching-life.html>

### **Teaching The Life of Music**

**A Film by David New**

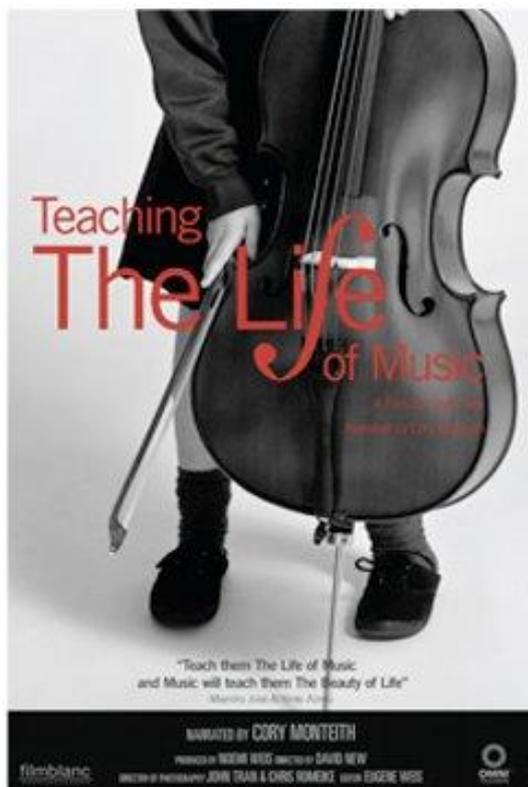
**Narrated by Cory Monteith**

**Produced by Noemi Weis**

**World Broadcast Premiere on OMNI Television**

**OMNI English January 22, 2012 | 9:00PM EST**

**OMNI Spanish January 29, 2012 | 8:00PM EST**



"It makes me happy to play violin."

The simple admission by a young musician is an idea echoed and amplified throughout this uplifting documentary about El Sistema and the organizations it has inspired throughout the world. Like the children it profiles, Teaching the Life of Music is so unabashedly good hearted and joyful it would melt the most cynical of postmodern hearts.

**Filmblanc, 1121 Bay St., Suite 1901- Toronto, Ontario- Canada –M5S 3L9, [www.filmblanc.com](http://www.filmblanc.com)**

Founded 36 years ago by Maestro José Antonio Abreu, El Sistema began with a vision of bringing free musical education to the children who live in the vast slums of his native Venezuela. The program now brings that same promise to some 300,000 children in that country, and extends its influence with organizations based on its principles that now extend across the globe. One of their most famous graduates is Gustavo Dudamel, the celebrated young musical director of the L.A. Philharmonic Orchestra. The film includes footage of a visit to Toronto from El Sistema's crown jewel, the <http://www.simonbolivarorchestra.com/Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar> (Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra) comprised entirely of its students.

"Music becomes a tool that serves man and society and the development of communities," says Dr. Abreu. The program is free and the instruments donated. Learning, playing and performing together builds a sense of teamwork, hope and of working together towards common goals, towards a future. It overcomes the exclusionary nature of poverty. Music is a social art, and El Sistema looks at music as the key to social change. "Music begins to extend its magnificent influence to all of society."

A conversation with Glee's Cory Monteith, the film's narrator:

One of the global off shoots of El Sistema is Ottawa's [the Leading Note](#), a music store whose owners were looking to get involved with local youth. Inspired by hearing the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra on the radio, they began to think about how to adapt El Sistema's principles to



local realities. The program they have been offering since 2007 runs out of a community centre close to inner city schools, and focuses on new Canadians. The music becomes a true universal language that transcends linguistic and cultural differences - some of them quite vast. It offers a community beyond language and economics.

The Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra comprises some 250 of the most energetic and passionate musicians you'll ever hear or see, and the strongest material in the film comes from its members along with their Canadian counterparts; the voices of the kids themselves as they talk about their love of music and the family of musicians, of the unifying nature of playing together that completely transcends class and race. "That is the message and that is what makes you become a better human being," says one young clarinet player matter of factly.

Maestro José Antonio Abreu received a Glenn Gould Award during the 2009 visit by the Orchestra and the film follows the group as they play at schools and community centres around town, leading up to a concert before 14,000 school children at the Roger's Centre. Tellingly, the orchestra's

talented and disciplined players are as excited about playing for them as the audience is to see them; the level of devotion and passion for the music is incredibly inspiring.



In a larger sense, the film and the stunning success of El Sistema also underscore the powerful returns that come from an investment in children.

Teaching the Life of Music is a one hour television documentary, produced by Filmblanc with the participation of OMNI Television's Independent Producer's Initiative fund, a division of Rogers Communications.

#### SPECIAL THANKS

Teaching the Life of Music is a labour of love that could not have been completed without the support of El Sistema, the Glenn Gould Foundation, The Leading Note Foundation in Ottawa, the Toronto and Ottawa School Boards, Jack Lenz and Lenz Entertainment, and individuals from the Canadian music community.

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#### **Teaching The Life Of Music Worth Watching**

Jamesbawden.com

James Bawden

January 22, 2012

Online

Review/Photo

Link: <http://jamesbawden.blogspot.com/2012/01/teaching-life-of-music-worth-watching.html>



This is the TV year when Canadian TV became virtually extinct on Canadian Networks. Most Canadian channels have simply become simulcasting outposts for the American fare already available on border U.S. stations. And then along comes a perfect example of what Canadian TV should be. Produced on the proverbial shoestring budget the hour documentary *Teaching The Life Of Music* is to use an old phrase --pretty swell. I hesitated to pop in the DVD screener because of the unfortunate experiences I had as a budding cello student with a maniac of a high school music teacher. However, I persevered and watched and the more I saw the more I liked it. It follows the concepts of El Sistema, a successful campaign to teach the rudiments of music to poverty afflicted students in the slums of Venezuela who must work together to achieve their goals. And the Canadian angle comes at Toronto's Rogers Centre when El Sistema's Simon Bolivar Orchestra (SBYO) plays for a capacity audience of Canadian students. Founded more than 35 years ago by a charismatic teacher Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu, it is wide ranging and ambitious in its scope. It begins naturally enough profiling the now aged music leader and the great success he has enjoyed --and how playing music together teaches the young. The footage expertly blends interviews with the orchestra leaders in Venezuela with a look at the Canadian attempt to jump start an El Sistema program of our own. We get to meet some of the Canadian children who are just beginning to study and play. And they get to meet leaders of the Simon Bolivar orchestra and rehearse a bit with them. There's also a look at the decline of music in Canadian schools. as school boards cut programs to balance their budgets it's apparent music classes are the first to be dumped --instruments are costly to purchase and maintain. Directed skillfully by David New, produced by Filmblanc, it has Canadian Cory Monteith as narrator. And it's highly recommended. I think you will learn from it but also be entertained. *Teaching The Life Of Music* demonstrates to me indigenous Canadian TV production may not be as down and out as I feared. TEACHING THE LIFE OF MUSIC PREMIERES ON OMNI SUND. JAN. 22 AT 9 P.M. MY RATING: \*\*\*1/2.

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### **Five Worth Watching on Sunday**

Parentcentral.ca

Debra Yeo

January 22, 2012

Online

Mention

Link: <http://www.parentcentral.ca/parent/articlePrint/1118956>

**Music to the Soul:** El Sistema has reached more than 350,000 children since it was founded 36 years ago in Venezuela as a way to counteract poverty and violence through music education. The documentary *Teaching the Life of Music* looks at the program's impact in Canada, the U.S. and Scotland, where El Sistema's goals have been applied to local kids and communities. Calgary-born, Victoria-raised Cory Monteith (Finn on *Glee*) narrates (OMNI at 9).

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### **Cory Monteith participa en proyecto "Teaching the Life of Music".**

Glee-zone.com

January 22, 2012

Online (Spanish)

Article/image

Link: [http://glee-](http://glee-zone.com/index.php?subaction=showcomments&id=1327262074&archive=&start_from=&cat=&start/from=360)

[zone.com/index.php?subaction=showcomments&id=1327262074&archive=&start\\_from=&cat=&start/from=360](http://glee-zone.com/index.php?subaction=showcomments&id=1327262074&archive=&start_from=&cat=&start/from=360)

*Cory Monteith participa en proyecto "Teaching the Life of Music".*



El actor canadiense siempre se ha distinguido por ayudar a organizaciones y empresas sin fines de lucro centrándose en las que se interesan por los jóvenes.

Esta vez se asocia con la productora Noemí Weis para narrar su nuevo documental a través de un canal canadiense llamado OMNI TV (sobresaliente por ser el primer canal multilingüe y multicultural de este país).

Éste canal tiene previsto celebrar el estreno del documental llamado "Teaching the Life of Music" el 22 de Enero.

Narrado por el actor de Glee, la película se centra en 'El Sistema' una empresa que utiliza la educación musical para transformar las vidas de los niños en ambientes violentos y empobrecidos, dándoles salud, así como la pasión por la música y valores de disciplina en sus vidas.

Las lecciones no sólo enriquecen a las vidas de los estudiantes, sino que su alcance se extiende también a las comunidades donde viven ellos; destacando a esta organización como un grupo de inspiración para otros.

El modelo educativo que maneja 'El Sistema' ha influido a otros programas similares en Toronto y otras ciudades de todo el mundo debido al impacto combinado con la vida que genera la música.

Hasta la fecha, la organización, fundada hace 36 años por el maestro José Antonio Abreu, ha llegado a más de 350.000 jóvenes, posiblemente el más famoso es la Orquesta Filarmónica de Los Ángeles de el director Gustavo Dudamel. Que se iniciaron en este proyecto desde pequeños.

[Adelanto del Proyecto.](#)

