

## **BATUTA: THE COLOMBIAN "SISTEMA"**

by Eric Booth and Tricia Tunstall

The accomplishments of Venezuela's El Sistema are greater and more far-ranging than anything we in the United States can imagine. It is not an overstatement to assert that El Sistema represents the most significant innovation in the arts and arts learning in our lifetimes. Fortunately, we in the United States and around the world are beginning to learn about it and to learn from it.

The Sistema-inspired work in Colombia called Batuta, the second largest such national program in the world, is also doing work beyond our U.S. imagining. And we have yet to begin learning from it. We hope that this essay will serve as a useful introduction to the proud history and the current accelerated growth phase of Sistema Batuta Colombia.

### **BATUTA: THE BACKGROUND**

Twenty years ago, Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu, the founder of El Sistema in Venezuela, helped the Colombian government to spark the launch of Batuta (Spanish for "baton") amidst the turmoil of Colombia, a country riven by crime, drug cartels, and political division. Colombia's problems were similar in some ways to those of Venezuela – both countries faced, and are still facing, crushing poverty and intense pressures on young people toward gang, crime, and drug involvement. In addition, Colombia has faced the challenge of internal migration, with thousands of children living in refugee-type camps and in migrant limbo.

Batuta's goal has been to address these glaring needs. As in Venezuela, the focus has consistently been upon the twin missions of socialization and musical

development – with social learning equal to, and sometimes even prioritized over, musical skills.

Batuta has many strengths to build upon: a significant presence throughout the country; a highly developed early childhood music education curriculum; a national faculty of dedicated and motivated teachers; a wide network of affiliations with an existing ecosystem of music programs; an already exceptional national youth orchestra; and several emerging regional youth orchestras – one of which has just triumphantly completed its first international tour, to Germany and Italy.

As in Venezuela, many thousands of children in Colombia, in all of the country's thirty-two states and in cities and towns large and small, have experienced life-empowering change as a result of Batuta's work. In the words of its director, Juan Antonio Cuellar, "Social action is the mission; music is the tool." Cuellar describes taking a plane across a remote area of the Andes, driving to the end of the only road, taking a boat to a small town...and finding the children singing songs and working in recorder ensembles exactly as they do in downtown Bogotá.

Several differences between the cultures and circumstances of Colombia and Venezuela have meant that Batuta's growth has been somewhat different from the development of Venezuela's El Sistema. Batuta's program focuses predominantly on younger children in non-orchestral settings; of the 47,000 students currently engaged in Batuta's programs, only 9,000 play orchestral instruments. The rest follow a program of choral singing, playing Orff instruments and recorders, and learning basic musicianship skills. This vital and beautiful work is guided by a national curriculum and a remarkably consistent pedagogy for early childhood learning. But a scarcity of trained orchestral teachers, and perhaps more crucially a scarcity of orchestral instruments, have held back the growth of an orchestral focus. The dense network of youth orchestras that characterizes Venezuela's Sistema is still, in Colombia, very much in the process of development.

Another difference between the two countries has been Colombia's wider and more developed infrastructure of already-existing classical music programs. Especially in Colombia's four major cities of Bogota, Medellin, Cali, and Cartagena, such programs have provided a range of opportunities for musical training, both for

impoverished and for more-advantaged youth. Functioning within this existing music-learning ecosystem, Batuta leadership has emphasized the roles of coalition builder and service provider. For example, Batuta has frequently served as coordinator for regional gatherings of many music programs. And one of its current goals is to become the nation's go-to source for affordable, high-end musical instruments. In its role of trustworthy national agent for coordinating, supporting, and elevating the entire field of music education, Colombia's Batuta is without parallel in Latin America.

Unlike Venezuela's Sistema, which is primarily government-supported, Batuta is supported by a mixture of public and private funds. Public support comes through the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, and from the Ministry of Culture, and constitutes about 70% of the budget. The program's main partner in the private sector is the Fundacion Bolivar Davivienda, the largest private foundation in Colombia and part of the Bolivar Group, one of the nation's largest consortia. (It's interesting to note that in Colombia, much of the funding, like many of the regional orchestral programs, is consortium-based.) The head of the Fundacion Bolivar, Fernando Cortes, is an ardent believer in the cause of youth development through music; his advocacy has helped garner major support for Colombia's first national youth orchestra, the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, and also for Batuta's teacher training initiatives.

We had the great privilege of visiting Bogota in July 2011, learning about Colombia's "Sistema" through working with Batuta teachers, conversing with its leadership, observing performances and rehearsals, and teaching within its professional development program. What follows is an attempt to encapsulate our experience and learning in Bogota, to share with all those who are interested and engaged in the El Sistema movement. Since our stay was short, our observations are necessarily quite preliminary and incomplete. Our hope is that they will serve as food for thought, inspiration, and further exploration.

## **NEW LEADERSHIP FOR BATUTA**

In 2008, Juan Antonio Cuellar, a U.S.-trained Colombian composer and the dean of a Bogota university music school, took over as Executive President of Batuta with a mission of change. Driven to address the sad reality that without a strong orchestral program, Batuta was losing many of its students at around age twelve – the very time when young people are most vulnerable and most attracted to the self-destructive choices that surround them – Cuellar has set about improving both Batuta’s orchestral commitment and its professional development opportunities for teachers. His aim is for Batuta and its partners to achieve results similar to the miracle in neighboring Venezuela, but in their own Colombian way.

To achieve the mission of significantly increased orchestral focus, Cuellar has set two goals as his first major priorities: the launch of vigorous and sustained teacher development initiatives, and the creation of “iconic” youth orchestras. To meet the first goal, he has tapped a wide range of resources, especially including Venezuelan teachers and overseas visitors like ourselves; professional development teachers go on tours to every Batuta site and frequently conduct regional training “intensives.” The second goal is being addressed through the formation of youth orchestras on regional levels, and also through the creation and development of a national youth orchestra, under the artistic direction of U.S. conductor Matthew Sydney Hazelwood. These two goals are intertwined in many ways: students need examples to look up to, teachers need excellence to aspire to, and high aspiration raises the reach of everyone’s achievement. Integral to both priorities is the expectation that teachers perform in orchestras, so that teachers can learn by doing, and students and community can know and be inspired by their teachers as artists.

## **TEACHER TRAINING: THE KEYSTONE OF DEVELOPMENT**

“Teachers are the motors of everything we do,” says Cuellar. “The teachers we train now will create the future of Batuta.” In order to build the capacity of

Batuta teachers to create orchestral programs and curricula, ongoing training programs are in place in all four major regions of the country. Teachers come together on a regular basis to be taught by leading educators from Colombia, Venezuela, the U.S., and elsewhere.

Rather than espousing a particular pedagogy, or even using a specific set of guidelines for hiring or retention, Cuellar proposes that there are three main elements to all good teaching – especially all good youth orchestral training. “One is improvement: are your students improving artistically, *all the time*? Two is engagement: Are your students engaged? Are their families engaged, and are their communities engaged? Three is ethics: are you adhering fully to the highest code of ethics, following the UNESCO Rights of Children code? And are you modeling for these students everything you want them to become? This includes artist, teacher, learner, experimenter, and socially responsible adult.”

This code of ethics, says Cuellar, is transmitted to students naturally, in the course of ensemble learning. “Children learn everything in orchestras,” he says. “Values. Habits. In this regard, the rehearsal itself is always really the point.”

As Cuellar describes these three imperatives, we can see why he emphasizes teachers and professional development as the cornerstone of his strategy for the future. Teachers with such deeply held values will necessarily have a forceful, intrinsically motivated, positive-but-relentless drive for constant improvement in their students’ capacities. They will have an equally positive-but-relentless drive for expanding their investment in families and communities. And they will have no trouble with the idea that their own lives, and the examples they set, are their most powerful teaching tools.

Teacher training, as conceived for Batuta, is an ambitious and far-ranging enterprise. In the three-day workshop we observed and participated in, Batuta teachers from across the Bogota region were invited during a morning session to reflect on the “Studio Habits of Mind,” a framework for understanding the mental habits that determine whether learning will be successful, engaged, and creative. The model was developed by researchers at Harvard Project Zero in 2004 (<http://pzweb.harvard.edu/research/StudioThink/StudioThinkEight.htm>) by

studying the teaching and learning of the best visual arts teachers in the U.S. Adapted to music, the "studio habits of mind" serve as a guide to holistic learning for Batuta teachers, students, and even conductors; Maestro Matthew Hazelwood eloquently describes how the Studio Habits inform his work on the podium.

In the U.S. we often state axiomatically that intensive orchestral study develops the "whole child." But we do not generally create structures for music learning that are pedagogically wide and artistically deep, to commit to such holism. We found it remarkable, therefore, that Batuta – uniquely among El Sistema programs, as far as we know – is developing such a holistic framework for broadening and deepening the learning experience.

[\*Note: Eric's professional development teaching during this trip focused on the "habits of mind" as they relate to a group learning setting and to music. He introduced them in the interactive, inquiry-based workshop style of U.S. teaching artistry, a style new to Batuta teachers.]

In the afternoon workshop we observed, the professional development focus switched to active, hands-on, master class-type learning, as Venezuelan master teacher Francisco Diaz coached the teachers in ensemble conducting. Diaz, who is from Barquisimeto and was one of Gustavo Dudamel's teachers, has been an important figure in the work of Venezuela's Sistema for many years. We watched him work both with the teachers and with young violinists, and his teaching style was consistent: hard-driving, exacting, insistently positive. He demanded courageous experimentation on the part of individuals, and was at the same time constantly attentive to the progress of the group as a whole.

Cuellar takes a long-term view of teacher development: the students of today are the teachers of tomorrow. The future of Batuta, he is convinced, depends upon the numbers and passion of students who choose to become teachers in the system. During our time in Colombia, we were struck by the frequency with which students are given this message. It is a great honor to be a teacher, they are told. It is the fruition of their artistry to become teaching artists. And it is their responsibility to become teachers and to share the beauty and transformative power of their musical lives.

[\*Another note: Asked to address the members of the national youth orchestra on the last day of their month together, Eric offered remarks that might serve as a kind of summation of the view we found so widespread: "You have become an extraordinary orchestra. You have the skill, the passion, the communication, and the joy that makes this true. I see many orchestras with such skill, some with strong passion and communication, and a few with such joy; it is the combination of all these things that gives you the rare opportunity to grow into greatness. With this opportunity comes the responsibility of greatness, which is to become teachers...teaching-artists who can bring others into this learning system, who can raise the level of skill and joy everywhere you go, who dedicate their lives to playing and teaching music – both of them, all the time. This is the extraordinariness that is within your reach."]

Francisco Diaz echoed this theme in his closing remarks to the Batuta teachers in Bogota. "Your students are the future," he told them. "We must instill in them the passion to teach, and they will take care of everything. We are accidents in this process – we merely begin it. We must trust the future to them."

"Trust the young" – it is one of Jose Antonio Abreu's most memorable and enduring sayings. As teachers in North America, we have much to learn from this El Sistema faith in the infinite capacity of our students, and from leaders' willingness to empower young people with jobs and decision-making authority.

## **A NEW NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA**

Through cooperation between Batuta and other music programs, and with the support of the Fundacion Bolivar-Davivienda, the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia was established two years ago, in 2009. This ensemble brings together over a hundred young people aged 16-24 from across the country, under the artistic direction of Matthew Sydney Hazelwood, a busy and widely respected U.S. conductor with deep musical ties to Colombia. In July 2011, Maestro Hazelwood conducted a two-week training "intensive" for the young orchestra, bringing a team

of his favorite teaching artists from the U.S. as well as seasoned Venezuelan educators, to fast-track the learning process. An ambitious five-city national tour followed.

Many of these young musicians had never played together before, yet because of their musical hunger and their zeal for preparation, they learned and grew in ways that were beyond the imagining of their faculty. Already they have attained the kind of improbable excellence and outsized exuberance that one sees in Venezuelan youth orchestras – albeit with a distinctly different feel, and a focus on repertoire that develops finesse and nuance in tandem with muscular intensity.

We heard the culminating performances of the tour in Bogota, in a new performing arts center whose grand contours suggest equal parts ancient pyramid and modernist concert hall. The acoustics were splendid, and the sold-out audience was the kind U.S. orchestras dream of, a rich representation of the city that surrounds it: many young people, families, the social elite, cool twenty-somethings on dates. With Angela Kim as superb guest soloist, the orchestra gave a skillful and passionate rendition of Saint-Saens' Piano Concerto No.2; they also played Rimsky-Korsakov's "Capriccio Espagnol," Johann Strauss's "Fledermaus" Overture, and Mahler's Symphony No. 1. The concerts had the visceral excitement of performances by Venezuela's national youth orchestras -- both musically illuminating and electrifyingly fun. Like their Venezuelan compatriots, the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia radiates joy.

For this culminating performance of their intense month together, in the national capital and in the best concert hall in the country, the energy level sizzled backstage. Onstage, like seasoned professionals beyond their years, they channeled that effervescence into their best and most focused performance, according to several who heard them during the tour.

Cuellar is interested in enhancing the sense of "event" in relation to the orchestra's concerts, in order to more fully engage audiences – and the "FJC," as they are known, are experimenting with several distinctive performance practices. Their concerts begin with a dramatic entrance, with the conductor among them: rather than sitting down to play, they stand and face the audience; they begin their first



piece standing in place, and sit when the music seems to invite it. In addition, for this tour there were special lighting effects designed by Cuellar to accompany and support the Mahler symphony. The stage was sometimes nearly dark, sometimes awash with hues that varied with the progress of the music. While such experiments can run the risk of being distracting or irrelevant, we found that these simple, elegant effects were musically sound, and created light environments that enhanced the listening.

The final encore was a Colombian folk song familiar to everyone in the audience. Like the Venezuelans, but in their own distinct style, the young musicians exploded into a playground of moving, singing, clapping and improvising. Cumbia (a characteristic Caribbean-Colombian folk music) dancing broke out across the stage and moved into the audience. The musicians who weren’t dancing began to improvise, sometimes even swapping instruments for solos. It was as ecstatic a closing as could be imagined – an unchoreographed, spontaneous, ebullient sharing of their personalities and their joy.

Since it was their final concert, there was much hugging and weeping after the encore by these tired and wired teenagers, and they did it *onstage* instead of hidden backstage. A number of families joined them on the stage. As audience members, we were moved by the quality of the music and the generosity of the artists: it felt authentic, joyous, and emphatically “iconic.”

One additional note for U.S. music educators: at the end of the tour, the musicians in Filarmónica Joven de Colombia were asked to reflect on their learning experience. They spoke of their love and gratitude toward all their teachers, from Venezuela and the United States. And they noted that the U.S. teachers had very valuable ideas, tools, and suggestions, but that all came “from a soloist’s perspective.” They found that the U.S. teachers struggled with teaching in groups, were somewhat inconsistent in their teaching between one student and the next, and were a bit too gentle.

Since these orchestra members were raised in the El Sistema lineage, the orientation of the Venezuelan teachers naturally felt more familiar to them. They praised the Venezuelans’ skills in moving whole groups (or sections) steadily

forward, and their ability to demand more and achieve more. They also praised these teachers’ consistency of approach, within a session and in general; it was clear that any Venezuelan teacher could pick up right from where a previous one had left off months before.

We in the U.S. who are involved in El Sistema-inspired work would do well to take note of these comments. We have much to learn about changing our mental and pedagogical framework away from the soloist/conservatory view to a perspective in which musicians develop in a group. We have much to discover, too, about how driving a rehearsal hard can increase the fun of it, and how repetitive practice can lead to refinement without boredom.

### **BUILDING ORCHESTRAL COMMUNITY: THE *ENCUENTRO* TRADITION**

In 2009, a music-loving Air Force colonel in the western city of Cali decided that the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Colombian Air Force should be celebrated with a huge musical event involving every single musical child in the city. So Batuta helped to mobilize all the music programs in the area that were working with children, and brought them together in a massive *encuentro* – a huge gathering of orchestras and choirs.

Batuta, with the support of the Air Force and the enthusiasm of the colonel, hired some of the greatest musicians in the region to come and help Batuta with training and rehearsing the young musicians. The *encuentro* brought together young people from Cali and from a Batuta music center in Buenaventura, a port on the Pacific two hours away from Cali. Buenaventura is a dangerous region of the country; as the country’s key Pacific port it is used as a transit hub for weapons and drug trafficking. But the teachers traveled wherever the children were, and rehearsed them intensively for weeks. The concert itself, with seven hundred young people performing in an airplane hangar for an audience of thousands, was unforgettable. “They played Shostakovich and Borodin, they sang the Alleluia chorus from Handel’s Messiah,” says Cuellar. “And while we originally thought that

beginners and advanced players would perform separately, it quickly became clear that everyone should play everything -- mostly because every young musician yearned and asked to play in everything. So even the smallest children performed in all the pieces. For every single music program in the city, this concert raised the bar of excellence."

"We don't look for things...we find them," he adds. He has said this several times, and here the meaning seems clear: such an amazing event occurs not through chance, but because of a laser-like determination, a refusal to look without finding. This adage seems to be the "Juan Antonio" equivalent of the "José Antonio" dictum about teachers' responsibility to serve students: "No is simply not an option."

The larger message seems to be a near-miraculous truth of El Sistema work in Colombia, Venezuela, the U.S., Scotland – wherever its seeds take root: the passionate and concentrated focus on changing the trajectory of students' lives through music seems to prompt the appearance of unexpected, unreasonable, even impossible opportunities. Cuellar launched an "encuentro strategy"... and then an Air Force colonel offered an airplane hangar for a concert of 700 kids. What were the chances of that? Cuellar hadn't looked for it – but Batuta found the opportunity

The encuentro was so successful that the Air Force repeated it again the following year. After the second concert, leaders of the various music programs had developed sufficient enthusiasm for the benefits of coordinated endeavor, and sufficient trust in Batuta as a fair agent of everyone's interests, that they agreed to launch a regional orchestra of the best students from all programs, with Batuta as manager.

The use of the "*encuentro*" – a gathering of musical ensembles to perform together in a particular, high-aspiration public event – is an important tool in Batuta's strategy of orchestral development. When many programs join together toward a specific musical goal, teachers and students alike overcome their natural parochialism and collaborate to accomplish something extraordinary that no one program could ever accomplish alone. As they did in Cali, program leaders usually recognize that coordination serves their students and does not diminish their

programs. Feeling the success of what they can do together, they want to make it a regular practice.

Another distinctive growth strategy in Batuta is to nurture, lead, and interconnect the many small and medium El Sistema-inspired initiatives that have emerged over the past years. Juan Antonio Cuellar systematically helps to build up the capacity of these organizations and actively seeks opportunities for collaborative work between all of them. Such collaborations also incorporate a number of universities and conservatories.

Out of this recognition, collaboration, and shared success, “iconic” regional youth orchestras can be born.

## **ICONIC REGIONAL ORCHESTRAS**

When a permanent regional youth orchestra emerges, drawing the most motivated and best students from all programs, it is “iconic” in that it creates an example of what can be done when programs strive together for something greater than individual institutional identities. It is also iconic in that the music students of the region can see and believe in what is possible if they strive: they are potentially those musicians onstage, if they apply themselves. The national youth orchestra provides a particularly dramatic model for this ideal, but regional orchestras increase the visibility and accessibility of the model throughout the country.

We believe this is a crucial feature in Venezuela’s El Sistema success. Children can watch performances by students just a little older than themselves ... and then by another orchestra better than that ... then a city-wide youth orchestra ... then one of the national youth orchestras (in Venezuela, there are currently three national orchestras that book international tours). They can envision their path to greatness, because they see and feel its power and rewards so regularly.

In each of the four main regions of Colombia, Batuta is sponsoring and building a peak regional orchestra, with membership by audition. These orchestras nurture wider musical aspiration, and build interest in and demand for all the music

programs in the region. The work in these orchestras feels very much like the orchestral work in Venezuela’s El Sistema – with good reason: many teachers and conductors travel from Venezuela to help build the orchestras, a process often simultaneous with providing professional development for Colombian teachers.

Batuta has now established such peak orchestras in three of the four regions. In addition to the permanent ensemble that grew out of the *encuentro* in Cali, there is also an iconic orchestra forming in the city of Medellin. Cuellar says that because an active “web” of music schools in Medellin involves as many as six thousand children, “there is the potential for a really strong pre-professional orchestra.” He adds that the professional orchestra in the city is eager to be involved and supportive, recognizing that a vibrant youth ensemble can help them connect with the musical life of the region – and that without making this connection, they may lose audience to the new dynamo down the street.

And then there is the Youth Orchestra of Bogota, a large and growing ensemble with members aged 13 to 18, led by the exuberant conductor Juan Felipe Molano. We heard this ensemble in rehearsal, and found its collective zeal and musical ambition every bit as astonishing as what we had heard from the national youth orchestra. The Youth Orchestra of Bogota was about to launch its first international tour, to Berlin and 12 Italian cities, and the young members were clearly spurred to intensify training and rehearsal. We watched them work long, hard days. We watched them enjoying every step of the way, growing before our eyes into the kind of generous, positive, mutually supportive musical community that is so characteristic of El Sistema in Venezuela.

And we observed that teaching and learning in Colombia, as in Venezuela, often uses playful, positive competition as a way to speed learning. In a sectional exercise, for example, one half of the violin section may try to outdo the performance of the other half. The competition never becomes ugly; it is based in the ancient definition of the word: “to strive with” rather than “to strive against.” It occurred to us that Batuta is using the same playful competitive strategy between regional orchestras, encouraging them to try to outdo one another in order to raise the level of everyone’s accomplishment.

**A KEY PRIORITY: MAKING INSTRUMENTS AVAILABLE**

"Here in Colombia, we just don't have enough musical instruments for young people in Batuta," says Juan Antonio Cuellar. "It's very difficult to find them for sale, or even to get them donated."

Solving this problem is critical, of course, for the large-scale orchestral development that is top priority for Cuellar and Batuta. "This is completely key to our vision of reaching and rescuing children through orchestral involvement," says Cuellar. "There are many, many kids who want desperately to play instruments, but can't." Buying inexpensive instruments from China is not the solution, he says, because quality is unreliable; it is not unusual to place a large order for violins based on appealing samples, and then receive a delivery of violins of far lower quality.

Batuta is therefore entering the instrument-providing business in a major way. Since it's prohibitively costly to buy high-end instruments from abroad, Cuellar believes that the way forward is for Batuta students and teachers to develop skills in instrument assembly, maintenance, and repair. There is support for this initiative from the Ministry of Culture, which has agreed to make Batuta the official instrument provider for all local culture centers funded by the government.

Eventually, Cuellar envisions a potential joint venture with Venezuela that would involve importing pre-made instrument parts and assembling them in South American factories. (The natural resources and climate in Colombia make local manufacture from scratch impractical.) In one way or another, he says, he would like young Colombian musicians to begin to see instrument maintenance and provision as a growth industry, with the door wide open for motivated entrepreneurs.

**OVERARCHING STRATEGY: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS**

The presence in Colombia of a wide variety of music programs for children has meant that Batuta has developed in a collaborative and inclusive way, often

serving as the catalyst for connection and cooperation between organizations. As many arts and arts education professionals in the U.S. can affirm, getting established organizations to partner deeply and sustainably is a rare accomplishment. Batuta has proven to be a reliable, eye-on-the-right-prize partner. As a result, there are 38 organizations formally affiliated with Batuta, and many more such affiliations are expected. "In Colombia," says Juan Antonio Cuellar, "the 'Sistema' is Batuta plus all the programs affiliated with it. We are all building something together."

"And," he adds, returning to his theme of teacher development, "we want all Batuta teachers to think this way." An important goal of teacher training throughout the country is the capacity to build coalitions and partnerships. The ideal is "to build an entire community around the protection of children through music." Batuta has much to teach consortium builders and stakeholder networks in the U.S. about how to break down institutional "silo" thinking and practice, for the benefit of students.

One very concrete way that the overarching Batuta network plans to serve its constituency is by developing a music library that will be available for use by all members. The library will include teaching materials, curricula, and repertoire, and extra sets of orchestral parts for the repertoire being played by national and regional youth orchestras. In this way, the growing network of youth orchestras will feel linked by materials and curricula as well as by pedagogy and mission.

Cuellar tells us the story of a huge donation of dozens of boxes of scores and music books from Boosey and Hawkes – a gift they didn't seek, but they found. Batuta couldn't afford the shipping expenses. So they found an NGO in the U.S. that specialized in shipping aid to troubled areas of the world, and had the materials sent as "humanitarian aid." "And that's exactly what it was," says Cuellar.

## **FINAL REFLECTIONS**

At the end of the intensive teacher training workshop we attended, there was an opportunity for the Bogota Batuta teachers and the visiting teachers to pause and

share perspectives. There were many touching speeches of appreciation and praise. There were eloquent articulations of an ultimate vision of a teaching community, who can work together regularly to share visions and create standards. "We need to be a grand collective of teachers across the country, who can permanently reflect together," said Cuellar. We noted how rare it is in music education to witness this emphasis on reflection as a primary teaching and learning tool.

And there was repeated recognition of the excellent progress made by the teenaged Youth Orchestra of Bogota. One participant boldly declared that within two years this orchestra could be as good as the iconic national youth orchestra, the Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, whose thrilling performance we had all seen the night before. There was general nodding in support of this ambitious goal. And then Francisco Diaz rose to say that this orchestra didn't need two years to achieve it – they could do it in six months! He said this with the same breath-stopping fervor we had heard from him before. The energy in the room surged. Instantly, they all saw this was possible. And they wanted it.

This kind of unreasonable, infectious hunger for achievement has driven the success of El Sistema in Venezuela. It now grows within the Colombian Sistema. Colombia may have grown in some distinctive ways, and may be funded and organized in unique patterns, but it is definitely a younger sibling from the same gene pool. The boldness with which the impossible is imagined and then realized – the idea of ensemble performance as a crucial medium for developing high musical standards – the joy in musical aspiration and accomplishment, realized in the ideal setting of the orchestra – all these are characteristic of the spirit and vision of Batuta. They are clearly and closely related to the spirit and vision of Venezuela's Sistema.

At the heart of Batuta is the same core assumption that guides El Sistema in Venezuela: that musical and social goals are inseparable, and that the lives of impoverished children, families and communities can be changed through the power of ensemble music learning, the joy in musical aspiration and accomplishment, and the presence of great beauty radiating constantly in the daily lives of young people.



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## APPENDIX

### **Studio Thinking Framework**

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#### **Eight Habits of Mind**

- **Develop Craft**

Learning to use and care for tools (e.g., viewfinders, brushes), materials (e.g., charcoal, paint). Learning artistic conventions (e.g., perspective, color mixing).

- **Engage & Persist**

Learning to embrace problems of relevance within the art world and/or of personal importance, to develop focus and other mental states conducive to working and persevering at art tasks.

- **Envision**

Learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed and imagine possible next steps in making a piece.

- **Express**

Learning to create works that convey an idea, a feeling, or a personal meaning.

- **Observe**

Learning to attend to visual contexts more closely than ordinary "looking" requires, and thereby to see things that otherwise might not be seen.

- **Reflect**

*Question & Explain:* Learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one's work or working process.

*Evaluate:* Learning to judge one's own work and working process and the work of others in relation to standards of the field.

- **Stretch & Explore**

Learning to reach beyond one's capacities, to explore playfully without a

preconceived plan, and to embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes and accidents.

- **Understand Art World**

*Domain:* Learning about art history and current practice.

*Communities:* Learning to interact as an artist with other artists (i.e., in classrooms, in local arts organizations, and across the art field) and within the broader society.