

NATIONAL

# Youth Orchestra OF JAMAICA

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*Shaping lives through music!*



Organization of American States

The National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica (NYOJ) is a non-profit, non-government organisation engaged in the promotion and development of youth orchestras in Jamaica. The NYOJ collaborates with the Organisation of American States (OAS) in the coordination, management and implementation of the OAS Orchestra Program for Youth in Jamaica .

## Our Launch

Welcome to the first issue of the newsletter!

The NYOJ came on to the scene with a bang, literally, beginning with "Fanfare for a Common Man" by Aaron Copeland a piece focused solely on brass and percussion. The program continued on a journey through different genres of music complete with violin solos and a Bob Marley medley arranged by Jon Williams.

Our Patron, the Hon. Chris Blackwell, O.J. committed his support for the Program and introduced an inspiring video on the internationally renowned Venezuelan orchestra program "El Sistema", (on which the Program is modelled), expounding on how he desired for a long time, to see such a program in Jamaica.

Our Chairman, Nigel Clarke

revealed that the NYOJ project hoped to produce opportunities for underprivileged Jamaican children, enriching their lives with tools for personal development thereby producing youngsters filled with self-esteem, discipline, and self-awareness.

Minister of Education Hon. Andrew Holness, M.P. assured spectators of the government's and his personal enthusiasm and support for the project. He also expressed his desire to see the program expand across Jamaica.

The evening continued to showcase the works of Jamaican and international composers alike. Peter Ashbourne's "Jamaica Folk" was especially well-received, combining familiar folk melodies and producing a nostalgic swoon from the crowd. By the end of the night filled contribution baskets proved the viewers returned home with a sense of fulfilment and great expectations. For more information on this event please visit: <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20091026/ent/ent1.html>



## Prep Work

The NYOJ was established to collaborate with the Organisation of American States' (OAS) in the coordination, management and implementation of the OAS Orchestra Program for Youth in Jamaica. Prior to the launch of the program here in Kingston NYOJ set up focus groups in target communities for an OAS consultant to validate the suitability of these communities for the program and determine what changes would be required for local implementation.



The NYOJ and the OAS then organised and coordinated training workshops integrating instructors from the YOA, FESNOJIV and Batuta to produce local tutors to power the program. For more information please visit: <http://www.museum.oas.org/en/oasis/>

# National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica

## Selection Process



The Program was advertised at schools in the surrounding area (St. Andrew Technical High School, St. Andrew Primary, Greenwich, Denham Town Primary, Denham Town Secondary, Tivoli Gardens High School etc.) and senior teachers/principals

were contacted to suggest students who could benefit from the program.

Seventy five (75) students came from the schools above along with their teachers. There were also a few who had recently left school and lived in the surrounding community.

We gave an overview of the Program and the Instructors delivered an interactive powerpoint presentation on the functioning of an orchestra which included a description of instruments, their roles,

how they are played and their special characteristics. The presentation also included demonstrations and a question and answer session which had broad participation.

The enthusiasm and curiosity of the students was very evident and they stayed long after the meeting ended, engaging the instructors, fiddling with instruments and asking questions.

While the demonstration took place the students were called individually to another



section of the auditorium where they handed in their completed application forms and were interviewed briefly.

During the week of December 14, 2009 we were also able to fly the luthier, Manuel Barberien, into the island from Miami to assemble the instruments and get them ready for use. He worked on the instruments, at the school, for two days and several of the young instructors in the program worked alongside him gaining useful knowledge and experience.

We were able to accomplish all that we needed to before the schools closed for the holidays and were able to begin instruction at the start of the new school term.

“ I LAUD THE EFFORT OF THE ORGANISERS OF THIS PROJECT. IT HAS BEEN TOUCHING THE LIVES OF THE STUDENTS IN A VERY SPECIAL WAY. I MUST APPLAUD THE ENTHUSIASM, EFFORT, ZEAL AND PATIENCE OF THOSE WHO WORK DIRECTLY WITH THE STUDENTS. THE STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE AT DENHAM TOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL ARE HIGHLY MOTIVATED AND APPRECIATIVE OF THE FACT THAT THEY ARE SEEING ANOTHER SIDE TO MUSIC. I DO SINCERELY HOPE THAT PARENTS WILL SEE THIS AS A WORTHWHILE VENTURE AND WILL CONTINUE TO GIVE THEIR UNRELENTING SUPPORT. “

LINNETT DAVIS,  
(TEACHER)

DENHAM TOWN PRIMARY  
SCHOOL

## Teaching Begins



We opened our classrooms to enthusiastic students on January 11<sup>th</sup> of this year. They were curious about all the different instruments but more than anything they were eager to get playing.

Our program is designed so that our students will be engaged in musical instruction every day after their regular school lessons, they have classical rehearsal with their specific instruments three times a week and group practices for choir and orchestra on the remaining two days.



## Students' First Concert

To say this concert was anticipated would be an understatement. This event was the first true test of our program, and while questioning the student's musical abilities never crossed the instructors' minds questions concerning their decorum and ability to focus for the duration of the event resounded in their hearts.

The auditorium was filled with 200 of the students' friends and family members from the community as well as notable members of the music fraternity and zealous NYOJ supporters keen to judge the program's achievements.

The NYOJ Choir conducted by Hugh Douse sang beautifully the pieces arranged by Aldayne Haughton and Caniggia Palmer. Then it was our string orchestra's turn to perform. With pieces arranged by David E. Robinson and Matthew Naughtin the students' performance brought the crowd to their feet cheering in pride and admiration. Our kids and their families were elated and their friends clamoured en masse with enrolment requests.

The NYOJ & Friends supported the children's performances. The instructors took turns conducting with Rafiq Williams, Philip Myers and Darren Young coordinating the youth string orchestra.



Thanks to Mr. Wayne Chen for the concert photos !!

### In Response to the Concert: The account below was e-mailed to us by one of our guests who attended our students' first end of term concert and was truly touched by the program's accomplishments to date.

"...Congratulations on today's show. The kids, and what they have accomplished, moved me so much. I had tears in my eyes from start to finish. Kudos to you for finding the energy to put out the immense effort that I know is required to get to where you've gotten with this project. I hope you can manage to sustain the effort, because this project has so much amazing potential.

Living in Jamaica is not easy. Just driving to and from STATHS today was depressing. (And I am in the

teeny percentile that have it relatively pretty good—yet I am depressed just seeing the malaise from the comfort of my air conditioned car.) Every single day is a psychic challenge to keep on keeping on. There's very little mental or emotional energy left over for anything.

There is so much to be done in this island of ours, and sometimes it feels overwhelming to even try to do anything, because such massive effort is required to get anything off the ground, much less to keep it up. Those of us who dare to try to do something are often overwhelmed by just how difficult these things

are, and it is understandable when we flag, when the first priorities on our time and energy are our jobs, and especially our families, and we just don't have anything left over.

*You have done something wonderful here.*

You have opened the world of these children to something new, something positive, something beautiful, something good in and of itself. **That** is very hard to come by in Jamaica today, and especially for the kids coming from where they're coming from.

We'll continue to support you however we can...."

# National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica

## NYOJ & Friends

The NYOJ & Friends support the NYOJ youth orchestra in every sense of the word. The group, whose core is comprised of our gifted instructors augmented by other local musicians, highlights the efforts and mission of the NYOJ with each of their performances. Their shows draw attention to the level of dedication required for the program's success while inspiring commitment and awe from rapt audiences.

Their first performance, in December 2009, was in honour of the departure of His Excellency Jeremy Cresswell, the United Kingdom's High Commissioner for Jamaica. Here their much appreciated music enlivened sombre guests to truly celebrate the ambassador's tenure.

Next was a performance at King's House in March 2010 as part of an event organised by the Embassy of Spain to Jamaica commemorating Spain's presidency of the European Union. Also present at this event was renowned Spanish tenor Luis Alberto Llaneza who was accompanied by a Spanish pianist. There too the superb playing of the NYOJ & Friends was so moving that they prompted the tenor's request for accompaniment at future performances in the island.

In addition to these individual endeavours the NYOJ & Friends are also committed to supplementing the programs of each end of term student's concert with brief recitals, on top of arranging and coordinating student's pieces.

Members of the NYOJ & Friends are our instructors; Helen Bromley, Beatriz Pozueta, Rafiq Williams, Aisha Robinson, Ann McNamee, Darren Young, Alejandro Gonzalez, Rolando Brown, and Philip Myers, and fellow musicians; Peter Ashbourne, Miranda Prescod, and Cosonya Smith.



The NYOJ & Friends celebrate Spain's EU presidency at King's House. Governor General Patrick Allen and Spanish Ambassador Jesus Silva centre.

## Instructor Profile: Rafiq

Rafiq Williams is a professional violinist and a Jamaican national. Trained in the Suzuki method, Rafiq explains that he learned to play and appreciate the violin before being formally instructed in music theory. But the driving force behind Rafiq's dedication to the violin was his grandfather, Ferdinand Madden. Although a funeral director by trade Madden's love for playing the violin led him to establish and conduct Madden's Philharmonic Orchestra. Rafiq recalls it was this love and commitment to music that carried him through difficult times and even now he turns to his grandfather's legacy for inspiration and encouragement.

Despite a long list of performances for local dignitaries Rafiq notes that his favourite performance was for the inaugural concert of the Jamaica Young People's Symphony

(JYPS). Spearheaded by Moyah Gibson, his original instructor and with a bevy of guest conductors and orchestral glitz he felt for the first time that he was fulfilling the purpose he was trained for.

Rafiq has also participated in the Jamaica Orchestra for Youth (JOY) program under Dr. Olive Lewin and is currently completing his BMus in Jazz and Popular Music Studies at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, which is where he was recruited for the NYOJ launch orchestra and ultimately for this program. He sees his time with the NYOJ as an invaluable experience and "a choice [he] could never regret".



## Instructor Profile: Alejandro

Alejandro Gonzalez is an accomplished Colombian cellist. A native of Pereira, Alejandro is in the process of completing his B.A. in Music Education at Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira. Most notably among his teaching experience he has been an instructor with Batuta for 5 years. With similar goals to the NYOJ, Batuta is a Colombian program which aims to achieve social development by providing music education to underprivileged children (for more about the program please visit <http://www.fundacionbatuta.org/>). Over the years Alejandro has been a part of many highly ranked

Colombian music groups including; The Pereira String Quartet, the Batuta National Orchestra, the Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra of Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira and has been invited to attend the international Cartagena Music Festival. Alejandro was selected to work with the OAS's Caribbean music development program OASIS-Caribbean. Through this position he has been a trainer in St. Lucia, Haiti and now in Jamaica.

He is astounded by the swift progress the NYOJ has made in getting its program off the ground and feels that it really "hits the spot" in terms of producing good citizens for the future and preventing the problems that occur when these children are without engaging prospects and opportunities for development.



## Upcoming Events

You can look forward to more information about the topics and events below in our next issue.

- **Arrival of New Instruments**

The Digicel Fondation has generously provided 30 new instruments for the program. Thanks to them we are now able to begin instruction in woodwind, brass and percussion instruments!

- **Darren Represents the NYOJ at Denver**

To celebrate the partnering of the OAS with the Denver Biennial of the Americas a concert will be put on by the Youth Orchestra of the Americas (YOA) in July 2010. The OAS has invited one representative from each of their Caribbean youth orchestra programs to join the YOA performance. Darren Young, one of our talented viola instructors will be representing us at this event. For more information please visit <http://www.biennialoftheamericas.org/>

- **Upcoming Concert, June 20th, at St. Andrew Technical High School**

One of the aims of our program is to have a concert at the end of each term. This gives the students an opportunity to display their abilities and enables their friends and family in the community to see their progress. You can look forward to pictures and details of this event in the next issue of our newsletter.

- **Our Website**

The official NYOJ website will be up and running by the end of May. Be sure to add it to your bookmarks!



## Get Involved

The NYOJ uses music education as a tool for social empowerment, engaging youths with an intensive and challenging program in order to develop core values such as self-esteem, discipline and perseverance. Our hopes for this program are high, and in order to achieve and maintain our goals we need a steady stream of support from our sponsors and volunteers.

For information about contributing to the NYOJ please contact us at:  
[jamaicayouthorchestra@yahoo.com](mailto:jamaicayouthorchestra@yahoo.com) or (876) 561 6252

We would like to thank our corporate sponsors and partners for helping us to realise and maintain the goals of our mission:

**Island Outpost, the Seprod Group, the Digicel Foundation, the Organisation of American States, the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts.**



We would also like to extend our appreciation to:

St. Andrew Technical High School,  
The Embassy of Spain to Jamaica,  
The National Youth Service,  
The Planning Institute of Jamaica,  
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

for their continued support.