



LA MUSIQUE AUX ENFANTS AND THE OSM LAUNCH THE PROGRAMME EL SISTEMA OSM

Montreal, January 17, 2025 – The **Orchestre symphonique de Montréal**, its Music Director **Rafael Payare**, and **La musique aux enfants** are thrilled and immensely proud to announce the launch in Montreal of their *El Sistema*-inspired program. Over the next 5 years, this program will provide intensive and immersive musical education to more than 600 young people aged 4 to 16. Under the aegis of *La musique aux enfants*, the **Programme El Sistema OSM** will enable students to learn, in a group setting, to play an orchestral instrument, in sessions scheduled four times a week, three hours per day, after school hours. Since mid-November, the program has taken root in two schools in Montréal-Nord: Saint-Rémi Elementary School and Calixa-Lavallée Secondary School. Participants from two other schools have also joined the program in January: Aux Mille Voix Secondary School and La Fraternité Elementary School

In addition to instrument lessons, this enriching program includes various musical activities that support the development of social skills, self-discipline, conscientiousness, and teamwork. The program's young students engage in a learning environment that is **immersive, stimulating, and playful**, designed to foster their growth, both musically and personally. The project's aim is to help each child develop their full potential and become self-fulfilled and socially well-integrated adults, whatever route they may choose.

"It has been a dream which is finally taking shape. Without El Sistema, I would neither be the person I am today, nor the artist I have become. This program opened doors for me and enabled me to build a career I could never have imagined. Music should never be a luxury reserved for a privileged few, but a fundamental right, accessible to all, since it has the power to transform lives". —**Rafael Payare, Music Director, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal.**

Since 2016, the OSM has run the program ***La musique aux enfants***, which has provided some 1,800 pre-school-level children attending École Saint-Rémi in Montréal-Nord with daily musical instruction led by a team of devoted and specialized music educators. The program, which combines lessons, performances in a dynamic concert hall setting, as well as a musical mediation component, has been hugely successful and is set to **restart for the 2024–2029 period**. Children will therefore continue to benefit from a one-of-a-kind program within spaces specifically designed for them in 2015, including a concert hall. Complementarily, the ***Programme El Sistema OSM*** will provide further learning for graduates of *La musique aux enfants* and build upon the OSM's contributions to music education in Quebec.



Young participants of the *Programme El Sistema OSM* rehearsing ©Antoine Saito

« Since its foundation in **1934**, The OSM stands out as a **key pillar of music** and culture in Quebec. Placing education at the heart of its mission, the Orchestra cultivates among younger generations an enriching access to music and a love of the art, while playing an essential part in music's integration in education. Through concrete and bold initiatives that unite communities and make classical music accessible to the greatest number of people, the OSM has a lasting and deeply enriching impact on society as a whole” maintains **Mélanie La Couture, Chief Executive Officer of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal**

Under Rafael Payare's leadership, a new chapter begins for transmitting the thrill of music in a spirit of celebration and sharing. This project reflects the OSM's renewed commitment to collective development, through which every young person can discover the power of music as a means of expression, exchange, and growth, while contributing to a living and inclusive cultural legacy.

“ For close to a decade, La musique aux enfants has grown and developed at the heart of the Montréal-Nord community, opening doors to music for young people to fulfill their potential and enrich their paths in life. Today, with the launch of the ***Programme El Sistema OSM***, we have reached another milestone: an inclusive project provided free of charge that brings together young music educators from various backgrounds who have a passion for transmitting their knowledge, and students who aspire to the daring adventure of becoming orchestral musicians. With its recent acquisition of some sixty instruments, this program represents a future where music builds connections, inspires, and transforms an entire community” affirms **Geneviève Bigonnesse, Principal Manager of *La musique aux enfants***.

This announcement also carries special significance, as the year 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of El Sistema in Venezuela. Since its establishment in 1975, over a million young people worldwide have benefitted from El Sistema, which thereby acts as a powerful driver of social development.



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KEY PARTNERSHIPS FOR A BRIGHT MUSICAL FUTURE

The pedagogical program was born of an essential partnership between *La musique aux enfants* (LMAE), the Université de Montréal's Faculty of Music and its LUMI school. This founding collaboration continues with this new phase, which we are pleased to announce. At the same time, LMAE and OSM would like to thank the Centre de services scolaires de la Pointe-de-l'Île, a partner from the outset, whose vision and expertise have been decisive in the implementation and evolution of the program.

The continuity of *La musique aux enfants* depends on the commitment of key partners. The OSM expresses its deep gratitude to the Newton Foundation, the Azrieli Foundation and the Marcelle and Jean Coutu Foundation for their indispensable support.

The OSM and *La musique aux enfants* also wish to thank their partners who enable *La musique aux enfants* to pursue its mission: the Borough of Montreal-North and Long & McQuade.

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