Over its 67 years, San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory (SDYS) has witnessed the remarkable and wide-ranging benefits that accrue to students who receive a high quality music education. The skills, habits and friendships they develop set them on a path to success in all aspects of their lives.

Unfortunately, there is an immense gap between those who have access to music instruction and those who do not. While some local schools have strong music programs, many others do not. These schools are most often found in low-income neighborhoods.

This was affirmed in the spring by the US Department of Education's report “Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 1999-2000 and 2009-10” which shows:

• 1.3 million of our nation’s public elementary school students receive no specific instruction in music
• Disproportionately, they are the students who attend high-poverty schools
• On nearly every measure of access to arts education between low-poverty and high-poverty schools, the high-poverty schools come up short

SDYS believes all students deserve the benefits of music education. The National Endowment for the Arts confirmed the importance of this in “The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth” by finding that significant academic, workforce, and civic engagement gains are associated with high levels of arts exposure for youth of lower socioeconomic status.

In 2010, our Board of Directors committed itself to making music accessible and affordable for all students by launching the Community Opus Project. We are proud to share this report of all the Community Opus Project has achieved in only two years. But our work has just begun. We need your help to make music education and its many benefits available to more children, families, and neighborhoods.

Please join us in this effort – for the sake of all children in our community!

Dalouge Smith    Robert Gaan
President and CEO    Chair, Board of Directors
San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory Provides Opportunities for Achievement

SDYS provides the highest quality music education and performance opportunities to the young people of our region and has set San Diego’s benchmark for excellence in student music making.

SDYS' Community Opus Project

The Community Opus Project began in 2010 when SDYS partnered with the Chula Vista Elementary School District to provide free on-site after-school music instruction and instruments to 65 third graders at two schools.

Inspired by Venezuela’s highly successful El Sistema youth orchestra program established 36 years ago to offer its poorest children a means to achieve purposeful lives, our Community Opus Project strengthens supportive bonds among children, their families, teachers, neighbors and the community through the shared joy of music.

The Chula Vista School District was so impressed by the effects of the program after less than a year, it invested scarce resources to make expansion possible. Opus grew to serve more than 200 students at six schools in its second year; partnering with Sweetwater Union High School District and four of its schools has allowed the Opus Project to further broaden its impact.

For 2012-2013, SDYS and Chula Vista Elementary School District are collaborating to expand music to the school day for third graders at six schools and to kindergarteners at a seventh. SDYS will establish the first Community Youth Orchestras in Chula Vista open to Opus students and those in middle and high school music programs.

Over 1000 students are now learning music because of the Community Opus Project!
Music instruction can change the trajectory of a child's life. Learning valuable lessons about collaboration and cooperation, as well as performing before an audience increases students' feelings of self-worth and self-confidence. The discipline and progress of learning an instrument builds the habit of hardwork and dedication.

After his evaluation I was told, “I don’t think your son needs medication, he only needs to learn that hard work will pay off and find a way to express himself. Your son told me that he likes music. He thinks it is relaxing. Music is a good discipline and that will help your son.”
— Opus Parent

Engaging Families

Parents assist with lessons, serve as liaisons to other parents, organize carpools and are forming a booster club to build community awareness and support for music education. Most profoundly, they are engaging more deeply in their children's overall education and becoming more involved with their schools.

Transforming Students

Music instruction can change the trajectory of a child's life. Learning valuable lessons about collaboration and cooperation, as well as performing before an audience increases students' feelings of self-worth and self-confidence. The discipline and progress of learning an instrument builds the habit of hardwork and dedication.

Strengthening Neighborhoods

Opus students from neighboring schools come together for weekly rehearsals, frequent performances and semiannual Music Camps. The school year ends with a joint performance combining 200 Opus students and 200 music students from neighborhood middle and high schools.

It was great to see the children from different places rehearsing and playing together in the playground during breaks. Every chance they got, they played together in the big mix of kids.
— Opus Parent
Broadening Horizons

Twenty-seven Opus students are enrolled in SDYS’ Balboa Park ensembles, joining students from throughout the county. They perform on stage at Copley Symphony Hall.

Thirty-five Opus students and their parents travelled to Pasadena to participate in a day-long “seminario” (musical workshop) with students from El Sistema-inspired programs in Pasadena and Santa Barbara. The day ended with a concert featuring a combined orchestra of 100 students and parents on recorders!

*The seminario was a great day for us. He told me he loved it and wants to do it again. He really learned from joining in and participating with kids he didn’t know.*

— Opus Parent

Serving Community

Opus students participate in over 20 community events as both performers and teachers. They perform at after-school programs and run instrument petting zoos to teach others about their instruments and how to play them.

Contact Jane Merrill at 619.233.3232 x200 or jmerrill@sdys.org
Returning Music to the School Day
With SDYS’ assistance, Chula Vista Elementary District is returning music to the school day for all third graders at the six Opus schools. The music will complement the overall curriculum to support learning across all subjects.

Promise Neighborhood Chula Vista
The Community Opus Project is expanding to serve all kindergarten students at Castle Park Elementary under the umbrella of this US Department of Education funded project. The program is designed to incorporate parents into music learning with their children.

Community Opus Youth Orchestras
Castle Park Middle School will be the site of two new after-school youth orchestras open to Opus, middle and high school music students. It will be the first community ensemble in Chula Vista that brings together students of multiple ages from different campuses.

Research and Measurement
Documenting the benefits of music instruction is important. SDYS and Chula Vista Elementary School District are tracking changes in student achievement on standardized tests and school attendance in partnership with UC San Diego CREATE. SDYS, UC San Diego’s Center for Human Development and The Neurosciences Institute have launched the SIMPHONY study to track how music education affects children’s brain and language development, as well as behavioral and cognitive skills.

Collaboration
These partners invest resources to support the goals of the Community Opus Project in collaborations with SDYS.

School Partners
Chula Vista Elementary School District
Sweetwater Union High School District
Visual and Performing Arts
Otay Elementary
Lauderbach Elementary
Rosebank Elementary
Vista Square Elementary
Rice Elementary
Harborside Elementary
Oak Park Elementary
Castle Park Elementary
Castle Park Middle
Chula Vista Middle
Castle Park High
Chula Vista High

Community Partners
Chula Vista Community Collaborative
South Bay Community Services
Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood
South Bay Alliance for Arts Education
heART on Center
UC San Diego Center for Human Development
UC San Diego, Center for Research on Educational Equity, Assessment and Teaching Excellence (CREATE)
UC San Diego Extension's Academic Connections
The Neurosciences Institute
San Diego State University School of Music
San Diego Symphony
La Jolla Music Society

National Partners
YOLA, LA Philharmonic
VYMA – Verdugo Young Musicians Association, Pasadena
ICAN, Santa Barbara
Sistema Fellows, New England Conservatory
El Sistema USA
The Weill Music Institute, Carnegie Hall
League of American Orchestras

My son has changed a lot. Music has helped him be more responsible and be more attentive at school. His grades have gone up. And to tell you the truth, every day he is getting better both in music and at school. — Opus Parent

Math and language arts improvement! Always on task! Math and writing skills are skyrocketing now! — Classroom Teacher
Community Opus Project
Government, Foundation, and Corporate Supporters

The Community Opus Project is only possible with the support of these funding partners and the many individual donors to San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory. To become an investor in our work, please contact Jane Merrill at 619.233.3232 x200 or jmerrill@sdys.org.

Chula Vista Elementary School District
Sweetwater Union High School District
City of Chula Vista
City of Chula Vista Cultural Arts Commission
City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture
County of San Diego Neighborhood Reinvestment Program
National Endowment for the Arts
US Department of Education — Promise Neighborhood
Christopher Weil & Co.

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San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory

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These community leaders assist the Board of Directors, President & CEO and Music Director with expertise and enthusiasm to advance the organizational mission and vision.

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