



New YONA-Sistema Site Welcome to St. Catherine School

by Kyra Droog

October 19th, 2021, was a very exciting day in the YONA-Sistema world. After the school day finished at St. Catherine school, 22 students from grades 1 and 2 excitedly made their way from their regular classrooms into a different room, set up for the first day of a brand-new program. They sat in a circle on the floor, talking with their friends as they waited for one of their teachers to start the program. Smiles were evident even behind the students' masks, as they were welcomed to their first-ever day of YONA-Sistema.

“Being able to expand our program has been a very exciting process.”

- Mr. Nathan

The addition of another YONA-Sistema site in itself is particularly exciting, especially considering how much the world has changed in the past 20 months. “Plans to expand the YONA-Sistema program had existed for years – long before COVID began,” explained Teaching Artist, Nathan Chan. “Of course, because of the pandemic, our expansion plans changed in big ways. Being able to expand our program and open a new site despite the pandemic has been a very interesting and exciting process.”

Nothing quite mirrors the excited energy of the first day of school more than the first day of YONA-Sistema. In this first day, St. Catherine Site Manager Chariz Faulmino sees a culmination of all the work that has gone into bringing this new YONA-Sistema site together. As the site manager, she coordinates between the school, the students, their families, teaching artists, and the YONA-Sistema team overall. Her goal is to ensure that everyone has the resources they need to succeed, and she's excited to

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see that all the hard work from the school and the YONA-Sistema team has paid off.

With the first week of the new site under her belt, Chariz is already thinking about the future, and how impactful this program will be for everyone involved. Though the new YONA-Sistema students won't receive their violins for some time (while they practice taking care of cardboard instruments), their excitement to begin playing is contagious.

When asked what the most exciting aspect of the new YONA-Sistema site is, Chariz said that "we get to start with a clean slate and build something that ultimately is going to come from Nathan, myself, and the kids."

We are incredibly thankful to St. Catherine school for welcoming the YONA-Sistema program into its halls and look forward to sharing further updates as the program continues. 🎵

Meet The Teacher



Biboye Onanuga
New YONA-Sistema Instructor

- I am a musician living in Amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton). My parents are Yoruba and Ijaw. I was born in Dorset, and grew up between England and Nigeria before moving to Edmonton at 10. I started playing the drums at 12 in school and church before going on to receive my music degree from MacEwan University. I love to move about on my bike, play basketball with strangers (perhaps my biggest challenge during the pandemic), and have recently reacquainted myself with running.
- I'm passionate about young people, music, and strong communities - so I feel connected to so much of what's at the heart of YONA-Sistema.
- I'm stepping into the site manager role at St. Alphonsus school!
- I am looking forward to supporting the kids and community at St. Al's for an extended period of time. I'm honoured to help introduce the magic of music to young people in this context.
- A student who was having an emotional day and, for safety reasons, had to keep to themselves - surprised me at the end of the day with a drawing made for me! It's now pinned to the corkboard by my desk in St. Al's.

YONA-Sistema Year 9

The Beginning

by Kyra Droog



We are so excited to announce that YONA-Sistema is back, and in person once more. Our ninth year of YONA-Sistema is certain to be an amazing year, full of fun, music, and learning. Understandably, the YONA-Sistema program looks a bit different this year, but nothing can stop the energy and excitement that comes from learning about music.

This year, we have five YONA-Sistema sites: St. Teresa of Calcutta, St. Alphonsus, St. Catherine, the Winspear Centre, and Kipohtakâw YONA. After not being able to welcome new students last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were excited to welcome 99 new students to YONA-Sistema this year, across our five sites. We now have a total of 186 students taking part in YONA-Sistema programming. "We're so inspired by these students," says Jacquie McNulty, YONA-Sistema Site Manager. "It's energizing to be back in person and seeing our YONA-Sistema kids each day after school."

Inside the classroom, there are many procedures in place to help stop the spread of COVID-19. "The safety of our YONA-Sistema students, volunteers, and staff is extremely important, and we want everyone to feel comfortable within the YONA-Sistema environment," Jacquie says. A mandatory vaccination policy is in place for all eligible staff, volunteers, and students, in addition to masks being worn at all times indoors, and physical distancing measures. Programming is being planned on a school-based cohort system, which means that each cohort only has students from one school within it.

Year Nine of YONA-Sistema has provided us with an exciting opportunity: to bring students to practice and learn at the Winspear Centre. Members of the

"It's energizing to be back in person and seeing our YONA-Sistema kids each day after school."

- Ms. Jacquie

La Bruyère Orchestra gather at the Winspear Centre during the week, with ESO Assistant Conductor and Community Ambassador Cosette Justo Valdés joining them once a week to work on new pieces of music. One such piece is Prairie Promise, which was commissioned from Canadian composer Cris Derksen in a joint effort by El Sistema inspired programs across Canada. Many Sistema programs will be practicing and performing the piece individually, throughout the year. While we can't say exactly when YONA-Sistema will be sharing a performance of this new piece, we can confirm that we'll share clips and updates on social media as we are able.

YONA-Sistema's ninth year is shaping up to be amazing, and there is much more to come. From instrument graduation ceremonies to winter concerts and the ever-popular Road to Joy year-end celebration, we have exciting content heading your way throughout the year. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who supports our students and can't wait to show you how much we learn and grow throughout this year. 🎵

Welcome to YONA-Sistema

2021 YONA Explorers

by Kyra Droog



When school let out one sunny September afternoon, the sound of chatter and excitement filled our YONA-Sistema programming space. All the staff members smiled widely behind their masks. It was finally happening; YONA Explorers was back! It's been two years since we hosted our last YONA Explorers and welcomed new students to YONA-Sistema. From September 20 – 23, the 2021 YONA Explorers program welcomed four new staff members and over 100 kids and their families to learn about YONA-Sistema. After all, YONA-Sistema is more than just an after-school activity; it's a community. From learning about rhythm to playing an instrument to following the YONA-Sistema philosophy, students join a tight-knit group that grows and learns together. By providing prospective students and their families the opportunity to see YONA-Sistema in action, they can clearly see whether it's the right fit for them.

At the YONA Explorers program, kids get a glimpse into a typical day at YONA-Sistema. They're provided with a nutritious snack, music classes, homework help, and an introduction to some of the instruments they might get to play. Kids spend time playing outside, meeting new friends, and

This year, 99 new students who attended YONA Explorers were welcomed to the YONA-Sistema program.

playing games that include singing and matching beats provided by the instructors. New instructors also get to experience how YONA-Sistema works, by meeting and working with the kids, seeing how other instructors interact with students, and even having the opportunity to teach some programming segments to help build up their confidence.

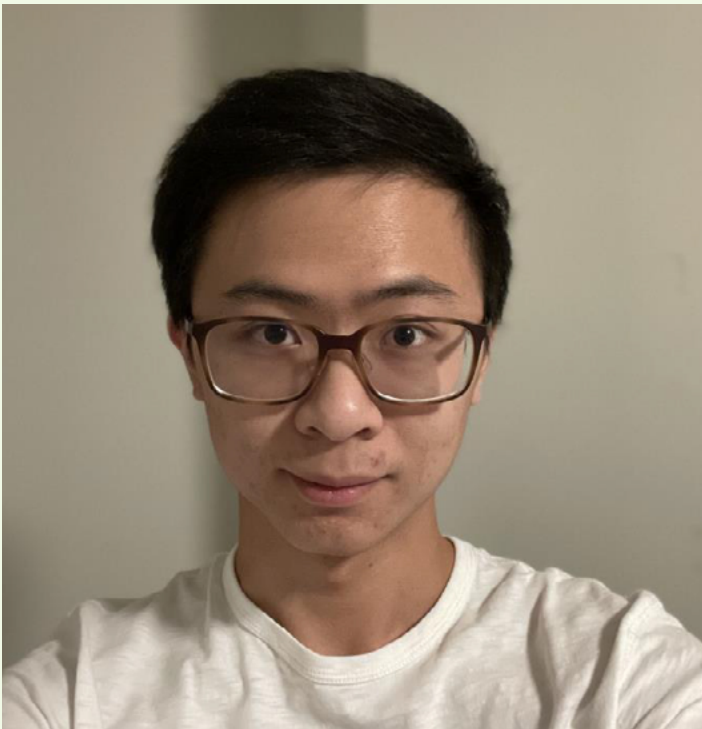
"The most magical moment of YONA Explorers is the energy in the room when they first see the instruments they'll get to play, especially the bass," says Jacquie McNulty, YONA-Sistema Site Manager. "It draws you in and feels so exciting - it's like a promise of something new that they can learn, something that we can teach them. That moment really sparks the 'I want to work for this' attitude that we encourage in YONA-Sistema."

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This year, 99 new students who attended YONA Explorers were welcomed to the YONA-Sistema program. These students will attend YONA-Sistema at St. Alphonsus, St. Teresa, or at our newest site at St. Catherine school. We are excited to get to know our new students and thank everyone who took part in YONA Explorers. There were more YONA-Sistema applications than there were spots within the program this year – there's more demand for the program than YONA-Sistema is currently able to accommodate for, even with the addition of a new site at St. Catherine School. All the new students this year had classes before any of the returning students did. By doing so, staff were able to help them settle in before being joined by students that were already acclimated to the program.

A few months into their YONA-Sistema journey, all new students will participate in an instrument graduation: turning their cardboard instruments in and receiving real instruments in return. Our volunteers have just completed crafting 100 new cardboard instruments, which was no small task. Details on our instrument graduation ceremony will emerge soon, and we'll be sure to share them as soon as they do. Stay tuned to witness the powerful moment when our newest YONA-Sistema students hold their instruments in their hands for the very first time. 🎵

Meet The Teacher



Joshua Ching
New YONA-Sistema Instructor

- Hello! My name is Josh, and I just started with YONA-Sistema as a Teaching Artist for cello this past September. I spent most of my past year tutoring math and science, but I was also looking for an opportunity to make use of my experience in education and my passion for music.
- I was most interested in YONA-Sistema's mission, as well as the unique learning environment provided for students in the program made possible by small class sizes, and time set aside for nutrition and academics.
- My most rewarding and memorable moment thus far has been taking my students out for a walk with their cardboard cellos they helped make themselves, and seeing them all get used to having to carry around such a large, unwieldy object with utmost care.
- Getting to know my class of cello students over the past few weeks, I most look forward to seeing them grow into their musician shoes, and hopefully gain a newfound sense of excitement whenever they hear, play, and learn music. Here's to a great year!

Meet The Teacher

Joshua Ryu

New YONA-Sistema Instructor

- My name is Joshua, and I'm a classically-trained violinist, born and raised in Canada. This is my first year as a Teaching Artist for YONA-Sistema.
- Teaching has been a passion of mine since the early stages of my musical career. In recent years, I've had the pleasure to share my experience with young artists, and programs similar to YONA-Sistema. What I've learned is that music is a wonderful art form, but comes with its challenges, especially at the start. It can be difficult to get and learn an instrument, find a teacher, and most of all, find a community that shares a similar musical passion. I believe everyone deserves the opportunity to have music-learning accessible to them; to reveal the inner artist that lies within. YONA-Sistema provides that opportunity and beyond, which initially drew me to the program. The program not only provides music-making for students, but is supported with a strong and inspiring community. I feel fortunate to have been welcomed into this program, and thrilled that I can continue sharing my experience with students, helping them discover what they are passionate about.
- At YONA-Sistema, I primarily teach violin to junior level students. This year, I have three groups of grades 1 – 3. I have one group at our site located at St. Alphonsus Catholic School, and two groups at our program for the Alexander First Nation Kipohtakaw Education Centre. Additionally, I assist and collaborate with other Teaching Artists.
- It's been a difficult period for the world, but I'm happy that we are able to hold YONA-Sistema in-person. It's been a pleasure getting to know all of the students, and I'm feeling their excitement to be learning an instrument. I'm most looking forward to continuing building the community with all the new and returning students, particularly with music-making. It hasn't been the most active year for students and teachers, so I'm thrilled to be able to teach and share my excitement with others.
- During the last day of our "Explorers Week," I had students draw their own YONA-Sistema poster, writing what they enjoyed about their time at YONA-Sistema so far. It was touching to see the strong connection they all had made with YONA-Sistema in the brief time frame, and how much they enjoyed learning music and getting to know everyone in their class. They all expressed excitement about learning violin, which was thrilling to hear!



Meet The Teacher

Chariz Faulmino

New YONA-Sistema Instructor

- My name is Chariz Faulmino (She/They/Siya). I am a Filipinx/Canadian Theatre Performer based in Treaty 6 Territory, immigrated in 2007 from the northern island of Luzon, Calamba City Philippines. I am a proud aunt of two (soon to be three) little nibblings!
- Music/Creativity has helped shape who I am today, and has steered me towards a career in the arts. Having a part in shaping young souls with musical creativity... fills my cup! Not to mention I love working with kids. YONA-Sistema beautifully blends community and the arts and I am thrilled to be a part of that. In addition, the advocacy work and social change ideals this program promotes inspires me to continue growing and to better care for the members in my community. Also, representation matters. During my upbringing I had rarely seen role models of my ethnicity in Western artforms and I hope to see the arts reflect more of society in my adult years.
- My role in YONA-Sistema is Site Manager at St. Catherine School!
- This year at YONA-Sistema, I'm most looking forward to growing and building relationships with the students and folks in the program!
- It's hard to pick a favourite moment so far. How does one pick only one? I already have many. Watching sparks of inspiration and awe from the students when they see or hear the teaching artist play their instrument. I also love seeing the bravery of young kids as they try something new – it reminds me to channel this bravery in my own life when faced with new challenges, skills, adversity etc...



Calling All Volunteers!

Consider spending some time with us at YONA-Sistema!

Our volunteers are a valuable part of our program, offering help in many areas including snack preparations, academic support and supervision.

If you're interested, please fill out the volunteer form on our website:

www.yona-sistema.com/volunteer

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