

## **The National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica's 'Canada Dream Tour' Background Information**

### **Summary – Canada Dream Tour**

The NYOJ is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that uses free classical music education as a tool to inspire, empower and enhance the lives of at-risk Jamaican youths.

In August, the NYOJ was invited by the Jamaican High Commissioner to travel to Canada and play for Jamaican Independence Day Celebrations in Canada's Capital, Ottawa.

So after rigorous auditions, twenty-five NYOJ students have been chosen to make Jamaicans proud by touring Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, Canada in August 2014.

This tour will inspire, motivate and infuse hope into the lives of so many at-risk Jamaican youth, many of whom have never left the Island. It will be a life-changing experience by exposing the students to new possibilities, allowing them to learn the discipline and pride that come with an international tour and create memories that will last a lifetime.

Students from the following schools in Kingston will be participating in the tour: Kingston College, St. Andrew Technical, Convent of Mercy or "Alpha", Camperdown, Excelsior, St. George's College, Clan Carthy and Vauxhall.

### **Short Background of the NYOJ**

The National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica (NYOJ) is a social development program aimed at enhancing the lives of at-risk youth from Jamaica. The program utilizes lessons in classical music to instill core values of discipline, perseverance and dedication, fostering emotional and intellectual development in our participants.

Through the creation of youth orchestras, the program promotes teamwork, compassion and self-esteem. Beyond enriching lives by providing a creative musical outlet, the program advocated cooperation, kindness and consideration as we encourage our students to have a positive impact on the world around them.

The NYOJ began in 2009 and currently operates five classical music-training centres throughout Kingston and Spanish Town, impacting the lives of over 1000 students since it's inception.

NYOJ was inspired by the famous Venezuelan 'El Sistema' program which has been successful in making 'learning by playing' a proven model for how to create great musicians and change the lives of at-risk children in a country.

### **The Objectives**

The NYOJ aims to facilitate the social and personal development of at-risk youths by fulfilling the following goals:

- To provide classical music lessons to students free of charge.
- To recruit music instructors to participate in the program.
- To select motivated students who are enthusiastic about new opportunities.
- To build social cohesiveness and develop self-esteem and self-awareness in our participants.

- To fill our students' spare time with positive instruction and opportunities for personal growth, decreasing the likelihood of involvement in or victimization from violent or criminal activities.
- To contribute to the social advancement and well being of the participants and their families.
- To engage participants' families and other community members by involving them in volunteer positions in the program.
- To establish additional youth orchestras, maintaining the same objectives, in other sections of the inner city in Kingston and in more cities across the island.

### **Is the Program Really Working?**

"Music and artistic expression transform lives; The Orchestra Program being implemented by the NYOJ has the potential to transform whole communities..."

- Chris Blackwell, Founder of Island Records, Producer of Bob Marley

"...the most inspirational aspect of our visit, however, was to witness the astonishing and invaluable work that is being done for the children and young people of the island by the National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica ..."

- Benjamin Pope, Conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra tour to Jamaica in September 2012

"...NYOJ is doing incredible work in Jamaica, using music as a tool for social change, and our partnership with them has been extremely fruitful...NYOJ has been unique in its ability to get the right partners at the table, from the public sector and private sector, from the start, and has been strong and revolutionary from the get-go...."

- Mariano Vales, Music Program Director, Organisation of American States

### **Student's Voices**

"It has helped me in numerous ways. The orchestra is a community of different instruments, I have to literally, try and live in harmony with the persons playing the music. It gives a symbolism of what the real world is like. We have to live in harmony with everybody"

-NYOJ Student, Daily Gleaner Interview, April 2012

**Quotes taken from an anonymous survey of current students administered on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014 when asked: "What does the NYOJ program mean to you?"**

"The NYOJ program feels like a second home to me. I feel appreciated, loved and apart of something big. It's a place of refuge when I am experiencing difficulties in life."

"The program has changed my life a lot, I'm now a different person from where I was 5 years back and a program like the NYOJ I think should be located in the 14 parishes of Jamaica because then I have a feeling that the country will be a better place."

"The NYOJ helps me to calm down even when I'm having the worst day, and I always look forward to just spending time learning about music and releasing some of the stresses I come across on a daily basis."

“It means open doors and a lot of opportunities. I can come to the NYOJ and be comfortable and not be discriminated. I am accepted honestly for the person I am, respect is the energy that flows through the programme.”

“Being apart of the orchestra has made me feel like I can be and *do* something, like I have a talent or the ability to gain one.”

“It means a lot to me because I get to learn my favorite instrument around some nice people who love and care about me.”

“The facilities provided to enable us to learn to play an instrument are a great asset to both myself, my community, and society.”

### **History of the NYOJ**

- The NYOJ's first training centre began in January 2010 in Kingston, Jamaica with St. Andrew Technical High School. At-risk youth, ages 10-18 were recruited from schools in the surrounding communities (including St. Alban's Primary, Denham Town Primary & Comprehensive High School, Trench Town High School and Tivoli Gardens Comprehensive High School)
- In September 2011, a second training centre was launched at Kingston College's Melbourne Campus, open to students from nearby schools and communities (including the Vauxhall, Camperdown, Holy Trinity and Clan Carthy High Schools).
- In 2014, the NYOJ opened three more centres including Windward Road Primary and Junior High School, St. Jago High School and Norman Manley High School having joined the Clinton Global Initiative, totaling five fully operational classical music training centres in Jamaica.
- Classes are held anywhere from two to six days a week, depending on the centre, from 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm and students receive a snack and bus fair along with their lesson
- The NYOJ is funded through generous contributions from a variety of individuals and private sector entities including the Organization of the American States, the Digicel Foundation, Seprod, Facey Group Ltd, NCB Foundation, NCB Foundation, Supreme Ventures Foundation, Ideal Group, PetroCaribe Development Fund, CHASE Fund, Friends of the NYOJ Foundation, JSIF (Jamaica Social Investment Fund), US Department of State, Embassy of Spain and the Russian Embassy.

### **For More Information**

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Crowd Funding Site: **<https://igg.me/at/nyoj>**