

US alliance takes a lead on Sistema training

THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC is going into partnership with the Longy School of Music and Bard College to train musicians to teach at US projects inspired by Venezuela's El Sistema music education movement. The collaboration, called Take A Stand, will offer a one-year, full-time master of arts in teaching (MAT) qualification from June 2012, and run national conferences on El Sistema teaching. Fifteen students will join the first programme.

The move comes two years after the New England Conservatory (NEC) established its Abreu Fellows programme for training musicians in the El Sistema model. The NEC also hosted El Sistema USA, a fledgling advocacy network, but cut its ties with the organisation earlier this year, leaving a lack of clear leadership in the field.

Longy president Karen Zorn said: 'There is an opportunity to drive the movement forward, but our first year will be partly diagnostic: instead of building a national leadership based on

what we think is needed, we'll listen to people already working in the field.'

NEC president Tony Woodcock defused talk in some US media of tension between Take a Stand and Abreu Fellows, saying: 'There is room and opportunity for all who want to support the development of at-risk children through music.'

Whereas the Abreu Fellows programme offers free tuition, the MAT will cost \$37,500. Zorn said that scholarships will be available to reduce that fee by up to half, but she added: 'I think it's right that participants have a stake in the game. Good citizens understand that.'

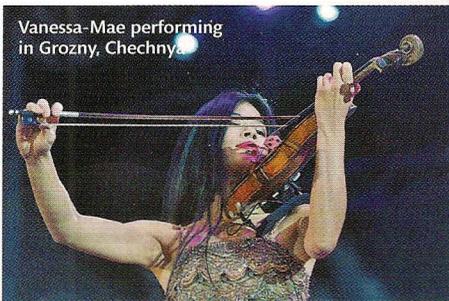


Children in the Los Angeles Philharmonic's El Sistema-inspired Youth Orchestra LA programme play for conductor Gustavo Dudamel

Violinist shamed for playing for Chechen president

VANESSA-MAE ANGERED human rights organisations by playing at a lavish 35th birthday concert for Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. Appointed president by Vladimir Putin in 2007, Kadyrov has been

accused by the human rights foundation Memorial of using torture, causing disappearances and authorising extrajudicial executions. The British violinist, reportedly received a fee of \$500,000



Vanessa-Mae performing in Grozny, Chechnya

for performing for Kadyrov. Actors Hilary Swank and Jean-Claude Van Damme and the singer Seal also appeared at the event.

The New York-based Human Rights Foundation (HRF) said that it had sent letters to the celebrities before the concert, outlining Kadyrov's track record and asking them not to attend. HRF president Thor Halvorssen described their appearance at the event as 'disheartening and shameful'. He added: 'Vanessa-Mae, born under the regime of Singapore, should be particularly sensitive to human-rights concerns.' *The Strad* contacted the violinist's management for comment, but received no response.

► **THE AUSTRALIAN STRING COMMUNITY** is mourning the death at the age of 25, of Richard Pollett, a promising violinist who was killed in a road accident in Brisbane. Composer Elena Kats-Chernin, whose concerto for violin and piano Pollett had been due to perform with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, has written a new piece as a memorial.

► **HILARY HAHN HAS LAUNCHED** a contest to find a final piece for her encores project. Twenty-six composers, including Mark-Anthony Turnage, Krzysztof Penderecki, Edgar Meyer and Nico Muhly, have already written encores for the violinist. She will choose the final work from blind submissions to her website.

► **A NEW YORK VIOLINIST** who is suing Young Concert Artists for age discrimination has complained that the judge for his case is too old. The *New York Daily News* reported that Martin Stoner, 60, tried to get the case reassigned, citing the 88-year-old judge's 'physical and mental limitations'.

CORRECTION
In last month's issue, Yo-Yo Ma's latest album was mistakenly referred to as *The Goat Road Sessions*. Its correct title is *The Goat Rodeo Sessions*. It was also stated that he received his undergraduate degree from Yale, when in fact he studied at Harvard.