

The orchestra as a tool for social inclusion Rolando Goldman (Argentina)

In Argentina there are eight musical companies run by the State, under the umbrella of the culture national government agency. These companies include four choirs, one ballet and three instrumental formations. Today we are going to focus on the last three: the National Orchestra of Argentine Music "Juan De Dios Filiberto", The National Symphonic Orchestra, and The National Symphonic Band of the Blind.

Historically, the participation of the State in these organisms has been restricted to their performance in traditional theaters and halls of the artistic circuit. Access to them did not reach numerous sectors of the Argentine society for reasons that nothing have to do with the simple personal lack of interest in music, nor the pretentious despise towards any form of culture —even though there is a clear interpretation of this issue deeply rooted among social elites.

This way of planning the public orchestras' schedule, in line with a conception of culture restricted to the dissemination of the so-called "beaux arts", among limited sectors of the community, has been revised in the recent years, aiming to ensure equitable access to cultural goods and services, and to promote the inclusion of all sectors of the population within its circuits of creation, production and consumption, which is finally a duty that the State cannot delegate.

If culture involves both art expressions and social forms of building reality, and the State ensures and promotes knowledge and the fulfillment of cultural rights, it is up to the State to promote public policies that become strategic tools for social inclusion, and encourage cultural creation and creativity of all excluded sectors, thus helping to eradicate the "first-class citizen" and "second-class citizen" categories.

Part of this process is expressed through the work carried out by the Culture Secretariat of the Presidency of the Nation since 2004, whenever it has to organize the orchestras' schedule, making decisions which - opposite to what is sometimes voiced out - end up being purely political decisions, and not simply management decisions.

Against this backdrop, the orchestras of the Culture Secretariat have helped invaluablely with diverse social inclusion programs, all of them embracing the musical discipline.

As an example, it is worth mentioning the reiterated participation of the orchestras in the concerts of the Music in Factories Program. This program focuses on generating cultural events in the work and production environments, which are not to be solely an end in themselves but also a means to originate and/or spur the development of art expressions to the inside of work collectives. These orchestras have thus performed in numerous occasions in factories and other spaces related to work and production, some of them, generated by the workers themselves.

The orchestras have also taken a commitment with their performance within the framework of the programs "Music for the Country" and "Music in Prisons". The former is oriented to meet the specific needs and requirements of public and private institutions all throughout the national territory; the latter aims to carry out cultural actions away from the conventional circuits, in relation to social groups under unfavorable living conditions such as prisons.

A special mention goes to the Social Program of Children and Youth Orchestras, which started in 2004 nationwide. Thanks to this Program 55 orchestras made up by 5,500 children and youngsters of family with very few economic resources have been created in twenty provinces with the objective to foster social inclusion through music. Apart from the weekly rehearsals and classes, hundreds of musical instruments were given out to complete the orchestras. Moreover, regional, provincial and national exchange gatherings are held with the children participating in the program.

Finally, it is useful to mention that the growing participation of the State-run orchestras in the above-mentioned social inclusion policies through music has been accompanied by the professional upgrading of these very musical companies. In the last few years they have recovered the career and permanent training mechanisms, which allows showing the professional progress in the level of income accomplished by every musician member, wages have been reformulated in virtue of the excellence required by this activity, and work is being done on the permanent reformulation of the organic structure and technical support of the companies for the better fulfillment of their public duties. All this, has been achieved within

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the framework of the democratic mechanism of negotiation between the State and the representatives of the sector, which has been recovered in the last five years in Argentina.