



For Immediate Release

Equity Arc and El Sistema USA Announce Partnership to Break Barriers and Create Access in the College/Conservatory Application Process

(August 23, 2024) — Equity Arc and El Sistema USA are excited to unveil a joint venture to provide support and expert guidance to musicians on the cusp of collegiate study and their families.

This Fall, Equity Arc and El Sistema USA are launching a virtual series entitled “Collegiate Access for Young Musicians” designed to expand collegiate access. While many young musicians navigate their early training and college audition process with the help of a private teacher or supported by staff in a youth music training program, many more families go through that process in isolation, making difficult decisions about the school(s) to which they will submit applications. This innovative series aims to empower and guide aspiring musicians who are navigating the college and conservatory application process, bridging gaps, providing invaluable resources, and illuminating the intricacies of applications and auditions. By providing information, access, and resources needed to inspire, educate, and prepare students to thrive in their post-secondary school musical pursuits, we level the playing field for all musicians who seek to pursue music in their collegiate careers.

This partnership is responsive to the needs of Equity Arc’s and El Sistema USA’s diverse memberships and is a natural step for leading advocates for building opportunity and accessibility in classical music. Together, these organizations create opportunities for students from all backgrounds to thrive musically, personally, and professionally. Through El Sistema USA’s leadership in musical education and Equity Arc’s focus on driving systemic change across the arc of the professional performance trajectory, the partnership will build access to collegiate study by ensuring that college-bound musicians and their families are equipped with the tools for success.

“We are proud to work with El Sistema USA to offer “Collegiate Access for Young Musicians” to break down barriers around the complex college application process.” says Stanford Thompson, Equity Arc’s Executive Director. “Equity Arc emphasizes collaboration across the field, and this partnership will amplify impact by reaching across our respective memberships and musicians around the country.”

“We are pleased to partner with Equity Arc to present this innovative series to students, parents, and leaders in our field as we continue to create pathways for young musicians into higher education spaces and our field at large.” says Elizabeth Moulthrop, Executive Director of El Sistema USA. “We hope that this collaboration can amplify our collective work of bridging the gap in collegiate access and careers in the music field for young people, regardless of background.”

“Collegiate Access for Young Musicians” will launch on October 8, 2024, with a virtual college fair and will cover topics ranging from exploring the complex financial aid process to developing self-advocacy skills. Sessions in the series are open to all and are free for members of Equity Arc and El Sistema USA.

Virtual College Fair & Finding the Best Fit

October 8, 2024: 6:30-9pm ET

A forum for prospective students and families to learn about various music programs across the country and to learn how to find a school that is the “best fit” for them.

Optimizing Your College Application & Audition

November 12, 2024: 7-8pm ET

A session for prospective students to learn how to prepare and optimize their pre-screening recording, college essay, interview, and audition.

Navigating College & Audition Process with Undocumented Parents

December 3, 2024: 7-8pm ET

Exploring practical strategies and resources tailored to support the unique challenges faced by students with undocumented parents as they navigate the college admissions and audition process.

Higher-Education Financial Planning for Low-Income Families

February 11, 2025: 7-8pm

Learn about essential financial planning strategies designed to help music students understand and navigate higher education expenses.

Navigating the Financial Aid & Appeals Process

March 4, 2025: 7-8pm ET

Advice on identifying and negotiating scholarships and navigating student loans.

Empowering Your Voice & Developing Self-Advocacy in Higher Education Spaces

May 6, 2025: 7-8pm

Learn to effectively navigate and advocate for your needs as a student in collegiate and conservatory environments.

About Equity Arc

Equity Arc (formerly the National Instrumentalist Mentoring and Advancement Network) is a national coalition of musical organizations and advocates whose mission and programming address the structural inequities in classical music that result in the field’s systemic lack of racial and ethnic diversity. Equity Arc creates and works with a robust network of passionate, experienced members from across the country and across the arc of musical development along two paths: Building a comprehensive arc of support and mentorship for instrumentalists to navigate the journey from student to professional and assisting in breaking down barriers to achieving success in the field. Equity Arc also provides forums, resources, and training for member organizations to dismantle the structural inequities, biases, and systemic racism ingrained in their policies and practices that inhibit the creation of equitable opportunities and environments for classical musicians of color.

About El Sistema USA

El Sistema USA (ESUSA) works to ensure every child has access to high-quality music education that celebrates their voice and potential by building a national network of member organizations and educators. With over 140 member programs, 6,000 teaching artists, and 25,000 students, we support our network with staff development and training, research and data, student leadership programs, and advocacy for the field. ESUSA is committed to equity and excellence in music education. We envision a world in which every child—regardless of income, geography, or identity—has access to a high-quality music education program that builds community, opportunity, and personal growth. Our model emphasizes programs with free or low-cost tuition, frequent instruction (5-10+ hours per week), and ensemble-based learning.