

TRASH, from page 10

Colá – one of the workers at Cateura with experience in carpentering – realized the orchestra's need for more instruments and offered to assist by building them with whatever materials he could find. In the beginning, the instruments made were educational and simple but after Gomez trained in stringed instrument construction he built the first ever violin from recycled materials.

Working with Sánchez, Gomez continued to try out different materials and shapes in order to build various instruments and then they realized they had an infinite source of materials from the landfill site.

"We started to look in the piles of rubbish as that was where we would find the materials that would be of use," Sánchez explained. "I am this orchestra's first musical instrument producer. I now have a workshop in my house and we have already made lots of violins," says Gómez. "I have access to the landfill, so I go in and look for materials... sometimes I'm successful,

others not..."

When asked how sound is maintained and how instruments are taken care of, Gomez replied while showing us a violin whose shell was made of tin. He said: "You have to tighten the casing well so that it doesn't move at all ... if it moves then it will make a different sound altogether. Recently I have been making a living from this, although I am still a rubbish collector."

Building musical instruments from recycled material resulted in original objects with beautiful sounds and increasing numbers of children

and young people wanted to join the orchestra. The trouble was that the situations the young musicians' families faced often stopped them from having instruments, which held back their musical development. In addition, the need to improve their playing required daily practice with instruments. "We saw ourselves with the dilemma of whether or not to give the few conventional instruments that we had to the children to take them home, with the risk they would be returned damaged or not at all ... considering that a conventional

"The world sends us its waste. We give them back music."

— FAVIO SÁNCHEZ
FOUNDER OF THE RECYCLED INSTRUMENTS ORCHESTRA OF CATEURA, PARAGUAY

violin costs more than the house of some of those children," Sánchez pointed out.

Inspired, in part, by the musicians and comedic actors from the Argentine comedy-musical group, Les Luthiers, they began to experiment. However, the first violin was not as functional as they had hoped. Nonetheless, it was useful to show them what worked and what did not.

Sánchez says participating in the project "has taught them (the children) many values necessary to play an instrument in a group: discipline, responsibility, respect, social interaction, tolerance, perseverance, persistence, the desire to study, obedience, leadership, creativity, sensitivity, concentration and more." For Sanchez, the above list has helped shape the children's characters, distinguishing them in a community dealing with many problems.

"There is a lot of drugs, alcohol, violence and child labor – many situations that you would think unsuitable for teaching values to children. However, they have a place in the orchestra, like an island within a community, a place where they can develop those values," he says.

Practice eventually led the innovative musical group to play live concerts and tour, which required a bigger commitment from parents.

"For us, putting the children on stage not

only involves putting them on a platform to play their instruments, but it is fundamentally about making them and all of the problems that affect them visible," says Sánchez.

Faced with their first big trip abroad, a show in Buenos Aires, they realised the majority of the children did not have identification cards. "Some had not even been registered as having been born," Sánchez explained. Today, all have documentation including passports and this pushed siblings, neighbors and relatives of the children into doing the same.

Sánchez coined a phrase that perhaps sums up the spirit of the orchestra's experience: "The world sends us its waste. We give them back music." A proud Sánchez expressed in conclusion that, "These children are role models for others of their age that want to play music and stand out like them. The children in the orchestra know that to attain that they must study and work hard. That is why they have made having intelligence and talent fashionable, above and beyond mobile phones or clothes."

Translated by Stuart Taylor. Street News Service, a news collaboration of the International Network of Street Papers.

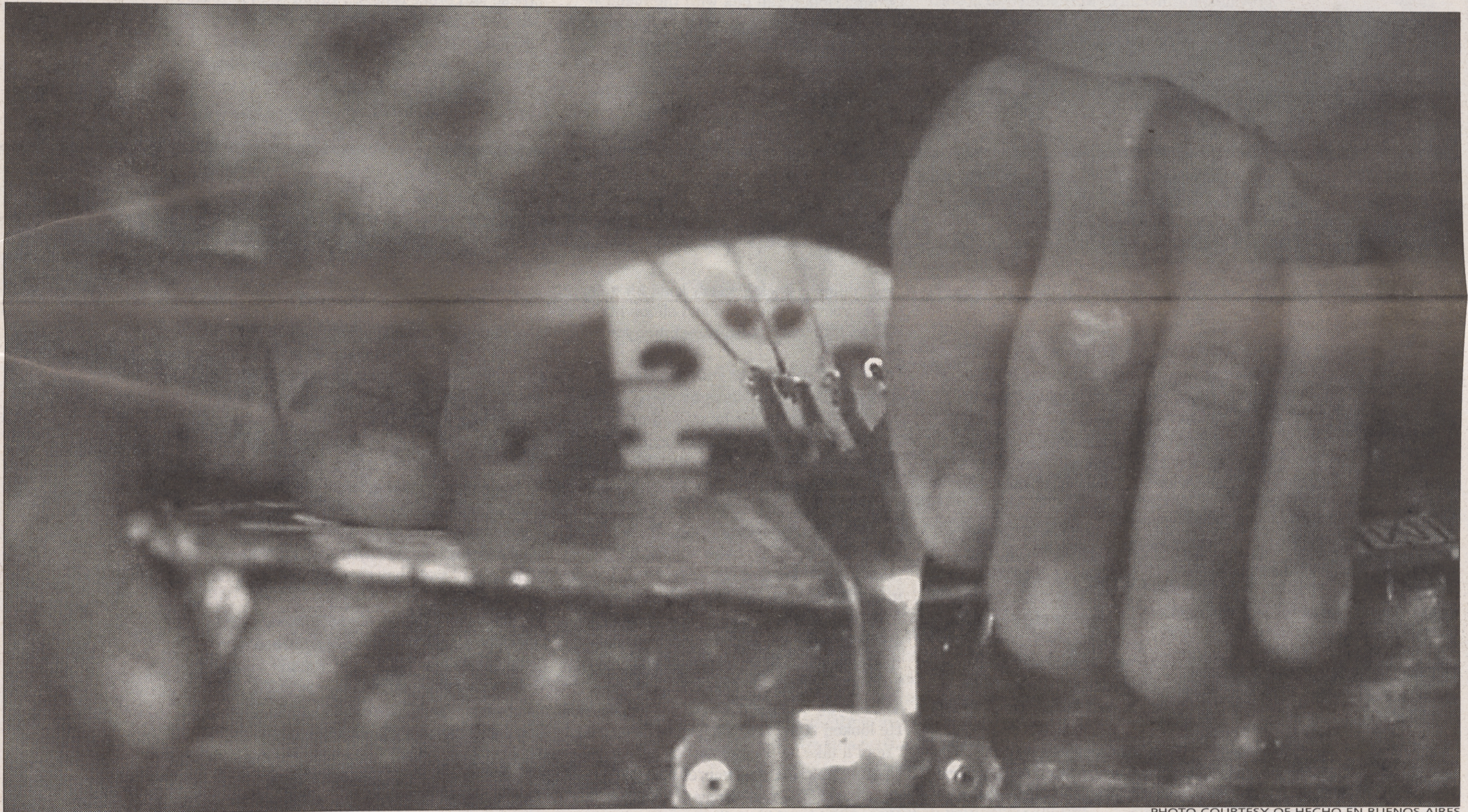


PHOTO COURTESY OF HECHO EN BUENOS AIRES

A craftsman for the Recycled Instruments Orchestra in Cateura, Paraguay, fashions a discarded fork and other trash into a violin.

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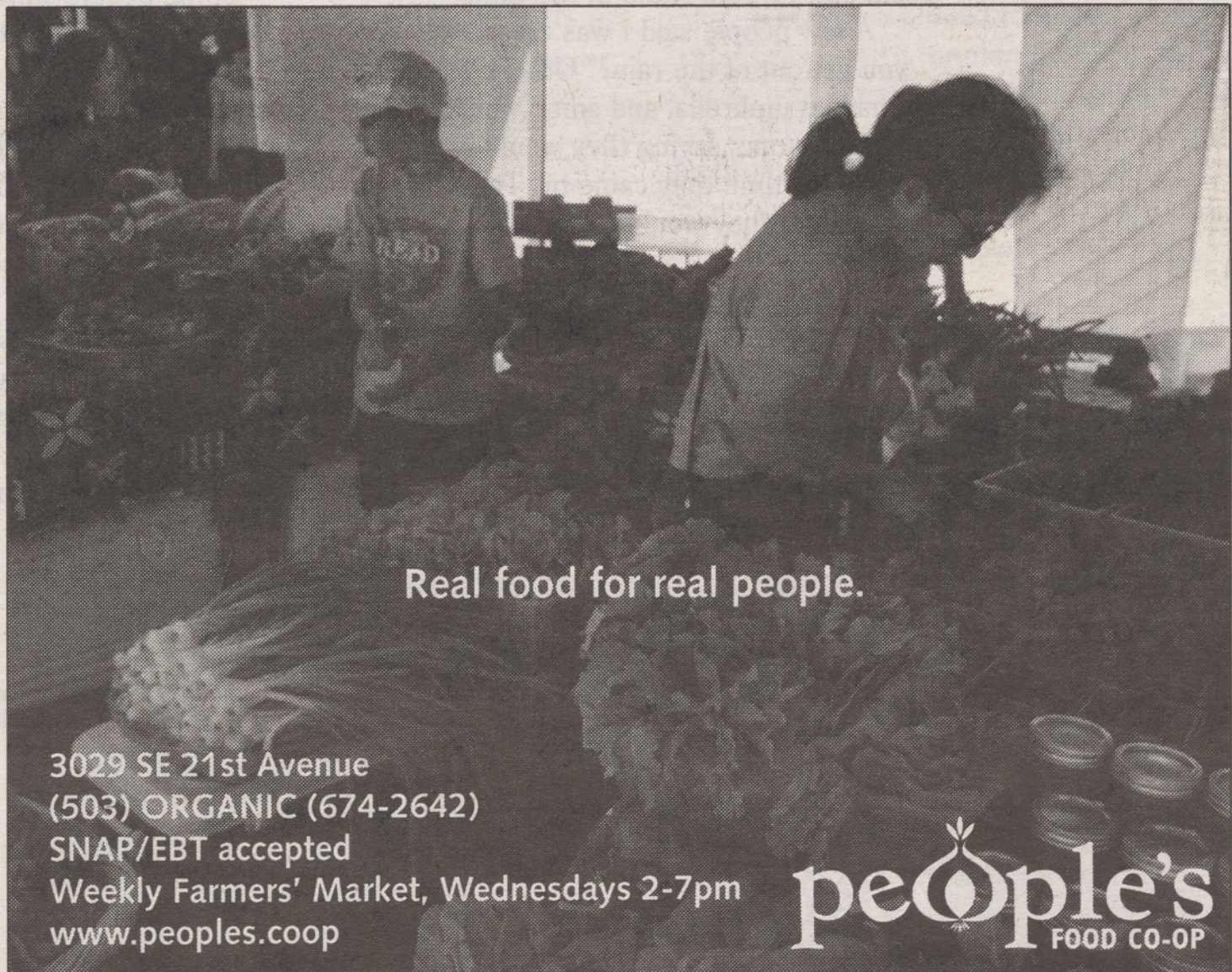
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