



PHOTO: COURTESY OF HECHO EN BUENOS AIRES

In Cateura, an area close to Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, a group of young people play Mozart, Beethoven, Vivaldi or "Yesterday" by The Beatles with instruments manufactured with recycled material.

One man's trash ...

Children's orchestra learn music, perform worldwide, on instruments made from salvaged garbage

BY ROMINA RESUCHE
STREET NEWS SERVICE

An old oil can has been transformed into a cello, a fork rescued from rubbish supports strings on a violin and spoon handles act as keys on a saxophone.

This is not a description of a fantasy world or a tale from a children's story. These are instruments played for real by the Recycled Instruments Orchestra in Cateura, Paraguay, an area some six kilometres from the capital city of Asunción and almost entirely built on a landfill site where the majority of inhabitants work in recycling.

For five years, a group of some 40 young people have been part of a project that aims to make music by constructing alternative string instruments made from resources

found in a landfill. They are now the subject of a documentary, *Landfill Harmonic*, released in Europe and expected to come to the United States in 2014.

The orchestra plays both classical and pop music at venues where they are often given standing ovations. They have already played in Panama, Brazil, Germany and Switzerland, and in Colombia they played the same theater as Lady Gaga. The bass player from Megadeth, David Ellefson, is a confessed fan and recently gave them signed guitar plectrums as a gift while René from Puerto Rican band Calle 13 is another devotee.

When you search for Cateura in Google, the first thing that appears is information about the orchestra. The story of this group of children, teachers and mentors highlights

the new life they all lead since taking advantage of waste and making music from recycled materials.

It was Favio Sánchez who, while working as an environmental technician at the Cateura landfill site, gave up his free time to teach local youngsters how to play music, one of his passions.

During his teenage years, Sanchez chose to get an engineering degree in human ecology and he later went on to study philosophy. When he began teaching music to the children of Cateura, he said it was "a way to establish relationships and earn the trust of the families of the recyclers", with whom he worked on the recycling project.

Previously, Cateura was known for its rubbish tip, uncleanness and prevailing marginalisation but today the area is famous

for its orchestra and for music changing the lives of almost 40 people.

According to Sánchez, music creates empathy, confidence and cooperation amongst children and, in turn, their parents. Once his group started on the landfill site, friends and neighbours also became involved in fine-tuning the project. Along the way, the eco-development organisation Sánchez worked for, Alter Vida – dedicated to a sustainable Paraguay – considered teaching music to landfill children as part of their technical work, which led to classes being held within its centre for waste collection. Teachers were then brought in and instruments donated.

Then one day, Nicolás Gómez, alias El

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