

“It was the best thing I have ever lived”

Last month we performed side by side with El Sistema Tempo Orchestra in Tampere. We spoke to Executive Director Verna Kaunisto-Feodorow about the experience

On April 4th, members of the EUYO performed together, side by side, with young musicians of the El Sistema Tempo Orchestra in Tampere.

Created inside the framework of [El Sistema Finland](#), the Tempo Tampere Orchestra started its activities in the autumn of 2021 to provide a musical hobby for children of diverse backgrounds, aiming to unite them in friendship through music. EUYO musicians worked alongside the children as part of our Finnish Residency, part of our Spring 2022 Tour.

Dear Verna, during the concert of April 4th we saw you conducting this diverse ensemble of young

musicians, where EUYO players were side by side with young children. How was it? Did the young musicians enjoy the opportunity to play with EUYO?

How did the children experience playing together with EUYO musicians? Please let me answer by adding nothing of my own, but simply reporting what others said.

Let me tell you the comment of the mother of Onni, one of the children playing violin in the Tempo orchestra that day. “As the concert began, his eyes lit up, and he listened eagerly to the performers. It was important for the children that the adults took care of them and treated them as peers. The handshake Onni received as first violin at the end of the concert from the conductor made him feel incredibly happy. Onni told everyone about it. The experience, I think, was useful to build self-esteem and develop a self-image. Playing together reduces the pressure on the single person, and this became apparent during the concert”. “I was looking forward to performing” said Miisa, a violin player. “It was a little different than I expected, but the hall was one I had always wanted to perform in. It was really nice to perform there – actually, it was great. It was really nice to perform with the best musicians in Europe, and the questions we asked were good for them. I like to perform, and



“What instrument do you play and what does it feel like to be one of the best musicians in Europe? I play the violin.”

This is just one example of the drawings made by the young musicians of the Tampere Tempo Orchestra dedicated to the EUYO musicians who visited them.

I always like to do things with others. I also really like it when I am interviewed. Performing was a really great experience”.

For Tuuli to play with such great musicians was exciting and fun. Amalia, a double bass player, said: *“The concert was quite different from what I imagined. Much more splendid and bigger”.*

Two days before, EUYO musicians also performed in Helsinki’s Musiikkitalo with another El Sistema Tempo Orchestra, based in Oulu. Could you tell us more of what you do with El Sistema Finland, and what are its activities and ongoing projects?

In Sistema Finland, we have a very friendly work team with my colleagues Juha and Jarmo Ahvenainen, and Taru Nygård, a real work power! We gather regularly to develop national activities. As executive director, one of my focuses is on international exchange, which is an essential aspect of the European El Sistema ideology. Being a member of the board of El Sistema Europe, the eventuality of bringing together El Sistema musicians during the EUYO visit rose with the president of the board of El Sistema Europe, Marshall Marcus. Within El Sistema Finland, we are currently building a “Tempo Tools” training method as a part of teacher’s training for new Tempo orchestras. We are also expanding our projects towards “Tempo Parents” orchestras. The idea is to help parents support the activities of their children by playing themselves in similar orchestras. We are also searching for ways to interact with refugees at the moment.

It seems that young people have the ideas, the creativity and the energy to shape a better world – how is it working daily with young people?

Young people own the future. There’s not a day without learning from the children’s openness and discover new ways to see life with them. Working with children, I feel better and more awake each day. The next rehearsals day after the concert with EUYO, we had promised to organise a party for Tampere Tempo orchestra children to celebrate the success of their hard work and a fine concert. With my colleagues, we planned games, programs to watch, and music to listen to. We had planned to begin the day with a picnic. And guess what? The children just wanted to take their time and enjoy the picnic peacefully together, discarding the games option in favour of talking about the EUYO, and writing you so many drawings with questions and expressions of love -

you truly left a mark!



Verna Kaunisto-Feodorow is a violinist, writer and educator, board member of El Sistema Europe, Executive director of El Sistema Finland and teacher of the Tampere Tempo El Sistema Orchestra.

“
May I express the feelings of Tempo orchestra by telling you what one girl yesterday: "It was the best thing I have ever lived". Please, pass her words to the wonderful and generous musicians (both in playing and by human values) of EUYO.
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*Want to hear more?
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