

A brigade of bucket-banging musicians

Kidznotes Bucket Band teaches rhythm, discipline and teamwork



Rosendo Peña and his students explore rhythm as they create music with 5-gallon buckets. Peña works with Kidznotes, a program that uses music to improve educational outcomes. (Photo by Kelcie Frye)

By Kelcie Frye
Durham VOICE

Sweet music fills the halls of the Holton Career and Resource Center in Northeast Central Durham every Saturday morning. From orchestra classes to ensemble choirs, Kidznotes aims to make the arts accessible to children.

One of the biggest issues in music education is a lack of access to musical instruments. Teacher Rosendo Peña is combating this problem by going back to the basics. All he needs is willing students and 5-gallon orange buckets to create music.

"The kids experiment with teamwork in this class, so it is a little introduction to the orchestra world," said Peña. His teaching methods include games, songs and other rhythmic devices.

The Kidznotes program aims to make a difference in the lives of kids by introducing music to them at a young age. Serving children in pre-K through 12th grade in both Durham and Southeast Raleigh, Kidznotes has a program for everyone.

"The bucket band is a very attractive class to young kids. It teaches them the principles of rhythm," said Peña. "By playing repeating games, the kids are able to internalize rhythms and apply them to music."

Kidznotes was created to mirror a program called El Sistema that is being implemented around the world. The program aimed to provide free classical music education to kids living in impoverished areas of Venezuela.

Rosendo Peña, who is originally from Venezuela, re-

ceived his bachelor's degree in music and hopes to soon finish his master's degree as well. Peña grew up in El Sistema programs, which helped shape his love for music and sparked his involvement in the Kidznotes program.

Experiencing the Bucket Band is like learning a new language. Kids are able to express themselves through the use of sound, beats and rhythm. A portion of Peña's class is done in silence, and its purpose is to encourage students to listen and communicate without the use of words.

"It's very important that kids learn how to listen and follow directions," said Peña. "When they come to the orchestra classes at Kidznotes, they have to follow the conductor. All of the activities we do are a great way to train them to be successful in an orchestra class."

A few of the kids in the class speak English, while others in the class speak Spanish. Despite this language barrier, there are no visible signs of communication issues. Some of the kids are even learning to count out rhythms in Spanish.

Peña, who also teaches percussion, believes that experience in his bucket band class is essential to succeeding in a music class setting. By using these 5-gallon buckets, he has found a way to make music obtainable to these young kids outside of his classroom.

"Rhythm is a very important thing in music," said Peña. "If you are going to play the violin, you have to play with rhythm and be able to count. Later, you add other elements like tonalities, harmonies and chords, but you always need rhythm first."

BUCKET BAND

Rosendo Peña teaches the Bucket Band class every Saturday at the Holton Career and Resource Center from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Visit <http://www.kidznotes.org/> for details.