

## Orquestra Geração at the Escola Básica 2,3 Miguel Torga in Amadora

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My research on Orquestra Geração (OG) focused on the process of implementation and development of an educational project in an elementary school located in a troubled neighbourhood, and on how it has articulated with the discipline of music education that I teach at the same school. The social neighbourhood Casal da Boba was built in 2000/2001, opposite to the EB 2,3 de Miguel Torga in Amadora, and later to the EB1 da Boba, to rehouse the families of three degraded neighbourhoods: Fontainhas, Bairro Azul and Alto dos Trigueiros. This changed the socio-cultural composition of the population from the parish and the school. The district came to be identified with and represented as a ghetto with a population of low economic resources, "connoted" with social and economic exclusion. Most of the working population is employed in construction, industry and domestic cleaning services. The youngsters, representing about 50%, are between 10 and 24 years old and exhibit problems of poor education, family instability, unemployment, low incomes and lack of documentation, factors that reinforce a trend towards social exclusion.

Under the responsibility of the City Council of Amadora and wanting to promote the social and human development of youngsters residing in Casal da Boba – especially those of immigrant descent in 2005 the *Projecto Geração/Oportunidade* emerges with the support of the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian and ACIDI. The project's intervention areas are training, education, health, employment, legal assistance and leisure. In this context, OG emerges as a pilot project in 2007. It imports the methodology that has made the Simon Bolivar Orchestra into an international example, a product of the pioneering vision of the Venezuelan economist, politician and musician José Antonio Abreu, responsible for the creation, more than 30 years ago, of the System of Youth and Children Orchestras in Venezuela. It seeks to take advantage of the approximation of children to music in order to develop personal and social skills, assuming that, beyond any direct relationship with music, the development of these skills can extend to society.

The adaptation of the methodology in Portugal, design of the model management and training of trainers are supported and monitored by Venezuelan specialists, under the educational and artistic responsibility of the Escola de Música do Conservatório Nacional. In 2007/08, OG began its activities in the school EB 2,3 Miguel Torga, in S. Brás, Amadora, with the string group. In January 2008, the program was extended to the Agrupamento de Escolas da Vialonga, with the adoption of the educational program and structure defined by the National Conservatory, albeit operating more

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independently and aimed at students in the 1st cycle of basic education. The Fall 2008, the group of woodwind and brass instruments performed, whereas the Fall 2009 featured the percussion group. On the Fall 2009 more schools joined the project in the municipalities of Loures (Apelação, Camarate and Sacavém), Amadora (Zambujal), Oeiras (Carnaxide), Sintra (Mem Martins) and Sesimbra (Quinta do Conde). This adhesion was due to the combined efforts of municipalities, foundations, European funds, private companies and ministries, specifically those of Internal Administration and Education, which supported all participating schools during the past school year.

Music as a force of social inclusion policies has gained prominence in projects seeking full citizenship for children and adolescents at risk. Culture is seen as an important means for rebuilding socio-cultural identity, and music is one of the most accessible and appealing cultural activities. Specific studies highlight the impact that social inclusion projects that use music as a conductor axis have had in the recovery process of identity and self-esteem. Many projects in this area have revealed the importance of music in constructing the identity of children and adolescents in urban peripheries of large cities. Music presents itself as an important element of identity formation and in the construction of citizenship in contexts where multiplying cultural agents transform social reality. Such a project, with the chief aim of social inclusion through music, is relevant to a broad field of research, to which the experiment described and analysed in my report has sought to make a contribution.