**Katie Wyatt:** For the listeners, I'm Katie Wyatt, I'm the Cofounder and Executive Director of Kidznotes in Durham, North Carolina and we're growing to serve the State of North Carolina. We were founded in Durham in 2010 and we have expanded into Raleigh, East Durham and Southeast Raleigh which are about 45 minutes apart and then we're looking into Chapel Hill for our next extension spot which is about an hour from both locations and then beginning conversations about expanding into the western part of the state. I think what makes Kidznotes unique is this statewide service approach, Kidznotes sits in an interesting place in North Carolina in that it's in the triangle where all the major universities are located. But because of the rural nature of North Carolina, many of the arts organizations and service organizations take a statewide service value really very seriously that the role is truly to reach those kids who would not otherwise have an opportunity in all art forms and in education and access as much as possible across the state. So I'm excited to share with you some of those unique perspectives today.

**Dalouge Smith:** Katie, maybe you should also mention you're the Executive Director of Eli Sistema USA.

**Katie Wyatt:** Thank you, Dalouge, it's a new job for me, you're so right, and Dalouge is a board member for El Sistema USA. I've just come back from Sphinx, the national competition and conference celebrating diversity in classical music and it was one of my first gigs as Executive Director of El Sistema USA and it's an honor to serve the national movement of El Sistema inspired programs and I am transitioning out of Kidznotes, we are in our Executive Director search now and I will go full time with El Sistema USA starting this July, so you'll be hearing more from me for sure.

**Dalouge Smith:** And I'm the President and CEO of San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory, we are a 70 year old youth orchestra program so we've been involved with music and young people since literally months after the end of World War II, here in San Diego. We're based in Balboa Park which is the kind of cultural heart of San Diego, San Diego County in fact. There are 20 plus cultural organizations all located within this municipal park and we've been in this location since the '40s so we've been a place where high achieving and aspiring musicians have come together to be playing music alongside their peers for many, many generations now and always with a notion that playing and participating in large ensemble music is not just about developing musicianship but also about developing citizenship and personal aptitudes in many realms. In 2008 and 2009, our board of directors recognized that the service we were providing to our community was not actually balanced, that we were predominantly reaching and serving and drawing into our youth orchestra programs students from families of fairly affluent backgrounds, professional and educated parents, parents with substantial resources to not only pay for participation in our program but also to provide music lessons and other complementary and supplementary experiences, whether those might be competitions or buying of the best instruments. And our board of directors which as I say had always believed in the importance of music as a component of youth development realized that there was a huge gap in access to music instruction in our county and our communities and made the decision that we wanted to be the driver to make music education accessible and affordable for all children. And in fact they were so ambitious they didn't even define it as all children of San Diego or San Diego County, they just left it as all. So we have now been working since 2010 in communities in partnership with school districts, the design of our approach is not to provide music instruction to every child but to actually be an instigator within communities and particularly within school districts so that school systems begin to prioritize the delivery of music education. And we've been using El Sistema inspired principles as well as our history and background as a youth orchestra program to drive that conversation forward and elevate the recognition that music delivers on many, many goals that schools have, music increases attendance, music increases parent engagement, music increases classroom environment and school culture, et cetera. So we're not just focusing on what is music doing in terms of students' performance ability but what is music doing to change the entirety of the learning experience. And the outcome of that work has been fantastic, we now have two school districts that have completely returned music education and in fact arts education to their elementary systems, one of those is California's largest elementary school district, 30,000 students who are now getting arts education for the first time in 15 years. Another is a smaller district, they have 11 elementary schools, they're part of a unified system that always had music at that middle and high school level and in the last year they've begun to return it to the elementary level as well. So we've taken all of this program work, this community program work, connected it to our youth orchestra program and are giving kids pathways of opportunity from in school to after school to our youth orchestra conservatory programs and then connecting them up to other opportunities above and beyond what we offer. So we've got kids learning, participating 10, 15 hours a week because we're layering all of these different music making opportunities for them. And now we've had such fantastic success with these school districts, we're putting together tools to try and help others have similar success so that again, we're not running programs everywhere but we're helping share the knowledge and the experience that we've had and using research, using storytelling, using advocacy, case making, media, all kinds of different platforms. So we're diverse now, much more diverse as in overall institutions than we were when I began here a little over 13 years ago.

**Katie Wyatt:** I love-- oh, sorry, go ahead.

**Dalouge Smith:** No, I was going to say, so we've got two very different sorts of situations between your setting back there and our setting out here in California.

**Katie Wyatt:** It is interesting and I love hearing just your story and the passion with which you talk about building systems change in the area and the El Sistema movement is lucky to have you among us to be able to share what it is that can be possible when a private entity begins to leverage public interest and public systems really and to be able to think about what the next step can be for all of us. It's different in North Carolina, Kidznotes is a model of co-teaching with the full time music teachers that are in each of our elementary schools, then we provide a violin instructor and all of the instruments to then teach primarily after school which means that we have a layered approach also but for the kids in the El Sistema program, they're getting significantly more than the baseline of music education for all kids. But I have to tell you that in North Carolina while we have maintained music in the schools for a long time, there is some fear that that may go away soon with our legislature, with the different priorities shifting and I'm just curious, have you thought about the-- do you feel like the move that you've just been able to help make, is it a tenuous one, is there any risk that there may be some sliding back despite all of this great forward progress?

**Dalouge Smith:** Sure. Well, so yes, I mean there is always the chance in one context or another that it could reversed, right and there are any number of factors that might make that happen. I mean it could be that a new school board gets elected, it could be that a new superintendent comes in, it could be that there's a serious budget crisis. And in California right now, there is an expectation of budget crisis for the coming years, and so we're not seeing in the districts that we're working directly in a sense of retraction on the music education front, but that is happening potentially in some other districts. And what we're finding though is that those districts are thinking about those retractions almost as an opportunity to retool and redesign their music education, so take an approach that using it as an opportunity and they're not-- I would say that the reason that we're not seeing a potential slip in the communities where we've been working most intensively, for example, Chula Vista and San Marcos is because our approach has really been about the overall success for the school system and not just about kids getting music or having the story be, "You're great because you gave kids music," no there are amazing outcomes that are occurring. So for example, one of the things that the superintendent in the Chula Vista school district just told us this fall after they'd completed their first full year of restoring arts education is that district wide they had a half percent increase in overall attendance. So in California that's a powerful statistic because it equates to money, days in school translates into how many dollars a school gets for that particular day. And so for the district to say, "Wow, we increased our overall attendance by half a percent," means they brought in an extra half a million dollars or more that they hadn't had the year before.

**Katie Wyatt:** That's the main thing.

**Dalouge Smith:** So they're seeing value in multiple dimensions and that seems to be the critical differentiator. We can't-- one of the earliest things I was saying to my team was we have to help music live in schools differently than it used to because it used to live in schools in enough of a way that was vulnerable, that we need to find a way for it to live there and be less vulnerable.

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah. It's very exciting. I hope that that continues and I hope that when you're ready to be able to share those tools with the field that individual programs can really start building those public, private partnerships because we have had so much success here with that and I just feel like it is the way of the future and it is a way to I think bridge the divide between what we have seen as, what we hope are public obligations and public responsibilities and what some see as the responsibility of the private sector. Do you feel like we're going to have to continue even growing our organizations in that way in building public partnerships in order to have impact over time?

**Dalouge Smith:** Oh, I do because I think what we've discovered is that there are things that the public entities want to do that they don't know how to do and that's where we play an important partnership role with them. So for example with the school district that had not offered music education for so many years, they needed our help in piloting music education during the school day, identifying school teachers, new music teachers, learning how to build a schedule, identifying what instruments or resources to be purchasing. We need to recognize, and even once they have hired in teachers, we continue to be a kind of experimenter for them, so now we're doing after school work that's very, very targeted to reaching kids that they've identified as at risk of failing out and so the program is an intervention and kids are in it by invitation of the school site leaders and the district is able to use its after school intervention dollars for it. So we didn't have to go raise new money to do this, they're paying us a contract to basically substitute music for what has historically math or reading after school tutoring because they believe that the music will actually deepen the students' and the parents' commitment and sense of connection and accomplishment in the school site. So I think that we are the ones that actually need to learn to work definitely whether it's in school settings or juvenile justice settings or health settings that we can't approach the settings with the same routine of, "We run this program and you can take it or leave it," we have to actually shape our programs to what the needs of the settings are.

**Katie Wyatt:** Have you thought about how far you think you can take this? Like how far does this go?

**Dalouge Smith:** How far does this go?

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah. Is the relationship that you've built with these districts particular to the awareness of the San Diego Youth Symphony and their respect for you as a colleague or do you feel like this is a model that can just, like the whole state will just pick it up like wild fire and all of a sudden, all of California will have all of their kids…

**Dalouge Smith:** Right. So I absolutely believe that these are transferable practices and I think that much of our success is initiated by the point of view that we took from the outset which was, this is not about us, this is about them and this is not about our metrics, it's about their metrics. And we were very clear about what we were not, we are not their music program, we are there to help them build a music program. I don't think that those are actually particularly mysteriously based on me or even on my teaching artists or our program design, I think it's about the intentionality that we've brought to the effort and both the generosity but also the clarity of what is our purpose there and what and why are we choosing to do everything that we do in order to reach this larger end. So, you know…

**Katie Wyatt:** So here's what I'm running into roadblocks in North Carolina and I wonder if there are others across the country who face the same things. Some of the principles you talk about…

<overlapping conversation>

**Dalouge Smith:** When you say roadblock, can you describe [ph?], what is a roadblock <inaudible>?

**Katie Wyatt:** Oh, so some of the things you talk about are like what is behind the Every Student Succeeds Act, here's all of this fantastic data as you described that the school district is having in their outcomes as a result of increased music education, increased days in school leads to increased academic achievement, leads to higher graduation rates, there's all of these connections. And yet, when I contacted our state arts council and said, "Awesome, I'm thrilled, how can we get behind the Every Student Succeeds Act? The arts is back at the front, let's do it," the response was, "We can't because that is really a political issue, we can't get involved, we can't go lobby, we can't have concerts on the hill, it's a political issue." And that is because we are in a conservative state.

**Katie Wyatt:** So I guess my thought on that is your state arts council certainly cannot lobby your state legislature, that's pretty consistent across the country, but that doesn't mean you and other nonprofits can't organize and communicate all those things you just said directly to the legislature, organize that concert on the green, it just doesn't have to be under the auspices of the state arts council. And some, many states have state advocacy organizations. So I'm on the Board of California Arts Advocates, I know that all across the country there are entities that are either our general arts focused advocacy organizations or they're arts education focused advocacy organizations and then there are the associations of the different art forms, so here in California, the California Music Educators Association is the state version of the National Association for Music Education. So all of those entities have independence and in fact we found that our independence of not being a government agency when we're working with the school districts gives us an unbelievable amount of kind of access and leverage that I can be a shuttle diplomat between the school site leader and the superintendent and that way the superintendent is not viewed as directing the principal but instead making sure that it's clear the principal has an offering or an opportunity to do something and then they can try it and I can be saying to the superintendent, "Here's what they're trying." There's a very curious kind of dynamic in the way education systems work that is very hierarchical and very protocol defined but interestingly there are a lot of ways to sort of circle around those if you're not in the system itself and they don't, at least again in the settings I've worked, they don't mind it. The structures are built based on governance and contracts and other rules but they're still people and they still are people that have to find ways to work with each other and sometimes that's helped by having an external partner. So I think the same is probably true with state advocacy because every child…

**Katie Wyatt:** Wait, I just find that it's-- yeah, go ahead.

**Dalouge Smith:** Oh, I was going to say, the Every Student Succeed Act is probably being defined for your state by your state Board of Education or Department of Education and that would be again the same in every state. And it actually deploys an immense amount of autonomy to the states, so engagement at the state level is critical. Not all states are very good at accepting community engagement on these issues so there's an effort that's required to try and make sure your comments are getting in there, sometimes that means you have to talk to your board members who are politically connected and they have to make an introduction or say, "Hey, who do we talk to about this?" or to the state legislators, et cetera. But that's a whole 'nother range of work that's in some respects similar to what we've done at the local level but is different because it's about the actual governing choices or the governing design of the school districts.

**Katie Wyatt:** So I have a perspective of some of the smaller, younger organizations in the country, we're just at, Kidznotes is seven years old, well we're really six years old, we're just in our seventh year this year. For the first five years we were really just kind of like make it, cover our budgets, make sure that we were going to be around to do good work in the future. And some of the work you described sounds daunting, it just sounds like a lot of work and I feel like that there's a lot of-- there are so many issues around which we could rally at this moment…

**Dalouge Smith:** Sure.

**Katie Wyatt:** …making sure that all of our schools have a basic level of music education for all kids, that there's access for everybody. I think certainly is a good one in our field, but you and I have also talked about even rallying action around social justice issues and human services issues and youth development issues outside of the arts and it just seems like a lot. Do you have any advice for a young leader like me and also a leader of a very young nonprofit in thinking about the timing of how to begin taking steps towards systems change?

**Dalouge Smith:** Well I think that we apply the same kind of choice making that we apply to the running of our programs in the sense that when we're running our program, we're going to try to identify a strong and good partner, we're going to try to identify kind of an efficient communication system with our families, we're going to build performance opportunities that we think are going to bring the most attention to the work that we're doing and rally people to the cause of it. It's really just an extension of those same sorts of choices, knowing we have limits, we can't do everything so we have to make the choices that balance efficiency with reach. And so that does mean that Kidznotes can have a performance at the Capitol once a year, maybe, maybe that's something that you could do or that, once you've got your kind of multi community sites around the state really well established, that one of the ways you bring them all together is actually at the State Capitol, right, so you use something that you want to do anyway, we want to bring all these kids together and make sure they have a sense of their connectivity to each other, and we can use that as a public awareness and advocacy experience. So it's that constant balance, right? And then it's finding others that intercept with those kind of same priorities that you're identifying as critical to the next step of both program advancement and cause advancement. That's the way we approach…

**Katie Wyatt:** And it is timing and people though because certainly I also feel like you can do an awful lot of advocacy that just falls on deaf ears, like you're working your butt off and you're <inaudible>.

<overlapping conversation>

**Dalouge Smith:** But that's fundraising too, isn't it?

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah, definitely, yeah.

**Dalouge Smith:** Right, I think most people view advocacy as some other that they don't know how to do and really advocacy is just another form of fundraising or fundraising is another form of advocacy that it's absolutely about having a relationship with someone, it's absolutely about helping them see what you're doing as aligned with their values and their belief of what's right and good for the community and for the children of the community, it's about sort of being present and being engaging at all times, not just when you're making an ask for something, making sure that they know you're paying attention to them and whatever it is they're working on. So for an elected official, it's showing up at one of their coffees, it's being willing to show up when an issue associated with your cause is being discussed or communicating with them. But you don't want to be sort of that random letter that comes that they've never heard of, you want to be in a position to call their staff and say, "Hey, I know this issue is one they're considering and because we've had such a longstanding relationship with you, because you've seen how well we work with kids, you've seen the impacts we're having in the neighborhoods, we want you to know what that means for us." And those personal conversations are so powerful but you only get to them because you've cultivated…

**Katie Wyatt:** Over time.

**Dalouge Smith:** …those officials just like you've cultivated your other donors.

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah, that's a great point. And I think you're right, I think it is tough to remember that advocacy is that relationship development over time for sure.

**Dalouge Smith:** And state, like no single organization should be-- no single neighborhood organization or kind of, even yours which is working to go statewide, you don't want to be the only voice on music education advocacy in the state, right, that's where coalitions are so fundamental. And if there is no arts education coalition or arts coalition then is there a youth development coalition or is there another education coalition where it's good to become present and help that coalition realize that they've got you as an extra strength and as a consequence then will help advance the point of view of our cause also. But it's always about finding the entry point, where's the right entry point and not trying to do it all ourselves.

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah. I'm curious about the success you've had with incorporating music into school systems and being a catalyst for that and my joining the Creative Youth Development movement, not as a skeptic but as someone who is hopeful for the reach and breadth of the movement, but curious as to how we can have targeted successful steps like what you have accomplished in your partner districts, with a much broader array of creative youth activities. And what do you think about how to advance those conversations as opposed to being able to be an expert in your field?

**Dalouge Smith:** I'm not sure I entirely understand your question.

**Katie Wyatt:** So do you think you could have a creative youth development systems change in the way that you have had a music systems change in the district where you've been working?

**Dalouge Smith:** Absolutely!

**Katie Wyatt:** Okay. How would that work?

**Dalouge Smith:** Well, so first I think it's important to know that whatever particular expertise you bring to-- you know, whatever program expertise a creative youth development entity brings to its intersection with other systems, will result in choosing which part of that system to engage with. So what I mean by that is if what I'm bringing is not music, but what I'm bringing is tactile sculpture, and other materials use, then there may be a technical education intersection point that's going to warrant me finding-- me delivering value to technical education programs, and also finding ways to tap some of those resources, to include in my own running of my own program. So I think that, but right like, I'm less likely as a music organization to find an intersection with technical education. Media Arts is much more likely to find it than I am, whereas a Creative Writing Program is much more likely to find an intersection with Language Arts and English Language Learning development. And so it's, you know, all creative youth development, I think, can deliver value to both our educational system, but also, too, workforce development, or to juvenile justice recidivism. So it's knowing what and how you do that best within the context of these many, many, many components of the public system. And the other thing is that creative youth development, I think, one of the things that I believe we've been missing, or not paying as much attention to as we have the potential to really flourish from a is how does the in-school connect to the out-of-school? The in-school, for the most part, is about a very general, a kind of very general advancement, right? All the kids in a particular school are getting a comparable delivery and it's not super specialized, but they're, you know, they're going to get sequential instruction year after year. So in a music sense, it's the band is progressing, but the whole band is still the whole band all the way through. Kids are not getting private lessons. There might be some family fundraising for coaches. There might be some really specialized instruments that get used for one piece or another. But in all likelihood, there are going to be students who are on fire for more. They just can't get enough of it, or they are really showing a kind of talent that's outpacing the rest of their peers, that's where the external creative youth development resources also become fundamental to their progress. Because now you can join them up with other kids who have that same passion, and that same drive for artistry, and for advancement, and for ambitious goals, that they can't get met within the school setting. But right now I feel like those two worlds work very, very separately from each other. And that's one of the other things we've really tried to do in our partnerships is create that connectivity so that kids that are driven to do more, have more and more at each point on a continuum.

**Katie Wyatt:** So I have, in thinking about this, and in music, in particular, in thinking about how as we continue to build-- if we're successful in accomplishing systems change, and we support schools systems and increasing the level of music education over time, and over time it just gets better and better, and the kids get better and better, which means that after school, our programs get better and better, and the level goes up and up and up and up. And I have a student, in particular, right now, who is a young African American student, and he has a private teacher who we've set him up with who is in the symphony. And this symphony musician is super interested in having this young man really begin practicing hard core to prepare for Summer Music Festival auditions and the top youth orchestras and national competitions, and then getting ready for pre-college activities, and then study music, as a music major in college, and then attempt to go on and get a job in an orchestra. And to have this path that is going to be achieved-- he is going to be an orchestral musician or soloist. And that that is-- that's the path for him. And I just-- I am really struggling with this idea that we're preparing all of these students, you know, we continue increasing the level of musicality until it's higher and higher and higher. And then we have these amazing students who are all ready to go to conservatory. And then the job placement rate at our conservatory is abysmal! And then we will have essentially been preparing all of these students to not get jobs in a world where they thought they were headed down that path. And it definitely is about getting to change higher education mindset, and what we're preparing young musicians to do, and of course, this ties into all of the conversations many are having around entrepreneurship for young musicians, and building the self-styled graduate musician so that you're building your own career, and you're thinking much beyond the orchestra field. But still our best teachers are those that are directing kids down that path. And when I say "best" I guess I mean teaching at the highest level of playing are those teachers. And I'm torn. I had a long conversation with his parents, and I said, "This is possible for Marcus, but I don't know that it's the best idea for him. I don't know that if you, if the life you want for Marcus is that of a successful businessperson, this is not the path for him. But here are all of the benefits of continuing with cello, continuing to perform and play, continuing to get better, continuing to have a personal discipline around it. There are so many benefits to it. But you know, pursuit of the classical musician career--," which is what El Sistema Programs on its face, if you take away the youth development component, and if you take away the social justice components, you know, truly we could be preparing a bajillion new conservatory students to then go on and do what? It just is something I've been thinking about, as we've been talking about raising-- you know, building public systems and then raising the level, and then private partners continuing to raise the level. And then what happens if the career world is not ready for that kind of influx of talent?

**Dalouge Smith:** So I have a couple of thoughts on that. I don't have any anxiety about this for a couple of reasons. First is, partly I have the benefit of having seen thousands of students come through San Diego Youth Symphony, and some of them be extraordinary musicians! Who, even as they were going to college were not choosing to go to music school. That's part one. Part two is I ultimately trust in the young people. That by giving them the skills and giving them the ambition that they're going to pursue it to the furthest possible point that feels right for them. And for some, that will mean they work, work, work, and only ever work as a performing musician in whatever form they can, because they just are unwilling or unable to do anything else. And if that's ultimately what is of such profound importance to them, I want to make sure they have the best skills they can to do it. I also know that many, many, many of them will at one point or another shift away from that. And it will be-- I believe if we've given them really strong foundations upon which to stand, they're going to find ways that their musicianship informs the rest of their lives, and some of them may stick with music and become music teachers, some of them may go into recording, some of them may go into some kind of business that's creating-- you know, that's related to music. That there's, I mean, I guess in a sense, this is where I have faith in the building up of these young people through these creative youth development programs is what will allow them to make the right choices for themselves as they become adults. And those choices may include an intensive endless pursuit of the highest level of musicianship-- which for you it did for many, many years-- and yet you have found other paths to be completely fulfilled through your music.

**Katie Wyatt:** I would share, though, that many of my colleagues have found very unsatisfactory paths, and because of their student debt cannot now consider-- you know, they're trained, truly they feel that they are trained in one thing; they're not getting the big job; they're unhappy in the way that that has played out for them; and they're in enormous amounts of debt. And that's a fact. You know, that's a reality. And I feel some obligation in thinking about this, in particular for El Sistema Programs and perhaps for all creative youth programs, in that we're reaching at-risk youth, for many of these kids it'll be-- they'll be first-generation college goers, and we're preparing them with a boatload of talent and potential, and I just feel some responsibility in working with their families to be aware of a creative employment dynamic that they may not be aware of.

**Dalouge Smith:** So one of the things we're doing in our Youth Orchestra and Conservatory Programs to try and do that, to try and make sure that kids in high school are aware of the diversity of opportunities that are available to them through their musical knowledge is running in a kind of precollegiate institute. So they're doing collegiate level music theory, and music history, and they're also doing some introductory conducting, and they're playing chamber music, and we also are doing seminars with professional musicians and professional music industry successes. So bringing in a recording engineer, bringing in a newspaper music critic, bringing in music therapists, bringing in music educators, along with these amazing orchestral and soloist musicians. Because I agree with you, we want to make sure that kids sort of have an understanding of both the possibilities from a vertical perspective--

**Katie Wyatt:** And the risks.

**Dalouge Smith:** But also possibilities from a horizontal perspective, all the different paths they might choose. And if they have those early enough, that they can start to investigate them well ahead of sort of being at a point where they've now reached a threshold that feels like it's a dead end.

**Katie Wyatt:** Yep.

**Dalouge Smith:** And so we actually have identified one of our top student from our community program who we're expecting will be eligible for that program next year. And he's-- he was at the Sphinx Conference last weekend as well.

**Katie Wyatt:** Oh, great, nice.

**Dalouge Smith:** And same thing, right? like he is aspiring right now to professional musicianship, but we want to be sure that he's got a well-rounded understanding, both of what that path looks like, as well as what other paths might look like for him if he finds that he ultimately needs to choose another path.

**Katie Wyatt:** That's excellent. I feel like all of my questions, you have all of the answers for. <laughs> So you just solved the world's problems, "Here's what you do! You start a precollegiate institute for all kids!" <laughs>

**Dalouge Smith:** Well, and I have the advantage of having had all this infrastructure in place before I started my El Sistema Program, and being able to have a destination for the kids in my community program, and then be able to build out that destination as well.

**Katie Wyatt:** And that's one thing, I think, working in the creative youth development movement, and rethinking my space, and our space in that field, it does really encourage a partnership approach in offering a wealth of services and opportunities for the families who are now your families and are people who you have deep relationships with, that you cannot offer everything, but there are opportunities in your communities where others are working towards the same end. It's been interesting.

**Dalouge Smith:** And I think that's a really important point that sort of how are you serving the families beyond directly serving their kids. And that's something we've just in this year, and a little bit last year we've started to organize different kinds of workshops for families, both in our Community Opus Project, as well as in our Conservatory Program. That tries to-- because we've realized that so many of them don't have a music background. For so many of them, it's a mystery. They have no idea where to turn. They're completely reliant upon us to give them advice and guidance and understanding. And so we're wanting to make sure that we're being proactive in that, and that we're giving them a whole range of voices, so it's not just who's their instructor, and it's not just me, it's the production team. I mean, we had the session this past week with our instrument librarian and one of our entry level conductors and it was all about instrument care and tuning.

**Katie Wyatt:** Oh, that's cool!

**Dalouge Smith:** Yeah!

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah. And I guess I was really talking about even in the creative youth development world, even programs outside of music, outside of our own, and more in youth development or community development, thinking about encircling our families with all of the relationships and opportunities that we've been able to build, just through our work in the communities. I wanted to just put in--

**Dalouge Smith:** Well, I was going to say, where we have expertise and where we don't, and finding the expertise we need elsewhere.

**Katie Wyatt:** And Kids Notes, I want to just be sure to put this point in for others across the country, we're very fortunate to be a partner in a model of the Harlem Children's Zone, or one of the Promise Neighborhoods across the country, and if others are not familiar with that movement or new community development setup, it has been a huge success point for us and for our families. It's been a great way to recruit kids into our program, and then it's been a great way to build a whole child, and a whole family approach to what we do, so that, for example, our parents take-- many of our Latino parents take English as a Second Language classes during rehearsal at the place where we offer services, because our home base is right in the middle of this zone model. Which has been-- it's been a great service for us, a great partnership.

**Dalouge Smith:** And we have a similar partnership-- there is actually a Promise Neighborhood also where our Community Opus Project is. Although it's-- because of the density, it's a very specific catchment right around one school, and our project is much larger than that. And so we've-- but we leveraged it as the very first funding for an in-school music teacher, which is fantastic.

**Katie Wyatt:** Oh, cool!

**Dalouge Smith:** Yeah, and in a sense, again, it was finding a partner that became a safe way for the school district to bring that music teacher in at a low risk and see what the outcomes would be, and then ultimately find that it was so valuable that they wanted to commit more broadly. But we also have a social service partner, the Chula Vista Community Collaborative, that is a hub and intersection point and also a direct provider of services and host of multiple family resource centers. So likewise, we have a place to turn when we discover families in crisis, or there's a student in crisis, and we need to work with the principal and with social workers, etcetera. I mean, we have been very clear that that's not an expertise we want to try and raise money to support internally, that we wanted to connect to those that are already providing that and are really the experts and have all the relationships in place already.

**Katie Wyatt:** Before we sign off, I really wanted to get into this rural versus urban conversation with you. I've been thinking a lot about it, as Kids Notes considers this statewide approach. And thinking about what are the things that are crucial to where I'm successful now. And then in a lot of ways, it's the resources to support it, and the resources to support what we do. For us, they're still pretty local. Even in Raleigh and Durham. People in Raleigh want to support Raleigh; and people in Durham want to support Durham. Then there's enough of a philanthropic community in both of those cities to make it happen.

**Dalouge Smith:** There's resource density there.

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah, *and* talent! So teachers, professional, having a place, having a space where we can conduct activity, you know, have multiple rehearsals in different roo-- you know, schools work great. That those schools are available for us, and in the areas where we are, there's a multitude of resources that can be shared. You know, if we're rehearsing in a space, there's still enough room for tutoring to happen somewhere else. That in many of the rural communities where I'm thinking of in North Carolina, like there's one school and that school is K through 12, and it serves the whole county. And there's no way we would be able to offer different instruments in different rooms, because we couldn't have the-- there's no way that we could have the reservation on the space in that way. We couldn't be King of the Land. We would just be taking up too much of the very valuable resources. And then I have no idea who would teach there. And I have-- and if I were able to vet committed teachers there, how we would maintain that over time? Like a pipeline of teachers over time being committed to that place. It's tough. I don't have an answer. And I'm just wondering if you have thought about it?

**Dalouge Smith:** Well, we are not working in a directly rural way. So interestingly, when you and I were-- after we sort of had our preliminary conversation about planning for this call, I met a colleague here in San Diego, who works at one of the theaters and she grew up in Western North Carolina and Western Virginia.

**Katie Wyatt:** Oh, interesting, yeah.

**Dalouge Smith:** So I took the opportunity to inquire of her, "What was that like? And what's your thought about this difference in the rural and the urban?" And she absolutely was echoing the lack of resources as a serious, serious problem. And she was identifying not just lack of music teachers, but lack of teachers, lack of school administrators.

**Katie Wyatt:** Oh, yeah! Of people! Absolutely! Yes!

**Dalouge Smith:** Right? Like the basic, the basic instructional content suffers because of a lack of instructional availability. And she was explaining sort of a few things about the-- I want to phrase this in a way that's appropriate, but basically this sort of-- the locally-focused and kind of almost local satisfaction. In other words, she-- so her example was, "You know, my father has been out to California to visit me once in six years. And mostly, she says, it's because he's-- it's too far away. He doesn't want to go that far. He's, you know, it's a stretch that he's not-- like he wanted to know I was safe out here. He came out here early on, but now if I want to see him, I have to go back there." That there's the sort of comfort of place, maybe is a good way to put it. So when--

**Katie Wyatt:** And averseness to change. You know?

**Dalouge Smith:** Yeah.

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah.

**Dalouge Smith:** But then that's where I guess I start to wonder, "Okay, what resource is there--," I mean it's impossible for me to believe that music-making is not going on in some form within the culture there, and so how can programs engage with-- you know, just as we would say, "Well, what's culturally relevant for working with a Latino or African American or any other ethnic group? What's culturally relevant for those communities? And how might some of the El Sistema principles be applied there, or creative youth development principles be applied there?" Not because we are trying to create great classical musicians, or we are trying to create some other artistic product, but because we know these practices can strengthen the communities own civic health and be a rallying point, and be a point of pride and celebration. And in a sense be an auger for positive future, simply by kids learning that they can succeed.

**Katie Wyatt:** I think, too, it makes me think of our conversation about advocacy and about being the right people and the right time. I think you, being an outsider, not being from the community, and not having that kind of cultural competency, it would be really hard to do. And so thinking about who's interested? Who can I just share our work with and figure out who might be interested in exploring, if not a collaborative idea, a supportive idea? How can we just support what they're doing?

**Dalouge Smith:** But isn't that true in an urban setting as well? That's what we found in Chula Vista. If we'd gone in cold and started knocking on the door of schools, they would have said, "Who are you? And why should I pay attention to you? I've got a hundred other things I'm already committed to doing; I don't want to add something else to my plate." But by having the leader of the Community Collaborative make those introductions, and do the groundwork to figure out which principals and which school sites might be good starting points, it gave us, you know, we got introduced into the community as opposed to kind of barging into the community.

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah, I totally--

**Dalouge Smith:** But I--

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah. I think though it makes it--

**Dalouge Smith:** And I think in a rural setting, it's even more critical, because those communities-- I'm saying "those communities," I'm projecting this, I don't know-- but my sense is there are such deep historic roots in many of these communities and that the families have long relationships, and the degree to which they think or want others to come and add to who they already are, that's only going to be successful if someone trusted is bringing that new--

**Katie Wyatt:** -- part of the conversation?

**Dalouge Smith:** Yeah, yeah.

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah, so look, it's been really good talking to you about all of this stuff. I have to go, actually. <laughs>

**Dalouge Smith:** Because you're busy! You're running two organizations!

**Katie Wyatt:** Yeah, god. Soon, soon not. Soon not. But thank you. It's been really fun, and I look forward to talking to you about this and so many other things in the future.

**Dalouge Smith:** Absolutely, and thanks to the Massachusetts Cultural Council and their creative youth development team, because they are absolutely at the forefront of trying to elevate the practices and the issues and the opportunities of this field. And it's exciting that they're-- even though they're a state agency, that they're really seeing their leadership role as a national leadership role. So I want to acknowledge that.

**Katie Wyatt:** Here, here! Totally agreed!