

# landfillharmonic

The world sends us garbage. We send back music.



**Website:**

[www.landfillharmonicmovie.com](http://www.landfillharmonicmovie.com)

**Facebook:**

[www.facebook.com/landfillharmonicmovie](http://www.facebook.com/landfillharmonicmovie)

**Landfill Harmonic Teaser:**

<https://vimeo.com/52711779>

[www.youtube.com/landfillharmonic](http://www.youtube.com/landfillharmonic)

**Still Photos:**

<https://www.box.com/s/2ke94shws9ke3iue4fqk>

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B3-PbkXS2HzcbGhEWA2ejJmLWc&usp=sharing&tid=0B3-PbkXS2HzcTEFWODY5Uk5TYkU>

Photos courtesy of: Landfill Harmonic

## **Logline:**

**A film about inspiring dreams one note at a time!** A heartfelt and moving story of how musical instruments made from trash bring hope and dignity to children whose future is otherwise spiritless.

## **Description:**

A film about “The Recycled Orchestra”, a group of children from a Paraguayan slum who play instruments made entirely of garbage. It is a beautiful story about the transformative power of music, which also highlights two vital issues of our times: poverty and waste pollution. The world generates about a billion tons of garbage a year. Those who live with it and from it are the poor – like the people of Cateura, Paraguay. . And here they are transforming it into beauty. Landfill Harmonic follows the orchestra as it takes its inspiring spectacle of trash-into-music around the world.

## **Background:**

Too many children in the world are born into lives with little or no hope. Our film reveals a mind-boggling, inventive effort to change that - musical instruments made from trash. In the barrios of Paraguay, a humble garbage picker uses his ingenuity to craft instruments out of recycled materials - and a youth orchestra is born. Music arises and children find new dreams.

Our film will showcase the power of creativity, hope, empowerment, and community work. We began official production in 2011 and returned to the village in 2012 to update the progress of the new children who recently entered the orchestra. We will continue to follow the story in 2013. Landfill Harmonic shows how trash and recycled materials can be transformed into beautiful sounding musical instruments, but more importantly, it brings witness to the transformation of precious human beings.

Our lives were changed in making this film so far - and we hope to change yours.

## **Status:**

Feature film documentary under production.

**Characters:**

**Favio Chávez:** Director of the “Los Reciclados” orchestra.



**Nicolás Gómez known as “Cola”:** Luthier and garbage picker



## Orchestra Kids:



## The Filmmakers Journey:

**Alejandra Amarilla** (*Founder & Executive Producer*) reached out to filmmaker **Juliana Penaranda-Loftus** (*Producer*) to work on a documentary about the underserved children of Paraguay. Together they started an extensive research process in 2009 during which they traveled to Paraguay to interview different leads among them: the Minister of Education of Paraguay, community leaders, school principals, and children from low-income families.

Through their research, Alejandra and Juliana discovered the Recycled Orchestra. In 2010, they returned to Paraguay to do some initial filming. Since then production has developed strong connections with the orchestra and the community and continue to follow the story.

Initial production for the documentary began in 2010 when the production team traveled to Paraguay. They spent days with Favio and Cola, the garbage picker, who guided the team through the process of creating violins, flutes and drums out of recycled metal drums, tin cans, and plastic pipes. They returned to the village in 2011 with an entire crew to film the progress of the young children who recently entered the orchestra.

In 2012, this team joined forces with **Rodolfo Madero** (*Executive Producer*) and then traveled back to Paraguay, this time they also followed the Orchestra to Brazil for their first concert abroad.

By the end of this year, the team brought **Emmy nominated Director, Graham Townsley PhD**, under his creative leadership, the team has gone back a couple more times, and now is planning to follow the orchestra to Europe, the U.S. and then complete post-production of the documentary by the end of 2013.

In November 2012 they launched a successful social media campaign that in just over three months brought over 120,000 facebook friends to the project, and had over 3 million views at their promotional video. This campaign also brought the attention of media all over the world.

During the last trip to Paraguay, the filming crew of CBS's show "60 Minutes" tagged along with our team. They filmed the production process and interviewed some of the characters, including Alejandra, and now a ten minutes segment is schedule to air sometime during the last quarter of 2013.

### **Current Status of the Project**

Production for the documentary began officially in 2011 when the productions team traveled to Paraguay with an entire crew to film the children and the orchestra. They spent days with Favio and Cola, the garbage picker, who guided the team through the process of creating violins, flutes and drums out of recycled metal drums, tin cans, and plastic pipes. They returned to the village in 2012 to check on the progress of three young children who recently entered the orchestra, and to travel with them to Brazil for their first concert abroad at the United Nations RIO + 20 environmental conference.

The production team is schedule to travel three more times under the creative leadership of our Emmy nominated, Director, Ph. D Charles Graham, and then complete post-production of the documentary by the end of 2013.

The world largest Musical Instruments Museum, MIM in Scottsdale, AZ., decided to set up a permanent exhibition with a collection of recycled musical instruments after learning about the Recycled Orchestra. These instruments, along with parts of the documentary will be permanently housed in the Latin American wing of the museum.

There are plans to bringing the Orchestra for the opening of this exhibition in 2013. This juncture will give the producers the opportunity to bring on board corporate sponsors to support a concert tour and make a few more presentations in the U.S.



Alejandra Amarilla and Juliana Peñaranda-Loftus at Tania's house

### **Crew Bios:**

**Alejandra Amarilla (Founder & Executive Producer)** Integrating philanthropy and a commitment to community service into her daily life and vision, Alejandra has aided a variety of social causes, most recently putting her efforts behind Free Arts of Arizona through the documentary film *Unleashing Creativity*, which she co-directed. *Landfill-Harmonic* is her latest endeavor.

**Rodolfo Madero (Executive Producer)** Rodolfo started Eureka Productions in 1993 in México. His work crossed frontiers by the end of the 90's when he established his production house in Phoenix, AZ. In 2004, Eureka made its debut in *Adweek Magazine*, being recognized as one of the 30 most important production houses in the US. As a film composer and Executive Producer; he has take part in Documentary films and Short and full length features.

**Juliana Penaranda-Loftus (Producer)** – Juliana Penaranda-Loftus' career began working as a Production Assistant and Second Assistant Director for primetime television shows in Colombia. After completing her Bachelor's degree in film and photography she moved to the United States to pursue graduate studies. She then completed her Masters in film and video at American University in Washington, DC. During a semester abroad studying film technology and directing at the Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague in the Czech Republic, she also shot

several short films. After September 11, she traveled to Afghanistan to direct and produce a documentary about Aid Afghanistan, an organization fighting for the right to educate women. Since then she has produced feature films and established her own production company, Hidden Village Films. In 2012 she was one of 8 women selected by the American Film Institute for their Directing Workshop for Women.

**Graham Townsley (Director)** - Graham Townsley is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker whose documentaries have been shown on PBS, The Discovery Channel, The History Channel and The National Geographic in the U.S.; Canal + in France; Channel 4 and the BBC in England. He founded Shining Red Productions in 2008. He is also an anthropologist with a Ph.D from Cambridge University. The New York Times referred to his three-part 2009 PBS series "Becoming Human" as "compelling...a well-paced series, which keeps adding beautiful layers of complexity."

**Neil Barrett (Director of Photography)** - Has worked on over 30 broadcast documentary films for National Geographic, BBC, PBS, Discovery, The History Channel, NBC, ABC and CNN. His films have been shown at the Sundance, Tribeca, Toronto, Fullframe, SilverDocs, Jackson Hole and Los Angeles Film Festivals. Three of his feature documentaries—"The Woodmans" (2010), "The Other City" (2009), and "Kicking it" (2008)-- have been released theatrically in the United States.

**Jorge Maldonado (Co-Producer and Editor)** is the Creative Director and Co-founder of Hyperactive Productions, a Washington DC based production company specializing in Video production, broadcast design, motion graphics, animation, visual effects and bilingual voice-overs. His television credits include Discovery Networks, PBS and The Smithsonian Channel. He has also worked on numerous projects for organizations such as Conservation International, The World Bank, The Gates Foundation, Citi Group, and the Pew Foundation.

**Jennifer Redfearn (Consulting Producer)** directed the 2011 Oscar nominated documentary *Sun Come Up*. *Sun Come Up* aired on HBO, garnered multiple festival awards, and has screened in over 500 educational communities worldwide. She is currently directing *The Blind Cinema Club*, in Havana Cuba. Over the past seven years, she has produced documentaries for National Geographic, CNN, the Discovery Channel, TLC, and for educational and online distribution.

**Tim Fabrizio (Director of Photography of selected scenes)** - Tim Fabrizio is a cinematographer in New York City. Getting his start in his native Washington, DC, Tim has over 10 years of experience shooting narrative feature films, commercials, and documentaries. Tim's work for PBS, Discovery Channel and National Geographic took him all over the globe from the deck of an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf and favelas in Brazil, to the shores of Northern France, the metropolis of Tokyo, and the rivers of India.

**Monica Barrios (Production Consultant)** - Mónica Barrios has been freelancing in the non-fiction television industry for ten years. She has worked for National Geographic, Discovery Channel, PBS and the Smithsonian Channel where she has collaborated with award winning documentary filmmakers.

## Outreach

**Issue:** Youth and Education

**Mission:** To demonstrate that creative and simple solutions can bring powerful social transformation to the poorest communities.

### **Goals:**

1. US Educational tour: Inspire potential donors and/or sponsors to bring *Los Reciclados* on a tour to the United States. *Los Reciclados* has been sponsored in the past by European Organizations to play at schools venues. Concerts would take place in a variety of venues including theaters, schools and neighborhoods with crime and violence related issues. Tour would include a series of workshops where kids can get the experience of building their own recycled instruments.
2. Landfill Harmonic Movement: open chapters of this program in other countries.
3. Inspire general audiences to recycle objects, restore their livelihoods and provide hope for younger generations.
4. Educate audience through social media reach about ways to recycle.
5. Partner up with environmental organizations to educate our audiences on sustainability topics.
6. Encourage other organizations to give opportunities to underprivileged youth to provide alternatives to drugs and alcohol so they can learn news skills.
7. Motivate youth to be creative, and resourceful as well as re-evaluate their lives by helping them recognized what they have to succeed.
8. Bring attention to the sanitary conditions in Cateura. Hundreds of families such as the ones that appear in the film live along a polluted creek. This is a sanitary emergency that needs to be recognized by the citizens and the government.

### **For more information contact:**

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## **Our Fiscal Sponsor “Creative Visions”:**

Inspired by the life of Dan Eldon, a young Reuters photojournalist killed in Somalia in 1993, Creative Visions Foundation supports “Creative Activist” who use media and the arts to create positive change in the world.

The Creative Visions Foundation is a 501(C)3 non-profit, tax-exempt organization designated by the Internal Revenue Code. *All donations are tax-deductible.*

### **Creative Visions Foundation**

The Dan Eldon Center  
18820 Pacific Coast Highway  
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[www.creativevisions.org](http://www.creativevisions.org)

## **Turning trash into musical instruments for Paraguay's children**

By Marcia Adair

**Los Angeles Times**

In the Paraguayan capital of Asuncion, there is a village called Cateura built practically on top of the city's main landfill. Families eke out a living sorting through the trash and selling whatever valuables they can find. Like many high poverty areas, drugs and gangs are rampant and children grow up with little hope of ever doing much more than sorting trash.

A trailer for a new documentary about Favio Chavez, a local ecologist and musician who is teaching the children of Cateura to play music on recycled instruments, has been circulating online at a rather feverish pace. The joy of the boy playing Bach on an oil-drum cello is difficult not to share.

We caught up with Chavez via Skype to find out the whole story.

Although he grew up nearby, Chavez first encountered these children when he worked on a waste recycling project at the landfill from 2006-'08 and got to know some of the local families. Since 2002, he has run a Boys Orchestra in his homevillage of Carapuengá and one day, he decided to repeat the same thing with the children of Cateura. More than 40% of children in the area don't finish school because their parents need them to work, so initially the idea of an orchestra was simply to keep the kids from playing in the landfill.

"At first it was very difficult because we had no place to rehearse and we had to teach in the same place where the parents were working in the trash," said Chavez. "The children knew nothing about music and it was very difficult to contact parents because many of them do not live with their children."

Eventually, parents began to see that playing music was keeping their kids out of trouble, some even reclaiming children they had previously abandoned.

Soon there were more children wanting lessons than there were instruments, so Chavez experimented with making some out of recycled materials from the landfill. String instruments have traditional tailpieces, fingerboards, scrolls and strings but the body, tuning pegs and other bits are made from whatever is around. "Eventually the recycled instruments were improved, and in many cases, they now sound better than the wooden Made In China instruments the more able children play on."

The recycled instruments serve another, more practical purpose: The kids can safely carry them. "For many children, it was impossible to give them a violin to take home because they had nowhere to keep it and their parents were afraid they would be robbed or the instrument would be sold to buy drugs."

Making instruments out of other materials, especially for beginning children is not so unusual. El Sistema, the more famous social music project in Venezuela, has children make their first instruments out of papier mâché until they are ready for real ones. In North America, small children starting Suzuki violin lessons are given a shoebox with a ruler for a neck and elastic bands for strings, so they can get used to holding the instrument.

Chavez has taught more than 120 children in Cateura and currently has 50 students, 25 of which make up the Recycled Orchestra. A recent tour of Rio de Janeiro, Panama and Bogota, Colombia, was complicated by the fact that none of the children had passports, with nearly half not even in possession of a birth certificate. "In some cases, I had to get the parents identity documents too. Now, because they are part of the orchestra, all the children have documents."

One of Chavez's best pupils is a 15-year-old girl called Tania. "She began her study with me in Cateura five years ago and now is one of the leading violins in the orchestra, " Chavez said. "Her father is addicted to crack, but had to stop for two days while he went to court to get permission for his daughter to go on tour. She lives in a single-room shack with her mother and three sisters, so when she wants to practice, the whole family has to leave the house. Because she is advanced, she has a wooden violin from China. It is worth more than her house."

Chavez is not trying to make top musicians out of his pupils, but rather to show them, and their parents, that studying something is worthwhile. "In 2011 I quit my job to devote full time to the project in Cateura because I noticed that the children have made progress and we are at a time when they definitely are changing their lives through the orchestra." "We dream that families and children can have a better house and Internet access, so they can connect with opportunities."

Momentum is definitely building. The Paraguayan government body FONDAC is providing support for a music school, and a recently released excerpt of a documentary about the project is making its way around the Internet. The film, "Landfill Harmonic," is currently in production. It does not yet have a distributor, but it's expected to be finished in 2013.

Meanwhile, Chavez will continue his work in Cateura. "Sports can be competitive. Music causes children to connect and feel they are building something together. Our orchestra feels special because the children make beauty out of garbage.

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## **The Recycled Orchestra: A story of creativity, hope, and endurance**

by Nina Mashurova

### **El Matador Network**

WHEN FAVIO CHAVEZ came to Cateura to start a music school, he realized that he had more students than instruments. Thanks to the resourcefulness of Cola, a Cateurian garbage picker, an orchestra came together, now featuring violins, cellos, and other instruments artfully put together from trash. Los Reciclados de Cateura, now an independent orchestra, recently performed in Brazil and Colombia under Chavez's direction.

I spoke, over email, with Founder and Executive Producer, Alejandra Nash, and Producer, Juliana Penaranda-Loftus, about their experiences in Cateura, the making of the film, and their hopes for the documentary.

### **Nina: How did this project come about? Did you visit Cateura and find the Landfill Orchestra, or did you know about them from the get-go?**

Alejandra Nash: I was born in Asuncion, Paraguay. I dreamed of the opportunity to help my country in a creative way; a way of bringing awareness to issues that revolve around children and women in Paraguay, so the idea of a documentary became the first seed. I contacted Juliana, who I met through a friend, and knowing she is a producer we started our research. During that phase, I met with the director of a non profit organization that brings music schools to the poorest areas in Paraguay. Los Reciclados story instantly took my breath away. Since then we have gone to Cateura, Paraguay several times filming the children and Cola, who all live there. Cola is the luthier, the sweet and humble garbage picker who makes those wonderful instruments for the children. Favio Chavez is the director and heart of the orchestra. His love and commitment to these children is fascinating.

Juliana Penaranda-Loftus: We heard a story about an orchestra that was put together using recycled garbage in April of 2009, it was during our first research trip to Paraguay. In the summer 2010, Alejandra and I came back with director of photography and friend Tim Fabrizio. We arrived to do some initial filming in order to produce a trailer. During that trip, we met the first group of children who were part of the recycled Orchestra, those children are now playing with professional Orchestras. We have been following this story since then. We went back in 2011 and have gone twice in 2012. Now there is a new group of children that have joined the orchestra. We have witnessed the commitment that Favio Chavez (orchestra director) has towards these children of Cateura, their families and their community. There is a whole social process that happens behind running the orchestra. We have developed very strong ties with them during these years and this is a story that goes way beyond the screen.

### **The trailer looks great. Could you talk a bit about the structure of the film? Who did you follow? What are some of the stories you're trying to tell?**

AN: Thank you. We are following three of the children in the orchestra: Tania, Maria, and Ada. As well as Cola and Favio (director of the Orchestra).

JPL: Our story follows a music teacher (Favio) and his students as they pursue their dream of building their recycled orchestra. The story explores the town where the children are from, Cateura, a slum built on the top of a landfill. The film also follows a local garbage picker, the instrument maker. We are still under production so the story is still evolving and taking unexpected paths for our characters.

**The entire crew has really impressive bios and histories of past projects. How did you all come together to work on this project?**

AN: Juliana, through her contacts, was able to get the crew together. I am extremely happy about having such a wonderful group of people involved in this project. It came through as a result of everyone having the same reaction as I did when I first knew of this story: we fell in love with it.

JPL: We are working with wonderful professionals who really love and believe in the story as much as Alejandra and I do: Rodolfo Madero (Executive Producer), Jorge Maldonado (Co-producer), Graham Townsley (Director) Jennifer Redfearn (Consulting producer), Tim Fabrizio and Neil Barrett (Directors of Photography) and Monica Barrios (Production Consultant).

**Is there a nonprofit backing the funding for this?**

AN: We get donations through our fiscal sponsor Creative Visions Foundation. Creative Visions is a non profit organization that supports projects that utilize media and the arts to create positive change in the world.

JPL: The production has funded the project so far. But we are in the process of approaching sponsors to secure additional funding which will allow us to complete the film. We still have a lot to film as the story is taking the orchestra members to unexpected places.

**Do you have an estimate of when you expect the film to be finished?**

JPL: We are still under production and expect to complete the film in 2013. Cateura is built on a landfill. Where does all that garbage come from? Is it all from Paraguay? How did the city come to be built there?

AN: All the solid waste stream from Asuncion (the capital) and the metropolitan area goes to the Landfill in the outskirts of Cateura. People in the actual town of Cateura don't have any dedicated place where they can throw their waste.

JPL: There used to be a big lagoon in the Cateura area. Over time, the lagoon was filled with garbage, debris and other materials that come from the city. Displaced people that were so poor they had no other place to go started occupying and building the homes over the top of the waste. That's why we can say that Cateura is literally built on the top of a former landfill.

**Can you tell me a little about the conditions in Cateura, from your personal experiences?**

AN: The hygiene and environmental issues are a real problem. Even though they live by the landfill, the infrastructure of the place is so under-developed that they do not even have a garbage pickup or any kind of trash system in place. So people throw their garbage around, some burn them, creating a polluted area filled with trash everywhere. Their water creek is completely polluted. We hope to bring some awareness on these issues as well, and assist in creating opportunities to support a plan that will tackle this issue.

**What was working with the kids in Cateura like? Did they have any prior experience with film crews / American journalists?**

AN: Working with the kids has been wonderful. They had no prior experience with international film crews and were very shy at first. They are very interested in learning about United States and curious about it. It still takes them a little bit to warm up to us when we first arrive. But then they are happy and open, we have created a very good relationship with them throughout the years we have been following them even before we started filming. Juliana is from Colombia and I am from Paraguay so speaking their language is a big plus. The director, Graham Townsley, speaks perfect Spanish as well.

**What do you hope the effect of this documentary will be?**

AN: My hope is to inspire, educate, and motivate, as well as bring attention to the sanitary conditions in Cateura. Through this film I hope people will be motivated to be creative and resourceful. We also have plans for outreach programs to bring the Recycled Orchestra to United States and get them exposed to musical and educational environments and opportunities.

JPL: Our job as filmmakers is to share this remarkable story of creativity, hope and endurance with the world. This story will inspire people of all levels and ages to look at an adverse situation in a creative way.

We also hope to bring awareness to major global themes of our time — poverty and garbage management.