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# UPBEAT

## A Helping Hand in the City of Angels

As an epicenter of the entertainment industry, Los Angeles presents countless opportunities for recording artists, studio musicians, composers, and arrangers to launch their careers. But outside of the Hollywood studios, not all of L.A.'s young people have access to the same level of achievement in music, and the nonprofit organization The Harmony Project is working to address that need in the community.

The Harmony Project, housed at the offices of Local 47 (Los Angeles), has grown considerably since its founding in 2001. Devoted to bringing

Trombetta first met Miller while teaching at the Henry Mancini Institute and he has offered the Harmony Project encouragement from the start. "I saw their purpose was to enhance the lives of young musicians, and I wanted to make things available to them," Trombetta says. "I look at people who give of their lives that way as guardian angels. I think it's very healing for some of these kids to be tutored by the likes of some of these teachers. It's a great experience"

Three office spaces at Local 47's headquarters are currently devoted to The Harmony Project—the most of any tenant, according to Trombetta, who adds, "I'm very excited not only to have them as tenants but as friends."

The Harmony Project now operates in two locations in the Los Angeles area—Los Angeles Community College in Hollywood and the Expo Center in South Los Angeles, near the University of Southern California campus. This second location is a result of its partnership with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, one of many musical organizations that supports the The Harmony Project. In addition to providing rehearsal space, both locations expose students to a college environment, something that Miller sees as tremendously valuable in their attitudes toward education.

"My dream would be for all children to have music, for all of them to finish school and have direction," she says.

Abel Delgado of Local 47, the project's founding executive director and now its music director and conductor, leads the students in The Harmony Project Orchestra and the Hollywood Youth Orchestra in rehearsal on a weekly basis. Delgado, who is director of development at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of

Music, balances two Saturday rehearsals, with his own work as an orchestral conductor and flutist.

"It's a well-oiled machine, but we depend heavily on the teachers," Delgado says. "They give group lessons and private lessons that often double as sectionals."

The orchestras' successes have come on quickly, and Delgado notes that in four years of leading the groups, he has run through nearly all of the repertoire that had been arranged for them, though he notes that the LAUSD library has been very generous in allowing access to their music holdings. He's currently working to find new arrangements for varying skill levels—music that will allow the students to be "as successful as they can be."

The greatest challenge for the students, and for Delgado as he leads them, is acquiring the discipline of long rehearsals and getting the students to understand the importance of group work. The achievement of multiple concerts per year, including a summer festival that concludes with a gala concert by four all-student orchestras, shows just how far the students have come through the hard work of their instructors.

For more information on The Harmony Project or to volunteer visit their website: [www.harmony-project.org](http://www.harmony-project.org).



**Abel Delgado of Local 47 (Los Angeles) conducts young musicians from The Harmony Project during a concert. The project has enrolled more than 300 students in private lessons and two youth orchestras.**

music instruction into the lives of underprivileged children ages seven to 17, this community enterprise is now reaching more students than ever. A partnership with the Los Angeles Philharmonic has expanded the project's offerings and attracted even more students, and its outreach into schools, including the huge Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), is making a difference in the lives of hundreds of children, as well as their families.

Myka Miller, executive director of The Harmony Project and member of Local 47, says that, in the project's first year, 30 children were enrolled in music lessons. That number has since grown to more than 500.

"It's been very small, very individualized, and there's been so much success and such huge demand that it was time to expand, and to expand our administrative capabilities as well," Miller says. She also notes that The Harmony Project has been able to double its teaching staff and provide staff with opportunities for professional development.

Regarding the project's affiliation with Local 47, Miller says, "It's been such an asset. It feels like you're in the thick of the community of musicians." Union members, she says, have donated instruments and helped to find teachers. She notes the support of Vince Trombetta, vice president of Local 47, for The Harmony Project and states that Local 47 has provided "a very family feeling."