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# News

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The Recycled Orchestra  
uses instruments made  
from scrap metal, old  
wood, and other trash.



## Sweet Sounds of Trash

Meet a teen orchestra in  
South America that makes  
beautiful music from  
recycled garbage. **Page 4**

**WATCH A VIDEO** about the orchestra  
[www.scholastic.com/sn56](http://www.scholastic.com/sn56)

# Sounds of Hope

**Kids from a poor village in South America are changing their lives by making music from trash**

**T**he sound of music slowly fills the concert hall as an orchestra begins to play. The high, bright notes of the violin are followed by the low, rich sound of the cello. Then the drum starts thumping.

But this is no ordinary orchestra. The violin is made from a salad bowl and hunks of wood. Its strings are held in place with a fork. The saxophone is made from a metal pipe and bottle caps. In fact, all the instruments are made from trash.

The group is called the Recycled Orchestra. It's made up of 20 teen musicians from the South American country of Paraguay. Their instruments are made from garbage found near their homes. They live in Cateura (kah-TUH-rah), a small, poor village just outside Paraguay's capital, Asunción.

Like most orchestras, the teens play famous pieces of classical music by Mozart and Beethoven. But they also play rock music by the Beatles and other groups. Judging by the sound, you'd never know their instruments are made from items tossed into the trash.

"The world sends us garbage. We send back music," says Favio Chávez, the music teacher who founded the orchestra.

## From Trash to Treasure

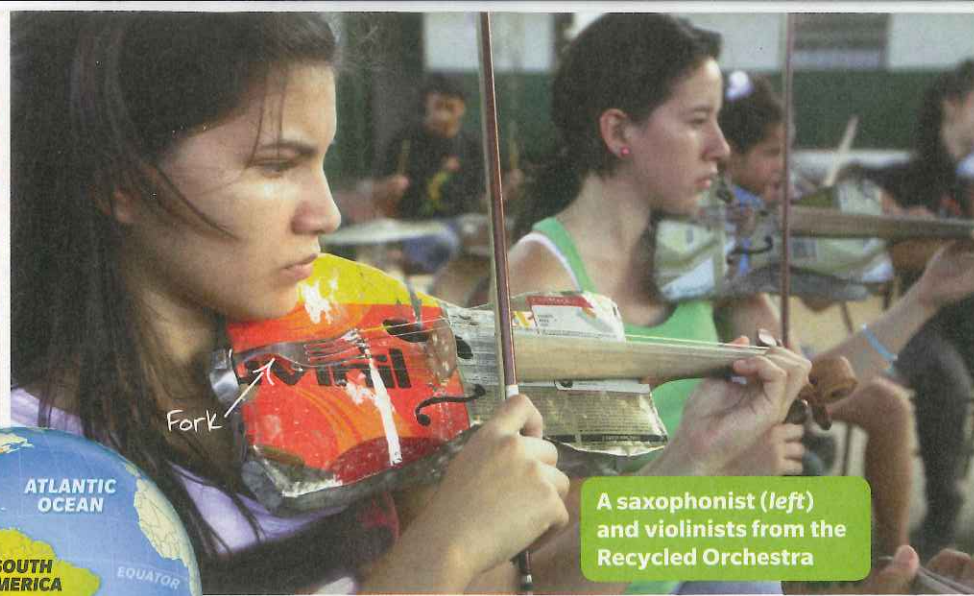
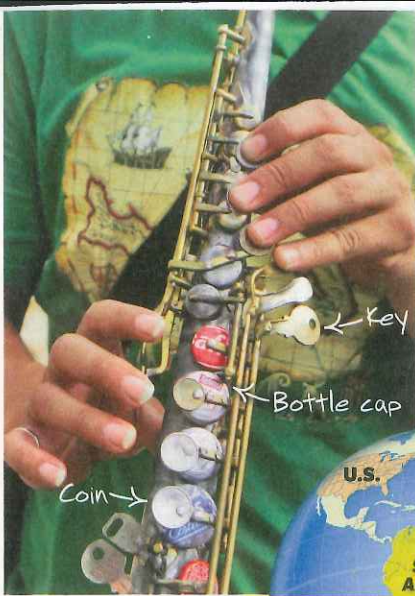
Paraguay is one of the poorest countries in South America. More than a million people there get by on less than \$1 a day. Cateura is a community that formed around garbage. Every day, 1,500 tons of trash is brought to a landfill there. A landfill is an area where



This double bass was made from an old steel container.



This guitar was made from metal cans.



A saxophonist (left) and violinists from the Recycled Orchestra



garbage gets dumped and is later covered with soil.

In the U.S., most of our trash ends up in landfills, where few of us ever see it or think about it again. But for most of the 2,500 families in Cateura, the landfill is their **livelihood**. Many residents work as trash pickers. They search the landfill for scraps they can sell as recyclable materials. Nearly half the children in the area don't finish school because their parents need them to work.

To keep the kids out of trouble, Chávez started a music school in Cateura six years ago. But there were more kids than instruments, and there was no money to buy new instruments. In Cateura, a new violin costs more than a house, Chávez explains.

A **resourceful** trash picker named Nicolás Gómez came to the rescue. A former carpenter, Gómez made a violin from scraps of debris. "I never imagined myself building an instrument like this," says Gómez. Soon, a whole orchestra was formed from recycled materials.

### A Path Out of Poverty

Chávez hopes that being a part of the orchestra will give the teens a way out of Cateura. The young musicians have already gained attention outside Paraguay. They've given concerts in Brazil, Colombia, and Panama. Later this year, they plan to perform in the U.S., at the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Arizona.

The orchestra will also appear in a film called *Landfill Harmonic*, scheduled to be released next year. The movie shows exactly how the community turns trash into instruments. It also shows how playing music can give kids hope for a brighter future.

Thirteen-year-old Ada Ríos plays the violin in the Recycled Orchestra. She says music has already transformed her life.

"When I listen to the sound of the violin, I feel butterflies in my stomach," she says. "It's a feeling that I don't know how to explain."

—Laura Modigliani

### Words to Know

**livelihood** (LYV-lee-hood) *noun*. the way a person earns money to make a living

**resourceful** (rih-SORS-fuhl) *adjective*. good at solving problems



The Recycled Orchestra in concert

COVER: LANDFILL HARMONIC; PAGE 4: IMAGO STOCK/PEOPLE/NEWS.COM (DOUBLE BASS); JORGE SAEZ/AP IMAGES (GUITAR); PAGE 5: JORGE SAEZ/AP IMAGES (SAXOPHONIST); JORGE SAEZ/AP IMAGES (VIOLINIST); IMAGO STOCK/PEOPLE/NEWS.COM (BOTTOM); JIM NICHOLSON/"HAPPYMAN" (MAP)