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***POIGNANT DOCUMENTARY
“CHILDREN OF LAS BRISAS” EXPLORES
THE POWER OF MUSIC EDUCATION
AMONG VENEZUELAN YOUTH,
PREMIERES JANUARY 2 ON PBS’S
INDEPENDENT LENS***

DECEMBER 16, 2022

The Documentary Highlights Inspiring Students of “El Sistema,” a Venezuelan Youth Orchestra Offering Hope in the Face of Political and Economic Repression

(San Francisco, CA) December 16, 2022 — In poverty-stricken Las Brisas, the Venezuelan government-sponsored classical music program *El Sistema* offers children the opportunity to aspire for greatness, as the country’s spiraling collapse and political repression threatens the musicians’ dreams of a better life. In “Children of Las Brisas,” award-winning documentarian and Venezuelan director Marianela Maldonado (“Once Upon a Time in Venezuela”) captures three young protagonists over the span of 10 years.

Following its U.S. North American premiere at the 2022 DOC NYC film festival, “Children of Las Brisas” makes its broadcast debut on INDEPENDENT LENS on January 2, 2023, at 10 p.m. ET (check local listings). The film will also be available to stream on the PBS app.

Maldonado brings a deeply vulnerable perspective to the ground-level impact of the political, economic, and humanitarian crises present in her home country, documenting the years of 2009 to 2019 through the lens of three young musicians. As captured in the doc, youth orchestra *El Sistema* provides guidance and purpose for the film’s subjects, including Dissandra, a violinist who observed the premature death of her two younger sisters, Wuilly,



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another violinist who spent seven years of his life locked in a church with his family as a result of his parents' apocalyptic ideologies, and Edixon, a viola player raised by his grandmother and deaf mother after his father was murdered.

Dissandra, Wuilly, and Edixon forge different paths for themselves over the course of the decade as they face unique struggles in Las Brisas. Some audition to play in foreign concerts while others engage with the politics surrounding them through military service and activism.

Described as "combining the intimate and the panoramic" by *The Guardian*, "Children of Las Brisas" explores the political and economic struggles in Venezuela at both the individual and systemic level, addressing the impact of historical moments from the past decade, including the death of former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in 2013 and the 2017 protests.

"Bringing incredibly real and vulnerable stories from my home country to a global audience has been the very purpose and heart of my work," said Maldonado. "Following these young artists as they endure so many hardships in pursuit of their dreams has inspired me, and I hope it does the same for the INDEPENDENT LENS audience."

"Children of Las Brisas" received Open Call funding from ITVS and was produced in partnership with PBS's VOCES. Visit the "[Children of Las Brisas](#)" page on INDEPENDENT LENS to learn more about the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:

MARIANELA MALDONADO

After graduating from the National Film & Television School in the U.K., Marianela wrote and directed fiction short films and was a screenwriter for animation and fiction projects, among them "Peter and the Wolf" and "The Magic Piano." As a documentarian, she co-wrote "Once Upon A Time in Venezuela" and directed "Children of Las Brisas."

CREDITS

Director	Marianela Maldonado
Producer	Luisa De La Ville
Co-Producers	Luc Martin Gousset Andy Glynne
Executive Producers	Luisa De La Ville Sally Jo Fifer Lois Vossen Sandie Viquez Pedlow

Visit the INDEPENDENT LENS [website](#) for more information.

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series, airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. ET. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, Action Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram at @independentlens.

ABOUT ITVS

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that has, for over 25 years, funded and partnered with a diverse range of documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning films, and then airs [them](#) for free on PBS via our weekly series, INDEPENDENT LENS, as well as on other PBS series, and through our digital platform, OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The National Endowment for the Humanities: American Rescue Plan, Acton Family Giving, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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