PRESS KIT



A COMMUNITY. A LANDFILL. AN ORCHESTRA OF HOPE.

THE CHILDREN OF CATEURA

MUSIC FROM TRASH

A DOCUMENTARY BY ANNA SCHMIDT

schmidtFilm

ZDF

SUPPORTED BY

Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung

SLM SÄCHSISCHE LANDESMEDIENANSTALT

81 min

www.schmidt-film.com



LOGLINE

On the edge of Paraguay's largest landfill, six young people play instruments made from trash. As their orchestra prepares for a European tour, music becomes about more than sound: dignity, belonging and the chance to shape their own future.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

On the edge of Paraguay's largest landfill, six young people grow up playing instruments made from trash: paint cans become violins, oil drums become cellos. But the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura is about more than music. It is about dignity, belonging and the possibility of shaping your own future. As the orchestra prepares for a three-month European tour, dreams come within reach, but not everyone will be chosen. While some encounter snow, foreign cities and grand concert halls for the first time, others remain in Cateura. Between family, friendship and an uncertain future, six young people find their own way in a place the world knows mainly for what it throws away.

RUNTIME
81 min

COUNTRY
Germany

DIRECTOR
Anna Schmidt

PRODUCTION
schmidtFilm

IN COOPERATION WITH
ZDF

WORLD SALES
EuroArts



SYNOPSIS

On the outskirts of Paraguay's capital, Asunción, a mountain of garbage dominates the horizon. In Cateura, a neighborhood bordering one of the country's largest landfills, children grow up surrounded by poverty, violence, and limited opportunities for the future. Many families make a living sorting through other people's waste. Yet in this unlikely place, something extraordinary has emerged: a music school and an orchestra where children and teenagers play instruments made from discarded materials. Violins from paint cans, cellos from oil drums, violas from baking trays, forks, and spoons.

The film follows six children and teenagers over several months, sharing their everyday lives between family, school, and orchestra rehearsals. Their life stories are as different as their dreams. Alexander finds a place in music where he feels accepted, after experiencing bullying and violence as a child. Maximilian wants to show the world that his neighborhood is more than poverty and crime. Ayelen, who is growing up with her grandmother, dreams of studying music in Europe one day. Analia, Yoseline, and Mathias are each searching for their own place in life, for independence, recognition, and a future they can shape themselves.

Music gives them strength and opens up opportunities that are far from guaranteed in their everyday lives. Suddenly, one of those opportunities comes within reach: the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura is preparing for a three-month European tour. But not everyone can go. While some leave Paraguay for the first time, board an airplane, and perform on major European stages, others stay behind, disappointed but still hoping for another chance.

For those who travel, it is an encounter with an unfamiliar world. They experience the European winter, the hospitality of strangers, and the applause of audiences in magnificent concert halls. But they also experience homesickness and the feeling of being caught between two worlds. After three months, they return to Paraguay, to an everyday life that has barely changed. Yet the way they see their own future has changed.

One of the film's central figures is instrument maker Wilson López. Growing up in poverty himself, he spent periods of his life sleeping on the streets. His violin was his constant companion. Today, he transforms scraps of wood, metal, and discarded everyday objects into

instruments for a new generation of children. To him, each instrument is far more than an object. It is an opportunity to open a door to the world for a child.

The film does not portray its protagonists as victims of their circumstances, but as young people with their own ideas about who they are and where they want to go. It tells stories of their families, solidarity and friendship, disappointments and new experiences. And of people who refuse to be defined by what they lack.

***The Children of Cateura. Music from Trash* is a film about dignity, belonging, and empowerment. About the power of music to bring people together and change the way they see their own lives.**

"The world sends us trash. We send back music."

Motto of the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura







THE PROTAGONISTS

Six young musicians and an instrument maker

ALEXANDER	After experiencing bullying and violence as a child, Alexander finds a place in music where he feels accepted.
MAXIMILIAN	Maximilian wants to show the world that his neighborhood is more than poverty and crime.
AYELEN	Ayelen is growing up with her grandmother and dreams of studying music in Europe one day.
MATHIAS	When Mathias is afraid in his neighborhood, his violin becomes his refuge.
ANALIA AND YOSELINE	Analia and Yoseline are each searching for their own place in life: for independence, recognition and a future they can shape themselves.
WILSON LÓPEZ, “WIWI”	Wiwi played in the orchestra himself as a child. He grew up in poverty and at times slept on the streets; his violin was his constant companion. Today, in his workshop, he builds instruments for the next generation from finds on the landfill and discarded materials.



THE CATEURA MUSIC SCHOOL

Cateura lies on the edge of Paraguay's largest landfill. Here, necessity gave rise to an unusual idea: because there were not enough instruments for the many children at the music school, people began building them from what others throw away. Paint cans become violins, oil drums become cellos, old wood and metal become double basses. Today, around 350 children and teenagers learn at the Cateura Music School.

With these instruments, children and teenagers play in the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura (Orquesta de Reciclados de Cateura). In Wilson López's workshop it becomes clear what the idea of Cateura is about: something considered worthless gets a second chance.

For the European tour, the choice of who travels does not depend on musical talent alone, but also on whether the children can cope with the demands of a long journey with many concerts. For those who travel, an encounter with a completely different world begins; for those who stay in Cateura, the question is what comes next for them.

The orchestra is far more than an extraordinary music project. It creates a place of belonging and self-confidence, and shows how music can give dignity and open up new horizons without hiding the realities of the children's lives.












PARAGUAYO
COMO VOS


le devolvemos



THE DIRECTOR



Photo: © Lourdes Franco Galli

ANNA SCHMIDT

Anna Schmidt is an award-winning German documentary filmmaker, writer and producer. She studied journalism and musicology in Leipzig and Amsterdam, trained for many years as a classical and jazz singer, and is a graduate of the Discovery Campus Masterschool. In 1998 she founded schmidtFilm in Leipzig and has since directed around thirty music documentaries for cinema and television, working with broadcasters such as ZDF, ARTE, MDR, NDR, BR, RTÉ, TVP and SRF.

Her films combine music, history and social issues with a poetic yet accessible cinematic language. At their heart are people who change the world around them through courage, conviction and creativity. Rather than simply portraying famous personalities, she looks for the universal stories behind individual lives: how art shapes identity, builds bridges between cultures and offers hope even in the most difficult circumstances.

Her films include **LIVING BACH**, which connects people across continents through the music of Johann Sebastian Bach; **PATHS THROUGH THE LABYRINTH**, about composer Krzysztof Penderecki; and **BEING HIPP**, about the pioneering jazz pianist Jutta Hipp. Her latest feature documentary, **THE CHILDREN OF CATEURA. MUSIC FROM TRASH**, follows young musicians of Paraguay's Recycled Orchestra. She is currently developing a feature documentary about the conductor Kurt Masur.

Her films have screened at festivals including IDFA Amsterdam, Krakow Film Festival, Film Fest Gent, IN-EDIT Barcelona and EPOS Israel. Her awards include the International Classical Music Award and the German Record Critics' Award, and in 2026 BEING HIPP received the German Jazz Award for outstanding journalistic achievement.

CREDITS & TECHNICAL DATA

CREDITS

Director	Anna Schmidt
Camera	Matthias Jim Günther, Axel Schneppat (BVK)
Sound and editing	Tom Chapman (BFS)
Producer	Anna Neuhaus
Production	schmidtFilm, Leipzig
In cooperation with	ZDF
Supported by	Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (MDM), Sächsische Landesmedienanstalt (SLM)
World sales	EuroArts
With	Analia, Ayelen, Maximilian, Mathias, Yoseline, Alexander, Wilson López “Wiwi”

TECHNICAL DATA

Original title	Los niños de Cateura. Música de la basura
International title	The Children of Cateura. Music from Trash
Runtime	81 min
Country of production	Germany

CONTACT

schmidtFilm Film- und Fernsehproduktion
Anna Neuhaus
Spinnereistraße 7, 04179 Leipzig, Germany
Phone +49 (0)341 993 90 57
www.schmidt-film.com

World sales: **EuroArts**

PRODUCTION PHOTOS



A Young musicians of the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura in front of the orchestra's mosaic



B Laughter at the music school



C With a recycled violin in front of the music school



D Playing the oil-drum double bass



E Rehearsal with recycled violins and flutes



F Orchestra rehearsal



G The orchestra's motto on a T-shirt



H A young violinist at the music school



I Playing a recycled violin



J Young violinists rehearsing



K Making music in the courtyard of the music school



L In front of the orchestra's sign

High-resolution photos are available on request. Photos A to L: © Lourdes Franco Galli.

FILM STILLS



1 Young members of the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura in front of the orchestra's mosaic



2 Carrying a recycled double bass down a street in Cateura



3 A double bass made from an oil drum



4 Making music at home



5 A girl and her grandmother in the kitchen



6 Mother and son with the instrument case



8 Two young musicians with their recycled instruments



9 Orchestra rehearsal



10 The Cateura landfill



11 A family selfie



12 During the European tour



20 Afternoon in an alley in Cateura

High-resolution stills are available on request. Stills 1, 3, 8, 9: © Lourdes Franco Galli. All other stills: © schmidtFilm.