

ARGOT PICTURES

presents

SOME KIND OF SPARK



Directed by Ben Niles, USA, 2015, 85 minutes

In English, no subtitles

Booking & Press:

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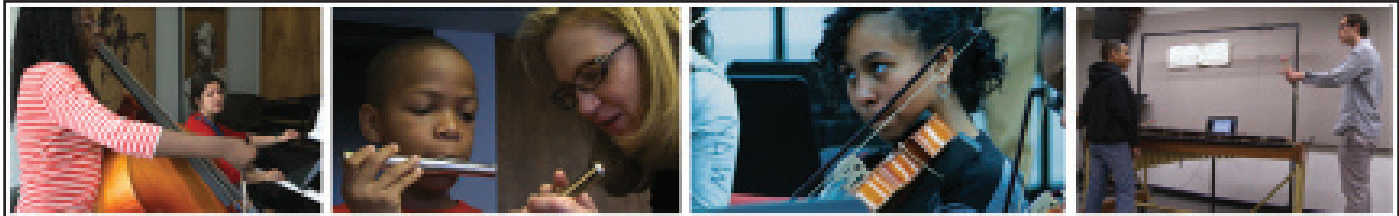
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SOME KIND OF SPARK

Some Kind of Spark is a feature-length documentary that follows six inner-city kids (ages 8-12) from the New York area as they embark on a life-changing experience—the opportunity to study music in Juilliard’s Music Advancement Program (MAP). Made over a 3-year period, the film intimately follows the students and their dedicated teachers, capturing the budding and profound relationships building upon every lesson.





ABOUT THE FILM

“Children’s access to music education has been declining sharply in recent years—over 20% since 2001. This alarming trend is compromising our children’s education and jeopardizing our culture.”
—Music Educators National Conference (MENC)

Some Kind of Spark is a feature-length documentary that follows six kids from all over New York City as they embark on a life-changing experience—the opportunity to study music in Juilliard’s Music Advancement Program (MAP), a Saturday outreach program for kids from communities that are underserved in the arts.

Painting a deeply intimate portrait of the students’ struggles to succeed in school and the program and patiently allowing them to tell their own stories, *Some Kind of Spark* illuminates the universal challenges faced by students and educators in communities worldwide: high poverty rates, low family literacy and weak school-family relationships. Spanning borders and ethnicities, gender and class, the film is uniquely positioned to quietly but effectively illuminate these pressing contemporary social issues.

Throughout the course of the film, these kids go on a musical journey that is both inspiring and very challenging. This is a new world for these children—many of whom have never even heard of Juilliard—and the demands are high, even for beginners. They come from the far corners of New York City, from Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn, Washington Heights and The Bronx, making the long trek, at times taking hours, as they navigate the buses and subway trains through rain and snow to reach the school every Saturday morning.

There is a natural arc to the story as the film follows the kids through some of the most formative years of their lives—and in the early beginnings of their relationship with music and their teachers—over a 3-year span. In this time, each child has his/her own conflicts and hurdles to overcome. From a first recital and stage fright, to a lack of practicing and dedication, to a shortage of funding for an instrument.

Ultimately, this is a film about transformation. It aims to serve as an inspiration for other programs across the nation to nurture two of our most valuable national treasures: our children and our musical heritage.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



Ben Niles is an award-winning documentary filmmaker. His film, *Note By Note (The Making of Steinway L1037)*, won top honors at the Sarasota Film Festival, was nominated for an IDA award and selected to the prestigious American Documentary Association, screening in over 30 countries. It has now been translated into 5 languages and premiered nationally on PBS. He is currently co-directing *Still We Rise* with producer Molly Raskin, a film about mental health in Liberia. Commercially, he brings his documentary approach to produce videos for Taste of NY, Gourmet Magazine, Ford, Razorfish, J. Walter Thompson and Wired Magazine. During his fifteen years as a graphic designer, Ben directed and produced photo shoots, trailers, commercials, and print campaigns for commercial and entertainment clients including Atlantic Records, The Nantucket Film Festival and the Jacob Burns Film Center. In his years in the record industry, Ben created album packages for Collective Soul (Entertainment Weekly's Best 100 Album Covers 2000), Jewel, Jon Brion, celebrated box-sets for Phish and George Carlin, and packages and identities for jazz musicians Cyrus Chestnut, James Carter and Henry Butler. A graduate of the University of Georgia at Athens, Ben attended UGA's prestigious Cortona program, an intensive fine arts study-abroad program located in Cortona, Italy.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Ironically, I first learned of the Music Advancement Program (MAP) at Juilliard after funding for the program itself was in dire straits. An article in *The New York Times* described the imminent closure of the program, leaving countless inner-city students without proper resources for music training once again. I thought, "If Juilliard is having difficulty maintaining an outreach program for music education, we're all in trouble."

Thus the inspiration for *Some Kind of Spark*.

I've always been a big believer in music education and what they're doing over at MAP got me excited. They're changing lives through music. I wanted to try and make my own impact through this film. Let's face it, most anyone will agree that music education can have a profound impact on our kids, and yet we don't really embrace that at all in this country. We simply teach to the test.

But not so fast. Juilliard had been approached by several film and TV productions since the inception of the program in 1994 and had always declined. Only CBS "60 Minutes" had been given access to cover the program in 1994 and again in 2004.

I called Juilliard and simply asked if I could pitch my vision for a film. They agreed to the meeting, finally, but then quickly pointed out that it probably wouldn't go any further and that I should be pleased with that.

But based on my past work, the award-winning film, *Note By Note (The Making of Steinway L1037)*, and my vision for an intimate, more thoughtful portrait, access was eventually granted. I was honored to have this opportunity and aim to use the film as an educational tool for communities all over the country. We've already partnered with several other foundations and organizations, including MENC, Steinway & Sons, Midori and NAMM, so it's exciting to take part in their endeavors as well.

I produced the film independently through my New Jersey based company, Plow Productions. I knew going in that we'd have to try and do this on our own like we did with *Note By Note*. No funding was requested or given by the Juilliard School. But MAP represents the gold standard for this type of outreach and it's wild to think that most of the kids taking part have never even heard of Juilliard! They were entering a new world and that's very, very inspiring to see that excitement unfold. We hope audiences will feel the same.

But in the end, I find it's most aptly put by Bill Ruyle, a percussion teacher of 20 plus years who says, "You don't have to become a musician to benefit from music or music education. It can inform you in many ways. It's about being a human being."

- Ben Niles

CREDITS

**Produced & Directed by
Ben Niles**

**Edited by
Sara Pellegrini**

**Cinematography
Ben Niles
With
Emma Cott
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Melanie Vi Levy
Orlando Richards
Andy Schocken
Ben Wolf
Ben Wu**

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Bill Hennessey
Chad Sonenberg**

**Sound Mix
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**Dialogue Editor
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**Color Correct
Wheelhouse Productions**

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Shane McRann Bigelow
Jonathan Burkhart
Richard Casavechia
Miles Chapin
Andrew Davis
Michael Dorf
Rani Doyle
Jill Goode
Dorothy Griffith**

**Carlos Henriquez
Bill Jasper
Thomas Kerns
Amy Knight
Claudia Marshall
Dana Messina
The Jay Pritzker Foundation
Ted Wiprud
Judy Francis Zankel**

**The Kids
Abdullah Amer
Rahman Amer
Kara Charles
Alejandro Ciedel
Ami Kone
Pete Torchon**

**The Teachers
Paula Bing (Music Theory)
San San Lee (Violin)
Suzanne Morello (Viola)
Jocelin Pan (Viola)
Gretchen Pusch (Flute)
Bill Ruyle (Percussion)
Lubima Kalinkova-Shentov (Bass)
Weston Sprott (Trombone)
Mike Truesdell (Percussion)
Terry Tszor (Trumpet)
Charles Yang (Violin)**

**The Juilliard Pre-College Symphony Conductor
George Stelluto**

**The Parents
Kermina and Adel Amer
Kay Charles
Luis & Teodosia Cediell
Karyn Kone
Cecile Torchon**

**Legal
Rob Powley and Associates**

**Translators
Patricia Benabe
Maudjah Francis**

**Fiscal Sponsor
Women Make Movies**

Interns

**Jaad Asante
Lauren Dragona
Heather Fisch**

Grant Writer

Stephanie Bleyer

**The filmmakers would like to thank The Juilliard School
and all the teachers and staff for their support, especially**

Janet Kessin

Yisset Gomez

Gloria Gottschalk

Rebecca Reuter

Caleb Hudson

Major Scurlock

Carson Fournier

Lucie Gelinas

Beth Nam

Larry Guy

Laurie Carter

Joseph Polisi

Julianne Thompson

Special Thanks

Kari Niles

Elizabeth and Manley Stockton

Sue and Robert Niles

Jack Niles

Mallory and Anna Niles

Emily and Katherine Niles

Niles Paden

Reverend Lillian Allen and The Metropolitan Church

Liane Thatcher

Tricia Tunstall

Maya Carney

Jeff Clyburn

Thomas E. Kerns

Dianne Tanihara

Richard Bayles

James Sonefeld

Amy Vickers

Dot Griffith

Barbara Michelson

Erin McCune

Chris Treloar

TOT MUSIC

Megan Wetherall
Piers Cornelius
Christina Parisi
Susan Alexander
Andrew Zolyak
Kristin Courtemanche
Bill Ruyle
Kathleen Soulé
Nancy Baron
Henry Alfano
Kem E. Miller
Dana Messina
Buck and Patti Williams
Pete Liguori
Weedie Stowers
Lisa Wong
Amy Knight
Jim Chapman
Robert Ruyle
Kristin Wolfe Jensen
Lisa Goad
Kathleen Corton
Joanna Barouch
Andrew Blais
Shannon Shultz
John Codling
Jaideep Punjabi
Rick Johnson
Juli Morris
Anne Schoemaker
Bryan Hamilton
Josh Joplin
Sandra ????

Cornelia Hasenfuss
Kimberly Harrington
Stephanie Bianchi
Molly Raskin
Robert Sandow
Tonya Thames Taylor
Matthew McGregor-Mento
Rob Cavenagh
Caroline Bourne
John Giegerich
Rik Bergman
Paul Lieberman
John Aaron Clifford
Amy Todenhagen
Sarah Heffron
Eliot Kirkus
Katie Trainor

Tonna and Moritz Bosselmann
Shannon Goines
Bill Jasper
Dana Kearney
Lisa Wong
Rani Doyle
Cary and Barbara Carson
Erin McCune
Kathleen Soule
Alycia de Mesa
Jonathan Robertson
Zane Brown
Christina Cairo
Rik Bergman
Leanne van Heerwaarden
Carl A. Benkert
Peter Broderick
Jeremy M. Harris
Hoang Lien Pham
Pete Liguori
Irina Voloshina
Amy Harrison
Francis M Whang
Vickie Feldstein
James Lawlor
Robert W Swales
Sophy Weinroth
William Deng
Suzanne Hevner
Juli Morris
Paul Hopper
Richard Tucker
Camille Sindell
Brenda Collins
Charles & Retta Folsom
Michael Jager
Jan Bradley
Cathy Weiner
Alexis Van Hurkman
Eric Courtemanche
Anthony Gilroy
Jane Kriss
Bill Everitt
Jerome Murphy
Karen Mazza
The Harlem School of the Arts
Sibylle Johner
Judith Insell

Music Credits (in order of performance)

**“Festival Overture on the Danish National Anthem, Op. 15”
Written by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Performed by The Juilliard Pre-College Orchestra
Featuring Kara Charles (viola) and Rahman Amer (trombone)
Conducted by George Stelluto**

**“Oh Happy Day”
Written by Edwin Hawkins, based on 18th century hymn
Performed by Ami Kone, Gabrielle Kone and Issa Kone**

**Written by
Performed by Kara Charles (practicing at home)**

**“Andante and Rondo for Two Flutes and Piano”
Written by Albert Franz Doppler
Performed by Gretchen Pusch and Jayn Rosenfeld**

**“Vega”
Written by H.A. Vandercook
from the book “Trumpet Stars” Set 1
Performed by Abdullah Amer**

**Courante from Suite 1 in G
Written by Johann Sebastian Bach
Performed by Kara Charles**

**Twinkle Twinkle
12 Variations in C Major on the French Song: “Ah vous dirai-je, Maman” K.265
Composed by Mozart
Performed by Pete Destil**

**Billie Jean
Written by Michael Jackson
Performed by Charles Yang
©1982 Epic Records**

**Bad Romance
Written by Lady Gaga and Nadir “RedOne” Khayat
Performed by Charles Yang
©2009 Interscope Records**

**Billie Jean
Written by Michael Jackson
Performed by Charles Yang
©1982 Epic Records**

**Written by
Performed by Rahman Amer and Maya Carney**

**“Bluebells of Scotland” or
“Oh Where and Oh Where Has My Highland Laddie Gone?”
Written by Dora Jordan
Performed by Pete Destil**

**Written by
Performed by The Sirens
Featuring Jocelin Pan, Robyn Quinnett and Lila Yang**

**“Romance”
Written by Dr. David A. Uber
Performed by Rahman Amer**

**Minuet by J.S. Bach
Performed by Ami Kone**

**Improvisation
Performed by Woodwind Ensemble (practice)
Pete Destil, Gretchen Pusch**

**“Songs of A Wayfarer”
(First movement - On My Love’s Wedding Day)
by Gustav Mahler
Performed by Weston Sprott**

**Improvisation
Performed by Kara Charles**

**“Trumpeter’s Lullabye”
Written by Leroy Anderson
Performed by Terry Szor**

**Water music & Music for the royal fireworks
Written by Georg Friedrich Händel (1685~1759)
Performed by the MAP Woodwind Ensemble
Featuring Pete Destil, Gretchen Pusch....**

**“Minuet in G”
Written by J.S. Bach
Performed by Alejandro Cediél**

**March in G by J. S. Bach
Performed by Ami Kone**

**“Duet for Five ”
Written by Garwood Whaley
Arranged by Bill Ruyle
Performed by Alejandro Cediél and Bill Ruyle**

"Romance"

**Written by David Uber
Performed by Rahman Amer**

"An American in Paris"

**Written by George Gershwin
Performed by The Juilliard Pre-College Orchestra**

Romance for Viola & Orchestra Op. 85

**Written by Max Bruch
Performed by Kara Charles**

Andante et Allegro by Joseph Edouard Barat

**Written by
Performed by Rahman Amer**

"Musette"

**Written by Johann Sebastian Bach
Performed by Pete Destil on flute
Gretchen Pusch on piano**

Carnival of the Animals, The Swan

**Written by Camille Saint-Saëns
Performed by Susan Keser
www.newyorkviolinist.com**

Sibelius

**Symphony No. 3 in C Major, Op. 52
Allegro Moderato
Performed by The Juilliard Pre-College Orchestra
Conducted by George Stelluto**

Psalm

Performed by Ami Kone and Reverend Lillian Allen