

The Arts Society Nerja

Report on charity projects

Season 2024 – 2025

I. Summary

Apart from organising talks and excursions on arts and culture, The Arts Society Nerja has been using surplus funds from membership contributions and entrance fees to support charity projects in the local community around Nerja in southern Spain.

Our aim is to support charity projects that involve art and children. We supported two charity projects during the past season involving children and music:

1. Weekly Flamenco lessons for a group of 18 children of 7-8 years old of the Colegio La Gloria in Vélez Málaga, Málaga province, Spain.

For the past few years we have been supporting the primary school La Gloria which is located in the neighbourhood La Villa, in Vélez Málaga. In this neighbourhood many low-income households are struggling with the cost of living crisis in Spain. The population comprises many Gitanos (Romani people of Spain) and recent immigrants. Both groups are affected by discrimination. Substance abuse and related crime are a common problem. Many children come from marginalised and fragmented families.

2. The Music Competition for Young Talent on piano, wind or string instruments.

In March 2025 we organised the third annual competition for young talent between 6 and 18 years old from the province of Málaga. 39 children participated. We were able to secure the venue, the theatre of Vélez Málaga, for free and the three members of the jury, all professional musicians, participated for free as well.

II. Project 1: Flamenco lessons for the Colegio La Gloria

1. Implementing Organisations / partners

The Arts Society Nerja

Colegio La Gloria, [CEIP La Gloria](#), Calle Gloria, Vélez Málaga, Málaga province

Antonio Guerra, dance teacher and owner of [Flamenco Dance School Antonio Guerra](#)

2. Timeline

October 2024 to June 2025: 1 weekly lesson for 18 children of 7 or 8 years old

3. Budget invested

€300 per month/ €2700 in total

4. Objectives of the project

Flamenco culture (both dance and music) is deeply rooted in the Gitano culture in Spain, yet music or dance lessons are often inaccessible for children from areas like La Villa. For the beneficiary children growing up in a complex and at times risky environment these extracurricular activities provide various beneficial opportunities:

- Dancing lessons at their own school
- Being introduced to flamenco which is part of the heritage of the Gitano community
- Having a fun safe haven with their teacher as a positive role model
- Learning skills with which they can shine on stage, at school and in the theatre, and which are useful in everyday life.

5. Activities carried out

We organise a dance teacher, Antonio Guerra, who owns a long-standing dance school in Vélez Málaga, to go to the school (as they do not have transport) and teach a class of 14 girls and one boy one lesson of an hour per week during the whole school year.

Last year the lessons took place after school hours in the afternoon and some children did not turn up. Cognizant of the importance of the lessons for the children, the school has now incorporated the lessons into the morning curriculum. The teachers and the Head of the school are extremely supportive and do their best to organise the lessons well, to help get the children to the lesson and to help with the necessary clothes and equipment for performances. Antonio is now looking into having fathers who are out of work participate as singers or musicians.

6. Results and outcomes

Every month 1 weekly lesson at school during school hours in the morning from October to June.

5 performances:

- November: Performance in Centro Cultural in Nerja, our regular venue, where they performed on stage in front of our members and their parents, before a lecture; 117 people attended.
- December: Christmas celebration at school with parents and families of the whole school
- May: Public performance at Aquavelis, a waterpark, where the children got free entrance for themselves plus a parent
- June: end of the school year ball attended by parents and families of the whole school
- July-August: public performance/s in the open air theatre in nearby Torre del Mar which is attended by over 200 people

The children learn a flamenco dance which they then perform.

The performances are important as they give the possibility to shine on stage in a beautiful flamenco outfit which is organized and sometimes paid for by the school: the girls need a skirt, a top, flamenco shoes, earrings, and a flower in their hair. The boy/s need shoes, trousers, and a shirt.

We invite them to the venue at the beginning of our season in the autumn to perform before a lecture on stage in a real theatre. Their parents were sitting in the first row and were stunned by being in a real theatre and seeing their children perform in a theatre full of foreigners!

They also learn many other skills like discipline, working together, and listening. Dancing is also a physical activity; it is fun and the music is uplifting and energizing. Dancing and performing gives the children self-confidence.

The dance teacher invites them to perform like the other groups of his dance school in the water park Aquavelis, where the entrance fee of €27 isn't usually within reach for the children we support.

On the day of the performance, the dance groups can come in for free, accompanied by one parent. This means opportunities that they would otherwise never have had.

During the summer months the children from the La Gloria project, like all other groups that Antonio Guerra teaches, will be performing in the open air theatre in nearby Torre del Mar in front of an audience of over 200 people. As this show is for free all parents can come too.

Another bonus is having a teacher like Antonio, who, apart from being an exceptional teacher, is a positive male role model, something that these children do not see so often.

In conclusion, this project is making a real difference in the lives of these children, well beyond the weekly dance lessons.

7. Testimonies from the beneficiaries and partners

Head of the school: Inmaculada Ruiz Morales

The classes and performances of the girls, the "flamenquitas", are a very valuable part of school life in our school, they have something very special. It's not just about learning to dance, but about sharing, getting excited together and feeling part of something beautiful.

Through flamenco art, our children develop confidence, body expression, and love for culture. In addition, these spaces strengthen ties between families, encourage teamwork and enrich the sense of community.

Seeing the children enjoy, make an effort and get on stage with so much enthusiasm fills us all with pride: families, teachers and classmates. These are moments that unite us, that make us smile and that remind us how important it is to take care of our traditions and grow as a community. Because when a “flamenquita” dances, the heart of the whole school beats with her.

Dance teacher: Antonio Guerra

The primary school La Gloria in Vélez-Málaga is the educational centre that has the largest number of marginalised students coming from families that are fragmented, recently immigrated, or belong to an ethnicity that is exposed to discrimination, etc. A large part of the student body is ethnic Gitano, and this project gives them the opportunity to socialise, to share and learn flamenco, something that excites them, and gives them the opportunity to train in this art to be able to have the opportunity to get out in some way of the environment in which they live. All this is possible thanks to this wonderful project.

III. Project 2: The Music Competition for Young Talent on piano, wind or string instruments

1. Implementing Organisation / partner

- The Arts Society Nerja
- Paula Coronas, pianist and music professor, jury member
- Ayuntamiento of Vélez Málaga (Townhall)

The Arts Society Nerja organise the competition posters to advertise to all logistics. Paula Coronas, a professional pianist, and music professor decides on the format and requirements for the participants, the jury members spread the word and send the poster round to all the music schools including the Music Academy where they teach. The children apply via our website.

We have found 4 professionals willing to be on the jury and take care of publicity:

Paula Coronas - pianist, teacher at the Conservatorio in Málaga

Daniele Basno – violinist in the Malaga Philharmonic

Babak Eshraghi - guitar player

Elena Pisonero - flute player, teacher at the conservatorio of Málaga

The Arts Society Nerja donate diplomas and trophies for everyone and donate money prizes (first, second and third prize) for piano, wind and string instruments in 2 age groups: 13-15 and 15-18. The winners of children aged 6-13 receive a money voucher that is sponsored by a music shop in Málaga.

Paula Coronas donates an extra prize for the best interpretation on the piano of a Spanish composer.

Next year we will have 3 extra prizes:

1. Daniele Basno, jury member, will also donate an extra money prize.
2. Babak Eshraghi, jury member will sponsor one of the prizes
3. The family of the famous Spanish composer Joaquin Rodrigo, who passed away in 1999, will donate a money prize for the best interpretation of one of his works.

2. Timeline

The competition took place on one day Sunday 30 March from 09.00 to 21.00.

Prior to the event, the participants had two months to apply.

3. Budget invested

We spent €1,700 on diplomas and trophies for all participants and money prizes for the first, second and third prize in two age groups for piano, wind or string instruments.

The town hall of Vélez Málaga has been allowing us to use the theatre for free.

4. Objectives

Our aim is to give talented young people stage experience and an opportunity to shine on stage and compete with others from other schools in the province of Málaga. We give them a reward for their hard work but also stimulate them to do their best and win a money prize.

5. Activities

The Competition: the competition, the finals, the award ceremony

We have the competition normally on two days, the first day for everyone, the second day for the finals. This season due to availability of the jury and the venue we had to do it all in one day on 30 March.

First, all children played about 5 minutes of two works. The jury then decided who could come back for the finals at 18.00. After the finals, where the children played five minutes of a different work, the

jury made known who had won and we ended with a prize ceremony. All children received a diploma and a trophy. 16 money prizes were handed out. The mayor of Vélez Málaga handed out the prizes.

Winners Concert

In July we organize a Winners concert where the 16 winners are invited to participate in a concert given in a beautiful and historic venue in Malaga: in the patio of the Ateneo, where Picasso´s father used to teach. They each play for 5 minutes for a real audience.

We give them the possibility to get stage experience with a real live audience.

6. Results

Grateful parents, children, and music teachers:

We hear from parents and teachers that we are the only ones who organise a competition for children in this age bracket. We give the children an opportunity to shine on stage and compete with others of their age. They gain stage experience. We have had children participating in all three of our competitions and so have seen them grow. It is a wonderful experience for us as well.

7. Testimonies from the beneficiaries and partners

Paula Coronas, pianist, one of the organizers and member of the jury:

The Young Musicians Contest of The Arts Society Nerja is one of the most exciting cultural projects of The Arts Society Nerja. Though still a very young project, three editions so far, it is an initiative full of emotion for the opportunity it represents for young talents who begin to shine in Music.

With the purpose of promoting musical art and interpretative development among young musicians from Málaga and its province, the strong commitment of this Contest aims to support the promotion of the specialties of piano and wind and string instruments in different categories and levels.

With great success in the editions already celebrated we see fulfilled the dreams and goals of these young performers who see their expectations fulfilled of making live music on a stage and performing musical works of different styles. Their rewarding experience encourages us to continue enhancing the skills of these young people who dedicate much of their time and effort to Music, with the commitment to continue spreading the musical culture of our time among the new generations.

By demanding at least one work of a Spanish composer we stimulate the knowledge of Spanish culture.

The Jury and organization of this Contest feel fully satisfied and happy for the realization of this Contest where we value very positively the level of its participants, as well as the quality of their performances, very enriching for everyone.

We hope and trust to move forward for many more editions, with the hope of continuing to add sponsorships and support to increase our faithful commitment to Culture among the youngest.