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Orchestra Performs to Benefit Blind Musician's School in Haiti

Romel Joseph's music school in Haiti for underprivileged kids was destroyed in the earthquake

By [JESSICA SICK](#)

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"It's his way of giving back," [Victoria Joseph](#) explained of her father's [New Victorian School](#).

Her father is [Romel Joseph](#), a blind violinist from [Haiti](#) whose music school for underprivileged kids was destroyed in the earthquake.

Romel was trapped in the rubble for 18 hours, his pregnant wife dead two floors below, during which time he played music in his head to keep him sane. After being rescued, he was [flown to Jackson Memorial Hospital](#) where he has undergone 13 surgeries so far for one broken leg, one crushed leg, and two of his playing fingers fractured.

Meanwhile, Victoria, who has lived in Miami since she was little and plays the viola, was missing rehearsals with the [Miami Symphony Orchestra](#) to tend to her father. Concerned about her absences, the orchestra's

director and conductor [Eduardo Marturet](#) inquired.



Romel with his children, Bradley and Victoria.



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Violinist Recovers in Miami

"I was actually the one who came to Victoria, actually," said Marturet of the benefit concert he then started planning to help Romel re-build the New Victorian School. "Everyone was going crazy doing concerts to benefit Haiti," he recalled. "I thought, if we were to do one, it had to be very special, so why don't we focus on the school?"

So on Sunday, the orchestra will perform a belated Valentine's Day concert ("You know, maybe you have another date you want to take out for the holiday," Marturet joked), which will feature Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet Suite, [Bizet's](#) Carmen, and De Falla's El Amor Brujo.

Victoria is hoping her father's doctors will allow him to attend the concert. But just if not, her brother is prepared to hold his phone up so that Romel can hear the music from his hospital bed, a place he's anxious to get out of.

"Another two weeks," said Victoria, at which point he wants to get back to Haiti and start the re-building process. "He's jealous of all the nurses and doctors who get to go over there."

Romel is no stranger to starting from scratch, though. Ten years ago the school, which is named after his daughter and helps an average of 300 kids a year, burned to the ground after an electrical fire.

"The first thing he'll do is rummage through the rubble," Victoria explained, "clear out the lot, start all over again, floor by floor."

Eight children are gone, she said, and Romel is still trying to account for all of his staff members. But one thing that is already accounted for is hope.


"He used to tell me that you can't make everyone happy, but if you help one person, then they'll help 10 others, and so on," said Victoria of her father, who decided to stay in Haiti to build the school instead of attend Julliard, where he received a scholarship. "He was born blind, learned music in an orphanage by a volunteer, so [the school is] important to us as a family. It's giving back."

For tickets to Sunday's concert, please visit the [Miami Symphony Orchestra's website](#).

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