

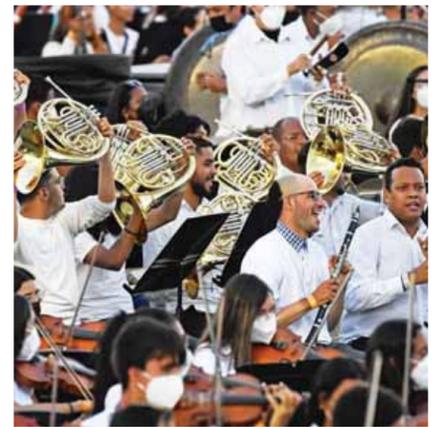
## Lifestyle | Features



Members of the National System of Orchestras of Venezuela play during an attempt to enter the Guinness Book of Records for the largest orchestra in the world, with more than 12,000 musicians, at the Military Academy of the Bolivarian Army in Fuerte Tiuna Military Complex, in Caracas.— AFP photos



Venezuelan Vice-President Delcy Rodriguez (third left) and Venezuela's Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino (second right) attend the attempt of members of the National System of Orchestras of Venezuela to enter the Guinness Book of Records for the largest orchestra in the world.



Members of the National System of Orchestras of Venezuela play during an attempt to enter the Guinness Book of Records for the largest orchestra.

# VENEZUELA SETS LARGEST ORCHESTRA WORLD RECORD

Venezuela on Saturday locked in the Guinness record for the world's largest orchestra after thousands of local musicians performed Tchaikovsky's "Slavonic March." The performers were brought together by Venezuela's publicly funded "El Sistema" program, which was founded in 1975 and has since provided

classical music training to thousands of working-class children. Gustavo Dudamel, the music director of the Paris Opera and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, is one of its most notable alumni.

"I can confirm that this attempt has been successful, congratulations," an official in charge of delivering the verdict announced

on a screen during a ceremony at the El Sistema headquarters. "You are officially amazing." About 12,000 musicians, including both children and adults who are members of the country's main orchestra, the Simon Bolivar, played for the record on November 13. In the end, Guinness World Records recognized only 8,573 of them as

having set the record, according to a certificate issued by the organization.

Performance of the piece was observed by around 260 auditors from the accounting firm KPMG, charged with ensuring each musician complied with the rules to set a new record, which include not sharing instruments and playing for at least five

minutes during the score. "This is a great achievement not just for El Sistema but for our country," said program director Eduardo Mendez. Russia had held the previous record, set in 2019 by more than 8,000 musicians.—AFP

## Franco-Cameroon artist Fred Ebami explores African icons in pop-art

Inspired by Andy Warhol's pop-art movement, Franco-Cameroonian artist Fred Ebami is exploring African and African-American icons with colorful, digitally drawn portraits. Whether it is singer Nina Simone, boxing legend Muhammad Ali, Nigerian afrobeats star Fela Kuti or Nobel winner Wole Soyinka, his works cut across the worlds of music, sports and literature. Even his homage to Warhol's famed 1962 "Campbell's Soup Cans" painting brings the taste closer to home with his own "Pepper Soup", a spicy dish popular in Nigeria and Cameroon. "African versions though... a bit more spicy!" he says jokingly, in an interview with AFP.

For the first time, the 45-year-old artist is showcasing his work in Lagos, the commercial and cultural capital of Africa's most populous nation. Ebami was influenced by the biggest names in pop art, a movement born in the late 50s in the United Kingdom and the United States, where he has lived for many years. Born in Villeneuve-la-Garenne, in the suburbs of Paris, the artist says his



early influences were manga and comics. But it was from Roy Lichtenstein that Ebami borrowed striking features and colours to paint icons that inspire him. Later, it was Warhol's work that influenced him to paint four versions of the American's famous tomato soup cans.

### Political topics

"Pop art is inspired by popular culture and is critical of a consumerist society, I also want to play with that," he says. And for him, there is no better place than Lagos, a megacity of some 20 million people and a mecca for capitalists on

the continent. In addition to the exhibition, the artist has partnered with a Nigerian design brand and sells household objects and a limited edition of T-shirts. "What I want is to make art accessible to everyone," says Ebami, who is also exhibiting in Brest, in France, and on social media where he widely shares his work. "I don't want my art to be shown only in galleries, I want it to touch as many people as possible."

Appealing to a broad public doesn't stop him from tackling political topics, "to foster a debate, a discussion," he says. Last year, when mass youth protests against police brutality rocked Nigeria, he made a portrait of one of the leading activists, Aisha Yesufu, with a raised fist and slogan saying "stop the bleeding". "The issue of police violence does not just concern Nigeria, it's also something you find elsewhere in Africa, but also in Paris, in the United States, and I thought it was important to support the movement (against it)," Ebami says.

Through art, he also wants to pay tribute to black women, still often victims of stereotypical representations inherited from colonial times. Next to portraits of Angela Davis and Kanye West dressed as former African leader Mobutu, visitors are invited to look at the portrait of an unknown black woman. The words "Not Your Exotism" are painted on the colorful background. — AFP



## Aniston calls cancel culture 'the new sport'

Jennifer Aniston has slammed cancel culture as "the new sport." The 'Friends' actress, 52, is now starring as a news anchor on 'The Morning Show', a drama series which focuses on the effects of "cancel culture", a social media term which sees someone ostracized for doing or saying something others deem as controversial. She said: "Obviously, that's a new thing that's happening. It's the new sport. It feels reckless, which is why I think we really wanted to explore it in the show. What happens when someone gets cancelled? Where do they go? Is that it?" The Apple+ series - which recently finished airing its second season and is yet to be renewed for a third - Jennifer plays Alex Levy, who during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic falls ill with the dis-



ease and decides to speak directly to a once-loyal audience who may be turning against her as a result of her character's actions earlier in the show. Despite being diagnosed with coronavirus, Jennifer's character had previously made the controversial decision to travel internationally in the early days of the pandemic, which left the news anchor facing a public backlash. —AFP

## Ryan Reynolds was 'in a bad place' in his 30s

The 45-year-old actor - who has daughters James, six, Inez, five, and Betty, two, with wife Blake Lively and was previously married to Scarlett Johansson - is "proud" of himself for tackling his problems and "working out" his issues". He admitted: "I was in a bad place in my 30. There was just too much conflict in my head. I saw a therapist. I read some books. "That's a good time to work out your issues. I'm proud of myself for doing that." And the 'Deadpool' star described learning how to deal with conflict without fighting has been life-changing for him.

He told The Times magazine: "Acquiring the tools for conflict resolution has been crucial for me. If someone is angry with us we have an instinct to fight back. "Learning how to listen and empathize even in the heat of confrontation was essential for me. It changed my life." Ryan hopes being open about his



issues can help other people in similar positions. He said: "I've spoken out about my anxiety issues. I hope it helps people. I overthink, overwork, overworry. I overcommit sometimes too." The Wrexham FC owner has a "very strict" routine to ensure he can put his family first. He explained: "At home I wake up at 4.45am to meditate. That's pretty much the only time I get to myself. "The kids are up two hours later and then they get 100 per cent of my attention. I walk them to school then go to work. "In the evenings I have a very strict regime. I don't care who's on the phone. I'm with my wife and family and I put my phone away. I'm in bed by 9.30pm. Sorry, you're not talking to a sexy 2.30am swinger here..."— Bang Showbiz