



*Performing a Concert for Special Needs
Children and Their Families*

*The Midwest Clinic
December 20, 2017*

Presenters

*Dr. Joseph Lill – North Park University, Chicago, IL
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*Dr. Lawrence Van Oyen – North Central College, Naperville, IL
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Seven Main Topics for Today

- I. What is Autism and what are “Special Needs?”
- II. Benefits of this concert
- III. Concert considerations: Non-musical concerns
- IV. Concert considerations: Musical concerns
- V. Presentation of the concert
- VI. After the concert
- VII. A few final things

What is Autism?

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors.

I. Characteristics of Some Children With Autism

- Very little or no eye contact
- Resistance to being held or touched
- Difficulty understanding group interactions
- Unaware of/disinterested in what is going on around them
- Ritualistic or compulsive behavior patterns
- Verbal outbursts
- Unexpected movements
- Difficulty with loud or sudden sounds

What are “Special Needs?”

- The term “Special Needs” encompasses a vast array of developmental and congenital disabilities. Some of these are:
- Cerebral Palsy
- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)
- Tourette’s Syndrome
- Speech and Language Disorders

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- II. Benefits of this concert

Benefits for our Students

- I. Increases the students' awareness of the special needs population
- II. Increases the student's appreciation of their music

Benefits for the Families

- I. The ability to attend a social event as a family without worrying about social constraints
- II. The concerts are fun!

Benefits for the School

- I. It allows the school to provide a service to this underserved population.
- II. It allows for interdisciplinary learning (for example, Schools of Education and Nursing).

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Non-Musical

1. Get a Team
2. Scheduling the Concert
3. Advertising
4. Ushers and School Officials
5. Special Concerns
6. "Instrument Petting Zoo"
7. Reception

Get a Team

- a. The team does not need to be large.
- b. We don't have officers (president/treasurer) because we have only one function.
- c. The team meets infrequently but keeps in touch by email.
- d. Have your team organized five months before the concert.
- e. Find a team by contacting special needs schools. Parents are very interested in helping.
- f. Collaborate with your Education faculty.

Scheduling the Concert

- a. Discuss the concert date and time with your team.
- b. Friday or Saturday was the best day for NCC. Saturday is favored for NPU.
- c. Early spring was the best time of year for NCC. Early fall works for NPU.
- d. 7:00 was the best time of day.

Advertising

- a. Contact autism and special needs organizations.
 - i. Search under autism.
 - ii. Have PDF flyers you can send them.
- b. Posters.
- c. Newspaper ads: Local papers within a 30 mile radius.
- d. Direct contact with schools, especially the SPED coordinators.
- e. Created a website: www.chordsforkids.net

Advertising – Other Considerations

- f. **RSVP** – In our advertisements, parents were given the option to contact us through the website and indicate how many people would be attending the concert, and if there special requirements (wheelchairs, etc.).
- g. **Open Concert** - You need to decide if you want the concert closed to the public. Your decision need to be clear in your advertising.
- h. **Concert for Families** - When naming the concert, be sure you are clear it is a concert for the families and not a fundraiser.



The 8th Annual Exceptional Music for Exceptional Families

*A concert for families of children
with autism and special needs*

Featuring the North Park University Concert Band

co-directed by Dr. Jon Lill

Saturday, October 7, 2017

Free admission. Tickets are \$10.00. Doors will be open at 7:30pm. Admission is \$10.00. (The concert is a fundraiser for the North Park University Special Needs Fund.)

Free Admission

The evening will bring music to this special audience in a most welcoming and safe environment. Unlike a traditional concert hall experience, audience members will be encouraged to freely enjoy the enriching power of music through relaxing, dancing, and hands-on activities with various instruments.

For more information or to purchase tickets, please contact:
(773) 244-6625 or info@northpark.edu

Ushers and School Officials

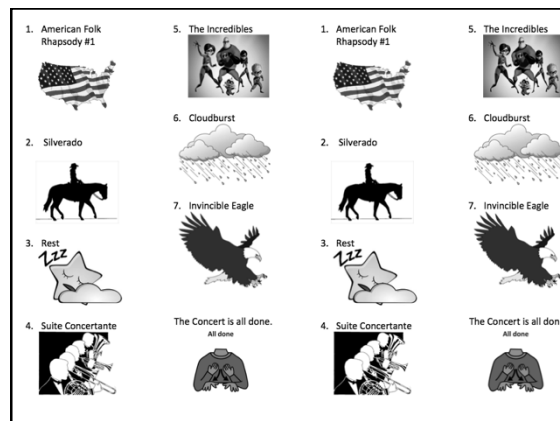
- a. We used both students and adults.
 - i. Three students to one adult ratio.
 - ii. 14 years or older.
- b. Post ushers at each door. (NPU: No children allowed in the balcony.)
- c. An adult was always present and available in the concert hall (and the lobby) prior to, during and after the performance.

Ushers and School Officials

- d. Prior to the concert, we met with the ushers to discuss appearance and conduct.
 - Dress well
 - Treat guests with respect
 - Be helpful but do not directly handle a child having a problem.
 - The usher's job is to assist the parents/caregivers.
 - If a problem occurs, an adult or school official should be the only one to intervene.
 - We have not had a problem.

Special Concerns

- Drop off points
- Special seating for children in wheelchairs and their families
- Earplugs
- BoardMaker (or Word) programs



When the concert starts everyone is quiet.

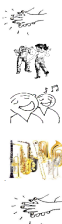
After a song is finished people may clap.

Sometimes people may dance.

Sometimes people may sing.

Sometimes they will show instruments.

When the concert ends everyone will clap.



Instrument Petting Zoo

- At NPU the concert is preceded by an "Instrumental Petting Zoo."
- Hands-on opportunities to touch (and sometimes play) instruments
- Needs:
 - Disinfectant
 - Paper towels/napkins
 - Extra reeds and mouthpieces
 - An extra baton!

Reception

- A reception provides an opportunity for our students to further interact with the kids and the families.
- It makes it more of an event for the band.

Reception Considerations

- Some of the attendees may be allergic to peanuts
- Some of the attendees may be gluten-free
- Snacks should be individual and portable
- To avoid choking hazards, we did not serve small snacks
- For beverages we served bottled water and apple juice

Reception Considerations

Some of the foods we served were:

- i. Cookies (with no nuts)
- ii. Rice Krispie treats
- iii. Pretzels
- iv. Gluten-free cookies and crackers

Buy them at health food or grocery stores.

Businesses will sometimes donate the food.

Raffle (NCC)

- i. Our raffle was free.
- ii. Prizes for the raffle
- iii. We ended the raffle last year.

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Musical Concerns

- 1. Length of the concert and music
- 2. Specific lighter pieces that worked
- 3. Maintaining the interest of the audience
- 4. Expectation of the concert for your students

Length of the Concert and Music

- 1. The length of the concert should be at least 45 minutes but no longer than an hour.
- 2. The length of each piece should be eight minutes or less.
- 3. We alternated short and long pieces.
- 4. When playing standard literature, you need to be careful about sudden loud sounds, especially early in the program.

Specific lighter pieces that worked.

- 5. Some of the lighter pieces we've played in the past are:
 - a. Peanut Vender – arr. Moss
 - b. A Gallop to End all Gallops – Warren Barker
 - c. Sweet Home Chicago – arr. Andy Clark
 - d. St. Louis Blues – arr. Luther Henderson
 - e. Pink Panther – arr. John Edmonds
 - f. Dixieland Jam – arr. Bob Lowden
 - g. Gospel in Dixieland – arr. James Ployhar
 - h. Disney Music and Music from Television Shows & Movies

Maintaining the Interest of the Audience.

- 1. Kid especially enjoyed pieces with special effects.
- 2. To maintain the interest of the children, we demonstrated the various instruments between pieces.
 - a. My section leaders were asked to come up with 10 – 15 seconds of music that would demonstrate their instrument.
 - b. Often they would try to make it light hearted or funny.
 - c. Three examples.

Expectation of the Concert for Your Students.

1. Have a specialist come in and talk to the students about autism/special needs.
2. Have a parent come in and talk to the students about autism/special needs.
3. Remind your students the audience will not be quiet.
4. Remind your students the kids will move around.
5. Remind your students the audience is not being rude.
6. This concert is for the kids.

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V. Presentation of the Concert

A. Some legal concerns:

1. If you take pictures of the audience members, you must get a release form if you plan to display them.
2. Talk to your principal/director/dean.
3. Have a school official there.

V. Presentation of the Concert

B. Logistical considerations

1. Wait for everyone to be seated.
2. Have food out of the way before the concert.
3. Have one of the school administrators welcome the families.

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VI. After the Concert

A. Be sure to thank everyone.

1. People and organizations that donated food or prizes
2. The school administration
3. The organizations that helped advertise the concert
4. Helpers

B. (NPU) All band members are required to write a reflective paragraph or two of their impressions/opinions/criticisms/suggestions for next year.

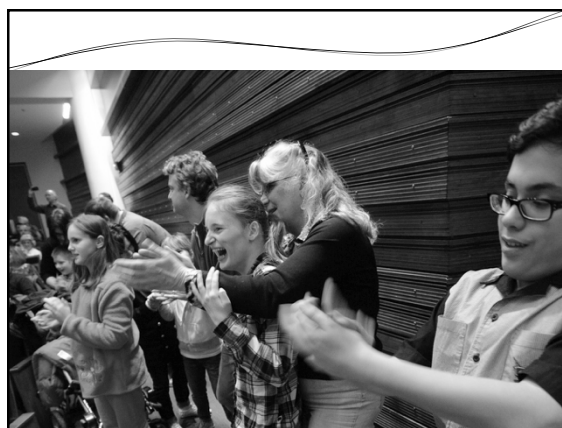


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- A. Handouts
- B. Growth of these concerts



Thank you!

- Please visit www.chordsforkids.net
- Thank you for coming today!
- Dr. Lawrence Van Oyen – lgvanoyen@noctrl.edu
- Dr. Joseph Lill – jlill@northpark.edu