

Musical Madness for Kids

[St. Johns County Public Library - Ponte Vedra Beach Branch](#)

Children

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Tweens (10-12)

Musical Madness for Kids

Feb 11, 2016

\$251-500

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Byline

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As part of their outreach efforts, the [Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra](#) provided an interactive ensemble performance series at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. After that proved successful, the St. Johns County Public Library System's youth services team utilized a Barbara A. Kay Foundation grant to expand the performances to the other branches in the system — including the Hastings branch, located in a tiny farming community.

Advanced Planning

After seeing online that the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra was hosting symphony events for children at Jacksonville Public Libraries, I contacted the outreach coordinator for the symphony. We worked together to set up ensemble performances in January, February and April for elementary-aged children. We also offered a Mole Music performance in May for preschool children, which incorporated the book "[Mole Music](#)" by David McPhail.

Marketing

To advertise the symphony events, we hung fliers, posted to the library's website and social media accounts, and distributed press release to the newspapers. Additionally, we contacted local media specialists and other interested members in the community and utilized word of mouth from library staff and volunteers (and youth services librarians at other branch libraries in our system). Staff also plugged the symphony programs at existing children's programs.

Budgeting

We paid \$150 each for the ensemble performances and \$250 for the Mole Music performance.

Libraries could also host just one program to cut down on costs to their Friends organization or other funder, or apply for a grant to pay for the performances, as we did for the later performances at other branches.

Day-of-event Activity

The ensembles required armless, cushioned chairs for the musicians, as well as space to set up their music stands. The librarian was expected (not surprisingly) to handle crowd control and explain proper decorum to the kids, which — when addressed before the program started — went smoothly. Depending on the age of the children, we sometimes had chairs out for everyone to sit in, but for the younger crowd (preschoolers) we removed the chairs.

Program Execution

The best part about these programs is that they weren't a solid 45 minutes to an hour of performing. Instead, programs consisted of short one-to-two-minute punctuated with the musicians introducing themselves, demonstrating how their instruments worked and giving ample opportunity for questions. The musicians were very friendly and encouraged the children to come up afterwards to meet them and see their instruments up close.

The Mole Music program incorporated the book "Mole Music" by David McPhail with the string quartet playing at intervals while the story was read aloud — a symphonic storytime! The families were thrilled and, in several cases, we had individual adults who attended simply because they loved the interactive element and personal connection that these programs afforded.

We had big attendance at all four of our programs at the Vedra Beach branch and, including the performances at four other branch libraries in our library system, more than 450 patrons attended total. Bringing the musicians to the library gave many children and families a first-time exposure to the symphony.

Advice

Symphony seasons generally run September through May, so I recommend contacting your local symphony as soon as they are in session to see what their outreach opportunities are. You will also want to reserve multiple date slots in your meeting space so you can be flexible for the dates the symphony is available. Our symphony has specific dates and times for these outreach programs, so we had to

work within that schedule.

Additionally, you never know if you don't ask! If you see another library doing something cool, why not ask their partner organization if they would work with your library, too? The organization presenting programs at another library clearly works with libraries, so why not yours?

I set the ball in motion for this program a solid month before I entered a contest and won a lunch with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra conductor, and while that amazing experience gave me the opportunity to invite him for a meet-and-greet, the symphony partnership for these programs began with a simple phone call and talking over the possibilities with their outreach coordinator.

I did a lot of publicity and was sure to share it with the symphony. Libraries and symphonies are facing similar challenges with loyal, yet aging, patrons, so with both of us wishing to reach out to younger audiences, this was a mutually beneficial program. Go for it and don't be afraid to contact me with any questions or ideas!

[Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.](#)

Supporting Materials

Document

[suggested reading for kids.pdf](#)

Document

[musical madness flyer.pdf](#)

[Download this Program as a PDF](#)

- [Programming Librarian Facebook Group](#)

More Programs

Apr 23, 2015

Adults (21 and up)+ |

[Image](#)



[Library Music Programming Isn't Just Kidstuff](#)

Audiences:

Audience

Adults (21 and up)

May 29, 2015

Children (9 and under)+ |

[Image](#)



Summer Music Programs for Teens and Tweens

Audiences:

Audience

Children (9 and under)

Young Adult (17 - 20)