



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Loudoun County

Program Title: Community Music at Loudoun County Public Library

Program Category: Community and Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Peter O'Brien

Title: Division Manager, Communications

Department: Library Services

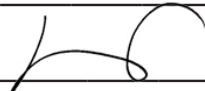
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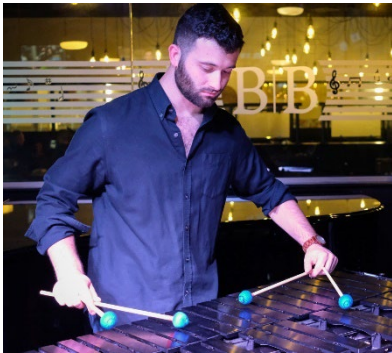
SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Chang Liu

Title: Director, Library Services

Signature: 

The Community Music Initiative at Loudoun County Public Library



Criteria for Selection

This ongoing program provides an innovative format for offering live, affordable, music performances with local and regional musicians, open to all residents in Loudoun County, accounting for social distancing during COVID, and utilizing existing library space in lieu of a centralized Loudoun County concert hall.

The program is intentional in its development, and utilizes ongoing collaboration with library administration, staff at all branches of Loudoun County Public Library, and established local professional musical soloists and groups.

The following model shows that the Community Music Initiative is replicable nationwide because of its low-cost marketing, efficient staffing, simple physical space needs, and standardized costs, with flexible scaling for library systems around the country. In addition, all communities have trained musicians who could participate in this effort, including music teachers, church musicians, etc.

The Issues

In late 2019, jazz saxophonist, composer, and George Mason University music professor John Kocur performed in the basement of a Leesburg, Virginia restaurant, and invited other musicians to join him at the event. His main purpose: to discuss increasing collaboration and performance opportunities for the local professional musician community.

Soon after, Kocur met with Loudoun County Public Library Adult Programming Coordinator Lorraine Moffa. In discussions that followed, together they developed an innovative and intentional partnership with potential for solving several issues:

Without a centralized performing arts facility, professional musicians in Loudoun lacked regular opportunities to collaborate, share their talents and reach new public audiences.

With many musicians performing at wineries, breweries and other adult-focused venues, children and teens had fewer opportunities to be inspired by professional musicians.



John Kocur

With inflation at record highs, and the New York Times reporting that “Buying concert tickets has become a mess of high prices and surcharges, anxiety-inducing registrations and pervasive scalping” individuals and families struggled to afford attending professional concerts.

Moffa worked with library branch staff and scheduled Kocur and accompanying musicians for two library concerts in spring 2020, all while making plans to expand music programming. Then COVID struck, and in-person programming ceased for months. Soon, however, the emerging music partnership presented more opportunities to solve previously unforeseen issues:

When libraries re-opened, in-person programs resumed. The library wanted patrons to return, but had to work with the significant challenges of patron social distancing and room attendance limitations.

Restaurants and other venues who previously paid musicians to perform were themselves struggling financially throughout COVID, leaving even fewer opportunities for musicians to earn a living.

Emotions were running extremely high as the effects of COVID rippled through Loudoun, leading to community arguments, frequent protests, and regular displays of anxiety and anger at the library. Loudoun residents needed calm, peace, and soothing.

Solutions, Financing, Staffing and Results

Loudoun County Public Library has always been a welcome home to the arts, with a focus on bringing in professional talent to teach arts-based classes, exhibit artistic works, and perform for the public. However, the LCPL Community Music Initiative that has blossomed since 2020 solved the above issues in the following ways:

Solutions:

- Rather than focus on a central arts facility (which did not exist) or hosting occasional music programs only at larger libraries, musical performances expanded to monthly programs at all regular branches of Loudoun County Public Library countywide. This enabled patrons from all reaches of our 521-square-miles to see a concert near their home.

- Musicians were hired on an individual basis, but also as duets, trios, and full bands, allowing them increased opportunities to collaborate together at the library.
- The performances were all open to everyone, regardless of age. This allowed children and teens greater access to not just hear, but also to directly engage with professional musicians during intermissions and after concerts.
- All performances were provided to the community completely free of cost, without any barriers such as requiring tickets or advance registration.
- Programs were regularly offered in open environments for the first time, alleviating social distancing concerns.



Masked musicians perform in lobby during 2021 COVID restrictions.

Musicians performed outside, and in atriums and lobbies of library buildings, without audience chairs, or the confines of meeting room spaces. The sounds of beautiful music flowed through the stacks and staff rooms in a way never before seen or heard!



Celtic musicians Gordon, Egan & Finch at Rust Library, Leesburg

And, as our community has grown more comfortable being in proximity with one another, we added seated concerts back into the schedule as well.

Financing:

- To provide more equitable compensation, the decision was made to pay all musicians the same “fair but affordable” flat fee whenever possible. Funds were

dedicated from the Programming and Community Engagement Division. Rather than paying based on the varying fee requests of individuals, in almost all cases each musician instead was offered an honorarium of \$150 per hour in exchange for presenting their professional musical skills. Most performances were either one hour or 90 minutes in length. No other direct fees were associated with the program.

Staffing:

- Music programs were designed to require minimal library staffing. Musicians performing passive concerts without seated audiences were merely shown where to set up, and left alone to perform. Seated concerts required only a set-up of chairs for the audience, and a short staff introduction.
- Marketing by staff was streamlined over time, reducing staff hours to support the programs. Initially flyers and social media posts were made for each performance, but to increase efficiency, staff moved towards creating “Live Music” combined promotional flyers for a month’s worth of programs.
- Musicians and musician groups voluntarily co-marketed the events, extending our promotional reach in the community at no cost.

Results:

- This initiative has been the most widespread, intentional, and successful effort at spotlighting the professional music community in our library’s history.
- Concerts were scheduled with increasing regularity. Rather than music being an occasional special event featuring musical groups from out of town, patrons now expect all library branches to offer professional concerts on a regular basis.
- The overall number of community music programs has increased 180 percent in just four years, and related music program attendance has increased 112 percent. These numbers reflect increases only in the “live music” format, and do not include children’s musical programs. Patrons representing everyone in our community – entire families, young and middle-aged adults, seniors, teenagers, children, aspiring musicians, and LCPL staff all now enjoy concerts at the library!

Fiscal Year (July 1-June 30)	Number of Community Music Programs	Total Community Music Attendance
2019: 12 months: Baseline	45	2,437
2020: 8 months (COVID)	24	1,581
2021: 7 months (COVID)	36	3,236
2022: 12 months	104	4,368
2023: 12 months	126	5,148

- The community of musicians now know they can perform, collaborate with other musicians, and be compensated for performances at the library. Word has gotten out, and now they often contact us about performing, rather than us finding them.
- Music concerts now are much more likely to highlight local and regional professional talent, rather than the more expensive out-of-state musical groups. However, “local” should not be confused with “inexperienced.” Most of our musicians have formally studied music, toured in other states, played in large venues, and published their music. This allows us to spotlight our own talent while saving on the travel costs and other fees associated with faraway bands.

Most Important Result: Patrons and Staff Love and Support This Initiative!

- “I just wanted you to know how much we enjoyed the guitar music today from Cristian Perez @ ASH! **He started his set with Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah and I almost wept...**it was stunning ... one of the ASH Board members walked by me on the way out and said ‘Nice! It's like the perfect music to play at a library.’ ... I've missing hearing LIVE music so much this year, so this was special to have this treat today at work.”



Christian Perez Quartet

– Ashburn Library staff feedback during COVID, December 2020.

- “Can we have Mr. Perez here permanently? Please?” – Staff feedback 2020
- “FABULOUS. We all enjoyed listening, and there were at least 15 patrons who had brought their own chairs and set up in the shade on the berm. Really great.” – Staff feedback during outdoor concert, 2021.

- “A word of gratitude for your introducing Zoë Jorgenson Trio ... As Zoe mentioned yesterday, ***Loudoun Libraries are really good at scheduling these cultural/musical performances. And she also attested that the LCPL is doing an outstanding job for the arts in the community*** ...I praise the variety in the number performing, the performance styles & professionalism as well as the sophistication of these events ...These offerings are one of the biggest perks of living in Loudoun ... Thanks again for what you are bringing to enhance the livability & vitality of our area.” – *Patron Dennis from Sterling, Virginia 2023*



Zoe Jorgenson

- “This trio was very creative and played original music ... ***this program really touched my core with its more avant-garde compositions. I try to get each of the monthly programs by LCPL and value them, especially in this age of inflation when I no longer can afford paying venues*** ... Keep on coming on with what you've been doing.” – *2023 Program Survey*

- “The pianist played beautifully, and he created a joyful atmosphere with his work. I also liked how everyone who was watching seemed happy. ... It was a good chance to sit down and relax. ***I play the violin, so music is a very important aspect of my life. Concerts are an essential part of learning to play an instrument. It helps artists learn and grow, whether it be from their mistakes or their successes.*** I love learning a piece of music and then finally being able to perform it for others; to wrap up all of my

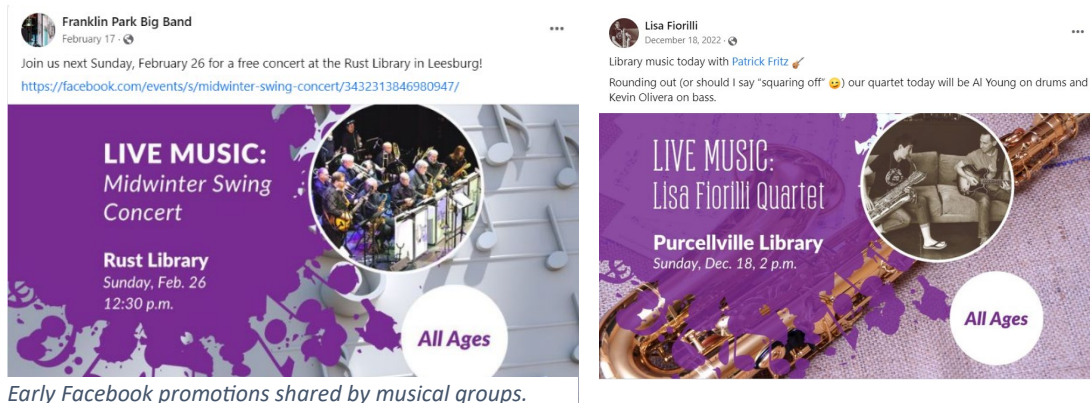


Quinton Walston

- hard work and the time I spent into one cohesive piece, which is why I know that it meant a lot for Mr. Walston to play at the library that day. I think it meant even more to him than it would for me because he was the one who wrote and composed those pieces. ***I hope I can one day make up tunes myself, even just for fun.***” – Teen 2022 concert attendee

- “Loved it.” “Great! Awesome!” “The Best! Love them!” “Excellent! Such talent.” “It was lovely.” – 2022 Rust Library music program surveys.
- “I just wanted to share that last night at National Night Out, we had live music by Purcellville local Ben Demase and he was phenomenal! ***The patrons, fire, rescue and police all came up to me and said how much they enjoyed the music*** and how talented Ben was. If possible, I would love to have Ben do music again ...” – Purcellville Library 2022 staff feedback.
- “The concert this afternoon was a big success. We were almost at capacity for the entire time, so I’d estimate as many as 75 people heard the music. ***So many people came up to the desk to tell us how much they enjoyed it and that they wished we had him here every weekend.*** One woman ... just came in to pick up her holds before going grocery shopping and decided to stay to listen to the music. The staff found it very enjoyable and relaxing as well. Please

let him know how much we appreciated his playing for us today. We look forward to seeing him again soon. Thank you for arranging this for us!” – Cascades Library 2022 staff feedback



Executive Summary

Loudoun County Public Library began a partnership with the local professional music community in early 2020, striving to increase music programming at the library, build collaboration among musicians, and increase free access to professional concerts and musicians. The library sought to provide more alternatives to expensive DC-area concert venues, or venues targeted for adults only, such as wineries or breweries.

One COVID hit in 2020, the program also revealed added benefits. It provides local musicians with opportunities for paid concerts when restaurants and other traditional venues are financially struggling. It also allows LCPL to offer programs in a “passive” way, with limited staffing required, and addresses COVID concerns or requirements by innovating how “concerts” are held – sometimes without chairs, in open library spaces.

Financial costs have been standardized to provide compensation as equally as possible, and in a way that is easily scalable for other communities wishing to use it as a model. This initiative has been the most widespread, intentional, and successful effort at spotlighting the local professional music community in our library history.

The success of the program is undeniable. From our baseline at the end of fiscal year 2019, Community Music programs are up 180 percent, and related attendance is up 112 percent. Passionate feedback has been given by patrons and staff alike, sharing their love for the music, and the programs have helped reinforce that Loudoun County Public Library provides a welcome home for the local arts community.

Supplemental information: Visit <https://library.loudoun.gov/calendar> and enter keywords “live music” in the search box to see many of the related programs.

Brief Overview

Loudoun County Public Library's Community Music Initiative

Loudoun County Public Library began discussing a partnership with the local professional music community in late 2019, striving to increase music programming at the library, build collaboration among musicians, and increase free access to professional concerts and musicians. The library sought to provide alternatives to expensive DC-area concert venues, and to venues targeted for adults only, such as wineries or breweries.

By partnering professional musicians with our library branches across Loudoun, scheduling concerts monthly at each location, paying musicians a flat fee per performance, and spreading the word through low-cost, simple marketing, the overall number of community music programs has increased 180 percent in just four years, and related music program attendance has increased 112 percent. The community of musicians now know they can perform, collaborate with other musicians, and be compensated for performances at the library. Patrons of all ages enjoy regularly scheduled, free concerts near their home, without advanced registration or other barriers to entry.

Passionate feedback has been given by patrons and staff alike, sharing their love for the music, and the programs have helped reinforce that Loudoun County Public Library provides a welcome home for the local arts community.