

Producing, promoting and presenting jazz concerts for young people: Tips & Tricks



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Supersonics at the EFG London Jazz Festival (2014). Photo: Monica Santos Herberg.

“I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy; but most importantly music, for the patterns in music and all the arts are the keys to learning.” Plato

1. Background & Motivation (about the project *Jazz for Young People*)

This handbook, with tips and tricks on how to produce and present jazz concerts for children and young people, is a product of the project *Jazz For Young People (JFYP)* run by Europe Jazz Network (EJN) and financed by the EU programme Creative Europe. Vestnorsk Jazzsenter (West Norway Jazz Centre) has assisted in leading the project and contributed financially.

JFYP grew out of the perceived need for professionally produced concerts for children and young people. Children’s concerts are in high demand internationally, and good quality work that has improvisation as its core, is important in the quest to attract, entertain, educate and develop audiences, and also to provide creative outlets for experienced and successful musicians. We hope that this handbook, meant to be a dynamic document that is regularly revised, will be a helpful tool for those already working in the field, as well as those who would like/are planning to start up.

Many of the EJN members commission and programme work for children and young people. Some also commission and programme work made *by* young people, and there is a real appetite and willingness to do more, and to improve the offers for audiences and the conditions for the engagement of creative musicians who want to work in this area.

Along with the handbook, an online marketplace was launched (<http://www.europejazz.net/activity/47752/marketplaces>), where musicians, producers and others can post information about their own concert productions for children and young people, including press releases, video clips and music. Interested promoters can book the productions directly via this website.

JFYP started in 2014 with a workshop at the European Jazz Conference in Helsinki, followed by a round table conference in London during the EFG London Jazz Festival. In 2015 the project organised a conference at Voss during the Vossa Jazz Festival, and another workshop was held at the 2015 European Jazz Conference in Budapest. In 2016, a seminar focussing on research aspects in the field took place in Stavanger during the Maijazz Festival, and a conclusive workshop for the pilot phase of the project was held at the European Jazz Conference in Wroclaw in September. This workshop marked the transition point where the project went from the pilot phase over to a practical/production phase, from here on aiming to contribute to the production of new concerts.

The workshops, seminars and conferences have facilitated discussions around the reasons why musicians create work for children and young people, and the reasons why producers and programmers are actively commissioning and presenting work for young and family audiences. Across the years that the project has been active, many examples of good quality, best practice have been either experienced or cited, for example, *Supersonics* and *ImproBasen* from Norway, *Jazzoo* from Sweden, *Mimmit* from Finland, *Tin Men & The Telephone* from Holland, *Monsters* from Ireland and *Catapluf's Musical Journey* from the UK.

JFYP attempts to collect and assess the knowledge and experience that already exists in this field. It also seeks to elevate the quality and status of performances for children and young people and to involve more musicians and producers in making professional concerts, aimed at children, young people and their families in order to make this field more attractive, and to present this as a recognised professional discipline of its own. Professionalism could sometimes be hard to define, although we all have our subjective opinion on what is professional behaviour or handling, here we could say, professionalism is about having an artistic idea behind what's presented on stage, and to use your educational skills/experience to make it happen.

Presenting concerts for children and young people can lead to sold out venues and it can also be great fun! It gives a great deal of satisfaction to both the organiser and the audience and can play an important part of recruiting a new audience, made up of children and their parents, carers and grandparents.

2. Producing, promoting and presenting jazz concerts for children and young people – tips & tricks

a) In general

First of all, there is not one right way to create and/or perform concerts for children and young people - different approaches might work perfectly well. But there are certain essential elements that should be included, those are: professionalism; producing work especially for children and young people; and communication.

Professionalism

Performing for children and young people is a professional field, and an area in which one can specialise and be educated. The musicians and artists involved might already play together in a band or they may be chosen individually by a promoter or producer forming a group from different fields, genres, generations, geographic areas, etc. If so, it is important to choose musicians who will facilitate a constructive and fruitful collaboration. Examples of performances for children and young people that have been developed by an existing band of musicians include: *Supersonics*.

A children's concert could be simply entertaining, or it could also have an educational purpose and if the latter, then it is best to involve pedagogical expertise. *Catapluf's Musical Journey* is an example of a show that satisfies the criteria of being entertaining, high quality and that has been developed in conjunction with pedagogical expertise.

Producing concerts for children and young people is also an interdisciplinary field, and to enhance musical performances, one should consider engaging dramaturgs, theatre directors and/or stage designers, i.e., professionals who know how to communicate through visuals, props, scenery etc., and who can advise how to 'set' a scene to provide the right atmosphere and/or and to communicate effectively. *Monsters* that was developed in the Republic of Ireland, is an example of a work that involves different expertise, in this case, an onstage illustrator.

When including different art forms such as acting or dancing, it is better to use professional actors and dancers rather than asking or expecting musicians to operate outside of their main area of expertise. There are benefits to this which extend beyond what the audience experiences, which include, additional creative expertise, engaging new audiences and a broader palette of ideas involved in the creation and producing process.

Producing work for children & young people

Those who take the initiative to create or commission new work for children and young people are many and various and include musicians, producers, promoters and others. It is always essential to be clear about ownership of the artistic idea and the music behind the project. Any new musical works will remain the property of the music creator/s, even if the 'production' or the 'idea' is a shared enterprise between

the musician/s and the producer or director, and this needs to be clarified in the initial stages with a contract between the parties.

Once ownership of the copyrights in the work is settled, it is important to involve the wider band or ensemble and any other artistic personnel (dancers, actors, etc) in the creative process. Other expertise can advise, comment and have an influence on the project as it develops, and can work hand-in-hand with the producer and promoter, who will have an overview on the costs and the logistics of the presentation/s.

Communication

The audience is of paramount importance, and when devising and producing new work in the form of concerts or presentations for children and young people, a communicative platform and atmosphere must be established. Communication can happen through music, sounds, words, grimaces/mimicry or other ways, but there needs to be a well-functioning channel of communication.

Looking at communication more broadly, it is also important that the style of the performance be communicated to the ticket buyers in an effective way to ensure that the audience knows what age/s the presentation is aimed at, what sort of experience will be had and what skills will be developed as a result of the performance/s.

i. Playing for and with children and young people - communication, improvisation

Important keywords when performing for children and young people are **communication and improvisation**. Improvisation is an important tool for jazz musicians while children and young people also improvise, are sometimes adept at playing, are generally very open-minded, and are usually willing participants during a concert, if audience participation this is an aim.

Communication is simply about establishing contact with your audience through what you say or play, your facial expressions, body movements etc. It is important to be clear on what you want to communicate, what story to tell (if any), and what kind of atmosphere you want to create – light, cheerful, exciting, scary, funny, etc. Equally it is important to make the music, scenography, style of performance fit that atmosphere.

It is also important to be conscious about what type of concert or presentation you would like when it comes to degree of **interaction**. A **'Fourth Wall Concert'** is a concert where the musicians on stage are 'unavailable' to audience input and work to create a magical mood or journey as the concert progresses. This is an approach that may be easiest to achieve by using scenic effects, lights and costumes, but it is also possible to do it with just music and good stage presence. An **interactive concert** is a concert where the children and young people get to answer questions, for participate with call-and-response or sing or play along, join you on stage, etc.

It is also possible to mix different approaches during your show. Concerts that stimulate multiple senses and manage to actively engage the audience and provide a better overall experience are highly desired, but the important thing is that you do something you find fun and rewarding as a musician. The children and young people will understand this!

Musicians who perform for children and young people are overwhelmingly saying that playing the music they like and know themselves, is definitely the best way to make things work, rather than trying to play something they think the children would like, or to make things 'easier'..

Quoting Joe Townsend (teaching music students to perform for children and young people, Trinity Laban): *'The important thing is that the students/musicians play the music they love, to not dumb down, and to then find interesting ways of communicating, deconstructing and involving the children in the performance. The students/musicians have to find ways of making the music into an interactive experience. This could be active listening, drawing with the eyes shut, moving to the music, joining in with rhythms, singing, or simply being asked to listen to the music with the eyes shut and to imagine what the scene might be if it were a film. With a highly developed language of improvisation, they have the skills to respond in the moment.'*

It is also possible to organise workshops in advance, to actively make children and young people prepare for the concert. This can take the form of making their own instruments, learning how to play an instrument, learning about different rhythms and music from various parts of the world. Preparation of the audience in this way enhances their experience for all when the concert or presentation is in progress.

ii. The International Perspective

With the JFYP project, we wanted to explore the fact that music is communicating beyond words and language and to look closer into the possibilities of international 'validity' and hence a market or a means of exchange for concerts for children and young people. This applies to existing concerts as well as planned or future presentations.

Discussion has pointed to the fact that the concert or presentation could be a storytelling performance, including songs with lyrics, where language plays an important part, or the performance could be the telling of stories either without words, or with words that are understandable in different languages. Text and lyrics could, for example, be translated into other languages, and performed by musicians and artists from the respective countries.

Many of the concerts and presentations that are cited in this handbook do not use language and this is a deliberate choice so that the concert can be presented anywhere without the need for translation. The Anglo-Norwegian presentation Supersonics say: *'We try to play contemporary, but understandable music with a good rhythm. We believe that children are not prejudiced, that they are open to everything. During our concerts, we try not to talk or use language.'*

Cultural variations might be more difficult to be prepared for, even in Europe, and

especially when not knowing the visiting country well. There might be differences in the way children are raised, in the general degree of politeness and discipline. Some claim that children in the northern parts of Europe may be more bold and less restricted and polite than children in other parts of Europe, and that this might be challenging for visiting artists. We also know humour may differ from country to country. To prepare for these variations, it might be a good idea to play a test-concert in order to avoid contents that might be inappropriate, offensive or simply hard to understand. Ultimately, children are children the world over, with the same affection for entertainment and music.

iii. Children & Young People as an Audience – age groups

Children and young people are not a homogenous group or audience and there are huge differences when it comes to the developmental ability of the children and young people to perceive and understand what is happening on stage. The differences in age groups must be recognised when making and performing concerts for children and young people. The JFYP working group has not been able to detect any official age group scale for children's concerts, but most commonly see performances divided into "baby" (0-3 years), preschool (3-6 years), early school age (6-9 years), medium school age (9-12 years), and young people (13-16 years).

There tends to be some general characteristics when it comes to age groups:

- Children aged 0–3 are not necessarily just focused on what happens on stage, but on all activities in the room. Sensitive to volume/noise level, tempo and intensive and quick changing lights.
- Children aged 3–6 are in a 'physical' period and get restless easily, but also get easily carried away and are usually eager to play along.
- Children aged 6–10 may start to become polite or reserved, but are still playful and open, and able to focus more on what happens on stage.
- With high school students, it is similar to playing for adults.

In order to make the concerts the best possible experience, both musicians and producers/promoters should consider and be aware of how, to what extent and which way music/sound/volume, lighting/use of colours and stage effects are used, and how they affect children and young people. It is also important to think about the balance between the amount of music and language/spoken word, as well as the content of the spoken word elements.

The **duration** of the concerts should be considered carefully. For the youngest children (babies to preschool) 20-30 minutes should be the limit; early school can be extended to 30-40 minutes, and older children can cope with concerts that are between 45-60 minutes. You would rather leave the children with a great experience and longing for more, than having stretched their concentration too far.

There is also a distinct difference between **school concerts**, where the audience consists of pupils of a similar age, and **family concerts** at clubs and concert halls, where the audience is mixed in age and experience and includes children across several age groups as well as their parents, carers and grandparents. It might be

easier to play for a uniform audience than for children of various ages, but with a more varied audience, a more varied performance is possible. Remember also that whatever minimum age limits are set for the concerts, there might be younger children present. Families usually go to concerts with children of different ages, and a public family event might involve children from infancy to about 10 years of age, as well as adults.

It is also important to provide content that appeals to parents, as they are the decision makers and the ticket buyers. For example, this could be a workshop that involves both parents and children, or concerts that appeal to both age groups. Serious' idea of 'jazz dads and mums' which involves playing music from old films was a great success, as parents wanted to bring their children to listen to the music they grew up with. It is also interesting to connect music with other disciplines, in this case, film music.

b) Researchers' Perspectives

In the pilot, or first phase of the JFYP project, the main task was to get input and collect information on existing expertise on the field, including research material. Scott Rogers, director at Concerts Norway, participated on the JFYP-conference at Voss in March 2015, sharing his huge knowledge on producing, in particular, school concerts for children.

Concerts Norway is an organisation that until 2016 presented concerts in Norwegian schools, to about 9000 students per annum, and as a result was the biggest employer of musicians in Norway. Each tour could be four to five weeks long, with the musicians typically playing up to three concerts per day. From 2017 the amounts of concerts have been reduced.

When talking about the criteria for musicians who want to perform for children, Scott stated the following: *'The first requirement is that musicians must play very well, and they should have an artistic vision they want to express, and an idea on how they can express it for children. Today, music for children has become a commercial business and we should go beyond it. Musicians must understand first what they want to communicate and find the right way to communicate it to kids – things must develop slowly and naturally...The musicians should try to create a dynamic audience, different from TV productions. Let imagination have space; the music is the story....Productions begin in different ways. In Norway there is a network of producers, some of them work regionally, some other work in direct connection with children, etc. There is a lot of research from this field, and the challenge is to find the producers who have an artistic background and make the research applicable to the situation.'*

At the JFYP seminar in Stavanger in May 2016, two academics participated: **Kari Holdhus** and **Petter Frost Fadnes**, researchers and associate professors at the Stord Haugesund University College and the University in Stavanger, respectively. Petter is also a performing improvising musician and composer.

Kari gave a lecture on the topics **quality definitions, power and ownership of concerts for children**. She pointed to the fact that school concerts, although

presented through Concerts Norway, are owned by the musicians, not the provider.

We often talk about “concerts of high quality”. Kari noted that **quality** is an empty word in itself, and that the important aspect is that all criteria for quality come from a **set of values**. Therefore it is actually more accurate to talk about **the owners of an artistic project**, and the value of the work, as the owners can set the agenda and can effect change. In order to do this, the owners need agency, i.e. they need to be listened to and this, in turn, will have an affect on the criteria of quality and the product itself.

To her question “why do we do this work?” the answers from the audience were divided into *instrumental values* characterised by rationality (i.e., cultural education, create new audiences, provide musicians with work, etc.) and *intrinsic values* characterised by emotions (i.e., positive response from children, including happiness, collaboration, family experiences, etc). So, **the mission** behind the work is **love**. A presenter has a mission to meet the wishes of the audience with their programme (i.e., love).

To be able to know what would affect young people positively, and to consider the personal cultural learning of individuals, we need to know how children and young people think, what they are interested in, and how they engage with music. To understand these things it is important to be in touch with audiences in their natural environment. The musical way of being for children includes playing, singing, observing, imitating, collaborating, moving, listening, repeating and creating. They are cross-modal, i.e., they can create a painting as a response to music, and these are important points to consider when planning a concert. The 21st century child has access to a plethora of music, accessed by a variety of means and this needs to be acknowledged by the programmers and presenters of work for children and young people. These children and young people are also expressive and creative, used to being listened to, digital natives, literate, able to negotiate, knowledgeable, vigorous, enthusiastic and reflective.

There are opposing paradigms about perceptions of artistic work and the role of musicians, artists and art that come into focus when making decisions about what to create and who to create it for. This left us with a breakthrough in our thinking: it is important to **create concerts with children in mind**, not concerts for children that we think they will enjoy.

Petter Frost Fadnes has a research project called ‘Playspace!’ investigating the topic: *What are the potential values of bringing improvisational practices into music didactics (educational activities) in schools?*

As a saxophonist and composer, Petter is part of the trio The Geordie Approach, with Chris Sharkey (guitar/electronics) and Ståle Birkeland (drums/percussion). Together they made the children’s concert *Supersonics* (2014) that was presented for the first time at the EFG London Jazz Festival. Earlier, the trio had developed the concert *Bråkebøtta* (Norwegian for noise bucket) that made up the basis for Petter’s research project Playspace! Petter asked the question ‘Does the musicians’ improvisational practice and the teachers’ perceptions of this practice, correspond?’ and was also testing the potential for a communal learning experience through the use of improvisational strategies. Key words in his research are *improvisational*

tools, *'adhockery'* (= spontaneous; a term coined by the UK academic George McKay) and *feedback loops* (communication/ interaction).

Petter explained the values of The Geordie Approach which include improvisation and electronics, a post modern 'anything goes' attitude to improvisation, unlimited use of musical styles, i.e., a 'shuffle' way of thinking. Their production methods, which are based on an experienced and established group, are also of interest and include improvisational tools and music with elements of contemporary music (in the broadest terms).

The combination of the values and the production methods, combined with an established group dynamic and a desire to facilitate a high level of interaction, led to the idea of a 'noise bucket' (*bråkebøtta*), a derogatory term for noisy children, which, through its use, empowered the children and in turn, challenged perceptions of what music is and what music can be.

The band employed 'adhockery' which works well in an informal context for children and young people because it is not intimidating. The interaction between the musicians and the children enabled a feedback loop (a term coined by UK saxophonist Evan Parker) in that any input from the children affects what the musicians play. Finally the meaning of the music was to be found in 'musicking' (Christopher Small) or 'in action', i.e., what people do when they are interacting. The style broke free of canonised norms and became a strategy for the improvising musicians.

Petter stressed the importance of the experience being playful and experiential. The rationale for this approach can be found in the words of Ken Robinson, the English author, speaker and international advisor on education in the arts: *'If you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never create anything.'*

From the musicians' perspective, the experience was meaningful and allowed them to adapt to varying needs, within a certain framework, and to create an enjoyable experience every time. The musicians learned that this approach made the musical flow tidier and the improvisational idea more economical and focussed. As a band, their internal communication improved as did their communication with the audience (via body language, eye contact, placement/movement). They also observed that they had improved self- confidence and better stage presence, which enabled them to be more open to experimenting with other art forms (e.g., dance).

Petter further indicated that, in order to have the most meaningful experience, preparation is paramount. In order to prepare, the musicians undertook workshops with the children in advance of the performances which included exercises around rhythm, musical roles, movement, dynamics, communication and visual notation, all of which resulted in active participation from the children, and therefore positive feedback from the teachers.

To sum up, Petter reinforced the use of improvisation as an ideal didactic tool because it has elastic properties, avoids issues of right and wrong, challenges norms and stereotypical perceptions of music, and has a sense of playfulness (and presence) not found in other forms of musical teaching. The employment of this method of communication also had the added ripple effect of the teachers

embracing the form and reflecting on how to integrate exploratory elements in their own work processes and their own teaching.

c) The Role of the Musician

This chapter includes tips from musicians and promoters based on their experiences.

On quality:

Eyolf Dale, musician/composer: *'Youngsters and adults are quite bestowed with all kinds of arts, which seem to lead to a kind of selectiveness. They make their own choices and develop their own sense of taste. But in general, I find that children have a quite distinct sense of quality, and as a performer for children, I strongly believe **that if you bring quality and integrity to the market, you can reach out to anyone.** There is something universal about "good music", and it can hit people where and when least expected.'*

From: *Children's Jazz from A to Å*, Norwegian Jazz Federation.

On status:

A partial aim for the JFYP project is to contribute to the discussion around making performing for children more attractive to jazz musicians, to improve the status of playing for children and young people, and to recognise this as a separate professional field.

Status is connected to how success is defined, so it is essential to improve the status for performances for children and young people. Although there might be an external concert producer involved, normally musicians performing concerts for children are also involved in the making of the concert or presentation, and hence possess some kind of ownership of the music or the production. Ownership, either legal or moral is the the best starting point when it comes to improving the status of the musician in this scenario. It is also important to bring musicians and promoters together at all stages of the process to ensure there is a mutual understanding and expectation connected to making and presenting the work.

Most musicians who perform for children and young people also perform for adult audiences and although it might be a challenge to maintain the artistic identity and the improvisational level that they aspire to, many musicians are prepared to extend their practice to develop bespoke work for children and young people.

As has been demonstrated above, where there is a will, there is a way to create work and performances to effectively communicate with children and young people that will not only utilise the same music making methods, but will also enhance the performing ability of the musicians involved.

On positive experiences:

As audiences, children and young people are ruthless and demanding, they expect that you do what you say you will do, i.e., that you keep your promises. It is widely acknowledged, that you get back from them what you give.

Developing work for children and young people can often be a positive experience, indeed many performing artists say it is the best experience ever, as you learn so much about yourself, about communication techniques, about dialogue, etc.

Petter Frost Fadnes and Ståle Birkeland from Supersonics say:

'First of all, performing for children has been a long educational journey for us. We made a lot of mistakes in the beginning, but the privilege we get through the Norwegian school concert system, by performing the same concert ca. 100 times during a short period of time, means that we get the opportunity to learn from mistakes and adjust immediately and continuously.'

On training and challenges:

The art of performing for and with children and young people has to be learnt, through practise and preferably through education, and it is a widely held opinion that it should be part of the education system for musicians.

Playing for children and young people means having to challenge oneself both as a musician and person, to think outside the box and step out of your comfort zone. Musicians might find it intimidating or uncomfortable to perform for children and young people, as they are brutally honest audiences, but, when satisfied, they are also the most enthusiastic audiences. Musicians of all kinds should be encouraged to challenge themselves and convey their own enthusiasm for performance via their music.

On extending your practice:

Playing for children and young people should be considered an extension of the work you normally do as a musician, i.e., being professional and playing the music you love and are enthusiastic about. Be present in the moment and communicate with the audience.

Per Ruskträsk Johansson (Jazzoo/Oddjob) says: *'The key to success lies primarily in playing the music you want to play while establishing contact with the children in the audience. Keep in mind that if the kids are enjoying themselves, their parents are enjoying themselves as well! The music performed by Jazzoo is composed with children in our minds, but has the same kind of expression that we also would perform for an adult audience.'*

On audiences:

It is important to keep a constant eye on the audience and their reactions. To keep this audience captivated, might require a hint of entertainment as well as well crafted and delivered music. At times you may experience that the audience does not respond quite as you had expected, or that they easily lose focus. It is possible to regain their attention and this can be achieved by an alternative approach, which can either be planned in advance (i.e., Plan B), or can be something spontaneous such as something unexpected (i.e., a new noise) or a change in mood. Remember that it is often your quietest voice that will get the children and young people to be

quiet, not shouting ‘hush’ into the microphone.

On preparation:

A key word in the development and performance of work for children and young people is **preparation**: one has to be well prepared and to always have a plan B.

Petter Frost Fadnes: *‘If responses are not as predicted, or you are losing the children’s attention, go to plan B! Immediately! You have two seconds, and if you cannot win their attention again, you have lost. Every time we feel that the children are starting to get bored, we try to change things around and find something that captures them. This approach is also far more stimulating for us as musicians.’*

On Communication & Interaction:

Direct communication and interaction are recurrent topics in this field. Interaction by means of clapping, dancing, call and response and so on, are often utilised as integrated or improvised activities in concerts for children and young people.

Supersonics: *‘We always try to create an energetic performance while interacting with the audience for instance through clapping and singing. We try to maintain the same level of energy and enthusiasm to keep the audience focused throughout the concert – especially during school concerts.’*

On duration:

When producing concerts for children and young people, the awareness of time, duration and dramaturgy is important. The concert as a whole should not be longer than 30-40 minutes for the youngest (up to 10 years), with a maximum of 60 minutes for older audiences. Songs or individual pieces should not be too long, the same with stories told along with or as elements included in a story. It is better to have simple narratives than complex ones. However, if the main element in the performance is music, and unless there is a distinct story to be told as part of the show, there is no need for excessive talking between the songs. Two examples:

Adriano Adewale is the composer and musician behind the colourful concert *Catapluf’s Musical Journey*. This performance tells the story about the character Catapluf, who loves all kinds of sounds and meets friends who play different instruments, and together they travel through several countries where they learn about traditional music and instruments. But the story is told without words, only through the music and playing, with some use of call-and-response using clapping, body percussion, dancing, singing and trying to reproduce the noises. It is a highly interactive performance, with visual effects that are relatively few and simple but well thought through – everything working together to express the story.

Juliet Kelly is a vocalist greatly experienced in making and performing family friendly concerts, i.e., concerts that should appeal to people of all ages. She is used to performing in village halls and community centres, often for a very mixed audience (from 6–90 years), most of whom are attending a jazz performance for the first time. Kelly’s approach is to set the scene for the songs, and then with words, tell the audience about what they meant to her, and to draw them in by asking questions

and encouraging audience participation. After these shows, a common response is that people tell her that they did not think they like jazz, but that they had really enjoyed the show.

On content variation:

Dynamically varied concerts that contain different musical expressions, changes in tempi, change in mood and so on, work well with audiences made up of children and young people and are within the performance capabilities of musicians. When expanding the performance repertoire to include visual effects such as sets, props, costumes, movement, etc, it would be beneficial to consult theatre directors to get tips on dramaturgy as well as stage direction.

On connecting with the audience:

As a general rule, it is smart to try to establish a connection with your audience from the very start. Often the concert is introduced by a promoter or venue representative, or by the lead artist. To present the band and musicians with first names could be a fine way to create a friendly atmosphere. Likewise, it is nice to say goodbye and thanks for coming and sharing the moment to the audience at the end of the concert.

On the best time of day for a performance:

Shows for children and young people and their families often take place during weekends and holidays, and/or in the morning or afternoon on working days.

When arranging a tour, it might be worth looking into the possibilities of arranging concerts at local schools during the daytime on weekdays, to expand the audience reach. This would depend on any exclusion zones the band may be subject to as part of the contracting process.

i. On school concerts

School concerts are produced and performed as part of a system of music education and cultural engagement in many countries in Europe. The 'Nordic model' however that has existed for many years seems to be special, as it rests on a political agreement stating the importance of introducing children to music/concerts. In Norway the public funded organisation Concerts Norway (CN) has produced and presented school concerts since 1968, with approximately 9000 concerts per annum for the last 20 years. As a result of this policy, CN has been the most important employer for Norwegian freelance musicians. Unfortunately there will be a change in the system from 2018, which will result in a reduced number of concerts per annum.

In other countries, there appears to be less public funding per capita which results in less provision, but concerts especially made for presentation in schools are also produced in relatively large numbers, and this is also represented opportunity for freelance musicians in Europe.

Karl Seglem, musician/composer says: *I have performed 2500 concerts for children in Norwegian schools since 1991 - a great way to earn practice in performing for*

children. A lot of musicians in Norway benefit from this fine arrangement. In the beginning, musicians often struggled a bit to find their way and the working method – often they talked too much. Now, they tend not to speak much during the concerts. Playing in schools might involve some practical difficulties because you rarely perform in a concert hall, theatre or dedicated performance space. Most likely, performances will be in the library, the gym, or in a classroom. Often, it is unclear how many children and young people will attend the concert, and sometimes you do not know their exact age. This often leads to musicians being forced to improvise and/or change plans the last minute, and reiterates the need to be well prepared for all eventualities (i.e., plan B).

School concerts may be educational, or they may just be a musical experience with no particular learning purpose. Sometimes school concerts are integrated as part of a subject and are meant to explain and illustrate specific issues. In such cases there is usually close collaboration between the school teachers and the producer and /or artist, often with workshops and other preparation activities in the lead up to the concert. Whatever the purpose, one should be aware that attempts to teach children about the music (or other issues) during the concert might have different outcomes. If a musician talks about the social and political history of jazz between songs, this might bring the concert towards an educational setting that the children are used to from their class environment and have the desired educational outcome. On the other hand, if the concert becomes too too didactic, the pupils might struggle to follow both all the desired educational outcomes.

It is best if you are well prepared and it can be useful to involve the teachers before the concert in order to help prepare the children. The band Supersonics had positive experiences working with teachers, and in tandem with the concerts they often instigated research projects and activities that involved the teachers.

d) The Role of the Organiser

Some promoters have been organising concerts for children on a regular basis for decades, and a lot of the jazz festivals in Europe have children or family friendly concerts alongside the main programme. Over recent years, the area of 'community music' has flourished, especially in the UK but also in other parts of Europe, and consequently more musicians are trained and educated in performing for a broad and diverse audience – from toddlers to elderly people, sometimes all together at the same time, playing in concert halls as well as village halls and at the local market place.

Those who have attended concerts for children and young people know there are different ways of making and delivering concerts. As a general and overall rule, everything concerning the concert, from advertising to all logistics, should be discussed and settled between the artist and promoter in advance. This also includes technical matters. The artist must create a straightforward technical rider that is as detailed as possible, and includes a stage plot. This makes it easier for the organiser to prepare and pre-rig the performance space, thus making the process easier for everyone. It is always possible to find alternate solutions and adapt to local constraints when dealing with things beforehand.

Both parties of course have thoughts and ideas on the presentation of the works and the promoter must respect the artistic idea and integrity, and the artist must respect the promoter's guidelines concerning how the arrangement should be run, which would include issues like volume level, etc. The local presenter knows their audience and what kind of show or concert will work or be appreciated, and also knows about the possibilities and restrictions of the venue. One should never underestimate the value of this knowledge, but on the other hand, it could be worth checking out new ways of presenting a show – moving the stage to another corner of the room (or in the centre), cover the venue in textiles, change the lighting, etc. Changes and variations on normal practice could have a refreshing effect for the audience as well as for the organiser.

As stated by researcher Kari Holdhus, it is the owner of the project who is entitled to make changes (if needed/wanted). The owner may be the artist, but it may also be the promoter. It is important to have a clear thought about what and how you, as the owner, would like the concert to communicate, what kind of atmosphere you would like to create. If you as a promoter are not familiar with the show that will be presented, dialogue should be established with the musicians/performers beforehand, to make sure you have a common understanding, especially concerning safety, volume, lighting and the general atmosphere.

As indicated above, the use of visual effects, lighting, props and scenography should be discussed with the artist in advance. Costumes and stage effects can help to create an appealing visual side to the show, and concerts that stimulate a variety of senses and invites the audience to take part, normally give a better overall experience. But it is also worth remembering that children are naturally drawn to instruments and people who perform, and using such effects is by no means mandatory.

If organising concerts for children is a regular activity for you as a promoter, it would be smart to put together a specialist group of people to develop and deliver work. This group may include adult volunteers or could even be young people as volunteers, who may be able to help with ticket sales, decorating, rigging, introducing the artist, etc. Let young people organise for other young people, a sure way to involve people in taking and sharing responsibility.

To assist with building atmosphere, if possible allow the children to enter the concert venue just before the concert starts. This not only lessens the wait while inside the venue but also capitalises on the instant magic the audience experiences when entering the room. It could also be a good idea to facilitate playful activities before and/or after the concert (e.g., drawing, dancing) in a separate room.

Remember that concerts for children and young people are also for their parents, so the content and the presentation should appeal to both. It is good to have a common child/young person-adult experience, always remembering that when children and young people have a good time, parents/adults also have a good time. The adults should be encouraged to be good role models to the young people by paying attention to the activity on stage and participating whenever possible or asked to do so. It is unacceptable for adults to talk/chat to each other during the

concert and before the concert starts, the presenter could ask the adults to put away their 'toys' (mobiles, papers, etc.) and pay attention to the concert (or ask the young people to tell their parents to do so). Another way to involve the adults is to say that if they find aspects of the performance or the experience to be scary they can ask the children to sit on their lap.

It is important to consider the location of the audience and the performers in relation to each other. All the audience should be able to experience the concert in the best possible way, not only the people in front/in the middle. This is especially important when performing for children and young people where they are often placed lower and closer to the stage than adults. Remember to take this into account and make sure that the sound system and speakers cover all areas. Children can react in a personal way in a public space – and the reaction might be different according to what kind of space it is (i.e., street, indoor concert hall, etc), so it is important to be aware of potentially harmful effects of sound volume, lighting, etc. Children may become afraid if they experience loud noises and this is especially true early in the show, before communication and trust between the artist and the audience has been established. Remember that children generally have a lower tolerance for high sounds than adults and that loud noise can ruin an otherwise enjoyable experience. Use varied dynamics, and establish a positive relationship with the sound engineer before the show.

it is important to discuss the capacity of the performance hall and how many tickets are available for sale for each performance. Also consider the kind of communication or contact the artist would like to have with the audience. A venue that is too crowded will affect the comfort level and safety issues and if the fire alarm sounds, a smooth evacuation according to safety instructions must be possible in all situations. In general, just try to make a positive experience for all involved: audience, musicians and promoters. And in the happy event that your concert for children and young people is a success, do not present too many concerts – keep the audience hungry.

e) Communicating to the Public: Marketing, Profile & Identity

Marketing is a good way to create a distinct profile and identity and to promote single concerts as well as to brand the organiser as a whole. If the club or venue has a graphic identity in the form of a logo, it might be a good idea to make a more 'child friendly' alternative for the children's shows (given there also are other concerts presented by the same organiser), to preserve the club or venue's identity while clarifying its new audience. If concerts for children and young people are a new concept, this should be thoroughly and broadly announced towards the existing and the new audience. When creating marketing material, focus on the child/adult event/family experience.

The audience will include families that might bring children of different ages. At present there are no well-defined international standard age ranges or groups, and it is up to the producer to define the core audience of the performance. The event must be marketed correctly so that parents understand which age group the concert is aimed at and is suitable for.

Find the most relevant and appropriate channels for promoting the concerts for children and young people, which could be social media (e.g., facebook, twitter, etc) or more traditional methods such as posters, flyers, adverts, etc. You could also contact schools and kindergartens to ask if you can promote the concerts via their channels (which is not always possible or popular). Search for cooperative partners locally, for example, business and others.

It is always desirable to have coverage in the local media - both in advance and in terms of a post-concert review. If this can be achieved, then all announcements are effective, but always aim for the option with the largest reach. Activities for children and young people are regarded as 'happy news' in newspapers, with easily captured images of children enjoying themselves. To encourage the press and media, to cover the activity, always invite the local media editors to view the performances. When writing press releases, ensure that yours requires a minimum of editing because a press release that can be printed as is, is far more likely to bring coverage than one in need of numerous revisions. Use a third person narrative, and write a journalistic text with a short headline and informative text. Using quotes is always an advantage, especially in printed media. The design should be clean and straightforward. It is best to start with practical information for instance, what, who, where, when and information on ticket price. Most artists and venues have websites with all relevant press information including photos so link to that for more information. It is also smart to agree with the artist on interviews a few weeks before the concert.

f) Funding & Financial Aspects

As stated earlier, an aim for the JFYP project is to help to make performing for children and young people more attractive to jazz musicians and to improve the status of playing for children and young people. Therefore discussions about fees and payments should be comparable to that for other 'mainstage' or adult concerts. Children and young people should learn that it is normal to pay a ticket for a cultural experience that is produced and presented by professionals.

It is also important to establish ticket prices that are not too intimidating for families, but still high enough to signal the quality of the show. Normally there are family tickets available (reduced costs), and different prices for children and adults. As family shows are often sold out, they may be a good source of income for the musicians and the venue – but again, ticket prices have to be balanced against ensuring a good experience for everyone involved, the economy in total, venue capacity and the type of communication between the musicians and the audience you want to achieve.

As a consequence, it is normal that additional funding is required, to be able to afford to hire professional artists to devise work and to perform, often in low or limited capacity spaces. Many countries have public funding, philanthropic foundations, and private donors who can help when looking to raise funds. In the Nordic countries, the UK and many countries in Europe and beyond, there are public funds reserved for arts by and for children and young people, that are important sources to co-finance concerts for children and young people. It is also

economical to present multiple concerts in the same venue on the same day. One could also cooperate with other presenters in the region and organise a tour, thereby enabling several financial contributors and lowered costs for each.

Further Reading:

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- **The EU Creative Europe programme:** www.ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/index_en.htm