

HOSTING SUCCESSFUL CONCERTS

A STUDENT'S APPROACH AND REVIEW



Hello, Reader!

My name is Madison Ford. As of writing this article, I am a high-school student in Atlanta, Georgia and a proud member of the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble. This year, I took on an enormous project. With the support of U.Y.H.E. (Urban Youth Harp Ensemble), I have the fantastic opportunity to share how I managed to organize such an impactful project with long-lasting effects.

I came about doing this project when deciding what I wanted to do for my Gold Award project. The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest award in Girl Scouting. Seniors and Ambassadors earn it by developing and carrying out lasting solutions to issues in their neighborhoods and beyond. To begin the project, we must first select a root issue. I chose racism. The lack of voice and support is a common theme in well-known creators of color stories. A survey by "Black Lives in Music" reports injustices several creators of color face. The article states, "Battling assumptions about what music they should be making and a lack of opportunities were regular occurrences. 40% of artists said they had felt the need to change their appearance, rising to 44% for Black women, who also face an average of 500 per month lower earnings than their white counterparts." This evidence presents the absence of fair compensation due to discriminatory actions and the negative impact of these discriminatory actions. Unfortunately, many people measure the ability and talent of a creator of color by their race. Many artists unfairly face adversaries due to biases and inequity within the industry. This pushed me to start my project and create change.

Once this portion of idea development was done, it was time for the real work. I wanted 2 successful guest speakers on both nights. For artists who make a living off of their music, giving even a few hours of their time is a challenging task. Not only would they have to fit me into their busy schedule, but they would also have to be willing to perform and speak without profit. Throughout October, I reached out to several B.I.P.O.C. artists based in Atlanta. As expected, many were unable to make it. Some were out of town, while others were simply too busy. Some even committed but later reported they were unable to perform. Hearing this news was very frustrating. I was wondering if I was going to pull this project off.

Even with the expected and unexpected declines, I procured cellist, Micah Hudson, for the first night, composer and pianist, Matt Vu, for both the first and second nights, and cellist, Okorie "OkCello," Johnson, for the second night.



****Photos from the 2nd concert****

On both February 2nd and 8th of 2024, I hosted my concerts, *The Colorful Creations of B.I.P.O.C. Artists*. Both programs were hosted in my school's theatre, marking me the first student from my school to ever organize a concert. High schoolers from all over Atlanta were given the opportunity to perform a selection of their choice.

Not only were they allowed to perform, they were able to ask personal questions to successful B.I.P.O.C. musicians from Atlanta.



**Photos from
the 2nd concert**



I am proud to say this concert had great significance. Many students have aspirations to continue to grow as musicians. Having an experience in which they will gain a plethora of knowledge about the root of racism and how it is planted in the music industry will genuinely help them. The participants have learned how to perform with confidence regardless of racial impediments. In addition, the students have learned different ways to overcome challenges through the personal stories of well-known, triumphant artists of color. With the opportunity to ask artists of color in the industry personal questions, they are further prepared for their journey.



****Photos from the 2nd concert****

All of the performances between both nights were absolutely incredible. The successful guest speakers enlightened me on performances that stood out to them.

*188 Strings-
Harp Quartet*



*Amber Nelms-
Solo Harpist*



*Sean Mouzon-
French Hornist*



****Photos from the 2nd concert****

I have had the wonderful opportunity to digitally graphic design several concert posters for different shows at my school. My own concert, of course, would be no exception. Since the concert title was The Colorful Creations of B.I.P.O.C. Artists, I wanted the poster to be colorful and vibrant. I decided to use a black background with drawings and words of bright colors to contrast against the background. I even created some of my own fonts to truly catch the viewer's attention. As usual, it had several revisions. Regardless, they did not block my creativity. Designing the poster was the singular element of the project that I was familiar with, so I produced an eye-catching poster that can be seen on the title page of this article.

I wanted my concerts to be as professional as possible. Small details, such as having printed programs that explained the layout of the concerts, would allow me to reach that goal. I could use a simplified version of the concert poster I originally designed to create the covers of the program. I ordered the performances in the most convenient way to move the instruments. I also wrote a bio for the artists performing. My Language Arts teacher proofread the information, and I was ready to begin printing. After much rearranging, formatting, and test copies, I created a clear and aligned program. I repeated this process for the second program, which had all different acts and guest speakers.

With the completed programs, I could finalize stage plans and food orders. I promised all participants free Chick-fil-A and could do so with money I received from harp gigs and girl-scout cookie profits. I then procured a team of teachers, staff, and students willing to help with stage transitions. I met with my school's Theatre manager, Shawn Anderson, to ensure my stage plans were efficient. I also asked a fellow classmate of mine, along with Mr. Anderson, to work on tech. On the day of the concert, I organized the lighting to correspond with the stage plans. With the stage plans, I efficiently ran the show while simultaneously hosting it. I did a similar process for the second concert night.

Scan of hand-written stage plans from the first concert.

<p><u>Before Concert:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Nhenze's) Drums will be set up on stage - The piano should be center stage, 2 chairs next to it. - Act #1 Performs 	<p>- Act #1 will be interviewed before prep for Act #2.</p> <p><u>Act #2 Prep</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During introduction, Act 2's band will set up. They will guide where they need help. - Act #2 will also be interviewed before preparing for Act #3
<p><u>Act #3 Prep:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During introduction, help Act 2's band move equipment off stage. - Move piano + piano bench to center stage. 	<p><u>Act #4 Prep:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove piano from the stage - Bring one mic + one stand to center stage
<p><u>Act #5 Prep:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove music stand from the stage - Band will move their equipment onto the stage - Give mic to vocalist (with stand) 	<p><u>Act #6 Prep:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drums should STAY ONSTAGE - Band will move their equipment - Move 1 stand on stage
<p><u>Act #7 Prep:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove stand and mic from the stage - Move piano + bench center stage 	<p><u>Act #8 Prep:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove piano + bench from the stage - They [Amber Nelms] will move harp onto stage - SPECIFIC bench should be moved onstage (will be labeled)
<p>Closing Remarks and then DONE!</p>	

By no means could I have done this by myself. I received a tremendous amount of help with each and every step. Micah Husdon, Matt Vu, and Okorie "OkCello" Johnson were all outstanding musicians willing to dedicate their time to music. Dr. Steven Anderson and Shaun Anderson helped through every single step. I am so grateful to have formed such beautiful relationships with them as they continued to push me to my most significant potential. My harp teachers, Dr. Jennifer Betzer and Dr. Molly O'Roark were more than willing to assist with stage plans. Kevin Parker photographed terrific moments from the performances, giving me beautiful photos to share with others. My mother, Melissa Ford, was able to drive to pick up the free Chick-fil-A for the participants and volunteers. My fellow classmate, Tamia Ward, and Mr. Anderson, worked the lighting for both concerts. I had terrific help from Barrie Herman, the operations manager of the Atlanta Metropolitan Youth Symphony Orchestras, who sent the signup link to participate in my performance to all high school musicians in the program.

I have gained so much from this experience. I have learned all it takes to acquire a team to help execute a goal. I have attained the knowledge to lead others. Most of all, I have gained confidence in advocating for myself and not being afraid of being told "no." Many of the students who participated reported having a wonderful time, and I am beyond grateful to say I successfully executed two concerts. I am excited to be able to share my story on such an exceptional music website.

Sincerely,

Madison Ford

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