

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Christmas performance uses original instruments and music *Elementary and university students collaborate in creative music project*

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WATERLOO – Students at Wilfrid Laurier University and Empire public school are drumming up some Christmas spirit with a musical performance that avoids traditional instruments – favoring ones made of hockey sticks, garbage cans and hubcaps. The performance is part of the elementary school’s Christmas concert, which will take place at 7 p.m. on Thursday, December 18 at Waterloo collegiate institute.

The performance is the finale to a project entitled the Sonic Playground. Developed by Leslie Wyber of Laurier’s faculty of music, the program includes workshops intended to spark musical exploration and creativity. It provides the children with an opportunity to create their own musical composition.

“This is a hands-on musical setting that teaches the children about musical concepts,” says Wyber. “It’s also empowering because they have the opportunity to present something they have made.”

During the eight-week program, the children learned about instrumental skill and arrangement, under the guidance of three Laurier music education students. The university students and the children created original compositions through a process that involves improvisation.

During the performance, the elementary students will play handmade instruments that include an electric bass made from a hockey stick, a terra cotta pot percussion section and a garbage can drum.

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Barbara Bryce is the designer responsible for inventing and creating the instruments. Wyber explained that “using familiar objects such as aluminum pipes and fencepost tops, (Bryce) is able to bring music making to a common ground.”

Judith Bean-Hornett, music teacher at Empire public school, invited Laurier to introduce the Sonic Playground to her Grades 3 and 4 music classes. By working with the children, the Laurier students were able to develop new instrumental skills and composition techniques.