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Laurier's sold-out Arts Express camp for children with special needs concludes with free public performance

WATERLOO – At a typical summer camp, children with special needs may feel like they are on the margins. This is definitely not the case at Wilfrid Laurier University's sold-out [Arts Express](#) camp, however, where children with special needs quite literally take centre stage. The camp's final recital takes place on July 12 at 1:30 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

Organized by Laurier's [Music Therapy program](#) in partnership with [KidsAbility](#) and the University of Waterloo, the Arts Express camp is a unique and often transformative learning experience both for the campers and the university students who facilitate it. The Early Childhood Education program at Conestoga College and [Carousel Dance Centre](#) are also founding partners of the program.

Arts Express is both an inclusive camp for children aged six to 14 and the culmination of a full-credit undergraduate course. Since early May, students from Laurier and the University of Waterloo have been studying music, visual arts, dance, drama and how to adapt all these creative activities to children with a wide range of abilities. During the camp, close to 30 volunteers, several of whom are former campers, will help the university students lead activities.

Of the 40 registered campers, 34 have exceptionalities – some are non-verbal, some use wheelchairs and some require one-to-one support all day. Some of the children are accompanied by siblings.

"Arts Express provides an inclusive environment where all campers have the opportunity to express themselves in a fun group setting through singing, dancing, playing, making art, socializing and performing," said Linda Gambell (MMT '08), a Laurier music therapy instructor and supervisor who is coordinating the university course and is part of the team coordinating the camp. "The camp also provides an ideal environment where university students can hone their skills learning how to adapt creative activities to children with a wide range of abilities."

The campers spend four days, July 8 to 11, at KidsAbility's Waterloo site, where in addition to the creative arts activities, they will swim and play outside. On Friday, July 12, they will be at Laurier's [Faculty of Music](#) all day. In the morning, they will rehearse. In the afternoon, starting at 1:30 p.m., they will take to the stage at Laurier's Maureen Forrester Recital Hall for about an hour to present *The Case of the Missing Music*.

The Arts Express final recital is free and open to the public, including members of the media. For information about the 2020 camp, contact artsexpress@wlu.ca.

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About the [Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty of Music](#)

Laurier's Faculty of Music is dedicated to fostering artistic and scholarly development of the highest calibre and to providing a creative environment for student success. A national and international leader in higher music education, the faculty offers innovative, sector-leading programs.

This spring, Laurier's Faculty of Music launched its Making Space for Music campaign to renovate and expand the Waterloo campus music building and to create a dramatic new gateway to Laurier's Waterloo campus. To find out more, visit wlu.ca/giving/making-space-for-music.