

“A Music Camp for Wounded Hearts”

China

Danqing Zhou and Matteo Sabattini, International House New York

Section I

A music camp for wounded hearts was a two weeks free music camp for children who belong to ethnic group minorities, disadvantaged families or who have experienced disasters in Yunnan, China. We aimed to use music to lighten children's heart. The camp also provided greater opportunities for these children to interact with one another, and developing a better understanding of each other's culture. In addition, this project included a teacher training which offered different perspectives and approaches to teaching for teachers to continue working with disadvantaged children in this area.

There were two groups of children participating at the camp. One group of 25 children was from kindergarden, the other group of 20 was from elementary school, from third to fifth grade. We had two teachers and two assistants for each group. Danqing and Matteo taught mainly the older group and Ye Ting, Wang Jing taught mainly the younger group. Each week we had a theme and our music activities were designed following the theme. The first week's theme was “traveling” and the second week's was “animals”. For example, in the animal week we first taught children their favorite animals' name in English. Then we played animal games, watch animal movies. After that our children learned songs about animals in English and Chinese. They also read stories about interesting animals both in China and US. The big project in that week was learning the story and instrumentation of the musical “Peter and Wolf”. After studying the original musical, children made their own version of the musical, including drawing their costumes and masks, composing music, and dance. Besides the final performance at the end, every day we had a short talent show for camper to show their talents. This opportunity strengthened the camper's confidence. The campers decided what they wanted to present in front of other campers. Everyone was participating in the show by singing, dancing, and playing instruments. In the beginning, there were more solo performances, but it was great to see children start to perform in group later. In this two weeks music camp, we also organized two trips for the children. We went to the zoo and water park.

One of the biggest challenges we encountered was at the very beginning. With a really short notice, (while we unfortunately already bought the tickets for Kunming), Mr. Chen, the director of the Conservatory told us that the government was being highly sensitive about people that came from countries infected by the swine flu. We were asked to stay in the hotel in Kunming at least for one week before starting the camp. Therefore they could have been sure that we were not infected. Our schedule was messed up by this sudden change. The two teachers from Shanghai could not extend their staying in Kunming more than what they previously agreed upon. Therefore we had to find two other teachers for the second week of the camp. The unexpected change of plan, also costed us additional expenses. In fact we had to change the flights, and had to cover longer hotel expenses. Mr. Chen helped us to find, in a very short time, the two teachers we needed for teaching in the second week. Mr. Chen also helped us to get a discount for the hotel near the Conservatory. Without his effort, our project might have been canceled. Another problem we had to deal with was about the English level of the kids. The director told us that the English level would have been good enough to being able to teach in English. It took us no more than two minutes to realize that our lesson plans and a lot of material we bought and prepared were totally inadequate for the English level of the students. Most students' level did not go any further than “Good Morning, How are you?, Well, Thank you.” This language barrier of course affected and frustrated mainly Matteo, which was the only one who did not speak Chinese and at that point had to constantly rely on someone else to help him as a translator. Fortunately Danqing took the lead in the first few days so we had more time to prepare and collect suitable and fun material to teach.

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In conclusion, even though we had problems, the project was a success in different ways. First of all, the camp exposed the children to different cultures. They definitely understood in a deeper way other ethnic cultures, moreover, they also learned about western culture in a way that they may not have otherwise been exposed. The camp helped to break down cultural barriers in between different ethnic groups, children made good friends from different ethnic groups. Besides music, they also learned a lot about social skills such as teamwork, leadership and friendship through music activities. The camp was also successful in lightening children's heart. The various music activities were planned to teach students music in a fun setting, such as using games, acting, story telling, drawing, body movements. One of the campers said to us this was the best experience he ever had. He was so happy to have this chance to join the camp. He ask us if we can do it again next year. The trainee, conservatory students and teachers that participated and observed the classes gave us a very warm response. They said they got a lot of inspiration on how to teach students with different cultural backgrounds, and also different perspective on how to teach music and english together. Many parents at the end of the camp expressed to us that they were thrilled to see how many things their children learned in such a short time. And more importantly, they were surprised to see the friendships in between children from different culture backgrounds.

Because the success of this camp, Yunnan Conservatory is eager to have more of this kind of collaborations to continue helping disadvantaged children in Yunnan. They are especially interested in learning more about music education for disadvantaged children and music therapy. We are planning to help them to set up collaboration with Music Department in Teachers College, Columbia University. We also hope our project inspire more and more people and organizations to come to Yunnan to continue helping disadvantaged children in this area.

Section II

We believe **RESPECT** is one of the main elements that constitute **PEACE**. Peace means respecting each other and having harmonious relationship in between people. This can be achieved when more and more people will start to treat others the way they expect to be treated. Also, peace means being able to work together and willing to share. In the music camp, our children were exposed to different cultures. They learned to respect and accept diversity. Moreover, most of our music projects required teamwork. Therefore, they practiced how to accomplish a project by sharing ideas, solving conflicts, and working together. Also, the music camp taught students to use music to express their emotion, to use music to lighten their hearts, and to use music to communicate.

We are so grateful to the Davis Project for Peace and International House to help us bringing our project to life. The preparation and planning of the project, and the direct experience of it, gave us an invaluable experience that we would have not been able to experience by ourselves. We learned to adapt to the local environment and culture. We learned to be more flexible. We learned that having back-up plans for emergency situations is definitely a must. From solving different problems and having to deal with so many people, our social skills and leadership also got strengthened. Most importantly, the change that happened to the children, taught us that the world could be more peaceful if more people would devote time and energy in working and educating people, especially children, about respect which is one of the main ingredients of peace.

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