

# Michael Park School Summer Fair

## How to organise the entertainment, stage and music.

### Tony Richards November 2014

#### Overview

These are the procedures, logistics and contacts I have used to produce the entertainment for the Fair – but first a quick summary. The job is to book and schedule the performers, to have a stage and a roof of some kind, to supply and operate a sound system, to stage manage and brief an MC, and to make an official start at 9.30am with a karakia.

In terms of the entertainment there needs to be a mix of student performers, accomplished parent and donated performers, and a professional main act. In 2014 we also had a buskers stage by the kindergarten with a scheduled line up of itinerant music teachers and folk singers.

#### Five key points

1. It really doesn't matter who performs at the Fair because it won't effect the attendance numbers – we just say there's 'live music' on the posters.
2. For the last three years the Fair Committee has paid the main band \$350 cash on the day.
3. Low production levels are fine – some years we've had no stage, just mats on the ground, a stretch canopy roof and two speakers on stands.
4. Avoid booking too many learners – we need to entertain with accomplished performers and create a festive atmosphere, it's not a student concert.
5. It's a long day – pack-in on Friday afternoon, start on Saturday at 6am and finish at about 7pm.

#### *in more detail*

1. It really doesn't matter who plays at the Fair because we don't advertise the entertainment, we just say 'live music', and so all we need is at least one professional band for the peak 12 noon slot who can play for an hour and a half. They need to be accomplished and culturally interesting – preferably, in my opinion, not a pub band, a dads band or a chart-reading jazz band.
2. Be up front with bands about the low fee offered and start the booking process early, about 6 weeks out. I have paid up to \$500 for the main band, but in 2012, 13 and 14 it was just \$350, and plenty of bands are keen to play and some will try to negotiate a higher fee, I also offer them free lunch vouchers – Sesame tickets to buy food.
3. Small is beautiful – some years we had no stage, just mats on the ground with a Schupepe stretch canopy roof. The 2014 stage was the biggest yet at 6 x 12 metres but it could easily be downsized to a small marquee and still be fine.
4. Avoid booking too many student learners – we need to entertain with accomplished performers and create a festive atmosphere, it's not a student concert. Rosana's Suzuki Violins always have the 10am slot and play for 20 minutes – it's a highlight, it works well and it's very popular with parents. The number of additional student performers needs to be limited in my opinion – it's a tough call, but too many learners is not entertaining enough for an outdoor public event.
5. It's a long day – I pack-in equipment on the Friday afternoon when I run my power cable from the sick bay (and cover with rubber mats on the pathway). On Saturday I'm on-site from 6am and always the last to leave at about 7.30pm. Student and parent helpers are appreciated but never seem able to commit to the whole day at the stage. You need at least one technical assistant: someone who knows

how to set up microphones quickly and operate a mixing desk. There's usually about ten changeovers in the six hours of performance time from 9.30am to 3.30pm.

## Entertainment

In 2002 I booked the Twisty Willow Celtic Band for \$500 to play for 3 hours, since then I've booked salsa bands, reggae, klezmer, Irish, electric jazz, acapella groups, cover bands, and numerous performers from harpists to samba percussion.

When negotiating with musicians it's best to ask them to make 'a donated performance' rather than to 'play for free', – it's more respectful. Beware of bands who say 'We'll look after you', and then a few days out when you're committed find out their discounted fee is \$2,000 (down from their standard \$4,000 corporate fee) – it happens.

There is always the temptation to book a 'name' band, and promote it as a concert event with the hope of boosting attendance – but the fee they will expect along with the increased production levels they will require will be very costly, and in my opinion, the costs will outweigh the benefits. Apart from there being no significant financial advantage in turning the Fair into a concert event I also think it would take away the charm of a low tech, hand-craft and child-focused family day.

## Performers

*Here's a list of performers and their contact numbers we have booked over the last 13 years, starting with the most recent.*

Kabin Bread Boys (Tongan ukulele band)– Jay Upoko jayupoko@hotmail.com 021 111 8567

Nigel Gavin and Richard Adams – (virtuoso guitar and electric violin) 021 294 9661

The Jews Brothers (Klezmer, Eastern European) Herschel & Linn Lorkin – 376 1838

AK Samba (20 piece Marimba band) – www.aksamba.org.nz

Ed Gaiger (solo covers artist) – 021 261 2460

Josh Leys (solo covers artist) – 021 143 6733 joshleys@hotmail.com

The Celtic Flyers (Irish pub band) Sean Kelly.

CVE with Jonny Love (covers band) – Grant Hislop 021 483 524 grant@harkmusic.co.nz

Drops Of Brandy (Irish, Russian) Howard Wills & Family 525 2212

Twisty Willow Celtic Band – Wes & Barb Bycroft 814-9203, 021 112 1568

Rosana Fea (MPS violin teacher, Suzuki Violin Group) - 025 327 400

Reb Fountain (parent/musician) 027 235 9024

Sacha (classic guitar teacher at MPS) 817 7705

Curtis (guitar/drums teacher at MPS) 021 201 9136

## PA sound system specs

2014: JBL MRX500 3,000 watts with 2x 18" subs, 2x 15" mids & horns, 2x 200watt stage monitors, 1x monitor at mixer, 16 channel Mackie, FX and compression, 2x handheld cordless mics, 4x overhead choir mic, 2x instrument mics, 4x vocal mics, 4x DIs, 2x techs.

Previous years (smaller system): 2x 500watt active speakers, 2x 200 watt monitors, 8 channel Yamaha mixer with FX, 2x handheld cordless mics, 4x overhead choir mic, 2x instrument mics, 4x vocal mics, 4x DIs, 1x tech.

Buskers Stage: We used the music department's QSC speakers supplemented with additional equipment; 2x speaker stands, 8 channel mixer, 2x vocal mics, 3x3m gazebo with mats.

## Stage and Roof

For the last two years the stage and roof has been donated by a school parent Tala Laban of Camelspace. talal@camelspace.com 027 500 1094, 09 574 6867

Previously we have used Auckland Staging, Ray Horan 027 320 8008, and Schupepe for the stretch canopy roof, Patrick 021 530 058, approximately \$550 for the stage and about \$550 for the roof.

## Music Programme

A karakia opens the Fair and is organised by Jade Flavell <jadef@michaelpark.school.nz> who asks Tamati <maungarongo@gmail.com> to perform it.

A schedule of the performers needs to be given to the graphic designer, Adrienne Foote, afoote8@gmail.com to put on the map handout about a week before the Fair, here's the programme from 2014

9.25am	Karakia & Welcome
9.30am	Reb Fountain & Dave Khan
10am	The Suzuki Violins
10.20	The Senior School Orchestra
10.40	MPS Jazz Group
11am	Sonia de Freitas & Joanne
11.15	Nutan Bhat Indian Classical Dancer
11.40	Tony Richards & Paul Naveen
12.00	Kabin Bread Boys Ukulele band
2pm	The Volcanic City Voices
2.35pm	– Raffle draws –
3pm	Ezra
3.30pm	Fair Ends - then Class12 DJ - dance party on stage – all welcome

To download a pdf of this document go to:

<http://www.21589.cmstrial.net/michaelparkschoolfair.html>

## Personal notes and reflections not related to the entertainment

The stall holders I have spoken to tell me it's one of the best fairs they attend – that means it must be profitable for them. I wonder if all the effort the school community puts into fund raising for the school has been so successful that the Fair has now evolved into a wonderful retailing opportunity for private commercial interests. It would be a pity if they collectively made more out of the Fair than the school. Perhaps it's time to re-think stallholder fees and sponsorship contributions.

Compared to the many fairs and community events I supply around Auckland ours is unique and head and shoulders above them all – it has an authentic old-fashioned feel, the food is wholesome and much is organic, the hand-crafts are beautiful, the games are charming and original, it is well planned and there is attention to good design with the printed material, signage and decoration. It's a classy event – there are no bouncy castles or hot dog and chip vendors, no two dollar shop junk or quick-fire raffles. No wonder the gate numbers are increasing every year. I think something very special has been created – folks, we're sitting on a goldmine!

In marketing terms it attracts a high-end demographic, an affluent middle class comparable to, for example, the Matakana Farmers Market crowd – except bigger. There also seems to have been a corresponding increase in outside commercial interests at the Fair but I'm not sure if their inclusion looks right – although, I do hope they pay plenty for the privilege.

*Tony Richards, 17 November 2014*