



# A Fling Called Swing Handbook

*Your Guide to Creating an International Swing Band*

**Created by DeAmicitia**





# The AFCS Handbook



## Purpose of the Handbook







**Music has the power to unite people across borders,** generations, and languages.

This handbook was created to guide organizations and youth workers in replicating a vibrant, community-centered experience: bringing together international young volunteers to form a swing band, rehearse collaboratively, and share the joy of music — not only with public audiences, but most meaningfully, with elderly people in care homes.

**Funded and inspired by the values of the European Union,** this project fosters intercultural dialogue, solidarity, and emotional connection. It is more than a musical initiative — it's a social journey that helps young musicians grow, elderly people feel remembered, and communities come alive through rhythm, laughter, and shared human stories.

Whether you're an NGO, music educator, cultural association, or youth center, this handbook is a practical toolkit to help you turn this idea into a joyful reality in your own town, region, or country.

## What You'll Find in This Handbook

-  How to recruit and select international youth volunteers with musical backgrounds
-  Day-by-day structure for a 20-day musical residency
-  Workshop ideas and rehearsal planning for building a swing band from scratch
-  How to organize a final concert for the wider community
-  Step-by-step guide for performing in an elderly home, including logistics and preparation
-  Tools to encourage intercultural learning and group bonding



# 01

# Preparatory Phase





# 1. Preparatory Phase: The Foundation of Success

Before a single note is played, the groundwork you lay during this phase will determine the strength of the entire project. A successful experience depends on careful planning, clear communication, and community partnerships.

- ✨ Clearly define your project's goals and values, so everyone involved — from staff to volunteers — shares the same vision.
- 👤 Select the right group of young musicians: Not just based on skill, but also attitude, curiosity, and willingness to collaborate.
- 🎵 Secure the instruments you need, especially for volunteers who can't bring their own. You'll learn how to partner with music schools, community centers, or local bands to find what you need.
- 🏠 Reach out to elderly homes early: These partnerships take time. You'll receive guidance on how to approach care facilities, explain your mission, and arrange concerts that are safe, accessible, and sensitive to residents' needs.
- 📍 Book spaces and manage logistics: The right rehearsal environment, accommodation, and transport plan make a huge difference in how focused, safe, and cohesive the group will feel.

Skipping or rushing this phase often leads to stress, confusion, or missed opportunities. This section gives you the tools to build a solid base — musically, practically, and socially.





# 02

## Implementation Phase

---



## 2. Implementation Phase: Shaping the Journey (20 Days)

Once your volunteers arrive, the real experience begins. But for the project to be transformative — not just busy — you need a thoughtful and flexible structure.

- 📅 Design a balanced daily rhythm that includes music, learning, reflection, and intercultural bonding.
- 🎵 Structure effective rehearsals: Learn how to split time between full-band sessions, sectionals, and creative explorations — all while keeping energy high and progress steady.
- 🌟 Enrich the program with workshops that go beyond performance: swing dance, jazz history, improvisation, and confidence-building.
- 🌍 Foster a strong, inclusive group culture through evening activities like country presentations, storytelling, and shared meals.

A well-designed schedule ensures that participants grow musically, socially, and emotionally — while also keeping the team energized and engaged.



## 2.1. Example 20-Day Timeline

### DAY & MAIN ACTIVITY

Day 1	Arrival, icebreakers, cultural welcome night
Day 2	Internal auditions, section grouping, leader selection
Day 3–5	Sectional rehearsals (brass, rhythm, vocals)
Day 6–	First full-band rehearsal + repertoire selection
Day 7	Cultural day-off (local excursion or activity)
Day 8–10	Rehearsals + Workshops (dance, theory, improvisation)
Day 11	Combo practice (small ensembles, solo rehearsals)
Day 12–14	Full-band rehearsals, setlist building
Day 15	Technical run-through + sound check
Day 16	Free day / group reflection and feedback
Day 17–18	Dress rehearsals, community performance (test show)
Day 19	Final public concert
Day 20	Evaluation, packing, closing ceremony, departures



## 2.2. Daily Structure

### TIME

### ACTIVITY

9:00 - 10:00	Breakfast & musical warm-up
10:00 - 13:00	Section rehearsals / full band
13:00 - 15:00	Lunch & break
15:00 - 17:00	Workshops (swing dance, improvisation, swing history)
17:00 - 19:00	General rehearsals or jam sessions
20:00 - 21:00	Dinner
21:00 - 22:30	Cultural exchange activities (games, presentations, movies)



# Building the band

# 03



### 3. Building the Band:

## Music Direction & Collaboration

Turning a group of international strangers into a swing band in less than three weeks takes more than talent — it takes structure, trust, and joy.

In this section, you'll explore:

- 🎵 How to structure musical leadership, with a dedicated musical director, section leaders, and rehearsal assistants
- 📋 Choosing your repertoire: Get a ready-to-use list of swing classics and adaptable sheet music for beginner to intermediate levels
- 🧠 Learning by doing: Encourage creative input from participants through mini-combos, solo moments, and jam sessions
- 📏 Arranging and adapting music to fit the real-time dynamics of the group — flexibility is key!

It's not about perfection — it's about creating harmony across borders and building confidence together.







# Fostering Collaboration Among Participants

## **1. Sectional Rehearsals**

- Purpose: Allow musicians to focus on their specific parts, improving individual and group performance.
- Implementation: Divide the ensemble into sections (e.g., brass, woodwinds, rhythm). Each section practices their parts separately before coming together.

## **2. Mentoring**

- Purpose: Encourage knowledge sharing and support among participants.
- Implementation: Pair experienced musicians with beginners to provide guidance and foster a collaborative learning environment.

## **3. Jam Sessions**

- Purpose: Promote improvisation and creative expression.
- Implementation: Organize informal jam sessions where participants can experiment with different styles and ideas, enhancing their musical versatility.

## **4. Group Arranging**

- Purpose: Develop arrangement skills and ensure all voices are heard.
- Implementation: Encourage participants to contribute ideas for arranging pieces, fostering a sense of ownership and collective creativity.

## 04

# Elderly Home Outreach



## 4. Elderly Home Outreach: Music with Purpose



One of the most impactful and heartfelt elements of this project is the outreach performance at a local care home for elderly residents. This isn't just a concert — it's a chance to bridge generations, bring joy to people who may feel isolated, and give young musicians a powerful reminder of why music matters.

For many residents, this may be the first live performance they've seen in years. For others, it may spark long-forgotten memories, emotions, or simply offer a much-needed change of routine. For the volunteers, it is often one of the most moving experiences of the entire program — where the true social value of their art becomes undeniable. This section guides you through the steps to make this visit a success — emotionally, logistically, and artistically.

### **Partnering with a Nursing Home**

Why it matters: Establishing a respectful, clear, and enthusiastic partnership with a care facility ensures the event is meaningful, safe, and enriching for everyone involved.

- Identify suitable homes or care facilities in your local area.
- Contact staff early — ideally 1–2 months in advance — and clearly explain the purpose of the visit, its format, and the value it offers.
- Use provided email and phone call scripts to introduce the project and build trust.
- Discuss with the nursing home:
  - The ideal time and day for the performance.
  - The physical setup (indoor/outdoor, stage space, audience arrangement).
  - Accessibility and health-related needs of residents.
  - Any COVID or hygiene protocols still in place.
  - Whether interaction with residents is welcome after the performance (e.g. conversation, photo-taking, card-giving).



## Preparing Volunteers: Social & Emotional Readiness 📖

Why it matters: Performing for elderly people — especially those with dementia, hearing loss, or mobility challenges — requires empathy, sensitivity, and awareness. Young volunteers may feel unsure, nervous, or emotionally overwhelmed if not prepared.

- Lead a pre-visit workshop or reflection session to help volunteers:
  - Understand who they're performing for.
  - Discuss how aging, illness, or loneliness can affect people — and how music can uplift and connect.
  - Learn respectful behaviors and boundaries (e.g. not touching, asking permission before photos, speaking clearly and kindly).
- Share example phrases they can use when interacting (e.g. "Do you have a favorite song from when you were younger?").
- Encourage them to be present and open, not performative — the goal is connection, not perfection.

## Transport & Equipment 🚌

Why it matters: Elderly homes are often not equipped like concert venues, so careful planning is key to avoid stress or confusion on the day.

- Organizing safe and timely transport of:
  - Volunteers
  - Instruments (especially larger or delicate ones)
  - Basic amplification (if needed)
- Creating a packing checklist to ensure nothing is forgotten.
- Designating a volunteer or team member as the "tech contact" to coordinate setup on site.
- Arriving early to set up and greet staff with care and professionalism.



## Songs 🎵

Music has the power to evoke memories and emotions — especially songs from earlier decades that residents may recognize and connect with. Choosing the right songs transforms a concert into an emotional journey.

- Select a short, joyful set (30–45 minutes) that blends swing standards with melodies familiar to older generations.
- Include slower, lyrical moments as well as upbeat, clapping-friendly tunes.
- Encourage sing-alongs where appropriate (e.g. “Que Sera, Sera,” “When the Saints Go Marching In,” “Fly Me to the Moon”).
- Assign someone to introduce songs briefly and warmly, helping contextualize them (“This next song was a big band hit in the 1940s...”).
- Keep the atmosphere light, respectful, and focused on shared joy rather than polished performance.



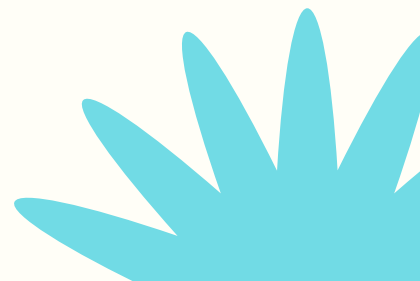




## After the Visit: Reflection & Integration 🧘

Why it matters: The experience can be emotional, and it's important to offer space for volunteers to process it and understand its deeper impact.

- A short group debriefing guide, with questions like:
  - How did it feel to perform in that setting?
  - What reactions or moments stood out to you?
  - What does this experience teach us about the power of music?
- Suggestions for creative reflection:
  - Writing a short letter to someone they met.
  - Creating a group collage or “memory wall.”
  - Recording a short video message for future volunteers.
- Encouragement to integrate this experience into their understanding of music, aging, empathy, and community action.



# 05

## The Final Concert





## 5. The Final Concert: Celebrating the Journey

The final concert is the culmination of everything: the rehearsals, the learning, the laughter, and the deep intercultural connections built throughout the project. But it is more than a musical performance — it is a public celebration of shared growth, European unity, and social impact. Handled well, the final concert becomes:

- A platform to showcase what young people can create together in just 20 days.
- A recognition space for the community, families, and partners who supported the process.
- A legacy moment that connects the project with broader EU values like inclusion, creativity, mobility, and intergenerational solidarity.

This section of the handbook helps you ensure the concert is not only a success but a moment of true visibility and pride.







## Choosing the Right Venue 🏛️

Why it matters: The space you choose affects everything — acoustics, comfort, atmosphere, accessibility, and the audience's emotional experience.

Tips for choosing wisely:

- Look for venues that are central, accessible, and welcoming to all age groups (including older audiences and those with disabilities).
- Match your space to the scale and vibe of the project: a cozy community center, an open-air square, or a historic cultural hall can all work beautifully depending on your goals.
- Ensure the venue allows for:
  - A stage or open area large enough for the full band.
  - Seating for the audience (check visibility and comfort).
  - Sound system or ability to bring your own.
  - A backstage area or room for warming up and changing.

Don't forget: Make a plan for weather contingencies if it's outdoors.





## Promoting the Event 📣

Why it matters: A well-attended and well-promoted concert gives visibility not only to the performers but also to your organization, partners, and EU-funded youth work as a whole.

Promotion strategies:

- Create a concert flyer/poster (Canva templates work great) including:
  - Project name, tagline, and EU logos
  - Date, time, location
  - Key message (e.g., “An international swing band connecting generations through music”)
- Contact local media outlets (newspapers, radio, community websites) with a press release and personal invite.
- Invite:
  - Local community members and families of volunteers
  - Partner organizations, cultural institutions, and music schools
  - Representatives from the municipality, EU youth program offices, or funders
- Use social media creatively:
  - Countdown stories
  - Rehearsal behind-the-scenes clips
  - Short interviews with participants

Optional but powerful: Print a concert program for the audience — include the repertoire, performer names, and a paragraph explaining the project and its EU support.

## Structuring the Show: Emotion, Energy & Identity 🎭

Why it matters: A thoughtful concert structure enhances the audience's experience and helps tell the story of your project. You're not just performing music — you're showing what's possible when diverse young people come together with a purpose

Suggestions for a strong structure:

- Welcome speech by a facilitator or participant: briefly introduce the project, its purpose, and the audience's role as supporters.
- Multilingual introductions: Have different participants introduce songs in their own languages (with brief translations) to showcase the international makeup of the band.
- Setlist pacing: Mix slow and upbeat songs. Start strong, add variety in the middle, and end with a powerful, joyful closer.
- Solo or group highlights: Feature soloists or small groups to showcase individual talents and variety.
- Interactive moment: Encourage a sing-along or clapping section during a familiar tune.
- Surprise element: A fun encore or a thank-you moment involving the audience (e.g., giving flowers to nursing home staff or key project partners).

Final words: End with gratitude. Thank your volunteers, audience, staff, and EU program for making the project possible.







## Documenting the Event: Creating a Lasting Memory 🎬

Why it matters: The concert may only last one evening, but its impact can be amplified through photos, video, and storytelling. This helps share your work, promote future editions, and inspire others.

Documentation checklist:

- Assign someone (or a team) to handle:
  - Photography: Capture key moments (group shots, performance, crowd reactions).
  - Video clips: Record highlights or the full concert.
  - Interviews: Ask volunteers and audience members short questions before or after the show:
    - “What does this project mean to you?”
    - “What moment moved you the most?”
    - “What message would you share with future participants?”
- Share content:
  - On your organization’s website and social platforms.
  - With local and national EU youth agencies or platforms.
  - In your final evaluation report to funders.
- Consider compiling a short recap video that can be used as a promotional or legacy tool for future projects.

# Final words: **Keep the music playing**

This handbook has taken you through every phase of an extraordinary journey — from gathering international volunteers and rehearsing joyful swing music, to performing for elderly communities and sharing your story on a public stage. But more than just logistics and checklists, what you hold in your hands is a blueprint for connection, creativity, and purpose.

At the heart of this project is something profoundly simple:  
***Music brings people together***

It transcends language, generations, and borders. It opens hearts, invites joy, and reminds us that we are more alike than different. Whether your project takes place in a small village or a bustling city, the values behind it remain the same: community, inclusion, and the belief that young people can create powerful change.

As you now prepare to bring your own version of this project to life, remember:

- Each note played is a gesture of unity.
- Each moment of shared silence or laughter is a form of healing.
- Each participant, young or old, brings value to the experience.

You don't need perfection.

You need intention, passion, and a willingness to listen.

Let this not be the end, but a beginning — of new collaborations, of deeper connections between generations, and of many more joyful bands forming across Europe and beyond.

So go ahead. Tune your instruments, gather your team, and let the music begin.

The world is waiting to hear your song.

With swing, soul, and solidarity —  
DeAmicitia

