Concerts and special events: 1970s

With so many of its teachers and alumni staying in Chicago to perform at local clubs, the Old Town School drew on dozens of gifted local musicians to perform at concerts. But it also continued the early tradition of bringing the best national, and international, performers to Chicago audiences.

"Sid Silverstein traveled through Chicago rather frequently, and he often stopped off at the School. In the late afternoon when things were quiet, he would sit near my desk singing and playing, and I would enjoy a private concert." Muddy Waters taught a blues guitar workshop at the School one summer. I asked Muddy how he would like to promote the workshop. He said, "Just say we're going to get together and sing some blues."

"I gave him his paycheck, made out to Muddy Waters. He looked at it for a long time, and he seemed embarrassed and uncomfortable. I told him that if there was a mistake it would be no problem to void the check and make out another to correct the amount."

"He said, 'Can you make your fingers write McKinley Morganfield? That's my name.'" -Floyd Brightman

In 1977, the School invited Chicagoans to help celebrate its 20th anniversary with a giant singalong and concert at Navy Pier. Over 700 people brought their guitars, banjos, autoharps, and voices to fill the cavernous building with music. Ray Tate and other School musicians led songs, with lyrics and chords projected on a huge screen for all to follow. And Pete Seeger, a friend of the School from the beginning, gave a benefit concert after the singalong.