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# Staten Island Advance

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## Bread and Butter

### Psychiatrists Wonder at Outcome As Musician Readies Big Show



Willowbrook State School's music director, Vincent Lombardi, rehearses with a group of his instrumentalists in preparation for a new experiment in the field of music therapy.

#### Lombardi Plans To Stage Hit At Willowbrook

By ERWIN ENDRESS

An epidemic of raised eyebrows among top New York State psychiatrists resulted recently when a young music director at Willowbrook State School swallowed hard, then made an announcement.

The director, 29-year-old Vincent Lombardi, told them he intended to produce an original four-act, Broadway-type musical production at the school for the mentally retarded!

True, the project could boomerang into failure.

But Lombardi pointed out that Dr. Harold H. Berman, the noted psychiatrist who directs Willowbrook, had originated the idea and was firmly convinced it could suc-

director of music at the school for two years.

He had no prior experience with the mentally retarded, but he has proven that the capabilities of such children can be developed, with surprising results in the field of music.

IT WASN'T LONG after he came to Willowbrook that he developed a 34-piece band. Only recently, when it played before an audience of 2,000 persons at a function of the Benevolent Society for the Retarded at Manhattan's Hotel Astor, its repertoire amazed listeners.

The children, some of which Lombardi says are "extremely talented," played everything from Tschalkowsky's "March Slav" to "Over the Rainbow." Right now, Lombardi says, the band plays such popular numbers as "You Belong to Me" and "Hold Me."

"You just can't beat the enthusiasm of these children," Lombardi

normal teen-agers might not be able to succeed so quickly in preparing a musical show because they are "distracted in too many ways."

"Willowbrook's children, living a somewhat confined existence," he says, "find that this show is a grand diversion. The result is their complete and undivided attention."

As a musician, Lombardi specializes in trumpet. But he also plays trombone, saxophone, clarinet and other instruments, including the drums. Three years with the 676th U.S. Army Air Force Band at Macon, Ga., during World War II, rounded out his musical education, he says.

Lombardi and his wife, Kathleen, make their home at 28 Cliffside avenue, Stapleton. It was there that Lombardi, with the encouragement of his wife, spent weeks framing a plot for his musical, and there he composed the music and lyrics. He now is shaping up orchestration