

Booking Concerts – Tips for Classical & Jazz Musicians

How do you find places to play concerts? You'll need to compile a list of likely presenters (a presenter is someone who runs a concert series, who is in charge of selecting artists or groups for performances). Presenters you may want to contact include colleges and universities in your area that sponsor concerts or festivals, as well as local arts agencies which may run a community concert series. For concert presentations, or for a tour in your region, you may need to do some research.

Start with the contacts you have, the places you've already played professionally or with a college group – the presenters you've already met are excellent sources for other possibilities, and they may refer you to another presenter colleague. Get letters of recommendation from satisfied customers.

Check the following sources; many of these valuable presenter lists are available for purchase:

1. Your state arts agency should be able to send you a computer printout of music organizations, or presenters in your state, see how they divide up their database. Your state arts agency is a state government office and is listed in your phone directory.
2. For presenters in other states in your region of the country, contact your regional arts organization (these are listed in *Musical America*, and in the Jazz Resources Handout).
3. The Association of Performing Arts Presenters (a national organization): tel. (202) 833-2787.
4. The National Endowment for the Arts (see under federal programs)
5. *Musical America Directory*, the annual directory for the music industry, expensive but available at most large music school's libraries. You can find listings of presenters in both "Performing Arts Series" and "Festivals" sections for the US and Canada. These listings contain information on presenters' artist fees budgets, so you'll know if they can pay you a reasonable fee, as well as information on the type of concerts/presentations they book, number per season, seating capacity, and contact name, address, phone, fax.

The goal of your research is to find appropriate potential presenters, with appropriately sized halls, booking concert artists such as yourself or your group. Beyond the research sources listed above #1-5, you can and should call or write a potential presenter, simply requesting to be sent a current brochure of their season (and to be placed on their mailing list). You want their season information because you want to see what their most recent season looks like. Ask yourself are they likely to be interested in the type of music you do, and do they present local talent or less well-known groups – do they have an "emerging artist" slot on their season roster? This process should narrow your list down considerably. Don't let that discourage you – you want to be sending your materials only to the most receptive presenters possible.

Next think of who you know who has performed on any of these presenters' concert series – think of the teachers you've had, fellow students, colleagues, etc. Call them first and ask how they arranged the gig and ask whether or not they'd suggest you contact the presenter. If any say no, ask if they can suggest an alternative presenter. This should give you more valuable background. Again, this may weed out more of your possibilities but that's OK because you want a shorter list of realistic prospects.

Once you have the green light from performers who have played the venue in question (performed on the presenter's concert series), and you have a referral name to use, then you should make a telephone contact. Make sure you have the right name, and pronunciation, and title of the presenter (check carefully before calling). Call at "optimum" times Tues.-Thurs., 10-11 a.m. or 2-3 p.m., when many busy administrators are more likely to be willing to talk. You may need to be persistent. Leave messages including the fact that XYZ person (the one who performed on the series) suggested you call.

Contacting Presenters – basic points to bear in mind

- Approach them in a friendly, non-threatening, information-seeking manner. Don't be too pushy
- Don't compare yourself with other performers, or put down others to prove that you are more deserving.
- Don't rate yourself or offer subjective evaluations of your performance – offer concrete information on where else you've played, who you've worked with, awards you've won, etc.
- Seek information about their operation:
 - When do they book artists for the next season?
 - What type of audience does their series attract?
 - How can you assist them in the process of deciding to book you?
(What materials would they like you to send?)
- Don't send your press kit or materials "cold," without first establishing some sort of relationship with the presenter, through a referral, phone call, or introduction.
- It's a good idea to not send everything at once (unless it's requested) because you want to be able to follow-up with additional materials as appropriate, to keep your name in front of the presenter.

The initial telephone contact

If and when you are lucky enough to actually get through on the phone to the right person, the presenter, you will need to have a prepared 15 second script about yourself. The object is to interest the presenter in hearing more about you and your band, and to want you to send a press packet.

Your telephone "commercial" should go something like this:

"Hello, my name is _____. My friend Jane Doe, the jazz band leader of _____, who performed on your series last year suggested I call you about performing at _____. I'm from _____ and performed in the area at the _____ concert series several years ago. I'm a graduate of _____, have been on tour with _____ and _____, and recently performed a concert at _____ which received very favorable press in the _____ paper. I'm especially interested in performing in [name the region of the presenter] because of my roots here in the community. Our band also offers master classes as a community outreach component of our performances."

Obviously, you'll need to modify this – tailor it to your own situation. Practice it with friends, preferably with friends who have done this before, to get feedback and tips for improving. When you're ready, don't make your first call the most important one – you'll need to get a few under your belt before you begin to get more comfortable.

Possible outcomes of telephone contact:

- The presenter can tell you flat out she/he is not interested (unfortunately, dealing with rejection is part of being a musician – you are not alone and you should try as much as possible not to take this personally).
- The presenter says she/he will get back to you. This may or may not be a put-off. Be careful in follow-up phone calls – don't be a pest.
- The presenter says, "Just send me your materials." (Maybe just trying to get rid of you, maybe not.) Send the materials with a letter with something like:
 - "As you requested, I am sending you materials on my jazz ensemble, the _____. I very much enjoyed speaking with you and will call next week to make sure the information got to you. Again, my friend and colleague _____, who played on your series last year suggested I contact you and I am very enthusiastic about the opportunity to perform on your series. Sincerely, _____"
- If the conversation is going on for a bit and you've captured the presenter's interest, make a point of explaining in what ways your abilities and their needs make a match, i.e. if they do a lot of master class or outreach children's presentations in conjunction with their concert series, and you can offer both, it's a good fit; likewise if they have a history of presenting local emerging artists and you fit the bill.

Consider the Presenter's Viewpoint

When speaking with presenters, remember that they are concerned with filling a hall, covering their costs, presenting interesting, memorable, and possibly balanced programming for an entire season, and making subscribers happy (not necessarily in that order). When you can speak to any of these needs, you are a potential asset to the presenter, and that is appreciated.

Follow up

Once you promise to call next week to follow up, do so. Keep a log of contacts with presenters so you know who you sent what to, who you called, and what the next step will be. When calling to follow up – tell the presenter that’s why you’re calling – to make sure they got the materials. Offer to send them a demo tape and ask if there is any further information you can provide. Ask when performers are scheduled – is it an ongoing process, or only during a particular time of year? For example, many summer festivals may only want materials in December or January. How far in advance do they book? When should you contact them again? If a season is already booked, find out when they’d like to hear from you again. Then leave them alone until it is time to contact them again. It is still okay to send them postcards and other appropriate information in the meantime, but please no phone calls.

The Fee – Negotiating

In your research on presenters you should be finding out from performers who worked with them what the general range in fees is. This is so that when a presenter starts to get serious about inviting you on the series and she/he asks what your fee is, you quote a range that’s realistic (neither too high nor too low to look respectable and to leave room for negotiation.)

If you have management, the presenter will haggle over fees with your manager; if not, you’ll do it yourself. If a presenter asks why they are not dealing with your management, and you have none, you can say that you’re just launching your career and have not yet looked into which management will be best for you, or that you’re between managements, etc. Many presenters deal directly with performers, so you need not feel like a second-class citizen because you don’t have management. It may, though feel awkward in “selling” yourself as an artist to a presenter and in negotiating a fee for yourself. Keep in mind that these are learned skills – negotiating and selling –you’ll get better as you go. You need to speak confidently about yourself as a performer and to present yourself on the phone as a gracious professional – you may want to role play with friends for a few trial phone calls before doing the real thing.

When it’s time for the subject of your fee, it may be the presenter or you who broaches it first. Be prepared – have an idea of what they pay similar artists at the series. Ask people you know who have played there, ask your state arts agency – the concert series may be funded in part through a local arts agency, and check the presenter information in *Musical America Directory*). Next, know what your real costs will be to do the concert – rehearsal time, travel, hotel, any special equipment. You’ll need to weigh the advantages that the concert will bring to your career (a possible review, exposure, experience, etc.), against your costs – so determine your rock bottom price ahead of time.

Be prepared to say something like, “My usual fee is \$(name it)...”then PAUSE.

The presenter can now say that’s fine, that’s too much, or we’re not your usual case so (and propose you another figure). If the presenter waits through the pause for you to continue, then add, “. . . but my fee is negotiable,” or “. . . but I’m willing to work with you on this.” The idea to convey to the presenter is that you ARE working with them as a team to help put together a great series in their community, and that you’re flexible (within reason) and that you’ll be easy to work with.

Young solo artists can get fees of \$1,000 to \$3,000 for touring engagements. However, locally funded concert series, funded by libraries and local arts agencies, do not pay this well – you can expect fees between \$300-\$800, which may be fine if your travel and accommodation costs are minimal.

The best thing you can be (to a presenter) is:

1. Easy to work with.
2. Prompt in sending requested materials and in following up.
3. Flexible and professional, understand that they will probably not make a final decision in only one or two phone calls.

Confirming the Gig

When you've negotiated the fee and confirmed the date, send a letter of confirmation outlining the details you've agreed upon. This should include arrival/set up time, performance length, whether or not there is an intermission, performance fee and venue address and phone number. You may also send your contract at this time, or the presenter may have a standard one she/he uses. When using your own contract, send two copies to the presenter to sign; when the presenter sends both copies back, you sign both, keep one, and send back the other. This is to make sure that you both get copies of completely signed agreements and that you don't sign anything first and then have the presenter make changes to the contract after you've signed (not that they would, but it's a legal precaution with contracts).

Also request directions to the venue (performance site), parking and hotel information, if applicable, at this time.

Before the Concert

If you are providing flyers or posters or the press photos and materials needed to make these, check with the presenter several weeks before the date to make sure they've arrived. Make sure you've given complete program information on time (presenters usually don't like any program changes, but if it's necessary, it can't be helped.)

Seven to ten days prior to your performance call the presenter to re-establish contact, to verify all the details and confirm that nothing has changed.

The Big Day

- Come early – it will help reassure the presenter, stage hands, etc.
- Consider a verbal introduction of your program and pieces if you are good or have potential for speaking well to an audience. (See our handout on stage presence.)
- Attend the reception after the concert. Be gracious, ask if the presenter has anyone they'd particularly like you to speak with. There may be trustees and board members – these are influential people in a position to help re-hire you so it's definitely in your interests to be easy to talk with, be interested and interesting.

After the Concert

If there were reviews, or comments/quotes from the presenter, or audience members, these may be useful to you in booking future concerts, so call or write the presenter and find out. Send and say thank you, tell the presenter you enjoyed working with her/him and you'd enjoy doing it again.

Press Materials

Publicity is a necessary tool in obtaining more concert opportunities. Professional-looking materials substantiate, in a tangible way for a presenter, that you are a professional – press materials may say that you have been well-received by audiences, that you are well respected as an artist, are comparable with other professionals, and that you've played a number of professional concerts already.

Flyers or brochures can be produced in a wide variety of ways for a wide range of costs. Inexpensive formats can be done on desktop publishing using Macintosh Pagemaker or an equivalent desktop publishing program. Using a graphic artist friend or perhaps a graphic artist student from a local school can save you money. Various formats are acceptable, but an easy one is to produce a three fold brochure on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, glossy or heavy stock. Photos can sometimes be photocopied for an interesting, (yet inexpensive) graphic "look." Leave one panel blank so that the brochure can be a self-mailer. This size also fits in a standard business envelope so that you can send it along with cover or introductory letters.

What to put on your brochure? Include a bio of you or your group, contact address, name, and phone, types of services/programs you offer, reviews/quotes (can use satisfied presenters' quotes or quotes from distinguished teachers or coaches – make sure you get their permission first, of course).

Press Kits

A press kit—sent to members of the press as well as managers and presenters—can be easily and inexpensively assembled by producing basic publicity materials yourself and making a trip to a discount office supply store. As you gain experience you will update your materials and create new additions. Each time you send your press kit, you can tailor it to the recipient's needs. Just be sure to emphasize only your most impressive credentials and include your name, address, and phone number on everything!

Basic Contents of the Press Kit

- **Biography**—of you or members of your ensemble, printed on your letterhead. Written in the third person, this is a prose version of your most impressive credentials: where and with whom you have studied, performance experience of distinction, and competitions, scholarships, or awards you have won.
- **Repertoire List** of solo and chamber works, printed on your letterhead. List works alphabetically by the composer's last name, with complete and correct titles. Only complete works you have performed or studied should be included (no single movements). Singers may want to have a category called "Roles Studied," and may want to organize the list with major headings (Art Songs, Oratorio, Opera, etc.). Some musicians simply have too much to easily list on one or two pages (pianists and singers are often in this group), in this case, list selected repertoire – things you would want to be playing for presenters in the next few seasons. Singers listing art songs for recitals may want to use categories by language, listing just the composers, e.g. under French: Debussy, Ravel, etc. Instrumentalists should generally not include orchestral works, (percussionists often do), but you may use separate sheets for solo repertoire and chamber music. For composers, this is a list of YOUR works, called "Original Compositions." Include arrangements, making sure you credit the original composer.
- **Past Programs** from solo or chamber music concerts you've already played.
- **Sample Program(s)** concert, residency, master classes, etc., being offered to presenters this season
- **8 x 10 Press Photo** of you or your ensemble with a glossy or matte finish. Invest in a good photographer—sample shots are available in the Career Services Center, and we can recommend photographers. Ask your colleagues for recommendations as well. Type your name, address, phone number, and the photographer's name on a label and stick it to the back of the photo. (See our information handout on press photos for particular help in this area.)

When you've got 'em, flaunt 'em...

- **List of Appearances** including your most impressive club, concert hall, or festival appearances. This can be particularly useful for jazz musicians.
- **Demo Tapes** need only be sent when requested, or when you are certain the recipient will listen to them. (See our information handout on demo tapes for particular help in this area.)
- **Reviews and articles** written about you or your ensemble. The day the reviews appear, cut out the masthead (the heading with the newspaper's name and the date from the front page) and the review. Arrange them neatly on an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper and have numerous copies made. Newsprint fades over time, so you'll get your best copies right away. If necessary, highlight or underline your name or the paragraph that refers to you and your performance.
- **"What the Critics are Saying . . ."** can be the heading for a list of the most impressive things that have been written about you. Include the name of the writer, his or her publication, and the date.

Have all written materials printed on high quality paper with your letterhead at the top and arrange everything neatly in a folder—the kind with two pockets on the inside. (This is where the discount office supply store comes in . . .) The type with a glossy finish looks best. On the front cover, either design a sticker with your name, address, phone number and logo on it or simply paste your business card in the center. If the folder has slots for it, you can stick your business card inside on one of the pockets.

If you want to see some press kits in action, we encourage you to look at the examples in the Career Services Center. We can also recommend several publications that will be helpful to you as you assemble your press materials.

(See our handout sheets on demo tapes, photos, and Management/Self-Management for particular help in these areas.)

Block Booking

Block booking means scheduling a number of performances in a specific region, in close enough proximity to reduce costs (travel, accommodation, and fees) for the performer and presenter. Block booking can be initiated by either the presenter or the artists. For instance, if a presenter can not afford to pay enough to cover your travel and expenses plus fee, to make the concert worth your while, block booking may be a solution. Perhaps there's a nearby school that would be interested in a master class, residency, or lecture demonstration you could tag on to the concert. The extra fee(s) may be enough to cover your expenses and make the booking work for everyone. If the presenter initiates this and makes the arrangements, they very reasonably expect a price break on your fee. For touring, block booking is a necessity. If you've got a concert on a Monday in Concord, New Hampshire and another on Friday in Bangor, Maine, then finding a performance site in between the two cities for Wednesday will cut down your expenses significantly.

Taking Your Show on the Road – Tips for Touring with Your Band

Talk to any bands you know that tour regionally for advice on which clubs to play. Collect copies of local arts/entertainment publications and newspaper listings – use these to determine which clubs are more likely to book your kind of music, which have decent advertising budgets, and which seem to get all the press coverage. Call the clubs to see who is interested or receptive to your pitch (you need to work up a decent 30 second commercial of your group – describing the type of music, where else you've played, the size of both your mailing lists – if you have one yet – and your “following,” the audience you've been able to attract to other clubs.) Ask the manager or club owner what kind of crowd they attract and what they look for in musical groups, then gear your promotional package and cover letter you send them to their concerns. Always be professional and courteous.

Promoting your tour

Get professional posters made up to hang in the clubs you play – this will help potential fans get a great first impression. Leave space at the bottom of the posters to add specific club date information. Send a few posters to each club on your tour several weeks before the gig date. Ask the manager if the club promotes bands in the local press. If they don't, ask which area newspapers they'd recommend you contact. Use your library to look up press contacts, local jazz radio stations, etc.

Once you have a list of press contacts, send these publications and local college radio stations a CD for airplay or to review (if they do such reviews). Let them know when you'll be in town and arrange interviews if they're interested. Again, you'll need a good “sales pitch” – the press is interested in the kind of stories that will interest readers, so you need an “angle,” what is special about your band, your music, this tour, etc. If there's a local college in the vicinity of the club, you'll want to contact the campus newspaper and also hang posters around campus.

If you have some money for advertising, ask the club to chip in for paid advertising for the band's appearance at the club – the owner may want to include some special enticement, like a reduced cover charge with the ad, or a two-for-one deal.

Keeping Expenses Down on Your Tour – Accommodations

Investigate free places to stay – check on friends of family members, alumni in the tour communities, and contacts of anyone who has been supportive of your career. Perhaps if you will be sharing the bill with another band they'd put you up and you can return the favor when they tour your town. Sleeping in the tour van, weather permitting, is an option, but safety is an issue – the possibility of burglary/assault is a real factor in every community. Some bands use camp grounds or a local YMCA. It's a good idea to have air mattresses or large pieces of foam with you in any event, for the unexpected.

Stress

Because tours are stressful to the group dynamics, you should expect that there'll be difficulties to work out, logistical, financial, and personality-wise. Make sure you practice good interpersonal communication skills with everyone involved in the tour – talk things out, give everyone an equal chance to be heard, and really listen to the other side's position. Because stress is such a factor, it's wise to start touring with shorter tours closer to home, to test the group's resilience and to be realistically confident before endeavoring on more extensive touring.

Recommended Software for keeping track of your gigs/concert bookings:

GigMaster

<http://www.shubb.com/gigm.html>

GigMaster is a complete booking and tracking system for the working musician. You enter all the details of each gig in the GigBook, then view them on a Calendar. You can print monthly calendars, contracts, travel details, reports, gig lists. The reporting feature is especially powerful, generating reports on income, expenses, mileage, product sales, and wages for any

selected time period. It also includes a file for musicians, agents, and contacts and a mailing list. For Windows and Macs. You can view screen shots of the program at Shubb's website (above). Check it out.

\$79.95, includes manuals and online help

\$59.95, downloadable version without the manuals

The following pages include:

Pg. 8 a presenter contact sheet (to track your dealings with each presenter)

Pgs. 9-10 a sample contract between an artist management and a local presenter.

Pg. 11 a technical rider for a jazz ensemble contract

Pg. 12-13 a facility questionnaire (to keep track of what each facility is like, so there'll be no surprises)

Pg. 14 an advance sheet

[Sample technical rider for a contract for a jazz ensemble, can be adapted for any type group. This is the part of the contract where you make special arrangements so there are no surprises i.e. piano must be tuned, music stands provided, etc]

Contract Additions

Personnel

Vocalist and a trio (piano, bass, drums)

Production Manager

Technical Needs

Sound System: Sound needs depend on the size of the space. The highest quality equipment possible is always preferred.

Specific equipment needs are listed below:

- 8 Channel Mixer
- 2 Speakers with elevating stands
- 4 Monitors
- 4 Microphones
 - 1) 1 vocal microphone (Beyerdynamic TGX 480 is ideal) with wind screen
 - 2) 1 microphone for bass as needed or DI
 - 3) 1 microphone for piano
 - 4) 1 microphone for emcee or speakers as needed
- 2 Microphone stands
 - 1) with boom set at sitting height
 - 2) with boom for piano
- Grand piano tuned to A-440
- Bass amplifier: to be negotiated with sponsor
- Drum Equipment - a small basic jazz set with the following specifications:
Please note: No heavy duty/double-reinforced hardware and boom stands
 - 1) 14"x18" bass drum (nothing larger than 14"x20")
 - 2) 14"x14" floor tom (with leg hardware)
 - 3) 8"x12" high tom
 - 4) 7"x14" snare drum (5-1/2x14" is acceptable, but no piccolo)
 - 5) All drums should be double-headed with Remo heads (coated, not clear or pin-striped)
 - 6) One hi-hat stand with clutch, three cymbal stands, one snare stand, one bass drum pedal, one rack mount for high tom, and one comfortable throne (stool) with 3" seat
 - 7) One rug no smaller than 5'x5'
 - 8) Brand name preferences include Gretsch, Yamaha or Sonor Drums.
Preferences for hardware include Yamaha 500 or 700 series or Sonor.
 - 9) Drummer will bring cymbals and sticks
- Performance Space: An area no smaller than 12 x 12
- Focused area lighting; if more elaborate lighting is available. Production Manager will furnish presenter and technical personnel with light plot and cue sheet.
- Non-alcoholic beverages, water, coffee and tea will be provided to the performers at the place of performance during set-up and throughout the duration of the performance.
- Dressing rooms:
 - 1) Rooms will be locked and secure throughout the duration of the performance and as long as personal possessions and instrument cases of the ensemble remain in the room.
 - 2) Dressing rooms will be adequately heated and/or air conditioned.

Accepted and Agreed:

Presenter

Artist Management (or group leader)

by: _____ by: _____

print name and title underneath signature

print name and title underneath signature

Performance Facility Questionnaire

Thank you for answering all of the questions that are relevant to your venue. Your cooperation in filling out this form will contribute to a higher quality and trouble-free performance. If you have any questions, please contact _____ at (617) 555-1212.

Presenting Organization _____

Day/Date of Performance _____

Venue _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Booking Contact _____ Office ph _____ Home ph _____

Email Address _____ Fax _____

Publicity Contact _____ Office ph _____

Technical Director _____ Office ph _____ Mobile ph _____

House Manager _____ Office ph _____

Box office phone _____ Backstage ph _____

Type of Facility

- Concert Hall
- Recital/Lecture Hall
- Theatre
- High School Auditorium
- Church
- Gymnasium
- Cafetorium
- Outdoor Venue
- Other _____

Wheelchair Accessibility

- Building - entrance/exit
- Performance venue
- Lobby restrooms
- Stage
- Load-in area
- Hospitality area
- Dressing rooms
- Backstage restrooms

Backdrop

- Curtain
- Acoustic shell
- Wall
- Other _____

Stage Floor Surface

- Hardwood
- Softwood
- Masonite
- Concrete
- Marble
- Other _____

Dressing Rooms

- Number of available _____
- Can it be locked? _____
- Wheelchair accessible _____
- Restroom facilities _____

Piano

- Grand (Length)
- Upright
- Console
- Other _____
- Make _____

Stage Dimensions _____ Seating Capacity _____

Is there an Orchestra Pit? _____ Will it be used? _____

Can the house lights be dimmed? _____

Are the house lights independent of stage light dimmers? _____

Who will indicate when the concert is to begin? _____

Will the group be introduced? If so, by whom? _____

Is there a lobby sales area? Please describe _____

(over)

Performance Facility Questionnaire - 2

Outdoor Venues:

Type of Stage _____

Is the stage covered? _____ Type of covering _____

Is the stage area rainproof? _____

How will instruments and equipment be protected in the event of rain? _____

Rain Policy _____

Please attach written directions and relevant area maps to this form and return it to:

(This is for a jazz ensemble for each member before a gig (can be adapted for any type ensemble).

The leader or manager should give these out once contract is signed)

Sample Advance Sheet

Band: Leader _____ Keys _____
Bass _____ Drums _____
Other _____ Other _____

Gig Date: _____

Name of Performance: _____

Venue: _____

Address: _____

Venue Phone: _____ Backstage Phone: _____

Contact Person: _____ Phone: _____

Technical Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Type of Space: _____

Directions: _____

Parking: _____

Accessible Parking: _____

Load-In Location: _____

Equipment to Bring: _____

Band Arrival Time: _____ Sound Set Up Time: _____

Sound Check Time: _____ Sound Co./Person: _____

Food & Bev. Time: _____ Number of Sets: _____

Food & Beverage (yes/no): _____ Start/Finish: _____

Dress: _____ Guest List: _____

Restrooms (Location/Accessibility): _____

Additional Notes: _____

