

Spreading the News — A Guide to Publicity for Musicians

Your musical product is ready — now you need the audience to appreciate it! There are numerous ways to get your name before the public: postcards or flyers sent to your mailing list, posters distributed to musical organizations, phone calls made to your most devoted fans. But, the best way to reach the most people is through the media. Making effective use of the media to gain the interest of critics, writers, editors and producers will excite the public and give them the desire to hear you perform. This handout will acquaint you with the most traditional methods of getting the attention you deserve. You should also consult our Resource Library and talk to your colleagues, teachers, and everyone else in your “network” for advice.

Press Releases

In order to get media coverage, you must distribute information about your events to the appropriate people at the appropriate time. First, you’ll want to research the media in your community and develop a list of contact names and publication deadlines. To find addresses and phone numbers, consult the *Musical America International Directory of the Performing Arts* or *Working Press of the Nation* in your local library. Boston University also publishes a Media Guide for the Boston area. When compiling your media list, make sure you target those organizations that would be most likely to cover your event. For example, if you are presenting a program of Spanish compositions, include every radio and TV station and newspaper that targets a Spanish-speaking audience. Call each organization on your list and find out the name and title of the staff person who would be most interested in your concert. Don’t forget to contact your hometown newspapers and alumni publications from schools with whom you are or have been associated as a student or faculty member.

Your next step is to prepare the press release, samples of which are provided in this handout. A press release is a news piece that is submitted to a newspaper for printing. Editors receive press releases by the bucketful daily and decide whether or not they want to use any or all of what you submit. Follow the steps and guidelines below to make sure your press release stays out of the editor’s waste basket. Editors are very picky about the format so it’s important to follow these guidelines. Musicians write press releases to publicize upcoming concerts as well as to announce having won competitions, scholarships, positions, grants, etc. Having copies of these news pieces in your press packet helps establish you as a professional.

Page Layout / Format

- Typed or laser printed with your letterhead, phone number, and name of contact.
- 1-3 pages in length. All pages but the last should have -more- centered at the bottom. Keep it to one page whenever possible. Be concise and mention only key points. Remember, further information can be provided if the reporter or critic decides to write a feature article or schedule an interview.
- Double-spaced (or 1 1/2 spacing) with wide margins (so editors can actually edit the copy.)
- Be sure to put “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE !” with the date you are sending the release at the top of the page and list contacts and telephone numbers prominently. If you are sending the release in well before the date of the concert / event you can write, “For Release: Aug. 15, 1997” indicating the ideal time for the piece to be printed.
- At the bottom, centered of final page should be “###” indicating the end of the release.
- Include an interesting professional quality photo whenever possible (8x10 or 5x7 black and white, and a color slide if the publication uses color.) On the back of the photo on a label (Don’t write in pen!), be certain to include the names and instruments of all those in the picture; the date, location and title of the event; the name, address and telephone number of the publicity contact; the photo credit: the name of the photographer. If you want the photo returned, include “Please return” and a mailing address. NB: most publications will not return photos even if you so request; never send anything you don’t want to possibly give up forever.

Press Release Text

Start with a first sentence that tells who, what, when and where. Be simple and direct, mentioning the most important information as prominently as possible. Include time, date and place, in that order.

The Arts Piano Trio will perform the “Archduke” and “Ghost” trios during an all-Beethoven concert at 8 pm Monday, April 15, at New England Conservatory, Williams Hall, 30 Gainsborough St., Boston.

- Remember: newspaper editors want newsworthy events, concrete facts. Avoid hype, avoid adjectives, unless they are a quote. Instead, write about unusual aspects of the programming, or emphasize a local connection.

The Collegium Musicum will present a free lunch hour concert of music by, for and about women of the 12th century through the 17th centuries, at Noon on Friday, Nov. 26, at Kings Chapel, 64 Beacon St., Boston.

The duo has been described by the American Recorder as “evocative, emotional, intense,” and by the Boston *Phoenix* as “stellar.” The duo will present a program of works by Telemann, Chopin, Bartok, and C.P.E. Bach.

- If you don’t have a review to quote, you can quote yourself if your quote centers on the program or the inspiration.

Soprano Jane Paliteri says she’s “looking forward to performing once again in her home town and to presenting the premiere of the latest work by local composer Bettina Marx.”

- Write to the general public: avoid using technical language or musical jargon. You can still include interesting information about the repertoire, just keep it clear and simple:

Hill’s “Thoughtful Wandrings” features the natural horn with a taped accompaniment of nature sounds and percussion instruments. It was inspired by the music of the Native Americans of the plains.

- Use short paragraphs; they look better in narrow newspaper columns. Start with the most essential information; bios and less essential info go at the end because most editors will cut stories from the bottom (pyramid style).
- Don’t forget to include ticket information: how much, where, how to order, phone number to call, etc. This can go towards the bottom with just a brief reference of ticket availability at the top.
- Some newspapers accept releases by e-mail, others do not. It’s safer to use snail mail until you find out if they’d prefer e-mail (having your new release in the newspaper’s computer system could increase your chances of getting it printed).

Stylistic Points

- Abbreviate months Aug. through Feb., write out March through July.
- Write out one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above.
- For names, give first and last on first reference, then use only last name—no Ms., Mr., Prof., Dr., etc.
- Titles of positions are not capitalized, but titles of organizations and institutions are. The only exception is when the person’s title appears before the name — President Freeman.
- You may want to use quotations marks for titles of works: newspapers don’t have italics, magazines do.

Calendar Listings

In addition to feature articles and reviews, most newspapers and magazines print listings of daily cultural events. Most news organizations will have one person, the calendar editor or listings editor, who is responsible for these announcements. A calendar listing should be in the same format as a press release; however, it contains *only* the basic information about a concert—who, what, when, where, how much, where to call for ticket information, and a brief program description.

Radio Announcements

Like the press release and calendar listing, a radio announcement should be typed, double-spaced, and have ample margins. The ideal length is 15-30 seconds, and the time it takes to read your announcement should be included at the bottom. The following word count will give you a rough idea of time: 10-15 words—10 seconds; 25-40 words—20 seconds; 55-65 words—30 seconds. Be sure to find out who at the station usually receives these listings. Give the reader a prose version of the announcement and a “bulleted” list of the key points.

NB: Timing is **crucial**—please refer to the Basic Publicity Timeline below.

For more help with press packets and more samples, please see our separate handouts on: **Bios, Photos, Demo Tapes, Press Packets, Repertoire Lists, Résumés, and Cover Letters.**

Basic Publicity Timeline Checklist — Depending on your publicity goals, just jump right in! For example, if you are only planning to advertise in local newspapers, you can start at “2 Months Before.”

4 Months Before

Send press releases and calendar listings to magazines (i.e., *Rolling Stone*, *Down Beat*, *Opera News*).

Send press releases and calendar listings to quarterly or bimonthly local/regional publications and academic journals (i.e., MENC, Chamber Music America).

2 Months Before

Send press releases and calendar listings to biweekly publications, radio and TV stations.

Follow-up phone call to previous mailings.

6 Weeks Before

Send press releases and/or announcements to radio (i.e., WCRB, WGBH, WBUR) and TV stations.

1 Month Before

Send press releases and calendar listings to daily and weekly publications (i.e., *Globe*, *Phoenix*, *Tab*).

Follow-up phone calls to previous mailings.

3 Weeks Before

Send press releases and posters or flyers to schools, arts organizations, and your mailing list.

Follow-up phone calls to weekly publications.

2 Weeks Before

Follow-up to daily publications.

The Big Day Arrives

1 Day After

Send thank-you notes to media and anyone else who assisted you with your event.

Compile press clippings and reviews.

Celebrate!

Sample Press Release Format

LETTERHEAD—including your name, address, phone

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Today's date

Contact name

Contact telephone

HEADLINE IN ALL CAPS AND CENTERED

The first paragraph should list:

Who, what, where, and when in a few sentences

Specifics only where necessary and a summary of the importance of the event

If appropriate, program information.

The second paragraph should provide biographical or historical information.

The last paragraph should contain information about admission or tickets. Include the contact phone number.

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(This signifies the end of the release and should always be included.)

Funding credits should go at the very end on one or two lines, unless they are included in the copy above.

Sample Radio Announcement Format

LETTERHEAD—including your name, address, phone	
Release date	Contact name Contact telephone
RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT . . .	
Include who, what, where, and when in short, active words and sentences. Give the announcer two versions—a bulleted list of the vital information, and a prose version. Be sure it can be read and easily understood by the announcer and his or her listening audience. You should include phonetic pronunciations of unusual proper names (see sample radio announcement).	
(— seconds)	
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Sample Calendar Listing Format

LETTERHEAD—including your name, address, phone	
CALENDAR LISTING Today's Date	Contact name Contact telephone
Calendar Listing: Category your event would fall into (i.e., Classical Music) Who, what, when, where	
List vital details only—how to get tickets, address of the event, program information.	
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[S a m p l e C a l e n d a r L i s t i n g]

YOUR LETTERHEAD GOES HERE

CALENDAR LISTING

April 15, 2007

CONTACT: Bob Annis, Manager

(617) 721-5423

Calendar Listing: Contemporary Classical Music

COLLAGE NEW MUSIC FINISHES SEASON MONDAY, MAY 9 AT

SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY'S C. WALSH THEATRE

- Collage New Music, David Hoose, Music Director
- 8:00 p.m. Monday, May 9
- Program:
 - Boston premiere of Jacob Druckman *BO*
 - Frederick Rzewski *Song and Dance*
 - Boston premiere of Cameron Ince *Night Passage* (1992)
 - World premiere of David Lang *Cheating, Lying, Stealing* (1993)
- C. Walsh Theatre at Suffolk University, 41 Temple Street on Beacon Hill in Boston
- Tickets: \$12 general admission; \$6 students and seniors
- For tickets and information, call the C. Walsh Theatre Box Office: (617) 573-8680

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[Sample Radio Announcement]

(Notice the for the radio announcement that there are pronunciation guides given
— spell out unusual names/titles phonetically.)

YOUR LETTERHEAD GOES HERE

Radio Announcement

April 15, 199-
5423

CONTACT: Bob Annis, Manager
(617) 721-

COLLAGE NEW MUSIC FINISHES SEASON MONDAY, MAY 9 AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY'S C. WALSH THEATRE

30-Second Announcement:

Join Collage New Music on May 9 for this prestigious contemporary music ensemble's final concert of the season. With premiers of works by Jacob Druckman, Cameron Ince (IN-say), and David Lang, this concert presents the very newest of new music. Frederick Rzewski's (SHEV-skee) *Song and Dance* in also on the program. Collage New Music performs on May 9 at Suffolk University's C. Walsh Theatre at 8:00 p.m.; for tickets and information, call (617) 573-8680. That's 573-8680.

(30 Seconds)

At a glance:

- Collage New Music, David Hoose, Music Director
- 8:00 p.m. Monday, May 9
- Program:
 - Boston premiere of Jacob Druckman *BO*
 - Frederick Rzewski (SHEV-skee) *Song and Dance*
 - Boston premiere of Cameron Ince (IN-say) *Night Passage* (1992)
 - World premiere of David Lang *Cheating, Lying, Stealing* (1993)
- C. Walsh Theatre at Suffolk University, 41 Temple Street on Beacon Hill in Boston
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[S a m p l e P r e s s R e l e a s e]

(sent to a hometown newspaper)

YOUR LETTERHEAD GOES HERE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 199-

CONTACT: Elenye German
Director, School of Creative Arts,
(617) 641-4493

**LOCAL MUSICIAN APPOINTED TO FACULTY POSITION,
ANNOUNCES BOSTON DEBUT RECITAL**

BOSTON, MASS. - Former Iowa City resident, trumpeter James Knabe, son of William and Judith Knabe of Iowa City, has been appointed to the music faculty of the School of Creative Arts in Lexington, Mass. The School is affiliated with Grace Chapel, the largest church in the New England area. This school serves numerous communities including Boston. At the school, Mr. Knabe will teach private trumpet lessons, music history courses, and conduct a brass ensemble.

James Knabe will make his Boston-area solo debut at Grace Chapel in Lexington at 8:00 PM on Friday, May 26. The program will include familiar and unusual works by Handel, Hovhaness, Copland, Neruda, and Vaughn-Williams. Artists joining Knabe for the recital are pianist Elenye German, soprano Kimberly Cone, organist Douglas Marshall and narrator Nancy Gerber.

A former student of David Greenhoe at the University of Iowa, James Knabe is now pursuing graduate studies at the New England Conservatory in Boston, where he studies with Peter Chapman and Charles Schlueter of the Boston Symphony. Knabe has performed with the Boston Civic Symphony, Boston Chamber Ensemble, and the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra. He currently plays principal trumpet with the North Shore Philharmonic Orchestra. He returns to Iowa this summer for a series of master classes and recitals. When asked about his latest success, Knabe said, "I consider myself very fortunate to have received a great musical start growing up in Iowa City and I look forward to returning home this summer to re-connect with my musical roots."

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[Sample Press Release]

(same info sent to a *local* Boston newspaper to increase audience for concert)

YOUR LETTERHEAD GOES HERE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 199-

CONTACT: Elenye German

Director, School of Creative Arts,

(781) 641-4493

FREE FACULTY TRUMPET RECITAL AT GRACE CHAPEL MAY 26

LEXINGTON, MASS. — Trumpeter James Knabe will make his Boston-area debut at grace Chapel in Lexington at 8:00 p.m. on Friday May 26. The program will include works with religious inspirations: “Prelude for all Saints” by Vaughn-Williams, “Let the Bright Seraphim” by Handel, “Prayer of Saint Gregory” by Hovhaness, and “At the River” by Copland. Other works featured will be “Suite in D” by Handel and the Concerto in E-flat by Neruda. Performing with James Knabe will be pianist Elenye German, organist Douglas Marshall, soprano Kimberly Cone, and narrator Nancy Gerber. The recital is free and open to the public and a reception will follow the performance.

Mr. Knabe has been appointed to the music faculty of the School of Creative Arts in Lexington, Mass. The School is affiliated with Grace Chapel, the largest church in the New England area. This school serves numerous communities including Boston. At the school, Mr. Knabe will teach private trumpet lessons, music history courses, and conduct a brass ensemble.

Currently principal trumpet with the North Shore Philharmonic Orchestra, Mr. Knabe has also performed with the Boston Civic Symphony and the Boston Chamber Ensemble. He is now completing graduate studies at the New England Conservatory in Boston, where he has studied with Peter Chapman and Charles Schlueter, members of the Boston Symphony.

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