

GENERATING EXPOSURE

If you plan to have chapter events and recitals open to the public, then advertising and public relations should be an integral part of your efforts.

Generating exposure varies greatly, depending on where you are located. In large metropolitan areas, advertising is more expensive and publicity is more difficult to generate. Editors of newspapers and magazines in smaller communities are more likely to care about local activities than big city dailies.

A successful recital or event will require planning, coordination and, of course, hard work. Take advantage of all of the resources in your community. Call on local business people, celebrities and media representatives for their support. Recruit volunteers to help with some aspect of the event or recital. You might even consider locating a public relations or journalism intern from a local college or university to help with media relations.

Public Relations:

A major part of public relations is really media relations – that is, communicating with reporters, editors and radio/TV producers who can relay your message to the general public.

On a national level, the American Guild of Organists will be generating articles in newspapers and magazines; public service announcements on radio and television; and interviews on radio and television talk and news programs.

On a local level, you can contact the media in your area to make sure they are aware of your chapter activities. In this kit are tips on how to work with the media and examples of how to write a press release or call an editor. Knowing how the media operates will help you increase your publicity opportunities.

As you write your releases and /or talk to the media, keep in mind that furthering people's knowledge and interest in the organ is the main message. Don't worry – your recital will still get coverage, but you don't want to appear too self-serving. A reporter must look for stories that will be interesting and new to a large number of people.

Reporters are looking for good stories. So what constitutes a good story? Ask yourself:

- If I weren't interested in the organ, would I read this story?
- Is it interesting to others?
- Does it sound like a fun event?
- Am I focusing on the most unusual, colorful and exciting aspects?
- Does this sound too much like an advertisement?

Getting the word out:

There are dozens of ways of getting our message to the public. Be creative and look beyond radio and television. Think about your audience. Who are they? Where do they shop? What do they do for fun? Look for alternative media, such as:

- **Posters:** put up in store, restaurant and grocery windows, at businesses, Laundromats, grocery stores, libraries, etc.
- **Flyers:** hand out to your choir members, members of organizations you belong to
- **Bulletin Boards:** help music teachers to put together bulletin boards about the organ
- **Information about event:**
 - **School Publications:** put information in PTA bulletins.
 - **Club and Church Bulletins:** put information in these
- **Marquees:** ask owners of marquees in your area if they will put up a message about the International Year of the Organ.
- **Stuffers:**
 - **Utility Bills:** arrange to have inserts about the International Year of the Organ placed in your community utility bills.
 - **Bank Statements:** arrange to place inserts in bank statement envelopes. You should apply a 6-9 month in advance of the International Year of the Organ since most institutions have extremely long lead times.

PROMOTING YOUR EVENTS AND/OR RECITALS

Television ads: Depending on the size of the market in which you are located, TV may or may not be the most cost-effective way to reach your potential audience (they are expensive). Schedule any TV advertising plans about two months in advance.

News Release: They're called news releases because you should only send them if you have news to announce. Keep them short, simple and to the point. Get the editor's attention in the first paragraph and be sure you have included all the important details such as your contact information.

Before you send a press release:

Find out who is the most appropriate editor. At some publications, it may be the features editor – at others, the music editor.

If you have good visuals, contact the photo editor. Find out their policy on using photos – every organization has its own policy.

Find out how far in advance you should send materials to make the deadline.

Remember to include the minority or foreign language publications.

When you send the information:

Be sure it is all correct and you have included the “what, when, where, who and why.” Nothing irritates a busy reporter more than having to call back to find out basic details of an event or recital.

Always include a phone number where a responsible representative can be reached during the day (a night home phone number is greatly appreciated, too).

Don't be afraid to follow up with a phone call. Reporters get hundreds of releases and yours may have been one that was overlooked.

Reporters are busy--especially those at daily newspapers or radio and television stations who have several deadlines a day. Find out those deadlines and avoid calling at those times. Weekly papers tend to have one hectic deadline day a week.

Be reasonable. Recognize that the news media have limits on time and space and must try to please a variety of competing groups (that's why we emphasize making your story have a broad appeal).

If they say no, perhaps you need to tailor your message better for that publication or station.

If you have a business co-sponsor, and that business is a regular advertiser in your local newspapers or on radio stations, you have an advantage. The advertising salesperson can get you in touch with the right editorial contact.

Photo releases: if your event/recital has a visual element, make sure you capture it on film and send it to the local newspaper. Remember, editors hate “grip and grin” photos that depict people shaking hands and smiling at the photographer. The same goes for holding a plaque, cutting a ribbon or breaking ground with a shovel. Try to be creative.

Media alert: When you want the media to attend your event, it’s a good idea to send a one-page alert that just tells the “what, where, when, why and who” of what’s happening. If you are going to alert the media, you must have something newsworthy when they show up – no crying wolf. An open house or contest drawing is *not* news. A celebrity performing or an organ-playing marathon could be newsworthy.

Query to TV/radio talk shows: While most of the top rated television talk shows only want celebrities or high-powered guests (particularly in larger cities), most stations have public affairs shows that air in the early mornings that are open to ideas for guests. Cable stations also have original programming for which they need guests. This might be an opportunity to suggest a guest for a segment. Potential guests might be an animated, enthusiastic organ recitalist talking about playing throughout the world, or the person responsible for a Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza who is firmly committed to educating young people about the organ. A local organist could talk about the plans for a new instrument. These topics would work well on radio talk shows, too. Once you’ve formulated an idea, call the producer of the show and suggest the idea to him or her. Have in mind a spokesperson that can deliver the message in an exciting manner. It’s better to have no one on a show than to book a guest who is boring and turns people off to the organ!

Direct mail: Despite rising postage and printing costs, sometimes the best way to reach your potential audience is through direct mail. Does your chapter have a mailing list? Can you get the mailing list from other musical organizations (local symphony, local choirs, etc.)? Can you use a church's bulk mailing permit to mail a flyer?

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Think for a moment about why you chose to join the AGO. Probably because you love playing or listening to the organ or you are interested in exactly how it works and looks. You probably believe in the importance of music. So how can you convey your interest and passion about the organ to those in your community?

Your dedication to music will inspire and stimulate the participation of others. Here are a few things you can do to promote a healthy musical environment in your community:

- Develop and post flyers and that highlight organ recitals, programs, and activities in your community.
- Invite members of your church and choir to organ events.
- If you or someone else in your chapter is a good public speaker, offer to give programs about the benefits of music study, especially organ study, at community meetings, such as the Rotary Club, Toastmasters, Chamber of Commerce, mixers, PTA, etc.
- Encourage your local keyboard teachers to get involved in the International Year of the Organ. Perhaps offer a workshop on organ fundamentals for piano teachers and students. When it comes to inspiring the love of music, independent studio teachers are effective and influential persons in any community.
- Encourage your local organ technicians and organ builders to have a workshop to talk about how the organ works. Then encourage anyone interested in engineering (especially those at a local vocational high school, community college, or university) to attend.
- Serve as a referral service for local music students desiring organ teachers. Invite teachers to submit résumés of their training and experience to keep on file for potential students. Send a press release about your referral service to local newspapers, especially neighborhood and suburban newspapers.
- Coordinate with local scouting groups to help young people earn badges in music achievement. Offer an organ demonstration to local scouting groups.
- Offer "crawls" of several local organs to school students, music clubs and senior citizens' groups.
- Start a scholarship program for deserving students in your community. Approach local businesses in your area about helping sponsor such a program. Scholarships could be offered for private organ study or the use of an organ for a year. Consider a scholarship for students planning a career in music teaching.
- Make an annual gift to the organ department of a local or regional college or university in the name of your chapter.

- Offer to speak at career day programs of local high schools. Invite organ builders, teachers, performers, and technicians to join you so students will have a better impression of the many career paths available in the music industry, and specifically the organ world.
- Sponsor recitals by guest artists for your chapter and the public. Consider having a regional or national competition winner perform.
- Make AGO brochures available for pickup at local doctors' offices, schools and libraries.
- Sponsor workshops on organ care and maintenance, for members and non-members, including organ students and the general public.
- What can just one person do? Plan a month of networking for retailers, teachers, technicians, students, performers and others from your musical community to heighten public awareness of the value of music study. Distribute the AGO brochures in public places, organize a Benefits of Music Speakers Bureau for PTA's and other service clubs, and publicize the benefits of music at every musical performance, both verbally and in print.
- Underwrite a musical educational activity in a public or private school. Even if the events are not held for your chapter, acknowledgement of your assistance in programs identifies your chapter as a source of support in the minds of the community.
- Offer a "Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza" program or an introduction to the organ for students and the general public. See if chapter members might donate their services to teach students, and perhaps follow up with organ lessons on a gratis or reduced fee basis.
- Distribute *The American Organist* or other AGO newsletters to potential members in your area. Promotional copies of *TAO* are available from headquarters upon request.
- Be aware of and support music and education-related bills in your state legislature. Spread the word and help teachers lobby for passage of legislation benefiting music and the arts.
- Make tickets to organ recitals available to students. If necessary, consider arranging transportation for students.
- Sponsor a chapter young artist playing competition.
- Serve as a volunteer or on the board of civic music groups. Invite the music lovers you meet there to attend organ programs.
- Make the AGO videos available to local public television and public access stations.
- Invite past students of the organ teachers in your community to attend an organ teachers' reunion honoring their service faithfully given to your community. After a performance by past and present students, invite participants to speak about the impact organ study has

had on their lives. Introduce each teacher and present them with an appropriate token of appreciation for their service to the community.

- Submitted by Richard Bradley, New York, New York

- Invite the magic triangle of parents, teachers and students (including prospective students) to participate in an “Organ Carnival.” While the students are playing games which strengthen their musicianship skills, the parents and teachers are discussing their roles in creating a positive learning experience for the child. Invite a panel to address parental concerns such as encouraging children to practice, getting them to continue lessons through times of discouragement, and providing positive reinforcement at home. Invite a prominent leader from the community to discuss the positive impact music has had on his/her life.

- Submitted by Marguerite Miller, Wichita, Kansas

- Encourage members to study for AGO certification exams and then hold an annual dinner for those candidates who are successful.

EDITORIAL CALENDARS/MEDIA CALENDARS

How Are Editorial Calendars Useful?

Each publication's editorial calendar (also called edcal or media calendar) lists the planned editorial content for each issue, providing you with an invaluable guide to story placement opportunities. An editor is much more likely to publish your story if you tailor your pitch to fit to the publication's editorial needs for a particular issue.

How Do I Obtain A Publication's Editorial Calendar?

Not all publications issue an editorial calendar. Most that do will publish their editorial calendars on their Websites. It's often located under "advertising," since the editorial calendar is used by advertising sales reps to sell ads in the publication. You can also call the publication and ask for the advertising sales department to request a free copy. While you're at it, also request the publication's full media kit.

What's The Best Way To Collect And Manage Media Calendars?

First, identify the publications that are appropriate for your story. Then build a list of media calendars by going to their websites and finding their editorial calendars, requesting a media kit, and assembling a spreadsheet of story opportunities. It's a time-consuming and arduous task that is best done on niche subjects with a limited set of media choices.

What Do I Do When I Find An Editorial Opportunity?

You'll undoubtedly find many story opportunity matches - and you'll need to "pitch" your idea to each of them, customizing your pitch to the audience and needs of each publication. There are many online articles about making a PR story pitch to an editor.

The basic rules are:

- 1) Fit your story to the needs of the specific publication
- 2) Offer story ideas or approaches that are distinctive
- 3) Tell the editor how your story idea meets the needs of that publication's audience
- 4) Approach the editor during "down" times
- 5) Keep the pitch succinct

How Far In Advance Should I Pitch Stories For Specific Editorial Calendar Topics?

Assignments and deadlines for most publications are often months in advance of publication date. It's best to contact the editor with your story idea as far in advance as possible - three to four months is not unreasonable. Since editorial calendars change frequently, re-check the media calendar shortly before contacting the editor.

In summary, utilizing editorial or media calendars is an effective PR tool to identify story opportunities and ultimately to obtain more and better media placements.

SEASON BROCHURE, WEBPAGE, AGO PHONE

You might want to consider making a season brochure, listing all of your chapter events that may be of interest to the general public for the program year. You should be sure to include the correct time, date, location, and a brief description of the program. If there are tickets, include the cost and where the tickets would be available. Although this takes some extra work early in the year to get these details worked out, in the end, the effort is worth it. If people come to one event, you would have the brochures available to entice them to attend another.

Think for a moment about all of the other musical organizations in your area which have season brochures. Perhaps some use color and glossy paper; others might be quite simple and in black and white. They don't have to be expensive. Having a brochure is helpful to everyone and might help enlarge your audience.

Webpage

Your chapter webpage is another way to inform the general public, as well as members. If your chapter does not have a webpage, you can have one free through national headquarters. It's easy to learn how to put information on the page. Contact Jennifer Madden, Director of Membership and Administration, at AGO headquarters, for details.

You might want to list all of your activities for the year, perhaps even grouping together those in which the general public might be interested. As in the season brochure, make sure the information is correct and as complete as possible. If details change or new ones are added, be sure to update the webpage. It should be accurate and current. If possible, include a phone number or e-mail address that people could use to get more information or to get questions answered.

AGO Phone

Your chapter might want to have a specific phone number for information about your chapter and its events. Perhaps one member is willing to have his or her phone number used for this purpose. Perhaps you will want to set up a separate phone line with an answering machine that can be updated with current information.

Telephone technology is changing very quickly. In some areas it is possible for people to be contacted by e-mail or text message when a message is left on a phone answering machine; the cost involved might be rather small. Do be alert for changes in technology in your area, if you are interesting in having a dedicated AGO phone.

This AGO phone can also be helpful in enticing new people to become members.

POSTERS AND FLYERS

Posters and flyers can be an inexpensive way to advertise your event. They need to contain the essential information: what, who, when, where and its location, what time, cost, and where to get tickets (if applicable). Perhaps you or someone in your chapter knows a graphic designer or artist who can design a template for your chapter. Then each time you have an event, you merely complete the template. Or, perhaps you have a member who would be willing to design a poster or flyer for each event.

The design needs to be eye-catching, but should not overwhelm the information. You don't want people to remember the design of the poster, but not what it's advertising! It can be copied or printed on an eye-catching colored paper. The size can be 8 1/2" by 11" or larger; it can be produced on heavyweight paper or regular paper. Remember, this is used to get the word out!

You can ask each member to post several posters around your community: grocery stores, music schools, churches---just about anywhere there is a bulletin board for this purpose.

You might want to produce flyers. Perhaps you could get permission to stuff these in the programs of another musical event close in time to yours. Perhaps you could put them in church bulletins. Be creative in your thinking as to where these might be seen!

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Some media, such as television stations, are obligated to make a certain number of public service announcements (PSA). These are very brief announcements. Again include what, who, when, where and its location, what time, cost, and where to get tickets (if applicable). Contact your local stations as to the lead time needed to include these announcements.

CALENDAR OF THE ARTS/EVENTS LISTINGS

Some newspapers and public radio and television station newsletters include calendars, on-line or in print, on which your event can be posted. If it's a print calendar, there is probably a very early (one or two months ahead) deadline to meet. Radio stations, especially public ones, frequently will make on-air announcements of events. Many of these announcements can be posted on the station's website. Look into the possibilities of these types of calendars in the media in your area. Don't forget the free newspapers, which are either mailed or distributed at grocery stores, etc. Many people look at these.