



20 tips for getting bigger audiences for uncompromising music **Heather Maitland**

1. Reach out to music lovers not just contemporary music lovers

Most live music attenders describe themselves as musical omnivores with very wide tastes. They don't think in terms of musical genres. Instead, they use words that describe the "flavour" of the music: "challenging", "melodic", "inspiring".

Get out of the contemporary music ghetto:

- Hang out where music lovers hang out – online and offline
- Think about flavours as well as genre labels
- Don't assume a theoretical knowledge
- Talk about emotional responses to the event
- Give them loads of information so they can make their own connections
- Don't name drop – they won't have heard of them
- Make connections: if you like that, you'll like this too

2. Don't signal "this music is not for you"

Cultural organisations that get bigger, broader audiences:

- make people feel at home
- use the language of the audience
- create links with "known" culture

Not for the Likes of You, Morton Smyth Ltd, 2004

"I think classic music is history and contemporary music is the future. But people do not understand this music. It makes them feel stupid." audience member, Belgium

3. Don't make them feel really stupid

Aim to write copy with a reading age of 12 – that's the best balance between conveying complexity and maximising the number of people who can get meaning from what you write. Microsoft Word has a readability function so you can easily check the reading age of your copy (see the handout).

4. Choose the right venues

Audiences for contemporary music are like the audience for other events at the venue. Find venues used by the audiences you want and start a conversation with them.

5. Curate the experience not just the music

Audiences are motivated by three things in combination:

- the other people
- the uniqueness of the location
- the music

They like:

- not sitting in rows
- welcoming and cosy venues
- opportunities to share experiences with other audience members afterwards
- being close to the musicians
- musicians who engage with them.

So, make your festival special. Find ways of helping the audience feel a connection with the musicians. Help the musicians make a connection with the audience. Move the chairs. Make people feel welcome (just saying “hello” and “good night” is a start). Help people start conversations with other audience members. Make sure they are comfortable – for example giving them cushions or blankets if the seats are hard or the venue is cold. Food and drink are important too.

6. Give reasons not facts

The vast majority of people know a lot less about music than we think so give reasons to attend rather than a set of facts about your work.

Young people become more confident and self-motivated when they get involved in music making not *We involve young people in music making*

7. Talk to different people in different ways

We do it every day in our private lives, so do it in your working life too.

A target market is a group of people who have something in common so they are likely to respond in a similar way when you choose the most effective message, tone of voice and communication method for that group

Focus on the target markets that will best achieve your objectives.

Be specific: “young people” is not a target group – there are big differences between a 16 year old boy doing clarinet exams, and a 16 year old girl playing in a heavy metal band.

8. Know who you are talking to

Understand the motivations, likes and dislikes of your target groups so you can put yourself in their shoes. Don’t assume that your audience listens to music like you do – you are not normal! Talk about the things about the concert experience and the music that will appeal to each of these types of listener.

Think of a real person you know well who is like each of your target groups. Think of them when you target your communications so you talk about the right things in the right way.

9. Persuade them

What do they like?

What are their negative preconceptions about what you do?

- Show that you can deliver things they like, contrary to their preconceptions
- Tell them about positive things that outweigh the negatives

What are their positive preconceptions about what you do?

- Reinforce them

"Normally I would never go to a concert like this as it is miles from what I normally listen to. The way they were marketing the concert – the words and phrases used to sell - it was spot-on."

10. Say what's in the tin

Most potential audiences haven't the faintest idea what we are on about. Tell them what the music is about, what it's like and how they will feel when they listen to it.

11. Use the language of the audience

How do they describe what you do? What words and phrases do they use?

Use their words in your communications. People trust opinions from other music fans so quote them, too.

12. Help them persuade others

Recommendations by friends and family are highly persuasive and reach far beyond the existing audience:

"I don't usually like this kind of music but a friend said it would be good."

Give people the things they need to persuade their friends and family: tell them what the concert will be like and how audiences will feel plus links and images they can forward.

13. Create a connection

Effective communication:

- An opener that makes a connection between you
- Reasons not facts or hype
- A simple, straightforward style
- A 'clincher' at the end

How to create a connection:

- Ask a question
- Use active language
- Really talk to them – use "you"
- Grab their attention with something relevant

14. Use the right image

A picture is worth a thousand words so choose one that says the right thing:

- Stand out – quirky, unusual, engaging
- Show you are interested in engaging visitors – eye contact is a powerful draw
- High contrast stands out
- Use eye-catching shapes and dynamic colour
- Pick images that convey emotion or tell a story

15. Focus on the things that work

Cut your to do list by prioritising the communication methods that work. Will it reach your target group? How effectively will it get your message across? Will it achieve your objectives? How resource hungry is it?

16. Be visible online

35% of all online visits come from a search engine.¹ 89% of UK searches use Google.²

Make sure your potential visitors can find you by searching online:

- Use keywords in your copy
- Have enough keyword rich copy on your homepage
- Make your title tags work for you:
 - 65 characters
 - Most important words first – what you do then who you are
 - Don't waste words: welcome, home
 - Different title tag on every page
 - Make sure they read well – they are the blue header in search results
- Sort out your metadescription: it's the two lines of black text in the search results and the only thing that will persuade someone to click on your site and not someone else's.

Check your website at www.ranks.nl – use the free sign up option

- Sign up for Google My Business

17. Make social media social

Have a conversation, don't just make announcements. Ask questions, have competitions, invite comments, start (and join) discussions...

18. Don't get deleted

Do you know what your emails look like with the pictures turned off? Choose the right template with large text at the top, give them a reason to carry on reading, talk about them not about you, and use their name.

19. Find the story

Only arts enthusiasts read the arts pages. Find really good media angles that will get you coverage off the arts pages that will reach everyone else.

- Newsworthy:
 - New!
 - Controversy or scandal
 - Links to recent events
 - Impressive number
- Human interest:
 - Social issues
 - Emotional connection
 - Surprising or unusual
 - Celebrity
 - Achievement
- Local connection
 - Impact on local communities
 - Local people
 - Local places
- Currency:
 - Current events
 - Time of year
- Photostory
 - An amazing photo that tells a story

¹ <http://www.newmediatrendwatch.com/markets-by-country/18-uk/148-usage-patterns-and-demographics> consulted 8/4/2013

² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/nov/06/google-bing-uk-search-share> consulted 8/4/2013

20. Know what you want them to do and make it easy

Make it easy for potential audiences to take action:

- Sell tickets online
- Links from your website and social media to places they can buy tickets for your gig
- Tell them what they need to know to take action – where does your festival happen? what's the best way of getting there? how can they buy tickets?
- Big buttons, visible without scrolling, that say what people will get if they click
- Links from your emails to your website and the venues' websites (where appropriate)