

HOW TO ORGANIZE A SHOW

Step 1 – The Venue/Sound support

The organizer/organization bringing me in assumes all costs of obtaining and using a venue, sound equipment, engineer....

Sound: When sound support is required, it is the sole responsibility of the host to provide. The venue provides the engineer to set up and run the equipment. If there is cost, it is assumed by the venue. It does not come from the performer's share of the gate if that is how I am being paid. If we are using sound support, I require 2 mics. 3 mics are necessary if I have a back up vocalist, but we will know that well before the show. The sound check should be done before the audience arrives, one to 1 1/2 hrs before the start time. *Note***: Outdoor concerts require sound support!!! There are birds, dogs barking, cars, lawnmowers, frogs, mosquitos, and the great outdoors that carry sound away. Mosquitoes are very bothersome to the audience and often carry them away.**

House Concerts: House concerts are a very popular venue and a favorite one of Tom's because of their intimacy. They are often preceded by a potluck, or desserts are offered at intermission. A mid-afternoon concert might be followed by an optional shared meal. The importance of house concerts is that they provide a venue when there is not an established venue available. A house concert is an affordable way for the host or organization to support a musician, and/or gather folks together around a particular cause that aligns with the musician's offerings.

Host responsibilities:

- Publicity: Tom will draft a poster and/or email for you to send out to your list.
- Typically, the host will provide overnight accommodations for 1-2 nights.
- If your living room has good acoustics, you may not need to provide a sound system, but be prepared to arrange for a small system if you think your space would benefit. Tom, like most musicians does not travel with his own sound equipment when touring.
- Light refreshments are always a draw or the ideas mentioned above.
- Collecting pre-paid donations via a check to you or the performer c/o you. If you have limited space, we strongly suggest an RSVP with a pre-pay for the seat. In our experience, people who RSVP but have not committed \$\$, are often no-shows. This means you may have turned people away. The performer receives "the gate" (all the pre-paid donations) unless other arrangements are made. If you are also raising \$ for a cause, having a voluntary donation basket might work to pass around at intermission. If there are late RSVP's who did not have time to send a check, be sure to set up a small table and basket with someone to

collect as folks come in the door, referring to a printed list of who has paid and who has not. It is important to get people's donations as they arrive. This is standard procedure for a concert. Your living room is now a professional venue like any theater. But it still maintains its intimacy.

- Send a reminder a few days before the show to those who have RSVP'd. You might include parking information.
- Managing the show: Introduce Tom (he will give you an intro) and explain the format of the evening; ask for an encore if you think that's what your audience would like.
- Enjoy the community you have created!

Performer's responsibilities: Tom will work with you on a publicity plan and schedule for the day of the show. He arrives early to settle in and warm up. He likes to be ready to meet people as they arrive. The music is typically offered in 2 45-50 minute sets but can be adjusted for your situation. He will provide some information so that you are comfortable introducing him.

Conferences and conventions: When I am asked to play at conferences and conventions, my registration fee is waived and if not on my route, transportation is provided. When I fly, it is with Southwest because of their instrument policy. My music is often used to start the day, introduce panels and plenaries, close them, close the day, and usually have a time slot to do a set of songs. Please do not schedule me to sing as background or when something else is going on in the room. In the business this is called "throw away music."

Schools: When I am brought to colleges and high schools for concerts, teachers assign my shows to the curriculum. I have done concerts through collaboration with the following departments: international studies, sociology, anthropology, English, political science, history, economics, music, religious studies, ecology, journalism, linguistics, and education. In classes, I do a workshop called "Music As Social History." This is also offered as a semester, quarter, or J-Term course. It combines the teaching of social issues with the performing arts. Sometimes we write songs. Sometimes we talk about how to use the arts to present social issues, to include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, media, health, etc., I have a readers theater piece with music about labor history. It makes a good independent study project at either college or high school levels. It is a very moving and vibrant piece where students take on the roles of historical figures. The speaking roles are interspersed with songs.

Children: I occasionally, though very rarely do children's (pre-teen) shows, but my satire is **not** a children's concert. The themes of my songs can be

very sophisticated for a child. There is playfulness with sexuality, although probably nothing a nine year old hasn't heard, and for younger kids it is over their heads. I have no FCC censored words." Children running around are distracting. It is like talking.

Step 2 – Make sure the coast is clear; Choose the right venue

BEFORE setting the date, it is important to check the calendar to see if any other big events are happening on the dates you are considering. Be sure to choose a venue with a clearly defined listening space. I avoid bars for this reason, unless they have a designated listening room. **Announce the Concert As Soon As It Is Booked**

My concerts are interactive with audience participation, and distraction nullifies this connection. Having a quiet space for audience and performer should be a given and understood by all, but it isn't.

Step 3 – Publicize, publicize

Once the date is set, it is critical to **ANNOUNCE** it asap to community groups so that another group does not book a competing activity that same night. It may be the most important thing you do. You need to let people know, as early as possible. You can't wait until 3-4 weeks before the event. By then, other groups have made plans. The sooner it becomes a community event, the better the turnout will be. The biggest mistake that venues make is that they don't **ANNOUNCE** the concert early and often! This is particularly important for fundraisers. The concerts are a great way to have fun, do outreach, build community, and raise money. If you have a community radio or campus station, odds are they have someone with a program who will play my music and announce the show. I can send CDs to them, the earlier the better. I also regularly do phone interviews. A newspaper interview can double your attendance. A very effective way to reach people is to **ANNOUNCE**

the concert and/or circulate handbills/posters at other events and meetings preceding our event. Put up posters. Refer people to my website.

Coffeehouses have put their menu on the back side of a concert poster. I will send you a sample poster. Please modify it and send it back to me for review, or develop your own if you have the graphic design skills. I will send it out to my contacts in your area who may not be on your mailing list.

My music can be heard on SoundClick at <http://www.soundclick.com/tomneilson>.

Groups you should contact include peace and environment groups such as Sierra Club, anti-fracking, anti-incineration, nukes, mountain top removal, Quakers, Unitarians, Humanists, Ethical Society, AAUP, Alliance for Democracy, labor unions, AFSC, Jobs with Justice, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Truth Out, Code Pink, Veterans for Peace, United Nations Association, progressive student organizations on college

campuses, Raging Grannies, etc. Most communities have local ministers, imams, rabbis, humanists, etc. and/or congregations with a Peace and Social Justice group. Professors use my concerts as part of their curriculum and students get credit for attending. If you have college contacts (or high school) it becomes a way of doing outreach by bringing people through the door.

Step 4 – Financial arrangements

See Booking

Step 5 – Showtime

I usually do two 45-minute sets. But it is up to you if you want to lengthen or shorten. An intro helps to start the show. Please have someone who can work the stage to intro the first set and bring me back for the second. It is also important to have someone close the show. Sometimes the audience is clapping for an encore. A performer likes to be brought back by an MC, at least i do. I find it awkward to bring myself back on stage. Especially when a second encore is requested, which has happened.

INTRODUCTION

Keep it short! One MC said this:

Please remember to turn off your cell phones. And remember that there is no recording or streaming of tonight's show. Tom began performing at the age of three. He has worked and traveled around the world and has performed his music in 22 countries on five continents. Among his many awards, he has received two Song of the Year Awards from Independent Musicians. He recently received an award from the Arab American Women Association for Global Education Through Performance Art. In 2015 he was nominated for the United Nations Nelson Mandela Award for Lifetime Achievement in Peace and Justice. If you ask him, he will tell you that he is just a farm boy with a guitar who loves a good ball game and human rights.

CONCERT NEEDS

Setup: Barring transportation snafus, I like to arrive 1½ to 2 hours before the show. I need a table for my CDs and literature. A card table will suffice, but a six foot table is much better, as I have literature, shirts, and other paraphernalia. It should be in an area that can be lit and accessible during intermission and after the show.

Stage needs: I know it is not always possible, but is nice to have a quiet room to tune and prepare. I need a chair with a flat surface or small table or stool to put my picks, capos, other props, and a glass of water.

Lodging: Necessary. I am not fussy. I have a sleeping bag. A bed is more than enough. This ole bod can still sleep just about anywhere. No smoking please; cats and dogs ok. Noise at night is un-desirable. Wi-fi internet access is becoming more necessary as I manage booking activity from the road.

THANK YOU so much for your support! It is you who keeps the music alive and our (I speak for all my road musician friends) gratitude goes out to you. This will be a lot of fun.