

How To Host Great House Concerts

There's a urge that rises in me from time to time to get up and go travelling around the planet. It's partly the Irish/Celtic wanderlust thing and partly the call that's on me to 'export' a little of what God is doing here and 'import' something of what He's doing elsewhere.

House concerts are a great way for me of fulfilling that and if you'd like to share the journey with me in this by hosting or organizing a house concert then read on...

Here's How To Host A Great House Concert In 3 Simple Steps.

Firstly What is a House Concert And How Does It Work?



A house concert is quite simply a live music performance in your home. You invite your friends and acquaintances over to watch a live show. Each of your friends donates a few bucks/pounds/euros (depends where you are) for the privilege. You then get live music in your home. Your friends get a unique, personalized, relaxed environment to experience great music.

It's a rapidly growing phenomenon.

In a New York Times front page [article](#) a number of years ago Dave Nachmanoff, a singer-songwriter from Southern California, said *"Part of the reason for the boom of house concerts right now is people are so hungry for community but lacking in ways they can get together with other people in an intimate or friendly way that isn't commercialized,"*

OK, Here Is The Nitty-Gritty...

A house concert is dirt simple to organize but there are some basics that you need to have in place to make it work.

1. **Find a place for the concert.**
2. **Spread the word.**
3. **Host the show.**

1. Find a place for the concert.

Well, it doesn't get much simpler than this - we'll do the show in your living room. Hence the name 'house concerts', right? Attendance is usually between 25 and 50 at most house concerts, so if you have a good sized living room, say 12'x15' or larger (about 650 sq. ft.), we're in business. Move the furniture around and you can get a lot of bodies in a space that size. It might be snug, but one of the charms of house concerts are their inherent intimacy.

Often you can borrow stacking chairs from a local church or school, use patio chairs, or ask friends and neighbours to bring a chair or two.

Your living room is too small? Remember the organizer and the host need not be the same person. It is a long-standing and sensible tradition to guilt-trip a wealthier friend with a big living room into offering it for the occasion. Do not feel badly about this, but rather, think of it as a favour: I am told it is one of the things St. Peter looks for in rich people's dossiers 😊

2. Spread the word.

Start talking it up. House concerts are still fairly rare in many places, so the idea of turning your home into a temporary concert hall will be a novel concept to a lot of people. Your audience (typically upwards of 90% of it) will be people you know or friends of theirs, so just start talking it up. Friends, relatives, people at church, people at work.

Invite your neighbours - anyone you come into contact with on a day-to-day



basis whom you think might enjoy live music. Let them know someone's going to come perform a concert right in your living room. Maybe you'll want to have a potluck supper beforehand - you can even have some folks bring the food.

To help you spread the word my House Concert Promo Kit contains a ready made invitation card template you can print out. Carry a few of these in your car and bag or purse and hand them out.

You can also mail them out as invitations.

As far as time-lines go, here's a general plan for moving things along:

A month before the event:

Make up your postcards and start letting people know about the concert - the word of mouth thing and hand-outs. Do an initial email announcement.

Two weeks out:

Do a postcard mailing if you like, put up flyers if that's appropriate for the event. If you want to get really ambitious, especially if house concerts aren't the norm in your community, maybe we can get in touch with the local newspaper or radio station and do an article timed to appear the week of the show.

Most performers are pretty well versed in the promotion of concerts and can help you with everything you'll need along those lines: postcard and flyer blanks, press releases, photos, etc. Post an updated email announcement and reminder.

The week of the show:

Make a last round of phone calls to remind everyone to come out, one more email reminder, then give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done.

Let's Talk About The Money Thing.

OK, let's get the money out of the way straight off. \$300 to \$400 is considered a pretty fair base rate for a solo musician on a quiet night, and that breaks down to a 'suggested donation' only \$10 or \$15 per person for 15 couples. Convincing 15 friends to come (with a partner or guest) is usually pretty straightforward.

It is normally done on a '*suggested donation*' basis for a number of reasons.

In most areas it's important that you are not seen to be promoting a commercial enterprise from your home and for this reason house concerts are non-profit private events with the donations going to the artist. You can, if you wish, cover any personal costs for tea, coffee etc.

How can I charge people to come into my home? If you are concerned about asking people to pay, let them know that all proceeds from ticket sales go to the artist.



Here's an incentive that I offer for advance 'ticket' sales. Anyone who prepays 2 weeks before the event will get a complimentary CD on the night - this will help you get commitment early for the show.

Whilst I don't want cost to be something that prevents us working together, this is what I do for a living (just like the first musician in the bible Genesis 4). Ideally if my expenses are covered plus an offering or fee then I, and my trustees, are happy (I'm accountable to the trustees of Deep End Trust www.deependtrust.org).

If that seems prohibitive and you'd still like to consider the options let's talk and work something out!



3. Hosting The Show

House concerts typically consist of two sets of music of about 40-45 minutes each with a short break between - about 20 minutes - so that people can stretch their legs, chat, have refreshments, visit the facilities, purchase the artist's CDs, etc. - more about this in a minute.

After people have assembled and settled in, you'll welcome everyone and introduce the performer with something simple like: Good evening, everyone. Thanks for coming out. Tonight we're fortunate to have with us a wonderful musician and performer, so let's get started. Please welcome...

At the break you might want to have light refreshments on hand, things like coffee, tea, sodas, chips and dip, etc. You can also ask a few friends to bring homebaked goodies as well. In fact, it's a good idea to enlist a volunteer to oversee some or all this chore (remember - you don't have to do it all yourself.)

What about CD sales?



It's very helpful if you can arrange in advance for someone to sell the CDs, during the break and after the concert. It's next to impossible for musicians to sell their own CDs at the same time everyone wants to talk to them.

That's pretty much it, but here are a few other considerations.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

ACCOMMODATION - If I'm away from home I will need a place to stay while in town, whether with you or by arrangement with someone else. Think of me as a distant relative or old college acquaintance - a place in a spare room or on the couch in the den would be great.

SOUND AND LIGHTING I normally bring sound equipment that I need (if any) and as for lighting, anything that creates a 'soft' relaxed ambience is great!

OTHER TECHNICAL ISSUES

What technical issues? Check that there is toilet paper 😊

Seriously, I'd love to help you have a great gig in your home. Download the House Concert Promo Kit here and let's set a date!

I'd like to give kudos to the following sources for this article:

[Fran Snyder's House Concert resource site](#)

[Bob Bossin's House Concert Guide](#)

[New York Times front page article on the house concert revolution](#)

[House Concert Hosting by folk singer TR Ritchie](#)

You Can download my complete House Concert Hosting Kit at <http://blog.andyrogersmusic.com/house-concerts/>