

e-News: Reaching Members in the Digital Age

Overview:

Just as our Madison Symphony Orchestra strives to maintain and expand its subscriber base, the MSOL wants to maintain its base of members (our subscribers.) We realized that more frequent and timely communication with members was critical to keeping them engaged with the organization. Our e-News project was born out of the belief that the greater the connection a member has with the organization, the more likely they are to renew.

Project Description:

The Madison Symphony Orchestra League (MSOL) began in the paper era when member communications were printed and mailed. For decades the MSOL produced a monthly newsletter, which was very labor-intensive. In 2011, our news was given its page in The SCORE, the Symphony's quarterly newsletter distributed to all subscribers. Once we no longer had a members-only newsletter, when we had specific news to communicate just to members, we began sending emails. These were sporadic, not consistent. It became clear over time that a section in The SCORE alone wasn't enough to communicate effectively or frequently with members. Returning to a paper newsletter wasn't an option: no one was going to volunteer to produce that each month! We needed a modern technique which could include hyperlinks and be sent by email. However, going digital required someone with digital communication skills. Luckily for the organization, a member had recently joined who had such skills as the owner of an advertising and marketing business. She saw our need and, best of all, was willing to take on the task. Our monthly e-News was born! We are now able to consistently showcase our initiatives, list new members who joined the past month, link to upcoming events, and more. The e-News has proven an ideal way to share information and engage members on a regular and timely basis.

Goals & Measurement:

Our goal in creating the e-News was to provide members with ready access to information and keep the organization front and center with them. We believed by doing this they would remain interested and committed members and spread the word to others. At the time we submitted the e-News for award consideration, we had a monthly open rate of 49% (music industry standard is 15.6%). Our click-through rate was 20.7% (industry-standard 2.9%). We also looked at membership growth; we experienced a nearly 20% increase in new members and were able to retain 95% of our members. We continue to have strong engagement with members through our e-News.

Cost:

The time to produce this monthly e-News is donated. It takes her approximately four hours each month to compile, write, and design the newsletter. Based on the rate she would bill a client (\$125 per hour) each monthly e-News could cost \$500 if we had to pay for it.

Volunteer Involvement:

The e-News is 100% volunteer-driven with assistance from staff to obtain photos or Symphony created content (as requested).

Considerations & Recommendations:

- Consider doing a member skills assessment to determine if there is someone with digital communications background;
- Use the creation of your e-News as an opportunity to recruit younger member(s); highlight that this is a role that can be done remotely;
- Take advantage of the ability to add links to your web page for event registration, volunteer sign-ups and member renewals;
- Cross-promote timely Symphony content (especially season subscription renewal) through links to the website;
- Illustrate each e-News item with a photo and feature photos from your events and activities.

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MEMBER E-NEWS



MEMBER
E-NEWS



APRIL 2020

To our MSOL members,

We express our gratitude for your support of the Madison Symphony Orchestra League and your participation in our MSOL events, volunteer activities, and our MSOL docent support of the music education in our schools and community engagement projects.



Greg Zelek
Pop Up Event

For MSOL members who weren't able to attend our fall pop up event with MSO principal organist and curator of the Overture Concert Organ, Greg Zelek, here's a short video. We all gained new insights into how he prepared the Samuel Barber's organ concerto *Toccata Festiva* for the MSO concert program.

Thank you to Greg for making time to visit with us during his busy performance week, and Peter Rodgers for videography and editing. Thanks to the MSOL Membership Committee for hosting.

[View the video of Greg's presentation here.](#)



A Soirée of Song
Party of Note

MSOL members Greg Reed and Michael Zorich hosted a lovely evening at their expansive apartment in downtown Madison, which began with drinks and a multitude of appetizers. Vocalist Susan Lee and her pianist Vince Fuh performed a collection of sad, silly, and sentimental songs. Dessert and more beverages capped off the event.



Art Inspired by Music
Party of Note

Stephen Fleischman, Director of the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (MMOCA), and Mei Becker Solomon, Curator of the Permanent Collection, led guests to the Works on Paper Gallery and the "vault" where the permanent collection is stored.

Guests also learned about the museum's collection of musically-inspired art. Refreshments followed the event and each guest also received special thank you gifts from MMOCA.

Thanks to Darcy Kind and Valerie Kazanias, who organized and sponsored this fantastic event.



Kenneth Woods
Pop Up Event

Madison born MSO guest conductor Kenneth Woods was kind enough to spend time with us for this exclusive MSOL meet and greet. Guests were able to hear about the works in the "The Music" program in March, his career, and his current work with the English Symphony Orchestra. He also described rehearsing with Blake Poulot, guest artist for the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto. For the Stravinsky Ein Heldenleben, Mr. Woods discussed how the notes played by concertmaster Naha Greenholtz helped tell the composer's story.

Thanks to the MSOL Membership Committee for sponsoring. Thanks also to Cathy Blunge for hosting.



Midwinter Luncheon

This year's Midwinter Luncheon was held at Nakoma Country Club on Thursday, March 12. The event featured an engaging presentation by Randal Swiggum about his experiences with music as a youth, and the current challenges and hopes for music education in Madison area schools. Highlights included his compelling demonstration of the need for a cultural shift and more worldly perspectives.

Thank you to Valerie Kazanias for organizing, and to Randal Swiggum for participating so enthusiastically.

About the MSO and MSOL:

Now in its 94th Season, the Madison Symphony Orchestra (a Group 3 Orchestra) enriches the cultural and educational environment of Madison and the surrounding area with performances of the great masterworks and top-tier guest artists from around the world. In addition, MSO's nationally-recognized Education and Community Engagement Programs bring the joy of music to more than 25,000 children and adults annually. Under the artistic leadership of Music Director John DeMain, the Symphony has grown to be one of America's leading regional orchestras. In 2018 the MSO celebrated John DeMain's 25th anniversary with the orchestra.

Part of the Madison community since 1956, the Madison Symphony Orchestra League (MSOL) is an organization of more than 370 members committed to supporting the Madison Symphony Orchestra's artistic, financial and educational mission. Membership is open to all.

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View the MSOL April e-News online:
madisonsymphony.org/msol-enews-apr-2020