

Publicity Tool Kit



Hi! I'm Jessica Shein, PR Manager for WorldStrides. In my career, I have worked for public, private and nonprofit companies, helping them get local and national publicity! Your selection to perform with the Honors ensembles provides a unique opportunity to bring positive attention to your abilities, your school, your private studio, or your community. I have crafted this kit to help you maximize that attention – whether you're aiming to amp up your fundraising efforts or just to tell the story of your experience with the Series! I hope you find these tips, ideas and templates to be helpful along the way.

INTRODUCTION

WorldStrides offers tools to assist you every step of the way during the process of planning your program. Publicity is a powerful tool that can help take your planning and fundraising goals and trip to the next level. In this kit, we'll discuss what it can do for you and your students as you prepare for the performance of a lifetime. Our goal is to get you the most traction and to garner publicity for your trip and your achievement and fundraising goals.

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What is Publicity (and Why Do You Care?)

The most basic definition of publicity to deliver information to the general public through the media. For any business or campaign, public relations is a vital aspect of marketing for your campaign or fundraising success. It allows you and your students to get the word out FREE OF CHARGE. Let me say that again last part one more time for emphasis – FREE OF CHARGE!

What's Newsworthy?

One of the most important practices when trying to garner publicity is knowing what the news is going to cover and what they won't. Here are some questions reporters ask themselves:

- *Is it unusual?* Did something out of the ordinary happen? Is this something special? Did you do something noteworthy?
- *Is it interesting or significant?* Did a student have a life changing experience while on the program? Did a local athlete or celebrity donate to your trip?
- *Is it new?* We have a saying at WorldStrides – Stories are like French fries. They are best served fresh and hot! Nobody likes soggy fries, and journalists don't like old news. Make sure you are giving reporters access to your story as its happening!

Media outlets are likely most interested in a few moments during this process of preparing for your program. Look out for unusual or interesting moments related to these:

- The Start - Your acceptance to perform at one of the world's premier stages
- Planning – Fundraising and making it happen!
- Departure
- Notable moments while traveling – Like performing famous pieces, working with renowned conductors, your performance
- Your return

Crafting Your Pitch

Depending on what you are pitching, you'll likely fit into 1 of these 3 formats:

Media Alert

Hosting a fundraiser? A media alert invites to media to attend your event. Your alert should be a one-page document that provides the 5 Ws of the event. Media alerts are typically sent one to three days prior to the event.

Community Event Calendars

Do you have 4-6 weeks' notice on your fundraising event? In addition to a media alert, there are lots of local calendars that would be happy to add your event free of charge!

Press Releases

To get publicity for your story, you'll likely want to send a press release. Different than a media alert, a press release contains more complete information. Essentially, you are asking the media to write about your news. Read more below about writing a press release.

The Angle

Now that you've decided what you will present to the media to cover, ask yourself, what's the best way to explain what I want them to take from this?

Example:

Okay: "We are having a fundraiser to raise money for my trip to New York City"

Anyone can host a fundraiser. What's going to make someone's head turn and want to attend?

Better: "(Insert Name) has been selected to perform at Carnegie Hall and perform with the Honors Performance Series. We need the community's help to make it happen!"

Or consider this:

Okay: "Local student was selected for the Honors Performance Series."

Put yourself in the readers' shoes. What's special about this?

Better: "Practice Makes Perfect! Local high school student selected to perform at world-famous Sydney Opera House"

Press Release Templates

The Series provides a Press Release template for you to use when contacting local media outlets before your program. The template is available to download from the Update page for your program.

The template is fully customizable – take some time to update it to meet your goals. Are you hosting a fundraiser and what is your fundraising goal? Do you want to highlight the members of your community who have shown support – your director or private instructor? What do you want your community to know about your selection?

Check out the Appended Resources at the end of this toolkit for additional templates you can use!

Contacting the Media

Once you have your press materials together, it's important to create a list of where you want your material to go. Here are some ideas:

- Local Newspaper
- Radio Stations
- Local Magazines (must have 4-6 weeks' notice)
- Broadcast News
- Alternative Newspapers

PRO TIP: Have a new reporter in town? Send your release and media alert directly to them! The main anchors and senior writers get TONS of story ideas and pitches in their inbox. New reporters are still trying to make connections.

The next question you may have is “how do I get in touch with these companies?” Though it may take some legwork, it’s not as hard as you may imagine! Here are some helpful hints:

- **Tap your connections.** Do you know someone who works in the media? Now’s the time to call in a favor. Give them your materials and see if they can work their magic.
- **Send an email.** If you are pitching to broadcast news, you can likely find the email address for their Assignment Desk. The Assignment Desk is the frontline. For newspapers, you are looking for editors. For radio stations, go to the program director and community affairs director. You can also reach out to individual reporters who cover community news, schools, culture, or other relevant topics.
- **The power of social media:** Many journalists use social media sites not only as a way to post their work, but as a way to find news stories to report too. Tag individual reporters in a tweet about your trip or fundraiser. Some journalist will even have their work email addresses on their bios. Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are all great tools! You may also want to post your event on local Facebook pages. Many community pages are followed by news reporter who are looking for story ideas.
- **Follow up.** Pick up the phone and say hello. You would be amazed how many emails are never read until you call and ask if a journalist has received your email. This is also a great way to give them a nudge if they are on the fence of covering your story.
- **Get “continuing coverage”:** If you get newspapers or broadcast television to cover your story before you go, send them an email prior to your return. Some journalists will send a camera crew or photographer to meet you at the airport when you arrive.

A word about the email subject line: If there is one thing I cannot stress enough is the importance of an attention-seeking subject line. Journalists get hundreds of email pitches in their inbox a week. What’s going to set your pitch apart from the rest?

Making sure your subject is eye popping without overhyping your release can be a slippery slope.

Start with the most interesting aspect of your release – your acceptance to perform at one of the world’s most renowned stages – and start with that. If you are \$1,000 away from your fundraising goal, add it!

Example PITCH: “Local Middle School student to travel to New York to perform at Carnegie Hall. Only \$1k away from goal”

Timing Tips from a Pro

Best and worst time to send a release

- **Best Time:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays are usually the best time to send a press release. With many journalists’ deadlines being at the end of the week, you will give yourself the best shot of presenting a reporter with a good story when they are trying to find content.
- **Worst Time:** Never send a release on a Friday or Monday. Friday mornings are a time when deadlines are due and Friday afternoons are downtime for reporters. Mondays are just that – Mondays. Like most of us, our inboxes are filled from the weekend and it’s easy for an email to be overlooked.

Best time to follow up with a news station

- **Best Time:** The best time to contact a news station and get your story on their radar is before the morning editorial meetings. Editorial meetings cover stories the team is working on and what is being covered for the day. They normally take place between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.
- **Worst Time:** If you are pitching a news station never send your materials or call to follow up during these times:
 - Before or during a newscast (6 a.m. – 8 a.m. or even 9 a.m., noon and the evening news)
 - Never, never, never call to follow up during breaking news! No reporter will be looking for new content during a breaking news story.

Best and worst times for your event (if applicable)

- If you want TV coverage for an event like a fundraiser, look at the time the newscasts are happening. In most cities, resources are most available between 10-3, or if it must be at night, between 6:30-7:30. Resources are tight in the morning, in the 2 hours just before the evening news, and again in the 2 hours before the late news.

Making the Most of Coverage

If your story is picked up by a local media outlet, make sure you and your directors or parents queued up for a potential interview. Pick people who are well-spoken and aren't camera shy. Practice a little for an interview! While you probably won't receive interview questions in advance, here are some questions that could be asked:

- **For Directors:** Why did you nominate this student for the Series?
- **For Students:** What was the application process like? What did you have to prepare? How did you feel when you learned you were accepted?
- **For Parents:** Why do you feel this trip is important for your son/daughter?

Remember, reporters can and will contact you on a moment's notice. Make sure you know who is going to speak on behalf of your event and be willing to go at the drop of a hat! If a reporter covers your story in the planning process, they may cover it again when you return.

Taking the reins and being your own publicist to help create buzz about your accomplishment and performance opportunity can be a fun experience. Remember, every media success will result in not only your trip's success, but you will bring attention to your school, your program and your community!

Appended Resources

Ms. Shein has helped the Series develop the Press Release Template (available on the Update Page for your program) and has provided the following templates you may also find useful when contacting the media. We encourage you to use one or all of these templates to promote your achievement and any fundraising efforts!

- Media Alert Template
- Post-Performance Press Release

Media Alert Template

*****MEDIA ALERT***MEDIA ALERT***MEDIA ALERT*****
****GREAT VIDEO AND PHOTO OPPS****
<TITLE>

WHO:

WHEN:

WHERE:

WHAT:

WHY:

MEDIA CONTACT:

Name

Title

Phone Number

Email Address

Post Event Press Release Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

Local <High/Middle> School Student Returns from Performing at <Venue>

<City, State> – <Date Sent> – <Finalist Name>, a student at <School Name>, recently returned from <City/Country> after performing at the 2018 Honors Performance Series. A <type of performer>, <student's last name> has been performing since <year>.

To be considered for this exclusive learning and performance opportunity, qualified high school musicians were invited to apply after being nominated by music teachers familiar with their accomplishments. Applicants were first accepted into the program and were then assigned an ensemble based upon instrumentation and balance requirements. Selected musicians rehearsed and performed under master conductors, which included Choir Conductor, <Conductor>, Band Conductor, <Conductor>, and Orchestra Conductor, <Conductor>.

Earlier this year, <Finalist Last Name> auditioned for the Honors Performance Series and was accepted after a review by the Honors Selection Board. Acceptance to the elite group is a direct result of the talent, dedication, and achievements demonstrated in <his/her> application and audition recording. <Finalist Last Name> joined <# of performers> from <locations>. Their performance at world-famous <Venue> marks the pinnacle of musical achievement.

“We believe that hard work pays off. These students have honed their craft and now get the opportunity to perform on an international stage,” said Morgan Smith, Program Director for the Honors Performance Series. “Their hard work captures the essence of the Honors Performance Series, and we are thrilled to feature these talented young musicians for a life-changing concert in one of the world’s most famous performance venues.”

The Honors Performance Series was established to showcase some of the most talented student performers today. The Series also holds two annual performances for middle school and high school students and one performance annually for young adult musicians aged 18-25 at the world-famous Carnegie Hall in New York. The Series plans to host a performance at renowned Sydney Opera House in 2019 for high school and young adult musicians.

The Honors Performance Series is currently accepting nominations for next year’s Honors Performance Series at the Sydney Opera House and the High School Honors Performance Series at Carnegie Hall in 2019. For more information, visit www.honorsperformance.org.

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About The Honors Performance Series

The Honors Performance Series was established to showcase the finest young musicians, selected from an international pool of applicants, through the exclusive opportunity to perform on the world-famous Perelman Stage in Carnegie Hall’s Stern Auditorium. Following in the footsteps of its renowned Carnegie Hall program, the Series will present its first Honors Performance onstage at Sydney Opera House in July 2017. The Honors Performance Series is proudly presented by WorldStrides, the nation’s leading educational travel organization. Learn more by visiting www.honorsperformance.org and www.worldstrides.com.