

Music Advocacy = Program Success, Part II **“How Do We Go About It?”**

by Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

The Next Phase

Let us move to the next step in building our advocacy success blueprint. How do we go about spreading the good news? This is a task of creating, implementing, and integrating a viable music advocacy program. Unfortunately, people are often intimidated by this seemingly impossible challenge; however, it simply means taking advantage of the network-of-exchange that is already in place. We must create various ways to shirrtail on the existing schedule, curriculum, and various program agendas.

Since we are musicians, music educators, and music supporters, we are convinced that everyone is in touch with the ever-growing library of positive music advocacy materials. Such self-deception can lead to complacency, denial, and will eventually come back to haunt us. We must establish an ongoing proactive campaign to persistently and consistently share the good news about the benefits of music with everyone. It is not just something we do, but it is a reflection of who we are; therefore, it becomes a signature message evidenced in all of our communications.

Now is the Time

It is all-too-easy to push this responsibility aside, particularly since we cannot identify immediate and measurable results from our efforts. Much like planting a flower bulb, the reward (the bloom) is not apparent until much later. Oftentimes, we do not see the fruits of our labor for many years, and even then it is challenging to think back, linking the outcome to the original work. In fact, most of our music advocacy work is done in good faith, hoping it will benefit many in the tomorrows that lie ahead. The opportunities are endless and the potential is beyond measure. Now is the time to take action.

Communication is the Key

Advocacy, by definition, means to voice an opinion, idea, or thought; literally, “to add one’s voice” to the conversation. We can do this in a number of ways. By reading through the following suggestions, you will begin to create your own list of communication possibilities and, with each success, more options will appear.

Proactive Communication List

1. E-mail: The popularity of Internet communication makes e-mail an obvious first step. Create an always-growing “list of candidates” who will benefit from reading the compelling information about music-learning, music listening, etc. Make the messages short-and-sweet, and create a comfortable outreach frequency for your cyberspace news quips supporting music advocacy.

2. Performances: Concerts always have programs which provide an excellent opportunity to put advocacy data in print. On the backs of the programs, inserts highlighting the value of music, registration cards to add to your data base, suggestion forms to allow the audience to become more involved as music supporters are all ways to facilitate your message. In other words, we must create a bridge of communication by asking people to become a valued member of our mission.

3. Community Organizations: Whether it is the Rotary Club, the Optimists, Chamber of Commerce, or any facet of the community, these groups are made up of town leaders and others who are vitally interested in the health and welfare of the local society. When they choose to “get on the music bandwagon,” they influence others by their actions. Ask for the opportunity to address the membership of the organization and put the information in their hands because their support is crucial.

4. Church Culture: From the church organist to the congregation singing hymns, we have made music an essential element of our church services. Here is yet another chance to share the good news. Adding a music advocacy note on the back of the church bulletin will assure readership from a group who often benefits from the talents and skills of musicians of all ages. And again, we have the chance to gain more people to be part of our music support family.

5. Local Media: Newspapers, television, and radio programmers are always looking for information that will draw the public's attention. Good news is worthy news and we have an abundance of "great news" to bring to their doorstep. Develop a relationship with the various people in the news media. Invite them to concerts, encourage interviews with students, graduates, music parents, and administrators. Once they become your allies, the media forum will become a popular billboard for music reaching a large audience of potential supporters.

6. Political Leaders: The politicians are the decision-makers, and, thus, the most vital aspect of our music advocacy efforts. One stroke of the budgetary sharpened pencil can instantly destroy many years of a tradition of musical excellence in your community. Political leaders can be music's "best friend," but they must be informed, and we must serve as the messenger-of-music. Don't ignore this crucial area of music advocacy. Rather, seek those in your community who "speak the language" of politics, engage their support, and begin an ongoing dialogue with the local, regional, and state politicians.

The Possibilities are Endless

The above six suggestions merely offer a starting place for successful music advocacy; the list of possibilities is infinite, it is limited only by our imagination. We all have a surplus of ideas, but we must take action on these ideas by assertively stepping forward to create active communication. □

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