

CMA Matters

CHAMBER MUSIC AMERICA

305 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001-6008 (212) 242-2022

ISSN 1050-9887

FALL 2011

Maximum Exposure

Using multiple Internet platforms

to build your career

by NINA PERLOVE

The music world went online over a decade ago, and it's there to stay. Virtually every professional ensemble has long had its own website, with a calendar, bios, press materials and reviews—and sometimes audio and video clips. But with the advent of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, maintaining a website just isn't enough. To get the most out of the Internet, you have to be an active participant across multiple platforms.

My own online experience dates back to 2007. As "The Internet Flutist," I have successfully built a substantial online following (over 7 million views). I have a website, a Facebook page, a Twitter account and an Instant Encore profile. My YouTube channel has 10,000 subscribers.

No, I do not earn meaningful income from these activities. Not directly, anyway. I make a small amount from sponsors,

along with the ads that show up on my site and my YouTube videos—just enough to offset my expenses. But the exposure I've gained has greatly increased the demand for my services. I get requests for lessons and masterclasses and from out-of-state students who want me to coach them. I am able to recruit a higher caliber of player to my university class and private studio. Composers have written pieces for me. I am asked to perform in more concerts and collaborate with outstanding musicians from around the world. And because of this increased demand, I am able to charge higher fees.

The lessons I've learned along the way, I feel, can be of benefit to any musician. Developing your Internet presence takes a lot of hard work and vigilance, but it can be well worth it.

The two main areas to consider when creating your online plan are content and distribution. The content is the material you create to share online: photos, music, videos, announcements, blog postings. Distribution is the means through which this content reaches an audience.

Neither will work without the other. Many artists create great content and put it online with the philosophy "if you upload it, they will come." It doesn't work that way. You have to get out there and work to attract viewers. By the same token, some artists and organizations have become skilled at using online tools such as Twitter and Facebook, but their content is so uninspired that no one really cares. If your "tweet" merely serves to direct the user to a boring piece of promotional material, what you're saying is: "time to hit the 'unfollow' button."



Content

Ben Chan, creator of the BenChan-Violin channel on YouTube, isn't even a professional musician. But his channel has more than 35,000 subscribers. Why? He gives the audience what it *wants*. He lets viewers request their favorites, and responds with renditions of everything from Bach to the theme from the video game *Zelda*. He has discovered the key to success on the Internet: create content that addresses an audience's wants and needs.

Based on the responses I've received on my own online materials, here's what I've discovered about the audience:

They want to participate. Ask your audience to weigh in on an issue, to post a video response. Put a poll on your site (SurveyMonkey is a great—and free!—tool for this). Or pose a question that people can respond to: “What’s your earliest musical memory?” “Who’s your favorite composer?”

They want to play like you. For this reason, teaching videos are more likely to get attention than performing videos. A series of videos I made, which covered the repertoire for All-State high school auditions, was circulated by band directors, teachers, parents and students. I get messages every week from viewers who tell me they saw one of my videos, and went out and bought a flute! I find that amazing.

They want to laugh and have fun. My audiences know I am a serious, hardworking musician, but they also enjoy it when I give them something fun, like my Vampire Flute Teacher Halloween videos. But you don't have to create this kind of content on your own. If you come across a funny music-related video or blog posting—share it!

They want innovation. The astonishing beatbox flute videos of Greg Pattillo, blending flute-playing with hip-hop, have garnered a stratospheric 20 million views. Now the former street musician has his own touring and recording chamber ensemble, Project Trio. So share your own innovations using sound files, videos or pdfs of music scores. If you've developed a new playing technique, blog about it.

They also like familiar things. Now, I didn't go to conservatory and practice scales for twenty years so I could play the theme song to *Avatar*, but it's a way for me to give

my audience something they like and appreciate. It's also a great way to attract new audiences—if someone typing in the search term “Lady Gaga” stumbles across one of your videos, you may very well acquire a new fan.

You'll have the most success with your followers if you allow them to see you as a person, not just a music-maker. This doesn't mean you have to offer revelations about your personal life, but the way you write about your art should give the audience a sense of who you are as an individual. Don't make it an ego-fest, but don't be afraid of using the first person singular. It's the way you warm up a website.

Of course, the most direct way to present yourself as a person is to let your audience see you. I think this is one reason videos have worked so well for me. The video route may not be for everyone: a lot of people just aren't all that comfortable in front of a camera. But appearing onscreen can make a crucial difference in building a following.

Videos are a chance to show your charisma and personality. Most concert musicians are charismatic while performing; the task is channeling that to video. Find the tone that is natural for you; don't just copy someone else, but find your own way to shine. If you can't speak comfortably on camera, you might want to delegate that task to another member of your ensemble. Another possibility: using subtitles or captions to “speak” while you're playing. (YouTube's “Caption” feature will let you do this.)

If you're offering videos, mix talking with playing—if not within the same video, at least within your overall output. You can find thousands of concert videos on YouTube, many of them very well played, but most of them don't get any significant number of views. Why? The musicians haven't established a relationship with an online audience by actually talking to them.

The Internet creates an unprecedented intimacy between artist and audience—an element that puts a premium on content that seems informal and home-generated. This doesn't mean hard-to-watch: viewers now expect high definition even from birthday-party videos. Your videos shouldn't appear to be highly scripted, and they should be filmed in personal surroundings. This approach makes the videos seem like a form of personal sharing.

Here are some precepts to keep in mind when creating content:

The art comes first. Artistic sharing—not marketing material—is what captures

the attention of an online audience. I'm not just talking about posting concert videos; I mean creating content specifically for online consumption.

Marketing works only in context.

Never, ever think of your online platforms just as places to post press releases! Yes, you can post informational updates, but only after you have built an actual relationship with your viewers. You will never fool them into thinking that a concert schedule alone is fascinating.

Stay on topic. You've attracted people who are interested in music. Don't overwhelm them with your thoughts on extraneous matters. If you're trying to develop a fan base for your jazz band, don't turn your blog or Facebook page into a series of postings about saving the rain forest. (I've actually unsubscribed to an artist's Twitter account because his interesting posts on music were getting outnumbered by his rants about other matters.) If you're passionate about an unrelated issue, invite your subscribers to also join you on a separate platform or different account. But don't assume that just because you have a passion for an issue, your followers share it.

Keep it fresh. Make sure your website is up to date. The more often you update your content, the more you encourage your followers to make return visits. Design your website so that you can do the updates yourself, rather than waiting for a webmaster to do them for you. Remember, if you've got a notice on your home page for an “upcoming” concert that took place two years—or even two weeks—ago, you might as well also post a sign saying “Nobody's home here.”

It isn't about the technology. Online technology doesn't create its own fascination. Just because you use Twitter doesn't mean people will want to read your tweets. Just because you've posted a performance video doesn't mean that everyone will want to spend seven precious minutes watching it. The technology is valuable only when it helps create a meaningful human connection.

And it isn't about you. Don't just think of the Internet as a way of capturing attention for your own benefit; think of what you can offer your audience. The first YouTube videos I posted showed me playing the Telemann Fantasies. Sure, they got me some attention, because people enjoyed my

playing. But I didn't go viral until I started posted teaching videos, since these helped viewers become better players *themselves*.

Distribution

Obviously, the best content in the world won't matter if nobody sees it. You've got to work at generating attention and building an audience. **Here are some things to bear in mind:**

Make it easy for your audience to find you and stay in touch. My own website (www.realfluteproject.com) has conspicuous links that let you subscribe to my free e-newsletter, follow me on Twitter, "friend" me on Facebook and download my mobile app. All of these help me stay in touch with my fans and keep them up to date on my latest projects.

Social networking works. You can't assume your followers will come to you—you have to go to them. And where are they? Facebook and Twitter. Use these social media to stay in contact with your fans. Create posts with links back to your content.

If your followers haven't heard from you in a few weeks, they've forgotten about you.

Create an email newsletter. This allows you to alert your audience about new developments, and also to direct attention, through links, to other components of your online presence. To get subscribers, you should collect email addresses at every opportunity. Post sign-up sheets at your concerts. If you do direct mailings, include a return card. Give your followers a shot at winning a CD or a T-shirt, in return for their email addresses.

When fans send you messages, write them back. When people contact you, they are trying to find out if there is an actual human being behind your online content. Let them know you're there.

Make yourself part of the online community. Comment on other people's videos and blogs, tell them when you like what they are doing and invite them to see your work, too. Don't be afraid of fraternizing online with your "competitors." A lot of times, a string quartet, say, will be afraid to let another string quartet post to its Facebook page; they'll think "I'm going to delete this right away." But in fact, this is

an opportunity to combine forces and build a fan base. I subscribe to the flute blog of my colleague Jennifer Cluff, and when I see something I like, I'll share it with my fans, posting it on my Facebook page and tweeting it. Jennifer will do the same for me.

Use every tool available. I've got apps for iPhone and Android to let my fans access my videos, music, blogs, and concert schedule right from their mobile phones.

Keep the work going offline. It isn't just your presence in cyberspace that can help you get followers: it's what you do in the real world, too. Don't sit at home: you should be attending conferences and concerts and introducing yourself to as many people as possible. Take advantage of every opportunity to share who you are and what you have to offer. It takes a lot of work, but it's the best way to start building an online audience—one fan at a time.

With over seven million views to her online video performances and tutorials, Nina Perlove is one of the most listened-to classical flutists of our time. She was an artist development advisor to the YouTube Symphony 2011 and is currently executive director of the American Classical Music Hall of Fame. (www.realfluteproject.com)

CMA Around the Country

CMA will participate in three end-of-summer regional conferences. Stop by our booth and learn more about our grant programs, new website, and upcoming conference.

CMA will also host networking events for members in each region (no conference registration required). Follow us on Facebook or check our Accent newsletters and website for updates.

Western Arts Alliance Conference (WAA)

www.westarts.org

Seattle, WA • **August 29–September 2**

CMA Booth No. 564

CMA MEMBER PERFORMANCE
IN JURIED SHOWCASE

Sybarite5

August 31, 5:15–5:30 P.M.

(Broadway Performance Hall)

CMA MEMBER NETWORKING EVENT

September 1, 5:00–7:00 P.M.

(Triple Door, 216 Union Street)

Midwest Arts Conference

www.artsmidwest.org

Minneapolis, MN • **September 7–10**

CMA Booth No. 514

SEMINAR: **CMA Grant
and Award Opportunities**

September 8, 10:30–11:30 A.M.

Join CMA's Program Director Susan Dadian to learn about Chamber Music America's grants and awards programs, which support both ensembles and presenters and recognize all styles of chamber music, including early, classical, contemporary, jazz and world genres.

CMA MEMBER PERFORMANCE
IN JURIED SHOWCASE

Sybarite5

September 9, 8:35–8:50 P.M.

(Pantages Theatre)

CMA MEMBER NETWORKING EVENT
September 9 (Time and Location TBA)

Performing Arts Exchange (PAE)

www.southarts.org

Baton Rouge, LA • **September 21–24**

CMA Booth No. 617

PANEL: **Presenting Jazz: Bringing the Music
Back Home to Louisiana and the Gulf Coast**
September 23, 8:45 –10:00 A.M.

PANELISTS: **Derek Gordon**, President & CEO, Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge; **Margaret M. Lioi**, CEO, Chamber Music America; **Jason Patterson**, Jazz Producer, Snug Harbor; **Alycia Mack**, Midwest/Canadian Agent, International Music Network

A Louisiana case study illustrates how simple it can be to bring jazz musicians into your community by networking with other arts organizations and with funders. The panel includes a regional nonprofit presenter, a for-profit presenter, an agency representative, a funder and individual artists. If you're inspired yet challenged by the idea of presenting jazz, this session is for you.

CMA MEMBER PERFORMANCE
IN JURIED SHOWCASE

Euclid String Quartet

September 22, 8:00–8:15 P.M.

(Manship Theatre)

CMA MEMBER NETWORKING EVENT TBA

Mark Your Calendar!

**CHAMBER MUSIC AMERICA'S
34TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

Sound Off! Raising the
Volume on Arts Advocacy

January
12-15, 2012

Westin New York at Times Square
Watch for updates at www.chamber-music.org.

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FALL 2011

The Technical Bulletin of Chamber Music America VOLUME 22, NO. 4

Date line

CMA Opportunities

CMA/ASCAP Awards for Adventurous Programming—Recognition for ensembles, presenters, and festivals with exceptional commitment to contemporary chamber music of all styles, including jazz and world music.
DEADLINE: October 7, 2011
FMI: www.chamber-music.org

Presenting Jazz—Support to U.S. presenters for concert engagements of emerging and mid-career professional jazz ensembles.
DEADLINE: October 14, 2011
FMI: www.chamber-music.org

Residency Partnership Program—Support for ensembles, festivals and presenters to create residency projects bringing live music and related educational programs to cities, towns or rural areas. Residencies may feature classical/contemporary, world, or jazz music.
DEADLINE: November 18, 2011
FMI: www.chamber-music.org

Other Opportunities

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Western Arts Alliance Conference—
August 29–September 2, Seattle, WA
FMI: www.westarts.org

Midwest Arts Conference—
September 7–10, Minneapolis, MN
FMI: www.artsmidwest.org

Performing Arts Exchange Conference—
September 21–24, Baton Rouge, LA
FMI: www.southarts.org

Virginia Center for the Creative Arts—
Fellowships (2 weeks to 2 months) for writers, visual artists, and composers, February to May, 2012, at Mount San Angelo, a 450-acre estate in Amherst County, Virginia.
DEADLINE: September 15, 2011
FMI: www.vcca.com

Aaron Copland Fund for Music: Supplemental Program—Support to nonprofit organizations (such as presenters and music service organizations) that have a history of substantial commitment to contemporary American music but whose needs are not addressed by the Copland fund's other programs.
DEADLINE: September 30, 2011
FMI: www.coplandfund.org

American Music Center Composer Assistance Program—Direct, project-based assistance is available to support performances of composers' works.

DEADLINE: October 1, 2011 FMI: www.amc.net

Puffin Foundation—Grant to Emerging Artists—The Puffin Foundation, Ltd., makes grants to emerging artists whose works, due to genre and/or social philosophy, might have difficulty being presented. Average grant is approximately \$1,250. Maximum, \$2,500. The 2012 grant cycle covers theater, music, and photography.

DEADLINE: December 30, 2011
FMI: www.puffinfoundation.org

ACMP: The Chamber Music Network—Support for adult amateur chamber music workshops, including coaches' salaries, reduced registration fees, and scholarships.
DEADLINE: December 31, 2011
FMI: www.acmp.net

Aaron Copland Fund for Music—Recording Program—Support for organizations that record contemporary American music.
DEADLINE: January 17, 2012
FMI: www.coplandfund.org