



Puttin' on the Dance Session Notes

“Booking and Working with Talent”

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Finding new talent –What have you done?

- Travel to other dances to find new talent/new to you talent

- New talent/talent contacts organizers via their website

- Go to festivals

- Talk to other musicians and music teachers about up and coming talent

How can you learn about the quality of a band/caller?

- Youtube

- Get references from other dance organizers/musicians

What do you do about musicians begging to be booked that aren't yet ready for “prime time”?

- Tell them they're not prime time, yet and give them suggestions on how to get there

- Nurture new talent through family dance or mentoring program

- Offer to hire the band/caller if they will accept feedback from the dance organizers and dancers

Who does your booking?

- Some committees help booker to choose talent

- Some committees review all bands/callers who have played so as to give feedback and to guide future booking choices

- Some dances have requirements of potential bands/callers (e.g. must have played Glen Echo, Greenfield and Scout House)

Does anyone have a feedback loop for performers? Do callers want feedback? Really?

- General consensus is an informal feedback loop

- Consider a more formal feedback loop (letter/email follow up – “here's what went well, here's what could have been better...”)

- Insure that feedback is specific and clear

- Insure that feedback is given constructively from the committee

- Feedback should be neither of a personal nature, nor appear to come from a person... it should come from “the committee”

Your Hiring Calendar – What to do? How far do you book in advance? What are the factors that go into advance booking?

- e.g. Rehoboth books the entire year of bi-weekly dances all at once

- lease/tenancy agreements can affect how far into the future you book

- bands often have long booking advances and can drive scheduling

SMART organizers look to see when a band/caller is playing in the area and try to piggyback their dance with another dance in the general vicinity
Waiting too long to book is NO Good! Book far enough in advance to publicize your event in a timely fashion.
One musician's perspective: booking too far in advance cramps their creativity

Payment structures: many variations

Profit Sharing vs. Guarantee

BIDA has a complicated system, which they find fair

Musicians and callers get a guarantee, then BIDA expenses up to the amount equal to one musician's guarantee, then profit sharing after first 2 elements have been met

Do your profit shares cap the # of shares for bands that have many musicians?

Do you pay bands that travel distances additional traveling dollars? Is that done through a traveling stipend or is it part of a larger guarantee?

Your organization should talk about paying more \$ for certain bands and not locals. Is that fair?

Negotiations with bands/callers

Negotiations should be made BEFORE the dance

Transparency about your payment structure makes it clear/ fair. Be clear.

Read Chrissy Fowler/Belfast Flying Shoe's "Dance Manifesto". Will Loving will include in conference documents the Downtown Amherst contra dance credence, which is taken largely from BFF manifesto.

Do have contracts for your talent, or a detailed confirmation email?

Include in your contract/confirmation:

Send your confirmation email about 1 month before event

Payment structure including fuel subsidy or guarantee for traveling performers

About your dance

General programming

General experience level

Where to eat in the area

Housing – "if you need housing, please contact us by "X" date"

Dealing with last minute problems

Approach the situation from a **WE** perspective e.g. Band calls and has a flat 1 hour away – "How can **WE** solve this problem together?" unless

Your caller calls and is *terribly* ill. How do you deal with it as an organizer?

Organizer does the work... "You take care of yourself, **I** will find your replacement."

Having a weather policy is a must for public and performers

Weather policy examples:

Decision is made by 4pm

If there has been a winter weather advisory in the area, performers must call to confirm FIRST. Dance organizers should also make great effort to

reach performers. This way if the dance is cancelled, the dance committee is not on the hook for paying a band that neglected to check in first. Get a Google phone # and leave weather messages so that public can call to be in the know. See downloadable conference files for Will Loving/Downtown Amherst dance weather policy.

Resources for finding replacement QUICKLY!

Send an emergency mass email out to all the callers/performers you know...eg. "dance tonight needs a caller, urgent. First come first serve". A mass email allows you to expend your personal energies wisely, rather than make a bunch of frenzied individual calls/emails

What if the band is late? What then?

Call on any local and new musicians for the first half of your dance
Play a cd of waltzes
Caller can rap it out
Do a beginner's session

Communicating with Band/Caller **During** the dance

Make your announcement policy known to the caller before the dance starts
Designate 1 person to be in contact with the band/caller for "dance management"
That 1 person lets caller know
Hall is crowded
If there is a group of beginners present (about 30 newbies or not many at all)
If band is slow or fast... if you tell the caller, but at the same time face the band, so that the band will get the gist.

Other potential snafus

Band complains to you about caller because they feel micromanaged...
Acknowledge the band's concerns but don't mention it to caller
Sound person and band desires are in conflict
Acknowledge
Make sure there is a good sound system
Make sure there are monitors
Make ear protection available if warranted

Understanding the Performers Perspective

Don't make them wait to get paid – they have to drive home! Have payment ready at the end of the dance.
Cash is the generally acknowledged most common form of payment, though checks work too