

# DRAFT

## BOOKING MANAGER

The Booking Manager negotiates contracts with performers and/or agents in booking the concerts. The booking manager is also responsible for reserving concert venues.

The usual negotiated items are the artists' fees, lodging, travel, meals, bonus payments, ticket prices and merchandise.

With regard to booking a year's worth of concerts, several other factors affect the bookings, such as the routing of the performer (i.e., the Fiddle's proximity to the artist's planned schedule), or the artist's fame. The less known a performer is, the easier it is to negotiate (usually) a lower guarantee.

Another factor in the negotiations is the venue size, which helps to determine the Potential Gross for the evening.  $\text{Potential Gross} = \text{Ticket Price} \times \text{Venue Capacity}$ .

It is essential to keep all of these things in mind when negotiating, as well as determining the costs of any given concert, which are dependent upon the venue used -- not all venues cost the same. It is important to compute what attendance is required to break even with costs before presenting guarantees to the board for approval (if approvals are necessary). It helps to consult prior performance records if the artist is a returning artist.

The Booking Manager should also obtain, before contracts are signed, the artists' technical riders. Working with the sound director in determining additional costs due to sound equipment rentals is vital.

The general timeline for booking is as follows:

September/October concerts - booked by July 1 at absolute latest  
November/December concerts - booked by September 1 at absolute latest  
January/February concerts - booked by November 1 at absolute latest  
March/April/May concerts - booked by January 1 at absolute latest

Most bookings for any given year begin by December of the previous season. That is, for the 2004-2005 season, bookings were begun in the spring of 2004 and were nearly completed by August of 2004.

Contracts should be in the hands of the gate manager(s) by the night of the show, although sooner is certainly preferable.

The Booking Manager must work closely with the gate manager with regard to the printing of advance tickets, ensuring that venue and ticket information is correct, and to establish a schedule for selling the tickets.

The Booking Manager must also work closely with the publicity director(s). Knowledge of how to market/publicize a particular concert (i.e., knowing the audience) is also important.

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The Booking Manager should also be available for comment by media, sometimes making personal contact with possible media sources.

It is recommended that the Booking Manager establish professional relationships with venues, agents, artists as this often helps with negotiations. Other venues within a four-hour drive are often interested in "block booking" possibilities. If venues can work together to ensure sensible tour routing for an artist, it minimizes the artists' costs and makes performing at the Fiddle more attractive.

The Booking Manager should also keep informed about new artists by subscribing to various music discussion lists or folk-oriented magazines and going to Folk Alliance.

From Judy Barlas (1992) & David McFarlane (1994)

Here's what you need to do once to start the job:

- Install the booking phone (the Fiddle will pay for this -- last time installation cost \$100-150).
- Notify artists/representatives (about 40 of them) of the change in booking manager. You may print up a postcard to do this.
- Introduce yourself to other presenters in the area (e.g. The Ark, Grand Rapids Folklore Society, Celery City, Creole Gallery, Paint Creek, etc.), if you don't already know them.
- Review existing tapes, documents, etc.
- Get a handle on materials & equipment for the job:
  - 10#F booking phone & answering machine, machine tapes
  - phone/contact list (rolodex)
  - concert log book
  - 10#F tapes & CDs
  - labels for 10#F tapes & CDs
  - promo packs & files
  - concert schedules: old, current, in progress
  - mail from other groups/organizations
  - concert guarantee & negotiation guidelines
  - performer/concert checklists
  - forms: contracts, technical, hospitality, travel & promo tips, maps (revise to reflect changes)
  - form letters
  - stationary & envelopes, postage
  - expense record & receipt file
  - business cards (optional)

Here's what you do the rest of the time (about 8 hr/wk to do it right):

- Attend monthly (usually) board meetings
- Bring the concert log book to each meeting for reference
- Submit Kinko's receipts and receipts for reimbursement to treasurer (currently Patty Degnan)
- Get & return concert reports for recording data in concert log book (see below)
- Replenish stationary & envelope supplies

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- Notify gate keeper(s) of concerts needing advanced tickets
- Notify MSU liaison (currently Doug Campbell) of concerts needing Kiva reservations
- Retrieve booking mail from the Fiddle's mailbox (currently at East Lansing Post Office)
- Give material for children's concerts to whoever is taking care of them (currently Wanda Degan)
- Review & respond to submitted material, and maintain these materials in the promo & audio files
- Answer phone inquiries, and keep the phone greeting up to date
- Line up performers, negotiate contracts/terms (see appendix A & C)
- Draw up contracts
- Send contract (2 signed & dated copies) plus support materials (map, hospitality & technical forms, travel & promotional tips), at least 16 weeks before concert
- Distribute returned materials:
  - publicity materials to Publicity Coordinator, by newsletter deadline (retain 1 set for booking files)
  - hospitality form to Hospitality Coordinator (currently Marcie Schwartz), at least 4 weeks before concert
  - technical form and pre-concert tape to Sound/Equipment Manager (currently Dave Chapman), at least 1 week before concert
  - contract to Gate Manager, at least 1 week before concert
- Assist performers/ reps with travel advice (Note: Capital City Airport is currently served by Continental, Delta/Comair ((800) 354-9822), Northwest ((800) 225-2525), United ((800) 241-6522), and USAir)
- Assist performers/ reps with promotional contacts (e.g., Bob Blackman, WDBM)
- Handle last minute info & emergencies for performers before their concert
- Record concert data in concert log book
- Help with writing of concert blurbs for schedules
  - blurbs should be about 30-60 words (see past schedules; also Appendix B)
  - submit draft copy to whoever makes the final official schedule
- Keep track of expenses & receipts
- Update and replenish supplies & equipment (see list above)
- Submit projected annual budget to the treasurer in July
- Revise and update this job description annually, and as needed for the next person!

### Optional duties & activities:

- Check out potential performers at other concerts (see appendix C)
- Greet arriving performers before Fiddle concerts
- Announce performers at Fiddle concerts (you have first rights to do this)
- House manage some Fiddle concerts (however, as primary contact for incoming performers, you might serve better by standing by to handle performers' last-minute emergencies, e.g., getting lost)
- Attend Folk Alliance meetings (the Fiddle usually contributes to expenses for this)

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## Appendix A: The Booking Year

The year's booking cycle starts in March or April and ends in February of the next year. Here is a basic sketch of the timeline for each concert season:

### FALL CONCERTS:

- Update booking phone greeting by OCTOBER
- Start the whole ball rolling again by JANUARY
- Start lining up performers by MARCH
- Make a Fall Tentative Schedule by APRIL
- Send contracts by MID-MAY
- Confirm dates, performers, residents, venues, advance sales, and ticket prices by the END OF JUNE
- Write & deliver concert blurbs to publicity coordinator by the MIDDLE OF JUNE, so that the Fall schedule can be distributed at the Great Lakes Folk Festival in early August (and then to Wheatland)
- Send courtesy copies of the final schedule to the Lansing State Journal, City Pulse, NOISE, WDBM and Bob Blackman, as soon as you get them
- Deliver September-October publicity materials to coordinator by JULY 1<sup>st</sup> (might as well get tapes to sound manager, too)
- Deliver November-December publicity materials to coordinator by SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> (might as well get tapes to sound manager, too)

### WINTER/SPRING CONCERTS:

- Update booking phone greeting by APRIL
- Start lining up performers by JULY
- Send contracts by MID-SEPTEMBER
- Confirm dates, performers, residents, venues, advance sales, and ticket prices by SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>
- Write & deliver concert blurbs by SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>
- Deliver January-February publicity materials to coordinator by NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> (might as well get tapes to sound manager, too)
- Send courtesy copies of the final schedule to the Lansing State Journal, City Pulse, NOISE, WDBM and Bob Blackman, as soon as you get them
- Deliver March-April-May publicity materials to coordinator by JANUARY 1<sup>st</sup> (might as well get tapes to sound manager, too)

Some of these deadlines overlap. Here's what it looks like arranged in chronological order:

### JANUARY

- Deliver March-April-May publicity materials to coordinator by JANUARY 1<sup>st</sup> (might as well get tapes to sound manager, too)
- Start booking acts for fall

### FEBRUARY

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- Continue booking acts for fall

### MARCH

- Finish booking acts for fall

### APRIL

- Set fall tentative schedule
- Update booking phone greeting for fall

### MAY

- Send out contracts for fall concerts
- Start booking acts for winter/spring

### JUNE

- Confirm dates, performers, residents, venues, advance sales, and ticket prices for fall concerts
- Write & deliver concert blurbs to publicity coordinator by the MIDDLE OF JUNE, so that the Fall schedule can be distributed at the Great Lakes Folk Festival in early August (and then to Wheatland)
- Continue booking acts for winter/spring

### JULY

- Deliver September-October publicity materials to coordinator by JULY 1<sup>st</sup> (might as well get tapes to sound manager, too)
- Finish booking acts for winter/spring
- Develop projected budget for the next concert season and submit it to the treasurer

### AUGUST

- Set winter/spring tentative schedule

### SEPTEMBER

- Send contracts by MID-SEPTEMBER
- Confirm dates, performers, residents, venues, advance sales, and ticket prices by SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>
- Write & deliver concert blurbs by SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>
- Deliver November-December publicity materials to coordinator by SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> (might as well get tapes to sound manager, too)

### OCTOBER

- Update booking phone greeting for winter/spring

### NOVEMBER

- Deliver January-February publicity materials to coordinator by NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> (might as well get tapes to sound manager, too)

### DECEMBER

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## Appendix B: Guidelines for Writing Blurbs

Simply put, the concert blurbs are brief descriptions that answer the following questions for the reader:

- Who is the performer (name, home, etc.)?
- What do they do?
- Why do I want to see them?

A generic blurb might look like this:

Performer, from location, plays instruments, sings songs, tells stories. You want to see this because it's fun and sounds good.

Past blurbs have occupied 2.5-3.5 printed lines (2-3 sentences) with about 12-16 words/line, for a total of 30-60 words. For example, the following came to 3.5 lines on the Fall 1992 schedule:

A highly original, sometimes hilarious, and always thought-provoking writer and performer, David Roth crafts songs that reflect the human experience from both a personal and a global perspective. Some, such as 'May the Light of Love' and 'Manuel Garcia', have been sung and recorded by people from Anne Hills to Sally Potter. Now hear them from the source.

## Appendix C: Random Ramblings on Booking

(Original contributions from Judy Barlas, 18 November 1992; additions and revisions by David McFarlane, 3 January 1994)

In order to enjoy success as a booking manager, you should have one or more of the following qualities:

- 1) Folk music is central to your life. You eat, sleep, and breathe folk music, and nothing could be more delightful than hobnobbing with the world's finest folk performers and their representatives.
- 2) You are people-oriented, and aspire to be in command of an operation drawing upon the cooperation of many disparate individuals to produce a quality product. You see this as an opportunity to prove your abilities for your own personal satisfaction and for the advance of your career.
- 3) You are comfortable carrying on about 50 simultaneous conversations spread across weeks or months.

Making money is not our goal, but not losing money is. Aim to make a profit on some things so you can risk on others, or so you can do stuff where you know you'll lose.

### MINIMUM GUARANTEE GUIDELINES:

(These are low rates. They do it 'cause they love us.)

- \$200 solo
- \$250 duo
- \$200 apiece if foreigners

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You need Board permission for anything over \$400.

### PROGRAM:

Try to maintain a season-wide balance between (among other things)

- traditional and contemporary
- male and female (inc. female INSTRUMENTALISTS!)
- solo/duos/bands (though the latter are expensive)
- American and international, languages, races, etc.
- old favorites and Fiddle debuts
- singers and instrumentalists

If you bring in a good dance band (e.g., Volo Bogtrotters, Wild Asparagus), try to coordinate this ahead of time with local dance groups such as the Ten Pound Fiddle (yes, that's us!) and Looking Glass Music & Arts Assoc. Also, if a performer is good with kids, coordinate a Friday concert/ Saturday kid's concert combo with whoever does the children's series.

You'll hear from a lot of singer/songwriters. Don't book a whole program of them; it's boring, and it's hard to give our audience a reason why they should come see THIS one, and then THIS one... For me to book a s/s, h/she had to be more than OK. There had to be something that made my ears perk up, that made the tape stand out from the pile. Look for creative language use, good storytelling, music that is more than just there. For these, a live tape (with between-song chatter) really helps. You are buying a whole show, not just the songs. In listening to the tape, try to think what it would sound like without all the backup musicians.

Performers with a specific cultural or political orientation are fine if, like Pat Humphries and Ann Reed, they appeal to and welcome a mixed audience.

Old favorites are good, dependable money-makers: low guarantee and a good draw. But don't overdo it -- makes for a boring schedule.

Except for special circumstances\*, avoid bringing people 2 years in a row.

\*SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: if a performer is very well received the first time, it is GOOD to bring him/her back the very next year so you can take advantage of word of mouth and a growing reputation.

Don't be afraid to consult with others, especially about a genre with which you're not familiar.

Listen to folk radio. Read SingOut and Dirty Linen. But just because others say someone is wonderful, don't feel you have to book it if you don't like it.

If someone you're interested in is at the Ark or other nearby venue, don't hesitate to ask the agent or performer for complimentary tickets so you can check them out live. It often makes a big difference (both plus and minus!). When you're at the Ark, introduce yourself to Dave Siglin as the new Fiddle booking person, and offer to work together on some stuff.

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Use the Folk Alliance. It's a great way to meet performers, agents, and other booking people.

Think of yourself as working in partnership with the performers and agents, to set up a good show and make some money for all of us. THEY NEED US, and want us to succeed. Develop your relationships with them, and they'll give you a good deal and go out of their way to help you out.

You are a go-between: you represent the Fiddle to the performer/agent, and the performer/agent to the Fiddle.

## BELIEVE IN THE PEOPLE YOU BOOK!

Doing 10#F contracts:

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- 1) Draft & print contract. Include:
  - a. Name of performer
  - b. Date & Location of concert
  - c. Guarantee
  - d. Dates for receipt of publicity & contract
  - e. 10#F Contact info
  - f. any other special agreements
- 2) Make copy of contract.
- 3) Sign & date both copies.
- 4) Into envelope:
  - a. 2 signed/dated copies of contract
  - b. Hospitality/Technical form
  - c. Hospitality Coordinator's (i.e., Marcie's) card (I like to paper-clip it to the hosp/tech form so that they know why it's there)
  - d. Map to concert site (I like to manually highlight the concert site on the map)
  - e. Travel & Promotional Tips

All this folded into an official 10#F #10 envelope should weigh 2 ounces.

- 5) Mail it!