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## THE ACOUSTIC ROUTES GUIDE TO HOUSE CONCERTS

House Concerts are very popular and successful in the USA and are an alternative to the usual gig experience because the musicians perform in someone's home for their family and friends. Now the people behind the successful Acoustic Routes concerts in Cambridge are looking to start organising house concerts over here.

### **What is a house concert?**

The definition's flexible, but generally, it's a show that's presented in someone's home, or a nearby private space.

- The audience capacity is usually from 20 upwards.
- The money collected usually (but not always) goes straight to the performers, with no "profit motive" on the presenter's part.
- House concerts are usually conducted by invitation with audience members making a donation rather than members of the public buying tickets. This is very important as it gets around the need for a license.
- Unless there is a large audience performances are usually done without a sound system.
- The concert can be a one off or part of a series.

### **What does a House Concert need?**

It is much like throwing a party but with a few important extras:

The performers need their own space which in a living room would ideally be at the opposite end to the entrance.

The audience need chairs and room to move in and out during the evening without disrupting the show. Cushions on the floor will be fine for the younger members of the audience.

Food can be served but this is optional.

Parking for your guests. Give them details of the nearest public car park if your road does not have the space. The performers will need to park close to your house.

### **The Performers**

The format for the show can be flexible. It could be a solo performance, a double bill, headliner plus opener - whatever you want. Acoustic Routes has had great success with a lot of different styles of show.

Many well-established performers are happy to do House Concerts and can often fit them into their touring schedule when they have a free night. Acoustic Routes is hoping to build up a circuit of House Concerts and to provide contacts for performers who want to do them and information on the availability of people on tour. Through running our own concerts we are in contact with hundreds of performers in this country and many Americans and Canadians who are arranging tours.

### **The Money**

Performers need to earn a living but are not expecting to get rich! Fees are usually negotiable and can be a set amount or based upon the door money. As a rough guide, for £200 you can have an evening of professional entertainment in your home so that requires just 20 people to donate £10 each.

Remember you are not selling tickets but are asking for donations which have a recommended amount. This is a private party and not a public concert. Everyone in your home is an invited guest.

## **The Audience**

To start with your audience will be family and friends. If you do a series of good concerts then word of mouth will increase your potential audience.

You should decide on a realistic capacity for the room and get people to make a reservation as you need to know how many are coming. Ask people to cancel if they can't make it so their place can be given to someone else.

Ask people for their e-mail addresses so you can build up a mailing list.

## **Refreshments**

This can be simple or elaborate, purchased from door money, donated by guests as a pot luck, or whatever. If you do a pot luck, don't be afraid to ask for specific dishes for the sake of a balanced meal. If you serve alcohol it's best not to serve anything stronger than beer and wine.

Performers will appreciate being fed so check on any dietary requirements they may have.

## **The Show**

It's your house and your show so if you have any particular requirements you should discuss them in advance with the performers. A typical format for a concert would be to start at 8.30, have a first half of one hour, an interval, then a second half of the same length finishing around 11pm. The interval should be around 20-30 minutes to allow the performers a decent break and time for the audience to socialise.

Unless you are making a meal a part of the evening then it would be appropriate to tell the audience that doors open 30 minutes before the concert starts. The performers will arrive earlier and any technical requirements for power supplies etc will have been discussed in advance.

It's good to have a compere to welcome everyone and introduce the performers who will appreciate having everyone's attention before they start. If you aren't comfortable doing this yourself ask a friend.

After the show please remember that the performers may have had a long journey and have worked hard. They may not want to party late into the night if they have another show and a long drive the next day.

***Most important of all: A House Concert is meant to be fun!***

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