



Bio Tip Sheet

Updated by Dr. Blaire K.S. Koerner, 2019

As a performer, conductor, teacher, or composer, you are going to need bios through-out your career. These brief glimpses into your life are commonly used for concert programs, websites, marketing materials, publications, CD cases, and other related materials. The focus and audience may vary, but the core purpose and components stay the same.

CONTENT

"A good bio is one that provides only as much information as is necessary to capture the attention of the reader and keep them engrossed until the end. It should come across as professional, be well written and well organized. It should find a good balance between sharing important factual information and also giving the reader a glimpse of what is special about the person. It should whet the appetite of the reader to experience the subject's artistry and to get to know them better." – [Edna Landau](#), Musical America

Potential Topics or Categories: (Pick at least 4)

Schools & Degrees	Upcoming or Recent Events	Outreach or Volunteer Endeavors
Important Teachers	Competitions, Awards, Grants, etc.	Special Venues or Events
Debuts, Premiers & Tours	Significant Ensembles or Festivals	Personal Side Projects
Recent Recordings/Publications	Institutions You Work For	Personal Interests or Fun Fact
Commissioned Works or Features	Quotes About You (written by others)	Purpose or Mission
Key musicians or Collaborators		Goals & Ambitions

Guiding Questions:

Here are some questions to reference when writing your bio. Please note that they are listed in the order of importance.

- 1.) **Who is your audience?** – When writing, think of *who* will be reading the bio. The accomplishments you highlight, your tone, and the personal touches you add should be different when giving to a potential donor vs. a young student at an outreach event.
 - 2.) **What is relevant?** – Think of the purpose of the resume. If it's going on a website where you sell your compositions, you shouldn't be referencing all of the conducting gigs you've done. Instead, focus on the more relevant topics *first* and then add the other interesting things you do if you have space.
 - 3.) **What is recent?** – Add a few dates and try to include recent accomplishment higher up in the bio. It becomes quite obvious to the reader if the individual hasn't spent time updating their bio.
 - 4.) **What are your other big accomplishments?** – It's very tempting to start off with the most impressive feature of your career. However, if it's not entirely relevant or it's rather old, it will feel out of place in comparison. Hold off on adding these unless you have the space.
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OTHER TIPS

- A. Name & Job Description** – You'd be surprised at how many drafts of bios that forget to mention the full name of the person or what they do for a living or the instrument they play. It's basic, but super important!
- B. Word Count** – Depending on the purpose, you may be asked for a 500-word bio down to a 150-word count. Cutting things down can be a challenge, so have a few different lengths prepared so you can just tweak when necessary.
- C. Making Assumptions** – Think about your audience and don't assume they know everything you reference. *Always* spell out an organization title BEFORE giving an abbreviation (ex. Eastman Community Music School - ECMS). if you mention specific geographical locations, provide the country/state in addition to the city.
- D. Listing** – Reading a long list is disengaging. Rather than stating every orchestra you've ever played in, *only list a maximum of 3*. If you want to include more, go in depth about what you've done with them rather than simply list.

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