



Classical Spark

On-Air Positioning and Promotion to Increase Listening and Listener Support

WHAT. A coordinated effort to increase and support “best practice” on-air promotion at classical public radio stations across the country. Our goal is more listeners using classical stations every day – on-air and online – and more listening overall, increasing both impact and financial support.

WHY. Targeted on-air positioning and promotion is a smart, effective, and affordable path to growing audiences. By coordinating efforts, stations can share resources and results. Support from Classical Music Rising will accelerate the sharing, build on our best work, and strengthen the collective impact.

HOW. We are asking classical stations to:

- Identify your station and its benefits consistently and constantly.
- Develop a “promotional inventory” of live reads, produced spots, and liners targeted at increasing regular midday listening, our format’s most listened-to daypart.
- Adopt a promotional schedule that approximates Optimum Effective Scheduling – about 15 live reads, spots, or liners a day or some 100 message points per week.

STATION SUPPORT. We will support stations with both materials and consultations. A series of Classical Spark updates will begin with a station branding checklist; a collection of positioners, liners, and scripts gleaned from classical stations; and suggestions on use and scheduling of this and stations’ own material. The materials will be refreshed regularly, sharing material from Classical Spark stations. Project leader Craig Curtis will schedule periodic one-on-one consultations to answer questions, offer advice, and collect material and experiences to share.

Shared messages will center on motivations for listening to classical music radio, such as sanctuary, inspiration, and timeless beauty that satisfies mind and heart. We will highlight the station as a “home” and our hosts as daily companions and trusted guides. These complicated times are also an opportunity for classical radio. Calls to action will focus on *daily* listening, repeat listening, and longer tune-ins.

Stations are free to adapt the material and to use established local language. The project is less about using a specific script and more about implementing best practices that can be used for years.

WHEN

Right now! A number of Classical Music Rising partners are already doing excellent on-air promotion and several have doubled-down with our shared focus on midday listening. To help with our evaluation, we would like all participating stations to be in full swing prior to the Fall ratings period, which runs from 9/14 through 12/16. We plan on year-over-year comparisons using basic audience measures.

CLASSICAL SPARK FOCUS POINTS

Station Branding

Drive institutional branding and value through frequent repetition of station name, dial position, and positioning liners that are memorable for listeners. These are proven basic broadcast techniques.

Many listeners don't know exactly where our stations are on the dial. Call letters alone don't convey what we offer – or why listeners should come back. And with audio listening on the rise via smart speakers like Amazon's Alexa and Google Home, clear station identification is more crucial than ever.

As part of this project, stations that do not have established, memorable identifiers will work to develop and use them consistently and regularly – such as “88.9 FM WDAV, Your Classical Companion,” “WOSU Classical 101,” “Classically Austin 89.5 FM” and “Colorado Public Radio, the Classical Voice of Denver.”

The Promotional Focus

Classical Spark takes aim at a critical classical radio daypart – **middays** from 10AM to 3PM – and our most important listeners – our core/P1 audience (the people who listen more to our stations than to any other) and nearby P2 listeners (those for whom we are a second choice).

More listening at any time of day is a good thing, of course, and many classical stations have some of their best hours in morning or afternoon drive. But we think midday is a “target rich environment.” We already have strong, collective performance on which to build; the number of persons using radio is significant in all markets; the competition elsewhere on the dial is often weaker midday; and our format works well with midday life-styles.

The Messaging

Sample approaches for crafting 100 spots and mentions a week to drive Midday listening include:

- Core benefits: this music makes my busy day a better day
- Programming tie-ins: teasers for specific works or daily anchors like “Bach's Lunch,” “Café Mozart,” “Midday Getaway” and “The Two O'Clock Special”
- Technical tips on how to listen: on the radio, online or via station app
- Listener testimonials: why they listen, how it accompanies their day, how the music makes them feel
- Companion to daily activities: when you're in your car, at the gym, at work, eating lunch. *“Your best friend at the office is Classical WETA. Perfectly tuned for your workday.” “The distance between nine and five? It seems a lot shorter when you spend your workday with Classical KUSC and kusc.org.”*
- Emotional benefits *“Classical music elevates everything on WQXR,” “Transform your day with Classical KDFC.”*

CLASSICAL SPARK CONTACTS

Craig Curtis is spearheading the project and is the best source for guidance and support materials.

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Classical Spark is inspired by NPR's "Back to Basics" Spark project focusing on radio fundamentals. At Classical Music Rising we know that the results of committed, consistent, collaborative on-air promotion know no station genre boundaries.

Classical Music Rising is a project of the Station Resource Group, supported by participating stations and a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. For more about the overall project visit

www.ClassicalMusicRising.org

