

## **Classical Spark #5: Promoting From News To Music**

--Craig Curtis

In managing the NPR Spark promotion project, my NPR colleagues and I were late to understand the needs of dual format news/music stations that wanted to promote the NPR news magazines in their music programming. **For Classical Spark, dual format stations and organizations with both News and Classical stations face the challenge of promoting music in news.** Most often that means promoting classical music during *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, *Marketplace* and the other public radio news programs commonly aired in drive time.

**Public radio news listeners share many qualities with classical music listeners**, such as broad intellectual curiosity and lifelong learning habits. Classical music satisfies those needs, but **for news listeners the relaxing and emotionally satisfying qualities of music may be of greater importance.** We can't assume the kind of knowledge of classical music that some heavy P1 classical listeners might have.

For instance, the standard daily classical music promo that includes a laundry list of pieces to be played will not be effective for someone who is primarily a news listener. They just don't care about repertoire lists. (I'm not sure those laundry list promos are effective for music listeners either.) **The simplest and most effective music promotion for a news listener is short branding or positioning spots describing the essential value of your music programming.** You may also find that tease promos focusing on a story or piece of information about music will tweak a news listener's curiosity. And guess what, **that kind of promotion also works for your heavy music listeners.**

Let's look at some examples, starting with a 30-second promo from Nebraska's dual-format NET Radio that runs in *Morning Edition*. Listen to the promo: [https://classicalmusicrising.org/wp-content/uploads/amcon\\_Sample101.mp3](https://classicalmusicrising.org/wp-content/uploads/amcon_Sample101.mp3)

[Music bed: *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*]

*"The movie Fantasia made quite a splash when it came out; it got Mickey in a bucket load of trouble. But when you hear Paul Dukas's music, you'll carry away a classic tune to whistle through the day. I'm Genevieve Randall. Stay with N-E-T Radio following Morning Edition and join me for Morning Concert."*

Many of you already use 10-15" sweepers and liners inside your music programming, and those messages can easily be used, often unchanged, in news programming. Here's a sample that works just as well in music programming as it would inside *Morning Edition*:

*"Had enough news? Keep calm and carry on with Morning Mozart at nine, right here on WXYZ, 89.3 Peoria."*

These short sweepers are easy to use in an NPR magazine as part of a stack of other promos and underwriting messages. They are doubly effective if your local news host comes out of them with some more detail. Here's an example of a longer spot, in this case voiced by the midday host. Again, this will work as well with news as with music listeners. Listen to the promo: <https://classicalmusicrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Annie-Wed-Promo-Boost-w-Mozart-etc.mp3>

[Music bed: Mozart to *Rodeo* to Schubert]

*"Hi, I'm Annie Bergen. Give your Wednesday a needed boost. Join me for Midday Mozart at noon. We'll help you wrestle that workload with Aaron Copland. And take a refreshing break with Schubert as our Two O'Clock Special. The soundtrack to your workday begins this morning at 10 on WQXR."*

In scheduling this kind of promotion in *Morning Edition*, for example, you could run hourly sweepers or promos early in *ME*, then increase the frequency during the 8 AM hour, adding some additional detail either through produced promos by your midday host or live reads by your *ME* host.

**Tease promos are a good technique as you get closer to the promoted program or daypart, and they can be surprisingly simple.** *"Mozart said it was his favorite piece. We'll have it for you just after the nine o'clock news. And here's a hint: It has violins in it!"* These can be voiced and produced by the music host, or done by the news host as a live read. Pose the question, set up the mystery, and promise the solution when the music comes around. (As a format, sport talk is very good at this sort of promotion, since their primary audience consists of young men with short attention spans.)

**Many stations have the local midday music host come in for a quick two-way with the *ME* host in the last 10 or 15 minutes of the program.** This is a good way for your local hosts to engage with each other using their own personalities and interests. These two-ways should not run more than a minute or 90 seconds, and should focus on a single item or idea rather than the aforementioned laundry lists of pieces on the midday playlist.

**Capital Public Radio in Sacramento combines the idea of the music/news host two-way AND featurette, but with the news host essentially interviewing herself!** Donna Apidone hosts *Morning Edition* on Capital Public Radio's news station, KXJZ, but she also hosts two hours of classical music from 10 AM to 12 noon on CapRadio's classical station, KXPR. Each day she records and produces a short 1-2 minute bit on a piece of music she will play later in the day on

the classical station, and she airs it during *ME* at about 8:50 AM. The audience has come to consider this “part of *ME*,” so **Donna has cleverly created content that is promotion and promotion that is content.**

For a step beyond standard promotion, listen to some of the 60-second classical music material **Colorado Public Radio** produces for use in their music service, but which is also used inside the NPR magazines on CPR news stations. Listen to the promo: [https://classicalmusicrising.org/wp-content/uploads/News60.Classical.Iyer-Brown.mw\\_.mp3](https://classicalmusicrising.org/wp-content/uploads/News60.Classical.Iyer-Brown.mw_.mp3)

[Music bed: Brooklyn Rider to James Brown to Vijay Iyer’s *Dig The Say*]  
*“I’m Matt Weesner from CPR Classical. When the string quartet Brooklyn Rider asked jazz pianist Vijay Iyer for some new music, they told him to choose an artist that inspired him. He immediately thought of James Brown. Iyer says it’s best to enjoy it with your body and soul, but there’s also much to learn from analyzing the music’s interlocking bass, drums, guitar, horn and vocal parts. Iyer put all of this into his rhythmic piece, Dig The Say. **Every day we bring you music from across the centuries and stories behind the music on CPR Classical, 88.1 in Denver and CPR-Classical-dot-org.**”*

Note the closes for this and other CPR Classical promos, meshing the appeals for both classical music and news audiences:

*...CPR Classical explores the curious backstories of music, with influences from around the world, across the centuries, every day at 88.1 in Denver and online at CPR-dot-org.*

*...Hear music like this and the stories of inspiration behind it every day on CPR Classical, 88.1 in Denver and streaming at CPR-dot-org.*

*...Throughout the year listen for great masterworks and the stories of how they came to be... on CPR Classical, 88.1 in Denver and online at CPR-dot-org.*

In my conversations with stations working on format cross promotion for NPR Spark, the most common reaction is, “I’ve been over-thinking this. It’s easier than I thought.” And it is. Obviously you need to tweak the message content and tone slightly for the target audience—news listeners in this case—but otherwise most of the same value and techniques apply. Listen to what your colleagues are doing, and send us examples of things you’re airing that you think are working for your audience.

Visit [Classical Music Rising.org/Resources/Marketing](https://classicalmusicrising.org/Resources/Marketing) for more *Classical Spark* materials.

(11/28/17)