

## *24 for '24: BEST PRACTICES TO PROMOTE LOCAL NEW HORIZONS ENSEMBLES*

*Contributed by the New Horizons International Music Association (NHIMA) Membership Committee and other New Horizons members*

Faced with challenges recruiting and promoting your New Horizon organization and ensembles? NHIMA has compiled a list of best practices to assist you.

### Membership and Organization:

1. Members are Your Own Best Ambassadors: Word of mouth by current members is the best way to recruit new members ! Have tri-fold brochures or business cards that members can pick up at rehearsals and hand out to friends, neighbors, and co-workers.
2. Reduce membership fees or conduct membership drives: The cost to belong to New Horizons group might keep some persons from joining. Waive or reduce membership fees or consider a membership drive that includes a percentage off if one joins. Or offer a reduced rate on one's next membership for recruiting a new member who joins.
3. Survey members, former members, and or potential members: Consider asking former members or those who do not attend regularly why they have not returned or are absent. For example, was day of the week or the time not convenient or are there other responsibilities (ex. caring for grandchildren) or priorities (desire to travel or engage in other activities) that kept them from participation? Carefully consider rehearsal times. Would moving rehearsal time to 5:00 p.m. permit attendance for those who don't drive at night as well as those who worked during the day?
4. Develop various levels of performing ensembles: Sometimes new players are anxious with playing with more experienced players. Consider adding a first-year ensemble or band. After developing confidence, players could move to intermediate or advanced groups.
5. Consider small ensembles in addition to large ensembles: Developing small ensembles and/or increased use of small ensembles (ex. clarinet choir, chamber group) gives more members an opportunity to play and develop confidence. This may also help solve a space problem as less space is needed for smaller ensembles. The smaller groups can be a good advertising vehicle as they can perform at nursing homes, schools, Sr. centers, etc.
6. Hold a formal welcome for new members: Provide a special event for new members such as coffee with the directors or a Q&A orientation session.
7. Sponsor an Open House: Invite community members to visit New Horizons groups to meet the directors and current members, ask questions, and view the facilities after light refreshments.
8. Create a buddy system for new members: Experienced players agree to mentor new members so new members feel welcome and are reminded of rehearsal schedule, dress for concerts, etc.

### Marketing and Media:

9. Include advertising in the yearly budget. If recruitment and marketing are goals for the coming year, the budget should reflect that.
10. Invite the local media: Invite a local TV or radio station to attend and broadcast an event or offer to provide a live sample of the concert. Many local TV stations have locally produced programs that highlight area events or organizations and will interview and feature area persons, groups, and events.
11. Prepare radio announcements: Many local radio stations have a Community Calendar or will advertise local nonprofit events for free.

12. Consider social media accounts: In the past, newspapers were a good way to advertise, but with increased costs, they do not get the needed return for the investment. Don't be afraid to explore social media such as Instagram and Facebook. Use social media accounts to post not only local New Horizons events and concerts, but the events of NHIMA and of other community music groups.
13. Make use of QR codes: The use of QR cards and having QR codes on posters, cards, etc. simplifies access to New Horizons information.
14. Develop a website: In addition to social media, consider developing a website provides information about joining, rehearsals, concerts, etc.
15. Create professional looking documents: Consider wording so that wording is clear and will help reach different desired ages such as the over 50 crowd and younger adult musicians. Also take time to proofread and make use of visuals. Include photos on flyers, business cards, brochures, advertisements, etc. Including a photo with any concert or recruitment listings in area papers will increase interest.
16. Keep a database or file of advertising efforts: Keeping a file digitally will make it easier to create future ads. The samples could be helpful with visual arrangement, prioritizing information on the page, and wording. Note what has worked well in the past. This information will be helpful if a change in leadership occurs.
17. Make use of a marketing team: Some New Horizons groups are housed in space provided by a local arts center or college. If you have access to a marketing team, check to see if they would be willing to assist with social media and getting the word out to local retirement communities, community agencies, etc. about performances.

#### Partnership and Networking:

18. Establish relationships with local colleges and universities: College music majors might be able to assist with providing lessons. Non-music majors who have not played since high school might be interested in joining a New Horizons ensemble. Promote each other's concerts and master classes.
19. Develop partnerships with local K-12 school districts: This might be helpful in terms of space as generally the schools do not charge or have a lower cost than other venues. Schools can also be helpful resources for borrowing needed equipment (ex. percussion needs).
20. Network with area businesses: Distribute posters to music stores, restaurants, etc. Many area businesses have a display area for local events and organizations. Invite area individuals or businesses to sponsor concerts.
21. Organize joint concerts: If your ensemble is small or even if it is not, join with other area New Horizons ensembles or community ensembles to present concerts.
22. Sponsor educational events or master classes: Consider sponsoring an educational event, master classes or sectionals with clinicians and invite not only New Horizons members but K-12 educators, potential members, and college and/or high school students.
23. Set up display table at area events, fairs, business expos, markets, etc.: This is an excellent way to promote New Horizons and NHIMA in the community.
24. Consider different venues and organizations: Are there area organizations, churches, or libraries that have halls that could be used? Consider joining with an area organization to provide a fund raiser for a charity. For example, the local New Horizons group could offer a concert while the other nonprofit provides dinner or refreshments.