



Developing your website

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www.worcesterguitar.co.uk

Introduction

This guide is intended for musicians approaching the task of developing their first web site. As such it is intended as a starting point, nothing more. Some of you may find the format suits your needs perfectly but others may need to adapt the format to their own personal vision. The rules are very relaxed, there is certainly no right or wrong way of doing this but there is nonetheless, a common expectation that a website will work a certain way and frequent frustration when it doesn't. This is not the only format you could adopt but it is common enough to be easily understood and approached by the vast majority of users.

The guide looks at the structure of the site but only as far as it serves the most important element, and the most important element by far is your content. Participants on the New Artist's Scheme (NAS) may use this guide to develop their own web pages but it is understood that the WCGS site will host these pages and that the design of the WCGS site is based on a set of templates which will be used for your pages. There are many excellent guides on web design out there and emerging professionals are encouraged to develop their own independent sites at the first opportunity in which any number of design ideas may be employed, but the theory is that when an artist is ready to do that, they will have already developed a solid understanding of the structure and content they might use. At the end of this guide, I will include a list of links that contain useful further information.

The process can be seen as a dry run, preparing the artist for the real thing with their own independent site, but in the meantime it is meant as a valuable resource providing the individual with a web presence that he or she can refer to in their own further promotions. Some artists will come to the process already with a site of their own, in which case, we would still develop a web page for the NAS production and we can include links back to your official site.

Case in point, take a look at this link:

<http://www.worcesterguitar.co.uk/acts/nas03/eden.stell.php>

The Eden Stell Guitar Duo already has a fully functioning site. For us to have developed (in effect) a separate second site could have led to problems of authority. There is no doubt that regular users would have quickly determined which of the two was the official site. The Eden Stell Guitar Duo site however, is updated constantly and we could not have kept up with these updates or provided anything like the depth of information that Mark and Chris produce on a regular basis. It is what makes the Eden Stell such a good site but it would have exposed a weakness if we had tried to mirror it. Instead, the solution was to provide ample links to the official Eden Stell Guitar Duo site and let the WCGS page describe simply, the concert they gave for us.

Compare this to the pages we developed for our patron Hayley Savage:

<http://www.worcesterguitar.co.uk/acts/nas01/hayley.savage.php>

We will tailor the development to suit you.

Broadly speaking your site needs to represent you to the world and we will work with you on your copy to ensure that the image you project is both professional and expert. In this respect it is a gateway. The site structure can be thought of as including three perspective viewpoints. In the first 'The Artist' you talk about yourself, some would say this is the least important aspect of an artist's work but people connect first with the human being. The second part 'The Merchandise' is about your creative output, it's the product – it is also the canvas for your imagination. The third part 'The Public' is what people see, and what they experience objectively speaking. Including it is akin to saying, "don't just take my word for it". This last is the viewpoint your visitors will identify with most, so it is important not to skip this element if you can help it, even if you choose a different format to the one outlined here.

Let's get developing!

Structure

The structure of your site is like a map connecting all the different pages. A medium sized site like the WCGS site has many pages and several eves of organisation all pointing to different aspects of the society's activities. Your site is likely to be quite simple in comparison.

It may be comprised of a number of discrete pages and in some respects this is a better approach than to try fitting all your content onto a single page: it is easier to find information, easier to navigate as well. The following structure should be familiar to you

- Home page
- Bibliography
- Discography
- Repertoire
- Compositions
- Sample programmes
- Concerts (past / future)
- Critical acclaim
- Gallery
- Contact
- Press kit

This list of pages is similar to how they will look in the finished state and this could very well be the order you choose too. We will discuss with you, alternative ways you can organise your content, but essentially this is everything you need in the way of content, and you may think of these page titles as subject headings.

Traditionally content is the very last thing to be developed but by working to a predefined structure like this you have an opportunity to buck that trend and go straight to your message.

If you do decide to redefine the structure of your pages then it is useful to get a pack of filing cards and jot down your subject headings on them (one per card) and then lay them out in the order you think they should take. This is an exercise in developing your thoughts and also the navigation of the site. So you will be looking at the information flow and categories of information. Laying out the structure using cards like this means that you can shuffle them around as your ideas develop and try out different scenarios before putting pen to paper.

You are limited to a single "eve of organisation", which means there is one navigation menu and it doesn't lead to another but we use 'inline' links, hyperlinks in the body text that may lead to another page or to a different part of the same page. We are limited to a single eve for your pages because it appears on the third eve (Events / Concert Archive / Your page) of the WCGS site and this is the maximum recommended for browser compatibility.



The screenshot shows a website page for the Worcester Classical Guitar Society. At the top left is the society's logo, which includes a stylized guitar and the text "Worcester Classical Guitar Society". To the right of the logo, it says "Since 1984". Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for "WCGS", "WCGO", "WYGO", "Events", and "Contacts". A breadcrumb trail reads "You are here: Events » Concert Archive » Hayley Savage". On the left side, there is a vertical list of links: "Biography", "Discography", "Compositions", "Reviews", "Contact", and "Press Kit". The main content area features the name "Hayley Savage" in a large, bold font, followed by the date "22nd February 2008". Below this is the address: "Worcester Arts Workshop, 21 Sansome Street, Worcester. WR1 1UH". A note says "For up to the minute information and news, please visit Hayley's official website:" followed by the link "www.hayleysavage.co.uk". On the right side of the main content area is a photograph of Hayley Savage playing an acoustic guitar. Below the photo is the caption "Photo: Nick Wilcox-Brown".

Content

The Artist

The home page

If the website is like an online CV then the home page is the perfect place for your personal profile. This is your opportunity to talk about yourself. What motivates you? What special interests do you have? What is it, if anything, that you stand for? What are you “about” as an artist?

You might talk about the things that inspire you or that you aspire to. It is the most personal or subjective of the pages and as such the personal profile is your chance to sell yourself to your reader.

If you talk about your skills you might include mention of any educational work here. The intention should be to give the reader a real glimpse of who you are as a rounded individual with a variety of skills.

You should also think about including at least one studio quality photograph of yourself on this page. You might also consider including any video or audio samples that are copyright licensed for this purpose.

The home page will ultimately include a short editorial on how you came to the New Artist’s Scheme. The objective is to give fellow promoters an endorsement of the qualities and attributes you brought to the process and we would want to describe any innovative programming, whether that was through the type of programming you devised or through original composition. Similarly if you are new to the profession, we would want to endorse you as a performer.

Bibliography

Like a CV this records the history of your development as an artist.

Focus entirely on your development as an artist. Many things make you the artist you are and so be prepared to think laterally, and keep it upbeat. Conflict may breed genius but people are generally suspicious of hard luck stories. A hard luck story just says you lack focus. People expect you to be serious about what you do to the exclusion of everything else. Stay with the facts – don’t “elaborate”.

Qualifications are good but these are probably the least relevant to your career as a performing musician. More interesting are the areas of study and the personalities with whom you studied with and under (shorthand for the stylistic influences on your development). Master classes are frequently cited but occasional, random classes are harder to justify. You should include everything you think is relevant but more often than not, in the area of master classes this will be for extended periods of study rather than single day events.

Include the details (title, composer, dates) of any prestigious performances. Where were the works performed? If the works were performed with an orchestra, what was the name of the orchestra and who was the conductor? You might also include mention of any work that crosses the boundaries of the classical guitar genre. Work in bands playing rock is not what we would be trying to sell but the idea of you as a multi-talented, multi-disciplined artist is all good press.

Give details of any competitions in which you were a finalist. What did you play? Where and when did the competition take place? Who were the judges? What was the prize?

Reference any commercially available recordings you have made or have participated in. We can link this reference to your discography page (if you have one) where you can talk about the recording in more detail if you like.

Reference any representation you have, a manager, agent or representative. We would link this to the contact information you provide for them on your contact page.

Concerts

A listing page showing all your past engagements outlines your experience to date.

If you include all your future dates as well it can help promoters with scheduling as well as providing information for prospective audiences.

Keeping it up to date would be your responsibility and while we would aim to update your information as soon as possible there may be delays in posting it up on the web.

If you prepare these pages during your time on the NAS before your concert for us, your NAS concert information would go on the 'in-focus' page. Some of that information is shared with your home page: concert details, editorial / promotional copy.

The Merchandise

The following pages are all about your output and they are optional; you may use none of them (not recommended) or all of them (WOW! You have been busy!).

Sample programmes

This page is of special interest to promoters because it describes a product he or she would hope to sell to the audience. The more options you provide here the better, because you cannot hope to reach everyone with a single programme if you are targeting the widest possible audience.

During the process of participating on the NAS we will talk about programming and different types of programme. As a starting point, you might consider having at least one contrasting programme to the set you prepare for the NAS. That is, an alternative programme with contrasting themes and/or styles. For maximum effect consider building three contrasting programmes.

Repertoire

If providing a sample programme doesn't suit your working practices then you may consider including a repertoire list instead, from which any number of variations may be drawn.

The disadvantages of a repertoire list can be that you are less in control of the programme choices; you would need to construct the set carefully so that it is programmatically viable even if all a promoter is interested in are the melancholy minor pieces. If you are really unlucky you will be asked for a no 22, a 17, a 6, three 9's and two 42's! All your years of training... to be reduced to a human jukebox! It also increases your workload if you are playing concerts close together that require different pieces.

The other disadvantage is that it can clearly demonstrate your lack of experience. A limited number of pieces is harder to sell than none at all so if your repertoire barely amounts to a single set consider the first option: a sample programme.

The advantages are that you get to choose all the pieces you include in your repertoire so if there is a piece you really do not like, you don't need to include it. This is no guarantee that you won't eventually be asked for it but it at least reduces the chances. A good varied selection of pieces can be the source for many more variations of set than preparing fixed programmes, it will overcome problems of seasonality and as long as you can keep up with the volume of work it can be a stimulating way of handling your material.

Compositions

Include the details of all your compositions to date, published or unpublished and consider including in this list, any arrangements you have made.

- Title of the composition
- Subtitle (if applicable)
- Dedication (if applicable)
- Instrumentation
- Duration (if relevant)
- The key of the work (if relevant)
- Description of the piece (always a good idea)
- The dates of composition / publication
- If published, the contact information for the publisher

Consider including sound files of the pieces for which you have either sole copyright ownership or licence to distribute.

If you wish to self publish i.e. (sell your work directly to consumers) provide the appropriate contact information for them to contact you or your agent. N.b. the WCGS does not currently handle any third party cash transactions.

Discography

Include the details of all your published recordings to date.

- Title of the recording
- Artist(s)
- Disc number / Record Company
- Date of release
- Description (liner notes) and/or track listing
- Image of front cover

Also consider including audio or video samples from the recordings.

Don't forget to include the merchandise information for point of sale (POS): Where can the consumer buy it? How much does it cost? How do they pay?

Educational work / Outreach / Teaching (private tuition)

Include any details of any outreach or educational projects you have worked on in the past. The criteria for booking you as a class provider are somewhat different but your history and presentation as a performing artist is just as valuable.

You may have reasons for wanting to teach and if improving the quality of education or providing outreach for certain sections of the community are reasons important to you, explain this. Teachers, in schools are more interested in the kind of lesson plan you can provide and a sample lesson might be similar to a sample programme for a recital. Let your experience guide you in this and avoid the promotional rhetoric. Again, stick to the objective facts. Ask yourself what the subjects will get from the experience and address these expectations if you can. What are the benefits you are seeking to deliver?

If you are teaching privately, the perception is that students invariably want to know that you can handle everything they will throw at you, so a broad repertoire, a variety of styles, a mixture of age groups catered for and so on are all selling points. We can include a link here for them to contact you and we can either repeat this or link the reference to your contact details page.

The Public

This part of the site concerns the resources that will help a promoter. It is self promotion again but this time, it is about addressing the point of view others have experienced with you and your work.

Critical acclaim / reviews

Every NAS concert collects comments from the audience. Invariably positive, we transcribe these into your pages. We may feather them into several of your pages at strategic points (like bullet points) or we may devote a page exclusively to them.

We can include press reviews or magazine articles. If the articles are long we can edit them down and provide links to scans of the originals that may be downloaded separately.

The acclaim can be for anything that is relevant to you as an artist: as a performer, teacher, or student. Anything in fact that augments your reputation.

Gallery

If you have a good stock of studio quality photos of yourself these can be threaded together in a gallery which may also include video performances. Photographs in your gallery are often a prime resource for promoters looking for artwork for their designs so the images need to be of the highest quality available to you.

Ensure that all the photos have the proper attribution: if you do not supply your photographer's name or company name, it will be assumed that you have the sole copyright of the image and no attribution will be given.

Special note on photographic images:

We can process your images to improve colour balance, contrast, brightness and framing (cropping) but we can only do this if the image has not been critically pre-processed or reduced in size. Photos should be submitted in .jpg format with a resolution for printing of a minimum 600dpi (dots per inch). The downloadable photo on a website is in fact normally comprised of two images: one at 72ppi (pixels per inch) RGB for optimum screen resolution and one which is called up when activated at (a minimum) 600dpi CMYK for optimum printing quality. We can convert a larger file into a smaller one but the process does not reverse well. When we shrink an image we discard some of the information of the format (this is why jpeg is called a "lossy" format) and once it is gone, it cannot be restored. We recommend that you supply all your images to us in the largest possible format and this applies to monochrome, greyscale images also.

Press Kit

This is a collection of materials for promoters and it's feasible that it reproduces your website content:

- Bibliography
- Contact details
- A selection of images (for printing)
- Details of any educational work provided or undertaken
- Programme suggestions / Repertoire - with or without a description
- Sample press release
- Critical acclaim (a selection)
- Any technical (stage) requirements

See [TIPS FOR PRODUCING PROMOTIONAL PACKS](#) for further details.

If you print these packs up for posting, you might also consider including demo CD's of your work.

Contact details

For convenience we recommend you include your email address but you might also consider adding your phone number as well. Email is generally the safest option if you are concerned for your privacy.

If you have representation consider including this in place of or in addition to your personal contact information.

If you have any merchandise, CD's for example, include the contact information for the point of sale (POS) – see 'Discography' above.

Resources

Writing for the web: a lot of studies here and links to other sites of interest.

<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/>

Still thinking about planning your site?

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/officelive/FX102380971033.aspx>

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/officelive/FX102513061033.aspx>

Beyond structure and content

<http://www.thesitewizard.com/general/index.shtml>

For the aspiring web developer – a free site authoring application which is extremely popular:

“WordPress is a state-of-the-art publishing platform with a focus on aesthetics, web standards, and usability.”

<http://wordpress.org>

Affordable and reliable webhosting (UK)

<http://www.uk-cheapest.co.uk/hosting.php>