

# How to Host A House Concert

*Some advice from the late, great Orrin Starr, who always put on a great show wherever he went!*

A House Concert is a great way to hear good music. It's just what it sounds like...a concert in someone's house. Here's how it works:

Many traveling musicians are looking for fill-in dates (often on week-nights) around their venue appearances. An increasingly popular way to fill this need is the "House Concert". Someone with an interest in live music, and a room that will hold 20 -50 people comfortably, books the performer and invites their friends in for a show. Here are the essentials (beyond which there's plenty of room for creative variation).

**SPACE** -- You'd be amazed how many people can fit in a modest sized living room in relative comfort! It's a concert - NOT a party with music - so people won't need room to move around and socialize except before and after the show and during the break in the middle (if you and the artist decide to have a break). Depending on the number of folks attending you can simply rearrange your existing seating or bring in folding chairs, etc. Some folks have the audience bring their own folding chairs (but it's probably better to set up your own so that you can control the layout).

Don't have a suitable room in your house? Talk a GOOD friend into volunteering theirs! One more thing on space -- Parking. In many neighborhoods you can fit a lot more people in your living room than you can cars in your driveway.

**LAYOUT** -- There needs to be a "stage" area for the performer. This can be as simple as a rug, or something more elaborate. The main thing is that the audience should be able to see and hear the performer without distractions...so don't set things up where late arrivals, or guests needing the restroom, will have to pass back and forth between the performer and the audience. The performer will also need to get to and from the "stage" without climbing over folks.

**SOUND** -- Depending on the size of the audience, many house concerts are done without sound equipment. When the room and the audience are small this is great; if the room is large or acoustically challenging, or the group is big, it may be necessary to use sound. Many traveling performers carry a small P.A. system with them. This is a decision best left to the performer.

**LIGHTING** -- This need not be elaborate - but it is critical. The goal is that the audience be able to see the performer clearly without shining bright lights directly in the performers face! Dim the house lights. Dim the background lights. It's best not to black out the room entirely though. One or two inexpensive clip-on lights - mounted near and ABOVE the performer - and you're all set. You may have adequate lighting in place already (track lighting can be adapted very easily if it's already in the right place).

**MONEY** -- We love what we do, and we also have to make a living at it. Typically house concert guests pay \$15 to \$20 each. If you have 30 guests that's \$450 to \$600. Typically all proceeds go to the performer. (I don't know anyone who presents house concerts and expects to make money on the deal. It has to be for the love of the music. Sort this out with the performer in advance to avoid misunderstandings.)

**REFRESHMENTS** -- Most hosts provide light refreshments; some encourage guests to bring something to share as well (or BYOB). And some make it a full-fledged "pot luck" before or after the show.

**AUDIENCE** -- put the word out to your friends, neighbors, etc. Put people's names on a list and/or pre-sell tickets. Seating is limited, so it's really important for people to understand that "no showing" is really uncool.