

Tips for Writing Performance and Composition Resumes

The Basics

1. An effective resume can get you in the door for an audition or interview. Resumes are also used to apply for grants, fellowships, degree programs, festivals, and competitions. They provide the reader with a blueprint of your most pertinent qualifications, skills and experiences that are relevant to the particular job or opportunity for which you are applying.
2. It's typical and recommended for musicians to have several versions of their resume – one for performance, teaching, arts administration, etc. Each one should be geared specifically for that type of work.
3. The challenge in creating a resume is to write it from the perspective of the employers needs. Put yourself in the employer's shoes; use the job description (or the grant application guidelines) to tailor a version of your resume to specifically highlight your relevant skills and experience.
4. Statistics show that employers spend less than 30 seconds scanning a resume, so the design and format should allow the reader to take in your most important credentials at a glance in order for you to make the best first impression.
5. If possible (or dictated by the application requirements), it's best to keep your performance resume to one page.
6. Design a letterhead at the top of the page with your name, address, email and telephone number. Choose an attractive and professional-looking font. Use the identical letterhead on your cover letter.

The Content

Divide your information into categories and use bold, caps or underline to set them off. The categories you use and the order you put them in should be determined by the job you are applying for (i.e. if you're looking for an orchestral position, put orchestra experience first). Typical categories for performance experience on performance resumes include:

- *For Classical Vocalists:* Full Roles, Partial Roles, Choral Experience, Solo Recitals, Musical Theater
- *For Jazz Musicians:* Clubs, Other Venues, Jazz Festivals, Has Performed With, Recordings, Ensembles
- *For Classical Instrumentalists:* Orchestral Experience, Chamber Music Experience, Solo Performances, Soloist with Orchestras, Community Performances and Presentations

- *For Composers*: Original Works (or just ‘Compositions’), Selected Compositions, Premiers, Selected Performances of Original Works, Current Projects, Arrangements/Transcriptions, Commissioned Works
- *Pianists*: Solo Recitals, Soloist with Orchestras, Chamber Music Performances, Collaborative Experience

Beyond the performance experience, the other categories typically found on all performance resumes are:

- Honors/Awards
- Education
- Principal Teachers
- Coaches
- Masterclasses
- Conductors [for orchestral/vocal resumes]
- Affiliations/Memberships

Generally speaking, performance resumes should not include teaching or arts administration experience since it is usually not relevant to the employer or situation. However, if you’re applying for a performance degree program and you want to be considered for a teaching assistantship, including your teaching experience would be appropriate. Or if you’re seeking an orchestral or opera audition and the organization has an extensive outreach program, then listing your community outreach performance experience and some of your teaching experience may be useful. The trick is to think about your resume from the intended recipient’s point of view.

Dates are used when listing orchestral experience, teaching experience, roles (for vocalists), for degrees and for awards and honors. In using dates, items within any category should be listed in reverse chronological order.

Your resume is always a work in progress. As you gain more experience, you’ll add new listings, and delete the less impressive.

The Layout

- Be consistent in how you list information in each category. If you list the city and state after each entry, continue to do so in subsequent categories.
- Format the resume so that it looks professional, is reader-friendly and graphically attractive – don’t be afraid of white space. If you have extensive experience, the important question may be: what do you need to leave out so that your resume isn’t crowded with material less relevant to the employer.
- For the content of your resume use a traditional “seraph” typeface that’s easy to read; such as these fonts: Palatino, Times New Roman, or Garamond

Resume Worksheet

The first step in creating your resume is to write down as much information as you can about your training and experiences. Start with more than you think you need—you can pare it down to one page later. The order of the categories will change depending on the type of job you are seeking. You may not have information to put in every category – don’t worry. We’ve given you some examples to get you started.

Performance Experience [choose the order of your categories based on the reader’s needs and interests]

Orchestral Experience

[include position, city, state, country if outside the US, and dates]

Portland Symphony Orchestra, substitute, ME, 2007-present
Tanglewood Festival Orchestra, Lenox, MA, 2007
New England Conservatory Orchestras, Boston, MA, 2004-06

Solo Recitals

[you don’t necessarily need dates on these]

Community Concert Series, United Methodist Church, Springfield, OH
Hale House, retirement home, Boston, MA
New England Conservatory, Boston, MA
Somerville Community Church, MA

Chamber Music Performances

[you don’t necessarily need dates on these]

St. James’s Church-Piccadilly, London, UK
Jordan Hall, Boston, MA
First Unitarian Church, Salem, NH
WGBH public radio, Boston, MA
Tuesday New Music, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA
Kupperschlag Art Gallery, St. Paul, MN

If you are a vocalist, typical performance experience categories include:

- Full Roles
- Partial Roles
- Roles Studied
- Musical Theater
- Solo Performances
- Choral Experience
- Recordings
- New Music
- Early Music

For listing roles, because there is a lot of detailed information that employers and audition committees like to see, the norm is to list the information in columns. List the information, from left to right, according to these areas: The role, the title of the work, the institution where you performed this (with city/state), and the year. Note that you must list these in reverse chronological order (most recent first; least recent last) See example:

Opera Experience

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--|------|
| 2 nd Woman | <i>Dido and Aeneas</i> | Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute | 2007 |
| Susanna | <i>Le Nozze di Figaro</i> | Phillips Academy, Andover, MA | 2006 |
| 1 st Lady | <i>The Magic Flute (scenes)</i> | Boston University Tanglewood Institute | 2005 |
| Belinda | <i>Dido and Aeneas</i> | The Treble Chorus of New England | 2004 |

Outside of roles, there’s no need to continue to divide your information into 4 columns. The other categories and information is easier for the reader to scan if left out of columns (e.g. recitals, chorus, education, awards, etc.) See example:

Choral Experience

Cantor & member, Schola Cantorum, Church of St. John the Evangelist, Boston, 2003-present

Jazz players have a number of good ways to list their experience in subcategories. Choose the ones that best highlight your experience. Since the names of the ensembles you perform with may not be well known, it may be more important to list where you’ve performed.

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Boston Venues</i> | <i>NYC Venues</i> | <i>Another Geographic Location</i> |
| Park Plaza | Knitting Factory | _____ |
| Harvard Club | CBGB’s | _____ |
| Fogg Museum | Tonic | _____ |

Other possible categories include:

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Festivals</i> | <i>Radio/TV</i> | <i>Recordings</i> |
| Montreal Jazz Festival | WGBH Radio, Boston | “Blue Mama” with Stan Freiberg, 2007 |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <i>Jazz Ensembles, New England Conservatory</i> | <i>Has performed with</i> |
| George Garzone Ensemble | [use well-known names here] |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

For Composers, depending on what they want to highlight, composers list their works (titles and instrumentation) and performances of their works (where and sometimes with whom—if noteworthy) using a range of categories:

- Original Compositions (titles with instrumentation, dates optional)
- Selected Compositions (highlights of what you want to put front and center for the reader)
- Premiers (titles, instrumentation, name of hall/venue where performed, city, state, country)
- Selected Performances of Original Works
- Commissioned Works
- Current Projects
- Arrangements/Transcriptions

Awards / Honors

(include city, state, country, and any explanation necessary, plus dates)

Winner, Canadian Music Competition, Toronto, 2007
 Scholarship, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA, 2005-06
 Recipient, Harriet Hale Wooley Grant, for study in Paris, France, 2004-05

Education

New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA
 Bachelor of Music in Guitar Performance, anticipated 2009

Boston University School for the Arts, Boston, MA
 Bachelor of Music performance program, 2005-07

[For a degree you received or are expecting to receive, list the year it was awarded or the year it's expected. If you transferred from a previous school where you did not receive the degree, list the program you were enrolled in and the years you were enrolled.]

Principal Teachers

Coaches

Conductors

Masterclasses

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |

Professional Memberships

National Association of Teachers of Singing, 2006-present
 Chamber Music America, 2005-present
 American Music Center, 2004-present

Related Skills (or "Other Skills")

(Only if pertinent—singers often detail language and dance/acting training)
 Languages: Fluent in Spanish; intermediate French; conversational Italian
 Special training: Ballet, 9 yrs.; Fencing, 4 yrs.

Creating Your Letterhead

“Letterhead” means your name, profession, address, phone, email and website (if you have one) arranged in an attractive graphic design at the top of all your press materials – your resume, bio, press releases, repertoire list, etc. In choosing your letterhead design, keep in mind that every font style (letter style), has a different look and communicates a different “personality” or image – elegant, established, distinctive, slick, etc. Play around with a number of different fonts until you find something that fits your aesthetic. Your name should be the largest – you want the reader to remember you. Shorter, simpler names can use the fancier fonts in larger point sizes. In the resume samples below, you will see a range of possible letterhead formats.

Christine Taylor, Cello

PO Box 41 Boston, MA 02222 | 999-555-1212 | christine@christinetaylor.com | www.christinetaylor.com

CHRISTINE TAYLOR, TRUMPET

PO Box 411 • Boston, MA • (999) 555-1212
christine@christinetaylor.com • www.christinetaylor.com

Christine Taylor, Composer

PO Box 41 Boston, MA 02222 // 999-555-1212 // ctaylor@gmail.com // www.christinetaylor.com

Christine Taylor, Harp

PO Box 411 | Boston, MA 02222 | (999) 555-1212
christine@christinetaylor.com | www.christinetaylor.com

[Cheat sheet for recommended format—Example: Orchestral Resume]

Joe Smith, *Instrument*

Address, Phone Number, E-Mail Address

Orchestral Experience

[List from most recent to oldest]

Name of Orchestra, Role, Location, Date

Example: China Early Youth Symphony Orchestra, Principal Violist, Kaifeng, China, 1999

Soloist with Orchestra

Same format as above

Summer Festivals

Name, Location, Date

Education

School, Location, Degree, Actual or Anticipated Graduation Date

Principal Teachers

Conductors

Chamber Music Coaches

First Last

Awards

Place (1st, 2nd, 3rd), Name of award and any necessary explanation, Location, Date

Example: Pressler Music Award, Anywhere, State, 2007-08

Ben Nogami, Violist

100 Canadian Terrace • Anywhere, Ontario A1A 2B2 • (905) 555-1212 • knogami@email.net

Orchestral Experience

Portland Symphony Orchestra, substitute, 2003-05
New England Chamber Orchestra, 2001-03
Jeunes Virtuosi de Montréal, concert master, 2000-01
l'Orchestre Baroque de Montréal, 2000-01
l'Orchestre des Jeunes de Québec, 1996-97, 1999
Orchestra London, Ontario, 1997-2000
Kitchener Symphony Orchestra, Ontario, 1997-98
Windsor Symphony, Ontario, 1997-98
l'Orchestre Symphonique de Trois Rivières, Québec, 1996-97

Summer Festivals

National Orchestral Institute, 2004
North Carolina School of the Arts International Program, European Tour, 2002
National Youth Orchestra of Canada, 1994-96, 1999

Soloist with Orchestras

University of Western Ontario Symphony, 1995
McMaster Summer Chamber Players, Hamilton, Ontario, 1993, 1991
Hamilton Chamber Players, Ontario, 1992
McMaster Chamber Players, 1990

Education

New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA
Bachelor of Music in violin performance, 2005

Principal Teachers

Malcolm Lowe
Richard Roberts
Lorend Fenyves
Martin Foster

Conductors

Seiji Ozawa
Simon Rattle
Michael Tilson Thomas
Andrew Davis

Chamber Music Coaches

Eugene Lehner
Louis Krasner
Terry Helmer

Other Experience

Social Coordinator, The University of Western Ontario Symphony Orchestra, 1997-98
Personnel Manager, The University of Western Ontario Symphony Orchestra, 1995-96

Principal Commissioned Works

- How Beautiful it is to Sing!*, for male chorus and opt. percussion
Composed for Music Serving Elders, Inc., Wang Center, Boston, MA, 1996
- Election III*, suite for two recorders, composed for Ray Samson, Tuesday Night New Music,
New England Conservatory, Boston, MA 1996
- Tears*, four songs for soprano and instruments, composed for Patricia Butler,
Tuesday Night New Music, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA 1996
- Election II*, suite for chimes, composed for Joel Stucki, Tuesday Night New Music,
New England Conservatory, Boston, MA 1995
- Two Motets*, for two part treble chorus and opt. percussion
Composed for the University of Houston Women's Chorus, Cullen Hall, Houston, TX 1994

Current Projects

- Mind Fields*, ballet based on the book by Harlan Ellison and Jacek Yerka
Harlan Ellison, narrator; William Harris conducting the New England Conservatory Chamber
Orchestra; Boston University Dance Company. Premiere anticipated for Jordan Hall, Boston, MA 1997
- Symphony no. 1*, for mixed chorus, bass, contralto & treble soli and orchestra
Memorial for AIDS Awareness Week, premiere anticipated for Jordan Hall, Boston, MA 1996

Education

New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA
Bachelor of Music in Composition, anticipated 1997

University of Houston School of Music, Houston, TX
Bachelor of Music in Composition, 1989-94

Principal Teachers

Malcolm Peyton • Daniel Pinkham • Charles Hausmann • Michael Horvit

Seminars

Toru Takamitsu • Gunther Schuller • Maxim Shostakovitch • Anthony Elliot

Vocal Performance Experience

- New England Conservatory Chorus, bass, 1994-present
Houston Symphony Chorus, bass, 1991-94
University of Houston Chorus, bass, 1989-94
Corpus Christi Symphony Festival Chorus, bass, 1989

Conducting Experience

- Bach: *Brandenburg Concerto #2*, Senior Recital, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA, 1995
Pinkham: *Three Lenten Poems*, recital, Dudley Recital Hall, University of Houston, TX, 1994
Pinkham: *Christman Cantata*, Grace Presbyterian Church, Houston, TX, 1993
Ives: *The Unanswered Question*, University of Houston New Music Ensemble series,
University of Houston, TX, 1989

Rick McLaughlin, Jazz Bassist

4 Watson Street, Cambridge, MA 02139 | (617) 354-6652 | rick@rickmclaughlin.com | www.rickmclaughlin.com

Performances, Boston Area

Regattabar
Ryles
The Middle East
Club Passim
The Lizard Lounge
Berklee Performance Center
Jordan Hall
WERS Radio

Performances, NY

Brooklyn Academy of Music
Knitting Factory
CBGB's
The Bitter End
Tonic

Festivals, US

Atlanta Jazz Festival, GA
Cambridge River Festival, MA
Boston Globe Jazz Festival, MA

Performed with

Either/Orchestra
Mick Goodrick
John Zorn
Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra

Steve Lacy
Bob Moses
George Garzone

Peter Wolf (J. Geils Band)
John Medeski
Jamey Haddad

Morphine
John Tchicai
Don Byron

Performances, Italy

Le Scimmie, Milano
Radio Popolare, Milano
La Palma, Roma
Club Filmor, Piacenza
Circolo degli Artisti, Faenza
L'Antica Traccia, Taurianova
Bitches Brew, San Benedetto del Tronto
Teatro Goldoni Musica, Bagnacavallo

Other European Performances

Travers, Brussels, Belgium
Jazztone, Lorrach, Germany
Wasserwerk Bern, Bern, Switzerland
Mai-Hofli, Luzern, Switzerland
City Jazz Center, Yaroslavl, Russia

Festivals Abroad

Festival of Dance & Music on the Volga, Yaroslavl, Russia
Jazz Jette June Festival, Jette, Belgium
Southern Thailand Jazz & Blues Festival

Recordings

Study of Light, Rick McLaughlin Trio, for Accurate Records, 2003
Mind Motions, Felipe Salles Group, for Fresh Sound/New Talent, 2003
Neo-Modernism, Either/Orchestra, for Accurate Records, 2003
In, Thru, & Out, Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra, for Cadence Jazz Records, 2003
Somnambulism, Laura Andel Orchestra, for Red Tucan Records, 2003
The Death of Simone Weil, Darrell Katz, for Innova, 2003
Afro-Cubism, Either/Orchestra, for Accurate records, 2002
Music, Mimi Rabson, for Meemzmusic, 2001
Pardon My Mess, Brian Gottesman, for Shelly Court Records, 2001
More Beautiful Than Death, Either/Orchestra, for Accurate Records, 1999
Nishoma, Bob Moses, for Grapeshot Records, 1999 (as Producer)

Education

New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, MA
Master of Music in Jazz Studies, Double Bass, 2005
Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies, Double Bass, 1999

Berklee College of Music, Boston, MA, Bachelor of Music Program, 1992-93

Beatrice Bononcini, soprano

100 Somewhere St. #1 // Anytown, MA 02115 // (617) 555-1212 // bbononcini@email.net

PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

Central City Opera Apprenticeship Program

Roles contracted for 1995 season: Papagena, *The Magic Flute*; Polly, *The Threepenny Opera*.

Operatic Roles

| | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| Pamina | <i>The Magic Flute</i> | University of Mississippi | 2003 |
| Adele | <i>Die Fledermaus</i> | University of Mississippi | 2002 |
| Jenny | <i>Down In the Valley</i> | University of Mississippi | 2002 |
| Laeticia | <i>The Old Maid and the Thief</i> | University of Mississippi | 2001 |
| Witch | <i>Hansel and Gretel</i> | Abilene Christian University | 2001 |
| Celie | <i>Signor Deluso</i> | Abilene Christian University | 2000 |

Partial Operatic Roles

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| Polly | <i>The Threepenny Opera</i> | New England Conservatory | 2004 |
| Adele | <i>Die Fledermaus</i> | New England Conservatory | 2004 |
| Donna Elvira | <i>Don Giovanni</i> | University of Mississippi | 2004 |
| First Lady | <i>The Magic Flute</i> | Abilene Christian University | 2000 |

Musical Theatre Roles

| | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| Meg | <i>Little Women</i> | Abilene Christian University | 2001 |
| Anne | <i>Anne of Green Gables</i> | Abilene Christian University | 2000 |

Partial Musical Theater Roles

| | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|
| Lily | <i>The Secret Garden</i> | University of Mississippi | 2004 |
| Christine | <i>Phantom of the Opera</i> | University of Mississippi | 2003 |

Film Roles

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|------|
| Caroline Jefferson | <i>Miss Firecracker</i> | Cosair Productions, Los Angeles, CA | 1998 |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|------|

AWARDS AND HONORS

Outstanding Vocalist of the Year, University of Mississippi, 2004
 Outstanding Undergraduate of the Year, U of M, 2004
 Prizewinner, Rose Palm-Tenser Scholarship Awards Competition, 2004
 Member, Phi Kappa Phi Academic Honorary Society, U of M, 2003
 Second Prize, NATS Southern Regional Competition, Graduate Division, 2003
 First Prize, NATS Southern Regional Competition, 2002
 Governor's Award for Most Promising Talent for a Professional Career
 First Prize, NATS Southern Regional Competition, 2001

EDUCATION

New England Conservatory, Boston, MA
 Master of Music in Vocal Performance, anticipated 2006
 University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS
 Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance, *magna cum laude*, 2004

Principal Teachers

Susan Clickner
 Cynthia F. Linton

Coaches

John Moriarty
 Dale Morehouse

Masterclasses

Martin Isepp