

# Arts Newsletters

## The Front Page Must Echo What Most Patrons Love

by HENRY RUDDLE, Ruddle Creative

**A**ll arts organization newsletters have one big thing in common – they are sent to and (with luck) read by people who like to participate in the activities offered by the organization. The current and prospective

members, subscribers, and/or donors—who comprise nearly 100% of every newsletter mailing list – care primarily about the next performance, exhibit, showing, tour or other event.

If you want your newsletter to succeed, events must be given center stage.

When we were hired to produce the newsletter for a theatre company in 1995, the marketing director gave us an animated explanation of why he didn't want a newsletter, just something that looked like a newsletter, but jazzier.

In his mind, a "newsletter" was a deadly boring compilation of the latest blah blah blah, punctuated with lots and lots of photos of people in evening wear holding alcoholic drinks.

Instead, he wanted something that would sell tickets. Radical! The front page (and much of the inside) would feature the upcoming show.

As you have probably already guessed, we had a semantics problem.

In my mind, the marketing director was describing a proper arts newsletter. His concept really wasn't a "non-newsletter newsletter" as he said. It was all of the publications he wanted to avoid copying that were not quite up to newsletter snuff.

### "A" for Effort

*A Tempo* from the Pacific Chorale and *On The Square* from the McLean County Historical Society are typical of newsletters which make the very reasonable, understandable error of confusing the news that is important to the organization with the news that is important to readers.

The chorale's naming of two new children's chorus directors and the celebration of its artistic director's 25th anniversary are important news items. From the content that was available, even a trained journalist would have chosen them for the front page. Yet, they are the newsletter equivalent of Brussels sprouts – undeniably good for you, but not most people's idea of a tasty snack.

The editor needed more events articles in the content mix. The calendar on the newsletter's back page listed 15 upcoming events, all with tickets soon to be on sale. One or more of those events should have been written up for the front page.

Meanwhile, in Illinois, the editor of the historical society's newsletter faces a dilemma that earns my sympathy. A big state grant sounds like front page news. Hoorah for the society's budget! Are more people going to visit the museum's exhibits? No.

Inside, this issue had articles about a recently opened exhibit (about corn!) and the next exhibit planned for the spring that should have at least been mentioned on the front page.

In both of these cases, the front page stories make good content, but should not have appeared on the front.

### First Prize

While by no means perfect, *DanceGram* from the Ohio Ballet and *Centre Focus* from the Centre for the Arts at Brock University in Ontario, Canada, are more effective at catching reader interest.

The ballet chose to feature the most immediate performance and to promote its upcoming season. Other stuff was going on, too. On page 2, the ballet gave the city an award, and first time subscribers were polled. On page 3, the winter schedule included a lot of touring, and a board member passed away. While important stories in their own right, the ballet chose wisely by promoting upcoming events on the front page instead.

## DIRECT MAIL SUCCESS TIPS

from left to right:  
DANCEGRAM  
(Ohio Ballet,  
ON THE SQUARE  
(McLean County Historical  
Society) and  
A TEMPO  
(Pacific Chorale)



Centre Focus takes the coming events concept to heart in a big way. Two thirds of the page lists the upcoming events (and gallery showings). However, the unfortunately worded headline article, "Buzzing Sound Heard" (an example of when not to attempt a play on words) did not belong. It was a wrap-up of an event that had already happened, so it should have appeared on an inside page.

To demonstrate how to make the most of the available information about the upcoming events, I have redesigned the cover of Centre Focus. The front page now features photos of the three highlighted events, and starts the articles about those

events on the front page as well.

The newsletter put the photos and articles on a differently colored insert (not shown). While that idea does have merit, it ignores the second most important reason to focus the front page on the material which will interest the most readers – once they start reading, they will probably read the entire newsletter. Don't separate the exciting stuff from the rest of the newsletter. If you want those bitter-pill-like announcements to be read,

wrap them in the event's peanut buttery exterior so that readers swallow the whole thing in one sitting. ■

**Henry Ruddle** owns Ruddle Creative, a marketing communications firm in San Jose, California currently celebrating its ten year anniversary. For more information, contact him at 1-800-7RUDDLE or visit Ruddle Creative's website at [www.ruddle.com](http://www.ruddle.com).

The new nameplate makes the name of the publication serve as the dominant feature.

A "bevel" filter in Photoshop adds depth to the type.

The date can appear anywhere in the nameplate, not just below the name.



**COMING EVENTS**

- Thursday, December 5, 8 P.M. **THE NYLONS**
- Saturday, December 7, 7 P.M. Sunday, December 8, 2 P.M. (Sunday sold out!) **Ballet Jorgen's "THE NUTCRACKER"**
- Wednesday, December 11, 2 P.M. and 8 P.M. **"LETTERS FROM WINGFIELD FARM"**
- Thursday, December 12, 8 P.M. **MANHATTAN RHYTHM KINGS**
- Monday, December 16, 8 P.M. Tuesday, December 17, 8 P.M. Wednesday, December 18, 8 P.M. **JOHN McDERMOTT & FRIENDS** (all three performances are sold out!)
- Saturday, January 11, 2 P.M. **AL SIMMONS "Cadey Stalks at Midnight"**
- Saturday, January 25, 8 P.M. **QUARTETTE and SHIRLEY EKHARD**
- Saturday, February 1, 8 P.M. **DANNY GROSSMAN DANCE COMPANY**
- Friday, February 7, 8 P.M. **LENNIE GALLANT**
- Saturday, February 8, 2 P.M. and 4:00 P.M. **MR. DRESSUP**
- Friday, February 21, 8 P.M. **PEGGY BAKER, Music for piano and solo dancers.**

**NEW BOOKINGS NOW ON SALE to "Friends" & "Best Friends"**

**BLACKIE & THE RODEO KINGS**  
Friday, January 24, 8 P.M.  
"Friends" prices: \$15 Adult \$11 Student/Senior.  
Regular prices: \$16 Adult \$14 Student/Senior.

**MARY JANE LAMOND**  
Saturday, March 15, 8 P.M.  
"Friends" prices: \$14.50 Adult \$13 Student/Senior.  
Regular prices: \$18 Adult \$16 Student/Senior.

**NANCY WHITE and DOUBLE EXPOSURE**  
Saturday, April 26, 8 P.M.  
Available to "Friends" only until January 20, 1997.  
"Friends" prices: \$20 Adult \$18.50 Student/Senior.

**BUZZING SOUND HEARD**

A loud "buzzing sound" was heard at intermission and after the performance in the lobby of the Sean O'Sullivan Theatre on Thursday, October 24th, as the Centre for the Arts presented its first-ever Season Gala Opening with Rawlins Cross and the region's own Niagara Symphony Orchestra.

Five hundred guests were treated to a musical feast of traditional Celtic tunes, Gaelic airs and original music by Rawlins Cross. Thirty-four members of the Niagara Symphony, under the direction of Michael Reason, complemented the band with strings, percussion, brass and reed sections. The Niagara Symphony Orchestra has grown from 40 amateur musicians in the early years, to 65 professional musicians who perform in 4 Masters concerts, 8 Pops concerts and 4 Choral concerts. This is the second season for Musical Director Michael Reason.

This was Rawlins Cross' third appearance in five years at the Centre for the Arts. The band is famous for taking Celtic folk music into the contemporary world by fusing it with rock and roll.

Rawlins Cross has played to out audiences across Canada has received enthusiastic status ovations. The gala performance was no exception! Rawlins' personal play a number of different instruments include bagpipes, mandolin, highland

"buzz-ing" continued on

**IN THE GALLERY**

Dec. 1 Jan. 6 Ernest Harris (Niagara Artists' Centre)

Jan. 7-24 Carolyn Pinder (Niagara Artists' Centre)

Jan. 27 - Feb. 21 Visiting Artist

Feb. 24 - 28 Lincoln County Board of Education, High School Exhibit

**Inside This Issue**

- 1 Events at a glance & In The C
- 2 Welcome new friends!
- 3 We will remember...
- 4 Try some Theatre trivia
- 5 96/97 Gala Opening. Were



## Tickets for New Bookings Now on Sale

**Blues Artists Blackie and The Rodeo Kings**  
Friday, January 24, 8 p.m.  
"Friends" prices: \$15 adult; \$11 student/senior; Regular prices: \$16 adult; \$14 student/senior



Left to right: band members Stephen Fearing, Colin Linden and Tom Wilson

Combining the talents of three exceptional Canadian artists, **Colin Linden, Stephen Fearing and Tom Wilson, Blackie and The Rodeo Kings** proves that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The songs from the band's debut recording, *High or Hurin'*, have been described as "truly awesome."

The band had it in inception when Linden and Fearing decided to record the songs of one of Canada's greatest

See **BLACKIE**, page 2



Gaelic Folk Singer Mary Jane Lamond  
Saturday, March 15, 8 p.m.  
"Friends" prices: \$14.50 adult; \$13 student/senior; Regular prices: \$18 adult; \$16 student/senior

ON STAGE:	Date	Performer	Time
Thursday	December 5	The Nylons	8 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday	December 7-8	Ballet Jorgen, "The Nutcracker"	7 p.m. Sat., 2 p.m. Sun.
Wednesday	December 11	"Letters from Wingfield Farm"	2 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Thursday	December 12	Manhattan Rhythm Kings	8 p.m.
Mon., Tues., Wed.	December 16-18	John McDermott & Friends	8 p.m. (sold out)
Saturday	January 11	All Simons "Cadey Stalks at Midnight"	2 p.m.
Friday	January 24	Blackie & The Rodeo Kings	8 p.m.
Saturday	January 25	Quartette and Shirley Ekhard	8 p.m.
Friday	February 1	Danny Grossman Dance Company	8 p.m.
Saturday	February 7	Lennie Gallant	8 p.m.
Friday	February 8	Mr. Dressup	8 p.m.
Friday	February 21	Peggy Baker, music for piano/solo dancer	2 p.m. and 4 p.m.
Saturday	March 15	Mary Jane Lamond	8 p.m.
Saturday	April 26	Nancy White and Double Exposure	8 p.m.

IN THE GALLERY:	Artist/Event	Location
December 1 to January 6	Ernest Harris	Niagara Artists' Centre
January 7-24	Carolyn Pinder	Niagara Artists' Centre
January 27-February 21	Visiting artist	Niagara Artists' Centre
February 24-28	Lincoln County Board of Education	High School Exhibit

**Remarkable**... capturing international attention. Her ability to effortlessly convey the deep emotional content of ancient Gaelic in combination with her unique style entertains and unites traditional and contemporary

See **LAMOND**, page 2



Nancy White  
CBC Radio Entertainers Nancy White and Double Exposure  
Saturday, April 26, 8 p.m.  
"Friends" prices: \$20 adult; \$18.50 student/senior; Regular prices: Available to general public starting January 21

Millions of Canadians know **Nancy White** as the acid-tongued, topical songwriter on CBC Radio's "Sunday Morning" program. **Double Exposure**, the multi-talented duo of **Bob Robertson** and **Linda Cullen**, currently have the highest-rated variety program on the



Double Exposure: Linda Cullen and Bob Roberts

A large, active headline provides readers with a clear starting point.

Drop caps and rules make it easy to figure out where each article begins.

All of these photos appeared inside the newsletter in the old layout.

The feature articles begin on the front and jump to page 2.

Every event, including the ones featured on page 1, is listed in the chart.

It's important to write captions for photos unless there is no doubt about who is in the photo.