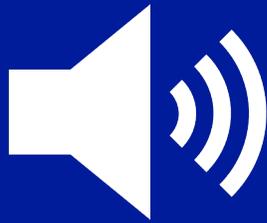


3 Traits of An Effective Donor Newsletter

Many arts and culture organizations launched donor newsletters in the wake of COVID-19, or shortly beforehand, to regularly communicate with donors *en masse*. The most effective ones are:

1: Differentiated



They're distinct from what the organization would offer to everyone.

2: Resonant



They appeal to readers on an emotional level.

3: Consistent



They have a thematic through line that readers can clearly identify with the organization.

1: Differentiating the Donor Newsletter from Your Other Content

The most effective donor newsletters differentiate themselves by (1) telling stories that profile *people*, not just programs. (2) Personalization and (3) donor-only offers can help further differentiate the donor newsletter from what might be offered to everyone.

Strategy 1: Storytelling & Donor Impact

Offers memorable, relatable, and/or inspiring stories about artists, patrons, staff, students, or other community members that would not be available elsewhere.

Example: 'Opera Unleashed' Magazine
Houston Grand Opera | Fall 2020

Wide Awake in Box 14

AN HGO PATRON ON HOW HE FELL IN LOVE WITH OPERA.

"In 1993, a coworker invited me to my first opera, *The Flying Dutchman*, at the Dallas Opera. I enjoyed the music and the experience, but for some reason, I just couldn't stay awake!" Perry laughs.



"Becoming a Patron changed opera for me. I was able to connect with new people, enjoy the Founders Salon, and do more of my favorite thing of all—bask in the presence of Perryn! The Patrons Circle has greatly enhanced our overall experience," says Perry.

Strategy 2: Personalization

Uses captured data to offer customized invitations, updates, and content.

Example: '✉ You're invited'
Scottish Ballet | April 2021

As you've let us know you are interested in our films, we're inviting you to meet some of the creative team behind *Odyssey*.

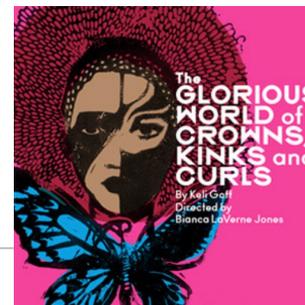
Odyssey – Costuming the Imaginary



Strategy 3: Donor-Only Offers

Provides insider tips, discounts, exclusive previews, or other special content.

Example: 'What's On At The Public This Week'
The Public Theatre Supporters Desk | March 2021



FROM OUR **FRIENDS**

Use discount code **MARCIA20** and get 20% off regular ticket prices (except student and senior rates).

2: Resonating on an Emotional Level

Storytelling is an important way to differentiate your donor newsletter – but what makes for a good story? Digging deeper into Houston Grand Opera’s ‘Opera Unleashed’ makes it clear: a good story is one that resonates with readers on an emotional level. In this case, it also strengthens donors’ emotional attachment to you and your organization.

Example: ‘Opera Unleashed’ Magazine

Houston Grand Opera | Spring 2020 & Winter 2021

Bold headers emphasize gratitude for the existential support provided by donors

You’re Their Hero!

YOU SUPPORT ARTISTS THROUGH THE PANDEMIC.

YOUR UNWAVERING SUPPORT KEEPS HGO ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF INNOVATION IN OPERA.

Your Words Mean *Everything*

KEEP THE MESSAGES COMING!

“Please hang on. We need HGO so much!”

—Claudia Reyes

One Lucky Caller

FOR THE PANCHERZ CREW, HGO IS A FAMILY AFFAIR. AND IT ALL BEGAN, YEARS AGO, WITH A FATEFUL RADIO PROMOTION.



As a young classical music lover, Mike Pancherz won tickets to the Verdi classic *Rigoletto* by calling in to a contest on the local classical radio station. Still in high school, Mike took his mom (longtime subscriber Linda Pancherz) as his date, and the two of them caught the opera bug that night!

Fast forward a few years: Mike met his future wife, Ruth Karper, at UT Law in Austin, and quickly introduced her to opera, too. When the couple moved to Houston a little over a decade ago, they began subscribing to HGO. One of the first productions they saw together that season? Why, *Rigoletto*, of course!

Relatable, memorable stories show (rather than “tell”), creating a tangible sense of community and connection

2: Resonating on an Emotional Level (Cont.)

Storytelling is an important way to differentiate your donor newsletter – but what makes for a good story? Digging deeper into Houston Grand Opera’s ‘Opera Unleashed’ makes it clear: a good story is one that **resonates** with readers on an emotional level. In this case, it also strengthens donors’ emotional attachment to you and your organization.

Example: ‘Opera Unleashed’ Magazine

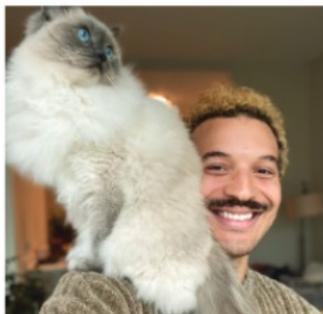
Houston Grand Opera | Spring 2020 & Winter 2021

A clean, engaging graphic detailing a day in the life of an HGO studio artist – in his own words – tells a human story while breaking up the text

The Masked Singers

BASS CORY MCGEE ON TRAINING WITH THE HGO STUDIO DURING COVID TIMES

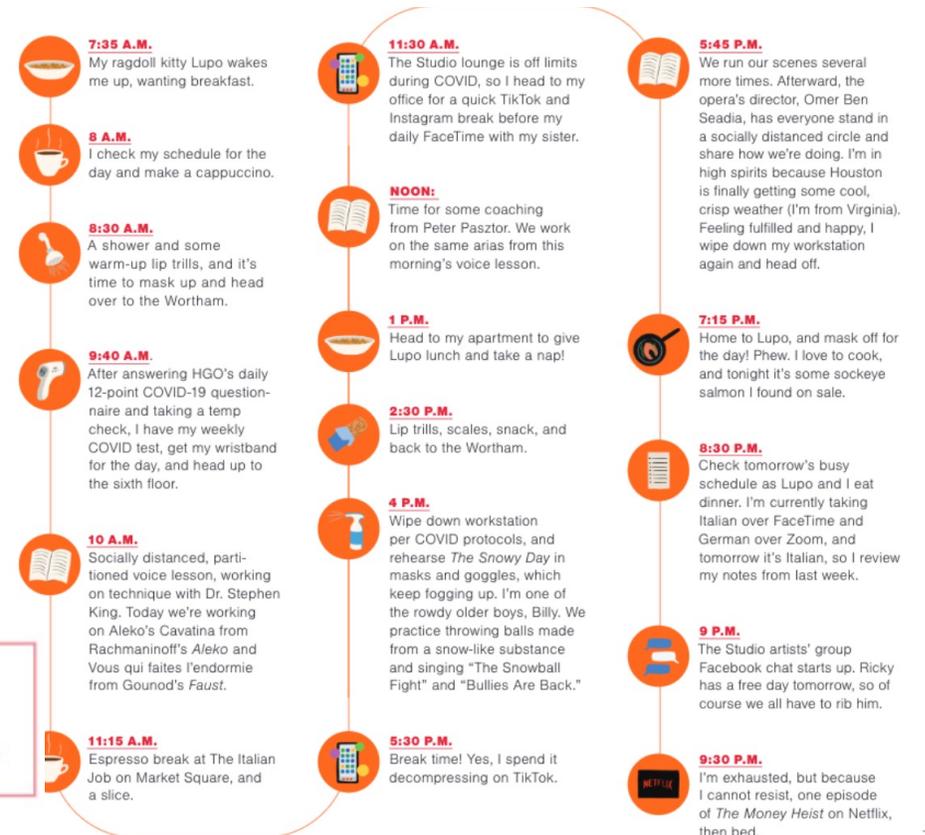
It’s a brave, new, socially distanced world out there for the gifted young artists who, thanks to your generous support, are honing their operatic skills in the HGO Studio during this unique season. By now, wearing face shields, regular COVID tests, socially distanced rehearsing, and Zoom lessons are a regular part of life for this year’s lively group of stars-on-the-rise. Bass Cory McGee, a first-year HGO Studio artist, shares what his day looked like on a recent pandemic Wednesday:



An informal selfie makes the content even more down-to-earth and relatable

Impresarios Circle member Beth Madison’s generous support made Cory McGee’s first year with the HGO Studio possible. If you’re interested in underwriting an HGO Studio artist’s training, contact Kelly Nicholls at 713-980-8688 or knicholls@hgo.org.

Including contact details makes it easy to get involved



- 7:35 A.M.** My ragdoll kitty Lupo wakes me up, wanting breakfast.
- 8 A.M.** I check my schedule for the day and make a cappuccino.
- 8:30 A.M.** A shower and some warm-up lip trills, and it’s time to mask up and head over to the Wortham.
- 9:40 A.M.** After answering HGO’s daily 12-point COVID-19 questionnaire and taking a temp check, I have my weekly COVID test, get my wristband for the day, and head up to the sixth floor.
- 10 A.M.** Socially distanced, partitioned voice lesson, working on technique with Dr. Stephen King. Today we’re working on Aleko’s Cavatina from Rachmaninoff’s *Aleko* and Vous qui faites l’endormie from Gounod’s *Faust*.
- 11:15 A.M.** Espresso break at The Italian Job on Market Square, and a slice.
- 11:30 A.M.** The Studio lounge is off limits during COVID, so I head to my office for a quick TikTok and Instagram break before my daily FaceTime with my sister.
- NOON:** Time for some coaching from Peter Pasztor. We work on the same arias from this morning’s voice lesson.
- 1 P.M.** Head to my apartment to give Lupo lunch and take a nap!
- 2:30 P.M.** Lip trills, scales, snack, and back to the Wortham.
- 4 P.M.** Wipe down workstation per COVID protocols, and rehearse *The Snowy Day* in masks and goggles, which keep fogging up. I’m one of the rowdy older boys, Billy. We practice throwing balls made from a snow-like substance and singing “The Snowball Fight” and “Bullies Are Back.”
- 5:30 P.M.** Break time! Yes, I spend it decompressing on TikTok.
- 5:45 P.M.** We run our scenes several more times. Afterward, the opera’s director, Ormer Ben Seadia, has everyone stand in a socially distanced circle and share how we’re doing. I’m in high spirits because Houston is finally getting some cool, crisp weather (I’m from Virginia). Feeling fulfilled and happy, I wipe down my workstation again and head off.
- 7:15 P.M.** Home to Lupo, and mask off for the day! Phew. I love to cook, and tonight it’s some sockeye salmon I found on sale.
- 8:30 P.M.** Check tomorrow’s busy schedule as Lupo and I eat dinner. I’m currently taking Italian over FaceTime and German over Zoom, and tomorrow it’s Italian, so I review my notes from last week.
- 9 P.M.** The Studio artists’ group Facebook chat starts up. Ricky has a free day tomorrow, so of course we all have to rib him.
- 9:30 P.M.** I’m exhausted, but because I cannot resist, one episode of *The Money Heist* on Netflix, then bed.

3: Cultivating Consistency in Your Donor Newsletter

Being not only differentiated but also thematically **consistent** over time makes it easy for donors to identify the newsletter with the organization. Of course, thematic change is okay, so long as there's a context and a framework for the change.

From the Arts

Example: 'Backstage Pass' Newsletter Berkeley Repertory Theatre | January 2020

When you take your seat in the Peet's or Roda theatre, and you have a first look at the set, or peruse the show program, you might still have burning questions about how this all came together. A tremendous amount of work goes into making just one moment come to life, like the one you see in this photograph. Donations like yours make this all possible. To show our thanks, we're giving you access to some exclusive behind-the-scenes facts with an interactive *Becky Nurse of Salem* photo.

Consistent Theme: Enabling donors to get up close and personal with each stage of the artistic process as a thank-you for their contributions – demonstrating how much time, labor, and money goes into a production.

Stage Magic: Props

The mannequins that you see onstage in *Becky Nurse of Salem* didn't used to look that way. Our Props Department team gave regular department store mannequins realistic faces for the play. Here they are at work:



Outside the Arts

Example: Valentine's Day Newsletter Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust | February 2015



Consistent Theme: Giving donors a lighthearted, educational look at where their contributions go, humanizing wetland conservation in the process.



3. Leave the kids at home

Flamingos often place their chicks in large crèches, which is safer for the little ones. They are incredibly social birds, and the crèches are minded by a group of flamingo nannies, giving the adults more time to flamingole.

Adopt a flamingo this Valentine's Day

ADOPT NOW

Anatomy of a Donor Newsletter: A Checklist

To recap: you'll be looking to answer 'yes' to the following three questions as they relate to your donor newsletter.

1. Are we **differentiating** this content from what we offer to everyone?
2. Are we being **thematically consistent** with what we've offered before (or if not, how are we framing the change)?
3. Are we **resonating** on an emotional level?

As you craft your organization's next donor newsletter, feel free to reference this (non-exhaustive) list of questions to ensure you're making the most of the tools at your disposal.



Tone

How do we want donors to feel about and connect with our language, and our organization, as they read?

- For/to/with whom are we writing our newsletter?
- What or whose voice(s) do we want to come through in this channel?
- How might we use this channel as more than a news outlet?



Content

What aspects of our organization do we want to highlight here that may not get as much attention elsewhere?

- Are we showing rather than telling?
- How can we provide points of entry for donors of all kinds of backgrounds and motivations?
- What is the right length for us?



Design

How can we design our newsletter a way that reflects who we are – and suits our donors' needs and preferences?

- Is it captivating and easy to read?
- How can we ensure our newsletter is accessible for all (including, for example, those with low vision)?
- Is our design sustainable both financially and environmentally?

More Examples (1/3): Cultivating A Personal Tone



From the Arts

'You mean the world to us'

American Repertory Theatre | May 2021

From world premieres to revivals and immersive site-specific experiences, the work of the A.R.T. has always aimed to create shows that inspire. And it is because of the support from friends like you that our productions have successful runs in Cambridge and galvanize audiences across the globe. **Cities such as Tokyo, London, Edinburgh, Seoul, Melbourne, and countless others have been able to experience the A.R.T. thanks to your investment in our work.**

A message of gratitude embraces donors as friends



Even exclusive content is described in a jargon-free way: a "sneak peek"

Get a sneak peek of A.R.T.'s upcoming programming at the Spring Celebration on June 5. [Register for a Free Ticket Today ▶](#)

Outside the Arts

'Your Connection' Alumni Newsletter

Converse College | Winter 2021

Genuine language that emphasizes unity

As we venture into a new year, I hope you will join me in celebrating the accomplishments of our Converse community as we move forward stronger, together.



Until we can gather with one another again, wishing you and yours health and happiness,

Warmly,

Jessica G. Eggimann '00
Director of Alumni Relations & Advisory Boards

Stacey Mulligan '01



Always pairs names with photos, giving a face to every story and letter

Linda "Jef" Glenn '71 and Edward Glenn '70



Tell Us YOUR STORY

Wherever life takes you, be sure to let us know where you are and what you're up to. Use Converse as a resource for connecting with fellow classmates, growing your career network, and helping others.

Offers easy ways to get involved

The Alumni Board is working diligently re-establish Chapters throughout the Southeast. If you are interested in co-chairing a chapter in your area, email alumni@converse.edu. Your TAPP Committee is here to help!

More Examples (2/3): Mission-Aligned Content



From the Arts

Spring/Summer 2021 Newsletter
Muscarelle Museum of Art | 2021

BEYOND THE MUSEUM'S WALLS



“William & Mary should be a place where everyone can thrive and contribute intellectually and we all have a stake in ensuring the kind of inclusive culture we want on our campus. We need to approach inclusion work as a community because efforts this important to the mission of the institution will be most successful when we pursue them together. We must all continue identifying barriers to full inclusion and work together on the most effective ways to surmount challenges to diversity.”
- President Katherine A. Rowe



Sections devoted to DEI&A and education showcase the museum’s strides toward its mission of “promoting thought-provoking dialogue and encouraging diverse and creative thinking.”

THE MUSEUM AS A CLASSROOM

Outside the Arts

Quarterly Newsletter
Habitat for Humanity, Greater Boston | Fall 2017



Elisemene Volmar is hard at work doing her sweat equity. Like all Habitat homeowners, the Volmar family put in 300 hours on the construction site.



Vierge Firmin

You’ve made sure this 76-year-old grandmother will sleep in a real bed in a room of her own by the end of the year.

Intimate profiles of volunteers and program beneficiaries are consistent with the organization’s mission to “bring people together to build homes, communities, and hope.”

**You’ve done it again!
Family of four will be homeowners in Dorchester, all thanks to you**

Stresses the personal impact of donor support as a community effort

More Examples (3/3): Effective Design

From the Arts

Giving Tuesday Newsletter

International Contemporary Ensemble | December 2019

Our cycle of advocacy – **discover, develop, share, amplify** – supports underrepresented voices and shares their unique perspectives on the world's premiere stages.



ICEcommons is our tool for discovering composers and their works. It is a crowdsourced, searchable database that is free and open to everyone!

Since our founding in 2001, developing new works side-by-side with composers has been part of our DNA. We're excited to say that we will perform 25 world premieres this season!



Our free concert series, **OpenICE**, allows music to be shared without cost as a barrier – 50% of our 2019-20 season is **FREE** to all.

DigitICE, our online concert hall of performance videos and more, amplifies important new voices to the world outside the hall, provoking further discovery and curiosity from an expanding audience.



The graphic groups facts about the organization's mission and impact into four distinct categories

Uses whitespace to direct attention toward only what is most important

Outside the Arts

2019-20 Alumni Report

MIT Sloan School of Management | 2020

Modern design combines individual profiles with facts and figures for the data-minded

BY THE NUMBERS



90%

Martin Trust Center programs took place despite the pandemic



5,500+

Students participated in Martin Trust Center events



1,248

Students enrolled in Martin Trust Center courses



GEORGIA PERAKIS PREDICTS PROBABILITIES OF INFECTION WITH METHODS FROM THE RETAIL SPACE

Not long after working on methods for prediction and optimization for retailers, **Georgia Perakis** (William F. Pounds Professor of Management; Professor, Operations Management and Operations Research) Director, MIT Retail Director, Co-Director