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PRESS TIPS:

1. Develop a strong pitch for your project:

A press pitch serves one purpose: to pique the journalist's interest in your story. A press pitch can be written as a letter or an email. It does not need to tell the whole story; rather, a pitch is a "teaser" for your project.

- To write a powerful and convincing press pitch you need to know whom you are pitching. Know the paper/magazine, look at recent articles that have been published, and try to understand the interests of a journalist/editor and for whom the magazine is writing.
- Always think of presenting an idea rather than promoting yourself. Think like a journalist. Consider what would interest an editor, think about trends and impacts and try to connect them to your project. The fact that an artist exists is not interesting - something has to happen and you have to convey that story.
- A pitch should be short and to the point, and it should always include links to additional information like a press release, websites, podcasts, and high resolution images.

2. Write a clear and convincing press release:

A press release is issued to targeted media outlets for the purpose of letting the public know about a project, a show, an event, a new product, a company's developments, etc.

- A press release contains vital information and serves as a fact-checking instrument. Most journalists like to get an electronic version of a press release, while some still like snail mail. A press release should be distributed as a Word document or a PDF file that allows text to be selected and copied/pasted into a Word document.
- A press release should include important information about your show: date, time, location, ticket information. Always remember "the 5 W's" – Who, What, When, Where and Why.
- Also include a short description about your work and yourself (in the third person). Make sure that it is written in a clear and simple way. Big words do not belong in a press release.
- Quotes can be included, but they are self-promotional and journalists know that. If a journalist wants a quote s/he gets it on her own and would not use a quote from a press release. However, quotes are still informative and add flavor to a release.
- You can also include links to information that might help others research your work or related projects/ideas.
- On average, a good press release can be written with anywhere from 500-1000 words. Your best bet is to try to get your press release to fit on one or two pages.

3. Develop an annual comprehensive press plan:

When you create a press plan you are developing your strategy for choosing a course of action when dealing with press. Develop a yearly plan that lists each media outlet — print, broadcast or online — and ideas on how to pitch stories to your targeted media. Consider the timeline and editorial calendar of each media outlet.

Assessment and Planning:

- Before you develop your plan, review and assess your past press coverage and determine what press pitches worked well, if writers wrote favorable stories about you or not. Look at the overall amount of positive, negative and neutral coverage.
- Look at your overall goal and develop your key message. Make sure that what you say and how you say it reflects your goal.
- Develop a timeline and calendar and look for press opportunities from the beginning to the end of the year. Do not only think of just one event you would like to promote, think about all your activities and look for opportunities to approach press from different angles.
- Be strategic, think about who to approach and when.
- Think about different media outlets and sections. Your show might not make it in the Arts section, but it might be featured in Style or Metro.

Tools and Tactics:

- Establish a press release calendar to plan out the press releases you intend to issue over the course of the year.
- Create or update your press list. Include editors and critics who cover your discipline (art, dance, theater, literature, etc.). Don't forget to include ethnic or culturally specific papers when appropriate.
- Many journalists write for their own blogs, covering art and culture. Bloggers have an immense influence today; they are gatekeepers. Make sure to include them in your press mailings.
- Contact your targeted media professionals (email is the preferred method) and try to set up timely meetings and/or pitch your story.
- Distribute your press releases in accordance with a media outlet's timeline.

4. Develop your own press list over time:

- Develop your press list over time. Do not try to assemble your media contacts two days before you plan to distribute your press release.
- If a journalist has contacted you in the past, make sure to include him/her in all your press mailings. If you see an article that relates to your work or is about an artist whose work relates to your own, add the journalist's contact to your list. Building a list takes time and is about building relationships.

- To start with the basics, think about the major daily, weekly and monthly media outlets as well as industry (such as art or design) magazines.
- Make a list of media outlets. Check who writes about what subject and write down their names and contacts.
- Blogs: Include bloggers in your press list. Look for appropriate bloggers that cover your discipline, are known and respected in the field and have a large following.
- There are also services you can use, like Burrell's, Cision or Vocus, that sell media contact information and press lists, as well as maintain and update lists. They are great resources, but they are expensive.
- Dance Theater Workshop and American Music Center offer press lists for dance and music media (respectively) for purchase, which are very useful and inexpensive.

5. Reasons to work with a publicist:

One of the publicist's main functions is to generate press coverage on behalf of clients and to serve as the bridge between clients, their public and the media. A publicist writes press releases, manages press campaigns and performs other public relations functions. It usually takes many years to develop the great media contacts, experience and relationships necessary to be an effective publicist.

- Publicists understand the media's needs. They know deadlines and editorial calendars.
- They have relationships with journalists and editors and know how to communicate with media.
- They function as a liaison between you and the media. Journalists often prefer to arrange interviews with a publicist rather than an artist.
- They understand how to write press materials and how to handle photo/TV shoots.
- They have press lists and can target your project accordingly.
- A publicist who does not understand or care for your work will not represent you well. Make sure you find the right publicist for you; somebody who not only has great relationships with media and a good reputation, but also cares about your work.
- Think about why you need a publicist and what you can or cannot do on your own. Think about media contacts you have and do not have. Think about your time availability and how much time you can commit to press outreach. If you have the time, can commit and come up with a good strategy, you can be your own publicist.