

How to Write a Press Release

POSTED BY ALISON HALLETT ON FRI, MAR 5, 2010 AT 3:59 PM



On Monday, the **Portland Area Theater Alliance** is hosting an informational panel about press photos: Local photographers and media types will talk about what makes a good publicity image, what format to send, etc. I unfortunately won't be on the panel, due to a **prior work engagement**, but the invite got me thinking that it might be useful to put together a more general list of press release do's and don'ts, since I think a lot of people know they need to do PR, but aren't quite sure how. To the jump!

PRESS RELEASES

DO:

- Send us press releases at least two weeks before your event.
- Include vital information in succinct form at the top of your press release; don't forget prices and press contact info. In fact, it wouldn't hurt to steal the template that the **Miracle Theatre** uses:

What:	HOW THE GARCÍA GIRLS LOST THEIR ACCENTS A play by Karen Zacarias based on the best-selling novel by Julia Alvarez Directed by Antonio Sonera Sponsored by Josie Mendoza and Hugh Mackworth
When:	March 26 – April 17, 2010 Thursday, March 25, 7:30 p.m., \$14 <i>Preview</i> Friday, March 26, 8 p.m., \$22 <i>Opening Night</i> (Opening night reception catered by Pambiche Restaurant) Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., \$20 (\$16 for students/seniors) Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 p.m., \$22 (\$16 for students/seniors) Sundays at 2 p.m., \$20 (\$16 for students/seniors)
Where:	Milagro Theatre, 525 SE Stark Street, Portland, Oregon 97214
Admission:	\$20 - \$22 depending on date; \$16 for students and seniors any performance Tickets can be purchased from www.milagro.org , 503-236-7253 or the PDX Ticket Network box office at the Hollywood Theatre daily 1-9 p.m.
Special events:	A free post-play discussion with the guest director, cast and crew immediately follows the 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday, April 11, 2010
Media passes:	Complimentary tickets for media representatives available from tim@milagro.org
More information:	503-236-7253 or www.milagro.org
Study guide:	Complimentary bilingual study guide available from www.milagro.org or tim@milagro.org
Photos:	High-resolution digital photos available from tim@milagro.org
Artist interviews:	To arrange interviews, contact Tim Krause, Marketing Director, at tim@milagro.org

-Feel free to elaborate at great length on the awesomeness of your project, but make sure and get the facts out of the way first. This helps ensure that information makes an accurate leap from your press release into my calendar.

- Know who you're sending your press release to. At the verry bottom of our site, there's a "[contact info](#)" link, with email addresses for each section of the paper. Most events fall very clearly into one category or another; if you think your event falls into a gray area, send it to whichever section seems the most likely fit, and include a note with your press release asking that the email be redirected if it's gone to the wrong person. It also wouldn't hurt to learn a few names: Alison does books, theater, and visual art. Ezra and Courtney do music. Erik does film. Addressing your email to Julianne Shepard—who worked here what, 8 years ago?—reflects poorly on the credibility of your pitch. Sending me an email addressed to Ben Waterhouse makes me want to punch your stupid show in the mouth.

- Double check that your event made it into our calendar. Let us know if there are any mistakes. We'll fix them.

DON'T:

- Take it personally or get hostile if we make a mistake in listing your event. Fuck ups will happen, but it's in our best interest to have accurate calendars, and we'll cheerfully update any errors. Again: If there's a mistake, just let us know.

- Send a fax. I mean... christ. I prefer digital everything—it's easier to organize. No paper necessary.

- Be cagey about how much your show costs. Half the time, price isn't included in press releases, and I have to go pretend to buy tickets through some 3rd party ticketing site in order to get a price quote. That's just bad for everyone.

- Send us last-minute press releases and expect them to make it into the calendar right away. If you send me a press release on Monday for an art show that opens on Tuesday, it probably won't make it into the calendar until at least the end of the week. Do everyone a favor and give us plenty of notice.

PRESS PHOTOS:

It's very, very difficult to convey extremes of emotion in a single newspaper photo, but people insist on trying. Stick with a concept that gives a basic idea of what your show is about (an image that tells the story), rather than attempting to take a photograph that sums up the *feeling* of your show—how hilarious/intense/heartwrenching/whatever the show is. Those pretty much always look ridiculous, out of context.

I can't speak for any other media outlets, but I prefer to get images as a link to a Flickr page or a website than a bunch of attachments. I particularly like it when people have a media link on their site that includes press releases and images. That's nice.