



# So Now it's

# SHOWTIME

## Programming

To Begin: What is your goal for this concert? What do you want the audience to walk away with? Do you want to inspire, entertain, educate, astound, mesmerize, befriend, flirt with, surprise, dazzle the audience? Pick a few words and think about how these words translate into a performance. How do they relate to the music you choose, how you dress and relate with the audience. What will make you feel you've had a successful concert? How will you incorporate these goals in your planning of your concert?

I recommend 13 tunes and an encore to create a program that lasts an hour and 10 minutes or 9 tunes for a 50 minute set, depending on the number of soloists and the length of songs. You should have songs of varied lengths and moods to keep the audience and yourself, engaged.

In your program you want to include a feature for each member of your band. Featuring different musicians on tunes insures the set doesn't progress predictability. Instrumental solos do not need to always be in the middle of a song. A song could start with drums for example and feature a drum solo. Or start with vocal and bass only, or drop out to 2 instruments. There are many ways to vary the arrangements of your songs, and to give everyone an opportunity to shine and keep the audience interested.

Think about separating your program into 3 or 4 parts, each one with a starting point, high point and transition. Plan the places where you will speak (often at the transitions) and also the places where the music flows into the next tune without stopping to talk. In my experience many singers and instrumentalists talk too much and it interrupts the flow of the music. Remember, you are doing a musical performance. Imagine if you went somewhere for dinner and in between each dish the host gave a lengthy speech about what you about to eat. Same for the audience. Allow them to appreciate what's happening without constant explanation. Don't be afraid to stay in a mood for a while. If you are in a quiet part of the show let it BE quiet.

*"The road of life twists and turns  
and no two directions are ever  
the same.*

*Yet our lessons come from the  
journey, not the destination."*

*Don Williams, Jr.*

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To start, make a list of all the possible songs you are considering for your show separated into styles, tempos, feels, or whatever makes sense to you.

Next make a list with the numbers 1-13 and encore, or 1-9, and begin by filling in particular spots. Sometimes it is easiest to decide how you are going to begin and end the show and fill in the other spots around that. Rather than considering each song separately, think of the concert in terms of segments and transitions. Each segment has a beginning, middle and end. There is no “right” way to program a set and you will probably experiment with the order many times until it feels right to you.

Here are some ideas for programming your concert.

## **The welcome and getting settled.**

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The opening: This is your chance to make a first impression. When you come out on the stage the audience will be checking you out visually; how you look, what kind of energy you bring to the stage, what the band looks like. Choose something that you enjoy singing and that allows you to settle into the room, the sound and the experience. The opening is a welcome and a chance to “set the tone” of the performance. For example, if you’ve invited friends to your house for an event, the “opening” corresponds with you opening the door and welcoming them in. What do they see when they come in to the room? Is it quiet and peaceful, is it lively and loud, are you uptight and nervous or are you focused on their comfort and enjoyment?

This first segment is all about getting to know you and getting to know your music. Band introductions and any biographical information fits here. This segment might be 3 songs or last 10 to 15 minutes.

(Transition)

## **Dinner is served.**

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In segment 2 you can begin getting to “the meat” of your performance. You can introduce more challenging material, have extended solos, do heart wrenching ballads, sing in foreign languages, show off a little (or a lot), play songs in odd time meters, add humorous material, etc. This segment might be 5 songs or 25 to 35 minutes, shorter for a shorter set. Talking in this segment will be mostly directed at song set up and directing the audience’s attention to soloists.

(Transition)

## **Coffee in the other room.**

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Segment 3 should begin with a dramatic (sonic) change from the end of segment 2. If you are going to break down the band to one or two players and do a few songs that way, now would be a good time to introduce that element. If you ended segment 2 with a ballad then I would start here with something fresh and a slow build to another high point. This segment might be 3 or 4 songs and last about 20 minutes.

(Transition)

## **Saying goodnight.**

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Segment 4 is the wrap-up. You've been through a variety of musical experiences and emotions. The final song, or songs, can reflect the philosophy of your group or of you and the tone of your evening. It can be wildly "up tempo" and exciting or it can be a gentle heartfelt ballad or anything in between. You can have each member do a short solo or have no solos. Do what you do best here and bask in the applause. This is the segment for your thank yous and final band intro. Remember to keep your comments brief. These thank-yous are merely acknowledgments, not need to "Thank the academy." This segment might be 1 or 2 songs and last 5 to 10 minutes.

## **Encore**

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Not every show will have an encore but if you do it's "a little something extra." Your show is over, no need to impress. Leave your audience with the feelings and the thoughts you want to impart. The encore should be about you. Do something you enjoy and say goodnight.

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Now, time to meet and greet.

Be sure to provide a place for your audience to sign-up for your e-mail list. Providing a guest book for people to sign is also nice and reminds you of who attended your concert. Take the time to meet with your fans and truly enjoy the afterglow. You earned it.