

How to Turn Student Concerts Into Profitable Events

A companion to Rock School Proprietor Podcast Episode 63 with Darvin Lau & Mike Grande

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1. The Venue

Negotiate the Price

Don't settle for the first number a venue throws out. Let them suggest their rate, then negotiate. Offer to guarantee part of the rental fee while letting the venue make the rest on food and beverage sales. For example, if they ask \$2,000, offer \$1,000 plus a guarantee they'll earn the other \$1,000 at the bar. This way, you reduce your upfront cost while they benefit from your audience spending money.

Choose the Right Venue

Avoid churches and community centers—parents want the bragging rights of their child playing amazing venues where real rock bands perform. This raises the perceived value of your events and justifies higher ticket and registration fees. Look for the following features in a venue:

- Great lights and sound system
- A proper stage
- A venue that serves food and drinks

Handle Tickets Yourself

Never let the venue control ticket sales. Doing so leads to confusion, long lines, and lost revenue. Your school should sell and distribute tickets directly, then provide those details to the door/venue. You can bundle tickets with student registration fees or sell tickets directly. You know your students and families best and this will ensure a well-organized event for the audience, and the venue will appreciate your work, too.

2. Show Planning

Group Performances Over Solos

A solo performance takes up the same stage time as a band, but only brings in one student's family. Grouping students into bands increases participation, fills the room, and teaches teamwork. More performers per slot = more tickets sold.

Strategic Scheduling

Place students in multiple spots across a show so families stay for the entire event, rather than leaving after one performance. This builds energy in the room and keeps your audience engaged.

Sell VIP Seats

If your venue has limited front-row or prime seating, sell them at a premium price. Parents love the prestige of VIP access, and the extra revenue can cover your entire venue cost before the show even starts.

Another alternative is to create a VIP table in front of the stage (great if the venue has a dance floor). Use the VIP table as seating for the family of the performers on stage. Parents can sit in those seats while their child performs, then return to their reserved seats for the rest of the show. That way the seats are always filled with parents of the students on stage.

3. Hire a Photographer

Capture Professional Photos

Parents will take phone pics, but nothing compares to professional stage photography. Hire a photographer and watermark the images. For more on this topic, listen to Episode 27: Capturing Amazing Photos for Marketing Your Music School.

Sell Access to Photos

Upload photos to a private gallery or cloud drive. Parents can pay \$5-\$10 for full access to the album (without watermarks). This not only covers your photographer's fee but creates another profit stream from each show.

Final Thought

The key is to stop thinking of shows as a cost center and start treating them as a business opportunity. With the right venue, smart planning, and add-ons like VIP seating and photos, your events can transform from financial stress to one of the most profitable parts of your studio.