

How To Give An SCI Conference

Some Suggestions

for

SCI National Conferences
SCI Regional Conferences
and
SCI National Student Conferences

1. Initial Planning
2. Funding
3. Announcements Timetable for National and Student Conferences
4. Announcements Timetable for Regional Conferences
5. Accommodations
6. Registration Table
7. Printed Program Check-List
8. Selection of Compositions
9. Selection of Papers and Lecture Demonstrations
10. Miscellaneous
11. Complaints
12. Sources of Funds

1. INITIAL PLANNING

A. The host institution for most SCI conferences has been a college or university music department. Extensive use of academic host facilities has been both convenient and expedient; and the discussion that follows assumes such usage. While hotel rooms and restaurants may be used for small meetings and banquets, and while outside concert spaces are usually scheduled, the number of events and the support facilities required by them make it typical for SCI conferences to center around the music department of a college or university.

B. The large number of performances required at a National Conference taxes the resources of any institution. The host school, early in the planning of the conference, should be in touch with other performance groups and performers in the vicinity in order to utilize them in the presentation of members' works. Members traveling to the conference may also be a source of performers. A judicious distribution of performance tasks will help keep the level of performance high. Many members feel that the quality of the performances is the single most important aspect of any SCI Conference.

C. Probably the second most important part of an SCI conference is meeting other composers. At least one main reception should be planned, and time and space should be allotted to make other gatherings possible. Morning coffee at the registration table (or lobby) is always a good way to bring people together. Be sure to include the cost of the receptions and morning coffees in your budget. Sometimes you can get outside funding for receptions.

D. Try to have all concerts recorded and copies of individual performances made available to the composers. This is mentioned here because it may affect your budget and your selection of performance spaces. Copies of tapes can be charged to the individual members. You might include order forms for tapes in the conference packet. If you are scheduling the performance of a piece commissioned through the SCI/ASCAP Student Commission Competition then the recording of the performance is mandatory. While this recording may or may not be the version of the piece presented on the SCI CD series, a recording at the premier is part of the prize. You must provide the prize winners with a tape of their performance. Individual recording sessions may be arranged, but are not required under the rules of the competition.

E. You may wonder whether your school is big enough to host an SCI conference. Successful regional conferences have been given by quite small departments. While most conferences last two to four days, single-day conferences have been given, especially when most participants are within driving distance of the conference. If the size of your school or your facilities is a concern, discuss these issues with the SCI President.

F. Plans for a national conference are usually finalized by a letter from your department head to the President of SCI. SCI will then send a letter of acceptance in return to your department. Arrangements for all conferences fall within the purview of

the President of SCI. He or she is empowered to accept or reject conferences on behalf of the Society.

G. Consider whether it is practical to have a theme for your conference. This might also open up other avenues of funding. You might showcase visiting composers or performance groups in residence. National conferences usually have keynote speakers or guests. This could impact on attendance.

H. Consider carefully how the community could be brought into your conference. Involving a local choir, public school orchestra or rap group perform could add vitality to your conference, not to mention increase attendance.

I. Consider seriously mounting a web site for your conference. Details are discussed later in this document. Web sites can be useful for many aspects of your conference. If you cannot have a web site mounted check with the President or the General Manager, and they may be able to find someone to help you.

J. Performance rights for the compositions performed at your conference should be covered by your institution's performing rights licenses. If you are uncertain, you should verify that your school has both an ASCAP and BMI license for the presentation of music by members affiliated with these two performing rights organizations. In the unlikely event that your school does not have the necessary licenses, one-time licenses or per-piece licensing can be obtained from both organizations.

2. FUNDING

A. *Budget for National Conferences:* For many years SCI has operated on a total annual budget of under \$30,000. Many of our national conferences have cost far more than that, at least on paper.

SCI provides the host institution with \$1,000 in seed money to be spent at the discretion of the conference host. (See section D. for regional conferences). We also provide services such as promotion in our Newsletter and on our listservs. Mailings (surface mail) have dwindled with the dominance of electronic mail, but SCI can provide you with electronic files from which any office supply center can print labels. If you wish extensive mailings then lists of the College Music Society (CMS) may be purchased.

The major issue to determine as early as possible is the extent to which your music department will absorb conference costs, and how much outside fund-raising you will have to do. (At this point, you may want to check the sample budget and budget sources in section 12.) Typical internal sources of funds are SCI (\$1,000), your music department, university or college funds (graduate school, lecture funds, development funds, etc), and registration receipts. You may also be able to tie the conference in with an already existing festival, or perhaps consider a joint conference with another organization like CMS, the theory society, or a performance society. Typical outside sources include foundations (both national and regional), state arts councils, and

performing rights organizations. Sometimes funds have been raised through advertising and exhibit fees, but these tend to be small and can take a great deal of effort.

B. *What Is Paid For—What Is Not:* This has never been the same from conference to conference. In general, transportation is never paid for members to attend, even if they have a work programmed. It would be great if we could make travel money available, but we simply can't afford it (but see below). When possible, SCI pays for the transportation of the President of SCI, the Chairman of the Executive Committee, and the General Manager.

If you have the funds and want to help specific composers or performers attend, that is between you and them. Usually, the host institution pays the transportation of the keynote speaker and perhaps some performers. (Again, that is up to you). If you have restrictions on university funds that keep you from paying travel you may want to reserve the SCI seed money for that.

Performers may be paid as you have funds to do so. Fine conferences have been given that made use of only university personnel, and no one was paid. At National Conferences there is usually a luncheon meeting of the Executive Committee and the National Council. SCI picks up the tab for this.

C. *Registration Fees:* It is the norm to charge registration fees, particularly for National Conferences. Keep the fee to between \$50 and \$75 dollars if possible. Members do complain about high registration fees, especially if they are attending the conference but are not having a piece performed. A reduced fee for advance registration is helpful but make sure members have time to avail themselves of it. A low student registration fee has always been offered, and you may want to consider a reduced registration fee for senior members (those retired or over 65). The majority of attendees will be members having compositions performed. That is an incentive to pack concerts and panel discussions. However, you should be careful not to over-extend your performance resources just to guarantee a large attendance.

D. *Budget for Regional Conferences:* Some regional conferences have been bigger than annual conferences. SCI can make available financial support based on the number of members in the region. The current formula is \$5.00 per full and joint members (two joint members counted as one), and \$2.50 per student (not student chapter!) and senior member.

Many of the things mentioned in A, B, and C above apply to regional conferences, as well.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND TIMETABLES

A. *Previous Conference:* The site of the national conference will usually be known more than a year in advance, thus the initial announcement of the time and place of a conference may be at the prior National Conference.

B. ***First Complete Announcement*** may be in the *Newsletter* immediately following the prior conference. It should include mention of the various conference hosts. Submission deadlines may be given at this time even if all the performance resources are not known. General ideas for papers, demonstrations, or types of concerts might be solicited, even guest ensembles. Always include email addresses in any conference announcements.

C. ***Calls for Scores and Papers*** may appear in the *Newsletter* and on the listservs as soon as the details are known. They should contain:

1. ***addresses*** where scores are to be sent
2. ***addresses*** where papers are to be sent
3. ***performance resources***: In particular mention resources for electronic performance. Composers in this medium are sometimes unsure whether facilities will be made available to them.
4. ***submission deadlines***
5. ***limits on number of scores*** that may be submitted.
6. ***return postage and packaging instructions***: Returning scores is a major expense and a major headache. Decide how you're going to deal with this, and instruct people accordingly in the call-for-scores. SASE is standard.
7. ***notification date***: This date must be early enough so that the subsequent announcement of the tentative program can be in time for people to make plans to attend. THIS IS THE ITEM ABOUT WHICH WE RECEIVE THE MOST COMPLAINTS, PARTICULARLY FROM COMPOSERS WHO ARE NOT SELECTED. THEY HAVE TO BE INFORMED, TOO. DON'T LEAVE THEM HANGING.
8. ***statement of judging criteria***: Usually instrumental limitations are mentioned but also state whether you are giving preference to shorter pieces; is there a time limit; are you emphasizing a particular style?
9. ***statement of judge***: Members have said that it would be helpful in deciding which pieces to send if they knew who was selecting the scores. Specifically, you should mention to role of performers or students in this process.
10. ***other restrictions***: If you are giving preference to composers who have not been performed in the immediately previous conference (recommended) then you should include this statement in your announcement. (See section 8.)
11. ***audio visual needs***: Require that members submitting suggestions for papers, panels and lecture demonstrations state their equipment needs.

D. ***Notification of Acceptance or Rejection*** should be in the form of An email from the Conference Chairman, and should be sent to all those who submitted scores and papers. It should *reach* the composers *before* they receive the tentative program. (No one wants to wait and see on the tentative program that their piece was not selected.) Needless to say, diplomacy is in order. For those accepted, the notification must be soon enough for them to apply for travel funds (they do still exist). This is crucial because

those members who are being performed will make up the nucleus of your conference attendees.

E. ***Special Announcements to Music Departments and Non-Members:*** If you wish to undertake (surface) mailings to non-members and music departments it is suggested that you purchase the department list and the composers list from the College Music Society on pressure sensitive labels. SCI does so few surface mailings (with the advent of email) that we do not maintain a bulk-mailing permit. You will have to utilize the mail facilities of your school which means the return address will probably have to be your school or department. The purpose of this mailing is to interest composers who are not members of SCI in attending the conference. As such it will be an abbreviated announcement and should not be the method by which SCI members are informed, although they should get this mailing too. These announcements should contain at least a partial listing of the program, the keynote speaker, and performing groups. Don't forget to include an email address and reference to your web site if you are putting one up.

F. ***Mounting a Web Site:*** Web sites can be extremely useful before, during, and after a conference. The obvious benefit is a readily accessible place in which anyone can find registration information, travel information, program information, contact information, and deadlines. After the conference it can be a place where reviews, comments, and photos can be mounted and maintained for years. The general manager of SCI, Gerald Warfield, still gets comments on the day-by-day review he wrote for the Indiana University conference back in 1998 because the web site is still maintained.

F. ***Tentative Program, Registration and Hotel Information:*** This information must reach members in time for them to make plans to attend. Email is fastest, but you may wish to use a combination of email and surface mail. **DO NOT USE SCIMEMBERS** as all members are not subscribed to this listserv. All conference announcements should be sent on the same listserv that sends out SCION. Check with the General Manager for sending announcements this way. In addition, mount this information on your web page. Composers' names, even in a preliminary program, should be followed by their academic affiliation, if any. This is probably on this mailing upon which most members will decide whether or not to attend the conference. Complete hotel information and directions to and from the airport should be included or available. Do not forget to list papers and panel discussions. Abstracts may be included or put up on the web site. This information must reach members soon enough to allow them to make travel plans, have classes covered, etc.

4. ACCOMMODATIONS

A. ***Location:*** It is beneficial that accommodations be close to the meeting sites. Shuttle bus service is necessary for anything longer than a 10-minute walk. Good weather can never be assumed. If there is an official conference hotel make sure your announcement so indicates.

B. **Confirmation:** Make sure enough time is allowed for hotel reservations. Sometimes reduced fees require advance reservations by a certain date. The number of rooms to hold varies. Average attendance for a National Conference is 100 to 125, and that means 60 to 75 rooms since some will double up, stay with friends, etc.

C. If extra **meeting rooms** are needed, they can sometimes be arranged at the hotel/motel at no charge. However, you will never get sound-proofing or good acoustics in a hotel. Watch out particularly for meeting rooms that are parts of ballrooms divided up with folding partitions.

D. It can sometimes be helpful to assign a *suite* to the President and the Chairman of the Executive Committee, to permit additional meetings in their rooms.

E. **Transportation:** If possible, select a hotel/motel that will pick up and deliver members at the airport. This may mean asking for the flight number and arrival time on the advance registration form. This kind of courtesy is *always* appreciated by attendees. Include a description of the airport transportation available in the advance material. Sometimes university vehicles may be available for this purpose.

F. Consider asking students at the host institution to put up other students who may be attending the conference from out of town. Such an aid in cutting costs may make it possible for some students to attend who ordinarily would be unable.

6. REGISTRATION TABLE

A. **Schedule:** The registration table should be open until the last day of the conference. Members will be arriving throughout this time.

B. **Location:** It would be helpful if the registration table could be initially at the hotel or motel where members are checking in, so that early arrivals (including National Council and Executive Committee members) may register, and thereafter at the conference site. This may not always be possible. If you have exhibits you may want to have it near that room so that they can be more easily watched over.

C. **Function:**

1. Keep a *list* of the names of all persons registered.
2. Distribute the *Registration Packet*, which should contain the following:
 - a) the program
 - b) complete instructions for finding every conference event. Sometimes a map is not enough—it should be marked with the site of the hotel or motel (if not already) and indicating a walking and/or driving route. At least, post on a wall a

- map that is marked with such routes.
 - c) information on *eating places*, especially those that can be reached for lunch and are quick.
 - d) *abstracts* of papers being presented, when available.
 - e) *SCI information/application brochure*, which contains a membership application form.
 - f) information on how to obtain *tapes* of the performances, perhaps order blanks.
3. *Collect registration* and have a list of advance registrants.
 4. Distribute *Name Tag*: The purpose of a name tag is to enable one to tell the name of a person *before* that person is within hand-shaking distance. Do *not* use a ball-point or fine-line pen to write the name. Do *not* use an ordinary-sized typewriter. **DO USE BLOCK LETTERS.** Frankly, block letters with a Magic Marker are best. Avoid tags that are gummed. They seldom last the entire conference.
 5. *Journal and CD Series*: Copies of the *SCI Journal of Music Scores* and the *SCI CD Series* should be on display along with purchase forms. Persons at the registration table should be prepared to receive money for CD purchases.
 6. A board for posting *notices* should be on or near the registration table.
 7. Sometimes other material is distributed, such as the *Newsletter*, *announcements*, *flyers*, and *brochures*.
 8. In the best of all possible worlds the registration personnel should be prepared to receive dues. Amounts are marked in the SCI brochure, and checks should be made out to SCI. Also be prepared to give receipts for registration as some members will want them.

7. PRINTED PROGRAM CHECK-LIST

A. Instrumentation for each composition should be clearly specified including the source media for electronic works.

B. It is important that institutional affiliation be indicated for each composer (and performer, if not from the host institution).

C. In addition to the pieces being performed, the following should be listed on programs of the Annual Conference:

1. Conference Chairman and committees
2. The National Council (see our web site)
3. The Executive Committee (see our web site)
4. Acknowledgements of grants or assistance. Note that ASCAP contributes to the SCI/ASCAP Student Composition Commission.
5. Wherever the winners of the student composition contest is scheduled, the program should acknowledge him or her as such. It is suggested that the aware be presented at a function, such as a

banquet, and not at the performance. Always coordinate this with the chairman of the contest.

6. The name of our Society. If your school or festival is also sponsoring the conference SCI needs to get at least equal billing.

D. The texts of songs are always welcome.

E. Work the current SCI logo into the design if you can.

F. Program notes for each work, written by the respective composers, are very helpful. This might be done on a separate photocopy if there is not enough room in the program.

G. Do not forget to include the date (including the year!) in the program.

H. A welcome letter from the conference host or the President is a good idea.

I. At conferences where the student contest winners are presented be sure to list the contest judges somewhere in the acknowledgements.

8. SELECTION OF COMPOSITIONS

A. Try to include representative scores from all the major trends in contemporary music. Variety in programming prevents fatigue at concerts. You might even have a venue where popular styles or jazz could be represented, perhaps at a reception or other non-concert style gathering. For National Conferences, representation from every part of the country is desirable. For Regional Conferences you may elect to favor composers residing in your own region. If that is the case you should mention it in your call for scores.

B. Give lowest priority to composers who have had a composition performed at the previous conference. Many members complain that the same composers receive performances at the National Conference year after year. It would be most equitable if highest priority could be given to composer whose works have not been recently performed. Use the "past conferences" pages in the SCI web site to check the members who have had performances at recent conferences.

C. A frequent problem of concerts at conferences is that they are too long., and there are too many. Select shorter pieces, in general, and order them on the program for maximum efficiency (i.e., to take least time in setting up the stage). Many concerts could be shortened if extensive stage arrangements were less frequent.

D. Although the call for scores is usually limited to SCI members, you may wish to solicit submissions from outside the Society. If programmed, however, these composers should be required to join SCI. You may also have a guest composer whose

music you may wish to perform. Beware the performing ensemble that says it will perform if they can include pieces already in their repertoire. Such bargains eat up valuable concert time and may cost you in attendance (i.e., the member composer whose piece was not played in that slot). Trade-off performances are all **too** obvious at SCI concerts but sometimes they are unavoidable.

E. Do not feel completely restricted to the performances of submitted works. Some established composers within SCI do not submit scores. The quality of the concerts may be greatly enhanced by the addition of SCI members' works that may not have been originally submitted. Invited (by you) composers should be kept to one or two, and it would be best if you mentioned in your call for scores that you reserve the right to invite one or two member composers to participate in the conference.

F. Part of the prize of the SCI/ASCAP Student Commission Competition is the guaranteed performance of the commissioned works. If you are performing such a piece you have already been in contact with the composers. Recently, these pieces have been featured at the National Student Conferences.

9. SELECTION OF PAPERS, PANELS, AND LECTURE DEMONSTRATIONS

A. This is an area where you may need to do some creative thinking. Panels and lecture demonstrations definitely take a back seat to performances, and there may be few submissions in this category. On the other hand, a slot on a panel can be a useful tool for some composers to get travel funds (if any) from their institutions. Do not hesitate to think of your own panel topics or ask members with expertise in certain fields to participate.

B. Advise speakers concerning the following:

1. If possible, never read a paper. Written papers pack information more densely than is usual in extemporaneous speaking. The density of information combined with the reduced voice inflections typical of reading will tire the listener. This point cannot be emphasized strongly enough (and few seem to believe it)!
2. Audio-visual needs should be established well in advance. Ask the speakers to prepared handouts in advance so that they won't be running to your departmental secretary at the last minute.

C. Be careful where you schedule lecture demonstrations and papers. Just because they are "papers" doesn't mean they may not require some sound-proofing for the hearing of tapes and examples.

10. MISCELLANEOUS

A. for the National Conference there are two required meetings that need to be scheduled:

1. A combined meeting of the Executive Committee and the National Council. This constitutes the legally required Corporation meeting. Attendance varies from 10 to 25 people. The General Manger will be in touch with you about this. Usually it is a luncheon meeting for which the Society picks up the tab.

2. A “business” meeting. This is a meeting of the entire membership in which certain reports (like the budget, new projects, etc.) are made to the membership. **BE SURE TO INDICATE IN THE PROGRAM THAT ALL MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO THIS MEETING.** Sometimes members have assumed that this is just for officers. A variety of venues have been used for this meeting, but the most successful has been an hour or half hour before some other general even like a reception.

B. for Regional Conferences and the National Student Conference a short business meeting should be scheduled. This is particularly important for Regional Conferences because the election of a new regional co-chair may take place at this time.

C. All conferences usually have a banquet or big meal which can be taken together and at which announcements can be made, awards given, and keynote addresses made. Consider publicly acknowledging outgoing regional co-chairs, the conference committee, judges, retiring officers, etc.

D. **ARRANGE TO HAVE PHOTOGRAPHS MADE.** Photos greatly enhance reports on the conference and can become a permanent part of your conference report archived on our web site. Simple digital photos are fine.

E. Access to a photocopy machine during the conference is often helpful.

F. Exhibits by music vendors and individuals have been mounted at various conferences. In general, a National SCI conference isn't big enough to attract major vendors. While arrangements can be made for smaller vendors and self-publishers, they will take a lot of work in terms of oversight. What you charge for an exhibit is up to you, but probably exhibits are not a significant source of funding for your conference. Whether you want to bother with them is up to you. Sometimes, they can be arranged as a part of the registration space which solves the problem of security for the exhibition materials.

G. Keynote Speakers have become traditional at our National Conferences and our Student National Conferences. Sometimes guests or keynote speakers also appear at regional conferences. Selection is up to you. If you select a composer it may be well to feature a performance of one or more of his or her works.

11. COMPLAINTS

A. One of the biggest complaints about the National Conference is that the same names are programmed year after year. The obverse of that is “my music hasn’t been performed in 10 (or 20) years. Anything you can do to help with a level playing field is appreciated.

B. The bitterest complaint is that members whose pieces were not selected for performance were never informed. Do not let this happen. Notify those who were not chosen at the same time you notify those who were chosen. This can be done at a minimum of trouble if you keep a directory of the email addresses of all members who sent in submissions.

C. Sometimes scores (and parts) submitted to conferences do not make it back to the composers who submitted them. Conference hosts often try to return scores at the conference, but scores not selected should go back to the composers before this time. No way of getting around this being an irksome task, but SASEs help. One university announced that they were not going to return any scores, and that submitted material would form the nucleus of a new music archive. This was very successful, and there were no complaints.

D. Simultaneous events. Don’t schedule two concerts against one another. If it is necessary to double up, schedule simultaneous papers against one another. In an extreme case, you may have to schedule papers against a concert. This should be avoided if at all possible.

E. Electronic music. In the past there have been conferences where some members felt the electronic medium was neglected or not presented on a par with live performances. The worst case was when an electronic concert was scheduled against a “live” concert, the thinking being that those that liked one kind of music could go to one concert and those who like the other etc. This did not go over well. More frequently, the problem has been that the playback facilities were inadequate. Probably this is not a problem these days, but care should be taken not to reopen this old wound.

G. Conferences are sometimes scheduled in conflict with other national meetings. This has plagued us quite a bit. It has been suggested that we maintain a calendar of the meeting dates of other conferences on our web site, but this may not be feasible. Please run proposed dates by the President and check the web sites of the standard organizations with which we could conflict. Sometimes, of course, conflicts cannot be avoided.

12. SOURCES OF FUNDS

At one time we reproduced a few conference budgets here, but each were so individual that they weren’t very informative. Particularly expenses, over which you have entire control, were very much geared to the host institution. Reproduced at the end of this

section are three proposed receipt itemizations from actual National conferences: two large and one small.

Sources for funds independent of the locale of the conference are extremely limited and, for the most part, already known. If you can tie in Meet the Composer, a state arts grant, or support from a national foundation then you have managed a substantial coup. The most likely sources are those affiliated with your institution, town, or state.

Here are some samples of estimated receipts.

The Canadian Annual Conference:

Delegate Registration Fees	\$15,000
Department of Communications	38,440
Ontario Arts Council	15,000
CAPAC	10,000
P.R.O. Canada	10,000
Society of Composers contribution	<u>1,000</u>
Total	\$ 98,440.00

A small National Conference:

Music School Fund	\$ 1,700
Univ. Graduate School	450
SCI Conference Fund	1,000
BMI	500
ASCAP	500
Registration Receipts	2,500
Univ. concert halls (\$1,200 in-kind per event)	3,600
Local advertising	<u>500</u>
Total	\$ 10,750

A large National Conference:

Dean of College of Fine Arts	\$ 15,000
Graduate School	5,000
School of Music	3,500
Development Fund	2,000
Waiver of telephone bill	8,000
SCI	1,000
Grants for 2 persons (1 semester)	<u>32,000</u>
Total	\$ 66,500

Note: grants were from National Endowment for the Arts, the Ohio Arts Council, and private corporations.