

Shane Baker House Concert

Thanks for your interest in inviting me to your home for a night of music and fellowship. With a little planning and a lot of love, this will be a night to remember for ALL involved!

Below I have listed everything you need to know to help you plan a house concert. Feel free to be creative and make this YOUR night...I'm just along for the ride.

First, what is a house show, or concert?

A House Concert is a great way to hear good music. It's just what it sounds like...a concert in someone's house. Experience great sound, fellowship, entertaining music, and a message of love and hope - right in the intimacy of your own living room. House concerts are quickly becoming a vital part of the music scene throughout the U.S. They are a uniquely personal way to present music. Generally, it's a 1 or 2 hour (depending on what you want) show in someone's home with an intermission. House concerts are conducted by your invitation only. Hosts (you) are ordinary people who like to share good times and music.

Church and conference venues with full band, lights, sound, and all are a lot of fun, but I love the chance to share in such an intimate and informal setting playing music in it's purest form...live and acoustic! House shows are ideal for cell/small groups, home or church based bible studies, college ministries, youth groups, etc. The night can be catered to what you're looking for. I can do a set of worship music that most people will know, break, and then go into my original material and message. The whole experience offers a "back to the basics" kind of 1st century church feel, which a lot of people are gravitating to in a era where we are over-stimulated by all types of media. Or, we can just have a night of fun that is less ministry based and more about having good clean fun...hey, Jesus did it! I'm totally open to either and love both!

Here's where you can help - by considering to host a house concert. It's fairly easy to do and I'll help you along the way! Imagine what a cool experience it would be to spend a couple of hours with friends listening to live music in the comfort of your own home! There's nothing quite like it for the listener or presenter.

WHAT YOU NEED!

The first secret to having a house concert is to have a . . . house. This isn't absolutely necessary but it helps. A yard or a church hall will work, but the main reason house concerts are so magical and intimate is because they happen in your very own living room. The size of the space matters less than the people you invite. Generally, if you have a decent sized living room, say 12'x15' or larger (about 650 sq. ft.), or an area that opens up into another room you can very comfortably fit the usual attendance of 20 - 50 people with no trouble at all. Move the furniture around and you can get a lot of bodies in a space that size. It might be snug, but one of the charms of house concerts are their inherent coziness. Music shops, public-library rooms, art galleries, school rooms, community halls, church basements, barns, back patios, etc will work if a home is just not possible.

The second thing you need is people. Please remember, people DO NOT come to house concerts because they are necessarily fans of the artist. They come because YOU invited them to come. This is huge, because the vast majority of singer/songwriters who are doing this kind of show, like me, aren't getting a lot of, if any, radio play and have little or no name recognition. So...take a risk and HELP A BROTHA OUT! HAHA!

OK, you have the room...now what?

SPREAD THE WORD

We are looking for a minimum of 20 people to get cozy in your home, so start talking it up. House concerts are still fairly rare in many areas of the country, so the idea of turning your home into a temporary concert hall will be a novel concept to a lot of people. But once people experience a concert in a home setting they usually become enthusiastic converts. In fact, this might be the time for a cautionary disclaimer: You may find your one-time foray into producing house concerts so enjoyable that it evolves into a regular or semi-regular series. Worse things could happen. :)

Once you begin letting people know about the concert you'll discover why house concerts are so well suited for smaller, more closely connected communities - most of your promotion will simply be word of mouth.

Your audience - and typically upwards of 90% of it - will be people you know or friends of theirs, so just start talking it up. You may choose to keep the show completely private as well and only have it open to your friends, relatives, people at work, neighbors, bible study, cell group, combined bible/cell groups, etc. The other option is to open it up to my email list and make it public. That is completely up to you. Tell your children's teachers, the family doctor, the check-out clerk at the market, the mechanic who works on your car, the tellers at the bank, anyone you come into contact with on a day-to-day basis whom you think might enjoy live music. Let them know someone's going to come perform a concert right in your living room. Maybe you'll want to have a potluck supper beforehand. Oh, don't forget to invite Jesus; he gets his feelings hurt if you forget.

Make up some postcards or send out an Evite or Emails containing the relevant concert information: A description of the music, Date and time, How much the suggested donation will be (typically \$10-15 per person, we will discuss this in a minute), Whether you're planning a potluck, hors d'oeuvres, etc. Include your phone number for reservations (more on this later) and directions. Carry a few of these in your car and bag or purse and hand them out. You can also mail them out as invitations. If you're internet proficient, put together a mailing list and send out an email notice. The beauty of email is that you can send several reminders regarding the show, reservations, etc.

If the concert is being held in a more neutral setting, for example a church hall, coffee shop, etc, you can do a broader job of advertising, like flyers at the church or coffee shop or around town in high traffic areas. You won't need to concern yourself with these last suggestions if the concert is going to take place in your home. If you're like most people, you're probably hesitant to throw open your home to just anyone. In an alternative space you can comfortably go for a larger, more diverse audience.

NO-SHOWS.

No-shows are an all-too-common fact of life. Things come up. People have to work late. Kids get sick. They're just too tired. Whatever. It happens. And nothing is more disappointing than to be expecting a full house and then have half or more of the chairs go empty. It's doubly worse when you've had to refuse people who wanted to come because you thought you had a full house. Regardless of the number of people, i would still love to share my music with you. However, i just ask that you keep in mind that this is my calling AND my living...i'm not asking that you cover for everyone that doesn't show, i'm just asking that you do your best to advertise and remind people of the event.

STAY CALM

Some timely words of advice: Breathe in. Breathe out. Relax. Take it easy. The whole idea is to make a good thing happen and enjoy yourself while you're doing it. All this publicity stuff doesn't have to

happen overnight or occupy your every waking moment. If you have a wide circle of friends it probably won't take much advertising to fill the house.

As far as timelines go, here's a general plan for moving things along:

A month before the show:

Make up your postcards and start letting people know about the concert - the word of mouth thing and hand-outs. Do an initial email announcement.

Two weeks out:

Do a postcard mailing if you like. Put up flyers in high traffic areas if you are opening up the event to whoever wants to come. You can download and print flyers from the "promo" page on my website www.shanebakermusic.com, just fill in the date, time, and place (Feel free to get creative and make your own flyer to suit your own style!) If you want to get really ambitious, especially if house concerts aren't the norm in your community and again, you are open to whoever coming, maybe you can get in touch with the local newspaper and do an article timed to appear the week of the show (other promo pics also available on website). Post an updated email announcement and reminder.

The week of and day before the show:

Make a last round of phone calls to remind everyone to come out, one more email reminder, then give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done.

THE BIG DAY

Now comes the Big Day.

TIP: You can avoid a lot of that hectic last-minute-details feeling by doing a little prep work a few days beforehand. Remember, you want to be able to enjoy the concert, too, so don't run yourself ragged.

1. SET UP THE ROOM

STAGE. Create a "stage" area in your concert room - in front of the fireplace or french doors, in an open corner of the room - and arrange the seating facing the stage. Be sure the audience will be able to see me, since "everyone getting a good seat" is one of the main reasons to host a house show. Also, make sure that if people come in late or need to go to the bathroom etc., they won't have to walk in between me and the audience...not an extremely important thing, just something to think about. it won't bother me, but it might some of your paying friends.

I'll need a standard 110 wall outlet close by for 1 or 2 things. If you have an IN-TUNE (at least with itself) piano i will SO love you! If not, i will bring a keyboard if i plan to do anything on piano.

LIGHTING. This doesn't need to be elaborate. The goal is that the audience be able to see the performer clearly without shining bright lights directly in the performers face! Dim the house lights. Dim the background lights. It's best not to black out the room entirely though. Folks will stumble over each other and you'll also lose some of the feel of a house concert. A couple of inexpensive clip-on lights and you're all set (in-line dimmers & colored bulbs or theatrical gel covers are good if you want to get "fancy"). You may have adequate lighting in place already (track lighting can be adapted very easily if it's already in the right place).

SEATING. Let's think about that a minute. Do you have enough chairs of your own? If not, consider places you might obtain loaners: school, church, the library etc. You can even tell people to bring their own. Or forget the chairs, push the couches and whatever chairs you have against the walls, and arrange for people to lounge on the floor. Or do some combination of all these. Of course, you can always rent folding chairs as a last resort, but the idea is to keep production costs to a minimum.

MERCHANDISE. Designate a table/piece of furniture that I can use to display my merchandise. This doesn't need to be very big, let's just say no smaller than 2x4 ft. of surface area...we'll make do...try not to lose sleep over this...

2. HOSTING THE SHOW

House concerts typically consist of two sets of music of about 30 to 45 minutes each with a short break between - about 20 minutes - so that people can stretch their legs, chat, have refreshments, visit the facilities, purchase my CDs :), etc. - more about this in a minute. At the break you might want to have light refreshments on hand, things like coffee, tea, sodas (or whatever your beverage of choice is), chips and dip, etc. You can also ask a few friends to bring homebaked goodies and beverages as well. In fact, it's a good idea to enlist a volunteer to oversee some or all this chore (remember - you don't have to do it all.)

VOLUNTEERS - It's a usual perk to grant free admission to the people who help out the night of the show, such as your refreshment coordinator and a person to collect money at the door and handle CD sales for me. You should also ask people to donate food and refreshments...remember, you're providing the venue and all the planning, let other's carry some of the responsibility...plus, it creates a sense of ownership for the others involved. Just be careful not to have EVERYONE "volunteer".

HANDLING MONEY

TICKET OR DONATION? You need to decide whether you will collect donations or set a price that people have to pay as a ticket or entrance fee. This decision and price is up to you, just keep in mind that i usually get \$200+ to perform, especially if i have traveled a good distance to get there. However, I will definitely be grateful for whatever God sees fit I receive.

IF YOU CHOOSE TICKETS. Decide the ticket price (i recommend \$10-\$15), if people need to pre-purchase, and if they get a discount for doing so (maybe \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door). Since not everyone will send a check, cash, or paypal in advance, it's best on the day of the show to have a volunteer sitting strategically close to the entrance with the guest list at hand. Then names can be checked off as donations are made. REMINDER - if you accept anything other than cash, you have to go through the hassle of writing me a check or giving me cash out of your own money and then reimburse yourself with the checks, paypal, etc. (checks can be made out to "Shane Baker Music")

IF YOU DECIDE ON DONATIONS. You'll need some sort of container/jar, preferably at the entrance, that has a sign that says "recommended donations \$10-\$15". You'll also want a volunteer to sit there with an email sign-up sheet for you to get in touch with people to thanks them and to invite them to your NEXT HOUSE CONCERT! (I will have my own sign up sheet, but would like to have a copy of your list as well.) You will also need to remind people about the donations a few time during the night (I'll explain that in a minute).

HAVE A SPACE (AS PRIVATE AS POSSIBLE) FOR ME TO PREPARE FOR THE SHOW. I may need to change clothes, and/or store luggage, instruments, and other belongings and possibly get a little rest depending on where i've been before your event and how long it took me to get there.

LODGING: Depending on how late and how far i am from home or my next show, i may need a place to stay. i don't require much, just a place to lay my head (a couch will do), a place to shower, a cup...or two...or three of coffee in the am, and most importantly your smiling face and conversation to go with it!

GUEST'S THINGS: Designate a spot for guests to leave their coats, shoes, etc. when they arrive. Signage can help with this task.

ANNOUNCE THE ARTIST

Before the I begin performing, the host (uhh...that would be you) should do an introduction for me. Thank the audience, say a few very cool, funny, extremely interesting, and inspiring words to get the crowd primed for a good show...what?...that's not a problem is it? LOL! If you need a little help, you can get some info from my bio on my webpage to get you started, and if all fails, simply say, "this is shane...he's going to sing for us". Also, tell the crowd that house concerts thrive on a LISTENING audience. Ask the audience to please keep their talk to a minimum while I am performing, not for me, but for those who really want to enjoy and hear every word and note...good and bad! Tell them they will have plenty of time to chat during the break between sets and after the show. Also, you could mention that i will have CDs and other merchandise for sell at the break.

AND AT LAST...ENJOY!!!

Having a musician...yes, even me...perform in a living room is a unique experience, soak it up and be happy knowing you played a major role in bringing something different, cool, entertaining, and meaningful to people you know and care about.

AT THE BREAK:

I will turn the floor back over to you at the break. If you are doing a donation based event, this would be a great time to remind people of the CLEARLY MARKED donation jar, and that this is how I make my living. This is also a good time to mention again that I will be selling CDs and other merchandise at the table you have set up for me. (by the way, i will bring a black cloth for the table, so don't worry about dressing it up unless you just love that kind of thing...then by all means...)

After the concert:

Enjoy good food and conversation! Encourage folks to buy CDs and get on the my mailing list. And if you plan to host more shows, remind them of the mailing list you have yourself for that purpose!

I know it sounds like I mention money and CDs and merch and all that stuff alot, but a well-respected man in the ministry once told me, we have to "do business to do ministry". I can't continue to do what i do if I can't support me and my family; and, as a person doing their best to follow in the footsteps of Jesus...yet failing miserably at times, that is one of my duties, providing for my family.

Thanks again for taking the time and having enough interest to actually read this lengthy, yet important, how-to document. You've now done most of the work! Ok...maybe not. However, the time you have and will spend will most definitely be worth the end result. I look forward to meeting you and sharing in some incredible moments with you and your friends.

Until we meet,
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