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COMPOSER AND MUSICAL TRAILBLAZER MARIA SCHNEIDER HARNESSSES THE POWER OF THE INTERNET WITH NEW CD, WEBSITE AND ARTISTSHARE

* July 2004 "Concert In The Garden" CD Is Schneider's First Entrée Into Online Marketing Realm *

"Schneider's music is like no other in the jazz world... [it is] the expression of a mature and complex musical mind, one that has found a unique and personal creative voice of its own."
— Don Heckman, Los Angeles Times

"...the foremost big-band composer of her generation." — Terry Teachout, Washington Post

Acclaimed, Grammy-nominated composer **Maria Schneider** has embraced a new concept in Internet marketing and distribution, one that not only returns control to the artist, but also renders moot fears of digital piracy.

Despite a recent Washington Post article about an academic study that concluded there was no significant correlation between music downloads and reduced sales ("Study: File-Sharing No Threat to Music Sales," March 29, 2004), record companies are panicking and artists are apprehensive. Considering digital piracy, and the already-limited distribution options and lack of promotion afforded to all but the biggest stars, it is no wonder that artists like Schneider are re-evaluating their options and taking control.

Schneider, who consistently garners critical acclaim as a composer and bandleader, and who has received Grammy nominations for all three of her studio recordings ("Evanescence," "Coming About" and her most recent, 2000's "Allégresse"), is an artist who pushes boundaries and takes risks — this applies equally to music and business. In October 2003, Schneider's website (www.MariaSchneider.com) became the prototype for ArtistShare, a company pioneering industry change with a patent-pending process of creating art directly through an artist's fan base.

"There is no way to stop online piracy of digital products, period. Ask any programmer," says ArtistShare president Brian Camelio, creator of this new process-cum-business model that is the latest technological innovation to put control back into the hands of the artists. *"The answer is to market what cannot be pirated: the artist, the artist's creation process, and a fan's love of an artist's work. The fan is now part of the creation process, not the litigation process,"* he explains.

Not a web store

Schneider's website has proven to be a success, allowing her to finance her latest recording while simultaneously bonding with her fans. Mariaschneider.com is not a web store, nor is it an online club. One of the key components is what ArtistShare calls the "Participant Offer." By fostering the involvement of fans, sharing the process, customers become participants privy to varying levels of behind-the-scenes exposure.

In this model the customary end-product, such as a CD or a copy of a music score, turns out to be a by-product, while the sharing of the artistic process becomes the primary product — one that is experienced over time as it evolves. The behind-the-scenes exposure is provided by media events such as streaming audio and video clips of rehearsals and meetings, photo galleries showing Maria at work, perhaps a peek at the first draft of a new score or an audio lecture analyzing a composition, and journal entries about her activities. Another perk at certain levels is the "participant listing" — the placement of the participant's name in booklet accompanying a new CD.

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Because participation in the process is now the product, what might have been viewed as pre-sales now becomes the source of funding for a project. In Schneider's case, the first major project is her soon-to-be-released new recording, *Concert in the Garden*. *"Because I write for large ensembles, my recordings are very expensive to make. That's why I've only been able to record once every few years,"* explains Schneider. *"Now fans can know that the money is going entirely to the artist, and they get to see where it's going. In addition, and more importantly, I can share many other things with my audience, beyond just a CD. It offers a much deeper experience."*

When it comes to the art itself, ArtistShare has pioneered another new concept, called Artist-Track, an idea that elevates what once might have been a common CD to the status of a collector's item, complete with hologram, artist's signature, and number. Not only does this increase the value of the item, but by also tracking ownership, the artist is able to collect residual income on the resale of an item.

Mariaschneider.com will now be the one and only source for all of Schneider's recordings, past and present. Some will be on CD, others for download only, but none will be found in any stores or through other commercial web sites. Plans for *Concert in the Garden* are to press 10,000 physical CDs (1,000 will be autographed limited editions) and when those are sold out, only downloads will be available.

Something for everyone

By offering varying levels of participation, an artist can target specific groups of fans. In Schneider's case this includes the average listener, fellow musicians and composers, and especially students.

Education is a big part of the appeal for Schneider – not only is she learning (a perpetual state for most artists), but she is able to teach by example. *"What I'm educating people about is what I'm learning in real time. I'm trying to be very honest. I'm sharing this process, and it's scary to do, in a way, being really naked with the whole thing. So far, the people who have signed up for it love it. If people want to know what it is I do and how I do it, this is the best way to teach."*

Whatever the participant level, feedback shows that people are appreciating the experience. Sandy Asirvatham, a Composer "Plus Plus" participant whom Schneider featured on her website, wrote, *"I never expected to feel so proud about it [the new CD project], and in such an oddly intimate and immediate way... I really appreciate Maria's generosity in opening this participatory 'window' to her beautiful, visceral, one-of-a-kind music."*

For Schneider, it's a brand new world. *"The whole business is rapidly changing,"* she says. *"I am hoping to pave a better way for future artists. This is a way that benefits both the artist and the fan. It's win/win."*

If her success in financing the new big band recording is any indication, just imagine what a four-member rock group, who require much less of a recording budget, could do. The possibilities seem limitless, and Schneider's innovative embrace of the ArtistShare system is leading the way into this new realm of artistic intimacy and satisfaction.

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CD review copies, JPEGs, "CD-specific" press release, full press kits available