

Syracuse Stage Media Content Analysis

Analysis of Chosen Important Articles

Syracuse Stage to bring back live performances for 2021-22 season with 'Eureka Day'” highlights the Stage’s announcement that they were resuming performances with live audiences for the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their choice for their first performance back to be *Eureka Day*, a story about a disease outbreak, parallels the reality that many faced during the pandemic. This article was by *The Daily Orange*, a student-run publication affiliated with Syracuse University. Their primary audience is adults aged 18-24, many of whom attend SU. This article is important because it was prominent. The theatre’s return to the stage was a major change for the company and an indicator that life was beginning to return to normal after a year and a half of unprecedent. Additionally, this change was important because theatre is unique from other forms of media because it is performed live. Bringing back live audiences is an integral element of the theatre. The tone of this article was neutral and informative; however, given the content of the story, the tone could lean more positively.

World premiere of 'How To Dance In Ohio' cancels remainder of run at Syracuse Stage discusses the theatre’s decision to cancel the remaining run of the world premiere of “How To Dance in Ohio” due to a COVID-19 outbreak among their cast and crew. This production was their first of the season and featured a predominantly autistic cast. This article was written by *Playbill*, a monthly theatre-based publication. With presence on a national scale, Playbill targets an audience of theater enthusiasts of all ages. This article is newsworthy because of it’s timeliness. As the effects of Covid become less apparent in society, a shutdown can be seen as a wake-up call; Covid is still around and the effects are very apparent. This story also has a human interest element. This production was groundbreaking in the sense that all of the principal roles were played by autistic individuals. The cancellation of the production was a disappointment because of its potential impact on the audience. The tone of this article was definitely negative.

Additional Access to Live Theater at Syracuse Stage Made Possible by New Gift From M&T Bank Highlights the \$20,000 grant that M&T Bank gave to Syracuse stage. With this money, the theater will be able to increase the amount of “pay what you will” performances for the shows of the 2022-23 season. This article came from the Syracuse University news page, an outlet that highlights changes within the Syracuse University community. This Outlet's primary audience is the Syracuse University community. This article mentioned the central New York regional president of M&T Bank, someone who played a role in giving out the grant. This information is valuable because of its human interest. A key criticism of theater is that it is more expensive, and therefore, less accessible. Being able to strengthen programs that make theater access easier helps to make theatre more accessible for all. The tone of this article was positive.

When examining these three articles for their topics, sources, notable influencers, news values and tonality; a few patterns can be observed. Articles that mention the Syracuse stage usually cover a wide range of topics; most pertaining to any updates within the theater. A majority of these sources are local, usually based in the Greater Syracuse area and Central New York. The Syracuse stage always tries to host a world premiere or national premiere, and these productions often gain national coverage. Influencers that are mentioned in these articles cover a wide range of backgrounds. each of the articles I examined had influencers from varied job fields. The news value for articles that mention the Syracuse

stage were mainly because of human interest, and the tone was generally positive, with the exception of stories that cover crises such as the article pertaining to the “How to Dance in Ohio” cancellation.

Summary Chart

Article Title	Topic	Source	Influencers	News Values	Tonality
Syracuse Stage to bring back live performances for the 2021-22 season with "Eureka Day"	Return to live performances/upcoming productions	Daily Orange	Director of Marketing	Prominence, human interest	neutral/positive
world premiere of "How To Dance in Ohio" cancels remainder of run at Syracuse Stage	Show cancellations	Playbill	Wilson Jermaine Heredia	Timeliness, human interest	negative
Additional Access to Live Theater at Syracuse Stage Made Possible by New Gift From M&T Bank	Donations	Syracuse University News	Central New York Regional President of M&T Bank	Human interest	positive

Qualitative Analysis

Conducting a thorough qualitative analysis is very useful in determining the audience and current perceptions of the Syracuse Stage. It is evident that the Syracuse Stage has very close ties with Syracuse University and the greater Syracuse area. The three articles that I examined clearly display the efforts that Syracuse Stage has on making theatre more accessible and enjoyable for the Syracuse community. Attending theatrical performances is a luxury that many people can't experience. With a 33% poverty rate (appendix), many people in the Syracuse Area can't afford to be a consistent patron of the theatre. However, it is evident that the Syracuse Stage is dedicated to making sure everyone has the opportunity to experience their shows with the implementation of aid programs such as the “pay-what-you-can” program. Additionally, when searching for my important articles, I found many articles from the Daily Orange and Syracuse.com that referenced the Syracuse Stage's efforts to establish themselves as an entertainment hub for the Syracuse community. From these financial aid programs to putting on shows in

community spaces, to putting on interactive productions for children; it is obvious that Syracuse Stage values the local community, and they have solidified so through their media perceptions. What really puts the Syracuse Stage on the map is its commitment to staging national and global premiers every season. These productions often gain coverage from national media sources such as *Playbill* and *The New York Times*. However, this national coverage isn't always good for the stage. The article that I analyzed on the cancellation of "How to Dance in Ohio" received negative feedback on a national scale, which can hurt a smaller company like the Syracuse Stage. When it comes to national coverage, there is always a greater risk to the organization's reputation because of the large reach that national and global publications have.

Analysis of Successful News Releases

Syracuse Stage's news release on the \$20,000 grant from M&T bank gained attention from several local news outlets. This article had a positive and hopeful tone, going into great detail on what this grant money is going to be used for and how this will affect potential theater-goers. The language used in the release portrays this movement to increase accessibility as something that is necessary for all theaters, and that Syracuse Stage values this movement. This release contributes to Syracuse Stage's identity as a community theater. I believe that this press release was picked up by the media because of its newsworthiness. This release had human interest because Syracuse Stage used the grant money to make it easier for people to go to the theatre. This story makes their audience aware that they have put in efforts to make theatres more affordable.

Syracuse Stage's news release on the announcement of the creative team for "How to Dance in Ohio" gained attention from several local and national media outlets. This release had a positive tone, introducing the viewers to the show's creative team, and listing their accolades. Doing so generates attention from those who frequent the theater. Seeing familiar names will get this demographic excited for the upcoming production. I think that this news release successfully gained media attention because of its story. The production of this new production has prominence because it has never been seen before, and any information regarding the cast and crew is going to get attention from the media.

Analysis of Unsuccessful News Releases

Syracuse Stage's news release on the panel discussion on their Cold Read festival outlines the event, detailing the schedule for the weekend. This article had a very informative tone, explicitly stating the event. What set this release apart from other, more successful releases was the lack of personal connection. This release was purely factual, with no quotes or insight on how one might feel attending the event. This release seemed as if it wasn't meant to create a buzz around the event. I think that this release was unsuccessful because the author wasn't trying to sell the event. Reading this article, there wasn't an attempt to be newsworthy.

Syracuse Stage's news release on the panel discussion for their upcoming production of *Kilroy's List* reveals the panelists for the discussion. The tone of this release is informative and neutral. This release is also fairly short, providing brief bios for each of the panelists. This release differs from more successful releases because there is little personal connection. In addition, the release isn't very clear. The

release mentions Kilroy's list several times, including a quote that references the production. But the release fails to inform the audience how this list affects the Syracuse Stage.

Overall, what sets successful releases from unsuccessful ones is the appeal to emotion and personal connections. It is reasonable to say that the content of a news release can be the determining factor for what gets news coverage, but storytelling techniques can make all the difference as well. The releases that saw a lot of media coverage were filled with quotes that help convey the newsworthiness of the press release content, in an effort to be personable with the readers.

Appendix

3 Most Important Articles

1. Syracuse Stage to bring back live performances for the 2021-22 season with “Eureka Day”
2. World premiere of “How to Dance in Ohio” cancels remainder of run at Syracuse Stage
3. Additional Access to Live Theater at Syracuse Stage Made Possible by New Gift From M&T Bank

Syracuse Stage Press

1. Successful press releases
 - a. Additional Access to Live Theatre At Syracuse Stage Made Possible by New Gift from M&T Bank
 - b. Tony Award winning creative team announced as tickets on sale for world premiere musical ‘How to Dance in Ohio’
2. Unsuccessful press releases
 - a. Syracuse Stage Hosts Panel Discussion About Kilroy’s List
 - b. New plays and a series of panel discussions highlight Syracuse Stage’s Cold Read Festival

Additional Sources

1. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/syracuse-ny-population>