



## 2019 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY: RADIO



### Connecting people to powerful ideas that inspire personal growth, exploration of our world and positive change.



**WKAR Radio is a valuable part of Michigan’s capital region advancement.**

The station provides public broadcasting service with WKAR-AM, WKAR-FM, online, and a Radio Reading Service.

Serving a 60-mile radius from East Lansing, WKAR is involved with nearly 80,000 weekly listeners. WKAR’s range of programming includes WKAR News, classical music, jazz, live broadcasts, participation in community events and with station representatives serving on a variety of boards and community committees; and community support through student learning internships.

**In 2018, WKAR provided these vital local services:**

- Two Radio Stations
  - WKAR-AM 870 & 105.1 FM
  - WKAR-FM 90.5
- One Television Station with four channels
  - WKAR-HD
  - WKAR-Create
  - WKAR-World
  - WKAR-PBSKIDS
- Online Streaming (24/7 Classical, Jazz, and News streams)
- Radio Reading Service
- National and local news, public affairs, arts and culture, health, science, and education programming.
- Music education throughout the capital region.

**WKAR’s local services had deep impact in Michigan’s capital region.**

WKAR reached a weekly audience of nearly 80,000 listeners through the station’s partnership with local educators, businesses, governments, arts organizations, schools, and social services agencies.

Through our timely local and national news reporting and coverage, WKAR helps local non-profits and government agencies reach and engage new audiences.

Volunteers at WKAR’s Radio Reading Service read local newspapers to area listeners who are unable to see or turn a page.



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*This past year at WKAR (July 2018-June 2019) was marked by more news, and more classical music, and a greater digital presence.*

### **News that matters, Music that inspires**

For 97 years, WKAR-FM from Michigan State University has informed and entertained listeners across Michigan's Capital Region. That tradition continued in 2019, as WKAR filled the airwaves from Grand Rapids to Detroit with news, classical music and an intense dedication to connecting with our community.

### **NEWS**

WKAR News strengthened its national presence in 2019, with features heard nationwide on NPR News magazines including **Morning Edition**, **All Things Considered**, and **Weekend Edition**; as well as during **NPR News** national newscasts. WKAR's national output in the last three months of 2019 outpaced the station's entire national output in 2018.

WKAR News stories carried nationally touched on topics as the looming 2020 election and Michigan's importance in it; racial discrimination; education; and even lighthearted news such as a marching band protecting their school mascot before a big rivalry game.

WKAR News also brought national figures to our Michigan Capital Region audience. WKAR News sports reporter Al Martin took listeners along on **Jemele's Journey**, a conversation in four parts with former ESPN anchor Jemele Hill. Listeners also heard first-hand from renowned documentary filmmaker Ken Burns on his latest series, **Country Music**, in conversation with WKAR News reporter Scott Pohl. WKAR News political reporter Abigail Censky brought listeners along on a series of stories following U.S. Representative Elissa Slotkin, a first-year representative with a national profile.

WKAR News produced more conversations between its reporters and hosts to give mid-Michigan listeners deeper insight into what's happening at the state capitol and how lawmaker's decisions will impact them. In 2019, a new weekly feature called **Arts Crawl** was launched to explore upcoming arts events in the community.

**Michigan Minute**, a daily look into historical events in the state and a fun break between serious news topics, was appointment radio for many listeners during 2019.

Our local NPR magazine hosts Mary Ellen Pitney and Karel Vega also expanded their efforts to bring listeners more Capital Region news each hour. For example, during **All Things Considered**, WKAR News local content effectively doubled with the addition of two "casual" news updates per hour to complement the traditional top and bottom of the hour newscasts. These updates feature traffic and weather updates along with state and national headlines. This provides listeners more chances to catch up with the latest news of the day.

WKAR serves the capital of Michigan and is dedicated to reporting on politics. WKAR News political reporter Abigail Censky has been selected to join approximately 20 reporters nationwide who are a part of **NPR's 2020 Election Collaboration Project**, which works with member stations to provide local and regional on-the-ground perspective throughout the 2020 election cycle.



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WKAR News also continued in its commitment to covering all aspects of education in the state, from K-12 issues to the latest in the Larry Nassar scandal. WKAR News reporting is available on-demand online and in the WKAR mobile app, and featured stories are available in the NPR One app.

### CLASSICAL

WKAR-FM's classical music programming remains a mainstay for 90.5FM. WKAR-FM's classical music team presented 1,976 hours of locally produced classical programming in 2019. Many Friday matinee performances of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra were broadcast live on WKAR-FM.

Early in 2019, WKAR launched a new flagship Michigan Music program: **Great Lakes Concerts**. The program, hosted and produced by Jody Knol, is made by reaching out to a variety of ensembles in Ann Arbor, Traverse City, Jackson, Lansing, Interlochen and the Michigan Philharmonic in Detroit; as well as smaller in-state partnerships with the Absolute Music Series in Lansing and the Baroque on Beaver Island Festival right in the middle of Lake Michigan.

Other unique local classical music programming included initiatives to underline the diversity in music. Special programming included music entirely by female composers on International Women's Day (March 8, 2019); a celebration of musicians from the African diaspora on Martin Luther King Jr. Day; and programming featuring LGBT musicians such as famed conductor Thomas Schippers from Portage, Michigan, during Gay History Month.

WKAR continued its statewide partnership with Detroit's WRCJ-FM and Traverse City's Interlochen Public Radio, producing the programs **MSU In Concert**, **Michigan Matinee**, **The Fugue** and **Great Lakes Concerts** for broadcast on those stations.

The Michigan-centric program **Folk with Matt Watroba** continued its lynchpin presence in the WKAR-FM Sunday line-up. This unique show features folk legend Matt Watroba as he hosts an evening of acoustic folk, blues, bluegrass, and more, performed by artists from the Great Lakes region and from all over the world.

### COMMUNITY

WKAR-FM is not just active inside the studio. Classical hosts Jody Knol and Jamie Paisley participated in local fine arts events as concert guides and hosted pre-concert lectures. On-air hosts Knol, Paisley and Scott Pohl were involved in Michigan State University commencements announcing graduates by name as they received their diplomas. WKAR News sports reporter Al Martin frequently serves as emcee at MSU and community events.

We hosted **Pop-Up Stories** storytelling events, where amateur community storytellers shared their perspectives in front of a public audience. The events are held for free and select stories are produced for later broadcasts and online.

During a live presentation, WKAR's **Serving Up Science** podcast hosts Sheril Kirshenbaum and Karel Vega explored the science behind taste with audience members at the final signature event of Michigan State University's seventh annual Science Festival. The audience participated by tasting a piece of paper with a substance on it called PTC or phenylthiocarbamide. Depending on their reaction to having the paper in their mouth for 10 seconds, they learned if they were a "super" taster or someone super sensitive to bitter tastes.

## WKAR Promotes Community Dialogue

WKAR invited listeners to a “**Pop-Up Stories**” event to share stories about acts of kindness that have touched their lives. Stories are recorded, edited, and then featured during Morning Edition or All Things Considered.



## WKAR Engages with our Community

- Absolute Music Chamber Series
- Live Broadcasts of Ann Arbor Symphony, Lansing Symphony, and MSU Symphony Concerts
- Concert Guides and Pre-Concert Lectures at Lansing Symphony Orchestra Concerts

## WKAR News

Our education series “**Making The Grade**” chronicled the pitfalls and successes of education in Michigan. The series won a regional **Edward R Murrow** award for top news series.

Covered the ongoing Larry Nassar sex abuse scandal. Beyond legal matters, WKAR News profiled the continued efforts of those affected by the tragedy to bring these issues to light.

Produced an interview series about Jamele Hill’s journey from MSU to national prominence as a sports journalist



## 90.5 Classical Outreach

Active community outreach is a vital part of the mission of public radio and an essential component of its continued success. The hosts of WKAR's classical music programming made many public appearances for various organizations and, while doing so, engaged with classical music lovers who have listened to WKAR for decades, as well as creating fans of WKAR out of people who are new to the area.

### Lansing Symphony Orchestra:

WKAR classical music host Jody Knol continued his partnership with the **Lansing Symphony Orchestra** with five appearances conducting interviews and lectures ahead of the main LSO performances of 2018-19, including interviews with YouTuber and cellist **Nick Canellakis**, as well as Okemos, MI native violinist **Melissa White**, who spoke about her collaborations with the **Sphinx Organization** in Detroit, focused on bolstering black and latinx representation in the arts.



### Absolute Chamber Music Series:

WKAR's classical music hosts served as pre-concert lecturers, and Q&A proctors for four of the long-running **Absolute Music Chamber** concerts in Old Town Lansing, while also establishing an agreement with Absolute to record their performances for broadcast on WKAR's local and syndicated programs.



### Wharton Center

WKAR's Jamie Paisley also served as concert guide for five **Wharton Center** performances, including pianist **Yefim Bronfman**, the **Czech Philharmonic** (featuring the return of former Grand Rapids Symphony conductor, Semyon Bychkov), and superstar soprano **Renee Fleming** in the Cobb Great Hall in East Lansing.

### Mason First Presbyterian Church

Jody Knol did a bit of performing, as well, during an organ concert in Mason, MI's First Presbyterian Church. The piece was a light-hearted, kid-friendly exploration of the capabilities of the organ as an instrument.

***"You're a gem of a human and for this community. Appreciate you so much!"***

- Ryonn Clute, Wharton Center Senior  
Marketing Manager



WKAR engaged with our community through live broadcasts and stage hosting, and by leading discussions at live music performances.

We expanded our programs and specials to showcase Michigan Capital Region talents and professions.

We increased awareness around local issues, providing timely and quality news content and discussions.

As a result, membership and listenership are up and our audiences are more diverse.

*"THANK YOU - WKAR never disappoints, either by via the air waves, or by its staff!"*

**Elizabeth O'Keefe**

*"Thank you so much for inclusiveness of female composers."*

**Helen**

*"I have enjoyed WKAR radio for 30 years now, despite the many times I have moved. Thanks for continuing with NPR news, stories and all the fantastic classical music!"*

**Anonymous Listener**



WKAR continues to play an essential role in Michigan's Capital Region as a key source for quality news, music and cultural programming, giving a voice to a broad and deep variety of conversation, community, concerts, and more. WKAR commits to expanding its community relationships to better share the talents, interests, concerns and cultural backgrounds of the people in mid-Michigan.