

PART IV - STRATEGIES, RECOMMENDATIONS, SOLUTIONS

Now that we've thoroughly examined the circumstances and methods that govern the jazz business and its position in the Fine Arts world, this chapter is designed to help the artist or professional to successfully navigate the tricky waters ahead.

The recommendations contained here are not theoretical, far-fetched or complex. They are pragmatic methods and sensible approaches to solving challenging problems. These are the ideas and solutions that we have utilized on behalf of artists quite successfully in our own activities for more than 25 years. Those who have applied these methods in their own activities have achieved similar success. And these methods will always be valid regardless of economic shifts, industry trends or fine arts whimsy – because they are based on a solid foundation of square business, reasonable expectations and organic development.

So why haven't these methods been embraced by the world of jazz advocacy? Why do these same people who meet over and over again with great waste of money, time and resources to come up with ineffective plans and ideas refuse to embrace these methods in spite of their positive results?

The answer is really quite simple. It's because these methods undermine the illusion of value that these folks purport to bring to the table on behalf of jazz. These methods – as they do for choreographers, “serious” composers, classical ensembles, theater companies and so forth – are designed to benefit the creators and performers, not those who prey upon them for their own financial benefit and personal aggrandizement. These frustrated, failed-musicians who run record companies, produce concerts and festivals, operate clubs, write about the music from a critical point of view, or most disappointingly, advocate on behalf of the music (and not the musicians) are primarily concerned with protecting or enlarging their own piece of the pie. And none of them seem to recognize the obvious solution – *making a bigger pie*.

The methods revealed in this chapter, and throughout this book, are designed for artists' self-empowerment. They focus on controlling one's own destiny – and maintaining control over one's own artistic creations and the product derived from it – a viable alternative to the standard approach of hoping that someone else will be “benevolent” enough to at least *cut the artist in* on the profits. And maybe, just maybe, make them a star.

The Concept of Self-Empowerment

Self-empowerment means that the artist takes personal control (and responsibility) for his or her own success, rather than relaying upon the roll of the dice or some power from the outside to produce the desired results. It doesn't mean that the artist must personally handle every aspect of their business concerns. Just raise the issue of self-empowerment for jazz artists to most jazz “advocates” and you'll receive snickers, rolled eyes, shaking heads and various other forms of scorn. But don't expect any real explanations – or even intelligent engagement – over why it's such a ludicrous idea to them.

Instead you'll get responses like, "Can you imagine (fill in the name of the least business-oriented musician you can identify) negotiating a contract, distributing product, conducting a board meeting or producing a concert? Yuk yuk yuk...guffaw, guffaw." Extend that same stupidity to the early days of American jazz artists touring Europe. "Can you imagine Louis Armstrong flying a plane to Europe? Yuk yuk yuk!"

Of course Pops didn't pilot the plane that took him to Europe. A skilled professional provided that service. Just as skilled professionals should provide those services associated with the business aspects of the artist's career. Self-empowerment simply demands that those professionals will be focused on an agenda that is designed to benefit the artist and his or her artistic vision – not the agenda of the record executive, management firm, booking agency or the professional providing the service.

An agent's first priority is to the agency; a record exec's is to the label; the publicist's to the publicity firm; and the sponsor's to the facility. They may shroud this reality by referring to these various entities under the guise of "our artists" or "our clients," but that's just the same as a politician's reference to "the people." The advocates' priority is "the music." This relieves them from concerns over the best interests of those who create it -- regardless of how they may protest that notion.

It doesn't work this way in the other Fine Arts, even though professional agencies and companies are generally hired to provide many of the necessary services related to the artists' careers and economic stability. The difference is in the internal structure that exists to insure the effectiveness of those outside entities on behalf of the artist. The entire focus of that internal structure is based on one thing only – to further the artistic vision of the artist through whatever means that artist intends, whether it be performance, education or the basic process of creating new works.

The basic structure utilized in developing this infrastructure and making it work to the artist's best advantage is virtually always the same – the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. And that is regardless of the economic realities or aspirations involved. The same entity houses the activities of composers, whether they're just trying to get their music heard or receiving million dollar commissions to compose a new opera; of choreographers whether they're struggling to find five dancers and a space with a suitable floor or are being honored at the Kennedy Center for a lifetime of achievement.

The 501(c)(3) is just a foundation to build upon, however. Like the foundation of a house, what is built upon it is of paramount importance. Shoddy construction, poor insulation, a lack of fire retardation and improper support structures can quickly lead to nothing being left standing other than the foundation.

So *Part IV* also includes recommendations, advice, strategies and so forth for the artist or professional in building successful relationships and taking best advantage of the various opportunities that can create a productive and fulfilling career.

With the information contained in *Part IV* combined with the material in *Parts I-III*, the serious artist or professional should have all of the components needed to develop a viable business approach without sacrificing artistic integrity or personal ideals.

