

## **Elementary School Project: The Business of Music**

“ I HAVE ‘NT HEARD OF THE AFM”. That is the most common statement that I hear from young musicians when I approach them about joining our association.

Unfortunately, in spite of preaching the benefits of membership, too many young musicians are blindly content to ply their trade for pennies at the door or even worse, for free. They dream of the “big break” that will propel them into a big record contract and stardom.

Misguided? Certainly, but we too are somewhat antiquated in our approach to recruitment of future AFM members. By the time we approach these musicians, they have reached that age where they believe that they know what they want out of music and how to get it. Unfortunately, they do not realize that there is more to being a musician than pure talent. They do not understand the “Business of Music”.

A few weeks ago, I noted that my grandson (who is in grade 6) was working on part 1 of a 3-part music assignment that required him to prepare a biography on a professional musician and determine what was required for the artist to “make it” in the music world. He then had to analyze 2 songs recorded by the artist noting their rhythms, pitch, genre etc. Part 3 addressed the artist’s impact on society (clothes, hair, dress style etc.)

This project went beyond the normal scope of music studies but stopped just short of scrutinizing what is required to attain a successful music career.

I contacted the school music teacher, introduced myself and offered to come into the classroom to discuss what is required to become a professional musician and look at the “Business of Music”.

She readily accepted my offer and asked me to address the Grade 6, 7 and 8 classes all of whom were doing the same assignment. In total about 200 students over a two-day span.

I contacted AFM Canada who provided me with promotional items such as IM magazines, guitar picks and luggage tags. These were used as an incentive for students who actively engaged in presentation discussions. Paul Sharpe from AFM freelance services provided a power point presentation that I was able to modify to suit my age groups. I was given 40 minutes per class and allowed to do a two-part presentation for the Grade 8 students of 40 minutes each.

Knowing that I had to engage the students attention, I decided to connect past and present by doing a business model comparison of Amadeus Mozart and Gene Simmons. I explained to the students that, by today’s standard, Kiss would probably be a warm up band in a concert with Mozart. We looked at their individual track records and did a comparative analysis. Both artists were successful performers. Mozart’s career, although commencing at age 5, spanned 29 years. Kiss has been performing 37 years and is still going strong. We reviewed their achievements and discussed their life styles. Mozart died

penniless at age 34. We discussed other musicians who died young such as Hank Williams, Jimmi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Cass Elliot and Kurt Cobain noting how a success coupled with a negative lifestyle ultimately leads to early destruction. We noted that Gene Simmons has never used drugs, never been drunk and never smoked and how artists such as Mick Jagger are physically fit and health conscious.

This led to the irrefutable conclusion that there is much more to being a professional musician than just being on stage.

At this point of the presentation I began discussions on establishing a business plan for musicians. This is where I began to inject AFM services into the presentation noting that no one person could be expected to have a thorough understanding of all the nuances of our profession but citing that the AFM is a one-stop resource “shopping center”.

We briefly discussed freelance services, symphonic services, theatre, recording, movie soundtracks, P2 visas, instrument insurance, liability insurance, copyright protection, intellectual property rights, fee tariffs, job referrals, recording royalties, pensions, political lobbying etc. When I got to political lobbying I used, for example, illegal downloading and why we must stop people from “stealing” tunes. In every class presentation, I was inundated with questions and inquisitive discussion. Once explained, the children fully grasped the serious effects caused by pilfering music. They realized how it affects the musician’s ability to be properly recompensed for their works and support their families and how it affects the price of concert tickets and CD’s.

I mentioned the MPF to the kids and told them about the depletion of funds as per John Hall’s memorandum. I explained that discontinuation of the trust fund was directly attributable to illegal downloading. Not only was I convinced that the students understood the consequences of stealing music but one of the aspiring young musicians asked me a most profound question.

*“If downloading is wrong, why do the companies like Sony sell blank discs and the equipment to make downloading so easy?”* Out of the mouths of babes!

Part 2 of my workshop, for Grade 8 students, involved a recap and more detailed presentation of AFM services. For this I used Paul Sharpe’s power point information. Students who played instruments were then directed to be team leaders with non-musicians, put together a band, band name, music genre, target audience and then assemble a business model determining what kinds of services they would require to undertake a tour in the United States (I was looking for the P2 visas).

Out of this exercise, I had a young lad approach me after class. He told me how he enjoyed the presentation and that he was planning to pursue a career in law someday. He went on to state that he hadn’t selected a specialty yet but was going to investigate a career in music industry related law.

As a follow-up to these presentations, I spoke with the Executive Director of our philharmonic orchestra. Since it is almost season end and there is still some educational

funding available, we are looking at sending in an ensemble to perform at a school assembly.

The symphony and local will be discussing future linking prospects should we have an opportunity to carry on these workshops in the next school year.

In summary, this project is not designed to reach out and sign up that new musician who just decided to become the next Canadian icon. We are looking forward and planting a seed that matures over the next 5 or 6 years. When a well-informed young man decides to join up with fellow musicians, he will probably be the AFM's best recruitment tool.

At the very least, he won't be asking, "So what is this AFM?"

Respectfully submitted,  
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