SECOND EDITION

BEYOND TALENT

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN MUSIC

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Mapping Success

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"This is such an exciting time in the world of music—musicians and institutions are re-examining and redefining who they are, what they do, what they want to do, and what is important in their lives."—Adrian Daly, Dean, Cleveland Institute of Music

What is it you dream of? For some musicians, it's performing with the world's best orchestras or with great opera companies. Some musicians want to record and tour with their own ensembles; some wish to create multimedia works involving music, dance, theater, and technology. Others dream of directing major arts institutions, writing music for film and video games, performing on Broadway, or teaching music at the college level. As you read this, you're probably reflecting on your own particular dream career. Having the dream is great, but what comes next?

Musicians often attribute career success to fate or destiny. They say it's a matter of being in the right place at the right time, getting "discovered," or just being lucky. Unfortunately, this kind of thinking leads to a passive approach: to simply letting things happen as they will. My goal is to fundamentally change this thinking and promote the idea that *you* are the person

in charge. *You* are the architect of your future. Through your attitude and actions, you can determine your luck and success.

Today's Musicians Profiled: Success Redefined ◆

What characterizes the newest generation of musicians? What kinds of successful careers are they creating for themselves? Here are a few examples of not-so-traditional approaches.

Cellist Matt Haimovitz garnered national media attention several years ago when the *New York Times* ran a piece about his unorthodox national tour—solo cello recitals played in rock clubs, coffeehouses, and even a pizza parlor. He had become frustrated with the traditional concert experience and missed seeing his generation in the audience. He wanted to reach out to new audiences with the music he was passionate about—from J. S. Bach to living composers to his own arrangements of rock standards. He has championed performing in nontraditional venues; for his "Anthem" tour of American works, Haimovitz performed Jimi Hendrix's improvisational version of *The Star-Spangled Banner* and recorded it live at former New York City's punk palace CBGB. Shortly after his initial forays into alternative spaces, Haimovitz hired a former singer-songwriter to find and book appropriate clubs for more extensive tours in support of his latest projects.

In 2000 he and composer Luna Pearl Woolf founded an indie classical label, Oxingale Records, and since then have released over 15 albums encompassing a wide range of artists and genre-blending collaborative works. Recent projects include *After Reading Shakespeare,* featuring literary-themed solo cello suites by three Pulitzer Prize–winning American composers. Haimovitz has toured the album in over forty cities, including exclusive appearances at Borders bookstores as part of "Borders on the Road." Oxingale has also launched a YouTube channel featuring his performances and on the label's website (http://www.oxingale.com), fans can download free ringtones of Matt's signature cellistic pyrotechnics.[1]

Here is an example of another music career path with a different focus: ICE, the International Contemporary Ensemble (http://www.iceorg.org), is a flexible group of thirty musicians who play everything from duos to chamber orchestra works, multimedia pieces using extended techniques, non-Western instruments, as well as improvisatory and electroacoustic works.

Claire Chase, flutist and cofounder of ICE, wrote about her experience as a musician-entrepreneur in 2008:

> When I formed ICE in Chicago the summer after I graduated from Oberlin, I had no money, no business experience, very few contacts in

the area. I produced our first concert on a budget of $605, which was exactly the amount of my first check working for Wolfgang Puck Catering Company.

Seven years later, we have given more than 250 concerts, including the world premieres of over 400 new works, and we have two solvent companies in Chicago and New York (with California coming soon), four albums on the way this season, and upcoming tours in three continents.

Our generation of young musicians, despite the economic challenges that we face, is experiencing an unprecedented freedom. We can do anything we want to do. We can produce our own concerts, release our own albums, create our own communities and our own movements, and we don't need a lot of money to do this. We just need great ideas, we need a spirit of adventure, and we need each other (thick skin is good to have, too).

ICE is an outgrowth of this early 21st century trend of the musician as entrepreneur, the artist as the producer. Although it might be too early to make this prediction, it is my hope that this spirit of entrepreneurship in the arts will be one of the defining characteristics and contributions of my generation of artists.[2]

And here is a third example and another ensemble demonstrating an alternative career path: the Providence String Quartet developed its innovative urban residency, Community MusicWorks (http:// www.communitymusicworks.org), over ten years ago in Providence, Rhode Island. Violinist/violist Sebastian Ruth founded Community MusicWorks on the conviction that musicians have an important public role to play in creating and transforming communities. Lauded by Alex Ross in the *New Yorker* as a "revolutionary organization," the quartet lives, rehearses, and teaches in an underserved urban neighborhood. Ruth, a Brown University graduate, started the project with a $10,000 grant from the university's Swearer Center for Public Service. Community MusicWorks is now funded through grants and private donations. By 2009, their budget had grown to $630,000. The organization provides 100 neighborhood children with lessons, the use of instruments, and transportation to performances throughout the region. A substantial waiting list of students is evidence of the program's popularity with young people and their families.

In terms of having an impact beyond their immediate community, in 2006, the organization started a two-year fellowship program that trains young professional musicians in the methodology of community-based performance and teaching careers. Fellows teach, perform, and design programs

alongside the members of the Providence String Quartet. The idea is that with this training, the fellows can go out and start their own community-based programs in other parts of the United States and the world.

A common mission runs through the stories of this new generation of musicians: they are finding new ways to connect music with audiences. Musicians are no longer content to perform only in traditional, formal venues, disconnected from audiences and from communities. Musicians today explore ways to find a sense of immediacy, connection, and relevance.

What Does It Take? Part 1 ◆

Keep in mind that careers are developed over years, not hatched overnight. The overnight success story is a media myth: when musicians are interviewed in depth, the overnight success invariably turns out to have been ten or twenty years in the making. There are substantial data that show that it takes 10,000 hours, or roughly ten years of study, work, and experience, to become an expert in *any* field. As detailed in the recommended *Musical Excellence: Strategies and Techniques to Enhance Performance,* "The ten year minimum has been documented in every field of human endeavor that has been examined . . . This rule holds for musicians, novelists, poets, mathematicians, chess players, tennis players, swimmers, long distance runners, livestock judges, radiologists, and doctors . . ."[3]

Though this should come as no surprise to musicians, it is comforting to realize that everyone—genius or not—needs the ten years or 10,000 hours of hard work. Malcolm Gladwell, in his excellent book *Outliers: The Story of Success,* offers examples of Bill Gates and others, detailing how their early years provided them the crucial 10,000 hours of exposure and training necessary to their later success. Mozart, though a prodigy and a genius, had been composing for ten years before he wrote his first "important" work. The point is that genius and talent are not enough. Hard work is essential; there are no shortcuts.

Gladwell also details the experience of the Beatles. As teenagers, when they were just getting started as a band in Liverpool, they hooked up with a local promoter, a fellow with connections in Hamburg, Germany, where they could get ongoing work. In Hamburg back then, Gladwell explains, strip clubs hired rock bands to play exceptionally long sets: *five or more hours each night, seven days a week, for continuous shows.* The Beatles ended up traveling to Hamburg five times between 1960 and 1962, Gladwell explains, "performing for 270 nights in just over a year and a half. By the time they had their first burst of success in 1964, in fact, they had performed live an estimated twelve hundred times. Do you know how extraordinary that

is? Most bands today don't perform twelve hundred times in their entire careers."[4]

They had to hone their performance skills, learn a huge number of songs, and figure out how to capture and maintain an audience's attention (not easy when you're a competing with strippers). Gladwell quotes Philip Norman, who wrote the Beatles' biography, *Shout!:*

"They learned not only stamina. They had to learn an enormous amount of numbers—cover versions of everything you can think of, not just rock and roll, a bit of jazz too. They weren't disciplined onstage at all before that. But when they came back, they sounded like no one else. It was the making of them."[5]

Success is a process. As a music career counselor, my job is to help people articulate their dreams, clarify their goals, and determine their next steps. Long-term career goals are realized through everyday choices about the use of time, energy, and money. Whether you're just starting out or are in midstream, these everyday choices are critical. Confucius had it right: the journey of a thousand steps *really does* begin with just one.

Defining the Profession: What's a Musician's "Job"?

In thinking about your dream, it may be useful to reflect on what it actually means to be a musician. The job of "musician" involves far more than performing. Musicians' careers are multidimensional. Working musicians typically "wear different hats" over the course of their workweek and over the course of their working lives. In talking with most active professional musicians, you will find they have multiple ongoing projects that involve performing, composing, recording, teaching, or other arts-related activities. What's more, musicians are often involved in handling performance contracts, publicity, and fundraising for their projects. Most musicians spend a portion of their work lives teaching—not just for the income but because they find it challenging and satisfying. Musicians advocate for arts education and public funding for the arts, and serve their communities on advisory boards and as consultants. So my first tip is this: ask professional musicians about their work lives. You will find there are very few who make a living solely from performing. Musicians' "jobs" encompass a wide variety of fascinating and rewarding work.

Debunking the Myth of Music Career Success

The myth that fuels many young musicians' dreams goes like this: "If I practice really, really, REALLY hard, do everything my teacher tells me, go to the best school, and win competitions, then with luck (and maybe the connections my teacher has), I will '*make it.*'" For many, *making it* means becoming

an international "star," making a living as a soloist, and performing with orchestras and in recitals worldwide.

This is a very narrow view of success. In the protective bubble of a music degree program, students can be oblivious to the difficult realities of the "real world." Unfortunately, the bubble also keeps musicians uninformed about the many other nontraditional and entrepreneurial music career success paths.

Only a fraction of the total number of musicians actually makes their living strictly as performers. And only a handful of those musicians are soloists. So, although there's nothing wrong with "going for gold," it can be a problem if a musician views anything short of this as failure. With a narrow view of success, musicians unconsciously limit their careers, their satisfaction, and their professional fulfillment.

"When musicians have a narrow view of the profession, they limit themselves in finding their own best career path," says bassoonist Ben Kamins, faculty at Rice University, former principal with the Houston Symphony, and active freelance chamber player. "There is a misconception amongst music students that you get a job in an orchestra and you live happily ever after. It's incredible to get and keep that job, but it doesn't guarantee artistic satisfaction."

If these are myths, then what can musicians actually do to be successful? When they don't find ready-made work opportunities, or when they simply want something other than what's available, they create their own opportunities. The history of the arts, after all, is a testament to the human drive to create. Musicians compose new works, invent new instruments, and develop music software. They launch new ensembles and performance series, and, in the process, they build audiences and transform communities.

The essential challenge for today's musician is to create a meaningful life's work and a livable income in a highly competitive, evolving marketplace.

The Big Picture ◆

The Higher Education Arts Data Service tracks information for the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). Of the 606 institutions reporting, the findings for 2007–2008 included these: more than 110,000 students were enrolled in NASM-member college-level music programs in the United States. And in that year over 20,000 people graduated with music degrees.[6] Therefore, competition for "traditional" jobs, such as full-time orchestra positions and college-level music teaching, is exceedingly high. Unfortunately, most graduating musicians have their sights set on these types of traditional opportunities.

To put supply and demand in context, though there are over 1,800 orchestras in the United States, the majority of these are volunteer and educational ensembles. The 52 largest budgeted professional American orchestras have roughly 4,200 total positions for players. In 2003, there were just 159 openings in these orchestras.[7] And the number of applicants requesting an audition for any one of these positions is typically 100 to 200.

As for college-level music teaching jobs, the majority of full-time positions require doctorates and prior college teaching experience. Here, too, the market is flooded with qualified applicants. A single full-time opening can attract more than 100 candidates. In 2008, the Career Services Center at New England Conservatory tracked the numbers of U.S. college music teaching opportunities for specific instruments and found the total number of full-time openings for cello faculty was thirteen; for clarinet, eleven. According to the Higher Education Arts Data Service, the total number of cellists enrolled in doctoral programs for 2008 was 155, and the total number of clarinetists was 138.[8]

However, these highly competitive traditional jobs are only a fraction of the work actually available to musicians. The U.S. music industry is vast and includes a huge variety of work opportunities. And because musicians are generally multi-talented, they often have marketable skills in more than one area. The majority of today's professional musicians create satisfying "portfolio" careers, braiding together part-time work and entrepreneurial ventures to capitalize on their talents, interests, and experience.

"Realize there are many different ways to make a living in music," says Boston-based freelance clarinetist Michael Norsworthy. "Remain flexible, look for opportunities at every turn, and be ready to adjust your viewpoint. There's no ONE way, there are MANY ways."

The U.S. music industry employs roughly 295,000 people in the *core* music industries, which include performers, ensembles, those working for publishers and record labels, and those doing studio and radio work, music instrument manufacturing, and retail. Another 899,000 people are employed in the *peripheral* music industries: those at music schools and recording reproduction companies, and those working as agents, promoters, and venue managers. The total annual revenue for the music industry includes $3.1 billion from the core industries, and another $23.5 billion from the peripheral ones.[9]

What do all these numbers mean for individual musicians? However you slice it, there's a huge range of opportunities for people with music skills

and a passion to share music with others. Musicians generally have marketable skills in more than one area, leading to multifaceted careers. If you are creative and open-minded, there are dozens of ways to put your music training and talent to work.

What Does It Take? Part 2 ◆

Winning and keeping an orchestra job demands skills and talents different from those needed to lead a jazz ensemble, write film scores, launch a music software company, or teach at a conservatory. Though there's no formula, there are six important qualities that are critical to all music careers. Do a little self-assessment: do you have some or many of these?

Talent *plus* **hard work** are necessary but *are not sufficient by themselves.* You need more:

Winning attitude: You are motivated, focused, and resilient; you can handle rejection.

Sales skills: You communicate and present yourself well; your enthusiasm is contagious. You can articulate your strengths to prospective collaborators, clients, and employers.

Support system: You have emotional support and encouragement from a group of friends and mentors. And your goals and plans do not cause conflict in your close relationships.

Strategy: You have plans for how to reach both your short- and long-term goals; you have the skills and experience necessary to implement your plan.

If some areas need work, consider yourself in good company. No one has the "perfect package." But knowing what needs improving is the first step to making positive change. The following chapters detail practical ways to enhance and develop these qualities.

Musicians who do well professionally and have the least trouble with the realities of the music profession are those who have most of these six qualities or who have an overabundance in one area that may compensate for a lack in another.

Case Study

Helen O., a talented pianist, has built a good local reputation as a chamber musician/accompanist and has received a number of favorable reviews. However, she is passive in her approach to her career: she does not seek out opportunities but relies on her reputation to generate them. Helen shies away from dealing di-

rectly with the business side of her career. She does not actively seek advice from colleagues or networking contacts. She is frustrated that she's not getting more concert dates, doesn't have a manager, and is not commanding the fees she thinks she deserves.

Helen blames the unfair music industry, the competitive market, and the dwindling audience for classical music. *She does not see how her own behavior and attitude may actually be holding her back.*

Musicians, like most people, are fond of complaining. It is easier to gripe about a lack of opportunities than to take control of your life. What could Helen O. do differently? Like most of us, Helen could make better use of her existing support system, cultivate new collaborators, and improve her self-management (until she can attract a manager). Identifying our shortcomings is essential to making improvements. Talking to others can be a great way to gain perspective. You may recognize a bit of Helen in you because there is probably a bit of her in all of us.

To help Helen and others, here are ten basic principles for advancing music careers. I call these the "Success Principles." See how many of these you use now, and consider adopting the others. They do not necessarily demand a lot of time or effort, but they do require adjusting your attitude, modifying habits, and venturing beyond your comfort zone.

Ten Success Principles ◆

There are many practical steps you can take to advance toward your career goals. But over the years, by observing musicians make their way in the world, I've noticed certain kinds of thinking and behavior that works well. I've distilled these habits into the principles below. These are lifestyle recommendations, ways to think about and deal with the world. Many of these principles are developed further in subsequent chapters.

1. *Know yourself.* Know both your strengths and weaknesses. Know what you have to offer the professional world. Get feedback from colleagues, teachers, and mentors. Their suggestions and advice can help you chart the path that's best for you.

2. *Get to know your industry.* Get savvy. Your research should include both talking to colleagues and mentors as well as reading about the arts and the music profession. Stay current by reading relevant music trade journals, blogs, and websites specific to your particular areas of interest. Reading this book is a great start!

3. *Schmooze.* Network; get out and exchange information and ideas with others. When you share career and job information with colleagues, they reciprocate. Networking happens everywhere: at rehearsals, backstage at concerts, in supermarkets, at gas stations, and at most social gatherings. Even if you are shy, you can find a style of networking to suit your personality. Chapter 2 examines networking in depth.

4. *Research your options.* Information leads to opportunities. Read other musicians' bios for ideas about grants, competitions, festivals, and performance possibilities. You can find bios on musicians' websites, blogs, CD liner notes, and in concert programs. Check online for local arts calendar listings to find out what other musicians at your career stage are doing. Make research a habit: schedule time each week to catch up on what's going on in the profession.

As graduate students, two composers—Koji Nakano from Japan and Lior Navok from Israel—both made time to regularly research and follow up on opportunities.

Koji researched competitions open to international students. Applying and winning a few of these led to commissions, summer seminars, and premiers of his works. His pieces have since been performed at the Tanglewood, Aspen, and Bowdoin music festivals, and at Carnegie and Merkin Halls in New York City. And he has had residencies at the MacDowell, Yaddo, Millay, Djerassi, and Ragdale artist colonies.

While still in school, Lior Navok produced a CD of his own works. He then researched where to send it (which radio stations and reviewers). The CD got radio airplay and was reviewed favorably in several publications, and this led to commissions for new works and plans for the next CD. Lior has gone on to receive commissions from the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, the Fromm Music Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Jerome Foundation.

It's never possible in life to know how any one project, contact, or opportunity will lead to the next. But in hindsight, we can see how these two musicians' efforts as students served them well in their unfolding careers.

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5. *Cultivate an attitude.* Be positive, resilient, flexible, and professional. Keep your ego in check; you need to be able to deal well with both rejection and acceptance. People want to work with those who are pleasant, optimistic, and inspiring. Remember that your attitude is a big part of your professional image.

6. *Assess your interpersonal skills.* Clean up your act. We've all suffered disappointments and difficulties in life. Get whatever kind of help you need,

but make sure you are not inflicting your personal difficulties on others. Because the music industry is a very small, relationship-driven world, we need to be good colleagues to each other (because the person you snub today may be the person who *doesn't* hire you tomorrow).

Musicians spend an inordinate amount of time alone in practice rooms. The solitary and demanding work can contribute to a lack of interpersonal skills and overall self-centeredness. This is how some musicians end up being considered "high maintenance" or "divas." So, be considerate. People will remember your thoughtfulness and optimism, and they will respond in kind. The more you can be at ease with yourself and with others, the more you can benefit from and appreciate the world you inhabit. Do your best to contribute positive energy to all of your life and work situations because what goes around comes around.

Tips on Tuning Up Your Interpersonal Skills

- Before going to sleep each night, think back over the day. Review your behavior and interactions with others. Ask yourself what you would choose to do differently. Be honest. Envisioning new patterns of behavior is the first step to making positive change.
- Ask for feedback from trusted colleagues and friends. If you are unsure of how you are coming across or about how you handled a particular situation, ask a colleague for objective feedback.

7. *Think like an entrepreneur.* This means thinking creatively about what you have to offer and how you can put your musical skills and experience to work, creating opportunities for yourself. Spend time brainstorming with friends and colleagues.

Conductor and vocal coach John Greer, when asked what career advice he had for musicians, described the three keys to success he gleaned from the Canadian entrepreneur Edward Mirvish. These were to "fulfill a need; go against the trend; and keep it simple." John Greer translates these tips for musician entrepreneurs: fulfilling a need means offering something that others want and will value enough to pay you for. Your music needs an audience; think about what you have to offer and who might want this in your community. Think creatively about where in your community you can perform, use your musical skills, and be paid for it. As for Ed Mirvish's second tip, "going against the trend," John reminds musicians to offer something distinctive. Think about specific repertoire and projects that especially suit your abilities and interests. Do you have other special skills? And finally, as

for keeping it simple, John says, make sure you keep in mind why you are in music. "Don't be distracted from the big idea—keep your artistic goals front and center. And make sure nothing extraneous or unessential distracts your audience from your mission." Make sure the projects and work you take on reflect your values.

Many musicians create their own performance opportunities and develop their own audiences. Wordless Music Series (WMS) in New York City is a great example. The brainchild of Ronen Givoney, the series presents innovative postrock and electronica acts with classical musicians at a number of venues, notably Le Poisson Rouge, an intimate flexible-seat venue multimedia art cabaret.

A rocker who got turned on to classical, Givoney created a series to "demonstrate that the various boundaries and genre distinctions segregating music today—popular and classical; uptown and downtown; high art and low—are artificial constructions in need of dismantling."[10]

The series' first concert brought two musicians from the group Wilco together with the pianist Jenny Lin, who played works by Ligeti, Shostakovich, and Elliott Sharp. Lauded in the press, the series has garnered a strong following, introducing listeners from both rock and the classical worlds to composers that they might not otherwise encounter. In 2008, the series presented the first American performance of Radiohead-fame Jonny Greenwood's "Popcorn Superhet Receiver," for string orchestra, on a program with music by John Adams and Gavin Bryars.

8. *Communicate what makes you distinctive.* In order to get bookings, media attention, and an audience, you will need to be able to communicate what is special about you and your music making. What is your singular viewpoint? Do you perform any specialized or unusual repertoire? Have you given concerts in unusual settings? This topic is covered in depth in chapter 3.

Cellist Reinmar Seidler had given a few concerts in South America and wanted to follow up on these opportunities. In order to increase his marketability and expand the scope of his touring, he put together a promotional kit to send to prospective concert presenters and music schools. The kit included detailed descriptions of lecture demonstrations and clinics he could offer on early music performance practices for string players and healthy physical approaches to performing (example shown in chapter 3). He offered a distinctive package and it resulted in more bookings as well as more college-level teaching experience for his résumé.

9. *Have both short-term and long-term goals.* Articulating your goals is important. You can't get somewhere if you don't know where you're going. Having realistic short-term goals, for each month or each week, will help keep you focused and motivated. Meeting short-term goals is the best way to work toward your long-term dream. At the end of each chapter there are practical prompts to help you determine your next short-term goals and action steps.

10. *Feed your soul.* How do you recharge and renew your creativity? What inspires you? Pay attention to what helps recharge your imagination and what helps keep your spirit alive. Whether you rebalance by attending to your spirituality, your family life, favorite hobbies, or by communing with nature, make sure that you are taking good care of your spirit.

Remind yourself of why you got involved in music in the first place. Your most basic reasons for being in music are crucial factors to keep you moving forward in your career. Keeping tabs on your motivation—on the essence of what music means to you—should help sustain you throughout your career.

On Inspiration

Israeli composer Lior Navok gave a presentation at New England Conservatory several years ago and spoke about creativity and motivation. In his talk, Lior described the drive that musicians have—the creative internal fire—and he likened it to a small gold box. It's something absolutely personal and irreplaceable in each of us, a precious gift that we need to safeguard. Lior's image of the gold box is powerful—it can serve as a reminder of our mission. His metaphor itself is a gift: when you conjure it, you may also find it has a centering and motivating effect.

Advancing in your career involves fine-tuning your goals, assessing your strengths, and discovering and exploring new opportunities. The kind of musician who puts these success principles into action can be described as an entrepreneur. Cultivate your entrepreneurial skills, and you cultivate your career.

The Entrepreneurial You ◆

Musicians do not usually view themselves as entrepreneurs, even though they are the quintessential "multi-preneurs." Musicians regularly launch new ensembles, start their own teaching studios, create record labels, and publish their own works. A satisfying work life for a successful musician often in-

cludes concurrent start-up ventures. This is just one benefit to being a musician: the diversity of ways you can contribute to society.

Musicians create their own start-up projects for a variety of reasons. They may catch the entrepreneurial bug because of frustration with limited traditional opportunities or because they seek the satisfaction of being in charge of their own project. They may want additional income or the opportunity to perform certain repertoire with particular colleagues. Sometimes entrepreneurship begins with identifying a specific community need and seeing how a musician's skills would meet that need.

Boston-based pianist and entrepreneur Sarah Bob had always been interested in the connections between contemporary visual art and music. In 2000, she founded the New Gallery Concert Series to present the two arts in dialogue. Each concert is presented in collaboration with a corresponding visual art exhibition at the Community Music Center of Boston, where Sarah is on faculty. She selects the visual artwork and commissions composers to write musical responses to it. As of 2008, the series had hosted 26 concerts with over 123 musical compositions, 30 premieres, and hundreds of works by over two dozen visual artists from around the world. The series includes works that span the spectrum from classical-contemporary, improvisation, electronic, jazz, and avant-garde music, paired with sculpture, painting, indoor installations, photography, and film. (See http://www.newgalleryconcertseries.org.)

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2005, on average, 2,356 people each day launched their own businesses. Individual proprietorships or businesses without employees, also known as "lone wolves," had receipts of $951 billion and made up approximately 78% of the nation's 26 million-plus firms.[11] Whether you are starting your own ensemble, establishing a private teaching studio, contracting other musicians for gigs, or marketing and selling your own CD, you too are being entrepreneurial.

In addition to their musical ability, successful musicians tend to possess certain entrepreneurial characteristics, personality traits, and other skills. Not every successful musician has them all, but they often have a high percentage. See how many you possess now; subsequent chapters detail how to develop these skills and cultivate these traits.

Entrepreneurial Checklist

Skills to Manage Your Music Career

- ❑ Interpersonal
- ❑ Writing
- ❑ Public speaking/presentation
- ❑ Negotiation

Personal Qualities for Success

- ❑ Determination
- ❑ Ability to handle rejection
- ❑ Imagination, creativity
- ❑ Flexibility, openness to new ideas

- ❑ Budget/finance
- ❑ Teaching
- ❑ Research
- ❑ Publicity
- ❑ Computer
- ❑ Grant writing
- ❑ Fundraising
- ❑ Personal integrity
- ❑ Intellectual curiosity
- ❑ Ability to learn from one's mistakes
- ❑ Conscientiousness, reliability
- ❑ Good follow-through, detail-oriented
- ❑ Interest in others, willingness to contribute
- ❑ Optimism

Oboist Jennifer Montbach started Radius Ensemble—a mixed chamber group with its own concert series—so that she could program the music she wanted and experiment with reaching a broader audience.

While she was a grad student, Jennifer gained valuable arts administration experience helping in the start-up of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and later took on a job working in the publicity department for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Through this work, she acquired the necessary skills and professional contacts to launch Radius.

Within its first two seasons, Radius had already received great reviews, created an impressive website and fan list, and was playing to full houses. In addition to all the practice and rehearsals, the work involved forming a nonprofit organization, fundraising, and writing program notes and press releases. The payoff for Jennifer was seeing her vision realized. (See http://www.radiusensemble.org.)

Toni Sikes is the founder of "the Guild," a company that markets and sells online original artwork by thousands of artists. For an Arts Enterprise talk at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Toni explained that being an entrepreneur is "not a job title: it's a state of mind." And in terms of what's necessary to move forward as an entrepreneur, she said people need to be adept at the following:

1. *Dreaming.* Do you have a vision? In business schools budding entrepreneurs are asked, "What's your 'BHAG'? The acronym stands for your Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal.
2. *Bootstrapping.* Can you take your vision and break it down into manageable pieces, starting small and working long and hard to bring your idea to life?

3. *Networking.* You need to get out and meet people, to gather ideas and suggestions for your work. Toni says, "Schmoozing is a contact sport: you need to rub up against others." (Networking is covered in chapter 2.)
4. *The art of pitching.* You must be able to communicate an engaging and concise "pitch" of what you have to offer others.
5. *The art of doing.* Entrepreneurs have a bias toward action; it's no good having great ideas if you don't act on them. Toni says, "The hardest thing about starting is starting."

Project-Based Career Advancement ◆

Through advising over the years, I have found that musicians often have an idea in the back of their minds for a special project, something they've always wanted to do, create, or help make happen. What I mean by *project* here is a music career-related venture that is concrete and specific. (This is *not a project:* "to become the best jazz ukulele player in the Southwest"! That may be a goal, but it's not a project.) Projects are focused on *doing* as opposed to being: they have timelines and are task-oriented. Projects can be anything from researching and applying for grants to study abroad, to starting a reed-making business, writing a teaching methods book, launching a concert series, or raising money to buy an instrument. Music career projects demand a range of musical and non-musical skills, and they can be tremendously satisfying to work on and complete.

Unfortunately, musicians often keep their project ideas to themselves. Worse, they often talk themselves out of pursuing these projects, thinking they're too ambitious or too time-consuming. The usual reasons given are a lack of time, collaborators, and/or funding. This is a shame, because it is usually these creative project ideas that lead musicians to rewarding and satisfying career paths.

In fact, most music careers are *project-driven.* A musician's contacts and interests generally lead to a series of short- or longer term projects (such as commissions, recordings, tours, teaching studios, and ensembles). These projects, in turn, make up the fabric of most musicians' artistic careers, much more than any particular "job." So learning to manage a project is a great way to learn to manage your career.

To get started, think about what you've been dreaming about doing. Seek out advice and feedback on the projects you have imagined. If you don't at least talk about your project, ask questions, and explore, you'll never have the satisfaction of knowing whether it was actually possible. Ask current or former teachers, alumni, or your music school's career development staff. Ask friends and family if they know anyone who has done something simi-

lar. People realize their dreams by talking about them with others and sharing their enthusiasm—which often leads to more ideas, collaborators, plans, and action. Do not underestimate the importance of other people; projects require collaboration, they take a team, if not a village.

Self-Assessment: Where Are You Now? ◆

In order to map your future, you will need to first orient yourself. Career advancement involves two kinds of work: the internal and the external. The internal work involves self-reflection and assessment. The external work involves research and networking. To help with the internal work, here are two essential questions and some help with finding answers:

What Are Your Strengths?

It can help to write all this down as a list. In what areas do you excel? Be specific. Think about all aspects of your musicianship in relation to the career you desire. Performers need to consider their technical performance abilities and levels, interpretive skills, range and repertoire, and performance experience. What is your reputation? How would your colleagues and mentors describe your abilities now? If you teach, what are your specific strengths as an educator? If you are interested in arts administration and music industry jobs, what relevant skills and experience do you have at this point? Everybody should consider their professionalism. Are you known as someone who is easy to work with, who shows up on time and is well prepared?

What Needs Improving?

We *all* have weaknesses. Write them down: be specific and honest. If you are serious about moving ahead in your career, you need to be willing to confront what needs changing and then work on making improvements.

Because we are not usually our own best judges, it's important to get objective feedback. Make individual appointments with three or four trusted mentors who know your work well. Ask people whose professional opinions you value, such as coaches or former teachers. Do *not* ask loved ones or close friends—they are biased, and for this you need objectivity. When you make these appointments, be clear that you are asking for unvarnished feedback on both your strengths and your weaknesses.

Be prepared for honesty. I recommend writing down everything you hear in these consultations—both the good and the bad—so you can sort it all out later. Listen calmly, do not get defensive, and do not make excuses. In meeting with different people, you may get contradicting input. Take time to think it all over carefully. It takes maturity to ask for and to process

this kind of critical feedback. Be humble and astute enough to ask for input, and then use it to improve your work—these are the hallmarks of a committed professional.

Clarifying Your Intent: What Is It You Want?

So, what exactly is your dream? What is your desired future? I like to ask the question this way: *"If a fairy godmother were to appear suddenly and bonk you on the head with her magic wand, what would you ask for?"* Write down your answers. What is the life you hope to be living ten years from now? Where and with whom would you like to be living? Do you see a house, pets, and/or children in the picture? Detail what you plan to be doing professionally. Consider how you want to be involved musically in your immediate community. Be specific and concrete about your future goals because you will need to think strategically about how to reach them.

Achieving Goals: Getting from Point A to Point B ◆

Career concerns and questions are essentially about choices: how to spend time and how to focus one's energy. Many musicians have difficulty figuring out the action steps to take to advance their careers. It can be difficult to see a clear path toward that long-term dream. In order to succeed, musicians need to break down big goals into manageable smaller pieces.

Backward planning is the secret weapon of wedding planners, corporate executives, and savvy musicians. The idea is to work in reverse from your desired outcome, making sure you have a manageable timeline with benchmarking goals along the way to help keep you on track. By breaking down a big list of responsibilities into manageable weekly tasks, the work is doable and the stress is minimized. The trick in managing any project is to think strategically and realistically about what needs to be done and when. It's great to have the satisfaction of crossing off tasks on your to-do list at the end of each week, knowing that you're that much closer to reaching your goal.

Case Study: Determining Short-Term Goals

Suppose that your long-term career goal is to lead your own jazz quartet ten years from now, playing international tours and releasing your own recordings. You have started your own band and have played a few local jazz clubs, thanks to contacts through friends.

The question now is, what would help you move forward, toward your long-term goal? You realize you need to gain more performance experience. So what is

an appropriate goal to set for the next six months? And what specific action steps should you take this next week?

A reasonable six-month goal might be to arrange a small regional tour to gain performance, promotion, and booking experience. How should you get started?

Week 1: First things first. You will need to find where your band could play, right? This is basic research. You need to find performance venues in nearby cities that will be appropriate for your music. You can look on the web and talk to other musicians. You'll need to keep track of the information you gather—the names, locations, and contacts of the performance venues. Depending on how busy you are, this research might be a reasonable task for your first week, because it will involve both detailed web searching and connecting with colleagues and mentors.

Week 2: Once you have a list of target performance venues, you need to have promotional materials and a practiced telephone *pitch* before making calls or sending e-mails.

If the band needs to update its bio, sound clips, or website, this may be another week's to-do list. These kinds of action steps are described in detail in later chapters. But for now, we are focusing on how to break down a large goal into manageable pieces. And the most important piece of any plan is choosing the tasks you will complete *this week:* it's all about getting the work done.

Devising Your Career Plan

Goals are dreams with deadlines. Planning ahead drives you toward your goal. Without long-term goals and the concrete plans to achieve these, we are at the mercy of all the distractions and immediate concerns of life around us. The only one who can prioritize your time and energy to meet your needs is you.

"Ever hear about the Harvard study of business school grads? The study monitored graduates of an MBA program from 1979 to 1989. Researchers found that ten years after graduation the three percent who had written goals were making 10 times as much money as the other 97 percent combined."

—Annette Richmond, "How to Develop More Effective Short-Term Goals," on http://www.career-intelligence.com

Even if financial success is not your top priority, writing down your goals is important. It serves to help you consciously commit to your goals. It is a powerful method that focuses your thoughts and energy.

Start with writing down your long-term and short-term goals. You can revise them as you gain more experience. People change, so their goals and plans need to change with them. You may even find yourself revising your plan as you read this book and discover more about yourself and the music industry. That's fine, because researching and assessing your options is an important part of career exploration. The next chapters are all designed to help you fine-tune your career plan, to make it work for you.

Summary

Ultimately, success is about creating a life path that is meaningful. From a holistic viewpoint, lives and careers are all about process—experimentation and discovery. It's up to each individual to make the journey satisfying and rewarding.

Career Forward

Working through these questions will help you move ahead. Writing out your answers will help with thinking through and committing to your goals.

1. How do *you* define success?
2. What *specifically* do you love about music?
3. What *specifically* do you love about being a musician? (This is not the same as question 2.)
4. What is your long-term goal? Describe in detail the life you'd like to be leading ten years from now. Where do you see yourself living? What kinds of work are you doing? Is there a family or significant other involved? A garden? Pets?
5. What is your short-term goal? To progress toward your long-term goal, what do you realistically want to accomplish one year from now?
6. What do you want to accomplish this month that will advance you toward your short-term goal?
7. What's on your to-do list for this week?