

Changing Landscapes

By **Kathy Canfield Shepard**

Are we workers or artists? That was a good question posed by *Allegro* in the last issue, and one not easily answered.

Are we workers, going to a job every day, or are we fulfilling our own artistic visions, creating something new and unique?

As a classically trained musician, I was taught to prepare for auditions. I hoped to get a professional orchestra job some day.

After moving to New York, I became a freelance musician, including eight years as a regular musician in a Broadway show.

During the course of my time as a professional musician, I won several orchestral positions, but find that I prefer the variety of a freelance life.

In both cases, though, I am always working for someone else, interpreting someone else's idea. Whether it is a conductor's interpretation of a classical piece, a composer's new work, or a Broadway creative team's vision of a new show, I

do feel like I'm a "worker."

During my time as a professional musician, we have also seen a decrease in these performing opportunities. Orchestras are folding due to shrinking audiences and funding, and Broadway orchestra sizes have gone up and down. Many have said that live music is dying.

As a small business owner, I have seen the same shifts happening in the business world. People in increasing numbers are either choosing to leave well-paying and secure corporate jobs to start their own businesses and work for themselves, create something meaningful to them, and have more control over their lives and futures; or they are being downsized and forced to explore the possibility of creating their own employment options.

With the move from "worker" to "creative entrepreneur" comes a quick education in how to start and run a successful business. What lessons can we as "worker" musicians take from the business world to adapt to this changing landscape and create our own opportunities?

Many of our colleagues are already established musician entrepreneurs. They write their own music, start their own groups, produce their own CD's, and start their own concert series. Many of us also straddle both the "worker" world and the "creative artist" world. In this column, we'll share ideas and tips from the business community to help us grow new opportunities and musical enterprises.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

One of the keys to creating a successful business is finding your niche market. What products can you — and only you — provide? And who is your ideal client or customer?

As an artistic entrepreneur, think about what you can do that no one else can do, or has thought of doing. Think outside the box here.

For example, besides your abilities on your particular instruments, what other skills do you have? Do you write or arrange music? If so, for whom or what is your particular style appropriate — children, a summer park concert, the formal concert hall?

Or maybe you are very social and have a passion for educating your audience — could you integrate pre- or post-concert receptions into your concert series, where there is some type of fun and entertaining educational component? The possibilities here are endless.

I'll close with a book suggestion: "Who Moved My Cheese? An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life," by Spencer Johnson and Kenneth Blanchard.

I hope to write more columns for *Allegro* about music and business. If you have any questions or ideas about music and business, please email me at Info@CanfieldDesignStudios.com. ☐

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A graphic of a musical staff with five horizontal lines, positioned below the word 'Allegro'.

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SAVE THE DATE!

Local 802's annual holiday party will take place at the union on Wednesday, Dec. 19 at 5 p.m. As usual, there will be plenty of food and good cheer. Mark it on your calendar now!