

HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT

HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT

BY FRANCIS DUNNERY



HOW TO MAKE A
GREAT LIVING
PERFORMING
HOUSE CONCERTS

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House Concert Expert

How to Make a Great Living Performing House Concerts

by

Francis Dunnery

www.HouseConcertExpert.com

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Foreword

By Eric Miranda

I met Francis Dunnery by chance in 1996 when I accidentally knocked on the door of his recording studio and he invited me in for coffee. I never made it to my original destination. Instead, I had the first of what would become regular caffeine-fueled powwows with the savant guitar player from the Gulley Flats Housing Estate in Northern England.

One evening after my band performed at the Mercury Lounge Club in lower Manhattan, I joined Francis and some friends at a café' on West 12th Street. New York City was a bustle of creativity in the mid-90s. At our table alone, two of us had record deals, one had a book deal and another just landed a part in a major motion picture. To the casual observer' we were an enviable lot; we were making moves and people were paying attention. But underneath it all I felt like a fraud. There was a lack of authenticity in what I was doing and Francis was about to pull the lid off the pot.

Francis said he loved a particular song I performed that evening, but why was I trying to sound like Kurt Cobain? Actually, I was trying to sound like Courtney Love, but the point is the same either way. He was calling me out for trying to be someone I wasn't. I could have been embarrassed or angry, but I felt relieved. In fact, I was surprised that no one had the courage to call me out on it earlier.

Francis then shared that recently he had been nervous to cut the long hair he'd flaunted for years and much earlier he'd feared singing in his Cumbrian accent. By the time our evening closed several hours later, each person at the table had come clean about his or her own charade. It came to a crescendo when the newly minted author admitted he paid nine hundred dollars for the shirt he was wearing because it once belonged to Jack Kerouac!

It would take a separate book for me to recount the generosity Francis has shown me and his other friends over the past two decades, but I must mention one story in particular.

In 2007, despite his hectic touring schedule, Francis came with me to visit my younger sister who was battling cancer in a hospital on the Upper-East Side. Francis played her a rendition of Chocolate Heart, and for as long as I live I will not forget the way her eyes lit up as he sang to her. Francis promised her he would come with me the next time I paid her a visit. My schedule prevented me from seeing my sister the following week. When I called to check in with her, she told me that Francis had returned without me and played his guitar and sang for her.

While my sister was battling cancer here in New York, Francis' brother Baz was fighting the same disease in a hospital in the UK. I often wonder if the roles were reversed if I would have shown Francis and his family the same generosity that he showed mine.

As you read this book, I hope you enjoy the enthusiasm, generosity and authenticity that Francis exudes and ignites in others, including me.

I don't believe in chance meetings.

Eric Miranda,

New York City, Feb 2015

Preface

By Kate Stauffer

I first heard the song 'Wounding and Healing' just months after my father passed. I did not know who the artist was but WOW, did those lyrics speak to me! (The power of music is profound!) I soon found out the artists name was Francis Dunnery.

In 2003, we saw Francis' performance at McCarter Theater, Princeton, NJ. After the concert my husband Larry and I were chatting with Tony Goyden, Francis' road manager. Tony had mentioned that Francis had recently performed in someone's home and loved the vibe. When we asked if he would consider playing at our house, Tony said 'yes'.

We had seen Francis on stage a few times and were very nervous about hosting a House Concert, partly because we had no idea what a House Concert was. From what I could tell at the time, Francis didn't know either. All our friends were wondering the same thing...what's a House Concert and what's protocol? Even with the ambiguity, the evening proved to be a great success. It was a surreal experience! Francis' performance was so intimate and engaging, and the evening had our friends in awe! There was NOTHING like having a concert in our own home...I was really excited by what we had just experienced!

Soon after our first House Concert I asked Francis; 'I love what you do, and the way you do it, is there anything I can do for you?' In response, Francis said, 'I am loving these House Concerts, do you want to do something together?' I said 'I'm a school teacher, I don't know anything about House Concerts.' He came back with, 'I'm a musician I don't know anything about House Concerts either, do you want to see what happens?' We jumped off that cliff and it has been a tremendously successful journey.

This book came out of that journey. In the pages that follow Francis brilliantly, succinctly and with his unique humor shares with you all he has learned about becoming a House Concert Expert!

What I have come to know about Francis is that he loves to see people become the best versions of themselves. He loves authenticity and he loves to see people shine. I hope as you read this book you will feel Francis believing that you can do anything you put your energy to!

I am grateful to Francis for his deep friendship, his fearlessness and his faith in me, so I can, in turn, have faith in myself!

Kathleen Stauffer, Malvern, Pennsylvania
March, 2015

Introduction

By Francis Dunnery

“You wouldn’t expect a tennis match to take place on an ice rink and you wouldn’t expect to recite poetry on the stock market trading floor, then why expect an acoustic artist to perform their songs in an environment that is designed for screaming loud rock music and drinking alcohol? It’s time to try something that works”

Francis Dunnery

HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT was created for the millions of acoustic musicians who are searching for a platform on which to share their songs and stories. Although I do concede that the information provided will greatly benefit any performer; this book is heavily focused on solving the performance issues that every acoustic artist and singer/songwriter has faced throughout their musical career.

The following pages will give you all the information you need to know in order to establish yourself as a successful House Concert Expert. It will uncover dynamics in your performance that you never knew you had and support you in developing communication skills that will have the audience hanging on your every word. Perhaps more importantly, this book will give you all the tools you need to earn a great living performing House Concerts.

The strategies that I have created for you in this book are the same ones I’ve been using since 2004, the same ones that made me the number one HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT in the entire world. I have personally used these simple performance methods throughout my House Concert career, performing more than 1500 successful House Concerts over the past ten years. These methods are guaranteed to work if you follow the instructions prepared for you in this book. You need nothing more than your integrity and a fierce determination to succeed.

I do not believe in get-rich-quick schemes or something for nothing. I believe that success comes with dedication and hard work. If you give nothing you’ll get nothing back. On the other hand, if you wholeheartedly give your commitment to your House Concert career, then the Laws of Causality dictate that you will receive the same amount of commitment in return for what you gave. Your success is not dictated by outside events, your success is a direct result of the action and commitment you make to your House Concert career.

By the time you finish this book you will have gained a definite advantage over other artists and musicians that haven’t received this training and you will be well on your way to earning a great living performing House Concerts.

It is no accident that House Concerts are booming and becoming more and more popular by the

day. Many people are tired of paying \$150 for a regular concert ticket, \$100 for dinner, \$50 for parking and the sheer hassle of finding their way to the show only to find they are sitting in a seat at the back of a gigantic hall. The sound is often difficult to enjoy and the seats are usually so far away from the stage that they cannot see any of the artists features. These impersonal shows have dominated the music industry for quite some time but something magical is beginning to stir in the underbelly of the music scene.

Over the past ten years, a new independent House Concert spirit has begun to rise to the surface of acoustic music. Like Punk Rock and Rap Music, both which created a musical platform for themselves out of nothing, now intimate acoustic shows are springing up all over the world in retaliation to the juggernaut rock shows that leave so many amazingly talented and gifted artists by the roadside.

This new performance platform exists because a growing number of acoustic artists have finally decided to take the ball in their own hands. After being ignored in rock clubs, train stations, discos, bars, pubs and coffee shops for decades, acoustic artists are finally waking up to the fact that they may be performing in the wrong venues! It's easy to believe that your songs are not up to scratch when an entire audience is completely ignoring you, but the fact is that rock clubs, train stations, discos, bars, pubs or even coffee shops are not supportive environments for your songs to be heard.

House Concerts are quickly becoming the number one performance space for acoustic musicians worldwide. It is my great pleasure to share my experience and expertise with you in the hope that you will take these simple steps and become a dedicated HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT yourself. For in the end, every artist and musician regardless of their genre must create an appropriate performance platform for themselves. It is my wish to support you in creating that platform.

Some of you may believe that you lack the skills needed and some of you may also believe that you have to be famous or a virtuoso in order to get people to come to your shows. I am happy to tell you that nothing could be further from the truth! The skills needed to become a successful HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT have nothing to do with the old music industry standards, we have our own standards!

Everyone who reads this book already has the skill set needed to have success. The guidance you will receive in this book will save you from the many pitfalls that I encountered when I first trail blazed the House Concert career path. I will share with you all the secret strategies that made me the number one HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT that I am today. I will assist you in building a supportive framework and action plan that will launch you into the heights of being a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT yourself.

But before you run out and start asking people to book you in their home, let's start at the beginning and take a look at the basic principles of House Concert fundamentals and gradually build up your knowledge base as you progress through the book so you will not be caught off guard; let's make sure that you will be prepared for any situation that comes your way. Even if you are a forty year veteran of playing acoustic clubs or rock venues, you will still need to adapt your style and performance in order to have a successful and sustained House Concert career.

Make no mistake, you DO have a valuable message to share and you DO deserve a platform on which to share your songs and stories without being ignored and humiliated in inappropriate venues. I know that you'll find this book to be an invaluable tool to launch your new career and I look forward to assisting you to help make your dreams come true.

If you have a message and a song, then HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT can guide you from frustration to elation and provide you with an education that will take the rest of the pack ten years to catch up with you. I am delighted to say that House Concerts have arrived and they are here to stay. It is my intention with this book to begin to change the performance space for acoustic artists around the world so that we may finally have an appropriate and comfortable space in which to share our work.

Now lets get started!

CHAPTER 1

A BRIEF BUT IMPORTANT HISTORY OF SONGWRITING

Loathed by the early Roman Church for their dedication to equal rights, the early troubadours were the original protectors of free speech. They were fearless individuals with no loyalty to blood or wealth, sometimes risking their lives in their resolve to speak the unspeakable.

You may not realize it but being an acoustic songwriter automatically grants you an integral part of songwriting history. You are connected to a long line of highly talented poets and songwriters dating back to the 11th century. In today's world we are called singer songwriters, but back then we were called troubadours. The word 'troubadour' means 'to compose' or 'to invent a poem.'

The early troubadours are responsible for much of the literature produced over the past thousand years. And while the Middle Ages were not particularly known for women's rights, there were in fact women troubadours back then, when women weren't allowed to do anything but cook and have babies! The women troubadours were called trobairitz.

The Albigeois Crusade of the early thirteenth century under Pope Innocent III left the troubadours in tatters and scattered all over Europe. Fleeing persecution, they took their poetry and their unique writing style and created the foundation of literature as we know it today. There isn't a single creative writer alive that wasn't influenced by our early songwriting forefathers. From Ernest Hemingway to Franz Kafka and even our beloved Stephen King, the poetry of the early troubadours is embedded into modern literature.

THE 11th CENTURY MUSIC BUSINESS MAFIA

The first recognized troubadour was a young privileged kid called Duke William the ninth of Aquitaine. I say 'recognized' because the peasant population had been writing creative songs and stories long before Duke William had ever set eyes on a lute. But similar to modern society, the peasant population had limited education and no organizing skills and consequently were all exploited, completely ripped off and forgotten. The music business in the 11th century was as competitive as it is today!

The privileged kids listened to the peasants' songs and stories and would often run home and claim them as their own. Contrary to popular opinion, the music industry mafia didn't start in the fifties. The music industry mafia has been around since the 11th century.

When the troubadours weaved their magic they had everyone's attention. Those who were fortunate enough to hear them sing their songs and tell their stories took them very seriously. They were called on by Kings, Queens, Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen to tell their tales, make people laugh, inspire people to think and sing of love gained and lost. The early troubadours carried the story of their time.

MODERN DAY TROUBADOURS

The early blues musicians were effective troubadours. With nothing more than an acoustic guitar and a voice, they told the story of their descendants' plight as slaves and in doing so changed the face of music as we know it today.

Over the past fifty years the troubadour tradition continued in great songwriters such as Bob Dylan, John Denver, Paul Simon, Woody Guthrie, Billy Bragg and an endless list of other extremely talented musicians, songwriters and storytellers. From the 1950's to the 1980's the music industry was packed with superb storytellers and songwriters. Authentic and true to themselves, they each celebrated their own styles and philosophies carrying the spirit of their times through their unique perspectives. Through their songs and stories they documented the things that were important to them, their generation and the world in general.

SO WHERE HAVE ALL THE TROUBADOURS GONE?

The past two decades has seen a disturbing decline in the importance of the acoustic singer-songwriter. We no longer have the eyes and ears of the world, nor do people hang on our every word or discover great insights from the songs we sing and the stories we tell. With each new generation comes a decline in the importance of the singer-songwriter, both in the music industry and the world in general.

With artistic integrity fast becoming a lost treasure, we now bestow honor on those people who simply mimic great artists from the past. By replacing the creative traditions of the troubadour with a glorified strain of karaoke, a new culture of pretending and copying has emerged.

Sadly, we have allowed this once majestic art form to decline to such a low point that we no longer command any respect. Instead, we have become an annoying background distraction to drinkers and talkers in rock clubs, bars, train stations and coffee shops.

Gone are the great works of literature. Gone are the attentive listeners. Once the great philosophers, today's troubadours have become dancing fools in a world of mediocrity. We have failed to match and progress our early forefathers traditions and instead have become the court jesters of the music industry. In short, we have been deemed irrelevant.

But we shouldn't lose hope, for whenever anything goes into decline, there is always an equal force creating new life in the other direction. If you look at a forest devastated by fire you will notice that out of the destruction comes a flurry of new life. The ashes are defeated in a surge of greenery.

Now a new breed of troubadour is emerging from the destruction of the past. It is a modern strain of troubadour; more creative, more unique and more dedicated to the original goals of our forefathers. The troubadour spirit has been reawakened in the soul of the modern day singer songwriter and YOU are the fulfillment of that spirit.

House Concert Expert Advice

01. *Thousands of acoustic artists are taking a stand against the destruction of the Troubadour spirit.*

02. *When the early Troubadours weaved their magic they had everyone's attention.*

03. *A new breed of Troubadour is emerging from the destruction of the past, more creative, more unique and more dedicated to the original goals of our early forefathers.*

04. *You are the fulfillment of the Spirit of the Troubadour.*

“It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation.”

— Herman Melville

CHAPTER 2

YOUR COMMITMENT TO INTEGRITY EQUALS SUCCESS

Integrity is not good or bad, right or wrong. Having integrity is more about the way you operate in your life. A commitment to honor your word and complete the things that you said you would. There is no lasting success without integrity.

Whether you are a painter, a sculpture, a dressmaker or a songwriter, if you are involved in the art of creativity then you have been given the gift of the gods, the profound gift of creating something out of nothing. You have been given the freedom and opportunity to create something highly unique in your own personal style, something that mirrors your beliefs, your lifestyle and in essence your whole self. The real opportunity for any artist, no matter what medium they choose, is to express their unique selves in what they create.

Within you is a completely unique and authentic vision of life, an amazing story and the capacity to tell that story as only you can. No one else has lived your life, and no one has seen the things you have seen in the same way that you saw them. Therefore, it is logical to presume that in order to become a unique artist, all you need to do is be yourself! If you dare to tell the stories of the things you have experienced in your own life, if you dare to sing of the world as you see it, then, by default, this will grant you a completely unique collection of songs and stories.

But, until you take the first step toward personal authenticity, until you truly believe that the story of your life is worth telling, then all of your wonderful, imaginative songs and stories will lay dormant and unexpressed, discarded for a copy of someone else's authenticity. The great news is that you don't need to pretend that you are someone else. No one's life is more important than yours.

WHAT THE HELL IS INTEGRITY?

It's easy to misunderstand the true meaning of integrity for it is often mistaken for ethics or morality. Many people believe that having integrity is 'good' and not having integrity is 'bad'. In reality, there aren't any 'good' or 'bad' qualities associated with integrity. Having integrity is more about the way you operate in your life. The word integrity comes from the Latin word 'integer' which translated means 'to complete.' In practical terms it means to complete the things you said you were going to do. Integrity is available to everyone. You can choose to operate with integrity or not. No one can stop you from having integrity. It is down to you and you only.

THE WAY THINGS ARE

If you take a car and remove some of the pieces that make it work, then, by default, you will have a broken car. Having compromised the car's integrity or completeness, the car will not work correctly. A lack of integrity puts a strain on the rest of the system and the car cannot perform its functions properly.

Much of the world lacks integrity. As a society, we make excuses for not completing what we started. We convince ourselves that no one will notice our lack of commitment to our goals, and instead of following through on our goals with integrity, we settle for 98 percent. The great men and women of history understood that the difference between success and failure lies in the final 2 percent. Whenever anything fails to work, it is always a lack of integrity at the core of the situation.

Being a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT means choosing to have integrity, striving to complete your goals and align your actions with your commitment. HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT is a multi functional role: telling stories, singing songs, educating others and seeking to understand yourself. Keeping your word gives you integrity. The more integrity you have, the more success will find you.

WHY SHOULD I WORK HARD TO ACHIEVE INTEGRITY?

Theater performers and classical musicians rehearse 14 hours per day for months on end to achieve integrity. They are dedicated to becoming experts in their field, yet many acoustic musicians don't believe they need to be exceptional. They settle for mediocrity instead. Many singer songwriters assume they have a right to be heard just because they pick up a guitar. We want the applause and recognition but all too often we are unwilling to put in the hard work to improve our skill set. If you truly want a career and a great living performing House Concerts, it is in your interest to continue to strive towards integrity.

There are many artistic benefits of integrity but integrity is a vital component for your financial and business dealings as well. People will pay money to see something authentic and exceptional. As you continue to improve your skill set and offer a fantastic service, people will reward you for your work.

You don't have to be Segovia or Pavarotti, but you should always maintain a commitment of constant improvement regardless of your level of expertise. Paul McCartney still strives every day to improve on his past work, which is not an easy feat after being in the Beatles! Having integrity means bringing everything you've got to the table, 100 percent, all of the time.

BUT I ONLY KNOW TWO CHORDS

The credentials needed to become a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT are quite simple: a commitment to improve your storytelling, your songwriting skills and your performance. If you practice these steps every day, no one can stop you from achieving your goals. If you only know how to play two chords, then make a commitment to learning one new chord a week and take action on your word.

Make a bold declaration that you will learn something new about your creative talent every day. You are not limited by where you are right now. You can choose the future you want by setting a goal, making a commitment and then taking action. Without action nothing happens.

MULTI FUNCTIONAL

Over the past twenty years our roles and how we function in the world have become increasingly multi- functional. Words such as 'multi-tasking' are becoming so commonplace that it's hard to imagine life with a singular role.

Most industry is multi-functional, computers are multi-functional and even sports have become multi-functional. In today's competitive markets, a singular role is usually not enough.

If you've ever watched the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) you know that some of the skills required to be a champion include boxing, wrestling, and Jujutsu along with a fierce determination to succeed.

Many UFC fighters excel in one or two of these disciplines yet continually practice in areas where they are vulnerable. Just because they excel in boxing doesn't mean they forget about wrestling. On the contrary, they practice wrestling every day along with their boxing in order to achieve integrity.

Successful people understand that the more actions they take to overcome their vulnerabilities, the more possibilities they have of winning. Successful people do not leave their goals to chance and they are often more dedicated to the disciplines they lack.

CORPORATE INTEGRITY

Back in 2000, I was invited to attend a music industry forum as a panel member. The panel consisted of four prominent music industry executives, representing corporate America and me, representing musical artists.

The entire discussion was focused on lowering the price of music CD's and digital downloads so record companies could sell more for less. Time and time again, the executives stated that the way forward is to give the music away, make it worthless and earn their profits selling advertising. They made it perfectly clear that they valued advertising more than they valued the music and today's music industry is the fulfillment of that vision.

In the world of QE (quarterly earnings) reports these executives have little or no regard for longevity. Short-term profits dictate everything and the quality decline happens so gradually you don't seem to notice until it's too late.

CHOCOLATE HEART

When I was a kid I looked forward to Friday nights when my Mam finished work and she would take me for some candy bars and a plastic toy. The candy bars tasted amazing. They were great value for the money; big, chunky chocolate bars full of nuts, nougat, toffee, caramel and raisins.

I'm still in awe of how great they tasted, so much so, that for years on my regular travels to the UK, I would locate the nearest candy store the minute I got off the plane.

At first I didn't notice but I gradually came to realize that the candy bars were not the same taste as the ones that I had rapturously devoured as a kid. The taste of the candy bars were changing and not for the better.

I also noticed that they were getting smaller, they had fewer raisins, fewer nuts and even the wrapping paper seemed cheaper. It has gotten to the point where I don't buy them any more because they don't taste anything like they used to. What happened?

HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED

Each time a corporation changes its president, the new president justifies his position by making financial cuts in order to generate more profits for the shareholders. Instead of buying high quality cocoa beans like the company used to, the president shifts to a cheaper brand hoping no one will notice. The shareholders make more profits, the president looks good and at first, sales stay the same.

The problem is that the next president does the same with the caramel, followed by other presidents who do the same thing with the nuts, nougat and toffee. Before you know it, you have a completely different chocolate bar, lesser quality and smaller in size. The changes may be small but over a period of time the integrity of the chocolate bar is compromised to such a degree that it is no longer desirable.

The company hoped that no one would notice the decline, but eventually those tiny details make a massive difference. By the time people stop buying them the presidents have already moved on to

their next kill, and no one is left responsible.

THOSE TINY DETAILS

In the music industry there is a general consensus that 'bigger is better.' Stadium concerts, blockbuster productions and pyrotechnics have become the industry's measure of success. In this 'juggernaut' reality the acoustic artists are considered mostly irrelevant and virtually ignored.

But this heinous mistake on behalf of the music industry executives, to focus exclusively on the blockbuster without considering the supporting elements that gave it life, will eventually destroy the music industry.

If you take away the flies from a pond, the fish die! It is the unseen, the minute elements of the pond that keep the water vibrant and healthy. Without Robert Johnson and his acoustic guitar there would never be a Led Zeppelin or Rolling Stones. Without Joni Mitchell and her acoustic guitar there is no Kate Bush and without the early bluegrass players with their acoustic guitars and banjos there wouldn't be a Taylor Swift.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR IMPORTANCE

Let me be clear: your role as a troubadour is vitally important to the longevity of the music industry. It cannot exist without you. You are THAT important.

Without you and your integrity, there is no music industry! The entire thing will eventually collapse without your contribution. Let the Mega-bands do their Mega-thing! Right now, your job is to restore the integrity to our once proud and thriving industry.

House Concert Expert Advice

01. *No one's life is more important or valid than your own.*

02. *Don't be a copy of someone else, tell your own story.*

03. *There is no real success without integrity, the commitment to bring everything you have to the table.*

04. *Without action nothing happens.*

05. *You are not limited by where you are right now.*

“Who you are is always right.” ”

— Deng Ming Dao

CHAPTER 3

PLAY YOUR SONGS IN THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

Most professionals insist on a suitable environment to perform their work. Without a performance space that supports acoustic music, acoustic singer-songwriters have virtually impossible odds stacked against their success.

Let's face it; standing up in a room full of strangers and boldly launching into one of your songs takes a lot of courage. Even if you were the greatest singer/songwriter in the world, the fact that you would dare to risk public humiliation makes you a hero by default. If you never achieved anything else in your life, the sheer bravado of putting yourself in such a vulnerable position would fill your 'life bravery quota' in one swoop.

There is no other profession in the world that puts you more at risk than an acoustic performer. All other professions have a suitable venue in which to perform their work. Only acoustic performers deal with such massive odds stacked against them simply because they do not have an appropriate environment which supports their work.

With no suitable performance space, the audience mostly ignores the acoustic performer. Once they hit the stage, they have absolutely no guarantees, no second chance and no safe place if the show starts to go wrong. Only comedians share this level of vulnerability, yet even comedians have comedy clubs specifically designed for stand up.

I repeat, no professional is under more constant stress than the acoustic artist. From the moment the concert is booked, singer songwriters are unconsciously wondering what humiliating treatment they might have to face. Having been ignored and talked over for so many years when the big night finally arrives, they hit the stage like a bag of nerves almost apologizing for being there and taking people's time.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

But it's not just you that feels this way. There are many successful artists that have tried to perform solo acoustic shows at inappropriate venues and ended up either walking offstage or shouting obscenities at the crowd. From Bruce Springsteen to Joni Mitchell, anyone who has ever dared to play solo acoustic music in an inappropriate venue has sooner or later faced the humiliation of being ignored and feeling totally irrelevant.

From rich to poor, strong to weak, black to white, east to west, north to south, male to female, rock to reggae and every other polarity you can name, acoustic music seems to function quite happily so long as the acoustic musician accept being completely ignored. The club owner accepts it, the audience accepts it and sadly the acoustic artist expects it!

BATTLE ROYALE

I went back to college when I was forty years old and I was introduced for the first time to some of the world's greatest writers. Earnest Hemingway, Franz Kafka, Edgar Allan Poe and a host of other tremendously talented people who had made their mark in one way or another writing powerful novels. My English Professor had given me a college book with forty short stories, and the sheer talent of the writers had me transfixed from start to finish.

But there was one story in that book that really got under my skin. I remember feeling almost nauseous when I read it. It was the saddest story I had ever heard in my life. The story was *Battle Royale*, by Ralph Ellison.

Set in the mid 19th century, the story is told by a young black man who was invited to give a graduation speech in front of the local white community. Although slavery had been outlawed, the concept of equality hadn't even begun to take root and blacks were without justice of any kind. It was only because his family had been obedient to the white people in the town that this kid was invited to give a speech. He was very proud of being asked to speak and thought of himself as 'doing well' because of the invitation.

When he arrived to give his speech, rather than being respected and treated as the eloquent writer he was, he was thrown into a boxing ring with a bunch of other young black men. They were all forced to fight each other in front of a mob of drunken white locals for their entertainment. As payment for the fight the young men were lead to a rug filled with coins and told to pick up their money. They jumped on the rug, and the rug was electrified. The white mob laughed hysterically as the kids jumped up and down trying to avoid the electric shocks.

After the humiliating event came to a close, the kid was asked to give his speech, which he did with a mouth full of blood. His speech was about humility. The white mob completely ignored him as he spoke. They joked amongst themselves only stopping to threaten him each time he talked of equality. When his presentation was over, he was presented with a calfskin briefcase and a scholarship to the local Negro college.

THE INVISIBLE MAN

During my time with Atlantic Records I was invited to sing one of my songs at a prestigious award ceremony in New York City. Like the young protagonist in *Battle Royale*, I was proud and excited to be invited to the event by the leaders of the music industry. The big night finally arrived. I had rehearsed all day long to make sure I would be a success. I bought some new clothes, polished my guitar and set off for what should have been one of the proudest events of my life.

When I got to the venue, it was jam packed with eight hundred of the most influential people in the music industry. I sat alone backstage for thirty minutes until one of the event organizers came into the dressing room and asked whom I was. I told her I was Francis Dunnery and I had been invited to sing a song by the president of my record company. She said that no one had told her that I was performing so she had to check to see if it was alright.

She returned ten minutes later and said I had to go on stage immediately and cut my song down to two minutes because they were running behind schedule. She said, 'I know this is pretty messed up but it's either two minutes or nothing.'

I walked out onto the stage and the room didn't even look up, it was just a barrage of clinking glasses and partying. There was no introduction apart from two drunken middle aged women who shouted 'Yeaahhhh' and then went back to talking. I started singing to a room entirely oblivious to my presence. I was literally singing to myself. Extremely embarrassed and humiliated, I looked to the side of the stage and the organizer girl was making cut throat gestures indicating I had to finish

immediately. I brought the song to an end and as I walked past her she said, 'Alright, great job.'

PERFORMANCE HANGOVER

I sat backstage completely depressed, wondering what on earth had just happened. It was like I didn't exist. I was the invisible man. There is absolutely no way that anyone can feel good about their life and contribution to society when they are ignored in this way.

Although incomparable, I realize now why I connected so heavily with the young black kid in Ralph Ellison's story. This was my own personal 'Battle Royale', which unfortunately seems to be an all too common experience for acoustic artists throughout the world.

I am delighted to announce that you no longer have to continue these negative experiences. You don't have to accept being ignored. It's time for all of us to take action and begin to educate the general public on how to act at an acoustic performance. It's time to take a stand and put yourself in an environment where you can showcase your talents without being humiliated.

CHANGING THE CONTEXT OF YOUR PERFORMANCE

It's common knowledge that when you go to church everyone knows that you have to sit quietly, when you go to the library people keep the noise down and when you go to the theater the cell phones are silenced and the chatter stops. People know how to act because over the years they have been educated on how to behave in those particular environments. Likewise, when you go to a rock concert everyone has a few beers and cheers for their favorite band. When you go to a sports event everyone screams for his or her team to win and at tennis matches people actually cheer in-between points. Again, over the years people have been educated about how to behave in those particular environments. It didn't just happen, someone made a point to let the public know how they should behave during the event.

There are social agreements that we have with each other on how to behave appropriately in different environments, and if we do not act in accordance with those agreements, there are consequences to our actions. Office workers know that you don't start having a conversation with your best buddy when the boss is giving a speech, otherwise you'll be fired. It seems that all other professions have successfully managed to communicate what sort of ambience or setting they need in order to perform their work with integrity. All but acoustic performers!

As acoustic performers, we have failed to educate our audience about the ambience or setting we need in order to perform our work. It's not the songs that you are singing or the story you are telling that makes everyone want to talk, it is the inappropriate ambience of the venue. It is simply impossible for an acoustic performer to successfully share their songs and stories in an environment that has been designated for loud, boisterous events. You wouldn't expect a tennis player to play on an ice rink or a punk band to perform in a church. You wouldn't hold a meditation session on the trading floor of the stock exchange or read poetry in a crowded pub. Then why try to play acoustic music in an environment where people are expected to talk and shout?

PROBLEMS IN THE AUDIENCE

I remember one particular night in New York City when I went to see my old pal Chris Difford (Squeeze) perform an acoustic set at B.B. Kings. As a member of the audience it really bothered me that the entire back table were involved in a loud drunken conversation the whole time Chris was singing. They didn't have to talk that loud. They could have held a conversation and not disturbed anyone, but for some unknown reason they had to have their conversation heard by EVERYONE within fifty feet of their table. Sadly, this is the norm at most clubs during acoustic performances.

I kept asking them to please talk a little quieter because they were shouting. They just sneered at me and said they had bought their tickets and, ‘they could do whatever they liked.’ After thirty minutes of almost pleading with them I eventually lost control and I blurted out some pretty derogatory insults to the whole table. The ensuing argument didn’t make me feel particularly good and certainly made everyone at their table openly aggressive. It was a no win situation. I was asked to leave by the staff. I missed my friend’s show and no doubt the group at the table went back to their shouting.

Most of you may recognize this scenario because more than likely you have been an audience member trying to listen to your favorite artist while four people on the next table talk and laugh loudly all the way through the performance.

THE AUDIENCE IS NOT TO BLAME

Criticizing audience members will not solve the problem. As acoustic performers we have to take responsibility and admit that we alone have not only allowed this behavior to flourish, but we have also failed to develop a performance that will keep an audience engaged in a time when attention spans are at an all time low. Blame is not the answer.

OK, SO WHY HOUSE CONCERTS? WHY NOT CLUBS?

As an acoustic musician, I have personally experienced the difficulties and humiliations that you have no doubt faced while trying to get your songs and stories heard. Every acoustic musician at one time or another has stood alone on a stage in a filthy rock club while the audience talks loudly amongst themselves as if you didn’t exist.

People respond to the environment that you put them in and if you put them in an environment that encourages drinking and shouting then, quite simply, they’ll drink and shout!

In order to successfully deliver your songs and stories, it is paramount that you insist on a suitable environment in which to do so. House Concerts are the perfect environment for any acoustic musician to be heard.

BUT THERE ARE ONLY THIRTY PEOPLE IN THE AUDIENCE

Like many singer songwriters, I once believed that playing to an audience of thirty people was not worth my time. But I have learned from experience that it makes perfect sense when the performance is a House Concert.

When performing to a room of 200 people in a rock club, I would estimate that less than thirty people would be listening. And it would be very difficult for them to hear because of the other 170 people talking. When you perform a House Concert, you are guaranteed to have your songs and stories heard.

After ten years as a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT, I would much rather have thirty attentive audience members who really wanted to share the evening with me than two hundred audience members who didn’t care whether I was there or not.

After years of swimming against this tide, I was forced to acknowledge that rock clubs are an ineffective way to showcase acoustic music. It’s never worked in the past and it doesn’t work now.

House Concert Expert Advice

01. *Stop accepting being ignored in pubs and rock clubs and try something that works.*
02. *Create the right environment for your performance.*
03. *Educate your audience on how you want to evening to proceed.*
04. *Stop blaming the audience for your problems.*
05. *Living in complaint weakens your position and prevents you from having any lasting success.*

“I stay true to myself and my style, and I am always pushing myself to be aware of that and be original.”

— Aaliyah

CHAPTER 4

Unleash the Power of Your Authenticity

Nothing can stop you from achieving your goals once you anchor your performance on your authenticity. Your success should be measured by how effective you are at sharing your special message with the world.

The songs you sing are not as important as the message they carry. A nice melody is a nice melody but when you add lyrics and give the song meaning, it transforms into a sacred vessel carrying your personal perspective from the inner worlds to the public platform.

Being authentic is the most powerful declaration of originality; people recognize it and admire it. If you dare sing your personal vision of life and share your personal stories about the things that matter to you, you are already a success by default. You are unique. To be original simply means being you. No one else has lived your life and no one has told your story. Artistic success is not only about CD sales (although we LOVE selling CDs), it is also about being authentic in the world.

The most effective way of gaining the respect of your audience is to be authentic. You cannot pretend to be authentic. You either are or you are not, and the audience will recognize the difference.

If you want to reap the benefits of authenticity then you need to know what matters to you. What message do you want to share with the world? What do you want to sing about? What made a difference in your life? How would you like to impact humanity? The answers to these questions are the very beginnings of your authenticity and your success as a House Concert Expert.

WHAT EXACTLY IS SUCCESS?

Many great artists and musicians were not discovered by the general public until long after they were dead. They were often creative visionaries, far superior to their peers and years ahead of their time. Extraordinary talent such as Claude Monet, Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Cezanne were all steeped in poverty because the general public didn't have the creative vision to recognize their vision and originality.

The blues legend Robert Johnson, who is arguably responsible for the creation of modern blues, is more recognized today than he was during his lifetime. Even the astonishingly talented Johann Sebastian Bach died broke and obscure. The public is often slow to recognize originality.

As a House Concert Expert you cannot rely on outside opinions to judge whether or not you are success. Often times the mass public are as fickle as a donkey's tail. They can change the direction of their opinion from one night to another for reasons that have nothing to do with your performance. One week they love it; the next week they hate it!

Basing your success on your authenticity and effectively sharing your special message means nothing can stop you from achieving your goals.

By living authentically you achieve success before any concerts are booked or any performance takes place. Sharing your special message on a blog page or other social media lets people know what you are about. It gives you confidence and purpose and keeps you focused on what's important to you. You will never doubt the path you are on because your words and actions reflect what matters to you.

You should explore the message you wish to share, as it will prevent you from becoming a copy of someone else's authenticity. When you connect with your own special message something amazingly powerful happens. Your focus shifts from external approval to internal approval, and once that happens there isn't a force in the world that can shake you from your task.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR YOUR SHOW

There is no right way or wrong way to sing your songs, and there is no perfect template to guarantee a phenomenal performance. But when it comes to performing House Concerts, there are definitely strategies that can greatly improve your effectiveness and help get your message across.

A strategy means that you know what you are going to say after every song, that you are never at a loss for words and you always know where you are in the performance. Contrary to what many artists believe, strategy doesn't mean that you are stiff or boring. In reality it makes the delivery of your message more confident and effective.

A street fighter may be tough and ferocious but when faced with a trained, disciplined fighter with a strategy, the street fighter won't last for very long. Likewise, an army may be filled with fierce and brave soldiers but without a strategy it will be slaughtered by more disciplined soldiers with less capable weapons.

The key to an effective House Concert performance is to find a way to blend your special message and musical talent with an effective strategy in a way that is natural and spontaneous.

DON'T FEAR THE STRUCTURE

During the past ten years I have personally tested two performance delivery techniques. I have ad-libbed entire shows and I have had concerts where I have followed a formal script. While both delivery techniques have benefits, I found that operating within a disciplined structure greatly improved my chances of a successful show.

Better still, adding structure to my show allowed me to be spontaneous within the structure, giving me the best of both worlds. I had greater confidence knowing that I could ad-lib at any time during my show and immediately return to my structure when needed.

BUT I'M HIP AND COOL AND STONED

Many artists naturally believe that adding discipline to their creative process destroys the authenticity of their work. What's more, they believe that being undisciplined, i.e drunk on alcohol or stoned on drugs, actually helps their creativity. In fact the exact opposite is more often the case.

Successful authors shape their stories within proven guidelines, filmmakers have standard templates for how to make a successful film and with few exceptions, and most commercial rock bands know exactly what they are going to play on any given night. In reality, having a strategy or set of guidelines reduces the risk factor and almost guarantees a successful night. You could be the greatest singer or guitar player in the world, but without an effective strategy to communicate with your audience you will struggle to be heard.

The first rule of effective public speaking is to know what you are going to say. When you have a basic outline and script to your message, you will be far more comfortable in front of the audience, which allows the audience to be more comfortable with you.

HOW TO COMMAND THE AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION

When sharing your message in any setting, it's useful to know that the audience's favorite subject is themselves.

Finding common ground or similar life experiences is the key to holding your audience's attention. The audience will only respond when some part of your story resonates with their own.

If I were a bird my life story would read something like this: I was born out of an egg and a straw nest. My parents brought me worms to eat. Then, one day Mother wasn't there any more. I was so hungry I was forced to jump out the nest and fly. Once I discovered I could fly I was free. After a life of flying, one day I realized that I was too old to fly anymore and I died under a tree.

All flying birds live their life under this basic structure, and if you were one of those birds you would completely identify with the story being told because you would be having the same experience.

Much like birds, all humans have similar experiences. Even though our day-to-day lives may vary, we share the same underlying stories. In the world of psychology, these stories are called 'archetypes' and are the basic themes to human life.

All of us are born with the ability to love; it is a basic human theme or archetype. If you tell a story of love in your performance, you will automatically connect with your audience. They will instantly recognize it at an archetypal level. Hollywood filmmakers always include a story of love in their films, even if the basic storyline has little to do with romance. Including a love romantic scene keeps the attention of the audience.

Archetypes are basic themes in life that we share and when you include them in your performance you will connect with your audience.

When you talk about subject matter that the audience has experienced themselves, they will be transfixed, and you will have their undivided attention.

House Concert Expert Advice

01. *Having a strategy for your performance enhances your professionalism.*
02. *Basing your success on outside opinion is a recipe for disaster.*
03. *The audiences favorite subject is themselves.*
04. *Tell them your own archetypal story and they will recognize it, as if you were telling their story.*
05. *Knowing what you are going to say creates confidence and reduces nervousness.*

“Create your own method. Don't depend slavishly on mine. Make up something that will work for you! But keep breaking traditions, I beg you.”

— *Constantin Stanislavski*

CHAPTER 5

The Twelve Steps to the Hero's Journey

People attend the theater because they are intrigued with the unfolding drama. Music is used to compliment the story. The combination of music and elaborate storytelling greatly increases the richness of the show.

Remember when you were a kid and your Mom or your Dad would read you a bedtime story? Remember how transfixed you were on the unfolding mystery? How about when you were a toddler at school and all the kids (who were usually wild and completely out of control) would sit attentively and absorb page after page of fairy tales? Well, nothing has changed; People still love a great story.

Even as adults we are mesmerized as each tale ingeniously unfolds.

This is why theater is so popular. Most people don't go to the theater just to hear songs. Theatergoers are intrigued with the unfolding drama in the story. The music is used to enhance the richness of the experience.

Opera is a story told in music. The story enchants the audience, bringing a fairy tale quality to the evening, and the music is used to reinforce the story. Likewise, songs with lyrics are always more popular than instrumental songs because they tell a story. When you perform a House Concert, it is your story that connects with your audience. The music enhances the story.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF YOUR NEW PLATFORM

One of the biggest advantages of a House Concert performance is the ability to tell detailed stories to a captive audience. Having a story that people can relate to guarantees that the audience will listen attentively to your songs.

If you know how your story starts, what happens in the middle and where it ends, then you already have a framework or strategy in place. If you can find a common theme and adapt it to your own story, you will hold your audience's attention because they will recognize the story as their own.

When you transfix an audience in a story, 75 percent of your success is already in the bag! From that point on, the audience will listen to your songs and absorb your lyrics, for you are telling the story of their life.

AN IRRESISTIBLE THEME

One of the most powerful descriptions of our journey through life is the story of 'The Hero.' From our humble beginnings full of potential, to our demise in midlife, followed by our resurrection and transformation, the theme of the hero is universal and exists inside each and every one of us.

You could take anyone's life and adapt it to the story of the hero. The overall theme follows a basic

pattern:

The hero is born into the world full of potential.

He begins his rise in the world

As our hero reaches his peak, the dark forces of evil begin their assault, and the hero is locked in a battle to save the world.

The dark forces beat him down, they smash him to the ground, they overpower him; he is helpless, weak and beaten.

At the very last minute when the dark forces of evil are about to strike the knockout punch, the hero rises once again and batters the dark forces to the ground to deliver a fatal blow.

Our hero wins the battle and the world is safe and good once again.

This may sound dramatic but in essence it is the story of everyone's life. You can find this theme everywhere in Hollywood and in many of the successful films throughout the history of movie making.

Films such as Rocky, Jerry Maguire, Star Wars and Rambo are all perfect examples of films adopting the hero theme. Literary classics such as Beowulf and Odysseus as well as all the Disney greats, and more recent films like Batman all follow the path of the hero's journey.

The hero's journey is a remarkable source of inspiration for songwriters, artists and scriptwriters. It is the most powerful story in the world and has been since the dawn of civilization.

12 STEPS TO THE HERO'S JOURNEY

The following paragraphs detail the twelve basic steps of the hero's journey for you to integrate into your House Concert performance. Read over the steps several times so you can fully understand the depth of the story and take advantage of its powerful meaning.

Some of you have already completed this journey, some of you are in the middle, and others have just begun. Simply adapt the template of the stories to your life.

After reading each step of the hero's journey, spend time connecting the themes to your personal experiences. It will help to take notes and write down all the ideas that naturally come to mind.

A GENTLE REMINDER

The best way to approach the following pages in this chapter is to read them over once, take note of what jumps out first and then move on. You will learn more each time you revisit the chapter while maintaining your enthusiasm for the book. Don't worry if you don't completely understand everything right away. Eventually you will!

HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR STORY

01. THE ORDINARY WORLD

The first step refers to the hero's everyday life before the adventure begins.

Give your audience a brief history; what town and country you are from and what your early life was like. Tell them about your roots and the influences of your culture. Share common themes about your mother, father, favorite sports teams, school life, etc. These are stories that all children experience in their early years. You can even add a little humor to the story.

The more universal the details, the more your audience will connect and the more engaged they will be. 'Ordinary' is the key to the first step.

02. THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

In the second step, the hero is faced with a problem or a challenge that forces him to begin his adventure.

You encounter a death in the family, moving house or anything that forces you out of your old self and your old life.

Share a time in your life when something began pulling you in a new direction, away from what your family and friends expected. Life had more to offer, the world was a bigger place and you wanted to experience more.

03. SUPERNATURAL AID

In the third step, our hero encounters divine intervention. It could be a chance meeting with an influential figure, a strange coincidence or something that happened out of the blue and put you on your new path.

People love stories about supernatural experiences. The statistics are staggering; 80 percent of the population reports having supernatural experiences in their own lives. Even staunch atheists love to hear others talk about an alternate reality.

Whether you believe in divine intervention or not doesn't matter. Eighty percent of your audience will believe it which means that 80 percent of your audience will respond favorably when you talk about your own supernatural experience.

Tell the audience of any strange coincidences or amazing luck you encountered on your journey.

Supernatural events run through the fabric of even the most hardened skeptics. The story of divine intervention is an integral part of everyone's experience.

04. MEETING WITH THE MENTOR OR GUARDIAN

In the fourth step, the hero encounters someone or something that can offer him sound advice and prepare him for the journey ahead.

When the student is ready the teacher will appear. It's remarkable how many people report Mentors, Helpers or Guardians entering their lives with the specific advice they need at exactly the right moment in time.

Tell the audience who inspired you to go forward on your journey. Share your personal encounter with the Helper or Guardian.

The Helper or Guardian is a seasoned traveler of the Special New World, someone who has already done the things you are looking to do. The Helper or Guardian is the person who gave you training, equipment or mentorship that inspired you on your journey. It may be a job opening, it may be financial help, or it may simply be that you encountered someone who inspired you to reach for something more than you already had.

05. CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

In this step the hero leaves his ordinary world (old life) for the first time and crosses the threshold into the Special New World (new situation).

You are now committed to leaving the comforts of your old life and are entering a new exciting condition filled with uncertainty, unfamiliar rules and different values. You are on your own!

It's important to remember that your audience will make a deep connection through the emotional pain you suffered overcoming the challenges of your life. Crossing the threshold is a point of immense uncertainty where you are caught between settling for the past or challenging yourself to create an alternate and more exciting future.

The story of your challenges doesn't have to be overly emotional, but it must be authentic. Tell the audience how difficult it was to make that first step, how uncertain you were and how you questioned whether or not you should leave your old life.

06. TESTING YOUR TRUE GRIT

In step 6 the hero learns the rules of his Special New World.

This part of your story is akin to entering a new school. You have to learn the rules and you are vulnerable to manipulation. You have to learn whom you can trust and whom you need to be wary of.

Your commitment to the Special New World will be tested during this time. How bad do you want the new life? Are you going to quit and go back to the Ordinary Old World?

Share with your audience about a time in your life when you had absolutely no success in the Special New World, a place where you were filled with doubt and you questioned whether leaving the old world was the right thing to do.

You may have been let down or betrayed by an enemy or you may have found a great new friend who gave you strong support and allegiance.

The difficult challenges you face in this time help you decipher who are your friends and who are your enemies in the Special New World.

07. DISCARDING THE OLD SELF

In step number 7 the hero experiences a major hurdle or obstacle, such as a life or death crisis. Out of this crisis comes a whole new approach to life.

There could be many physical deaths or endings happening around this time but most of all you suffer a psychological death. The person or role you have always been playing up to this point is

totally destroyed or wiped out.

This is the part of your story where setbacks occur, everything went wrong, your partner cheated on you and ran away with someone else. Your father was sick, you were fired from your job, depression, bankruptcy or illness. The old self dries up and dies.

This is a wonderful connection point in the story because everyone in the room will have a recollection of their own painful memories of death and endings. Some of them may be going through the experience at the very moment you are sharing yours. This is an extremely powerful part of your story and a pivotal point in your performance: the end of the old self.

08. ACCEPTING THE NEW ROLE

Because of the difficulties faced discarding the old self, step 8 sees the hero transforming from the closed and limited person he used to be into a more authentic state of being.

The old self is dead and the hero is forced to expand his vision of life and accept a more authentic role.

Share with your audience how you tried to hold on to the past but were forced by circumstances to let go and allow something different to happen in your life. Tell them how you were systematically closed down and prevented from continuing in your old ways.

09. REWARD

The old self is dead and the new self encounters a series of revelations. The hero takes possession of the treasure (knowledge) that comes from the revelations.

Share the amazing things you discovered through your own destruction and demise, how you now realize that the old self was holding you back, and that the personality traits you thought were useful were actually a hindrance.

You now realize that there is much more to your personality than you ever imagined. Let the audience know how much insight you gained and how much better equipped you are to navigate life since receiving your new knowledge.

10. THE ROAD BACK

In step 10 the hero begins his journey back to his ordinary life to re-address his old issues with his new knowledge.

You are driven to return to your early life, leaving the Special New World to make sure the treasure (knowledge) is brought home. You return to your place of origin to mend the early life and to share with others what you have learned in the Special New World.

Tell the audience how you successfully transformed your old difficult issues with your new knowledge. You can now heal the wounds of the past that you were unequipped to deal with before. You have the tools necessary to successfully navigate the old world.

11. TAKE A NEW PLACE IN THE OLD WORLD

With all your newfound wisdom at hand you return to the old life to make peace with your old difficulties. At this point of your story you are severely tested once more on the threshold of home. You are challenged to solve your early conflicts by using everything you have learned.

By using the insights you gained from the Special New World, the issues that were in conflict at the beginning of your story are finally resolved. You make peace with those you have harmed in the old life and accept your place in the grand scheme of things.

You can share how your early issues came forth one last time to be resolved and how you laid them to rest with your new perspective. You are at peace.

12. THE GIFT OF THE GODDESS

The gift of the Goddess is the beginning of a new cycle. You continue the journey, only now you have the treasure that has the power to transform the world as you have been transformed. The hero brings his knowledge back to the ordinary world where he applies it to help all who remain there.

New creativity, a new life, and a brand new chapter begins. The profound mysteries of existence are forever presenting themselves throughout each cycle we partake in. You can tell your audience about where you are now and what your hopes for the future are.

YOUR AMAZING IMAGINATION

You can loosely weave your personal experiences around the basic structure of the hero's journey to tell an enticing and meaningful story. You are limited only by the scope of your imagination and on how elaborate you want your story to be. You can make it funny, challenging, inspiring, meaningful or heartfelt. Don't be afraid to use the full dynamics of your imagination. With the structure already in place you can be as wondrous as you like. You can use all of the steps or simply handpick the ones that are easiest for sharing your journey.

PAINTING THE WORLD YOUR COLOR

When I was a child, I could transform any object into whatever I wanted it to be. My imagination could turn a piece of wood into a gun, a quiet stream into raging rivers and the tree in my garden into a cactus in the vast, wild west caverns, filled with cowboys and Indians. As children we amuse ourselves endlessly in our own worlds. Playing in our own imagination, we paint the world with the color of our minds. It is a beautiful thing!

As creative artists, we have to be careful not to lose touch with our imagination, for this is our greatest asset. It is easy to become lazy when huge corporations via the Xbox, PlayStations, cell phones and computer apps provide most of our stimuli. We are being encouraged to rely on other people's imaginations, yet telling our personal stories in our own unique way remains the key to our success. Imagination is always available to each and every one of us and no one can ever take that away.

House Concert Expert Advice

- 01. Weave your story around the hero's journey and connect easily with your audience.*
- 02. Once you have their attention you will be able to perform your songs and share your message far more easily.*
- 03. Your story will be understood and accepted by everyone in the room if you adapt your story to an archetypal theme.*
- 04. When it comes to public performance, the story that everyone in the room can fully relate to is the story of the Hero.*

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

CHAPTER 6

PREPARING TO BOOK YOUR FIRST HOUSE CONCERT

How we navigate the world is shaped by the language we use. Language is vital in all areas and aspects of life. Without correct language we cannot clearly communicate what we want. We will experience insufficient language as a lack of power.

The most common question during our research for the book was, ‘If I’m not famous and no one has heard my music, how do I book my first show?’ There are many ways to book your first show, but let’s concentrate on a foolproof method that everyone can succeed in.

When a new restaurant opens it is not uncommon for the owners to invite friends and family to test the food and service. When the meal is finished they ask their guests for feedback so they can improve the dining experience.

A simple strategy to book your first House Concert is to find a friend who is willing to open his home for a show. As payment you may want to ask for a donation on the night of the performance or offer the first show for free so you can test run your story and your songs. The goal is to get a feel for what it takes to perform in this new environment and practice your new skill set with a live audience.

Perhaps your first show can be for a close friend to honor a milestone such as a birthday celebration or even a graduation. Contact your friends and tell them how excited you are to launch your new House Concert career. Ask if they would be prepared to host a fantastic evening in their home and allow you to perform your brand new show for an hour. You will be pleasantly surprised how many of your friends are all too eager to join in and help you on your maiden voyage. Remember, the goal is to perfect your performance before you take it to the general public. Once you are comfortable performing for your friends and family, you are ready to take it to the next level.

WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER A HOUSE CONCERT BOOKING AGENT

When I first started performing House Concerts I was absolutely clueless. I really didn’t know what to expect. There were no templates I could follow because, as far as I knew, I was the only person performing House Concerts.

I do not recommend that you book your own House Concerts. One of the most beneficial decisions I made early on was forming a partnership with my House Concert Booking Agent. I knew that in order to have a sustainable and professional House Concert career it was paramount that I find a person or friend who is well organized, polite and loves interacting with people. The House Concert Booking Agent will create a much-needed space between you and your House Concert hosts.

I encourage you to keep well away from the booking process and allow all questions or communication with your hosts to go through your Booking Agent.

We all know people who are perfectly qualified to fill the role of booking agent. You don't need to look in Hollywood or New York City. These people are around us all the time. Search for someone who is committed to the House Concert process, understands your needs as an artist and can adapt to any circumstance to make the show happen.

SECURITY MEASURES

I could not perform my show with integrity if my head was full with the details of organizing the event. My job is getting myself to the House Concert and delivering a great show.

A House Concert Booking Agent is a great investment for your House Concert career. It gives your hosts a sense of security in their investment and it gives both you and your host some much-needed peace of mind. It also provides you with companionship so you don't feel like you are doing everything alone.

CREATING A HOUSE CONCERT BROCHURE

One of the best ways to educate your audience is to create a House Concert Brochure. Although we call it a brochure, from your standpoint it can be seen as an educational tool to help the host understand how to set up the evening and what direction you want the evening to go.

The goal is to create the best performance space that you can, but you need to be careful that your brochure doesn't read like a list of demands.

Many people believe they should be free to do anything they want at anytime they want to do it. You can see this dynamic in action when you tell a three-year-old child that they cannot have another ice cream, or when you tell a fourteen year old that they cannot hang out with their friends because they need to do their homework. Rules, laws and boundaries are usually perceived as oppressive and negative. Yet boundaries contain hidden benefits that serve a great purpose. The child cannot escape your boundaries but it also means intruders cannot break in.

People secretly enjoy guidelines. They like to know that someone is paying attention to the boundaries so the evening will not run amok. They like to know what is expected, what to do and how to act. It creates a sense of security and brings validity to the evening.

Boundaries act like sleeping policemen. They make sure that no troublemakers can break into your space, and this creates a feeling of security.

WHAT TO ASK FOR?

When creating a House Concert Brochure keep your requests to a minimum and make sure all of them are necessary. A reminder for guests to switch off their cell phones before you start is a reasonable request. Asking for imported Italian wine is completely ridiculous. I think you get my point.

Have your House Concert Booking Agent send out your brochure in an e-mail 2 months before the show so that the host has plenty of time to review your requests. The e-mail should be simple asking the host to read the House Concert Brochure.

The best format for your House Concert Brochure is a PDF document. We use the PDF document simply because it is a universal format that can be opened on Windows, Mac and Linux. In the document you can state your guidelines, your suggestions for a successful evening, your pricing information, as well as details such as; the start time for the concert, the duration of the concert and anything else that you feel is important for the success of the evening.

The following sections in this chapter highlight some of the items we found necessary to include in our House Concert Brochure.

INSIDE OUT

When booking your House Concerts you will find that many people ask if you will perform your show in their garden or some other outdoor venue. It sounds like a reasonable request if you were performing with a full band, but standing in the middle of someone's garden or on the back porch with an acoustic guitar is putting yourself at the mercy of nature and the general noise of the neighborhood. Personally, I love performing outdoors, but each time I tried to take my House Concerts into an outdoor arena I was given a pretty severe wake up call!

In the bustle of the summertime there are a million normal outside events happening every minute of the day. Lawn mowers are turning, birds are chirping, crows are crowing, dogs are barking, children are screaming, cars are tooting their horns, loud music is blaring from car stereos, airplanes are flying overhead and the next door neighbors are having a barbecue. Most of these background noises happen all day, every day and most of the time you won't even notice them... until you put a guitar around your neck and try to sing a song. All of a sudden the little sparrow chirping on the roof sounds like a fifty-foot vulture from a science fiction movie!

No matter how well intentioned the hosts are, having the stage outdoors means that there is a 99 percent chance that you will be bombarded with outside stimuli and overwhelmed with background noise. There isn't one single advantage that I can think for performing acoustic music in a garden. Having a House Concert outdoors may be a pretty cool vibe, but the reality for acoustic performers stuck on the back porch amongst the summer bustle is a different matter altogether.

We only need look at the rules and dynamics of the theater to get some idea of what works and what doesn't work for a perfect House Concert. You rarely find successful theater performances being staged on a beach or in a car park. Successful theater shows are mostly performed in an indoor environment that is appropriate for theater. There are so many dynamics that could go wrong in a theater production that the directors have to stage the show in a predictable and controllable environment. Because nothing is left to chance, the actors and the audience are guaranteed a flawless evening.

You have gone to great lengths to develop your show; you have rehearsed, you have built your show around a proven strategy and you have developed your story. It is preposterous that you would then abandon your master plan and walk into a completely unpredictable environment that does not support your story or your music.

No one but you can decide which setting suits your performance but as a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT, I recommend keeping your concert or performance in an enclosed and controlled environment. This way you can guarantee a wonderful night for you, your host, and their guests.

HOUSE PARTY VS. HOUSE CONCERT

Language is vital in all walks of life. How we navigate the world and our entire experience on the earth is all shaped by the language we use. If we don't communicate what we want in our lives then we cannot expect the world to give us what we want. Everything we create first exists in language so we need to take great care in how we communicate our requests. When you advertise your availability to perform House Concerts, it is paramount that you use the correct terminology.

Many people like to call House Concerts 'house parties,' which gives a totally different impression than a House Concert. If you advertise your performance as a 'house party' it suggests that the audience will be attending a drunken free-for-all where everyone can show up randomly,

and you will be the background music to lots of noise. The word 'party' clearly indicates a particular kind of ambience to the evening.

Theater productions are not called theater parties, tennis matches are not called tennis parties and church services are not called church parties. The creators of these events have been very clear and specific so that it is highly unlikely that anyone would mistake their events for a party.

Remember, this is a relatively new venture. No one yet knows how to act at a House Concert, how to respond, or how the evening is going to take shape. It is our responsibility to make sure that everyone in the room understands what is going to be taking place and we can do that with clear, concise language and communication.

Only you can decide the ambience in which your performance will take place and a wild crazy night may be exactly what you are looking for. But, if you are an acoustic performer looking to spread your message, tell your story and sing your songs then I would suggest NOT putting the word 'party' after the word 'house' when you advertise your show.

KEEP EM SOBER!

For the record, I have nothing against alcohol. I'm not anti-alcohol and I think people should be left to drink as much or little as they want. I am not in the game of policing people's alcohol consumption, but when it comes to House Concerts alcohol plays a huge part in whether or not the concert will be a success.

There are two distinct ways that people can relax. The first involves being calm but alert to what is going on (above thought) and the second involves being sleepy with your mind focused elsewhere (below thought). When people drink alcohol their mind falls below the level of thought and they begin to shut down. They may well be relaxed but they are also less alert. The mind becomes dull and they are much less able to absorb information or be engaged.

THE SCIENCE OF ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a natural diuretic which means that it acts on the kidneys to make you 'pee out' much more than you take in. It also stops the production of the hormone vasopressin which tells the body to re-absorb fluids. The effect is that your bladder is always full because the body is not absorbing any of the fluids. This is why you need to go to the bathroom every five minutes when you drink alcohol. It's also why you have a hangover no matter how much water you drink before you go to sleep. The body has stopped absorbing fluid and the bladder fills very quickly.

When people drink alcohol it's only natural that their minds become focused on another drink or going to the bathroom. In a room of thirty people this becomes a constant distraction and makes it difficult for anyone to focus on the show, and is extremely annoying for the people who aren't drinking. A constant stream of bodies back and forth to the bathroom makes it impossible for you to relay your message and sing your songs.

PROTECTING YOUR HOST

In my first year of performing House Concerts I soon realized that drinking before and during the show is a recipe for disaster. People would innocently drink alcohol from the moment they arrived at the house and within an hour there was a traffic jam of dulled individuals back and forth to the bathroom. It was like musical chairs. Others were disrupting those around them by talking loudly while I was singing.

It's important to note that the guests were not drinking alcohol to be mean-spirited or obnoxious. On the contrary, they were drinking because that is the norm. But, if we are to develop a performance space that is fitting for acoustic music, then we have to begin to educate the general

public on what an acoustic performance looks like. We have to begin to declare the ambience we need to perform an effective show.

In order to protect the evening for our hosts and their guests, we added a clause to our brochure to request the audience to refrain from drinking alcohol before and during the show. It protects the host from a potential disaster and guarantees the audience will stay alert and attentive and won't have the discomfort of needing to go to the bathroom every five minutes. In short, everyone wins!

BUT THEY GOTTA DRINK SOMETHING

To give your hosts the opportunity to be socially polite and welcome their guests, we always suggest that they provide water or juice before and during the show. By providing soft drinks you are setting the ambience for your performance. You are simply asking the audience members to refrain from drinking alcohol for a short period of time. This a very small sacrifice to make for a perfect House Concert.

When the show is finished then naturally people are free to drink or smoke whatever they want. By limiting the alcohol intake until after the show, you automatically create an environment where the audience is attentive, and the host is credited with a successful night. The guests get to enjoy a great concert AND everyone can drink what they like, if they choose, after the show.

WE LOVE PETS BUT.....

Naturally House Concert hosts want their pets to attend the concert. They want their dogs, cats, birds, snakes, spiders, chameleons or rabbits to be a part of the experience. But, in my experience, allowing an animal into the concert space is a huge gamble that could destroy your entire performance.

During the concert, cats walk around people's feet and no one can resist stroking them. Just at the exact moment when you are about to sing your most meaningful line, the dog barks and completely ruins the song and the experience for the audience. Or the cat uses the litter tray and the entire room smelled like...well, you can imagine! Some of the guests may even think you did it and you don't want that reputation getting around or you'll never get invited to people's homes again!

Regardless of how cute and friendly they are, pets dominate the room. If you watch YouTube you'll see that the biggest hits are always on stupid animal pranks where cats are leaping up and down, dogs are chasing their tails or birds are sitting on top of tortoises! People can't help themselves.

CANINE EROTICA

I remember one cold night when I was performing a House Concert in Pennsylvania. It was a beautiful house with a comforting log fire and the family golden retriever was lying next to the fireplace. He was actually very well behaved and I remember being relieved that he was lying down quietly.

After about three songs the dog was so hot that he started panting. It actually sounded like a sex act. I was singing my songs (which had nothing to do with sex) and the dog was providing the obscene background noises. The dog was so huge it sounded like a person was doing it. It was hysterically funny but we had to remove the dog otherwise we would not be able to finish the show for laughing. Even Leonard Cohen would sound hilarious with a panting sex dog in the background.

NOAH'S ARK

Birds chirp all the time and distract everyone from being focused on the evening, fish tanks make bubbling noises that drown out the songs, people are terrified of spiders and snakes, and dogs are attention demanding and walk around with a big smile on their face licking everyone and constantly checking to see if there is any food on offer.

We are always aware of how much people love their pets and so we let the hosts know that it is not because we don't like their pets, it's simply to ensure their concert runs smoothly with no risk.

To help the artist and the host achieve a perfect concert, we included a paragraph in our House Concert Brochure where we politely asked the hosts to make sure there are no animals in the room during the performance. Before and after the show the pets could be in the room, but during the show we requested the animals leave the room and be housed in a space where we couldn't hear them barking or chirping. In my experience, to guarantee a perfect night for you, your host and their guests, pets are best kept away from the performance space.

CHILDREN AND AGE LIMITS

Let me be very clear from the outset. I absolutely adore my children, I would do anything for them and I know you would do the same. But when it comes to House Concerts, small children can be an absolute menace.

Naturally, some hosts want their children to attend the show because they want the event to be a family affair. But the simple fact is that it is extremely difficult for ANY child to sit quiet and still for an hour or more. At some point the child becomes bored and either walks around the room or starts demanding their parents' attention. At that point your concert is over.

It is not uncommon or unreasonable for you to ask the hosts to limit the age of those in attendance to fourteen or fifteen. There are countless examples of age restrictions in all walks of society. For example, it is inappropriate to take your five year old to a business meeting or to take your six year old to a chemistry lecture. Imagine how impossible it would be to have your toddler in a yoga class where everyone was trying to meditate?

There are many areas of professional life that are not appropriate for children and everyone accepts and understands the reasons why. It is your job to educate the House Concert Hosts so that they understand what sort of ambience you need in order to successfully create an amazing evening for you, your host and their guests.

STAR WARS

At the very beginning of my House Concert career I played a show with a small group of twelve-year-old boys blaring an Xbox in the room next door. I did my entire show to the sound of Grand Theft Auto. The hosts didn't think anything was wrong. They were oblivious to the cars screeching and gunfire.

On another occasion I played a House Concert with three teenage girls giggling in the front row talking non-stop and texting their friends. And once in the middle of a very emotional moment in my story, three children burst into the room requesting ice cream. The hosts didn't think there was anything wrong, but my show was destroyed from that moment on.

IT'S NOT PERSONAL

It's important to note that the hosts are not being mean, they are not being rude or insensitive, or any other form of insulting behavior that you can conjure up in your mind. They simply don't know House Concert protocol and so you have to educate them. Once the hosts understand why you ask that children don't attend the show, they usually understand. If the hosts insist (and it is their right to do so), then ask them nicely to keep the children at the back so if they start talking or start getting bored they can leave with the minimum of fuss.

All of these situations can be prevented with a little education and clear communication, which provides the House Concert Host with a detailed description of the ambience you need to do your work. The House Concert format is not established enough to have rules that everyone understands.

The format is still in its infancy so we have to be diligent and educate the hosts, the audience and of course, the world in general.

TWO BIRDS WITH ONE SONG

Sometimes it's fun to find creative ways to get around awkward situations that arise. I created a wonderful compromise for the kids who really wanted to see my show but were too young to risk having them in the room. I always perform a special two-song concert for the kids before I start my show. I hang out with them, ask them loads of questions about football teams, baseball teams and star signs. Finally, I ask them their favorite song of mine and then play those songs for them. This simple, practical solution allows me to warm up my voice for the main concert and lets the kids hear me perform.

After the first song, the children are beginning to lose interest and once I finish the second one they have certainly had enough. The kids are happy that they got their own private show, the parents are delighted because they didn't want to leave their kids out and I'm over the moon because I have kept the energy of the evening high and reduced the risk of disruption during the concert. The kids are then taken out by a baby sitter and brought back two hours later to join the evening. Problem solved and everyone's happy!

The worst thing you can do is sulk or show your dissatisfaction. Remember you are in someone's home and regardless of what situation appears before you, sulking is not an option. You have to be creative and find a solution for every situation. It doesn't matter whether you are justified or not, you need to rise above it and be professional.

NO PICTURES OR VIDEOS DURING THE PERFORMANCE

Have you ever been to an event when the members of the audience are taking video on their cell phones instead of watching the show? They pay a bunch of money to see an event in real life, glorious 3d Technicolor and then spend the entire night looking at it through a tiny screen. Bizarre!

Before Edouard-Leon Scott de Martinville invented the first recording device, the only way to hear a musical performance was to personally attend a concert. It happened once and once only. For this reason it was considered an immense luxury and privilege.

People were so excited to witness the event; they were completely present during the entire performance and appreciated the efforts that the cast had made in order to create the production.

Your House Concert will be far more appreciated if no one is recording or filming. Rather than something you can go home and watch later, the show will be a shared moment in time, one that compels the audience to be present for the entire performance.

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

I love eating, period! So when a host puts on a great spread I'm the first to sample the culinary delights.

Over the years, our hosts have cooked the most delicious food you could ever hope to eat. Curries, chilies, meatballs, buffets, apple pie, you name it. Food creates a sense of community within the house. It softens the atmosphere and creates emotional warmth.

Many of our hosts ask their guests to bring food to share amongst the community. Everyone contributes and the evening is a huge success. My relationship with food is definitely a healthy one and I recommend food at any House Concert.

BEST TIME FOR YOUR HOST TO SERVE FOOD

Much like babies and pets, food can also be a massive distraction from your performance. Having

forty people get up and down for more of Aunt Sally's beef stew is not ideal when you are looking to express yourself and share your songs and stories.

Like alcohol, food should be served AFTER the concert so that everyone can focus on the show and participate in the evening. Food served before the show will create unnecessary problems. By the time your performance starts, everyone is bloated on pizza and your show becomes a bedtime story as the food digests and the audience goes to sleep.

House Concert Expert Advice

- 01. The House Concert brochure is a communication tool.*
- 02. Keep your shows in an enclosed environment and avoid performing House concerts outdoors.*
- 03. For a successful evening, keep your House Concerts pet and kid free.*
- 04. Wait until the show is finished before providing alcohol.*
- 05. Your House Concert will be far more appreciated if no one is recording or filming.*

“People should think things out fresh and not just accept conventional terms and the conventional way of doing things.”

— R. Buckminster Fuller

CHAPTER 7

YOU HAVE TO BE SEEN TO SURVIVE

Self-promotion is essential if you want to make an impact on your House Concert career. No one can book you for a show if they don't know you are ready and available!

Every business venture needs advertising and promotion to secure a steady, ongoing stream of work and HOUSE CONCERT EXPERTS are no different. There are tried and tested methods of promotion that date back to the beginning of time. Some are still relevant, and some have been replaced by new methods that are particular to new technology. As a pending HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT, it is your duty to utilize all of them.

Promotion is a major part of being a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT. You have to let people know you are out there and that you are keen to perform your show. If you don't take action nothing will happen. You have to be an active salesperson and promote yourself otherwise no one will know you are available.

Being a brilliant performer is of little use if no one knows it. A large part of your work is being a great salesperson and making a commitment to letting the world know you are very happy to come and perform your special show in their home. Being a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT is a multi-functional role.

THE OLD VIBRATION

In days of old, musicians and artists made demo recordings of their songs and sent them to talent scouts at record companies. The talent scout (aka A&R guys) would listen to the first thirty seconds of your first song and then throw it in the garbage. Most artists wouldn't get a reply, and the rejection letter usually disappointed those who did. I would estimate that one percent of the songs that were submitted to record companies were actually listened to. The rest were given a free pass to the songwriters' graveyard and thrown into the garbage.

Your entire musical career was on hold until someone at a record company liked your song. You were completely at the mercy of the music industry with little or no power over the direction of your own future.

Even if you did manage to secure a record deal you were still at the mercy of managers, promotion staff, corporate budgets, accountants, club owners, agents and lawyers, all maneuvering for a hefty slice of your record company loan. Little has changed in the sixty years that the music industry has been in business.

Needless to say, the old music business model will not work for your House Concert career. You don't have the time to sit around waiting for someone to judge your work, and unless you are nineteen years old with a perfect body shape, record companies are not interested anyway.

Contrary to the old music business model there are no age restrictions or image restrictions on becoming a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT. All you need is an authentic story, some cool songs and a commitment to succeed. No one can stop you!

THE NEW VIBRATION

The Internet has eliminated the old gatekeepers and blown open the gates of success to every artist in every corner of the world. This is a truly magnificent time for all acoustic musicians to flourish. Technology has given you free access to the world market, limited only by your own ambition, drive and action.

There has been an explosion of amazing computer programs and apps on the market today that will help you to become completely self-reliant and the master of your own destiny. You have access to free recording facilities, free financial apps, free mastering programs, free video cameras, free promotion tools such as Twitter or Facebook and free phone calls on Skype to name but a few. The world is teeming with free technological help.

You literally have the entire world at your fingertips. It's up to you to take advantage of these wonderful times. Self-promotion is the new vibration and a major part of becoming a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT.

TEN GREAT WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR HOUSE CONCERTS

01. WORD OF MOUTH

One of the oldest and best ways of promoting your House Concert career is word of mouth. If you are dedicated to excellence and create an outstanding show, people will hear about it. You just have to make sure that they can contact you online when they want to book your show.

02. DIRECT MARKETING

During each and every performance, be sure to take five minutes to let people know that they can also have a House Concert in their home. Let them know you are available after the show with your contact details and to answer any questions they have.

This is the most direct and effective way of securing another House Concert especially when the audience has enjoyed your show.

Make it a personal rule to end every evening with a new House Concert secured. Be sure to give the new contacts to your Booking Agent so they can follow through with any potential new hosts.

03. PERSONAL WEBSITE

If you are serious about your business then a personal website is the first thing to put in your tool bag. The landing page on your website should be dominated by big, bold lettering declaring that you are available to perform House Concerts. There should be a clear and simple way for the public to contact you.

04. FACEBOOK

Even though millions of potential customers are at their fingertips, some business owners still refuse to take advantage of the benefits of social media. HOUSE CONCERT EXPERTS need to be involved in the social networking arena. Facebook is a massive advertising platform that allows you to broadcast to millions of potential customers for free!

05. TWITTER

The explosion of Twitter users over the past five years have given HOUSE CONCERT EXPERTS a direct way of interacting with their audience. It allows you broadcast news and events directly to cell phones and ensure that all of your followers receive updates in real time.

06. COFFEE SHOPS, MUSIC STORES AND BULLETIN BOARDS

If you are locally based and don't want to travel, then local coffee shops or any location that display bulletin boards are a perfect way for you to advertise your House Concerts. It is usually free to advertise on bulletin boards and it guarantees that the local community knows that you are available.

07. BUSINESS CARDS

It's always useful to have business cards on hand when you are out in public. Whether on planes, trains or doing your laundry, it's a good idea to have a portable way of advertising your House Concerts. A stack of business cards in your pocket means that no matter where you are or what you are doing, you can immediately hand over your contact details for any interested parties.

08. FRIENDS

At least 15 percent of my House Concerts have been booked by friends or recommended by friends. Friends are an amazing source of advertising. Be sure to let all of your friends know that you are available to perform House Concerts and at some point they will either book a show themselves or recommend you to one of their friends. Friends are one of the most resourceful ways of advertising because not only do you get their support, you get access to all their network of friends via word of mouth!

09. GOOGLE

House Concerts are becoming more and more popular with each passing year and there are a growing number of House Concert hosts who are fishing for talent on the Internet. Try entering various keywords into the Google search engine to locate those people looking for artists.

10. CHURCHES, CHARITIES AND SPIRITUAL CENTERS

If you carry a positive message in your story then there are thousands of church organizations, charity organizations and spiritual centers that are always looking for a powerful message. You may even have a message specific with their organization. Alcoholics Anonymous, Planned Parenthood, and yoga centers are among the hundreds of organizations that you can visit to let them know that you are available with a positive message that will be perfect for their clientele.

House Concert Expert Advice

01. *You are no longer at the mercy of the music industry.*
02. *You have all the power over the direction of your own future.*
03. *The internet has eliminated all the old gatekeepers and open the gates of success to every artist.*
04. *This is a magnificent time for all acoustic musicians to flourish.*
05. *Self promotion is a major part in becoming a HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT.*

“I'm not going to limit myself just because people won't accept the fact that I can do something else.”

— *Dolly Parton*

CHAPTER 8

There is No Traffic on the Extra Mile

Most people are not prepared to reach out for mastery. They attempt to win with only 75% of themselves in the arena and are always defeated. If you are prepared to go the extra mile, there isn't a force on the earth that will stop you from achieving your goals and dreams.

There is a quote, which says, 'There is no traffic on the extra mile'. This makes complete sense because most people are not prepared to take the action necessary to achieve success. If you have followed the guidelines in this book and are prepared to take the action necessary to achieve these goals then you will now find yourself alone on the extra mile.

Success is rarely an accident. Almost always, success can be pinpointed to integrity (completing what you say you will do) and walking the extra mile. It's creating a vision of the future and taking whatever action necessary to fulfill that vision.

You can confidently presume that you are in better shape for success than 99 percent of the performers out there. You have worked on all aspects of your performance, developed the best show that you can create at this time, and now your big night has finally arrived. You are on your way to your first House Concert performance. It's time to put all that hard work into practice.

RESPECT FOR THE HOST AND THEIR HOME

When you arrive to perform a House Concert you must always be aware that you are coming to someone's home. It isn't a club or a rock venue. It is someone's home and you need to respect it as such. The old seventies model of the prima donna rock star is a long faded and outdated way of life. It is not appropriate in today's society and it is certainly not appropriate to take a bloated attitude into someone's home.

If you want to be treated like a Rock God then House Concerts are probably not for you. Rock Gods and House Concerts are not good bedfellows. Showing up intentionally late is not appropriate, showing up drunk or stoned is not appropriate, and showing up with a bad attitude is a recipe for disaster. Remember, if you want respect then you have to give it first!

Musicians and songwriters have always been granted a certain level of immunity to courteous behavior and traditionally we have been allowed to get away with certain attitudes that the general public are not. If members of the general public showed the same disrespect or treated people in the manner that musicians have become known for, they would be chopped down to size within minutes. They would more than likely be physically attacked. But somehow popular musicians have been issued a free pass to be obnoxious in the music industry.

NEVERLAND

An astonishing amount of popular musicians continue to act like they are 21 years old even though they have long had their bus pass. This is not a judgment of their work but simply to show the huge gap between the physical body and the mind of the musician.

It might be argued that musicians are allowed to act this way because we carry the flag for the public's youth. Or perhaps the general public lives out their own rebellious teenage behavior vicariously through musicians. We might even say that the general public actually encourages musicians to act like spoiled children as it keeps alive their own sense of youth that years of hard work, debts, kids and divorce have slowly squeezed from their hands.

Because the music industry is built 95 percent on image and only five percent on substance, there is a 'necessary' halo of narcissism exuding from top celebrities, largely because you need to be completely self-obsessed to maintain that level of fame and status. You have to think about yourself, glamorize yourself and constantly tell everyone about yourself twenty four hours a day otherwise you will be discarded by your supporters and public. High celebrity is one of the few walks of life where narcissism is the foundation for success.

The entertainment industry is an unforgiving, cutthroat business. You cannot survive for long unless you are focused on your own sense of specialness and are prepared to withstand strict diet, obsessive workout schedules and annual cosmetic surgical procedures to maintain a youthful look. But, while narcissism may serve celebrities in the entertainment profession extremely well, it will become a complete embarrassment at a House Concert.

LEAVE THE NARCISSISM AT THE DOOR

The best behavior for a successful House Concert is kindness, humility and a commitment to create a fantastic evening for your host and their guests. No one owes you anything. You have made a commitment to excellence and that includes your attitude and your professionalism. The host has been kind enough to invite people to their home. They have planned for weeks in advance so the evening will be a success. They have cooked food, bought drinks and invited 30 – 50 people to come and listen to you perform your songs and tell your story. Make sure you treat these people with respect. Don't show up at the front door like a spoiled child and act like they owe you a favor.

YOUR INTRODUCTION BY THE HOST

Once you've arrived at the house, greeted your hosts, and warmed up your voice, the show is ready to begin. If you have created a House Concert Brochure the host should already be aware of how you want the introduction to occur. Ask your host to remind the audience not to use cell phones during the performance: no texting, no photographs and no audio recordings. Don't give the audience any opportunity to focus their attention anywhere other than on your performance. Let the audience know that the evening is more than just an acoustic performance. It's akin to a theater show and their participation and their undivided attention will help make the evening a success.

It is important that you wait behind the scenes while the host gives the introduction. You want the evening to be special, to be portrayed as a show and not just 'some guy' showing up to sing a few songs. If you simply walk into the front room and start singing, the audience will respond likewise. They will think you are just the background music to a party. You have to upgrade your presentation with a greater sense of professionalism by presenting yourself in a way that commands the audience's respect.

TAKING THE FLOOR

Avoiding eye contact with the audience as you walk to your designated performance space is standard procedure at any public speaking event. Once the host has welcomed their guests they

will then introduce you and you can take the floor. It is important that you walk out smiling and that you don't look at the audience. Look at the person that introduced you. After you shake hands with your host and put down your notes, tuner or any other accessories on the table, you are ready to begin the show. As soon as you lift your eyes to start talking you should begin making eye contact with the audience.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OPENING LINE

Your opening monologue must be fluent and without hesitation. This gives the audience the feeling that they are in competent hands. I have rehearsed my opening line so many times I can say it without even thinking. Knowing what I am going to say in advance gives me tremendous confidence for the rest of my performance. The strength of your opening clearly communicates that they are in safe hands.

The first five minutes of your show is the audience's introduction to you and will shape the rest of the evening. During these first few minutes the audience will make up their mind about you so you should be relaxed and likable to put them at ease.

Humor can play an important part of your opening speech by sending a clear message that the evening is going to be lighthearted and fun.

When you successfully connect with the audience while delivering your opening speech, they'll be with you for the rest of your performance. Likewise, if you fail to make this initial connection you will spend the rest of the concert trying to make up for those missed opportunities.

Once you have delivered a successful opening, you should already be feeling more confident. You can now launch into your first song and begin your own personal story of the hero's journey. (Please see Chapter 5.)

HOW LONG SHOULD THE HOUSE CONCERT PERFORMANCE BE?

In the beginning I would recommend that you perform a forty five minute to one hour show. The old adage that 'less is more' certainly rings true when starting out on your House Concert career. You don't want to overwhelm yourself and you don't want to overwhelm the audience.

It takes time to know how to deal with people at such close range. Sometimes there may be only ten people in the room and you will need to understand how to keep the performance flowing otherwise you may run into trouble.

It is difficult to hold an audience's attention for longer than 90 minutes especially when you are starting out. The story you are telling becomes a vital component to the length of time you are performing. If your story is successful you will naturally be able to perform for a longer period of time, but in the beginning, I would recommend no more than sixty minutes. Currently my shows run between 90 minutes and two hours, but having ten years experience I have learned to keep the audience fixated for the duration. This is something that experience will bring you.

INTERMISSION?

I would not recommend having an intermission in your House Concert performance. You are far better served limiting your performance to one hour and completing the show in full.

An intermission breaks the flow of your performance, interferes with your story and kills the vibe of the room.

Having an intermission also gives members of the audience an opportunity to leave, which can make the rest of the audience question whether or not the show is worth seeing.

If the host requests an intermission politely explain that it is never a good idea. Do whatever you can to avoid having your performance be in two parts (unless you have specifically designed your show to be that way).

HOW MANY SONGS?

If each story you tell is approximately four minutes long and each song you sing is approximately five minutes long then you are looking at approximately 6 songs to fill the hour. This is enough in the beginning. The worst thing you can do is overplay. When it comes to House Concerts, overplaying destroys everything. You want to hit them with your very best material.

When you are starting out, most people will be unfamiliar with your songs. Keep it short, this way no one will be bored, everyone will enjoy the experience and will look forward to come see you perform again. Remember that the average attention span in 2015 is only 9 seconds.

Once you create a following and people know your music you can extend the length of your set to 90 minutes. But keep in mind this takes time and experience.

THANKING THE HOST

Towards the end of your show it is extremely important that you publicly thank your hosts for facilitating the evening. Your hosts are the most vital part of your success, for without their hard work and kindness you wouldn't have a platform on which to successfully perform your songs and stories. They have planned the event for weeks, they have taken the time to invite their guests, they have prepared food and beverages and they have treated you with respect and dignity. It's only right that you pay them the same in return.

In my experience it always helps to make a fuss of your hosts as it let's the hosts know that you have noticed their hard work and you are grateful for their support. Remember, this is not a rock 'n roll show where everyone shows up to idolize you! You are creating an evening of songs and stories with your hosts. This team spirit and sharing attitude will help to make the evening extra special and everyone will remember you with fondness and gratitude.

DON'T HOG THE LIMELIGHT

When the House Concert performance is finished, it is always wise to stay out of the way for at least twenty minutes. The audience has just spent the past hour or so paying attention to your every word and may need a little time to decompress and share their experience with other guests.

As artists we are notorious attention seekers and always want more no matter how much we get. Frankly, by this point of the evening the audience has probably had enough of you and just want to have some food and a few drinks. This time belongs to your host to receive praise and congratulations for hosting the evening.

You should use this time to revisit your performance and discover ways of improving. Which ad-libs worked? What could you have done better? Are all the songs working? You are always a student and should never stop striving for a more perfect performance. It is best to do this immediately after the performance while it is still fresh in your mind.

This is also an opportune time for you to pack your equipment away and tweet about the great evening you just had. You can check your emails and call your family or friends. It's time to relax and wind down after a full day of activity. It takes a lot of energy to travel, perform a show and retain an audience.

When you are ready to rejoin the after show, thank the host first before mixing or talking with anyone else. After all, without them you wouldn't have had the opportunity to perform. Offer your

host some free CDs and let them know that YOU enjoyed your time and their hospitality.

Mingling with the audience is one of the most educational parts of the evening because you get direct feedback about what works and what doesn't.

They have cooked food, bought drinks and invited 30 – 50 people to come and listen to you perform your songs and tell your story. Make sure you treat these people with respect. Don't show up at the front door like a spoiled child and act like they owe you a favor.

DON'T OVERSTAY YOUR WELCOME

There comes a time at every House Concert when the hosts and their audience should be left by themselves. Don't overstay your welcome! After 45 minutes to an hour I've had enough time to talk to everyone, sign a few autographs, sell CDs, and eat a little food. It's time to leave!

House Concert Expert Advice

01. *Treat your hosts with dignity and respect in their home.*

02. *Smile and make eye contact, first with the host and then with the guests.*

03. *When the show is finished make sure you disappear for at least twenty minutes. Allow the guests to have time on their own.*

04. *When you come back, don't overstay your welcome. Give yourself about 45 min to an hour to answer questions and sell merchandise after the performance.*

“A poor original is better than a good imitation.”

— Ella Wheeler Wilcox

CHAPTER 9

Why You Should Make Money Your Friend

Contrary to popular belief, money is not the root of all evil! Money itself is neither good nor bad. It's simply a medium of exchange. It's a way for people to trade one thing – like money, time or their energy for other things, like food, housing or guitars!

People can be awkward about the exchange of money and artists are more awkward than most. Most people work a forty-hour week and are paid accordingly. Artists don't usually get paid by the hour, they are paid on the value of their work. This brings up sticky issues for the artist and their ideas about self-worth. Artists put so much emphasis on the personal satisfaction of performing that they often underestimate the monetary value of their work. Like any other profession, if you perform a competent service, you deserve to be paid.

If you don't charge for your services, people will not respect your work. They will think the service you provide is worthless because you don't charge anything for it. If you don't value your work why should they value your work? It is just as important for you to be paid for your House Concert as it is for any professional to charge a price for the work that they perform.

When you charge money for your services, people are more likely to pay attention to what you are offering. They know that your concert is worth something, that you value yourself and they have a professional and valuable service. Charging a fee for your work is a declaration that you are a competent professional and your work has value.

If, on the other hand you charge too much money and do not deliver a service that matches the price, then people will complain. Showing up at someone's house drunk with an acoustic guitar, playing six songs poorly, and giving attitude to the people around you is not a professional service and does not warrant the exchange of money.

THE GOING RATE

During my research for this book, I discovered that a whopping 65% of all the musicians that I interviewed do not get paid for their performances. Those that do get paid, earn approximately \$30 - \$200 a night with only five percent managing to earn \$100 or higher. The majority of paid musicians average around \$50 and only one percent of paid musicians earn above \$300 or more per night. There is a staggering amount of musicians who receive nothing for their work.

One of the coolest things about performing House Concerts is that it takes very little to put you in the top five percent of paid musicians. In fact all it takes is 20 people at \$5 a head and you graduate to the top of the pile. While your peers are being ignored and playing for free at the local rock club, you are having the time of your life playing to an attentive audience AND getting paid

more than 95 percent of the entire music industry. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that 30 people at \$10 a head puts you in the top one percent, or that 30 people at \$20 a head can make you an annual six-figure salary.

When you begin to assess the financial benefits of House Concerts, you need to set a price that matches what you believe you are worth. Ask yourself, at your current level of performance expertise: How much do I believe I am worth? Have I gone the extra mile? Have I rehearsed enough? Have I researched enough? Do I have integrity? Am I authentic? Have I found my true voice?

THE FINANCIAL TRUTH

One of the saddest problems artists have about accepting money is their lack of authenticity. I would suspect that 75 percent of all musicians, artists and songwriters haven't yet discovered their real voice and as a result feel a deep sense of 'fraud' in their work. Most have invested all of their time trying to copy someone else's authenticity and have failed to develop their own uniqueness. It is difficult to accept money for your work when you are pretending you are someone else. Somewhere in your thoughts you are painfully aware that you are not being entirely honest and this translates to a lack of self worth. You can either get paid less for pretending you are someone else or get paid more for being yourself!

People who have found their own voice do not question what they charge because they feel a sense of completion about their skill set. It is important to acknowledge that being authentic is a declaration of your own uniqueness and originality. No one else has lived your life, no one else has your personal story and no one else has your voice.

CHANGING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MONEY

Other problems with money are directly related to our cultural beliefs and upbringing. Often for moral or religious reasons, we believe that money is bad or wrong or it will corrupt our nature. Obviously this is not the appropriate time to go into detail on such matters, yet it may be worth noting that the early religious organizations promoted the 'money is evil' theory so that the peasants would give it all away... to them! It was declared that you could greatly accelerate the time it took for you to reach heaven by how much money you gave to the church. This false and misleading belief is embedded in the very fabric of all western culture and greatly influences our relationship with money to this day.

Contrary to popular belief, people with money are not the scourge of the earth. To quote an old friend who said, 'the guy who said money is the root of all evil, didn't have any.'

If you believe that money is the root cause of all evil you won't allow yourself to earn any because you believe it will make you evil! You are essentially telling yourself that you don't want money. It is imperative for you to oust any negative beliefs or myths that you currently hold about your financial status otherwise you will find it difficult to ask for payment.

Money is simply an exchange of energy for your time and expertise. If you have followed the guidelines in this book, you have no further need to question your payment. You have worked hard to be as authentic as you can, have sharpened your skill set and are performing a service to the world. You deserve to be paid for your time and energy.

If I travel 200 miles to someone's house with a positive frame of mind and perform a great show, there is absolutely nothing wrong with being paid. You need to embrace this concept to avoid spending the rest of your life undervaluing yourself. It is equally important to understand that your value is determined by how authentic you are and how far you are prepared to go to find your own

voice.

THE VALUE OF SELF WORTH

In 1994 I took up the study of classical guitar and I learned how to read music fluently. The discipline of learning classical guitar gives me confidence and the belief that I am a valid and an authentic guitar player. Before I studied classical guitar I didn't feel accomplished. I had spent most of my musical life playing snippets of tunes that I had heard on records. I wasn't complete. I lacked integrity.

Through the discipline of classical guitar, I no longer doubt my ability to perform. Years of hard work and practice give me tremendous confidence in any musical setting whether it is a campfire or a stadium of 100,000 people. I'm tremendously confident that I could walk on any stage anywhere in the world and play the guitar fluently within any musical style.

For the record, I do not play classical music anywhere on the stage, I do not include classical music in my songs and I have no aspirations to be a classical guitar player, but the underlying confidence that the discipline of classical guitar gave me is undeniable. Going the extra mile creates confidence levels that are impossible to achieve on their own.

When you show up at someone's home and begin your performance, the rehearsal time and discipline you have put into your work will benefit you greatly. You will not be insecure about accepting money for your services and the host will be happy to pay you.

SELLING YOUR PRODUCTS

A fundamental principle of sales is, 'if you don't ask for a sale then you won't sell anything.' This applies to House Concerts as much as any other profession. It is your duty to let the audience know of the services you are providing, particularly on the evening of the show.

Throughout the evening you should create a space in your story to let your audience know of the services that you have to offer. Here are five things that you should promote at each of your shows:

01. Let everyone in the room know that you are available for House Concerts and you will be delighted to discuss it after the show. Make it your number one priority to leave the House Concert with another House Concert secured.
02. Let the audience know that you have merchandise for sale and remind them that you will be available after the show to sell CDs, t-shirts or anything else you are providing.
03. Invite everyone in the room to join your mailing list so you can easily inform them of any upcoming concerts or events.
04. Connect them to all of your social media; Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and any other web based media that you have. This will become your greatest source of advertising in the future.
05. Give them your monthly concert list. Let them know when you have other shows in the area. Tell them you would love to see them at the show.

You are not just promoting the evening, you are promoting your world. Every artist has a world that they operate in and things that are important to them. You may have a charity that you are supporting or a cause that you are passionate about. All of these things may be interesting to members of your audience.

You are the best advert for your services. No one knows more about what you are doing than you. Don't be shy, speak up. Remember the first law of sales: if you don't ask, then you have no chance of them saying, 'yes.'

SELLING MERCHANDISE

Unless you are famous (and even this doesn't guarantee you immunity) you will probably be in a category of musicians who perform in venues where drinking and partying are the dominant feature of your audience's entertainment. In short, they are not there to see you! Your chances of selling merchandise are slim at best.

For example, you perform in a Rock Club to an audience of 200 people. From the 200 people only twenty are listening periodically, and out of those 20 periodic listeners you are lucky if you sell two CDs. You are often required to give the venue 10 percent of your CD profits and are most likely being paid little or nothing for your evening's work. This is an all too familiar scenario for thousands of musicians around the world.

But when you perform a House Concert, you make the rules! House Concerts are a perfect venue to sell your merchandise because you have created an attentive audience. If your performance is up to scratch, you can almost guarantee CD sales.

My CD sales are not linked to the amount of people in the room, but in direct correlation to how attentive the audience is. If I have the audience locked into my songs and story then my CD sales are within 50 to 75 percent of the total number in the room. I have sold a higher percentage of CDs at House Concerts than any other performance space in my entire career.

FIVE WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR CD SALES BY 500%

There are many different ways to sell your merchandise at a House Concert and you should always be aware of new and exciting ways to get your music out into the world. In the past ten years I have tried and tested many different approaches to letting people hear my music. Here are five of the best ways I found to sell merchandise at a House Concert:

01. GIVE IT AWAY

The number one way to guarantee sales is to give the CDs away. Yes, that's right, you heard it properly, give them away. BUT... there is a specific way to give the CDs away that will enhance your sales. Tell your audience, 'I really want you to hear my music so please take my CD and simply pay whatever you feel you can afford.' Allow them to dictate the price. Research shows that the donation system actually produces more sales AND revenue than regular priced CDs. Even if you get less money for the CD you end up selling twice as many because you are giving people the choice on what to pay.

This proven method almost guarantees that all of the audience members will visit the merchandise table and most people will actually make a purchase. In fact, many people will give you more money for a CD than you would normally charge. In my experience, this is the number one method to increase your merchandise sales.

02. HAVE A MERCHANDISE GUY

Some people are naturally gifted at selling things. If you know someone who has this natural ability you can bring them along as your own merchandise person. They can set up and sell your merchandise before and after the show. This gives you the advantage of having someone attending the merchandise at all times and the ability talk to any prospective buyers about your products.

You will have to pay a merchandise person so it may be wise to give them a percentage of what they sell rather than a fixed fee. This gives them the incentive to sell more CDs and it stops you from losing money if sales are lower than expected.

03. INCLUDE CD SALE IN THE PRICE

Another great way to guarantee your sales is to suggest to the host that they add an additional \$5.00

to the price of the show and you will give everyone in the room a CD. The host charges \$15 a ticket and tells everyone they get a concert and a free CD for the price. If the host agrees then you have just increased your sales by at least 500% and if your CD is full of fantastic songs then you have just got yourself some new fans in the bargain.

04. LEAVE A MONEY BOX

For those of you who don't have a merchandise person why not leave a moneybox and a price list for your merchandise so people can simply drop their own money in the box. This would be impossible in a rock venue because people would most likely steal the merchandise or the money.

For the record, in the 10 years I have been performing House Concerts, I haven't had any CDs or money stolen. House Concerts tend to be very intimate and trustworthy events. If you tell everyone where the CDs are located and how to pay for them, they will deposit the money in the box and take their purchase.

05. DOWNLOAD CARDS

Another way of selling CDs is to offer download cards. In this day and age many people reject having physical CDs. They prefer digital downloads so they can listen to their music on their favorite digital device. If you are going to the trouble of making a physical CD, then make sure you also request download cards from your manufacturer to include those members of your audience who will not buy CDs.

Every time you sell a CD you increase the chances of your next CD selling more, and you gain more fans in the process. Don't be put off because you are not selling millions of CDs in one night. Think about longevity. You will find after two years have passed that that you have actually sold an outstanding amount and increased the traffic visiting your website and other social media. Every CD sale increases your chances of another future House Concert and the chances of your back catalogue selling more.

House Concert Expert Advice

01. *Money is neither good nor bad, it is simply an exchange of energy for your time and expertise.*
02. *Charging a fee for your work is a declaration that you are competent professional and your work has value.*
03. *Expect payment for your services but the amount you expect to get paid will largely be dependent upon your own self worth.*
04. *Oust any negative beliefs or myths you have about money and make it your best friend.*

“Once conform, once do what other people do because they do it, and a lethargy steals over all the finer nerves and faculties of the soul. She becomes all outer show and inward emptiness; dull, callous, and indifferent.”

— Virginia Woolf

CHAPTER 10

Thriving in the World of Your Possibilities

When you live in the space of 'what's possible' your entire world transforms from a mindset of mediocrity to a fascinating, never-ending stream of possibility.

If you explore the progress of humanity over the past five thousand years, you will recognize that it is fearless individuals refusing the status quo who are responsible for the vast majority of progress made. These are ordinary men and women who broke the rules, imagined life another way and never stopped dreaming. These are the people who forged the world as we know it today. From the first Neanderthals who rubbed two sticks together to create fire, to present day technological research on DNA and the human genome project, giving rise to provocative, new discoveries that are swiftly unraveling the secrets of life.

The majority of these individuals were highly educated, yet intellect isn't the dominant commonality they share. Neanderthals for instance, cannot be described as brilliant scholars.

Jimi Hendrix, by no means stupid, didn't even graduate from Garfield High School yet he changed the face of guitar forever. Being intellectually brilliant doesn't necessarily give you an advantage when you want to change the world.

The most common thing that all visionaries share are the words, 'I DON'T KNOW.' If Isaac Newton didn't say, 'I DON'T KNOW,' the apple he saw falling to the ground may have been picked up and eaten instead of triggering his curiosity and the discovery of gravity. If Nicholas Copernicus had died a year earlier and failed to publish his theory that the earth and planets revolved around the sun, we may still believe that the earth is the center of the universe. One ordinary girl named Rosa Parks took action and refused to sit at the back of the bus. Society has made huge leaps towards racial understanding and tolerance as a result.

Three military guys Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins took action and agreed to be catapulted into space with no guarantee they would come back. Today as a result of their bravery, we send vehicles to Mars and take photographs of environments that are unimaginable distances away.

If you are fearless enough to carve out your own path, other songwriters and musicians will follow your example and create the same for themselves. What you do in this life matters and you have the power to alter your course.

There are very few accidents in the world. Take the necessary action and life will realign itself into your chosen goal. If you don't take action then nothing will happen.

I BELIEVE YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR WORLD

When we live in the past, we severely limit our capacity to create a new exciting future. This is one of the biggest roadblocks for people trying to create a new life for themselves. Living from the past shuts down what is possible and we are unable to see life any other way than how it always has been.

If you had told someone living two thousand years ago that we would be able to fly through space and land on the moon, that we would be able to watch ourselves on a video screen or bioprint body parts, they would think you had lost your mind. Yet today these things are all reality, born out of the minds of people who focused on what was possible.

LIVING PROOF

When someone first mentioned to me the idea of writing a book about House Concerts, I had no idea how to begin. The process seemed daunting from start to finish and I wondered if I could achieve such a task. Writing books was for other people, not for the likes of me!

It was difficult to imagine a future as an author when my default thinking kept telling me I could only achieve things that I had already done in the past. Anything new or outside of my own beaten track was unimaginable.

I was experienced enough in the creative arts to know that writing a book involves research, partnerships and a colossal amount of time to bring the project to fruition. I also knew that once I had the book written, I would have to research print publishers, online publishers, audiobooks, etc. Every thought I had led to a million excuses as to why I shouldn't do it.

But instead of using these excuses to procrastinate, I simply followed the guidelines you've just read in this book. I made a future commitment and took the actions necessary to fulfill that commitment. I sat down and wrote almost every day. Step by step, little by little I set about bringing integrity to my work by completing what I said I was going to do. Low and behold, one year later, here we are.

As you can see I have actually published a book. I am indeed the proud author of HOUSE CONCERT EXPERT. My original commitment was to write a book that would help musicians and songwriters all over the world to express their own true self and have a career doing what they love. As you can see, what was once just an idea in my mind is now a full-fledged book and the beginning of a new chapter of my life in publishing. I'm standing on the precipice of a whole new world of possibility.

THE FUTURE BELONGS TO YOU

Upon finishing the task of writing this book I was well aware that my work not yet done. To complete the project and operate out of integrity I still have the exciting task of marketing my book to the entire world, which involves another 'career's worth' of research.

I don't care how much work there is ahead. If I follow the same principles, make a future commitment and take the action necessary to fulfill it, a marketing plan will eventually emerge. It's not luck or fate, Gods or Demons, nor is it impossible. It's a commitment to honoring my word and completing the things I said I was going to do.

I am a novice in the book-publishing world, much like you may be in the House Concert world. But I won't live in a world where the past dictates what I do with my life. I have opened up the gates of the future and what is possible for my life is no longer frozen. If I follow the same principles outlined in this book, make a future commitment and take the action necessary to fulfill that commitment, there is no reason whatsoever that I cannot achieve anything I choose to set my sights on.

Your House Concert career is already waiting for you in the future. All you have to do is take the action necessary and life will have to oblige. You are no different from me. Your main roadblock to success is getting your past out of your future.

THE NEW TROUBADOURS

I began this book by celebrating the early troubadours and highlighting the respect they commanded in their immediate world. I would like to close the book in the same manner.

Over the past twenty years, the art of songwriting and storytelling has taken a back seat to gimmicks and record company greed. It's true that the music industry has always had those elements as part of its mode of operation, and I welcome it wholeheartedly but I vehemently believe that in order to keep the system healthy, we also need to include a percentage of authentic songwriters and storytellers to offset the commerciality and the gimmicky pop.

Much like the film industry, the corporate music machine has stopped supporting any project less than a blockbuster. They mistakenly believe that bigger is always better. I also love blockbuster films, but I am keenly aware that there is great validity to independent movies whose priorities include artistic merit as well as financial gain.

The current system is similar to soccer teams banking everything on superstars like Ronaldo, Messi and Rooney without investing in a team to support them, or the Yankees banking everything on A-Rod without having a AAA youth policy. Every successful industry needs a healthy supporting framework to allow the entity to survive.

Without the flies in the pond, the fish die, and without Robert Johnson and his acoustic guitar, there is no Led Zeppelin.

Skill levels in creativity are rapidly declining as songwriting becomes more akin to playground chants. With Pop Idol, X Factor and American Idol churning out a copy of a copy, songwriters have discarded their authenticity for someone else's story from the past. We need new stories and new people to come forward and tell them.

The music industry is suffering enormously from its decision to exclude intimate and meaningful songwriting and is presently in a state of collapse. The film industry isn't far behind.

BON VOYAGE

The act of sitting down in a room of friends, singing your songs and sharing the story of your life will never die. It is as old as music itself. Regardless of the challenges of the past several decades, the troubadour spirit still burns bright and will continue to shine.

Humans love to share their experiences. It's time for you to express the personal perspectives you have gained on your journey so far.

I hope this book will ignite your enthusiasm and give you the tools you need to make a great living doing the things that you love to do most.

There are no guarantees in life. There are no magic pills or potions to ensure 100 percent success all of the time. Yet, even amidst the uncertainty, experience shows us that we can indeed affect the outcome of events by focusing on the things that bring about success. Make a future commitment and take the action necessary to bring about that event.

If you follow the guidelines in this book, it will take an army of angels to keep you from your goals. Your future is unwritten and your past is where it belongs. There is no condition you cannot change. When you take the action necessary, life will realign itself according to your actions.

I wish you well for the future and I sincerely hope that the information provided in this book will help you to find your own true voice. I hope you will choose to honor the timeless tradition of those fearless individuals who went before you.

I have no doubt that you can achieve anything you want to achieve. When you take the risk and invest in the story of your life, you deliver to the world a truly unique perspective.

There simply hasn't been anyone like you before and there will never be anyone like you again. You are the greatest story waiting to be told!

Francis Dunnery, March 2015

THANK YOU

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who contributed not only to the book, but to the last ten years of my life. I simply couldn't have done it without them nor would I want to.

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I am fortunate to say that the road we all took was not particularly rocky or difficult; on the contrary, all my amazing friends mentioned above were a joy to work with and contributed greatly to the 1500 House Concerts that we performed over the past ten years. Their essence is deeply present throughout this book.

I would also like to thank all of our House Concert Hosts who took the great risk to pioneer a whole new experience in acoustic music. When we first set out performing House Concerts we were essentially alone, there wasn't such a thing as a House Concert and we were forging a new path through the world of music. I would like all of our House Concert Hosts from the past ten years to know deep in their hearts that they were a major part in making this unique experience a huge success. House Concerts have now exploded throughout the world and have created an amazing new platform for acoustic artists and singer songwriters alike to perform their songs and stories.

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The adventure continues . . .

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