

## **So, You Want to Succeed as a Composer?** - Dr. Larry Nickel's cheat-sheet seminar notes

### **You will need:**

#### **1) to be gifted to begin with:**

- being a gifted musician does not necessarily mean that one does well at academics; right side of the brain activity
- often youthful rebellion is a sign of creativity and independence. Turn negative energy into something positive.
- a degree in piano performance, but can't play "Happy Birthday" without the sheet music?

#### **2) a healthy work ethic; hone your craft**

- try to write music every day - at least four bars - even when you don't feel inspired.
- was Mozart an artist or a gifted craftsman? (another seminar would be needed to touch on this)
- for most successful composers the formula is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.
- keep everything you write - one day those crumpled scraps might come in handy

#### **3) thick skin and and self confidence:**

- be ready to be under-paid and under-appreciated for your efforts
- be ready to have your music put down and rejected by fellow musicians and publishers
- not many people in this world can relate to you; this can be lonely
- self confidence is often mistaken for arrogance - learn to forgive those that don't understand you

#### **4) to have a certain humility - realize that you are "gifted"**

- give back to the Gift Giver with your work (Bach: "Soli Deo Gloria")
- good music benefits the community - don't forget
- take criticism with grace; get honest opinions about your music from people you respect
- be ready and willing to go back to the drawing board
- be thankful to work for no pay (we have a tremendous privilege)
- be a tent maker like Paul; find a steady job - so you can pursue and develop your gift

#### **5) to listen, listen, listen to good music of all styles (from Bach to the Beatles)**

#### **6) to connect with your community in an attractive and assertive way.**

- don't wait to be discovered; - knock on doors - ignore "Don't call us, we'll call you."
- join a group of performers - be a participant - learn about the possibilities of choirs through first hand experience
- write music that is user-friendly with intuitive voice leading. Even complexity can be approachable.
- work on being attractive as an individual - gregarious, well groomed; clean up your room, wash the dishes
- be genuinely interested in others and their musical pilgrimages
- "what goes around, comes around" - it's the truth

#### **7) to get your music out there - start now - without fear**

- nothing beats a great recording and attractive sheet music; then seek out a publisher - or self publish
- build a website - with sample scores and quality recordings of your music
- use social media to make connections
- one on one meetings with key people. e.g. invite a conductor out for lunch and foot the bill
- there are a million groups out there looking for new exciting music so offer your services!

#### **8) to have a partner who really believes in you. (Edna has been my support for over 50 years.)**

*My five cents worth*