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Music

The Savvy Musician
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Too many fine musicians fail to achieve their dreams of becoming professionals. The problem is not their skill level. Their shortcomings include inadequate self-promotion, a lack of supportive audiences sufficient to sustain an income flow, and a failure to network with others in the music industry.

That's the assessment of author Cutler, a professional musician himself, who has a background in a range of musical pursuits, including jazz and classical composing, arranging, conducting, and speaking. He currently teaches at Duquesne University, where he also serves as Coordinator of Music Entrepreneurship Studies.

This text is a comprehensive and engaging how-to book tailored to encourage musicians eager-or reluctant-to take the next big step. But it is also a realistic look at the business, in a format that does not sugar-coat the truth.

The author gives detailed sources of potential income streams for maintaining a career in the music field, including areas that musicians might not have considered. These include educational workshops, summer camps, sales through the merchandising of CDs, grants and fellowships, part-time jobs, and maintaining finances.

But it is vital to stay connected, he urges, as musical skill alone is not enough.

"In the music industry, the saying 'out of sight, out of mind' is particularly applicable," he writes. "When someone seeks a cellist, for example, odds are they will direct it to the last qualified player with whom they connected. For this reason, it is essential to stay at the top of your connections' mental Rolodex."

Perhaps the most inspiring sections are the short, easy-to-absorb vignettes of 165 working musicians and groups. Each is a real-world example of unique marketing, usually employing an imaginative and thorough website and a pinpoint targeting of a specific audience.

For example, at the Garth Newel Music Center (www.garthnewel.org), a western

Virginia music retreat, the resident musicians bond with their audience by mingling during a casual cocktail party setting. They share stories and explain the music they will perform that night. After the concert, everyone enjoys a four-course dinner together. The likely results? A vastly more appreciative audience and positive word-of-mouth publicity for future gigs.

As the title states, this book can make a difference-benefiting both musicians and listeners.