



THE HEART OF AN ARTIST

by Marc Dicciani, Director of the School of Music at
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If you are reading this magazine, most likely you already have been recognized for your accomplishments. No doubt, you have been told how talented you are. You probably even believe that talent alone has gotten you where you are. But really, your success can better be attributed to your dedication, commitment, hard work, sacrifice, team-effort, and collaboration – and maybe to some talent (whatever that is). Ultimately, success is not about talent – it's about character. That, in fact, is what you have demonstrated, and what is contributing to your success.

Perhaps the greatest advantages of studying music are the positive qualities it instills in you - self-confidence, discipline, team-play, and values. These are traits that will stay with you and help you in almost every aspect of your life. So, just remember the personal qualities that brought

you this far and continue to develop them. I believe that personal success can be accomplished in three ways:

WORK CREATIVELY.

This means to not just accept things as they are, but to challenge assumptions, re-invent



tradition, and take rational, yet imaginative, risks in thinking and performance. Working creatively also can be called "critical thinking," which includes reasoning and analysis. In other words, use your powers of analysis and

understanding, and less judgment, as you go through life.

WORK SMART.

Learning doesn't begin or end in college. Learning is a life-long process. Education, information, and resources are the building blocks of knowledge. Take classes, read, research, and investigate, delve into books, magazines, and web sites, and talk to people. Learn about the business of the arts - how the industry works. Learn about the many hundreds of career options there are for musical people. Performance is just

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one of them. Some of my best students have gone on to fulfilling careers not just as →

performers, but also as entertainment attorneys, music software developers, record company executives, music

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therapists, music publishers, and as teachers. (Many of the greatest performers in the world also teach!) Also, learn about your rights and the rights of others in copyright, licensing, performance, and management contracts. You will need knowledge in many of these areas to become successful in the arts. Most important, make sure to study the world and learn to respect and value other peoples and other cultures. It will feed your creativity, and make you a better all-around human being!

WORK HARD.

To my way of thinking, this is the most important ingredient of career success. It's irreplaceable; you can't get anywhere without it! Since you have demonstrated dedication and a good work ethic in practicing to develop your per-

formance skills, it is highly likely that you already possess a good deal of passion and commitment for hard work. Keep it up!

Always remember, being an artist is a dynamic process-- just like life is a process of learning, growing, changing, discarding and creating, abandoning, and becoming. Being an artist is a life-long pursuit of excellence. Commit to the process, not to the results. Work creatively, work smart, and work hard -- and success will follow. Resist society's tendency toward instant gratification and competition. Be the best that you can be; not better than others, but better than you were yesterday, last month, last year.

I advise students that they will never be the complete artist nor the complete person they want to be. An artist continual-

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ly searches, learns, reaches, risks, and grows. Whether or not you pursue the arts professionally, you will always have the heart of an artist. To grow, you have to risk, and if you're going to take risks you're going to fail. Mistakes, missteps, and rejection are unfortunate but essential parts of being an artist. Deal with the rejection. Don't let it get you down. Likewise, don't get

complacent. No matter how "good" you think you are, you can always learn more and do better. So, don't get comfortable; the artist's work is never finished; avoid convenience; embrace uncertainty and risk.

Focus on goals, not rewards. Don't put so much stock in Grammys, wealth, honors, positions, and important-sounding titles. Focus instead not on the external, but on the internal. Not on having a #1 selling recording, or playing first chair, but on helping to improve yourself as a person, the quality of another person's life, and maybe even of many people's lives. You don't have to try to change the world, just make a difference.

Society may not need another trumpeter, singer, or composer. But it needs people with character -- people with the heart of an artist. It needs you in a life-long devotion to the process of being the best you can be. And if you dedicate yourself to continuous improvement, you will achieve success as a performing artist or in any other field you wish to pursue.

Good luck!



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