

## **EXPANDING YOUR ACTIVITIES**

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## EXPANDING YOUR ACTIVITIES

### NEW AUDIENCES

Most traditional performers feel at home when performing for members of, or events in, their own communities. For example, playing music at family or church gatherings, swapping stories on the front porch on summer evenings, or playing for the regular Saturday night community dances are familiar pastimes for many traditional musicians and they know their audience(s) intimately.

More and more, traditional musicians are moving outside their communities to perform. At **folk festivals** you will be performing in front of new audiences of people who may not be familiar with your kind of music or performance traditions. Most reputable festivals will have a **presenter** who will see to your needs as a performer and who will help to acquaint the audience with you, your traditions, and your style of performance.

The presenter's job is to introduce you and your music to a new, and usually diverse, audience. A good presenter will talk with you before presenting you and will discuss what you would like people to know about you and your music. If you have questions about whether or not to perform particular songs or numbers, you may wish to ask your presenter if they will be appropriate for the particular audience.

Either the presenter or the stage manager will make sure that you know when, where, and how long you will be performing. If you are not accustomed to performing with a microphone, it is the responsibility of the presenter or stage manager to adjust it for you and to help you use it comfortably.

Good festivals will provide you **in advance** with adequate information on:

- the performance place, time, and duration;
- how to get there;
- who to report to; if there is to be a "sound check" (to set up microphones and amplifiers), when and with whom.

Be sure that you know when and where to report, and who to look for. For bookings other than festivals (clubs, dances, schools, community arts councils, concerts, and the like), make sure that you have a **contract** which clearly states the following:

- **where** you will be performing;
- **when** you will perform;
- **how long** your performances is to last;
- **what fee** you will be paid;

- what arrangements will be made for **travel and lodging**, if you must go some distance to the performance site;
- who will provide the **sound system**, if one is needed;
- the **nature of the performance space** – is it suitable for what you do? If you are a musician or storyteller, are the acoustics appropriate? Is the stage a reasonable size for your group? If you dance, does the space have an adequate surface? If you are performing outdoors, what provisions have been made for sun and/or rain protection?

## SOUND RECORDINGS AND VIDEOTAPES

Traditional performers tend to appear on recordings which are not on major commercial labels and which do not sell many copies. Documentary record projects may include selections by folk artists, and small royalty fees are frequently assured to artists whose music is included on such records by agreement (contract). However, the actual profits (income from the sale of those records) rarely amount to much for either the producer or the musicians.

It is possible to produce your own recordings to sell at performance sites through **custom recording services**. For a flat fee, a custom record business will rent a recording studio for a specified length of time, hire the necessary technician(s), and produce a set number of recordings for you.

Before you select a custom recording service, get prices and details from as many custom record firms as possible. A reputable firm will show you samples of their work and will provide you with references. If a company has made more than one recording for the same artist or group, that probably indicates a satisfied customer. Get opinions from other traditional musicians or people in the music business. It is a good idea to get a reputable opinion from a non-interested party, someone who will not benefit in any way from your hiring of a particular firm.

Remember, custom recording is a "package deal." The service agrees to deliver the end product, a saleable tape or CD. In order to do so, the following should be specifically included in any contract with such a firm:

- studio time
- mixing/technician
- master tapes
- duplication (tapes) or pressing (records)
- artwork and text preparation (labels, liner notes)
- printing (labels, liner notes)

You will also need to know the length of the tape (number of minutes per side) and the number of cuts which can be included when you are comparing prices.

Be prepared before you get in the studio:

- Know **how many selections** you will be recording
- Know **which songs or numbers** you will perform
- **Be well-rehearsed** prior to recording

For a small-budget custom recording, a well-rehearsed group or musician should be able to record enough for an album in **one day**. Beware of additional studio time, for which you will be charged extra.

A good, well-packaged custom recording requires an outlay of \$2,000 to \$2,500 initially. While this may seem expensive, remember that the sale of such recordings can provide additional income at each performance site. Professional recordings can also be used as a marketing tool to obtain future bookings.

A short sample or "demo tape" (3 to 5 minutes per side) can also be made from your master recording. Such tapes must be custom loaded (the shortest commercial tape available is 30 minutes), but are in common use by song writers and performing artists in the music industry. Your custom recording service should also be able to make these for you, or help you find a custom loading service where you can buy blank tapes. Remember, if you want demo tapes in addition to your full-length production, it should be specified in the contract and the price included in the total agreed upon with the recording service.

Videotapes are considerably more expensive to produce and duplicate. However, if you are participating in a festival or gathering that is being videotaped for some other purpose, be sure to make your receipt of copies of the finished videotape a condition of your consent to be photographed. Such videos can be useful promotional tools for acquiring other bookings.

## COPYRIGHT

A **copyright** is a bundle of rights. Musical copyright gives the owner exclusive ownership of a song or composition and the right to decide when and by whom it may be published, recorded and/or performed. The only way that commercial sound recordings (records, CDs, tapes) can be put out is by permission of the copyright proprietor through the granting of a **mechanical license**.

Public performances of a copyrighted work must also be licensed. This is usually accomplished through performing rights societies such as ASCAP and BMI. (*See Performance Rights Organizations below*). The copyright proprietor licenses the printing rights to various music publishing companies by giving them permission to print the music in return for a fee for each copy that is printed. The creator(s) of the musical work is the copyright proprietor unless and until he/she assigns the ownership to another party, such as a music publisher.

The copyright on a song or piece of music is registered by sending a Performing Arts (PA) form to the Register of Copyrights in Washington, DC with a copy of the work to be registered (either a lead sheet, a printed arrangement or a cassette tape), and the \$10 filing fee. You will receive a certificate with your copyright registration number within six to eight weeks of filing.

If you are copyrighting a sound recording, you must send a copy of the recording along with a Sound Recording (SR) form and the current fee. The PA form registers the **song or piece of music**; the SR form registers the **sounds that emanate from the recording**, not the underlying work. Copyright forms can be obtained from the Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20559.

## **PERFORMANCE RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS**

One of the rights in copyright is the right for the work to be publicly performed. Copyright music is music that has to be paid for when it is played. A performance rights society is an organization which represents the owners of copyright music in the collection of license fees for the performances of their copyrights.

Music for which no one holds a current copyright is called "public domain." Many folk songs and traditional tunes are in the public domain, and therefore do not require permission to be performed publicly. However, don't assume that because something is old or you learned it orally that it is "public domain." Before you perform a tune publicly, and especially before you record it, check with performance rights organizations to see if you need a performing or recording license.

The two major performance rights organizations in this country are the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) and Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI). Both organizations have memberships composed of writers and publishers whose copyright privileges are safeguarded and enforced by the society.

## TEACHING YOUR TRADITIONS

In addition to creating objects or performing, you may want to consider offering services such as teaching, workshops, and residencies.

You can either initiate your own educational programs including apprenticeships, studio classes, and private lessons, or you may look to local educational institutions (schools and colleges) and arts organizations to sponsor programs.

While in the past numerous government agencies provided funds to schools for artist-in-residence programs, arts funding has been severely cut back. However, some programs are being sponsored by local businesses and individuals. If you are interested in sharing your traditional art with school-age children, develop a program and/or proposal and let teachers and school principals know that you are available and what you have to offer. In most cases, if the schools are interested in providing the program, money to pay for it can be found.

You may want to consider setting up a variety of programs, including both short-term (hourly, or daily) and longer (week, month) residencies. You will need to establish hourly, daily, and/or weekly rates, as appropriate, and outline what the workshop or residency will include (e.g., lecture-demonstration, performance-lecture, lecture with student participation, and so on.)