**Get the Gig, Keep the Gig**

**How to make yourself more desirable, marketable, and overall employable as a side-person (or session musician) in today’s post-pandemic climate.**

There are little to no auditions for major tours. Budgets are tight, so bands are getting smaller. Session work is harder to come by with the realities of modern production and genres that are almost entirely digital in nature. How do you find work? How do you keep getting called once your phone starts ringing?

This seminar will give you tips and suggestions to help you get those coveted gigs. Questions will be answered, and help will be given, to aid the personal goals of attendees (volunteers needing specific help are welcome for one-on-one sessions). Several points will be discussed, with actionable advice, to break through and move careers forward (see some examples below)…..

1. **What is a Side-person (or Session Musician)?**

-What are some of the jobs a Side-person (or Session Musician) can have? (Forging a career in the music/entertainment business is like crossing a bridge that you're building at the same time. -Nate Morton). A side-person is someone who gets hired, usually by an artist or musical director for live shows ranging from one-offs like a wedding, corporate event or award show to multiple events like a tour or radio/TV promo dates. A session musician is someone who usually gets hired to record some music in a studio or at their home studio.

1. **Master your craft!**

-10,000hrs (Malcolm Gladwell book, “Outliers”). He says the “Key to achieving true expertise in any skill is simply a matter of practicing, albeit in the correct way, for at least 10,000 hours./4 stages of learning: 1. Unaware/Unable – Don’t know the info, can’t execute it. 2. Aware/Unable – Know the info, still can’t execute it. 3. Aware/Able – Know the info, can execute it, but are consciously thinking about executing it. 4. Unaware/Able – Know the info, can execute it, but can also deal with other issues (i.e. asking for more of something from the monitor tech or playing while fixing your high hat clutch, etc.).

-Can you practice effectively and efficiently? Learn songs/forms quickly? Aaron Sterling has a stoplight trick when listening to learn music. If everything happens the way you would think, it’s a green light. Something you wouldn’t expect, a yellow light, something you have to stop, go back and write out, a red light. To save time you might only make a mental note to go back and check out certain sections (i.e. 2nd chorus, yellow light, bridge red light, last chorus yellow light).

-How does your instrument work/what are the sounds created? Be creative. If you were given $5 for every sound you could create with your instrument, your incentive to be inventive would go up!

-All styles/genres (or at least the one you want to play). Knowing more styles and genres will help inform the more popular ones or at least the ones you want to play/specialize in.

1. **What are the tools you should have?**

-“When in doubt, bring it all out” (assume nothing will be there, or be in working order – also, you can control “your sound”). Mics, extension cords, D.I. Box, etc.

-Quality instruments in working order. Endorsements can help here – getting them is a partnership. You, as an endorser, becomes a walking talking part of the marketing team for that product. You should like, and be somewhat knowledgeable, on how that gear works and helps you do your job. In exchange you can get discounts and sometimes free gear to use (exclusively).

-Amplification/Electronics. This includes (but is not limited to) computers/tablets/phones. Using charts - forScore or Realbook apps, Bluetooth page turner/other accessories-headphones/Ableton-SPD type sample pad. Understanding and/or having a PA system.

-Earplugs/In Ear Monitors – You will probably need some sort of ear buds for certain situations. If you don’t always have a floor wedge speaker, another option is having a personal monitor box (i.e. berhinger 1 or 2 channel unit) – Find an ENT with an Audiologist on staff to get molds made and your ears cleaned (wax) and hearing checked. You get 2 sets of teeth, but only 1 set of ears. Having a decibel meter on phone (so you know when to use your earplugs).

-Marketing tools (business cards/Business card flash drives/QR codes to link to things like a digital business card (also use for tips on live gigs)/social media (you control it!) - Batching content for the future/website/quality links (linktree, etc.).

-Actual tools/spare parts (do you know how your instrument is put together? Can you repair it? Do you have a repair technician you can contact?

-Passport/I.D./Vaccination apps.

-Calendar (app or analog).

-Transportation sorted (car, Uber/Lyft, taxi, train, airline, ferry, etc. including, but not limited to AAA, mechanic, tire place, metrocard et al.).

-Cartage/Backline (sometimes you cannot bring your own gear from home or storage. This can be made easier with endorsements)

-Home studio (with microphones/lights/cameras/soundproofing (like Audimute for custom spaces)/audiomovers (for when clients want to be “in” your home studio “with you”, etc).

1. **Who has the job you want, and how do you get it (respectfully)?**

-Can you read music? Can you retain musical changes on the fly? Do you understand basic harmony/theory? These are basic music cognitive skills to have.

-Who’s hiring? Do you know what a musical director (or musical contractor) is? Do you know who are the ones out there working? How do you get their attention? Do you know a musician, who works with the musicians, that you want to be called by? Can you hire your dream musicians or musical directors for a gig?

-Can you execute at a high-level night after night? Are you able to play (well) for longer than social media clips. Do you have the stamina for a two-hour show? Multiple nights a week? Can you discern when to play only what the music needs as opposed to inserting your “ego” or chops? (“it’s the fills that bring the thrills, but the groove that pays the bills”-Steve Gadd).

-Session musician isn’t the viable career it used to be. Do you have your own home recording set up? Do you understand DAWs, and can get good sounds and turn them around quickly? Who are the people in my field that are doing this?

-Do you want to tour, record from home, (or record in studios) for artists/bands/films/TV?

-LOCATION! Are you in the area where the gigs that you want to play are being booked. Yes, people can find you from word of mouth, and also from social media, BUT "out of sight, out of mind" still plays a role in whether or not you get called, thought of, or booked.

-A good resource is the book ‘From Zero to Sideman (in five easy steps)’ by Mel Brown.

**5.** **Why should someone hire you instead of someone else?**

-Are you cool to be around? No Ego! (Music isn’t a competition, there’s room for everyone!).

-Do you show up on time (early)?

-Do you have your music learned BEFORE rehearsal?

-Do you have any Travel/dietary/health restrictions?

-Do you shower (regularly, with soap)? This can also be important in staving off disease. Also, as simple as washing your hands.

-Can you offer other skills (Singing while playing? Tour Managing? Graphic Design? **See Section 6**, Etc.)

-What can you do on your instrument that someone else can’t do? Can you play multiple instruments?

-Do you dress the part (every job has a “uniform”)?

-Etiquette with the MD/Artist (also with musical ad libs/liberties). Are you subbing (intentional stealing of gigs is a no-no!).

-A bad reputation spreads a lot faster than a good one! You can get called for a gig, but will you get called back?

**6.** **What are other jobs/careers that can help you make connections/ends meet while you’re working toward your goals?**

-Teaching lessons/Consulting online, in person, at a school, or subscription sites (Phillip Johnston Books are good for ideas in building and expanding your teaching studio).

-Clinics/Masterclasses.

-Vlogging/Blogging.

-Podcasts.

-Recording/Live Sound Engineer (mixing and/or mastering engineer).

-Photographer/Videographer.

-R&D (research and development) for instrument companies, creating new instruments or making existing ones better.

-Live streaming (your gigs or clinics or lessons).

-Loop/One-Shot libraries.

-Writing books, writing articles for magazines, or reviews for publications.

-Extras on TV or Movies (Sidelining as a musician-usually through the Musician’s Union).

**7.** **Do you understand the business side of the music industry (and other off the stage stuff)?**

-Taxes (Write offs).

-Contracts.

-1099s/W2s/W9s etc.

-LLC/S-Corp/Inc.

-501-C-3 (for independent groups like a percussion ensemble or hosting a benefit or starting a scholarship).

-NDAs.

-Up to date bio/headshot.

-Invoices.

-Rates (how much to charge).

-Royalties (also, Neighboring Rights).

-Professional Etiquette (especially around celebrities).

-Camaraderie/Bonding (“the hang” can also help get you more gigs “More deals are made at the bar than the boardroom”).

-When to take a gig or pass (the 3 M’s – Music, Mates, and Money – 4th is Milieu. You should have at least 2 out of 3, or 4 if you’re counting the Milieu-location).

-When to invite friends/significant others – asking for comp tickets/guest pass etiquette.

-Dating (other musicians or outside of the industry).

-Staying healthy mentally and physically, exercise and/or therapy. (Can also be refer to dating/marriage etc).

-Unions.

-Formatting Emails (including salutations, spelling, grammar, etc.).

-Marketing & Promotion - referring to you, your projects or content. (especially use of social media).

-Pensions (usually through the musician’s union).

-Financial Planning (Retirement/Ira/401k, Student Loans/Debt etc.).

-Insurance (gear, car, personal etc.).

-A modern handbook is Ari Herstand’s book, “How to Make it in the New Music Business”.

**8.** **Do you have a team (not necessarily on retainer, but you can hire or bounce things off of)?**

-Friends you trust (bonus if they’re musicians too).

-Manager (do you need one?).

-Tour Manager (if not you).

-Booking agent (do you need one – for percussion ensembles, etc.).

-Accountant (you DEFINITELY need one).

-Graphic Designer (if not you).

-Photographer/Videographer (if not you).

-Lawyer.

-Private Instructor (you can always get better and keep learning, not necessarily from just one person).

-Recording Engineer/Recording studio (if not your own)/Rehearsal Studio options.

-Backline/Cartage/Endorsement Rep.

-Producers (if not you).

-A Pet/Plant/Baby Sitter (if you’re going to be away and choose to be responsible for living things)

-**T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore!

**9.** **Apps for your device to help your career!**

Discussions in Percussion Podcast Episode #280A

# ****Communication Apps****

Texts/iMessage

WhatsApp - Good for international messaging.

Viber - Good for international messaging.

Email

Slack

Facetime/Zoom/Skype for video conferencing.

Google Translate or something like that.

# ****Social Media Apps****

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Tik Tok

YouTube

Snapchat

Later (dot) com, Hootsuite, Planoly, and Planit for scheduling content to be released.

Tweetbot for assisting with using Twitter.

Linkedin

JammCard

Linktree

# ****Education Apps****

Percussion Tutor

Djembeföla

Drum School

Drum Jam

Erskine Essentials

Harmony Cloud

Metronome

The Clave

Conga Chops Practice Loops

iReal Pro (The Real Book)

forScore

Tempo SlowMo

(Mention how to slow down or speed up YouTube videos on settings)

Moises removes instruments like drums.

Shazam

Spotify/Soundcloud/Apple Music/Amazon Music/Pandora

Decibel Meter – Damon uses the free one from The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

Percuss.io

Transcribe+

Live Mixing Apps - M32Q/Mackie’s Master Fader/iLive OneMix and more!

DAW (Digital Audio Workstation)/ProTools Remote/Logic Pro X Remote

Audiomovers for home recording!

Notes - Apple ‘Notes’/Evernote/Voicenote

Password Keeper

# ****Finance Apps****

Banking App with Zelle – (print QR code if you need to collect tips or merch payments)

Venmo - (print QR code if you need to collect tips or merch payments)

CashApp - (print QR code if you need to collect tips or merch payments)

PayPal - (print QR code if you need to collect tips or merch payments)

**Note**: Venmo, PayPal, Cash App must report $600+ in business transactions to IRS

Square for selling merch and other items using your phone or tablet.

Wave for managing receipts

Calculator

Digital Wallet

Tip Calculator

# ****Travel Apps****

Maps/Waze

City Mapper

Rome2Rio

Parkmobile

Parkwise

Park NYC - Pay or Dispute

Smooth Parking

EZ Pass/Toll NY

Momando for flights

Hopper for when to buy flights

I Know the Pilot for last min travel deals

Travel Safe to avoid dangerous neighborhoods

TripIt

Airbnb/Hotel Tonight

Hotel reward apps (Hilton Honors, IHG and Marriott BonVoy)

Also get them for Airlines too! (Delta, United, Southwest, American Airlines, Lufthansa, British Airways and more!)

The Points Guy – for maximizing travel and earning perks!

Other cool apps to check out:

ExpertFlyer**:** This useful tool helps you search for award seats and upgrades for $4.99 a month. The $9.99-a-month subscription will alert you when new award seats become available on specific flights. The free version lets you set up seat alerts to help you snag a window or aisle.

FlightAware**:** A free flight tracker with the most up-to-date information since it gathers data directly from air traffic control systems around the world.

LoungeBuddy**:** Find the closest lounge to your gate, what amenities are available, how much it will cost and how other users rate it. It also tracks which lounges are free if you have elite status or access with a credit card or other rewards programs.

SeatGuru**:** Get accurate seat layouts and other information for your next flight before selecting a seat. Don’t get stuck in a narrow seat that doesn’t recline.

Award Mapper**:** A simple website with a map-based interface that tells you which hotels belong to various rewards programs.

Uber/Lyft

**Master Tour!!! (Essential for the side-person)**

Sign up for TSA Pre check or Global Entry. But you can keep Mobile Pass on your device as well.

A weather app. I use Dark Sky (because it was mentioned to me by stage managers from several festivals)

Train Apps like the one for the MTA (Metro Transit Authority). You can also buy tickets in advance.

Campermate (if you choose to use campsites while touring or days off)

# ****Food Apps****

Coffee Apps - Dunkin’ Donuts/Starbucks

Find Me Coffee

Closest Cup

Cuppings

Yelp

Open Table

Tasteful

Happy Cow - for vegan and vegetarian eating establishments.

Postmates/Grubhub/Door Dash/Uber Eats

Zomato (formerly Urbanspoon)

BarHopper (aka Happy Hour Finder)

# ****Photography Apps****

Quik- GoPro app

Color Splash (for altering the color of your photos)

Over (for making quick poster/flyer type posts out of your photos)

No Crop

Pic Stitch

In Shot and Video shop for Instagram posts with templates.

# ****Physical Health Apps****

My Fitness Pal

Strava

Map My Run

Trail Link

NY Times 7 min workout (on the road hotels)/10K steps a day (Manpo-kei).

## **Mental Health**

Backline, Talkspace, Headspace, [BetterHelp](http://betterhelp.com/verywell/?aff_sub2=4692902&aff_sub3=nbc9149698e3e45d58dad6f412a450f8005)

**Stress:** [Sanvello](https://www.sanvello.com/" \t "_blank), **Addiction:** I Am Sober

**Sleep:** Calm, **Anxiety:** Worry Watch

**10.** **Useful Organizations for the Musician**

American Federation of Musicians (The Musicians Union – AFM)

Be An Arts Hero

PROs-Performing Rights Organizations (ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, SOCAN, PRS, and other organizations like Sound Exchange and the Harry Fox Agency).

Americans for the Arts

Jazz Foundation of America

Country Music Association (CMA)

National Independent Venue Association (NIVA)

Artist Rights Alliance

Music Workers Alliance

National Independent Talent Organization (NITO)

Touring Professionals Alliance

Arts Alliance Illinois

New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA)

Los Angeles County Arts Commission

Sceen Actors Guild/American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG/AFTRA)

Neighboring Rights Administrators – Lime Blue, ACTRA (Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists), PPL (UK)

The Recording Academy (Grammys)

Percussive Arts Society (PAS)

Woodwind/Brasswind

Jazz Educators Network (JEN)

Association of Performing Arts Professionals

National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM)

Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA)

Audio Engineering Society (AES)

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

Chamber Music America

Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association (MEIEA)

National Music Publishers Association

Independent Music Professionals United (IMPU)

American Association of Independent Music (A2IM)

Music Artist Coalition (MAC)

Backline/Black Mental Health Alliance (Mental Health and Wellness Resources)