

RPL/APEL PROPOSAL

Name Colin MacGregor

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Subject Area Creative industries

Certificated Learning N/A

I am able to demonstrate the development of the cult of the celebrity and to analyze how this has impacted on traditional platforms for the development of talent.

Through my involvement within the sector I am able to demonstrate a broad knowledge of the history of Scottish Music Hall Theatre and Scottish light entertainment from the early 20 century to the present day.

I can show a broad knowledge of the skills necessary for effective entertainment management evidenced through a critical analysis of my experience within theatre and cruise ship environments.

I can demonstrate performance skills on stage and in advertising production for the radio.

I can demonstrate the ability to write, produce and market musical theatre shows paying particular attention to the following:

- **Development of a business plan**
- **Creation and development of a concept**
- **Securing funding**
- **Introduce innovation to the genre**
- **Encourage and develop new talent**
- **Arrange auditions and rehearsals**
- **Secure a venue for performances**
- **Manage sound and lighting including sourcing engineers and organising rehearsals**
- **Create marketing and advertising materials**
- **Write press releases**
- **Investment in local economy by using provincial theatres**

Introduction

This Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning will endeavor to highlight, examine and scrutinize the opportunities open to young performers in Scotland over the last decade.

It will also examine the plight of variety theatre in Scotland since its roots over a century ago. Also, it will study the benefits of business theory in today's entertainment sector and explore performance theory and the role it plays in enhancing a performer.

On the back of the success of television shows such as 'The X Factor' and 'Britain's Got Talent,' ever increasing amounts of potential performers are signing up for drama and theatrical schools throughout Scotland. These schools, one could argue, cater for the growing demand among young people to follow in the footsteps of performers being elevated to instant success. But are these schools just exploiting youngsters who dream of instant success in this age of celebrity? What of those who want to make the entertainment sector their vocation? What does Scotland have to offer them? Are there any opportunities to progress naturally through an established circuit of venues, like the entertainment icons of the past, or is there a void hindering the production of new Scottish homegrown talent?

The Cult of the Celebrity

Is the modern day cult of the celebrity a monster created by the media to sell their newspapers, television shows and magazines to an ever delusional public? Or, is it a phenomenon created by the public themselves to see life from a different and better prospective? Whichever one is true, one thing is clear, and that is the profound effect it has on a new generation who absorb this new cult and who dream of aspirations that are

probably well beyond their reach. Koladiyil says that these aspirations of stardom have gone so far in that they effect the education of a young generation:

A whole generation of young men and women influenced by celebrity culture now believe

education and hard work are not important for success. And this concern has been voiced

by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers. A survey of more than 70 per cent of primary and secondary school teachers feel celebrity culture has become a hindrance to children's aspirations and dreams. (Koladiyil, 2010, p 1).

If this is the case, then it would seem logical to educate the young generation in the realities of this new cult of celebrity and put forward the harsh fact that with each success comes tens of thousands of dejected dreams.

The word 'celebrity' seems to be on everyone's lips nowadays, and it seems that the whole world wants to be on television. Some people, indeed, will do just about anything for their moment of fame, and those who aspire to be rich and famous but don't quite make it are left feeling less of a person. Witness the tears and tantrums of those who fail the auditions for shows such as The X Factor; such near-misses feel that they're abject failures. (Wright, 2006, p ix).

Here Wright concentrates on the talent show format, where it must be said that many of the contestants have only themselves to blame for opening themselves up to the scrutiny of the judges. But what of those talented contestants who don't quite make it this time around? Heartache and deep rooted feelings of rejection would be normal but some see it

as the end of their career, why? Could it be in this modern era these talent shows are the only springboard to success that they see? Certainly in Scotland it is hard to see any other routes for gaining success other than through one of these talent shows. Although other routes do exist they are very few and far between and with more and more private theatrical and drama schools opening up, there is less sustainable opportunities awaiting young performers after graduation. Theatrical and drama schools could and maybe should take collective responsibility in the education of a young aspiring performer to inform of the lack of opportunities and not just exploit them through this new cult of celebrity to create revenue. But of course this would be detrimental to their business. So maybe a government funded finishing school/production company would not go amiss in Scotland. A school that would not only create opportunities but would educate in a way that would also bring awareness to the pressures of success if a young performer was ever to make that successful leap into stardom. As suggested by Wright, stardom comes at a price:

As celebrities are catapulted from their relatively normal lives into a fantasy playground, it becomes increasingly impossible for them to hold on to their core personalities, to remember who they are. A void appears, and in this gaping hole a public persona grows, fighting for supremacy. The celebrity then projects a false image that they believe the public will buy into – and, of course, the public does. But now the celebrity has to live up to this image. Their life is no longer their own; they have become public property. All problems are aired and scrutinised under the bright lights of a theatre to which everyone is invited. (Wright, 2006, p xi).

It would seem though, that in this age of the celebrity, most youngsters would not find this a burden, in fact to the modern new celebrity this probably would be a welcome feature, one that they set out to achieve and part of their overall dream. But realism has to be installed from an early age, realism to the fact that very few ever reach this stage.

According to Rojek there are three forms of celebrity status: ascribed (royalty etc), achieved (via a given talent or knowledge) and attributed (credited by the media or general public):

The latter of these being a modern day phenomenon attributed to the expansion of the mass media. (Rojek, 2001, p18).

We only have to look to the talent show format and we see stardom being achieved, but it is also attributed, as it is the general public who vote for their favourite. With the rise in the televised talent show format, achieved celebrity and attributed celebrity now seem to be one and the same. With this now comes a sense of ownership, a sense that the artist is at the will of the people who put him there, to be raised or dropped at a whim. This ability is what the public would seem to demand these days, but all too often they do not realize that it is the media who wield the greatest power in the marketing of a celebrity:

The celebrity exists above the real world, in the realm of symbols that gain and lose value

like commodities on the stock market. (Marshall, 1997, p6)

It seems here that Marshall is stating that the individual celebrity is a business, and like all businesses if you do not have a sellable product then you are doomed. In other words,

no matter how much talent a performer has to give, if the media does not see a sellable product, then the chances of the performer making a success through their talent becomes greatly reduced. Unfortunately this theory also implies to the person who has very little in the way of talent but becomes a celebrity through the fact they are a sellable product via there looks and lifestyle, take Katie Price and Paris Hilton as examples.

Attributed stardom is all very well as long as there is still a route open for achievement out with the talent show format. The work hard ethics and natural progressive learning path of pub, club, production company, variety theatre then television taken by our performers of old has been slowly eroded away by lack of venues, lack of funding and most of all a modern way of life with entertainment largely taking place at home through the invention of home entertainment system. The void that was once filled with natural talent has now been filled with a new talent free cult of celebrity, a cult that has taken over as a new religion to its many young disciples who in this modern era according to Sihera:

Need nothing more than a role model for reflection, affirmation and to some sense authority. This is a new religion, a church of celebrity, that has been exploited by the modern media for its own gains. (Sihera, 2010, p1).

Many of the older generation would say that today there is a lack of traditional family values and respect. According to Sihera could it be that today's role models are to blame? Celebrities like Katie Price and Paris Hilton with their lack of morals are corrupting today's youth? Or do we just firmly place the blame at the feet of the media monster? One thing we must remember is the fact that not all natural talented celebrities are angels

and most role models through the ages have had the ability to corrupt the youth of the day.

An alarming lack of experience is shown by Scottish applicants applying for positions within the entertainment sector. The reason being is the lack of opportunities to enhance their C.V.'s out with their schools. While most have performed on stage at their drama or dance school, this does not constitute as an advantage because, wither they are talented or talentless they **are** at some stage going to perform within their school, it's what they achieve after that tends to count. Could this be because most youngsters are taught at privately run drama and theatrical schools by someone with probably limited experience of performing on stage themselves? This suspicion arose when most private schools that were originally 'schools of dance' suddenly changed their titles to dance, drama and theatrical schools on the back of the celebrity boom. These private schools are still important in the development of our youngsters today, as they educate in the art of communication, teamwork, transferable skills and friendship. But is that not how they should be viewed and not as a serious stepping-stone within the entertainment sector.

Conclusion

Through this modern cult of celebrity era, some youngsters could be exploited. It is clear that an opportunity exists for production companies who will provide a real stepping-stone. The Scottish Arts Council, government and local councils could invest in smaller production companies, companies who provide real opportunities for youngsters to advance within the industry and help in the development of our stars of the future. In doing so we might even see, with the help of the television talent show 'Britain's got talent' the return of an old institution, the Variety Music Hall Theatre.

The History of Music Hall Theatre

Music hall was a 19th century phenomenon. Originating in the back rooms of pubs and gin palaces, where the bawdiness of the clientele and the performers prompted the authorities to take steps to close them down, music hall as a form of recognised entertainment was established by profit minded entrepreneurs who wanted to tap into this new kind of entertainment. These entrepreneurs built licensed halls with the view of attracting a better class of audience by providing a better class of entertainer. They succeeded mostly in the latter as the new style venues continued to be frequented by predominantly male working class audiences. A typical music hall evening would consist of dancers, singers and a main act, which was always a comedian. These performers would appear individually, with continuity being provided by a chairman. The chairman, who was a performer in his own right, would sit at the side of the stage and bang his desk with a small mallet for order, or to introduce the next act. Alcohol, tobacco and food were all available, and at times the food might well be thrown at the performers. It was no wonder that many people felt horror at the mention of the music hall. In their attempts to improve things, the music hall owners started to hire comedians from south of the border, mainly London. These comedians came with a huge reputation, but although funny in their own right, most suffered miserably at the hands of a typical Scottish music hall audience, and nowhere more so than in Glasgow:

Scottish working class audiences of the time would have found it hard to see humour in

a joke about life in London. This was the start of a traditional reputation that carried on right up until the late 20th century. (Scottish music hall society).

Scottish repertory theatre in the early 20th century was also having its problems through a distinct lack of writers from the Scottish literary scene. It was becoming very rare indeed to hear any form of Scottish dialect on a Scottish repertory theatre stage. A breakthrough came in the late 40's when a form of theatrical Scots was spoken in Robert McLeish's *'The Gorbals Story'* and Ena Lamont Stewart's *'Men Should Weep,'* but it wasn't until 1974, that the language heard in everyday street life, was successfully brought to the contemporary stage in the production *'The Sash'*, which was followed by *'The Jesuit'*, *'The Hard Man'* and *'Slab Boys'*. In terms of audience, perhaps due to the lack of Scottish dialect representation, repertory theatre had come a poor second to music hall/ variety theatre in Scotland up until this period.

George Munro, who was part of the Glasgow Unity Theatre in the 1940's, wrote:

'Here be deserts and wild beasts', wrote medieval cartographers: and so, cryptically, would I write Scotland's name upon any theatre chart... ..dramaturgically speaking, Scotland is in the bronze age, still'. (Randall Stevenson & Gavin Wallace, 1996).

And the dramatist Alexander Reid wrote in the 1950's:

'The return to Scots is a return to meaning and sincerity. We can only grow from our own roots and our roots are not English. If we are to fulfil our hope that Scotland may some day

make a contribution to World Drama.....we can only do so by cherishing, not repressing our national peculiarities (including our language)'. (Randall Stevenson & Gavin Wallace, 1996).

In the 1890's, music hall stepped up a gear because of its immense popularity, and became an interchangeable term with variety. At the head of the revolution, or evolution, was Edward Moss. Moss built a large theatre in Edinburgh, the Empire Palace, to host music hall performers. The title on one of the Moss Empire programmes said, 'High Class Music & Varieties'. The term 'varieties' struck a chord with the patrons and the genre 'variety theatre' was born, perhaps as a conscious effort to distance the new theatre from the rough and ready music hall scene. Music hall continued to exist, and soon became a training ground for performers wishing to step up to the more professional level of Variety. But in 1914 with the start of the War, Parliament banned all food and alcohol in auditoriums, it was the end of traditional Music Hall. In Variety theatre there was no longer a chairman; the acts would not only perform individually, but also collectively taking in an opening number and a finale, along with the odd comedy scene. It had become a production show. After World War one, with more and more theatres being built to host this form of entertainment, circuits became the norm, which in turn gave birth to the agent, who would put together professional companies in pre-produced variety shows. By 1930 there were variety theatres in every seaside resort, town and city in Scotland:

It was reputed that there were 60 within easy reach of Motherwell alone, and the famous music hall performer George Clarkson quoted that it took him a total of two years to do a

circuit of these theatres. (Scottish music hall society)

By the mid 30's however, cinema had risen dramatically in popularity. Small theatre owners often found it more profitable to convert their premises into a cinema, those who didn't simply closed down. By the start of World War two, only the theatres in our cities, major towns and our Scottish holiday destinations of the time remained.

The Revue Show was a type of entertainment that came into being after World War Two, this was a show that had a theme, and at times a thinly veiled story line. Some of these shows were born out of a new sense of national pride, the most famous being the *White Heather Show*. They were all tartan affairs, which, although there had been Scottish styled shows in the past with the odd tartan clad performer, took the sense of Scottish identity to a new level. Their success was even greater in the colonial countries. By the 1950's the revue show had found success in touring, while the variety show had become a static seasonal production show, popular mainly in the West of Scotland. By mid 60's, with more and more of the population able to afford a television, variety was at an end. Many of its stars turned to television. One was Stanley Baxter, another was a whole show, the *White Heather Show*, which became the *White Heather Club* and brought instant fame and legendary status to performers such as Andy Stewart, Kenneth McKeller, Jimmy Shand, Calum Kennedy, Johnny Beattie and the Alexander Brothers. This however was not a true representation of Scottish variety theatre, but a Scottish national novelty show for the much wider audience south of the border. The closure in 1976 of the Winter Garden in Rothesay marked another end for Scottish variety theatre. There were no more 'doon the water' entertainment expeditions for west coast patrons

as Blackpool, with its cheap and affordable board, was now just as easy to go to. All that was left of successful Scottish variety was pantomime, an opportunity that was grasped by contemporary theatres such as the Citizens. Literary theatre saw a box office opportunity that was contrary to their natural theatrical preferences and programming. It was a dramatic contradiction, as some of these theatres did not even support Scottish literary pieces (preferring foreign contemporary works) and new Scottish playwrights, never mind Scottish variety and pantomime.

The argument on biased funding

Something of a change took place in the early 70's that is confusing within the context of theatre popularity. If variety theatre was suffering then surely contemporary drama theatres must have been suffering also?

Scottish drama came to the fore in the 70's, probably brought on by the nations surge for political independence, it was short lived and eventually suppressed by the financial constraints put on it by Tory rule in the early 80's. Contemporary theatres looking for funding turned to the visual arts and imports? Was this an individual decision by the theatres or, could the decision have been made for them by the financial bodies? Here Scottish playwrights began to suffer through lack of budget. They could not compete with the larger imported companies who had superior set designs and larger casts. The Scottish playwright who had too much of a chance to stir the nation, had become stifled and it wouldn't be until post devolution that Scottish theatre would have a voice again through companies such as TAG:

After Tory rule between 1999 and 2002 TAG sought to raise debate amongst young people, by engaging them both intellectually and emotionally in issue surrounding the developing nation and by exciting them through the mediums of drama and theatre to engage with the political process. (Blandford, 2007, p 145).

Funding that had been eradicated under Tory rule came flooding back into Scottish Theatre:

The Scottish Executive allocated an initial £7.5m of funding to establish a theatre that was a 'commissioner' and would draw principally on Scotland's existing talent in order to produce work that could happen anywhere across the country. (Blandford, 2007, p 146).

Alas, none of this money allocated would be given to the upkeep of the traditional variety provincial theatres that kept variety alive. Since the demise of variety theatre and the closure of theatres such as the Winter Gardens in Rothesay, money had been made available in one way or another to contemporary theatres throughout Scotland to expand or refurbish. Theatres such as the Tron, Citizens, Royal Lyceum, His Majesty's and the Tramway, theatres that champion imports and tended to turn their backs on Scottish literary and variety theatre benefited. Today, many of the smaller provincial theatres that used to host variety stand empty and in disrepair. Run by local councils, the people who are left in charge of these theatres have dual positions within the council due to cut backs and do not see running the theatre as their

priority, yet the Scottish Arts Council and city councils aided in funds and facilities to maintain a more or less viable existence for contemporary imports. Surely some form of assistance could have been given to maintain a form of theatre that for nearly a century was the heart and soul of a good night out for the working class people of Scotland?

During the 70's and 80's there was a company that, along with its sister company, tried to bridge a gap by taking repertory theatre out to the working class via any performance area they could find available. They hit a chord with the people through their socialistic material, which was a dangerous thing to do in the wake of a Thatcherite government and it was to play a part in their downfall:

Of all the art forms, theatre is traditionally the one most closely associated with ideas about nations and nationhood. At its simplest, theatre is a public arena where people who live in the same place, and usually speak the same language can come together to share experience; to recognize dilemmas, identify conflicts, laugh at enemies, celebrate achievements or mourn great losses. It's no accident that in capital cities all over the world, since the rise of nation-states as our most important political communities, national theatres have tended to stand cheek by jowl with presidential places and parliamentary buildings as symbols of the national community. (Macmillan 2003: p4)

The 7:84 company, and its sister company Wildcat in the early 70's were the darlings of small time contemporary theatre and received funding from the Scottish branch of the Arts Council. But when 7:84 took their socialistic material to the communities of Scotland in search of a new audience, it didn't sit well with the Thatcherite government,

and 7:84 and Wildcat lost it's funding from the Scottish Arts Council. Now, some people will debate that the reason that funding ceased was due to financial errors within the company. But, others will argue that it was due to their socialistic material during the time of Tory rule, and their association and popularity within the working class communities which mirrored Glasgow Unity Theatres fate under Tory rule in the early 50's:

When the Scottish Arts council simultaneously granted revenue funding to Suspect Culture and cut funding to Wildcat. Without singling out Suspect Culture by name, John McGrath grumbled in the 'Herald' that money had transferred from political work to 'theatre for west end yuppies'. (Rebellato 2003, p 62)

For some, typified by John McGrath mentioned above, Suspect Culture's refusal to be explicit about the politics of their work is a frustration and an indication of an elitist theatre surrendered to fashionable metropolitan values. (Blandford, 2007, p 149).

It could be said that Thatcherism was finalizing the demise of Scottish socialistic theatre.

Scottish theatre and politics

As already established Scottish theatre pre Thatcherism era was very much left wing and nationalistic:

Nationalist parties gained some purchase in both Scotland and Wales during the 70's. (Vinen, 2009, p 209).

Thatcher herself wrote:

there was still too much socialism in Britain. The fortunes of socialism do not depend on those of the Labour Party: in fact, in the long run it would be truer to say that Labour's fortunes depend on those of socialism. (Thatcher, 1995, p306: Vinen, 2009, p299).

But Thatcherism itself was a confusing issue, its goals divided even the most left wing of parties i.e., the Marxists, via its aims in privatization:

For some contributors to Marxism today, the urgency of their day-to-day analysis of Thatcherism seems to have gone with a declining interest in Marxist theory. (Vinen, 2009, p312).

Thatcherism became a delusion for Scotland and its theatre, was there a hidden agenda?

According to Marxist theory:

those groups who own the means of production thereby control the means of producing and circulating a society's ideas. Through their ownership of publishing houses, newspapers and latterly the electronic media, the dominant classes subject the masses to ideologies which make the social relations of domination and oppression appear natural and so mystify the 'real' conditions of existence. (Hall, 1997, p347)

7:84, Wildcat and Scottish theatre as a whole could be said to be putting too many social and nationalistic ideas into the heads of the Scottish working class and according to Marxism:

Ideas affect society and society affects ideas. (Reiss, 1997, p75)

Marx himself went on to state:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it....The individuals composing the ruling class...rule also the thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. (Ibid., 59: Reiss, 1997, p75).

Although the above had a profound effect on Scottish theatre as a whole, it certainly sent Scottish variety theatre into oblivion possibly aided by the puppets of a Thatcherite government.

Conclusion

Since 1990, and Glasgow's success as European city of culture, there have been a couple of notable changes in Scottish theatre. First, the National Theatre Company. And second, the spiralling success of the Edinburgh festival. In Variety, the only thing of note was the sad affair of the last ever Francie & Josie show; the last ever truly great music hall comedy performance in Scotland. In the new millennium variety is still breathing. The Kings theatre Glasgow has been known to facilitate the odd variety style show usually brought in from down south. The Pavilion in Glasgow is still a great

supporter of variety, and in utilizing Scottish talent, has an appeal to the partisan working class audience. However, they use the same writers, the same performers and the same directors, with the result that the shows sometimes seem stale, with the same jokes being reused in the numerous serials of a particularly themed show. In television the same formula seems to apply. All commissioned work comes from two production companies, 'Effingee' (Chewing the Fat and Still Game), and 'the Comedy Unit' (Rab C Nesbit). Today, while Scottish variety theatres stand abandoned, more drama and theatrical schools are opening up, and in this age of the celebrity, more and more want to be stars of the future are pouring in. Today's gifted performers do not necessarily create celebrity appeal and further advancement within the entertainment world seems to come under the power of the media and the desires of its audience. So what is really there for talented youngsters when they look for work or experience or indeed an education into this modern cult of the celebrity, unfortunately not a lot.

I can show a broad knowledge of the skills necessary for effective entertainment management.

As a producer, director or entertainment manager, you should instill into the cast members the importance of being part of a team. Not one individual member of a cast can be the star. Better to be part of a team in a successful show, than to be the star of an unsuccessful one. The producer, director or entertainment manager as the point of authority has to believe in their cast and make them believe in themselves. Confidence is paramount, not only to the new artist but also to the professional artist who has confidence by the score, as the entertainment business is full of envy and

competitiveness. Young performers must be nurtured and taught the values of sincerity within their performance. Perviz Sawoski in writing about the father of modern acting theory, Konstantin Stanislavski, said:

Stanislavski believed that the quality of the actor's performance depended upon the sincerity of his experience. (Sawoski, 2010, p19).

Young performers should be encouraged towards this theory and to develop further learning skills and theories that combine with their given individual strengths. William O. Beeman of Brown University attempts to break this learning process into three dimensions:

Seeing how a performer learns performance skills is an essential aspect of learning to study performance. Any individual who wants to achieve success in performance behavior needs to recognize their own abilities – knowing what they are good at and have an easy facility for. Skills can always be developed. The process of honing any performance skill involves three dimensions:

- 1. Analytic – the performer must assess the task and what s/he needs to accomplish to achieve successful representation.*
- 2. Technical – the performer must develop the necessary motor skills to actually carry out the performative activity.*
- 3. Interpretive – the performer must develop a method of making the performative activity uniquely their own – an embodiment of their own skill.*

(Beeman, 1997, p5)

Beeman would seem to agree that while a young performer should recognize their own ability they should still be prepared to open up to reflect and enhance on that ability.

A valuable trait in a director, producer or manager is the ability to admit that you are not always correct. An ability to listen to other points of view can gain the respect of a cast. Cast meetings are an essential part of this process where performers can put their points across, not only on their role but, also on the production as a whole. Being in management is all about being part of a team while all the time guiding everyone in the right direction. Responsibility for the well-being of your cast and crew is paramount not only during production but sometimes it delves into their private lives. All round experience and understanding is vital but you must be strong if you have to gain respect. Your private problems must be thrown to one side as it is you who must stay level headed in trying times, and it is important that there is one thing you should never do and that is lose your head.

At times being an entertainment manager/director/producer is not just about the cast and the team that you are working with, there is the business side to be taken care of also.

One of the fundamental problems usually associated with the business side of the entertainment business, after funding, is marketing:

Marketing is the process of developing and implementing a plan to identify, anticipate and satisfy consumer demand, in such a way as to make a profit. (The Times 100, 2010, p1).

At times it is necessary to implement a marketing plan prior to the writing of a show, this helps in finding out wither it is the right product for the time. But it is paramount after writing to make sure the promotion of the product is maximized. Most entertainment companies of old were product-oriented companies who had a ready market place for

their said product. But nowadays it seems that more and more companies are learning to adapt and see value in a marketing approach:

A market orientated company is one that organizes its activities, products and services around the wants and needs of its customers. By contrast, a product-orientated firm has its primary focus on its product – and on the skills, knowledge and systems that support that product. Until the late 20th century many firms were product-orientated and failed to understand the changing needs of their customers in an increasingly competitive marketplace. (The Times 100, 2010, p1).

Although the above refers to companies mostly out with the entertainment world, it is still relevant to the sector. I myself changed my company Stage-Elite into a market-orientated company as well as a product-orientated company in order to write my commissioned show, ‘Mistletoe and the Devines’ and took my bearings from such quotes as:

Successful companies recognize the importance of both approaches. Products must start with the needs and wants of customers. But delivery of a profitable product depends on efficiency and quality in production. (The Times 100, 2010, p1).

Of all the aspects of marketing, pricing your product is a major contribution to the success or failure of the product. The Times 100 says on this matter:

The price of an item is clearly an important determinant of the value of sales made. In theory, price is really determined by the discovery of what customers perceive is the value of the item on sale. (The Times 100, 2010, p2).

As quoted above marketing comes to the fore when deciding the cost of a show as many aspects have to be taken into account. Aspects such as time and circumstances, are we in a recession, what is your target audience, is it for teenagers or the middle age bracket, and what are other theatres charging for such a show. All of these are accountable when pricing a product. In other words, there is no use in charging a low income target audience with top end prices at a second rate theatre, it just simply would not be of value.

In being a manager/director/producer within the entertainment business, it is worthwhile remembering that it is just that, a business, and some form of business knowledge and theory is what could make a good manager/director/producer a great manager/director/producer.

I can demonstrate performance skills on stage and in radio advertising production.

An important weapon in the successful performers psyche is the alter ego. Used in the correct manner it can bring something extra to a performance.

Finding your alter ego is not easy, but one way to achieved this is to envisage yourself as being part of the audience watching yourself perform. What would entertain you? What kind of performance would you like to see and hear? It is then just a matter of being that performer, that other person that you envisage before you.

William O. Beeman talks about another altered state of mind that is called 'flow':

Flow is the experience of loss of sense of the physical body or of conscious control of

one's own actions when one becomes totally engaged in a given activity. This typically takes place when the activity is not so familiar as to be boring, and not so challenging as to be anxiety producing. (Beeman, 1997, p7).

He goes on to say:

Effective performance also involves the concomitant ability to enter 'flow'. Part of the ability of any individual to engage in successful performance activity is the ability to make that activity appear effortless and natural. (Beeman, 1997, p7).

One only has to remember a situation of meeting a famous person from stage or screen only to find out that they are not the person you were made to believe they were. Could this be because they adopt an alter ego on stage or do they quite simply enter the 'flow' while performing? There are many performers out there who are a different personality away from their entertainment roles.

It is important as a stage performer to connect with your audience. Beeman says of this matter:

An audience, whether it be 25,000 people, or one person sets conditions for the performer to deal with. The performance event is, in any case always an act of co-creation between performer and audience. (Beeman, 1997, p8).

If humour is part of your act you must endear yourself to them, one way to do that is by poking fun at yourself, a trick used by many a comedian. Another way to is to make them believe that you are performing to each as an individual by making eye contact with

all of them, this is obviously easy to do for the front rows of a theatre, but what about the rest? A way round this is to focus on the very back row itself, everyone from half way back in your line of vision will then believe that they have eye contact with you.

Many amateur singers want to over perform when they sing, it tends to make up for their lack of connection with their audience. Every adjective tends to come complete with an obligatory hand gesture that rams home the importance of the line being sung. This to amateur singers is falsely regarded as a 'performance'. The occasional hand gesture in the right place is not a bad thing but, it is the voice and the emotion within it that makes a vocal performance. Beeman would tend agree with this if we look at his four strategies of performance:

1. *Timing – the ability to display symbolic elements precisely at a time when they will most effectively convey an intended meaning.*
2. *Charisma – the ability to engage and hold the attention of an 'audience.' This can be a shared function, as in a conversation when individuals take turns at narration.*
3. *Focus and Concentration – the ability to concentrate fully on the task of accomplishing a representation provides engagement for individuals being affected by the performance.*
4. *Freshness and Spontaneity – the ability to display symbolic materials in novel and unexpected ways is a means of capturing the attention of an 'audience'.*

(Beeman, 1997, p5).

A way forward for the amateur singer, is quite simply the fact that they need to engage more with their audience and to realize that it is the emotion in their voice that stirs the audience into appreciation. One way of harnessing this emotion is touched upon by Periz Sawoski when he quotes Konstantin Stanislavski:

The performer can stir the needed emotion in him/herself by remembering a parallel

situation having a similar emotion. This emotion would then need to be brought out at the

exact moment when called for on stage. This 'evoking' of the past experience was called 'Emotional recall'. Thus, through rehearsal and training techniques, the actor developed a conditional reflex. (Sawoski, 2010, p20).

It is clear here that what is being referred to is of someone in the acting profession but, it could easily be associated to anyone within the entertainment sector.

Stanislavski touches in the above that rehearsal should be an important factor in the development of a performance, however Beeman says:

Too much rehearsal or preparation dehumanizes the performance, and makes it less believable. (Beeman, 1997, p6).

It could be said here that each individual performer has different beliefs and confidence in how much rehearsal time they need, but one thing that Beeman would agree to is the fact that no matter how much rehearsal time is needed, as long as the performer, come performance time, had the ability in themselves to enter the 'flow'.

In radio productions a performer can feel more at ease as they do not have the visual medium to distract from the performance, and also because most radio performances are pre-recorded, reducing the risk of mistakes.

In the production of radio adverts, a producer must instil in the performer the fact that it is not the presenter but the product that is on show. In radio advertising the audience

reaction is paramount, you must have a hook. The hook could come in the way of a musical ditty that more often than not hits home owing to the fact that it is annoying or, it can be a more pleasant comedy piece. Whichever tactic is used, it is important that the information, or message is conveyed in a clear and easy to follow way and that the product or company in question gets mentioned as many times as possible.

Writing, producing and marketing, for musical theatre shows (A Case Study).

In order to write shows with audience appeal, many visits to shows within the Scottish music hall comedy genre as possible were arranged. Using one of the most famous acts of Scottish music hall comedy Francie & Josie as a benchmark, a review was embarked upon regarding the few shows on offer which could possibly educate and offer an insight into the modern mindset of a paying public. The information gathered was disappointing, as expected most were dull affairs with the major contribution being the glorious sets and the B list celebrity. The review then turned to television. Having acquired the scripts of some of the great comedy shows such as 'Porridge' ect, gave a clue. A show that had comedic qualities but was not just stand-up, one that had a thinly veiled plot that was easy to understand and follow and was strong in comedy dialogue, with good music and audience participation, was the goal. With this concept in mind, pen was set to paper. After working out the 'beginning, middle and end' story line, many comedic lines were written and cut out then placed on a board in an order familiar with the storyline. After this it was like the piecing together of a jigsaw. Many pauses were deliberately written in to allow the audience the scope to use their imagination prior to the punch line. The most important factor in the comedy was familiarity, i.e. comedy that the audience

could relate to. It was important, in this instance, to understand the target audience.

Producing a show is not just about getting prepared to write it, you must:

- Create a concept
- Gather funding
- Find a director
- Audition
- Find rehearsal rooms
- Create marketing and advertising material
- Produce and create photo's for marketing and advertising material
- Sell the show to venues
- Prepare press releases
- Organise radio and newspaper interviews
- Organise the music
- Organise promotional performances at fairs and public events
- Find potential sound & lightning engineers
- Organise sound and lighting rehearsals

The biggest lesson learned to date has been in marketing and advertising.

Marketing and advertising is highly important and also hugely expensive. With only a SCOTVEC in marketing as a safety net, I enrolled the aid of two professionals, one in media P.R., and the other who ran a company experienced in marketing and selling shows to theatres. This was a potential financial disaster waiting to happen, as the costs of having any two individuals onboard would affect any small profit margin. Having spent valuable time in correcting their mistakes, the decision was made to extinguish the working relationship, but not before a conscious effort was made to learn how these individuals went about their professional business. It was only afterwards that it was discovered that the person whose company which sold 'The Wise Guys' show to the theatres, was using the show as an experimentation to 'test the water' before promoting their booking of Lena Martell and Joe Longthorn. This saved his clients advertising costs by gauging the public's attendance at my show and

consequently withdrawing these two performers if my feedback was negative. On a plus note I now have the necessary experience in media and selling shows to theatres, which is invaluable for future productions and tours. Most provincial theatres are now run on a very low budget, this has resulted in a cutback in staffing levels to the extent that the person in charge of the theatre has more than one position of responsibility, and regrettably at times the day to day operation of the theatre is the least of these. This jeopardizes the effective running of the theatre and, in turn, the full backing of the theatre that a show requires. For example, the local theatre in Helensburgh is run by the manager of the local council leisure centre. It was arranged via telephone that £400 worth of advertising material i.e., posters and flyers would be sent to his office at the leisure centre which he would then distribute and display at various venues around the town. During a reconnaissance of the theatre, one week before the show, it was discovered that all the advertising material which had been sent him, was still boxed up in his office. His words were, 'I don't care about the theatre, I didn't ask to run it'. Always, take time out at least two weeks in advance of show time to visit the venue.

The year 2006 saw the successful launch of 'The Wise Guys', show at the Motherwell Civic Theatre followed by a nine-date tour of one-night performances at provincial theatres around Scotland. On the back of an opening night success and my company ideals of presenting opportunities to potential new talent, I was commissioned to write, produce and direct a Christmas show for the Motherwell Concert Hall and North Lanarkshire Council. This second show, being a commissioned Christmas show, was slightly more challenging in its concept. Research had to be undertaken as

to who was the target audience of the venue in question (Motherwell Concert Hall). It was ascertained that the target audience would be predominantly family and female. The decision was made to utilise as much of the local talent as possible incorporating the Bothwell Philharmonic Choir and a local children's drama and dance school along with pupils from Motherwell college. As for the story line, the premise was that it must be family orientated. However, with it being Christmas, it was felt that just being a family comedy infused with traditional music would not be enough for an audience to want to pay to see the show a second time. The question then hit 'what makes a female want to re-watch something at Christmas?' The answer was 'a movie with an emotional twist'. The show concept was complete. December 2006 saw the successful opening night of the family Christmas show, 'Mistletoe and the Devines.' A show that represented all my company stood for and which enhanced the experience of almost 70 performers of all ages. Beyond these two successes I was commissioned to write comic strips for Puffin Books reintroduction of their children's subscription magazine 'Puffin Post,' which had gone out of circulation in 1984. My input went beyond just writing the strips, as I created a new younger puffin to represent the new generation of young readers that Puffin Books wanted to attract, the fact that the old characters name was 'Fat Puffin,' made my argument all the easier as in this day of age it wouldn't have been politically correct. In a carefully written script I comically set about the death of the old puffin and introduced the new. I also introduced a sidekick for the new puffin, an idea that would make writing comedy scripts a little bit easier. There are other aspects I have added to the magazine such as Fun Facts followed by a comedy quote from the puffin. Puffin Post is a magazine that

can boast having had patrons such as Roald Dahl and Spike Milligan and who today have regular inputs from children's authors Charlie Higdon and Jeremy Strong. To establish myself beyond the theatre industry, I had to learn to adapt.

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