

Connecticut

Newsletter of the Connecticut
Songwriters Association

Songsmith



March 2013
Vol. XXXIV
Number 3
Issue # 391

Combining Arts,
Education, and
Community Outreach

1979-2012 : 33 Years of Combining Arts, Education, and Community Outreach

Why Is a Hit a Hit? (All Hits Are Not Created Equal)

Wednesday March 13, 7:15pm at the Glastonbury YMCA (Welles St at Fox Run Mall) – see directions on pg 2

Sometimes we hear a great song and wonder why it's not a hit. Sometimes we hear a totally banal song that any 10-year old could have written and wonder why it is sitting atop the charts. Understanding the separation of popularity and quality is a key skill for songwriting success (see the related article in this issue).

Successful songwriter, author, and past CSA President **Joe Manning** joins us for a very special session – Critiquing and analyzing successful hit songs that have "made it" on the charts. YOU bring the songs and Joe, along with co-host Bill Pere will look at the presence or absence of good songwriting elements. We'll see why a song makes it or fails to make it, and what factors are at work. These are key insights that you can apply to your own writing.

Select a commercially released song, successful or not, that you would like to have discussed. Bring the song on CD WITH MULTIPLE LYRIC SHEETS. The song will be played and analyzed.

See what's really going on in those songs that everyone says is "good" but you can't quite see why. Joe Manning is one of CSA's most successful members, with major cuts and honors over a decades-long career

This program is free to members, \$10 for non-members. Come and give your career a boost. Bring a friend!

**Success comes from opportunity.
Opportunity comes from involvement.
Get involved!**

CRITIQUE SESSIONS

Following regular CSA programs, as time permits, there will be a critique session. To participate in the critique session, members may bring a song on CD (or do it live), with 15 copies of typed lyric sheets, and receive constructive feedback. Critique sessions are a good forum for works in progress or rough demos. For best feedback, note on your lyric sheets the intended genre and audience for your song, and what your goals are (i.e. picked up by a commercial artist, self-produce, etc.). The programs at most CSA monthly meetings, except for special workshops, are free to members, \$10 to non-members, applicable toward membership if you join within 30 days. Members are encouraged to bring a friend who might be interested in what CSA offers. .

CSA EVENT CALENDAR

(for complete listing see www.ctsongs.com)

- Mar 13 - CSA Meeting, Glastonbury;
"What Makes it a Hit?" with Joe Manning
- Apr 6 – PRO WOPRKSHOP with major industry pro
- Apr 12-14 - CSA Songwriting Retreat
- Apr 27 2012 - Voices For Hope Finals
- May 07 - Colloaboration Workshop, Mystic
- June 12 – CSA Meeting, Glastonbury
- June 23 – CSA Summer Showcase/Picnic
J.B. Williams Park
- July - Meeting at Wesleyan Univ.
- Sept 11 – CSA Meeting, Glastonbury
- Fall 2012 - IMC Conference
- Nov - Meeting at Wesleyan Univ.
- Dec 4 – CSA Meeting, Glastonbury
- Dec 7 – The 17th Annual LUNCH Holiday Show

REGISTER NOW for the April 12-14 SONGWRITING RETREAT.

**See why folks are coming from L.A. and
Canada to this amazing weekend! Give your
career a major boost. Limited to 12 slots.
Slots are filling. Don't miss out!**

More than half the slots are gone – don't delay.

Guiding Artists Along the Path from Creation to Realization to Proliferation

CSA RHYTHM AND NEWS

Directions to Glastonbury YMCA (Welles St.) : From I-91 going north or south:

Take Exit 25 over the CT River onto Route 3 to Glastonbury. Bear right onto Route 2 towards Norwich. Take Exit 8 (Hebron Av.) off Route 2 and go right at the late onto Hebron Av. Go right at the next light which is New London Turnpike. Take first left (Welles St.) and a quick right into the Fox Run Mall. Go straight, park anywhere and look for CSA signs near People's Bank.

From I-84 east or west: Take Exit 55 onto Route 2 towards Glastonbury to Exit 8. See above. **From Norwich / New London area:** Take Route 2 to Exit 8 in Glastonbury and go right and a quick left onto Hebron Av. Go 2 lights to New London Tpk. See above

How to
Get There!

PLEASE NOTE: If you have any used printer ink cartridges, please bring them with you to the meeting. CSA can recycle them and receive a donation.

TAX SEASON !

GET A NICE TAX DEDUCTION FOR YOUR OLD STUFF !

If you have any old music or office equipment lying around or just old "stuff" that you don't need, consider donating it to CSA and you'll get a generous tax deduction ! CSA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all items donated to us can be deducted at their maximum fair market value. We have helped many folks get nice deductions for their old items, which certainly can be useful to us either in our regular CSA programs or our community outreach programs through LUNCH. We can use any office equipment and supplies, computers and electronics, any type of music and studio equipment, and any type of item that could be used for auction or raffle. We'll provide a tax receipt that will give you the best possible tax-deduction. If you have anything that you might like to donate, contact Bill Pere at bill@billpere.com. THANKS !

PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITY

Hot Fun in the Summertime

The Annual CSA Summer Showcase & Picnic !

Sunday, June 23, from 2pm to 5pm at J.B. Williams Memorial Park, on Neipsic Rd, Glastonbury. **RAIN OR SHINE!** CSA returns to this gorgeous facility for our popular annual event. There is a large covered pavilion with electricity, picnic tables, grills, volleyball, playground, hiking trails, pond, and convenient parking. We will host a songwriter showcase, from 2pm to 5pm with sound system provided. CSA members and friends may reserve a slot to showcase original songs. Do a few tunes or a whole set. Don Donegan is booking the slots on a first call basis. If you'd like to perform, call Don at 860-659-8992 or e-mail at DDCSA@aol.com. Please bring some food for the grill, a non-alcoholic beverage, a dish to share and some picnic items like plates, cups, and napkins. **The event is free**, so bring family and friends.

Directions:

From New London/Norwich: Take Rt 12 west to Exit 8 in Glastonbury. Go right, and right again onto Hebron Ave. Go 2 miles and turn right onto Wickham Rd. Go to end of Wickham and turn left on Neipsic. The park is one block on the left. >>>

From New Haven: Take I-91 North to Exit 25, Glastonbury. Cross CT River on Rt 3 and bear right on Rt 2 towards Norwich. Take Exit 9 off Rt 2 and go left on Neipsic Rd under Rt 2. Go 3/4 mile to park on the left.

From Hartford: Take I-91 South to Exit 25 (Glastonbury) and proceed as above.

From I-84 East or West: Take Rt 2 to Glastonbury to Exit 9 (Neipsic Rd) and proceed as above.

EACH YEAR DOZENS OF SONGWRITERS AND FRIENDS COME AND GO THROUGHOUT THE DAY. COME RELAX, SCHMOOZE, AND ENJOY THE COMPANY OF CREATIVE PEOPLE

For photos from previous events, check out the website photo album

LAST CHANCE !

CSA SONGWRITING RETREAT

**FAST-TRACK
YOUR
CAREER!**

What others have said:

"Life-Changing! "A Transformative Experience!"

"You've given me a whole new way to approach songwriting"

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN- LIMITED TO JUST 10 SLOTS

Slots are going - Reserve your spot now!

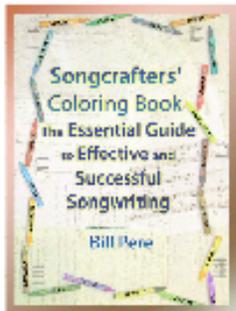
Take control of your creative process!

Take your songwriting to a new level!

Get several years worth of CSA knowledge in one weekend!

You'll see songwriting in a whole new way and
experience a level of creative control you never thought possible.

DON'T DELAY! TIME IS RUNNING OUT - Rates Go Up at the End of the Month!



April 12-14, 2012, at Camp Wightman, North Stonington, CT
A time away from the distractions of everyday life, where all you have to think about is your music. A beautiful setting in the woods, with meals and lodging provided, and a group size limited to 12. You'll get personalized attention guaranteed to give you new ways to improve the effectiveness of your writing, and bring it to a new level.

Artists from 9 states and 3000 miles have come to this retreat. It has been called "Transformative " and "Life-Changing". Folks are coming from L.A. and from Canada!
REGISTER NOW! DON'T BE LEFT OUT!

This program of Master Classes, performance and critique, is based on the concepts of Bill Pere's internationally acclaimed songwriting book, "Songcrafters' Coloring Book", and led by Bill and Kay. This content, presented nationally at major conference events, is not available anywhere else at this affordable cost. All the details about the program, the facilities, schedule and registration are online at: <http://www.ctsongs.com/Retreat/SongwritingRetreat.htm>
See what others have said -- Check photos /reviews of the last retreat at the CSA website

The program is limited to 10 participants. The earlier you register, the lower the cost, and it guarantees your spot. **The cost includes meals, lodging, and all workshops.**

(Note: If you have to arrive late or leave early, we cannot make cost adjustments).

Register by: Member rate is for active **members of CSA, RISA, Songsalive, IndieGrrl, IMC**

(Before Dec 1)	Member Rate = \$ 99	Non-member = \$115
(Dec 1 - Feb 28)	Member Rate = \$120	Non-member = \$145
(Mar 1 - Mar 25)	Member Rate = \$140	Non Member = \$165

Two ways to Register, for your maximum convenience and security:

1. PAYPAL SECURE REGISTRATION ONLINE (www.ctsongs.com)
2. BY MAIL: Send check or Money Order payable to CSA, PO Box 511, Mystic CT 06355 (Include your e-mail address, phone number, street address, and member ID # (if a member of CSA, RISA, IndieGrrl, IMC, or Songsalive).

QUESTIONS ? Check the Website for FAQ Info.

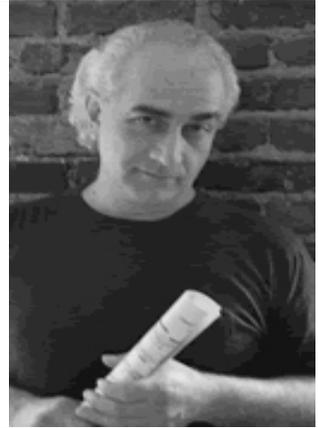
If you don't find what you need, e-mail us at retreat@ctsongwriting.com

Saturday April 6 – CSA Spring PRO Workshop

SPEND A DAY WITH A TOP PRO IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS

The Renaissance Man,
Dr. Louis Anthony DeLise

This CSA PRO Workshop will be held on Saturday April 6, 1pm-5pm at the **Morgan House in Mystic, 119 High St.** Registration (recommended in advance) is \$25 for CSA members, \$30 for non-members.



Space is limited. Advance registration is recommended
(online at www.ctsongs.com or send check to: CSA, PO Box 511, Mystic CT 06355)
Pre-registered folks get priority for critiques, as time is limited.

Dr. Lou DeLise is one of those rare people who has done almost everything in the music business. With classical training from Julliard and a PhD in music arts and composition, Lou has worked with many music icons in the realms of jazz, pop, and classical music including Luciano Pavarotti, Mel Tormé, Beverly Sills, Dianna Ross, Lou Rawls, Henry Mancini, Dave Brubeck, George Shearing, Mercer Ellington and many more. He has been an arranger and producer for major labels and has produced Patti LaBelle, among many others. Today, Lou works as a composer of concert music, arranges and conducts for pop records, composes for film and teaches at the Temple University Boyer College of Music and Dance. His recording credits include a number one chart album for Patti LaBelle, and many other pop chart records. His theme for the television series, PrimeTime (“It’s the PrimeTime of My Life”) is recognized as a Philadelphia classic.

You will likely never have another opportunity to learn from someone who has such a broad background in the craft and business of music, successfully spanning styles, artists, and decades.

Lou will speak about several aspects of the craft and business of music, answering your questions, and he will critique your songs from a perspective that you rarely get elsewhere.

REGISTER NOW – DON'T MISS OUT !

A GREAT HONOR FOR A LONG TIME CSA MEMBER !

CPTV Hosts Screening and Performance Event with Hartford's Albert Hurwit at the Wadsworth Atheneum

**-- Featuring World Premiere of PBS Special *Lifecasters* and Performance of "Remembrance" by Members of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra Directed by Michael Lankester --
Monday, February 4 at 7 p.m. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 600 Main Street, Hartford**



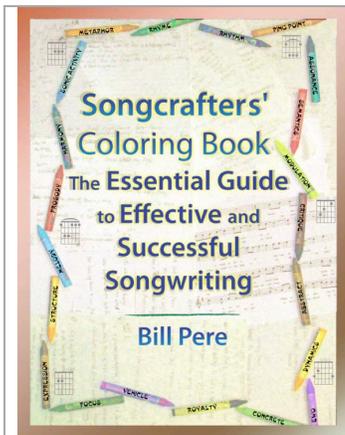
Connecticut Public Television (CPTV) is proud to host a very special evening celebrating the life and music of Hartford's Albert "Alby" Hurwit. On Monday, February 4 at 7 p.m., CPTV presented an exclusive screening and performance event at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford. The night began with a world premiere screening of a portion of the new PBS national special, *Lifecasters*. The TV special – made up of three independent films about Americans who have all discovered creative ways of realizing their dreams – contains one film called "The Gambling Man"

about the life of Alby Hurwit and his lifelong pursuit of music. Attendees got a sneak peek at the film before the national premiere of *Lifecasters* on Thursday, February 7 at 9 p.m., airing locally on CPTV.

Following the screening, eminent conductor, arranger and commentator Michael Lankester lead an illustrated talk about Hurwit's piece "Remembrance", the third movement of his award-winning **Symphony No. 1**. Lankester highlighted and explained key components of the musical composition with members of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra performing segments as an illustration. Then attendees enjoyed a full performance of the world premiere arrangement of "Remembrance" for string septet performed by members of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra (including HSO Concertmaster and First Violinist Leonid Sigal) and conducted by Michael Lankester.

Except for a few years in his childhood as an unremarkable piano student, Hurwit has had no formal musical training. He is a graduate of Harvard and Tufts Medical School. In 1986, Dr. Hurwit left a fulfilling medical career in order to pursue his dream of composing music. Using the technology of computers, software programs and synthesizers, supported by technology experts in CSA, he has been able to translate the music in his head into audible and written compositions. The result was his award-winning **Symphony No. 1**, a piece which won the 2009 American Composer Competition which has been performed in the U.S. and internationally. On February 6, composer Albert Hurwit was honored at an event at New York's prestigious Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts recognizing his achievement and the national PBS premiere of *Lifecasters*

CPTV and Lincoln Center, and CSA are proud to honor the accomplishments and music of Albert Hurwit, proving it is never too old to dream.



The concepts discussed in this article are a part of the comprehensive analysis of songwriting presented in the complete book "Songcrafters' Coloring Book: The Essential Guide to Effective and Successful Songwriting", by Bill Pere. For additional information or to order a copy, visit <http://www.songcrafterscoloringbook.com>

Your Music Career is a Pentathlon: The Five Currencies of Success.

by Bill Pere

In the music business there are five primary currencies. "Currency" here does *not* mean money. It is anything that you can trade in specific amounts to obtain certain things or objectives. If you go to Europe, you use Euros, and in Japan, you use Yen. On e-Bay, the preferred form of payment is electronic transfer via PayPal. Frequent Flyer miles are valuable when booking a flight, but not when buying a car. In a poor rural village, your basket of produce or bundle of firewood would be worth more than a non-edible gold coin. In a survivalist camp, a roll of toilet paper or tube of toothpaste would be valued over paper dollars.

Clearly, different things have value in different situations, and it is an essential business skill to know which currency to use, when to use it, and what it will buy you.

Having worked with more than 10,000 artists over more than three decades, it is clear that one of the main things impeding the forward progress of a career is not knowing what the five currencies are, when to use them, or even how much of each you have. Many aspiring artists simply don't know what or where their five "bank accounts" are, what their balance is, or when and how to draw on them.

The craft and business sides of music require many roles (a set of tasks) to get songs and artists from obscurity to a place of recognition, respect, and reward. Each role requires specific skills and currencies. (A complete discussion of the roles is presented in "[Songcrafters Coloring Book](#)". See here for condensed [diagram](#) and [article](#))

The five currencies for the purposes of this discussion are:

(a) Money

-- cash or barterable goods

(b) Well-crafted songs

-- lyric/melody crafting ability
-- Your body of work
-- The copyrights you control

(c) People Skills

-- temperament
-- communication (written/verbal)
-- social interaction
-- schmoozing
-- negotiation/persuasion/mediation
-- lifestyle
-- management/coaching

(d) Performance Talent

- vocalist (live and studio)
- musicianship (live and studio)
- stage presence
- creativity / vision
- arranging / production

(e) Visual presentation

- physical appearance
- stage presence
- fashion / style
- logo / image branding
- web presence

The relative importance of these depends on one's specific goals and situations, but ultimately, some amount of ALL FIVE is required for a career that provides ongoing recognition, respect and reward. Each currency opens a different door, and you have to know which keys fit which locks, and how much a given key will cost.

What about that all-important factor of "reputation"? The *track record* that one builds in using each of the currencies is essentially your "credit score", and THAT is what we know as "reputation".

One of the sad realities is that the music business is not a meritocracy, i.e. those with the most talent are not the most valued, recognized, or rewarded. Talent is indeed a currency, but unfortunately, not the most valuable one. Many of the artists I've worked with have the idealistic belief that because one has some talent, advancement should be automatic. They believe that if you go to the mall with enough money, there is no obstacle to getting the things you want. What they miss is that the stores at the "Music Biz Mall" require different kinds of currency, so no matter how fat your wallet is, there are some stores where all the merchandise remains out of your reach.

The fact that talent is not the primary currency is made evident by two simple observations:

- (1) - I, and probably you as well, know hundreds if not thousands of very talented performers, songwriters, or producers who are every bit as good (or better) than many of the biggest names out there, but they flail in obscurity for lack of the other currencies.
- (2) A good portion of stuff that is "out there" getting airplay and selling downloads is of average (or less) quality, when objectively measured [parametrically](#).

The same can be said about the quality of a song (another of the five currencies).

In a meritocracy, well-crafted songs would be successful and the songs with no evidence of writing skill or craft would fall to the bottom. But this is not the case.

There are huge numbers of truly great songs just sitting on dusty shelves or buried on bargain-bin self-produced CDs that are never heard, while "songs" that could easily have been written by your neighbor's 10-year kid (in collaboration with the family dog) are selling millions and getting all kinds of accolades and awards. Many well-known songs that receive all kinds of attention are really quite lacking in songwriting craft. There are obviously other currencies at work.

Popularity and quality of a song do not correlate, as there are many reasons that a song becomes a big hit other than the quality of the song itself. These include:

(a) The popularity of the artist -- If a popular artist puts out a mediocre song, it is still going to chart because the artist's fans will still support it. This perpetuates an illusion that what is popular is also of good quality. The separation of popularity from quality and craft is discussed thoroughly in the [Four-Fader Model](#) in [Songcrafters' Coloring Book](#).

(b) Great Production -- Production / Arranging is certainly a creative art form requiring a special skill set, but it is NOT songwriting. Great production is the essence of most pop songs, not actual skill at songwriting. Visual glitz and sonic sparkle are substituted for lyric and melody. This is not a matter of good / bad or right / wrong, but it simply requires an eyes-wide-open awareness that this is not the craft of songwriting. It is good studiocraft and stagecraft, as opposed to good songcraft.

(c) Big \$\$\$ Promotion – If a big record label wants a song to be a hit, then regardless of its quality, it is going to be a hit. Relentless promotion, manufactured 'buzz', and public saturation fueled by corporate dollars will usually get a song on the charts.

(d) People Connections -- The old adage of "It's who you know" is never more true than in the music business. Networking and making contacts greases many paths forward and creates opportunities that otherwise would never be offered. Many hits exist solely because of personal contacts.

(e) Riding the wave of a trend or news event – If a song is written relating to some other event or trend that is getting a lot of media attention (9/11, fashion trend, politics, news event, etc), it too can get a lot of attention, but it will likely be of a limited duration.

(f) Creative Marketing/Novelty – An otherwise average song that is creatively marketed via YouTube or other social media can, through the [Asch and Von Restorff effects](#), become widely known and inject itself into pop culture.

The important thing to understand about all of the above is that the currencies at work in each instance are ones OTHER than the currency of having good songs. We'll come back to this key point later in more detail. But for now, consider – in each of the above instances, how much MORE successful would a song be if, in addition to any of the factors listed, it was ALSO a really well-crafted song.

Now let's look at some of the ways in which the five currencies function, and how they differ between the mainstream big-label world, and the Indie music world.

1 – Money: This is somewhat obvious. To get forward movement at any point along a career path, money is required. Buying a new instrument, transportation, hiring an arranger, maintaining a website, assembling a wardrobe, paying a sound engineer, renting a venue, etc. Spending money is straightforward and easy to do.

In the mainstream big-label world, money is the primary currency – after all, the big labels are corporations with a prime directive to make money, more so than to make music. Their supply of funds is virtually unlimited and thus all the other currencies take a secondary, though not invisible, role.

The thing that trips up lots of Indie artists is trying to apply that mainstream corporate model of being "under contract" to their own Indie career. In this day and age, if you are an Independent Artist, there is very little reason to want to be "under contract" unless you really find a deal that fits you perfectly. When you are under contract, even to an artist-friendly Indie label, it may seem that you no longer have to draw on your own money to get things done because the label is doing it for you – However, no matter what label and what deal, what they are really doing is spending YOUR money – it just happens to be your future money. So you have to expect not to see any of it since a majority of acts never recoup the investment put into them. And in some really bad deals, you can end up owing the label money. Also, there is no readily available way for an artist to know what they are owed, so the label can essentially dress up their own expenses and income and tell the artist anything they want.

Of course this does not mean that all labels are "bad" – many are out there trying to do right by the artist, but just be aware that they are not really giving you anything. You're still paying for it, just in a different way. Most labels, whether mainstream or Indie, focus on cash as the primary currency, and thus you don't get to fully leverage the other four "accounts" that you have.

As an alternative to traditional labels, there are artist "development" or artist "incubator" companies which, if they are doing their job, would be optimizing the flow of all five of your currency accounts. This assumes they are aware that all these accounts exist, and that they have the knowledge and resources to maximize them.

If you want to be affiliated with a label or artist development firm, it's up to you to understand the deal you're getting into (i.e. know how to understand a contract, or have one of the reputable songwriter associations review it for you – often at no cost) and to decide if that deal is right for you. There are many

flavors to choose from. Ask them how they plan to use all of the currencies and how they will directly benefit you.

As a DIY (do-it-yourself) Indie Artist, who is not under contract, i.e. proudly "unsigned by choice", you retain control of all cash flow, and you issue the contracts to have work done for you, when you want, how you want, by whom, and for how much.

This approach keeps you in control, but it requires positive currency flow. Notice I say CURRENCY FLOW not cash flow. As an Indie, you do not have the big-label luxury of dealing in unlimited cash. You have to draw on multiple currencies to move ahead.

If your focus is entirely on the currency of cash, it's easy to fall onto the treadmill of having to do endless dead-end gigs to generate enough money to keep on doing endless dead-end gigs. Even if you can successfully generate surplus cash to move forward, your speed of advancement and choice of paths expands greatly when the other currencies are also in play.

2 – Visual Presentation/Appearance: This is a deceptive currency. People rich in physical appearance often try to use this as a primary currency and end up being disappointed. Appearance can open a door but if there is no talent, no people skills and no quality material to back it up, the door leads only to a small, unfurnished room (and beware if there is a couch...). Appearance is best used with the understanding that it is not enough by itself to propel one to the top of the career ladder. I meet many artists who are certainly pleasing to look at and who use that well on stage, but their material is devoid of substance, their talent is average, and/or their people skills may be lacking. Any of those deficits will impede or kill a career. Too often, an aspiring artist will expend a great deal of their limited time, energy, focus, and cash to try to increase the balance in their appearance account. Sometimes it is worthwhile, but just as often it is not the best investment of limited resources. It is converting a stronger currency into a weaker one. I typically turn down opportunities to help develop artists who rely too heavily on appearance at the expense of other currencies.

In stage performance, there are often great amounts of resource expended on lights and glitz and pyro and costumes and effects, all to present a stunning display of totally average (or less) material and/or talent. Not a good investment -- and as the years creep by, artists wonder why they are not "getting anywhere".

What if one has an abundance of talent but is short-changed in their appearance? If your primary goal is to be songwriter rather than a performer, then as long as you are writing top quality songs, and have reasonable people-skills, you are dealing in the right currencies. Although appearance is a big help in negotiation and persuasion, top-quality songs will be the most valued means of exchange for you and can carry you far. You'll see a more successful career when you are wanted for your body of work, rather than for your body. Looks decline – great songs age like wine.

As a performer, if you have great talent, but are not Aphrodite or Adonis, you can still have many opportunities, but they may be in more bounded regions of the music landscape. Consider the cases of the very talented but not glamorous Paul Potts or Susan Boyle, both winners on "Britain's Got Talent". The realms of classical, opera, or easy listening adult music are welcoming environments. For styles like folk, jazz, or hard rock, talent and substance tempered with people skills trumps appearance. Pop, country, hip-hop, Vegas, and glam-rock place more value on appearance. It's up to you to know the realistic value of the currency you have in that account, and how to spend it wisely.

As one of the most poignant examples of how talent and people-skills trump appearance outside of the music realm, consider the story of Jackie Robinson, the first African-American to play in the baseball major leagues. His incredible talent silenced the critics, and his even-temperament in dealing with the harsh social environment he faced made him a revered legend and an inspiration to this day.

Aside from physical appearance, there are all the other visual elements that go into presenting yourself. It's amazing how many people want to be taken seriously as artists, writers, or producers, yet have no credible website, no logo, no brand identity. They have CD's with unreadable fonts and no clear communication about the name of the band/artist. These things are key conveyors of credibility. They give you gravitas and speak volumes about whether others should invest their time, attention, and money in you.

And finally, though ephemeral and superficial like physical appearance, an artist can generate great buzz through their fashion choices (Lady Gaga's meat dress? Michael Jackson's white glove? KISS's makeup?) This should not be relied upon as a primary currency, but can serve as a "value-added" supplement to your other currency accounts. Do not use fashion to try to make up for deficits in the other currencies. It is an add-on, not a substitute.

3 – People Skills: In my various conversations with top industry folks, I usually ask them "What are the top ten characteristics needed for success in music?" At the top of that list by a wide margin is people-skills. The music business is first and foremost a people-driven industry. There are egos, sensitivities, feelings, insecurities, and quirks that cover a vast spectrum. A detailed discussion of how people skills work in various parts of the music business is presented in great depth across several chapters of "[Songcrafters' Coloring Book](#)". Suffice it to say here, it is among the most valued of the five currencies. It opens many doors and *keeps them open*, allowing opportunities to come to you, rather than you always having to seek them out. It is a slower-acting, more subtle currency, but it has greater reach and staying power than appearance, money, or talent. If a producer, publisher, manager, or any decision-maker has a choice between several people to whom they could offer an opportunity, they are not necessarily going to choose the most talented person. It will be the one they "like" best, the one they feel most comfortable working with, the one whom they know they can trust. Understanding people and knowing how to spend your currency gives you an incredible edge in negotiations, presentations, collaborations, and getting people to say "yes!" to you.

Tapping this account is one of the ways you can help generate positive currency flow when your actual cash reserves are limited. When a business owner (which you are as an Indie artist) asks for credit, or a loan, or sponsorship, or a favor, or an opportunity, the transaction does not hinge on cash currency – it is people-skill currency as you are asking someone to trust you and to believe in you, while you are offering your temperament, your communication skills, and your lifestyle as collateral. When you have a skill to trade or goods to barter, you are relying on your people-skills to make that happen. Crowd-funding ventures (Kickstarter, Rocket Hub, etc) have less to do with cash and everything to do with generating faith in YOU and the way you communicate your ideas.

The successful writer/artist/producer understands this most fundamental people-based concept: The songs, the music, the performance, and the experience you offer succeed when they are first and foremost about the listener, not about you. Writers, performers or producers who make their work center on their own self-expression rather than on communication and connection with listeners are misdirecting valuable currency. The good steward of people-skill currency clearly grasps the difference between [expression and communication](#).

4 – Performance Talent: Talent is a bittersweet currency. It "should" be highly valued and propel you far, but alas, its luster is dimmed by the allure of the other aforementioned currencies. If you have talent in conjunction with one or more of the other currencies, it will serve you well. But remember this simple reality: In order to show people the talent you have, you must first get the opportunity to do so. That's where the other currencies are most helpful. They enable you to *get* people's attention, and then it is your talent that *holds* people's attention and makes them "believers".

There are two caveats here: (a) that you actually have sufficient talent to make people say "Wow!" and (b) that however much talent you do have, you have an accurate assessment of it. The "Wow" level of talent comes from a combination of natural ability, honed by around of 10,000 hours of practice. The 10,000 hours theory was originally formulated by Dr. K. Anders Ericsson, professor of psychology at Florida State University, looking at case studies in many different fields – sports, chess, music, business etc. This is discussed in detail in Malcolm Gladwell's excellent book "Outliers".

The point is this: don't expect people to be in awe of your talent if you have not put in a heck of a lot of work to develop and refine it -- and even after you have, make sure you have an accurate picture as to whether you are just average, competent, highly skilled, or world-class. And if you truly have top-notch talent, it's going to take the other currencies to get you the opportunities you need to cash in on that talent.

On the other hand, suppose you have only average talent and you know that, but you have an abundance in the other currencies, particularly people-skills. If you look at the music landscape across the mainstream

and Indie worlds, the top spots are filled with competent or average artists, who have no more talent than many unknown folks that you or I know. There are some "Wow" folks to be sure, but not the majority. Most of those average folks got where they are through the use of the other currencies.

Sadly, the bottom line is that talent, though one of the more difficult currencies to amass and greatly valued by those providing it, is in the eyes of the buyers, the least critical of all the currencies. Yes, you need to be competent or at least adequate, but not great, in order to get ahead.

And that finally brings us back around to that key point mentioned earlier:

5 – Well-Crafted Songs: Why is anything valuable? It must be wanted by many, critical to meeting needs or goals, and in short supply. In the music world, there is no shortage of songs. Not even a shortage of average or reasonably good songs. But GREAT songs? Those that hit with the impact of a laser and etch themselves into the collective conscious of millions of people? Those that last across decades, being recorded by hundreds of artists in a wide spectrum of styles? Those are as rare as the Hope diamond. So if you have one – just one -- think of what you can do. And if you have a portfolio of them, few doors will remain in your way.

As an Indie artist, you probably do not have access to great sums of money. You do not have teams of people to support and promote you. You do not have wide vistas of opportunity to choose from. You may not have world-class talent or heart-throb looks, but if you have great songs, you have a path to the top of the value-pyramid.

Of all the currencies in the music world, songs are by far the most critical and valuable currency – after all there would not be a music business without songs. Like any other business, e.g., cars, computers, fast-food, there are well-made products and there are lower-grade products. The stock of companies that produce quality goods rises, and the stock of those that produce inferior goods languishes.

If you are a songwriter, don't just write songs; Craft great songs! Understand what it means for a song to be well-crafted so that it takes people's breath away. Understand that it is an extremely difficult task to score that "Perfect 10", but you can only achieve it if you try every time, and most times you will fall way short. But if you amass a portfolio of songs that are 7's or 8's or 9's in a world where most of what is "out there" is just 5's and 6's filling chart spaces while waiting for the occasional great one to come along, you have highly valued currency.

If you are an artist with great talent and a drop-dead looks, and you can whip audiences into a frenzy singing mindless pop lyrics, think of what you can ascend to when you augment your assets with the sparkle and gravitas of top quality songs that linger long after the final chord fades. When you're seeking songs to record and perform, don't settle for average. Find great songs from talented writers if you can't write them yourself. Don't fall into the trap of taking songs from your friends or colleagues just because they are the folks you "know". That is simply substituting people-currency for quality-song currency, and it's not a good use of your "funds". Train yourself to recognize a truly well crafted song.

If you are a producer with great talent for arrangements and beats, don't let that be all you offer. Apply that talent to great songs, so that a great production of a great song can elevate you to a new place., and you develop a reputation as a true artisan and not a mass-producer producer.

If you are an artist development coach, don't groom a talented, good-looking, people-savvy performer only to leave them with a repertoire of ordinary cookie-cutter songs that don't add significantly more value to what you have worked to develop. Use your currencies wisely.

Independent artists have only one way to really compete with all the big money, big talent, big schmoozing, big glamour competition – and that is through well crafted songs that are clearly a cut above the cluttered baseline of 'average' that is popular for all of the reasons having nothing to do with the quality of the song.

No matter what your role or aspiration, this is what you need to know: Big money is something you can't hope to compete with. Great vocalists and musicians and producers are out there in abundance. Great looks are out there in abundance. Great schmoozers are out there in abundance. Abundance reduces value.

The ONE thing you can do to have rare and highly valued currency is to have great songs. They are NOT out there in abundance, and they cannot be created by money. They can only be created by you.

Look at singer-songwriter icons like Harry Chapin, James Taylor, Bob Dylan, Billy Joel, Carole King, Janis Ian, Susanne Vega, Jim Croce, Don McLean, Jimmy Webb, and so many more like them -- No glamorous looks, no great voices, no glitzy stage performance and no silver spoons – just well-written songs that have lasted for decades, crossing styles, artists, and generations. And that portfolio of well-written songs attracted great talent and big money to support and propel them farther and faster.

One final point: You, like everyone, has these five currency accounts. What you might not have is a realistic idea of how much currency is in them. Toward that end, never be afraid to seek out qualified, objective feedback on your songs, your people skills, your image, or your level of talent. Don't be afraid to hear a constructive critique. Objective feedback will enrich you and keep you from overdrafting a big check on a low balance.

Some artists seek out critique not to improve themselves, but to get affirmation and pats on the back. That is a formula for disappointment. Some artists mistake a positive audience response to the energy of their performance as a positive response to the quality of their material. The result – a wrong notion about how much is in which account. Rather than great songwriting buying you a fan, it was your great voice singing meaningless lyrics. Some artists mistake a positive audience reaction to their appearance as an affirmation of their talent. The result – a wrong notion about how much is in which account. Rather than your talent buying you a fan, it was your short skirt.

Not having the proper awareness of what currency you have, and when and how it is being used can take you down unintended paths that lead you farther from where you want to be. Keep a keen awareness and accounting of the five currencies and what they are buying you, and you will always be moving forward along the path that you have laid out for yourself. Spend wisely, invest wisely, and you will find that place of recognition, respect, and reward that awaits you.

©Copyright 2013 Bill Pere. All Rights Reserved.

=====
Bill Pere is named one of the "Top 50 Innovators, Groundbreakers and Guiding Lights of the Music Industry" by Music Connection Magazine. With more than 30 years in the music business, as a recording artist, award winning songwriter, performer, and educator Bill is well known for his superbly crafted lyrics, with lasting impact. Bill has songs on more than 26 CD's including a Grammy, and has received many awards for his philanthropy through music. He is President of the Connecticut Songwriters Association, an Official Connecticut State Troubadour, and is the Founder and Executive Director of the LUNCH Ensemble. Twice named Connecticut Songwriter of the Year, Bill is a qualified MBTI practitioner, trained by the Association for Psychological Type. As Director of the Connecticut Songwriting Academy, he helps develop young talent in songwriting, performing, and learning about the music business. Bill's song analyses and critiques are among the best in the industry. Bill has a graduate degree in Molecular Biology, an ARC Science teaching certification, and he has received two awards for Outstanding contribution to Music Education. The New York Times calls Bill "the link between science and music. For workshops, consultation, performances, or other songwriter services, contact Bill via his web sites, at <http://www.billpere.com>, <http://www.ctsongwriting.com>, and <http://www.lunchensemble.com>".
© Copyright 2013 Bill Pere. All Rights Reserved. This article may not be reproduced in any way with out permission of the author.



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

If you like Bluegrass Music, this is for you –
If you have never gotten into Bluegrass Music, this is still for you!
Fourth Annual Competition

CSA has partnered with the well known Podunk Bluegrass Music Festival to present a songwriting competition opportunity., with some great prizes and a chance to be heard by thousands of people. If you've written any bluegrass songs, here's a chance to put them to work for you. Most importantly, if you've never written in the Bluegrass style, here's a great reason to give it a try! Bluegrass, by it's very nature, is meant to be accessible to all, an easy style to write in. One of the great things about the style is that you don't need a percussion set or really fancy lyrics. Listen to some examples and give it a try.

All the details and entry forms are online at <http://www.ctsongs.com>.

ALL FINALISTS WILL RECEIVE

- All Access Podunk credentials for up to two
- Listing and link on the Podunk Bluegrass website
- One-year subscription to Bluegrass Music Profiles magazine

1st PLACE WINNERS WILL ALSO RECEIVE

- A check for \$300 (Three hundred)
- A 10 minute performance on the Main Stage at Podunk on either Thursday, August 1 or Friday August 2, 2013. Must include your song chosen as one of the top three.
- Lifetime Membership to CT Songwriters Association (\$400 value)

2nd PLACE WINNERS WILL ALSO RECEIVE

- A check for \$150. (One hundred Fifty)
- A 10 minute performance on the Main Stage at Podunk on either Thursday, August 1 or Friday August 2, 2013. Must include your song chosen as one of the top three.

3rd PLACE WINNERS WILL ALSO RECEIVE

- A check for \$50.00 (Fifty)
- A 10 minute performance on the Main Stage at Podunk on either Thursday, August 1 or Friday August 2, 2013. Must include your song chosen as one of the top three.

Contestants must enter by May 1, 2013 by completing the [Official Entry Form](#) and mailing it to: CSA, PO Box 511, Mystic, CT 06355 USA OR by entering online at www.ctsongs.com

WHAT IS BLUEGRASS MUSIC ? *a discussion by C. Roger Moss, Podunk Bluegrass Music Festival*

Bluegrass is a style of acoustic music that originated in the 1940s when Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs combined elements of country/western, gospel and blues music with the British, Irish, and Scottish music of their Appalachian mountain heritage. It is played most commonly on the mandolin, fiddle, five-string banjo, six-string guitar, and upright bass, but the resonator guitar ("Dobro"), harmonica, and electric bass are also found in bluegrass. Percussion is not generally used, with the insistent rhythm being a result of the interplay of the stringed instruments. Bluegrass music is often called "that high lonesome sound" but it includes a wide range of lively instrumentals, sweet ballads in three-part harmony, soulful a cappella gospel quartets and up-tempo love songs.

The unique, driving sound of the original Blue Grass Boys was built upon by many musicians, including the Stanley Brothers, Reno & Smiley, Jim & Jesse, and Jimmy Martin. Bluegrass blossomed with artists like the Osborne Brothers, the Dillards, the Seldom Scene, the New Grass Revival, and Hot Rize. Today bluegrass is popular worldwide, and its stars include Ricky Skaggs, Alison Krauss & Union Station, the Del McCoury Band, Laurie Lewis, the Lonesome River Band, Blue Highway, and the Nashville Bluegrass Band.

Bluegrass is a very inclusive music, with friendly and informal jam sessions springing up around almost every event. It's a great way to learn to play an instrument and sing, for kids and adults alike. Almost all bluegrass events have a family atmosphere, and performers and listeners are equally welcome. We hope to see you soon at a bluegrass event!



The Annual
VOICES FOR HOPE
 Scholarship and Vocal Competition

Service-Learning Through Music
 for students ages 11-19

Finalists audition live and participate in the annual Harry Chapin Legacy Concert

AN EXCEPTIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG VOCALISTS

The winner receives prizes valued at more than \$1500, including:

- a \$500 scholarship
- professional recording and performing opportunities, with worldwide distribution
- professional vocal and performance coaching with Grammy and Immie Award Winners
- a lifetime membership to the Connecticut Songwriters Association

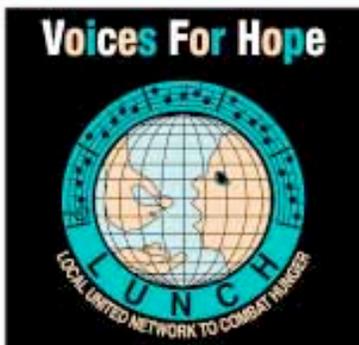
All participants are part of a service-learning outreach to support agencies which provide services for kids with special needs, and basic human services for those in need.

Previous winners have had opportunities to meet and perform with artists like Melba Moore, Diana Degarmo, The Harry Chapin Band, Patti Austin, and the LUNCH Ensemble at venues like the Bushnell, The Shubert Theater, University of Hartford, the Granite Theater, and many more. Their recordings have been released worldwide. Participants have come from many states, and our winners range in age from 11 to 19.

EVENT DETAILS AND ENTRY FORMS are at www.lunchensemble.com

ENTRY DEADLINE: MARCH 15, 2013 (early entry) / APRIL 12 2013 (final deadline)

FINAL LIVE AUDITIONS AND CONCERT: April 27, 2013 , in Mystic CT



VOICES FOR HOPE is an outreach of L.U.N.C.H (Local United Network to Combat Hunger), using the Power of Popular Music to Produce Positive Social Action

For additional information and inquiries, contact
 Bill Pere, Founder and Executive Director, LUNCH
bill@billpere.com
 860-572-9285
www.lunchensemble.com

SONG CRITIQUES Members may bring a song or lyric on CD (or do it live) to the monthly meeting for critiquing by fellow members. Please bring 20 copies of typed lyric sheet. Out-of-State members may have their songs or lyrics critiqued by sending one submission with 20 typed copies of lyrics to: CSA, PO Box 511, Mystic CT 06355. Include an e-mail address or a double stamped return envelope. Please note that since critiquing is designed to give constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement, songs which are meant only to be shared for self expression (as opposed to critiqued for improvement) should not be submitted. These can be presented in songsharing opportunities.

Questions about CSA Programs? Need To check your Membership status? Have a news item to submit? Want to volunteer for a project? Seeking a collaborator? Change of Address? It's easy to contact CSA.

General Info: www.ctsongs.com E-mail: info@ctsongs.com

Change of Address, Newsletter, Membership, Special Projects: CSA membership PO Box 511 Mystic CT 06355 E-Mail: info@ctsongwriters.com

CSA on the Web: www.ctsongs.com

• **COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES AND NETWORKING** : CSA provides opportunities to meet collaborators and providers of various music services. Make sure you're listed on our web site.

• **SONG SCREENING** : CSA helps its members get well-crafted songs targeted to their best potential market. Songs may be screened at meetings or by mail. Selected songs are eligible for inclusion on CSA compilation albums which are often given to industry pros. Songs submitted for screening must have been presented at a prior critique session. (exceptions on a case-by-case basis)

• **PARTICIPATION IN CSA MARKETING OUTLETS AND DISTRIBUTION** : Recordings by CSA members may be made available to retail outlets, radio stations, or Internet Distribution channels.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES: The [LUNCH](#) Program offers opportunities to be involved in the production and performance of benefit shows to address hunger and poverty . For details, contact info@ctsongwriting.com

CSA REGISTRATION FORM FOR NEW MEMBERS

NAME _____

ADDRESS: _____

E_MAIL (required for newsletter) _____

TODAY'S DATE: _____ BIRTH DATE _____

PHONE: (_____) _____ OCCUPATION: _____

CHECK WHERE APPROPRIATE __ Songwriter __ Lyricist

__ Vocalist

__ Composer __ Musician __ Patron Other: _____

Membership Categories

(outside the U.S., please add \$10 to all categories)
(All memberships include free electronic Newsletter Subscription. For a paper copy by mail, add \$10 per year)

1 year New Membership \$45

2 year New Membership \$80 (save \$10)

3 year New Membership \$109 (save \$26)

Full Time Student (under 19) \$40/yr

Senior Citizen (60+) \$40/yr

Lifetime \$400 one time total

e-Newsletter Subscription only (\$25/yr. 12 issues)

Members receive a free 1 year subscription to the monthly newsletter *Connecticut Songsmith*, free or discounted admission to monthly meetings and critique sessions, participation in the Song Share Sessions, Song Screening Services, eligibility for inclusion on Compilation CDs, free classified ads, and discounts on goods and services.

Enclosed is my check or money order to CSA for \$ _____

Mail to:

CSA Membership OR
PO Box 511
Mystic CT 06355

Go to:

www.ctsongs.com and
you may join online using
PayPal

E-Mail: info@ctsongs.com

**An investment in CSA is
an investment in yourself!**

An Educational, Non-Profit Organization Dedicated to Improving the Art and Craft of Original Music since 1979