Making an Asset Out of Your eSe

NEWMUSICBOX

WRITTEN BY
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ARTICLES

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Making an Asset Out of Your eSelf

Update from the Author: *This article was written in 2008. While the references to MySpace and Classical Lounge are now obsolete, the power of social networks continues to grow and the concepts herein remain relevant and useful.—AS*

When I sat down to write about how composers can use their web presence to create income from their music, I realized that everything I wanted to say about building a career is inextricably tied to much larger concepts of self esteem and joy. If we don't have a strong sense of who we are and what we're trying to share, it's a challenge to communicate the worth of our music to others. Thus, in **my November 2007 article for NewMusicBox**, I explored the psychological basics that I see as the foundation for a healthy and happy life in this field.

The internet provides artists with the most significant tool in history. With a clear sense of self and of mission, composers can make full use of this gift. We can live anywhere, while our music can be everywhere. It's never been easier to build fan bases and generate income from our work. Welcome to your e-career.

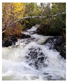
The Tools You'll Need

Let's start from the assumption that you already have all your professional materials at the ready, because this is essential, as you will soon see. Without a high level of preparedness, you may feel a certain level of internal resistance, which will impede your progress and prevent you from enjoying the process. Yes, your career should be fun! Your arsenal will probably include:

- lots of [uh, good!] music;
- well-recorded music on CDs and MP3s,
  with necessary performer usage agreements on file if applicable;
- great looking, properly bound scores, also in pdf form (if your music requires notation). And, if you're a multimedia artist, videos ready to burn and upload;
- updated bio, photos, C.V., concert info, and catalog of works;
- a continually updated website with MP3s and links to deeper levels of information;
- all works registered with a performing rights organization like ASCAP, BMI, or SESAC: you cannot be paid for performances and broadcasts of your music unless the PRO's know that your pieces exist; and
- A good entertainment/copyright law attorney for your contracts.

And of course this list continues. It takes time and also some money to initially create and gather all these materials. It can seem positively overwhelming, and in fact, occasionally it is. The ability to quickly follow-up on every opportunity is key, however, and if we're not prepared, we send a subtle message to the universe to hold off on presenting those gifts. But when we're ready, the universe responds accordingly. Once you have everything available in a few well-organized folders on your hard drive, your professional life will be easier. There is a difference between being a composer and making a career as a composer.

Getting Wet in the Income Stream



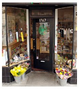
Every concert music composer should understand the worth of their copyrights and how those assets can be used to create income. I was very lucky to have worked for a long time in the commercial music world, because the experience taught me a great deal about the business related to our music and the potential financial value of what I compose. There are many avenues a self-published composer can explore; here is only a sampling of income ideas that stem directly from your compositions, just to get ideas swirling:

- commissions—
  from one source, or from a consortium;
- royalty payments (for writers and publishers)—
  live performances, radio broadcasts, sync fees, and mechanical fees;
- sales of scores—
  direct sales from your web presence to musicians and universities,
  direct sales by exhibiting at conferences,
  creating distribution deals with retailers and publishers;
- sales of CDs—
  direct sales from your web presence,
  point of sale income when you perform or speak;
- downloads of your MP3s—
  iTunes, eMusic, SNOCAP, etc.;
- publishing some pieces in your catalog with another publisher;
- ticket sales (if you perform your music);
- the lottery: awards and grants.

Notice what I put at the very end of the list. As delightful as it is to receive a nod from an institution offering funds, such largesse and luck—and it is often pure luck—are not reliable ways to plan a budget and support oneself. There is nothing wrong with subsidies and grants. A dependency on them is, however, the absolute weakest position an artist can put himself or herself in. Applying for grants, never knowing whether you will receive one or not, is like being a child with a hand out to a parent, hoping to gain approval and get allowance money for the week. There's something inherently emotionally unhealthy about putting ourselves in a position where others judge us and deem our passion to be worthy or not.

Your passion is worthy. It's yours, and it's unique. And the combination of capitalizing on your copyrights and maintaining a significant web presence will help you determine the path that passion takes you and allow you to reap the rewards. The only approval you need is your own, and that of the people who enjoy your music. Money is not a four letter word. Composers deserve to be paid for the work that we do, but it's still up to us to let others know about it.

Preparing Your Web Presence



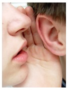
O.K., you feel pretty solid about yourself and your music, you've got your materials ready to send to people, and you even have a better idea of where you might be able to generate income. Now it's time to think about your enpixelated interface with the world, because this is where your income generation will often begin.

As we build local and international relationships with collaborators, patrons, and fans, our web presence is our chance to set the tone for how we're perceived. You have far more control over this than you may realize. In the paragraphs that follow, I'll focus on websites, MySpace pages, and blogs, but there are countless other ways to be seen and heard online. And as technology evolves, there are sure to be countless new ways we can't even imagine.

A web presence should be maintained just like a store front. If you had a shop on a city street, you'd sweep the doorstep, clean the windows, and create displays that would entice passersby to come in for a look. You'd tidy it up it every morning, place fresh items on the shelves, and ensure that people could walk around the store without bumping into things. Well, your website, MySpace page, and blog are no different. The internet is a virtual city, and people from around the world are strolling on its streets, window shopping. You want them to come into your store!

As you develop the style of your web presence, your aim is to create places that visitors will feel comfortable exploring. Layout, color choices, navigational tools, and content are equally important in all of your web-based existences, and it's worth investing a decent amount of time and thought to what your "look and feel" is going to be, because that's something visitors will remember.

You Have Control



There's an odd phenomenon that occurs when people see things in print: the mere act of something being published by or about someone gives them an unconfirmed credibility. Buzz. Hype. Rumors… or compliments. It's silly, and yet when we hear about someone a lot, or see their name pop up all over the place, or read their offerings on the web, they become a known quantity to us within our community. One would think that a composer would need to have their music heard to have opinions formed about them, and yet more often than not we divine things about our peers through the buzz and assess them without even knowing their work. There's nothing inherently wrong with this—it's human nature, don't feel too guilty. But it's important to be aware of the power of the buzz, and also how you can manipulate it to your advantage.

There's a technique known as branding, whereby we associate people with certain images or ideas due to the way those individuals have been presented to us in the media. In addition to our unique musical approaches, we each have something memorable, compelling, or flat out weird about us that sets us apart from our peers. Consider what those things are about yourself, and perhaps choose one or more to use as a subtle theme or focal point within your web presence that can be connected, even obliquely, to your music. Whether it's a specific trait of the music itself or an interest unrelated to your profession, it will give your visitors something slightly tangible to remember about you, even though much of what you're promoting is intangible.

The public enjoys having a sense of who artists are as people, and photographs and a bit of personal writing on our websites are a very effective way to transmit that information. Just as in life we choose how we dress, which in turn influences how we're perceived, on the internet, we have a great deal of control over the "persona wardrobe" we choose. This is an important aspect to building relationships with colleagues around the world, many of whom we may work with yet never meet. Just as we might choose to brand ourselves with a concept that relates to our life and our music, we can include content that sets a tone appropriate for our persona. The more web visitors feel as though they know us, the greater the likelihood that they'll want to engage more deeply with our work. We want to encourage empathy, and might manage to achieve it without ever meeting our web visitors. Pretty nifty! Putting forth an image that a stranger can relate to, whether it's one of seriousness, silliness, peacefulness, or oddity, is immensely helpful in the psychology of getting that visitor to connect with your music.

The information you choose to include on your website is the jumping off point for others who choose to discuss your work. Music reviewers have limited time, and it's common for them to glean language about a piece from a composer's own program notes. We are helping them to write about our work, and it's good to keep that in mind as we discuss our music.

Most of the time this awareness is very helpful in subtly getting a critic to like what they hear by connecting the music with a concept, imagery, or story that grounds their interpretation. I've noticed on many occasions that words I write in my program notes are lifted and used by those who write about my music, and I'm delighted: it's like having my own PR firm without the overhead. But conversely, I've seen my own words backfire: a few years ago a reviewer who was biased against film music tarred a piece of mine she heard at a concert with that brush, having read something about the music possessing a cinematic quality. Moral of the story: there's no pleasing everyone, nor should you ever try to do so! Just be aware that your own comments will indeed be read and used.

Creating Income with Your MySpace Page

For those looking to earn a living from their music, how exactly are opportunity and income generated on the web? Let's start with **the music side of MySpace**, a remarkable online networking website. If you're looking for positive feedback from a community of people eager to connect with each other, here it is. Once you begin participating here, your sense of self worth, happiness, and faith in humanity will rise rapidly.

Get a MySpace page under the "artist signup" section, which will provide you a media player to showcase several of your pieces. Some of us choose to post excerpts; others less concerned with arguable income loss and potential copyright infringement issues post entire pieces. With any recordings that include live players, and particularly if you wish to post a track in its entirety, obtain permission from the musicians—at least verbally, if not ideally in writing. In addition to being a professional courtesy, if you don't own the master and the recording [illegible] this in mind for every e-venue on which you choose to post audio clips. Additionally, make sure that each MP3 you create is embedded with the names of the musicians, the composer and PRO, and the copyright information, all of which can be displayed when the music plays via iTunes or elsewhere.

A MySpace page layout includes various sections in which you can describe what you do, why you do it, and why others might enjoy it. Be as compelling and as real as you can. This is one aspect of your face to the world on the internet. And remember, you have complete control over how you will be perceived. There are many free MySpace layout websites available that can help you customize your page and have it better reflect your message aesthetically.

Once your page is up, visit the page of someone you know, have worked with, or simply whose music you like. It's harvest time! Send them a "friend request," and do the same with some of the friends on their page to whom you would like to introduce your music. If you make the effort to correspond with these new e-friends by interacting positively, taking an interest in their work, and showing them your own, it's very likely that a remarkable set of career-building opportunities will appear. Let the games begin!

The immediate contact you'll be having with people all over the world is astonishing. There are endless opportunities to interact with colleagues on many levels, from a simple exchange of "Hi, great work you're doing!", all the way to people messaging you to say, "Hi, I'd like to perform / record / broadcast / commission / purchase / promote your music."

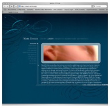
Skeptical? I've been on MySpace less than two years and can list a myriad of great examples of this. The most lucrative one so far has been when the commander and conductor of the U.S. Army TRADOC concert wind band sent me a message on MySpace, asking to commission me. He had clicked my "top friend" link on a colleague's MySpace page, heard my audio clips on my MySpace page, then explored further on my website, which is linked from MySpace. I've had countless performances and broadcasts throughout Europe and Russia thanks to terrific musicians e-meeting me on MySpace, and two of them, from Belgium and Italy respectively, have created beautiful videos featuring my music. I've even collaborated with an engineer in Bulgaria, who did a fantastic job on a mix I was having difficulties with. Plus, I've sold many scores, CDs, and downloads, all just from my MySpace page.

As a great deal of the communicating you'll be doing will be with musicians from all edges of the globe, you'll quickly find that there's no longer any meaning to the term "local artist." When used well, internet networking sites are extremely powerful tools and you'll be astounded by the unexpected rewards, as well as by the exponentially growing number of people who will start sending you "friend requests" because they learned about you and your music from their friends who link to your page. Inter-linking is one of the key aspects of doing business on the internet.

For concert music composers and musicians, another useful networking site is **Classical Lounge**, and there will continue to be additional ones that sprout up. Some will remain popular longer than others, and it's a safe bet that with growing technologies, soon there'll be an entirely different way to e-meet colleagues.

One of the newer e-venues I find most fascinating and promising is **Second Life**, a virtual world that is already a virtual home to millions of very real people online. I've already been a talk show guest on a **Second Life TV show**, held a CD release party there, and have had my music featured on several virtual concerts. These Second Life appearances introduced me to many more people around the globe, some of whom have now become CD-purchasing fans. It's heartwarming and inspiring to see how many talented people there are in the world, and the chances for fruitful collaborations, including those that generate income from CD and score sales, performances, radio play, and commissions, are endless.

Creating Income with Your Website



Your MySpace page is a microcosm of a full website, and it offers a powerful way to do business with colleagues around the world. But to make the most of your professional internet presence you absolutely must have a website, which will complete your professional picture and attract thousands upon thousands of people who are not using MySpace. For those who are, your page there is actually a teaser that will direct visitors interested in learning more about you over to your website, which will pick up where the limitations of MySpace left off.

Your website is your face to the international e-world. In addition to a de rigeur short promotional bio, here you'll be able to go into far greater detail about significant aspects of your professional life. Remember that web pages are sonic business cards: it's extremely important to have as many audio samples of your music posted as you can. It's also essential that any self-published composer conduct score and CD sales directly from their website, in addition to whatever distribution deals they may have established with retailers.

Most of my catalog consists of chamber works, and I offer a choice of bound, physical scores and parts at full price, and .pdfs of them at half-price. PayPal shopping carts are simple to set up and the very small percentage deducted from your sales income for this service is well the morning and opening emails from PayPal that tell you so-and-so has just sent you X amount of dollars for such-and-such score(s)/CD(s). Makes the coffee taste even better.

Ideally, you should feel comfortable using a professional website design program so that you can create and—even more importantly—update your pages as new information arises. If instead you have the desire and the funds to hire a good designer, ask them how quickly they will be able to add updates for you and how much this service will cost. You might also dip into both, having a pro design the site, but then requesting that they also design a simple back-end administrator program so you can edit the site and add your own updates going forward. The web is a place of immediacy and since it's global, three in the morning for you is the prime of a work day for colleagues in a distant country. You don't want to delay posting material that's important to your career.

Linking

Perhaps the most important thing to realize about how the internet works is that its structure is based on inter-linkage of material. You'll want to participate in this global cross-pollination by placing links on your pages to other websites relevant to your work, and by making sure that your website link is included on many other sites. The more sites you link to and which link to you, the greater your traffic and the faster the general knowledge about you and your work will spread.

Linking is all about driving traffic to your site, and allowing the serendipity of the web to introduce strangers to your music. Your MySpace page, website, and blog will all drive traffic back and forth to each other, creating a perfect e-freeway of you-ness. Linking is vital to web success not only actively, but passively. While a good number of your hits will come from those specifically looking for you, many others will be derived from surfers unexpectedly stumbling upon you via links on other web pages. If you are a composer or performer with recordings on your site, any one of these visitors, musician or not, could result in a CD sale or track download. This is why it's a good idea to attempt to appeal to non-musicians and not simply peers in your own musical circle. Just about everyone loves music, and most people I've encountered are willing to purchase recordings, whether as CDs or downloads.

Searching

Google and other search engines are responsible for a very large percentage of people's web hits. Search bots look at words, and a nice byproduct from including a generous amount of text and names on your pages is that you'll benefit from the same kind of viral marketing that works so well in MySpace. When people type in someone else's name in a search engine and end up clicking on your page because that person is mentioned there, you have a potential new fan or client. Early on in my career, for no other reason than admiration and respect I created a webpage listing all the musicians I knew about who perform and record my music. I soon noticed that an increasing number of hits coming to my website were due to people who were definitely not looking for me, typing in the names of those musicians into search boxes.

It's always fun to be contacted by someone who discovers you by accident, and I end up doing business with more than a few of these unexpected visitors every year. Sometimes people with stunning websites wonder why they get so few visitors, and one of the culprits could be that there isn't much text on their pages, or if there is, much of it is designed as a graphic and so the search bot can't read it. Adding a modest number of keywords in the source code of your website is also very useful in attracting targeted web surfers. These are specific words invisibly embedded on your web pages, culled by search engines such as Google to guide visitors to your site.

Finding Clients

Having discussed passive and semi-passive methods that create income, let's actively drum up some business. A powerful use of the linking concept can be demonstrated by one of the best ways to use email. Many of us find it painful to pick up the phone and contact someone we've never met out of the blue. But there's something less intimidating about sending an email to the same unknown person. Say you're a composer who's got a new piece that you're seeking ensembles to fall in love with. When you type its instrumentation into a search engine you'll be greeted with many pages that hold clues to who might want to know about your offering. A little due diligence goes a long way: click on the ensembles that come up, study their websites, and see if they program music that's in the same vein as yours.

If they do, drop them a personal email through their website–never, ever, ever (can I stress this enough?) a bulk mailing—in which you briefly introduce yourself, perhaps compliment them on something you respond to in their work, and tell them about your piece which might be of interest to them. But here's the deal-clincher: include a link in your email to the exact place on your website where they can read about the piece and hear an audio excerpt. You've made it very easy for them to instantly know your music, because it's almost impossible to resist clicking through. And quite often you will receive a positive response that results in a new relationship, or a score and/or CD sale, or a performance and/or recording. I have benefited from this technique countless times over the years.

A deeper scouring of those same search engine results will give you the names of other musicians mentioned within other sites, and if you follow the bread crumbs once again, you'll have many colleagues to politely, professionally contact. For self-published composers this identical method is an effective way to contact distributors and introduce them to your catalog. While you don't want to overwhelm a retailer with endless links to every one of your fabulous euphonium pieces, you can include direct links to one or two, and then a general link to your catalog page, where, of course, visitors will be wowed by seeing the list of all of your many, many, brilliant euphonium works.

There are quite a number of retailers who specialize in one family of instrument, and targeting them for specific works in your catalog is a very good idea. My observation has been that these specialists tend to be even more open to new repertoire than general music suppliers.

I've avoided addressing technical how-to questions in this article, because there is a great deal of material available on these subjects. However, the use of audio is so key to a composer's success on the web that I want to briefly discuss how to put your best sonic foot forward, because you are going to be judged in part by the production quality of what you post.

In a perfect world, you'll already have examples of your acoustic pieces from good live performances or recordings. But failing that, sampled realizations can be useful, too, under one very strict and often ignored rule: they absolutely must be listenable and carefully created with high quality samples. If they are cheesy sounding, very few potential clients or grantors will be able to get past the first utterly painful phrases. I've had a project studio for many years and my MIDI mock-ups of works that had yet to be recorded have gotten my pieces plenty of performances and even an award from a well known instrumentalists' organization. So there is hope! But you've got to put in the time to learn how to beautifully manipulate this often frustrating, and always limiting, digital palette. As with playing any real instrument, programming samples into a sequencer is an art, and not something that should be slapped together. All the things that go into a good live performance—rubato, dynamics, phrasing—are also a big part of any professional mock-up. Other tricks, like panning, reverb, and the use of different samples for various techniques within a single instrument (pizzicato, col legno, marcato, etc.) will result in a representation of your music that indicates its intent without distracting from its content.

A helpful by-product from the time spent creating these excellent mock-ups, is that they will be very useful to give to your living, breathing musicians so that they can immediately get a general idea of what your piece is like, and what the other members of their ensemble will be playing.

It's a good idea to use your web domain as your primary email address (yadda@yaddayadinsky.com) because—once again—it's a form of advertising and linkage. A short signature set to display at the end of your emails which includes your website, MySpace, and blog links is useful, too. The internet is as much about randomness as anything in life, and you just never know who will click on what, when, or why, but you want to give them every opportunity to do so.

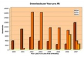
Google Yourself

Googling yourself may sound either painful or illegal in some states, but in fact it can provide a lot of information about where your career buzz is buzzing. Every week, type your name into a search engine and examine the results. This is a fascinating exercise that balances professionalism with extreme vanity, and it's worth every key click. You'll be amazed at what's out there. Take a moment to set up a series of "**Google Alerts**" for yourself. Enter your name in quotation marks (to keep both parts together), paired with any relevant keyword you can think of, like "composer" or "music," and also pair your name with the titles of the pieces in your catalog.

If your work is commercially available, you will discover radio playlists and live performances that you otherwise may never have known about. This gives you the opportunity to drop an email and say hello to those who support your music, and that in turn begins a new relationship. I've received commissions, recordings, and many additional broadcasts from people around the world who were tickled to hear from me out of the blue simply telling them, "Thank you."

Additionally, you can add these newly discovered performances to your ongoing list of ones about which you know, and inform your performing rights organization about them to ensure

The Stats Ma'am, Just the Stats



Another form of detective work that will assist you with income awaits with your website statistics. These offer fairly specific information, including the domains from which visitors clicked (universities, media outlets, libraries, government, etc.), where they're located, what kind of computer with what screen resolution and operating system was used, what words they typed that led them to your website, which pages they visited, and when. Most server hosting businesses offer a stats program free with your account.

Checking these intricate files regularly and learning how to decipher them will give you a business edge because you can track the effectiveness of all the linkage we've discussed. You'll know whether that ensemble in Oslo you emailed decided to click on the link, and you can see what other pages of your site they visited. You might notice a piece or two being played at a university and use that information as the incentive to contact the librarian about purchasing more of your scores. You'll be surprised to see where people are discovering you and what bizarre keywords they enter that lead them to your site. And related to our earlier theme of self-worth, it's a nice ego boost, too, when you click on a link in your stats and find that you've been mentioned somewhere or linked to by people you don't know. This is especially fun in another tide pool community, the blogosphere.

Creating Income with Your Blog

Because there's no such thing as having too much internet presence, another way to ensure that your music and your persona are earning their keep is by participating in blog culture, and perhaps even authoring your own. In the new music world there's a supportive, interconnecting community of blogerati, each with their own tone and take on a variety of subjects not always restricted to music. Here is a chance for you to quickly become a known quantity. If—and only if—you feel you've got something worthwhile to add to a conversation, jump right in (right after spell-checking). The more relevant and well-conceived your remark the better, because blog readers will take notice and will want to learn more about you through—you guessed it—the website link attached to your name in the comments box. Once again, you've broadened your global professional reach in the comfort of your pajamas.

Creating your own corner of the blogosphere can be a powerful way to build links between your world and that of others both in and outside of music. Most blogs feature blog rolls and many occasionally quote from other blogs they like. These links will give new people a glimpse of your universe. You can choose to make your blog an extension of your professional life and discuss daily work-related issues, or you might decide that your website can suffice for career information and instead write a blog that relays a separate offering you think others might enjoy voyeuristically.

My own blog, **Notes from the Kelp**, takes a different approach from most other composer blogs, in that it focuses on my life as a composer surrounded by nature (initially in Malibu, CA. and now in Washington's San Juan Islands), rather than being a discussion about my music. Instead, I allow the music to speak for itself as I pair audio excerpts with my local snapshots, creating a form of "photo-scoring." I call it a pixelsonic blog.

The result has been wonderful: many people, including lots of non-musicians who would not otherwise know of me, seem to enjoy visiting and best of all, they buy my CDs. It's been a lovely way to connect with people from around the world, and it also means a lot to me to share the beauty amid which I'm so fortunate to live and provide a little virtual tourism. I encourage anyone willing to take a few extra minutes in their week, to venture into the blogosphere and share whatever they feel they have to offer that is unique to them.

Whichever path you choose, try to post on a regular basis to encourage people to visit regularly and to add you to their blog rolls and RSS feeds. RSS, which stands for Really Simple Syndication, is an efficient method by which people can read regularly updated web content using a small application for their computer or PDA. Best of all, just as MySpace attracts one general category of people and your website attracts another, your blog will invite yet a third variety of surfers to experience your universe. By including links to your other two sites on all three of them and in your emails, you create your own vital weather system of information, persona, and most importantly, music, for the world to enjoy. Every bit of this triangulation can translate in one way or another to a financially viable career. You are building familiarity, which encourages trust and respect. And that leads to business.

Take the Initiative

You may think your career is about music, but it's equally about relationships. And those are formed by taking the initiative, responding, and following up, as well as by being a kind and genuine person as you do so. People respond beautifully to those who are authentic.

Captain Kangaroo was right: "please" and "thank you" are magic phrases. Take the time to send emails that thank radio DJs, concert presenters, ensembles, bloggers, reviewers, colleagues, or anyone at all who does something that is helpful to you. It means a lot to them to hear from you. And while you're at it, don't only thank them for yourself: consider gearing the tone of your note to your appreciation for them and the work they do on behalf of others.

Networking good people together is a joy and builds a very strong community. Take the time to use web links to introduce your colleagues to each other. Remove the concept of competition and scarcity from your thinking, and act abundantly in helping others to do well.

Think Even More Creatively

In my opinion, one of the most frustrating things about the new music world is that it is so insular and self-referential. Communicating almost entirely with other musicians and the same tight circle of audiences limits our potential success. In our blur of professional motion, it's easy to forget that the new music niche is a tiny percentage of the population, and we often ignore the vast majority of people who might support what we do—if only they knew about it. Expand your concept of who your audience is or could be, and give the public more credit for being interested in what you create. Use MySpace and other networking sites to reach out not only to musicians in many other genres of music, but also to non-musicians. Anyone might purchase a CD or concert ticket. And you just never know who will commission your next work.

There are some brilliant thinkers writing about how the changes in our society necessitate changes in our views and in our business strategies, and it's helpful to read what others have to say on this elusive topic, particularly those outside of the arts. I'm often inspired by **Seth Godin**, **Kevin Kelly**, and **DoshDosh**, among others, and I recommend their blogs for a greater perch perspective on how you can generate more income from your music—anywhere from direct marketing techniques to an overall shift in perception. The latter is most important, because once we perceive that we can be successful, we very often are.

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Alex Shapiro
Photo by Paul Chepikian

Through her website, **her MySpace page** and **her blog**, composer **Alex Shapiro** daily experiences the fulfilling results from the advice she shares, and proselytizes to colleagues in print, at schools, and at the ASCAP "I Create Music" Expo in Hollywood. In early 2007 she moved from Los Angeles to live amidst nature on remote San Juan Island off the coast of Washington State, and thanks to the internet, her musical life has never been busier. Alex's newest CD is a collection of eight of her chamber music works on the October 2007 Innova Recordings release, *Notes from the Kelp*. This article is part of Alex's upcoming guide for composers.

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