

DON'T REBUILD. REIMAGINE.



MUSIC
POLICY
FORUM

A COLLECTION
OF ESSAYS

MUSIC POLICY FORUM

NOVEMBER 2022

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**member of the Music Policy Forum Board of Directors*

re·im·ag·ine

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verb

1. reinterpret (*an event, work of art, etc.*) imaginatively;
rethink.



ESSAY I

michael bracy

The last time we gathered in person for a Music Policy Forum Intensive, in the heady days of November 2019, our community left Washington, DC filled with energy, passion and a sense of momentum. We shared ideas, strategies and solutions in conference rooms, auditoriums and taverns. Little did we know what lay ahead.

Over the past three years we've seen the physical, emotional and economic ravages of a pandemic. We've seen new organizing efforts redefining what is possible on Capitol Hill and a surge of local music activism. We've seen an industry in constant flux attempting to establish a new normal in the digital landscape. And we've seen many music stakeholders come to the realization that our broader societal failings mirror and amplify the historical structural failings of our music industries.

Now, as we gather in Washington from all over the world, we know it is not enough to “rebuild” the music community – we have to fundamentally “reimagine” how we can build stronger, more resilient and more equitable music ecosystems.

It’s a complicated time for musicians and the music industry. If we squint into the distance we can see the outlines of what might be a promising future. As a parent of young adults, my children have always been my in-house focus group. To see them grow up with access to the entire history of recorded music on their phone is transformative. Also transformative is the emerging generation of young women who are reaching wide audiences through great songwriting, recordings and live performances without making the concessions that historically have been required - think Phoebe Bridgers, Billie Eilish, Lizzo, Lucy Dacus, Thao, Sharon Van Etten, Julien Baker, Rhiannon Giddens, Japanese Breakfast, Yola, Soccer Mommy, Brittany Howard and many others. This isn’t Woodstock ‘99.

But we also know that for most musicians, the industry simply doesn’t work. Streaming revenues don’t add up. The incessant need to fight for oxygen in an attention economy can be overwhelming. And for many artists touring is a physical, emotional and economic nightmare. In the words of Robbie Robertson in *The Last Waltz*, it’s a “goddamn impossible way of life.”

So as self-appointed music stakeholders, where do we even begin?

At the start, we need to acknowledge that music is not entertainment. Music is how we celebrate and how we grieve; central to our memories and how we come together as a community; music gives language to our challenges and our triumphs. Put simply, music is essential to who we are as human beings. We need to treat it as such.

In some ways the failure to support music ecosystems is a quintessential American problem. Virtually all other nations invest significantly in their music ecosystems – in most cases not enough, but that kind of investment exists. Models like Canada's FACTOR program provide significant direct funding to help musicians invest in core career infrastructure – costs of doing business like buying the van, hiring the publicist, and paying the producer.

I want us to think about a specific number: \$84 million.

At that funding level, we could provide 2800 artists with \$30,000 grants to support expenses related to being a professional musician. It would be a transformative structural intervention. Of course, in America this kind of investment seems like a pipedream.

Why do I propose \$84 million? That's the amount of money public universities paid in 2021 to football coaches they had fired for lack of success on the field. To be clear: this is not salaries for current coaches, this is money from public institutions paid to failed coaches to not coach. And this shows where our priorities lay as a country.

We need to stop pigeonholing musicians as entertainers and treat them like the public health advocates that they are. And we need to challenge ourselves in all sectors of the music ecosystem to pursue policies, funding streams and initiatives that fundamentally transform the structures of the American music community. From government to philanthropy, nonprofits to industry we all simply need to do better.

One way we can do better? Double down on Federal policy and funding.

In my mind, this cuts three ways.

First, we need to emphasize how music is an underutilized tool to help address existing policy priorities. From urban development to youth engagement, public safety to mental health, music weaves through virtually all aspects of public policy. We need to scale up our efforts to help policymakers understand how music and music organizations offer scalable solutions if properly resourced. If policymakers want a simple, shovel ready investment that addresses multiple priorities at once they could simply implement a steady, predictable funding stream for Creative Youth Development organizations like Youth on Record, Totem Star, Roots of Music and many others across the country. These organizations pay working musicians, inspire and engage the next generations of music creators and fans, serve as anchor institutions in neighborhoods, facilitate intergenerational cultural continuity and support a pipeline of future music industry workers. Heck, it probably could be done for less than the cost of five or six fired college football coaches.

Second, we need policymakers to understand how their decisions impact the structures of the music economy and take action as appropriate. We need to join the rest of the world in direct funding for artists. Antitrust laws need to be enforced. And musicians and the small businesses that make up the lion's share of the music industry need to have basic protections to ensure a fair marketplace in virtually every aspect of the sector.

Finally, we need to place ourselves in the 1960's mindset that led to the creation of CPB, PBS, NEA and NEH. In that era, stakeholders identified critical elements of art and culture that would not exist in the private marketplace. We need to have the same honest conversations about what needs are simply unable to exist in this climate. We need to invest in cultural journalism, strengthen and modernize public media, support musician's access to digital tools to connect with audiences, protect venue ownership and explore successful models of accessing public space.

In America, money is never the problem – there always is money floating around. The question is always who gets access to those resources. Save Our Stages showed us what's possible. Now let's go get what our music ecosystems deserve.

About Michael Bracy

Co-Founder, Music Policy Forum

Michael is an advocate, strategist and entrepreneur who works at the intersection of emerging technologies, culture and public policy. As Founder Emeritus of the non-profit Future of Music Coalition, Michael spent fifteen years bridging the gap between the music community and policymakers. His platform at BTBV has allowed him to work with and represent a wide range of other cultural leaders including American Ballet Theatre, NPR, Native Public Media, Colorado Creative Industries and Fractured Atlas.



ESSAY II

kate becker

What does it mean to reimagine our music communities? The pandemic brought us a wave of new knowledge – perhaps its only silver lining. We know things now that we didn't know then. Let's cherish and leverage what we've learned through the past two years.

In February 2020, out here in the Pacific Northwest, we were on a solid track, having launched our new King County music initiative mid-month. At the end of the month, in partnership with Responsible Hospitality Institute, we hosted 224 folks working in the nightlife industry around the country and the world.

On February 29th, when King County Executive Dow Constantine came to deliver the closing keynote at the summit, he had to champion nightlife economy and culture while simultaneously delivering the news that we'd had the first COVID-related death in the country, right here in King County.

What a time we have all been through since then. In many ways, I'm grateful for it. Lessons learned during the pandemic could not have been learned without the struggle. Out here in Seattle we really pulled together to support each other and help each other navigate uncharted waters.

The Music Policy Forum (MPF) launched the REVS (Reopen Every Venue Safely) initiative in April 2020 to explore how we could reopen live music as quickly and safely as possible when the science allowed.

A Seattle/King County team was established as one of our eleven national pilots – government officials and venue operators; musician advocates and non-profits...the entire sector pulling together to navigate this crisis to the best of our collective ability. After hundreds of virtual meetings, our REVS participants have bonded in very authentic and important ways. We've deepened our local collaborations and bonded with others across the nation. We've worked tirelessly to stabilize our music venues and festivals, fortify our musicians and venue workers, and find the support needed to help folks pull through and resume business.

Nationally, MPF hosted virtual webinars, and a virtual MPF Intensive, bringing together music industry folks from around the country and the world, sharing ideas, strategies, and resources.

Where was the cutthroat mentality that often gets pinned on the entertainment industry? It wasn't here, I'm glad to say.

Venue owners and talent buyers, who had historically been competitors, became allies. We saw similar patterns of cooperation and collective effort develop across the country, from rural regions to the mighty and wildly successful effort led by NIVA (National Independent Venue Association).

Most of our local music venues have survived, yet they still have a long road ahead of them. Many of our musicians have had their careers radically impacted and may or may not find their way back to the stage, or a recording studio, or a tour bus.

Our festivals are back in business, and we've lost quite a few of them, including some longstanding community events. Our arts and culture sector has reopened, with many fits and starts, and now seems to be getting back on track, although recent local studies from ArtsFund and the Puget Sound Regional Council clearly indicate that the pandemic impact has a very long tail. Our nightlife scene has its own issues, including a rash of recent gun violence incidents, and a shortage of venue and hospitality workers.

I have learned that in these critical moments, with these hard issues, it is important to move toward the trouble at hand, knowing that the political waters can be dangerous. It is not a responsible option to turn a blind eye. We must extend our public resources, utilize our political clout, our networks, and our bully pulpits to be true champions of the folks who are making music, running venues, creating art, sustaining jobs, generating opportunities, and making our cities and towns places that are worth living in.

I am immensely grateful to live and work in a county where the executive instantly understood the existential threat that our music venues and performing arts organizations were facing from the pandemic. He then led the charge to allocate the first recovery funding in the country for live music venues.

While also overseeing the public health department managing the first COVID outbreak in the country, he simultaneously championed the recovery of our music and art ecosystem. When recovery funds became available, and there was much competition and need for them throughout the county, Executive Constantine boldly allocated \$35M to arts recovery in our region, focused on arts and culture organizations, independent live music venues and movie theaters, festivals and events, and the development of an accessible film production facility known as Harbor Island Studios. Earlier this month, Executive Constantine was awarded the well-deserved Arts Advocate of the Year award from Governor Inslee.

So, for more than two years, we did our best to respond to the grave concerns we were hearing from folks whose lives were so radically disrupted.

We also developed a deeper understanding of their business models, their slim profit margins, their staffing challenges, and the risks they undertake to keep our music ecosystem thriving.

So, what have we learned? Some key bits of knowledge that we are centering in our strategic thinking as we pull forward into better days:

- Find our allies and use our bully pulpits. The pandemic has highlighted the realities of how many people work in the arts ecosystem, and what our cultural landscape feels like when art and performance are absent. More folks are sensitized to this now – let’s bring them into our collective folds and keep them close as we forge ahead.
- Highlight groundbreaking initiatives from around the country and the world and share them with your decision makers. Sometimes we need to light the spark by pointing to the good work that others are doing.
- Keep telling our story. Often, we are the only folks at influential tables who have insight into the realities that our creative sector workers, businesses and nonprofits are facing. Without this knowledge, politicians, policy makers, and funders cannot respond effectively and sufficiently. We must stay in their ears – keeping them abreast of the state of our creative ecosystems, both the challenges and the opportunities.

As we come together this week in DC, let’s salute each other for making it through the last few years and embrace our collective tenacity to drive this work forward and help lead the transformation to a more equitable and thriving music ecosystem.

About Kate Becker

Building sustainable and equitable creative communities has been what I've aspired to throughout my career. Since 2019, I've had the honor of leading King County's first creative economy initiative. Just prior to this, I served as the Director of Seattle's Office of Film + Music for five years, spending my days (and nights!) working to build Seattle's creative economy, keenly focused on the film, music, nightlife and special events industries. Informed by community and industry, we are expanding this work at the county level, with the championship of King County Executive Dow Constantine, who will be joining us at the Music Ecosystem Forum.

Prior to working in local government, I spent a decade in key roles at nonprofits - Seattle Theatre Group, Art Share LA in Los Angeles, and the New Art Center in Boston. I am a longtime all ages music advocate, and co-founded legendary Northwest all ages venues The Vera Project and the Old Fire House, talent pipelines for the music industry.

Many moons ago, I produced more than 1,000 all ages shows, and numerous large scale events, festivals and fundraisers. These days, I navigate policy and politics more than production, and I miss having young people and music outside of my office door. I currently serve on the boards of the Music Policy Forum and the Seattle Center Foundation, and Totem Star FC.



ESSAY III

hakim bellamy

“Without great solitude, no serious work is possible”

-Pablo Picasso (1881 - 1973)

As a struggling first year law student (bear in mind that there is, indeed, no other way to "law student"), I now find myself approaching any new idea with one question. What's the precedent? Said more simply, "What can we learn from the past?"

Not necessarily to cherry pick dated solutions for contemporary problems, but rather to find out what dynamics of those past problems persists. To see if the reasons we felt it so critical to address a problem way back when, is still the reason we find it critical to develop solutions to the selfsame problem today.

First step? Context.

Sometime last Fall, the American death toll due to COVID-19 surpassed the mark for "most fatal pandemic," previously set at 675,000 by the Spanish Flu of 1918. To put those numbers in perspective, that amounted to 1 in 150 Americans in 1918 and 1 in 500 Americans in 2021. Both then and now, that amounts to there being more of us at the start of the pandemic than nearing the end.

So what's that got to do with music, you ask? Should you do your own research, you will quickly find no shortage of articles casting both comparisons and contrasts between the cultural boom (also known as the "Roaring 20s") that followed the Spanish Flu and the various predictions as to what our cultural landscape will look like post-COVID-19. Some scholars and pundits suggest that the Roaring 20s were the result of a collective "sigh of relief" from influenza (The "Spanish" flu was incorrectly labeled as Spanish).

Other scholars and pundits say that the cultural sonic boom that was the Roaring 20s was nothing more than relief due to the end of World War I (even though the flu killed WAY more people...). Those same scholars and pundits point towards other pre-War trends like The Great Migration, Prohibition and the climax of Women's Suffrage when trying to account for why the 20s were so roaring. I'm more of a "scholar and pundit" of one ... and we think it's both.

But I am interested in neither theory as it pertains to *why* and *what*? I am much more interested in *how* and *now*? Also happening around the same time was the popularization of the Edison phonograph and the advent of motion pictures with sound. Now *that's* intriguing. Sure, with fewer people on the planet, “modern medicine” still finding its sea legs and *laissez-faire* government officials who were hesitant to pump the brakes on the Second Industrial Revolution; the flu of 1918 only shutdown theater houses and concert halls for about two months. The live performance sector in America was in “timeout” for almost a year and half. As a matter of public policy, most of us waited for a vaccine before returning to business as “usual.” Scientists didn’t develop the first influenza vaccine until 1938. It was approved for U.S. soldiers and civilians in 1946.

The convergence of timing and technology was the *how* for the sonic boom (quite literally) of the mid- to late 20s. The timing was both economic and electric. (insert “boogie woogie woogie” here) Families had more disposable income and free time than they ever did before and were in search of entertainment opportunities to spend it on. Coincidentally, the Cotton Club was hitting its stride in Harlem, breaking musical talent like Duke Ellington, Lena Horne, Billie Holiday, Nat King Cole and Ethel Waters. Early radio and television would soon make these “underground” musical acts household names. By 1956, Nat King Cole became the first Black man with his own nationally televised show.

So what are promising convergences that we can take advantage of today, that will evolve how music is both created and consumed beyond COVID-19?

As you can imagine, after that brief history lesson I have a few ideas.

1. Public

The romantic in me could see a future where the music sector is considered critical to any future legislation designed to address our country's crumbling infrastructure. Sure, we could always use more stages and studios (especially if incentivized for owner-operators and subsidized for users) to help make careers in music less aspirational and more viable, more like a trade than *just* a talent. However, I am more intrigued by plans within the recently passed Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to catalyze new industry (clean energy FTW!) through major investments in workforce training and redevelopment. Just as we propose to offer a government-resourced re-tooling for those transitioning out of a "dead energy" industry into a renewable one; what kind of career development and wrap around services could we offer musicians skilled in live "gigging" to diversify their content (read: streams of income) to match how the public has diversified its consumption since 2020?

During my time as Deputy Director for the Arts & Culture Department for the City of Albuquerque, we used the inability to spend money in our budget dedicated to live music performances as an opportunity to reimagine and redeploy our budget. We reappropriated those funds for streaming content and "tiny home" concerts across our public and government access media platforms.

This allowed us to upgrade and acquire the equipment and technology to increase our capacity in order to produce this new, high quality content in volume (sounds like infrastructure to me). However, we also developed a program in the early days of the pandemic where musicians and venues could pitch “The City” to microfund productions that would result in music video/concert-like content with the backdrop of our most beloved (and empty) venues during the pandemic. The taxpayer won by virtue of locally-sourced creative quarantine content and by not having their tax dollars die on the vine. The musicians, venues, A/V techs and videographers won by being able to work at a time when there was no work. As a result, City government now has a plan and capacity to pivot when the next pandemic comes around... also known as “from now on.”

2. Private

How do we get the Live Nations and AEG Lives of the world to lead industry evolution efforts to help get music off the profit model island of live performance (Fyre Fest anyone?) and pouring some resources into talent/content business accelerators that groom musicians for work in video-games, immersive entertainment and streaming television shows? Historically, whenever this country has wanted a business or an industry to grow, we’ve found the political will to make it economically attractive for companies to take risks. Companies established in one way of doing business will take a risk on another way of business if properly motivated to do so. Once the new way becomes profitable it sustains itself. This is so much more than just playing a gig in the Metaverse.

This is venture capital-esque investment in emergent platforms where creatives and their content isn't harvested for the profit of others. This is a platform with a path to ownership for creatives where they are the publishers, producers and profiteers of their content. Where the musicians are the proprietors and not the property.

3. Polity

Yup, I said polity not policy. According to Wikipedia, "A polity is an identifiable political entity – a group of people with a collective identity, who are organized by some form of institutionalized social relations, and have a capacity to mobilize resources." This is so much more than an IRS tax code or designation. This is collective bargaining for economic consideration and political leverage. It is reminding those whom we've elected that musicians can and do vote. That we are a critical part of the "live, work, play" destinations they hope to create and profess to become. We must continually make our *collective* voices heard (as a tax paying special interest group) on working condition issues like the permanent federal extension of Benefits for Self-Employed, Independent Contractors and Gig Economy Workers.

And should they pretend they cannot hear our unified, we're all pretty handy with a microphone. If that doesn't work, we as artisans may be left with no choice but to resort to satire. We might just be forced to take a page out of the "A Day Without Immigrants" playbook. Imagine if none of us showed up to play ... anywhere across the country ... for just one day.

What kind of pressure could we put on “the system” (as opposed to ourselves) in order to make decision makers take our livelihoods as seriously as we do? Perhaps, what I suggest here is a bit premature. Poets are, indeed, prone to hyperbole. But on the heels of The Great Resignation ... I feel I can safely say (with zero scientific evidence) that there was not a single artist that fell into the often bemoaned category of people (real or imagined) who just “didn’t want to work” during the global pandemic. Musicians never wanted to stop. Just like the music. Just ask Yarbrough & Peoples.

“Without great solidarity, no serious future is possible.”

-Hakim Bellamy (2022)

About Hakim Bellamy

Hakim Bellamy is an award winning and widely published performance poet, teaching artist and creative placemaker. Co-creator and co-curator of the hip-hop theater production Urban Verbs: Hip Hop Conservatory & Theater, Bellamy is also a singer-songwriter and emcee with three New Mexico Music Awards to his credit. Bellamy recently finished a four year term as the Deputy Director for the City of Albuquerque Department of Arts & Culture. He is a John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts Citizen Artist Fellow, a member of the Western States Arts Federation Board of Trustees and the Inaugural Poet Laureate of Albuquerque, New Mexico (2012-2014). www.beyondpoetryink.com



ESSAY IV

dani grant & abbott hoeven

My work in advocating for the music industry has always centered around cultivating a community and culture in which my daughters feel supported, and one in which they can identify the values of acceptance that I have worked hard to instill in them. Home for me is Fort Collins, a mid-sized music market and University town an hour from Denver. I have always known that if I want my daughters to return to our home one day, to choose our community in which to start their own families, it would require serious action to foster an ever-expanding community that embraces diversity and inclusion. The younger generations are to be admired for their greater acceptance of diverse identities, histories, and backgrounds. These foundational values should be embraced and displayed in all communities, and I believe the music industry offers a unique avenue for normalizing these ideas as compared to many sectors.

Without access to this level of diversity that can be administered so well through music and art, I expect we will watch our children wander off to places that offer them that environment otherwise. When I sent my daughter, Abbott, off to LA for college I was eager for her to experience the inherent diversity a city like that could offer, but knew her concept of an ideal community was likely to exceed our small-town's capabilities.

Abbott explains to me that despite her love for our family and for our home she can't limit herself to an environment that doesn't expose her to the cultural versatility that she needs to grow and fully appreciate the world around her. It gives me hope, though, to see her eyes light up when I discuss my intentions of bringing diversity to Fort Collins through music. I consistently seek her perspective and her advice, as a young woman and a member of the generation that is paving the way to an era of progress through their prioritization of equity and inclusion, and she is eager to join the conversation.

"Wow," she says to me, her wheels visibly turning, "I'm just imagining what it would have done for me and my childhood friends if we had been exposed to a greater landscape of people and cultures before going off to college. I saw myself as already so open-minded and culturally aware when I left our little bubble, but learned quickly once I got to LA that I still had so much to learn. I want my friends with similar, non-diverse backgrounds, to have the same chance to expand their minds, and I want my home friends that were part of minority groups, and felt isolated by our community, to find belonging in a more representative culture."

I have learned from the work I have done, and other's work I have observed, that efforts from within the currently available frameworks will never be enough. I approach the concept of reimagining music ecosystems with a hyperlocal lens. The local market is approachable and has much to gain from total reimagination as well as the real potential for change to materialize. The re-imagination of the music ecosystem will require a shift in focus to local, bottom-up initiatives that encourage curated allocations of resources necessary to foster private businesses and grassroots organizations. These specialized entities would develop and sustain the industry, provide greater accessibility to the general public, offer better protections for artists, and create more diverse representation throughout the levels of this complex, interconnected system.

Pushes for change at the highest levels can often be overwhelming and inefficient thanks to the limitations of bureaucratic institutions with steep hurdles. A narrowing of focus presents opportunities for effective and replicable change. Short-term initiatives like token diversity and equity boards that are given little agency beyond a space to discuss problems they see in society are symbolic at best, and far from a solution. The collaboration of creative and marginalized minds is critical to progress but is pointless unless they are given real responsibility at the institutional level.

The failure to extend responsibility beyond perceived boundaries of competence is a systemic problem to be addressed. Local governments often delegate arts initiatives strictly within their existing infrastructure.

Instead, local municipalities should empower local actors who are already educated about and dedicated to art, and who actively embrace diversity within it. An example of outsourcing leadership in cultural initiatives could look like hiring a nightlife manager to direct funds and identify organizations with the right purposes and goals in which to invest.

The placement of more qualified individuals in positions of influence with regard to the music industry would also benefit a smooth transition to improved resource allocation. There needs to be greater investment outside of governmental infrastructure and a more direct channel for funds to actors who can better utilize them. While minimal, funds for the arts do exist, but the complex processes involved in authorizing their distribution can create serious barriers to access.

From 2008 to 2016 I ran a music nonprofit called SpokesBUZZ in Northern Colorado. Its mission was to develop local artists from diverse backgrounds featuring many genres and to foster economic development by activating Colorado artists on national platforms. Even having generated momentum for the bands involved, local businesses, and the cities that participated, it was ultimately unsustainable without more meaningful or consistent funding. It is important to acknowledge that my being well educated, having connections through various levels of government, and strong support from the community wasn't enough. I was still unable to continue my project without bankrupting myself. The struggles that I faced from my position of privilege emphasize the devastating reality that current barriers to access further exclude marginalized or underprivileged individuals from the music ecosystem.

As a result of such limited access to already scarce funding, smaller arts and culture organizations are forced to compete with each other, driving a split among them. If funding was more abundant and made more readily available, collective impact would be incentivized and local businesses would be greatly served by supporting each other.

In Canada, creative federal legislation requires that 3.5% of the price of an overnight stay be distributed across creative arts initiatives. The most important aspect of this tax is the mutual gain for the music and hospitality industries. Hotels and restaurants benefit from this level of investment in arts because a more prominent arts ecosystem brings in business.

The music ecosystem, hence, plays a vital role in this positive cycle of economic and social development, but those who reap the benefits fail to reinvest in their source.

Centering focus on increasing the diversity of artists and genres within cities is also vital to the development of societal ecosystems in general. A diverse music and entertainment scene has the power to attract a more diverse population, particularly of younger generations.

For example, businesses can use a diverse music scene as an incentive for hiring and retention of a diverse workforce. Increased investment and intention in the arts would also likely draw more creative companies who demand that diverse workforce.

I hear my daughter loud and clear when she complains about the inefficiency of institutions and the need to break down and rebuild structures that limit grassroots efforts, and welcome the creative solutions that young people are coming up with today.

Without proper investment and development of further diversification within the music industry, how can we expect the greater society to embrace those same ideas? How can we expect our populations to continue to grow and expand locally? I fear I will soon watch my daughters seek out and settle in new places, with better resources and support, that are better implementing the very values of diversity and equity I have worked so hard to instill in them. We need to find ways to apply the will for a stronger and more resilient music landscape to practice, to cut the red tape, and escape the fear of taking risks in a creative industry.

About Dani Grant

Owner & General Manager, Mishawaka Amphitheatre

Dani owns and manages a legendary and historic music venue located in Northern Colorado, The Mishawaka Amphitheatre. Dani is one of those tenaciously hard-working, creative entrepreneurs who has transformed a deep passion for music into her life's work. She understands that music and the arts are powerful economic drivers, and collaboration is the key to success. She founded and managed SpokesBUZZ Fort Collins for eight years, a grassroots nonprofit that develops emerging artists and promotes the thriving local music scene to grow the local economies on the Front Range of CO, and has served on many boards including WESTAF Denver Music Task Force, Rocky Mountain Media Corp (CSU), Community Radio of Northern CO – KUNC/The Colorado Sound and the recent Reopen Every Venue Safely (REVS) cohort.



ESSAY V

ashlye keaton

The Ella Project was formed in 2004 in response to a clear need that had to be addressed in New Orleans. Because we believe in the importance of New Orleans and Louisiana culture, The Ella Project provides comprehensive, pro bono legal counsel, arts business advice, and an advocacy platform in service to our cultural community. Our mission is to empower artists, musicians and culture bearers in ways that lead to greater justice, equity and inclusion across a broad spectrum – from singular transactions to policy development.

Over the past two decades, we have provided direct pro bono legal assistance and arts business services to more than 4,500 artists, musicians, culture bearers, small businesses and grassroots non-profits within our creative industries and cultural ecosystem.

Over time, we learned through conversations with our constituents that our work should expand beyond helping our clients to navigate existing industry structures. That's when we became more deeply engaged in providing forums, convenings and other ways to engage our constituents in developing better structures across our City and region for the purpose of supporting thriving cultural communities.

Throughout Louisiana, we have been forced to reimagine in numerous ways- often in response to natural and unnatural disasters – from Hurricane Katrina and many hurricanes since – to the pandemic - and beyond. We have been deemed “resilient” mostly by people from other places, who seem to really want to understand why we all still live in a land that is so vulnerable, so poor and so dysfunctional, albeit so alluring, hypnotic and joyous. While we may indeed be resilient at times, there are better-fitting terms to describe the people who make New Orleans and Louisiana so special: determined, strong, dynamic, fearless, ready, dedicated, stubborn, buoyant, uplifting, joyful, generous, spirited – but resilient? No, that word is for people who simply get through the day. We are more than resilient. People who live in this wonderfully vulnerable City and State are here because they want to be here, not because they're simply bearing it. We don't put up with living here, we celebrate living here. And, that's what attracts so many new residents and millions of tourists to New Orleans and across Louisiana.

So, when it comes to reimagining, all these attributes from the people who are part of that process are revealed, and the ideas and strategies and plans that come out of the reimagining process are often reflective of these values that many of us share.

Unfortunately, often is that case that the ideas sprung from the reimagining process do not come to fruition when it comes to implementation, particularly when the government is involved. This breeds tension and sometimes division.

Yes, this between community and government happens everywhere, but in New Orleans and Louisiana, where there are centuries of intentional oppression against the very people who continue to make New Orleans so appealing— and which New Orleans uses to draw billions of dollars in tourism each year — this tension is like a constant undertow flowing throughout our communities.

The Ella Project works to support a thriving creative industries and vibrant cultural ecosystem. Though those constructs often overlap and are arguably of equal importance, we have focused more and more on our cultural ecosystem, because it's easy to overlook something that isn't directly connected to the economy.

Whereas ticket sales and other commercial transactions tend to resonate with folks making policy decisions, including where

investments and resources are allocated, our cultural ecosystem may be deeply appreciated but continues to be considerably vulnerable by virtue of the fact that it's hard to put figures around its "worth."

Dollars and cents don't add up to authenticity. But, we all know our cultural community is the fabric of New Orleans's and Louisiana's identity and appeal, not just for tourists, but for the entire population who actually lives here. So, we have to recognize its vital place in our City and we have to fight for it when called upon by the culture to help ensure it's not being neglected or even oppressed but instead being engaged and celebrated.

This is one of the main reasons I co-founded Music Policy Forum. Before the pandemic, The Ella Project worked with our MPF partners to brief local officials on model policies and initiatives that could be adapted for New Orleans. We brought musicians, elected officials and advocates to Washington and Toronto to participate in conferences. We organized delegations to meet with government officials and nonprofit leaders in Seattle and San Francisco. We made progress.

COVID-19 put a pause on that progress and was devastating to our community, particularly our older culture bearers who were already vulnerable to the health effects of aging and poverty.

Add to the pandemic the devastating effects of Hurricane Ida, and we were our existing triage mode had to be put into overdrive. Now, as we move into what seems like the “next normal” it’s time to restart the clock on major priorities.

New Orleans in particular still needs to work harder to prioritize the way it allocates resources, with a focus on how to have a more positive, measurable impact on the cultural community. Our cultural community already invests so much in this City just by being here - and let's say it - by also attracting tourism dollars. Billions of dollars are spent in New Orleans each year, and those dollars filter back into the City and State coffers without an equitable reinvestment into the communities and individuals who attract those dollars.

Beyond the better investment into our cultural ecosystem, sometimes the City just needs to get out of the way instead of creating unnecessary challenges that adversely impact our cultural community.

For instance, instead of charging fees for permits for porch concerts during the pandemic, the City of New Orleans should have promoted these alternative ways for its musicians to earn revenue when they were stripped from opportunities to earn via ticketed performances.

Fortunately, The Ella Project was able to work with its network at Music Policy Forum to demonstrate to our City that no other place was charging musicians for the right to perform in the face of great financial adversity. And, the City reversed its permit fees.

Though there are many examples of how New Orleans and Louisiana have made things harder for our cultural community, and indeed, that has often been the case, there is one anecdote that is positive. For years, The Ella Project has been advocating for an office of nightlife economy. We have worked with the cultural community, stakeholders, and the City to research, convene, and discover what cities and regions elsewhere are doing to help promote a thriving nightlife and cultural ecosystem, balanced with reasonable regulation. With the help and support of Music Policy Forum, as of the end of 2021, we now have an official nightlife advocate appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council. Howie Kaplan is joining us today and can speak more to his role in this newly established office. But, the point is that while there is still much work to do, the power of networks like Music Policy Forum can facilitate real transformation even in well-known, challenged places like New Orleans and Louisiana. So, cheers to Music Policy Forum, cheers to Howie, and cheers to New Orleans and Louisiana for trying to get it right!`

About Ashlye Keaton

Co-Founder, The Ella Project

Ashlye Keaton practices intellectual property and entertainment law, and she also works in cultural advocacy and policy. Ashlye is the Co-Founder of The Ella Project, a nonprofit based in New Orleans that serves Louisiana artists, musicians and culture bearers with direct legal, business and advocacy services. Ashlye is an adjunct professor at Tulane Law School and the University of New Orleans Graduate School in Arts Administration. She received the distinguished teaching award by Tulane Law class of 2015. Along with other legal successes, Ashlye helped the Mardi Gras Indians by arguing that their elaborate suits qualified for copyright protection as works of sculpture. She is also noted for her work around the New Orleans municipal noise ordinance and other arts-related policies and regulations.

Ashlye co-founded and serves on the board of Music Policy Forum, a North American organization dedicated to providing resources and strengthening networks within the music sector, and she was part of the national leadership team for Reopen Every Venue Safely (REVS). Ashlye served the creative industries sub-committee for Mayor Cantrell's transition team; she is the Chair of the community advisory board for WWOZ 90.7FM; she has served on numerous boards for arts and culture related organizations, including the Recording Academy.

Beyond New Orleans, Ashlye has convened stakeholders and presented at conferences at the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Georgetown University, Canadian Music Week, the NoncomMusic Alliance, National Endowment for the Arts, South Arts, and other organizations steeped in conversations around developing best practices and facilitating fairness and equity in promoting thriving creative industries and cultural ecosystems. Ashlye has been recognized with numerous accolades for her commitment to arts and culture, including OffBeat Magazine's Best Music Attorney for nine consecutive years, The Advocate's Forty under 40, New Orleans CityBusiness Leadership in Law, and the Mardi Gras Indian Hall of Fame Legal Eagle Award for her work with Mardi Gras Indians.



ESSAY VI
mark davyd

“Don’t Rebuild...Reimagine”

Let’s start again. What would a modern, thriving, connected and vital Grassroots Music Venue look like?

Location: The city centre, sitting in the centre block of a nine-block grid where it’s function as a driver of decision making for the night-time economy is reflected by the buildings, businesses and residents choosing to surround it.

Build: A multi-purpose space, home to rehearsal spaces, recording facilities, community activities and action. Adaptable performance spaces, housing events that feel full at 100, 250, and 500 capacity, sitting alongside daytime use spaces which create economic returns; a café, bar, and workspaces.

Carbon Neutral; power supplied externally from the roof and surfaces of the building by Solar and Wind, from internally by an Energy Generating Dancefloor. Plastic free, recycling and reusing in every aspect of its delivery. Surrounded by public transport facilities that run until the last person gets home, from well-lit and safe streets. Integrated into the City's progressive plan for culture with equal weight and importance to 'high' arts.

Performance Facilities: Cutting edge sound system and lighting, digital backline able to mimic every amplifier, instrument and kit ever created in every space in which a performance ever was recorded or took place. Accommodation for artists, built around a calm and quiet backstage, where the ability to care for yourself was prioritised above the need to party. Free electric vehicles to travel from space to space.

Audience Facilities: Sight lines for everyone in the space, digital information points] throughout the space, service apps to reduce queueing times, quiet spaces for recovery from sensory overload, dedicated areas for merch and meet and greets.

Programme: Truly reflecting its location, its community, local, regional and national trends. Inclusive in the truest meaning of the word.

These things all sound like pipe dreams while we struggle to just keep afloat. But we don't have to imagine them into existence, the parts that make up this perfect venue already exist.

What is lacking is the vision on the part of Cities to bring all the available opportunities together and create a truly 21st Century touring circuit for grassroots artists as they start, grow and develop their careers. The perfect venue will possibly never exist, and my perfect venue is not your perfect venue. But if we have the opportunity, we should take it to push towards a touring circuit for artists which focuses everything about our buildings, our programme and our facilities towards the one thing on which our business relies: People.

About Mark Davyd

Founder, Music Venue Trust

Mark founded Music Venue Trust in 2014, an award-winning charity which works to protect, secure and improve Grassroots Music Venues across the UK. MVT represents over 900 venues and has campaigned to change laws and policies, to gain greater recognition for the vital work GMVs do and make them more sustainable. Mark has co-owned Tunbridge Wells Forum for over 25 years, spent 20 years as CEO of the award-winning music charity Rhythmix and owns Outstanding Music, a 360-degree music company. Mark is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a regular speaker at international conferences and was awarded NME's Person of the Year in 2020.



ESSAY VII

jami duffy

**Youth Work Isn't as Sweet as You Think – And It's More
Urgent Than You're Imagining.**

The kids are alright, right? Well, if they are, or have a chance to be, it's in large part because of a nonprofit sector called Creative Youth Development (CYD) or Creative Youth Development and Success (CYDS).

Over the past twenty years, rising costs of living, suburban sprawl, failing public schools, outrageous costs of higher education, the flight from organized religion, and a music and entertainment industry that both commodifies artists and has no career pathway have necessitated an increase in services from CYDS providers.

I've proudly worked in this sector since I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer at the age of 22. Technically, while doing youth work in rural Nicaragua, I was still young enough to receive services from the CYDS sector—and only now that I'm 40 do I realize just how much young adults still need us—and just how young the early 20s truly are.

CYDS providers are attempting to fill the widening gap in services that the government and private sector can't seem to tackle: *social services, child-care, education, career readiness, mental wellness, suicide prevention, reproductive education, health and safety, drug prevention and diversion, play, arts education, and creative expression*, to name a few. That's a lot for a small sector to take on—especially when most people don't know about us or imagine us shooting hoops and making art with “troubled” teens—and then sending them on their way to a better life filled with new promises (cue the corny montage music).

The truth is, CYDS work is social work, economic work, community work, workforce development work, and creative work. It requires both the presence of mind to address immediate needs of young people (often a crisis, or sometimes, even worse, apathy) and long-term strategies to prepare the next generation of dreamers, doers, thinkers, creators, problem solvers, and the music and entertainment workforce.

For years I've been attempting to take the sugar-sweet perception out of Youth on Record's* work. I once had someone sing to me "I believe that children are our future" from Whitney Houston's "Greatest Love of All" during a job interview. It was cringeworthy, to say the least, not just because of the awkwardness of the moment, but because of the simple platitude. You believe that children are our future? Um—who else is the future, if not the world's literal next generation? Also—what does that even mean (no offense to Whitney)?

I wish working with kids was as sweet and simple as everyone thinks it is. I really do. As a nation, we've done something quite strange around kids and youth—we either infantilize them, or we villainize and fear them. Kids are cute. Teens are terrifying. And there's not much in between. We've done the same to CYDS workers and Teaching Artists—treating them as pseudo-professionals who couldn't "make it" in the Music and Entertainment industry.

The truth is, CYDS work and the Teaching Artists and nonprofit professionals at the helm bring a special blend of grit, determination, artistic talent, and compassion that is rarely found in the workforce—which is why youth mentors, Teaching Artists, and coaches are some of the most important people in the community.

My hope is to educate our community about the need for the CYDS sector—and to make a case that the future of Music & Entertainment is dependent on quality CYDS programming starting now. This will take more resources, more committed Teaching Artists to work in this sector, and a deeper commitment from all of us to reimagine what's possible. We need to put youth work at the forefront of the Music & Entertainment industry, as opposed to the backburner, where it's previously lived.

At our conference, and over the next few months, I'll be digging into three specific areas in hopes to broaden support for Creative Youth Development and Success:

1. To understand the complexity of youth work, we have to go back to the relatively new idea of the “American teenager.”
2. To understand the urgency of youth work, we have to understand the youth mental health crisis in the USA—and be willing to face it.
3. To understand how youth work impacts all of us (or will in five to ten years), we have to understand the changing nature of work itself.

I hope you'll join me on my quest to expand our knowledge of this sector. After all, all of our futures depend on it (cue the ominous end-credits music).

- Youth on Record is a Denver-based non-profit founded by members of the local music community. We design and implement strengths-based, music-centered programs intended to equip young people from historically under-resourced communities with the skills needed to find success in life by advancing their academic success, increasing their economic opportunities and career skills, and strengthening their community connections and networks. In my 12 years as Executive Director, I've been honored to help us resource over 10,000 youth, serve as a cultural hub in a reimagined neighborhood, and pay over \$10 million in salaries to Teaching Artists. Most recently, YOR has become the co-owners of the Underground Music Showcase, Denver's longest running independent music festival.

About Jami Duffy

Executive Director, Youth on Record

Jami Duffy is a locally and nationally recognized thought leader and innovator in the areas of equitable company culture, the global impact of artmaking, public policy advocacy, music ecosystems, and inclusive leadership. Jami has participated on panels before the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Labor, among others, and is on a journey to advance equity in the arts, music, education and in the workplace.

Jami joined Youth on Record as Executive Director in 2009 and has since provided the strategic vision and fundraising expertise that has led to consistent growth and national brand recognition for the organization. She spearheaded a \$2M capital campaign to build YOR's state-of-the-art Youth Media Studio in west Denver, and has grown the organization by 1,400% in her tenure. She is also the co-founder of a local advocacy organization, All in Denver, and a member of Denver's Cultural Affairs Commission.

Jami is a locally and nationally recognized thought leader and innovator in social justice education and engaging at-risk youth. In 2021 she was named one of Denver Business Journal's 40 Under 40 winners, and under her leadership, Youth on Record has twice been named one of the best places to work in Colorado. In addition, Jami is a visual artist at Blue Silo Studios, where she creates abstract paintings, sculpture, photography, and collage. She is a Political Science and Journalism Studies graduate of the University of Denver, and a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, having served in Nicaragua from 2004-2006.



ESSAY VIII

kevin erickson

In moments of crisis and renewal like this one, I find it helpful to return to first principles. Here's one: too few companies have too much power. It's one of those basic irreducible truths that sounds a little too cornball to say out loud in certain company if you want to be taken seriously. But the longer I work in advocacy, I'm convinced that it's worth it to get comfortable repeating basic truths over and over, like the chorus of a long folk song.

In my work with Future of Music Coalition, I spend much of my time thinking about how this problem of concentrated corporate power impacts diverse musicians of every genre. Over the past 30 years, we've seen ownership consolidation in almost every part of the music industries and every adjacent industry. Too few companies have too much power, and this makes it harder for musicians to reach audiences in the ways that makes sense for them, harder to earn a sustainable living from their creative work.

While many hoped that new technologies could bypass old gatekeepers, many now worry that dominant music platforms have simply created a new tier of unaccountable intermediaries standing between creators and audiences, some of them while actively platforming white supremacy and vaccine disinformation.

Healthy music businesses and ecosystems are built on investment and reinvestment in communities. In contrast, monopoly businesses tend to focus on extraction of wealth, attention, data, and other resources from communities, for the primary benefit of distant investors.

The problems created by monopoly power can't be simply bypassed by entrepreneurship, public funding, or innovation. That means that all of us who care about healthy music ecosystems must work on multiple fronts simultaneously—we have to build community-centered cultural infrastructure with private, philanthropic and public support all in tandem. As we do this, we have to be deeply attentive to questions of equity and address barriers to inclusion and access. But we also must collectively confront the problem of monopoly power directly.

For example: local brick-and-mortar record shops are precious hubs for local music communities. They're an irreplaceable part of our local music cultures.

But Amazon can use their market power to demand that independent record labels sell their releases to Amazon at a discount below the wholesale price offered to independent record shops. That means there's literally no way for many independent record shops to compete with Amazon on price. We can't solve the problem without addressing Amazon's predatory behavior directly.

Similarly, as traditional newspapers and alternative newsweeklies have scaled back their music coverage, some innovative noncommercial media outlets have been trying to help fill the void left behind, but they still facing the same chokepoints and extractive practices faced by their commercial counterparts.

Your amazing local noncommercial community radio station might be commissioning great local music journalism, but their reach and impact are constrained by the intransparent algorithms of centralized tech platforms and the extractive practices they engender.

Much of this owes to regulatory failure—regulators who could have intervened fell under the spell of neoliberal economic ideology, and a narrow focus on consumer welfare that kept them focused on consumer facing price.

Economists took over too much of the analysis of public policy, and because their field often struggles to understand the non-economic values that drive so much of healthy music communities, they failed to sound the alarm about impacts on cultural diversity.

The good news is that there's a growing movement to address the problems of monopolies and monopsonies across the economy for the benefit of workers, small businesses, and consumers. Regulators and some elected officials are getting bolder, and while much of that conversation is happening at the federal level, there are numerous ways for local and state leaders to get plugged in.

For example, your city or state music office should be opening up lines of communication with your state's Attorney General, as AGs have been collaborating to rein in corporate power through antitrust lawsuits. Small businesses can share their view of the marketplace with the relevant regulatory agencies in various rulemaking proceedings and encourage them to take action.

At a bare minimum, local organizers should resist efforts by dominant firms to further control our local music scenes. Extraction-based models cannot provide a path forward. Too few companies have too much power, but this is the moment to start taking that power back.

About Kevin Erickson

Director, Future of Music Coalition

As FMC's director, Kevin Erickson works at the intersection of DIY music, community organizing, and policy. His experience spans the full range of the music industry, from community radio to live show booking and promotion to brick & mortar music retail management. Before joining FMC's team in 2012, he directed All-ages Movement Project, a national non-profit network of all-ages music venues and youth music programs. He has contributed opinion pieces to outlets as disparate as The Nation and Pitchfork, volunteers with Positive Force DC, and remains active as a musician and record producer, operating Swim-Two-Birds recording studio in DC, alongside husband Hugh McElroy.



ESSAY IX

lisa gedgaudas

For over a decade I've watched, participated, and led work that helps to define music as the agent for building economic vibrancy, a more equitable and connected nation, and to create positive social change through music-centered programs and initiatives.

Over the last three years with cities across the nation and the globe being tested on their versatility, resilience, patience, democracy, and immediate response to a pandemic, I've seen people from all sides embrace the arts to survive, and even see the value in it to protect it.

This embrace was held and advocated for at the Federal level for music specifically, in a way that felt like lightning in a bottle. I believe we have been reimagining our potential ever since.

We can work to build on trusted partnerships from all sides, while engaging effectively and authentically with federal, state, and local government officials, community leaders, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

I pose two areas to advocate for funding on a national scale:

Investing in arts and culture for public health. We have the opportunity to build on this momentum for more sustainable funding opportunities by identifying, defining, branding, and amplifying our mission(s) as the trusted leaders in music for workforce development, capacity building, economic development, emergency planning, safe creative spaces, data gathering and reporting, land and special district development, youth engagement and education, providing opportunities to our historically marginalized communities and artists, sharing best practices, and continued storytelling.

Investing in reimagined spaces, assuring more safe and creative spaces for arts and culture to continue to thrive. Every city has or will endure a great need for affordable, safe, creative spaces for our creative community to live, work and perform in. From high costs, a need for compliance, or simply trying to stay open, some of our independent venues continue to struggle to survive.

How might we help these places among others reimagine their space, hours, offerings, and their role as leaders in supporting arts and culture in their cities beyond their usual expertise. How might we invest funding to support programs, land ownership, and long-term preservation? And, who in our communities are already doing this well?

About Lisa Gedgaudas

Program Manager, Cultural Affairs, Denver Arts & Venues, City and County of Denver

Lisa has dedicated over 20 years of progressive work into the creative sector, demonstrating a consistent track record in building more sustainable art and culture initiatives and opportunities that focus on the strength of diverse communities. In her current role with Denver Arts & Venues at the City of Denver, she is rooted in research, policy, advocacy, grant development, cultural district development, and economic development for the creative industries. Lisa has built strategic partnerships to advance the field of music, recognizing the vital role the music ecosystem plays locally, nationally, and globally.

In 2018, she launched the Denver Music Strategy putting Denver on the map as a leading Music City. Through funding from the agency's revenue streams, including Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Lisa has advocated for and provided over \$2 million in grants to support individuals, non- and for-profit businesses to build music-centered programs rooted in engaging youth education, climate action, mental health and wellness, unhoused teens and adults, incarcerated communities, film, technology, immersive, and more. Lisa co-manages the National Independent Venue Foundation's Emergency Relief Fund, which has given over \$3.2 million to independent venues and promoters across the nation.



ESSAY X

santigold

Dear Friends,

I am both sad and proud to announce my decision to cancel the Holified Tour.

I am sad because it breaks my heart to disappoint those of you who consistently come out to show love and support me for what I do, those of you who have bought tickets and planned trips to come and see me. When I think of disappointing you all, I feel the disappointment deep in the pit of my stomach as well. I was excited to finally be back with you in person to celebrate and bring the music of this new record to life. I know that without you I would never have been able to continue making music for all of these years, and I am so grateful.

But for the past several years we have all been through immense challenges, some physical, some mental, some spiritual, some economic. And yet, as we have begun to trudge on, much of the toll of that experience has been left untended as we rush back in, attempting to make up for lost time, to reconnect, catch up on bills unpaid, to escape the insanity that had begun to set in. For many of us, the landscapes we are re-entering are not the same.

As a touring musician, I don't think anyone anticipated the new reality that awaited us. After sitting idle (not being able to do shows) for the past couple years, many of us like everyone else, earning no or little income during that time, every musician that could, rushed back out immediately when it was deemed safe to do shows.

We were met with the height of inflation – gas, tour buses, hotels, and flight costs skyrocketed – many of our tried-and-true venues unavailable due to a flooded market of artists trying to book shows in the same cities, and positive test results constantly halting schedules with devastating financial consequences. All of that on top of the already-tapped mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional resources of just having made it through the past few years. Some of us are finding ourselves simply unable to make it work.

In my case, I have tried and tried, looked at what it would take from every angle, and I simply don't have it. I can't make it work. I'm actually going to elaborate on it more later because I think it's important for people to know the truth of what it's like out here for artists and I don't believe enough of us are talking about it publicly. I've seen a couple articles start to emerge, literally over the past few days, just as I had started writing this letter to you, about musicians canceling tours, prioritizing themselves over the demands of a relentless industry.

But for now, I want to tell you that for me it has taken a toll – through anxiety, insomnia, fatigue, vertigo, chronic pain, and missing crucial time with my children. In the place that I'm in, in the place that the music business is in, it feels like I've been hanging on, trying to make it to the ever-distant finish line, but my vehicle's been falling apart the whole time – the bumper fell off, the wheels one at a time, the steering wheel, and finally the whole bottom fell out. And here I am thinking, 'Should I just hold the doors up and run?' And my little heart that has been working way beyond its limits, my whole body in fact and my soul too, are screaming at me "NO muthafucka! Pull.The Fuck. Over!"

I'm coming to you with the honesty that is inherent in my music. How could I release *Spirituals*, an album about honoring yourself and refusing to cross your own boundaries, and not take this opportunity to do just that for myself?

I want you to understand that I am proud to be canceling this tour when it means that I am proclaiming that I, the person who writes the songs, is as important to me as the songs. I will not continue to sacrifice myself for an industry that has become unsustainable for, and uninterested in the welfare of the artists it is built upon.

I love you all. And I hope to see you soon.

Santigold

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About Santigold

SANTIGOLD—born Santi White in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—is a genre-defying musician, style renegade, and visionary artist across multiple platforms celebrated for her fearless ability to fuse unexpected elements into bold new work. An artist whose perseverance relies on invention, her singular aesthetic has made her a major muse watched by the inspired world.

Since her classic self-titled debut in 2008, Santigold has revealed herself to be the most eclectic artist of her generation with a broad influence. Over her expansive career, she has collaborated with fellow icons from Jay Z and the Beastie Boys to Mark Ronson, Pharrell, Julian Casablancas and Tyler The Creator; not to mention, her songs have been sampled by Drake & Lil Wayne, among others. She's had a #1 record on Billboard's Dance/Electronic chart, won an ASCAP Pop Music award (Vanguard Award), and has been nominated for a Q Award, MTV Europe Music Award, and BRIT Award. Most recently in September, Santigold released her fourth album *Spirituals*, which captures the feeling of surviving in the modern world while elevating yourself to new places.

Santigold has engaged in new ways to express and release her ideas, allowing her greater range to be even truer to her creative intentions on her own terms. She created *Spirituals* as a multisensory experience that includes not only the music and video vignettes, but a brand new tea line bearing the same brand name, *Spirituals*. She is also the host of her very own podcast "Noble Champions" in which she interviews other artists and visionaries around some of the same themes explored in her music. And it doesn't stop there: Santigold has other literary, film and product lines in the works as well.

Renowned for her iconography, Santigold has collaborated with visual artists including Kehinde Wiley, Wangechi Mutu, Kara Walker, and Sanford Biggers. She has also done various brand collaborations for shoe, accessory, and cosmetics lines, as well as had comedic roles on *The Office*, and Adult Swim's *NTSF:SD:SUV*.

While taking yourself to new places is core to her outlook at this point in her impressive career, she has always been an artist who has charted new paths in the world of pop music and beyond, breaking down barriers of genre along the way, further cementing her as an essential artist when surveying the last two decades of popular culture at large.



ESSAY XI

sean keithly

Each year in our community of Boise, Idaho, we experience five days of Treefort – our annual festival of all things creative, centered upon music. Many Boiseans will say that these five days bring out the true soul of Boise – the essence of what our mayor calls a City for Everyone. People from all walks of life come out to play music, tell stories, hack their next business idea, dance, and celebrate in the spirit of community. Calendars are cleared, old friendships are rekindled, new ones are born, social barriers are broken down. It's a special time that is held as dearly as any traditional holiday season by many in Boise. And like any holiday season, its economic impact is undeniable. Aside from the direct impact, it is fundamental to the continued development of Boise's creative economy and is a major recruiting event for many of our local employers.

At its heart, Treefort is a powerful event – like a torrent of creative energy that galvanizes our commitment to our community, our relationships with each other, and leaves us inspired. But it is also an expression of our community's values that goes beyond a single event. So how do we capture, direct, and cultivate this same energy over the course of the rest of the year, in our everyday lives and everyday city? What does this all mean in terms of creating a more resilient, more equitable music ecosystem?

The answers are multitude, but two keys from a city leadership perspective are 1) Our effective and intentional use of public space; and 2) Taking an active role to build and maintain networks and partnerships that create opportunities to multiply benefits and equity.

Public spaces are a part of a city's physical fabric and are an important component of the infrastructure that supports a number of types of resilient systems. Resilient systems are characterized as those that create adaptive capacity to accommodate change; i.e., instead of just building bigger and/or stronger, we strive to build adaptive systems that are more capable of responding to change. Attributes of adaptive systems often include de-centralized rather than singular elements.

Music's place in a community – whether live, or carried via a medium – is more often than not part of a large, sometimes organized but usually decentralized system of actors, events, and physical spaces.

Often, the events and spaces are small -- sometimes involving only a single person and also often in an informal, public place -- a park, a street corner, on a bus, or a patio. These public places are often the starting point where art and music become a performance, a transmittal from an individual to the larger community, from which point that performance gains an audience, an awareness, and a connection.

The public spaces that make up a city are essential parts of a resilient music ecosystem that can sustain the ability for artistic growth within the public realm, activate and create vibrancy in areas that may be under-utilized, and create vital connections between people. Our charge is to ensure that our various and sundry public spaces are created and maintained with this potential in mind, and to make room in the conversation for creative purpose.

Similarly, networks and partnerships are components of the infrastructure vital to building and maintaining resilient and equitable music ecosystems.

The success and growth of music ecosystems in our communities is dependent upon the close cooperation of individuals and organizations in the public, private, and non-profit sector toward a common understanding of values.

An active network of these actors is critical to advance singular goals, such as major events, but perhaps more importantly, the ongoing support of programs, initiatives, and funding strategies to grow a community's creative / music ecosystem. One example of a successful collaboration in my home community of Boise is our annual Neighborhood Concert Series, which brings free music to parks across our city in the summertime.

A partnership led by a major performance venue (the Morrison Center for the Performing Arts), a brewery (Lost Grove Brewing), and the City of Boise's Department of Arts and History make the events possible. Another powerful example is Boise's monthly First Thursday event, organized by the Downtown Boise Association, that creates multiple opportunities for music performance throughout the city in public spaces and "third places", reinforcing the fabric of small, connected physical places and spontaneous connection through music.

These ongoing initiatives build and strengthen the networks that allow low-barrier, democratic access to our growing music ecosystem.

As city leaders, much of our role can be summarized by being steadfast advocates, conveners, and awareness-builders alongside our partners in the creative community. The connections and networks that we help to build and support are key to moving forward the initiatives that build stronger, more agile, and more equitable music ecosystems that can respond quickly to stresses and change. By advocating for creative uses of public space for music, for example, we can be advocates for democratizing access to performance space and providing opportunities with multiple benefits for our communities.

Ultimately, intentional leadership and engagement with our partners, aligned on common values, can further the ongoing actions needed to capture the energy required to build a music ecosystem – and our creative economy as a whole – in a resilient, equitable way.

About Sean Keithly

Director of Economic Development, City of Boise, Idaho

Sean Keithly is the Director of Economic Development in the Mayor's Office at the City of Boise. He has held roles in economic development, planning, and business development spanning over 20 years in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. He is a proud member of several Boise area boards including the Boise Valley Economic Partnership, the Downtown Boise Association, Trailhead (business incubator), and the Boise Bicycle Project. He is a strong advocate for the authentic and intentional growth of Boise's creative economy -- with music as a central component. Outside of the office, he enjoys spending time in all seasons of the Idaho outdoors with his wife, Tessa, and 7 year-old lab, Ryder.



ESSAY XII

teremoana rapley

One beautiful sunny November afternoon, I attended an inaugural indigenous writers panel sitting, bare-foot and cross-legged on a comfy red sofa centre-stage, in a low-light black box theatre.

I began to summarise my understanding of my fellow panellists creation process, and at the specific point in their practice when energy is exchanged between creator and the receiver, I presumed two things; 1) *our* words are power and 2) we, the panellists, are translators; the knowledge gap holders.

I explain to the audience the old adage *Sticks and Stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me* is settlor fallacy, as is the usage of the Hebrew derived word Abracadabra relegated to a children's magic show.

To test my hypothesis I ask the audience to raise their hand if they have never been hurt by words. No one raised their hand, disapproving a seemingly harmless children's nursery rhyme accepted as popular culture that actually words *can hurt*, words *are power*.

This got me thinking - what if, before the word, there was sound, and before sound was feeling, and feeling evolved from intrinsic, natural and natural from self – the reworked statement would be: knowledge of *self* is power.

The premise for this panel discussion was based on the words from I-Kiribati and African American scholar, activist and creative, the late Teresia Teaiwa who wrote that:

“if we assume our literature was only oral, we continue to mystify writing as a practice and reinforce it as alien”.

Teaiwa was acknowledging our ritualistic practice of communicating through our interpretation of writing, found across all people of the Moana, the Pacific Ocean.

The patterns inspired by nature are tattooed onto our skin, adorning our infrastructure, our transport. The responsibility of maintaining our village plantations, fishing grounds, homes and food storage.

The weaving of bedding, wall panels for homes, daily living, the passing of loved ones, births and marriage. The composing of song and dance for celebrations and more, are all relevant to the broader purpose of maintaining a self-sustainable system, where communication or *continuous improvement* is key to operating in an environmentally-aware, energy and cost-effective manner. Everything we do has purpose, adding value to the *whole*.

Words are foundational to how our system operates and context always matters. The introduced system within our natural state was designed to repress our whole self, because as a whole person, anyone can become undeniably powerful.

The generations before me, planted the seeds that grew into a movement for reclaiming knowledge of self, my generation raised and fed the seedlings.

I wrote my first rhyme at 8. I was in english class at school, the story was of a young girl seeing her mother struggle to make ends meet and established that it was the Prime Minister's problem that he should resolve. Six years later I joined a politically conscious rap group and started travelling the world at 15. It was the eighties.

As globalisation and the super mis-information highway took hold in the early 2000s, so did all the other societal challenges around the world, including the ability to make a living, choosing where you live, where you want to work, what you eat – fast track to 2022 where 2.5 quintillion bytes of data is created everyday; the simple task of searching ‘best place to live’ transforms into the battle of the algorithms, paid marketing and product placement.

Closes laptop, walks to the fridge...what was I doing again?

We, the urban raised diaspora of resilient tolerant indigenous peoples’ express ourselves through trusting or ignoring an innate *feeling* - sitting in the pit of our gut, instinctively determining what is supposed to be (stomach is settled) and what shouldn’t be (stomach is unsettled).

Unwittingly, I have used this ‘gut’ reaction my whole life to gather and harness all the skills I needed to support my family, as did my fellow panellists, naturally. This gut reaction involved the realignment of the fight or flight response, instinctive reaction under stress. Now imagine if your entire existence is coupled with stress suppressing this natural responsive state.

As translators, our existence is necessary to support the transition of the *reconnection of knowledge to self*.

When I create, I am having a conversation with my ancestors. Regardless of delivering policy work, writing a rap, painting a picture, making a raw cheesecake, my conscious mind takes a backseat to the process of creation, I just do.

Making us believe we are lesser than what we need to be is the most devastating legacy of the settlor mindset we carry as colonised indigenous peoples’.

We all live within the system that perpetuates this condition, and statistically the panellists and I are an anomaly.

If we acknowledge that everything is interconnected, then knowledge-gap holders are part of the system-transformation that we seek. They are in our nannies, in our young people who have lived experience, the artist who paints an image so inspiring it moves you, the postal worker who knows you and your neighbourhood intimately, the rapper who penned lyrics so deep you swear they are speaking directly to your soul, to the singer who soothes and heals with frequencies and vibrations, we are storytellers, i.e., the translators.

Translators use their own *language* to reconnect knowledge to self for themselves and others by demonstration and as we collectively determined earlier; words are power, therefore we need to be impeccable with our word.

Knowledge of self is power, therefore we need to be impeccable with *oneself* before reaching to support others.

As translators, it is not the power we seek, it is the responsibility and accountability to the continuous energy we draw from our ancestors, that we have had to self-discover the tools required to manage this gift effectively. Sharing our learnings with others act as a beacon or how-to guide for those who are rediscovering their own power.

We are not sitting at a table waiting for someone to tell us what to do, we just do.

Don't rebuild, realign and reconnect.

About Teremoana Rapley

Matriarchitect, The Hefty Agency

A neurodivergent award-winning beat-making rapper creative economy strategist Teremoana Rapley has spent over 25 years in senior roles in television, music, and events serving community, corporates, local and central government institutions.

She has worked in the social change space for over three decades and is currently working on a research and development project to prototype 'an artist-led collective of Pacific musicians working towards systems-transformation' within their current local music infrastructure design, in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Heritage.

The Hefty Agency is an indigenous intelligence systems-change and strategy design agency led by Teremoana Rapley- the Matriarchitect.



ESSAY XIII

beverley whitrick

*Don't Rebuild, Reimagine – Thoughts on Building Stronger,
More Resilient and More Equitable Music Ecosystems*

I suppose Music Venue Trust was created largely with the concept of wanting other people to perceive and value Grassroots Music Venues in the way that we do. For me, at the heart of this issue is my route into working in music. Unlike many of my colleagues I have never been in a band or worked as a promoter, instead I worked in community arts development, often for local councils.

Even now I struggle to see myself as being 'in the music industry' as I still think I'm a cultural professional, with a specialism in the Grassroots Music Venue sector. And that's what I'd like everyone who works in our area to be seen as - cultural professionals.

We have already made some progress in renaming our beloved venues, with Grassroots Music Venues (GMVs) now being an internationally accepted term and eclipsing dive bars or the toilet circuit in general discussions of the challenges for our sector. Yet all too often we are still faced with a perception that GMVs are bars with some music, rather than cultural venues which also serve beer.

I don't know about the rest of the world but in the UK I have never been to a theatre or arts centre that did not offer a bar in addition to its live performance programme. No theatre is a 'bar with plays' so why should a GMV be considered a 'bar with music?'

Then there's the perception that our venues only present music. Many UK GMVs have varied programmes of music, comedy, theatre, spoken word plus they play host to a plethora of community-based activities such as meetings, rehearsals, yoga sessions and charity fundraising.

Our Music Venues Alliance members across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have a cultural, social and economic value to their local communities AND are nurturing and developing the future talent of the UK Music Industry.

Music Venue Trust has a reputation for being quite loud. That's because we genuinely believe that we need to reposition our venues in everyone's understanding as key cultural assets. They are vital for the cultural well-being of the nation, reaching into communities often not served by more established (and funded) cultural venues. They need to be recognised and supported for this by local policy-makers and enforcers rather than viewed with suspicion. And they must be invested in by the higher echelons of a music industry which benefits from their hard work.

So, let's imagine working on MVT's mission to protect, secure and improve the UK's Grassroots Music Venues in a world where those two things had been achieved. Proper investment into what amounts to the research and development department of the music industry would immediately reduce the financial pressures faced by every GMV.

With real investment we could move ahead on taking the buildings which house our GMVs out of commercial ownership into Music Venue Properties, a not-for-profit created exclusively to be a benevolent landlord. Once MVP owns a bunch of buildings then the possibility of achieving good deals for services needed would be increased, enabling a greater degree of financial stability and opening up the possibility that the people who run these venues might actually start paying themselves a living wage -- our most recent survey revealed that the average operator

earns £20,400 (\$23,464) a year for a 66 hour working week, which is slightly more than two thirds the legal UK minimum wage level.

With greater understanding of venues' cultural worth many of the challenges taken on by our Emergency Response Service would be minimised as proper consideration of the venues would be given before awarding planning permission to that apartment block next door. Obtaining the correct licence would be perfunctory rather than heavily contested. Applying for grant funding would be normalised and easier, and sponsors would have the local GMV on their list of considerations alongside the Theatre.

I like this version of reality but we aren't there yet so MVT will keep working towards convincing whoever we can that it makes sense for all of us.

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About Beverley Whitrick

Strategic Director, Music Venue Trust

Music Venue Trust was created in January 2014 to protect, secure and improve the UK's grassroots music venues. Beverley runs the charity, manages the team, oversees campaigns and communication, produces national networking event Venues Day, manages the Music Venues Alliance, liaises with cultural sector and government partners, and represents MVT at national/international meetings. Beverley has over 25 years' experience of Arts Development, event management, tour coordination, building networks, funding, evaluation and strategy. She has worked as a local government Arts Development Officer in 3 different authorities and as a freelance Arts Consultant in London and Barcelona.

The Music Policy Forum is a non-profit dedicated to building and sustaining stronger, more resilient and more equitable music ecosystems through stakeholder collaboration, networks and promotion of best practices.

A video archive of previous interviews and conferences is available at www.musicpolicyforum.org.

We would like to give special thanks to our contributing authors for participating in this project.

For more information, contact musicpolicyforum@gmail.com

This eBook was designed by Claire Krawsczyn.
Connect with her on LinkedIn [here](#).



MUSIC POLICY FORUM