

Zoe Schneider
GEMB M.A. Candidate
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Reflective Paper

1. Summary of the Completed Project

My CE is a reflection of my first graduate year, mastering my craft as a business professional, artist, and hopeful ethnomusicologist. This academic year, I decided to tackle not one, but three final thesis deliverables. I did not take on a heavy workload for the sake of achievement, but because it reflects the quality and scope of work I aim to do for the rest of my life, finding a balance between academics, businesses, and active musical artistry. With this master's degree, I build upon my years of professional experience, further refining my skills at time and energy management. I exercise my organizational power through the increasingly difficult task of balancing all of my passions. I am an artist, and I am an activist. I am a businesswoman, and I am a public speaker. I have bold ambitions and a thriving academic mind. I refuse to let the depth of my passions restrict the reach of my curiosity. I don't need to sacrifice any facet of my profile to ensure another part of me is as strong as it can be. If this year, and the completion of this project, has proved nothing else, it is this: I am a renaissance woman, capable of balancing my divided interests, and thriving in diverse environments.

For my initial project, I completed the planning and execution of a tribute performance, commemorating the 40th anniversary of Michael Jackson's first solo album, *Off the Wall*. In executing a musical performance of scale at a respectable public venue, I've displayed testament to my abilities to organize and manage a project. It was a platform with which to showcase my musicianship, and my pursuit of excellence in mastering a new musical craft. I've proved that I'm an accomplished singer, and also a bassist, drummer, and pianist. Furthermore, I was able to

develop an ideal growth strategy for my consulting firm, Grown, Gifted, and Black, feeding my desire to serve and give back to young artists of color. Finally, I've expanded upon my research into how we can encourage and support public figures to be socially conscious artists, and fully embrace their duty to be a well-informed global citizen. This is research intended to propel me into my doctoral thesis ethnomusicology application on my completion of this program.

2. Project Results

One of the greatest lessons I've ever learned from my mentor, Vanessa Stone, was, "To lead the most fulfilling and satisfactory life possible, we must let go of expectation." While it's vital to have aspirations and dreams we waste our energy in formulating how things might work out. It is not a form of self-defense, and it isn't avoidance of excitement or joy for fear of disappointment. It is the acceptance of the mystery in life. I entered into all of my projects with a desired outcome, but I had no expectations for how I would achieve my goals. I only knew that I wanted to learn, I wanted to collaborate, and I wanted to grow.

I've spent the last four years refining my skills as a live event producer. I've managed and produced small house shows, and shows attended by over 10,000 people. With my history in festival planning, and my private interest in small live show production, I feel very comfortable facilitating the organization of live performance events. My deep interest in live production began when I was studying abroad in Valencia during my undergraduate career. There was a restaurant called Black Chili struggling to bring attention to their venue, so I suggested we start a weekly live music night to increase community engagement. Through trial and error, I provided an artistic space for my peers to engage with the local community, and stimulate business for a small, local company. My foundational experiences like Black Chili have taught me to maintain

a level head during the planning process of Off the Wall, because there are few unforeseen variables my experience has not prepared me to navigate.

The greatest difficulty in any live show is corralling and organizing all of your live musicians. Musicians are an incredibly unique and vibrant people, but they can be hard to organize on a large-scale project, especially when working for free. It was important to me to make this event accessible to the community with free admission, choosing to work with limited resources on the band's behalf. Convincing a large group of people to commit to something with no fiscal incentive is difficult, especially within the struggling population of college students. That being said I relied upon my DIY live event production experience, as well as my own personal experience as an artist, to encourage their willingness. I offered to match hours for music business consulting services with anybody willing to participate in my show, a valuable resource I have to offer with many of the participants being artists in the developmental stages of their career.

Aside from the logistical and administrative tasks required of me to complete in preparation for the show, I do believe the greatest challenge was confidence in myself, not only as musician, but as musical director of a show. Having been a vocalist for the greater part of my life, I have no problem stepping onto a stage being a powerful and energetic lead woman, following instructions of a band of any size and caliber. It's a completely different world stepping into that same space as an instrumentalist and director. As a Berklee graduate, I know I have the practical and technical education, but having the confidence can be challenging. It forced me to grow as an arranger, a conductor, an engineer, and a project manager. When you have no one to hide behind, you must take all the struggles of yourself and your group and turn it into something beautiful. I am excited to approach this challenge, while acknowledging I am

intimidated by doing something so far out of my comfort zone in such a public way. I believe the presence of fear must be confronted and appreciated, because there's probably something amazing on the other side of it. I haven't performed my show live yet, but with the support of my community I have no reason to believe this performance will be anything short of extraordinary.

Developing a well-thought-out business plan for my consulting firm in tandem with this performance presented a unique set of challenges. Music business consulting is something I've practiced for years, but I hadn't made an official platform for my services. The further I became involved with my own brand and platform as a public speaker and professional musician, I realized that there needed to be another outlet for me to express myself as an industry professional. My motivation to assist young professional artists build their careers comes from an intrinsic desire to serve my community, indifferent to money or recognition. I found it very hard to think about conducting the services through the lens of a businesswoman, because I have always affiliated business with capitalism and profit hungry mentality. I intend for GBBC to be a people-centric pursuit, uncertain of how commerce and community could work together.

Having been so privileged to obtain a music business education from Berklee, I felt it my duty to give what I've been given and pass along the wealth of information I've learned. I'm grateful to the support I found in my mentors and advisors at Berklee, namely Tony Woodcock, and Alex Perrin. These gentlemen helped me to realize that it is possible to conduct business motivated by the activities and not by revenue. Professor Perrin offered invaluable advice as to how to consider the organizational structure of my business so that our mission remains centered around the people and not the bottom line. He helped inspire me to further my growth as a businesswoman, by stepping into the social entrepreneurship world.

My thesis advisor Tony Woodcock was knowledgeable and offered many useful tools to aid me in articulating my message to a general public clientele. While often a source of strength, my stubborn personality can be very hard to maneuver when I need to see something from a new perspective. With the help and patience of these educators, I'm approaching a sustainable balance between what activities are required of me to succeed and what I truly desire. I've realized small ways in which I can let go of my preconceived notions about business and prejudice about profit-hungry models, and I've opened my mind to the full potential of what I can achieve in starting my own business.

My ultimate goal is to become an ethnomusicologist to help connect culture, society, and music through a critical academic and artistic lens. I find much of the profession, however, very inaccessible to the general population. I wanted to do my research as an ethnomusicologist, a potential PhD candidate, and someone deeply involved in academia, but it felt inauthentic to me. I want to be doing the kind of research anybody would be able to do using the tools everybody has available to them, not the tools you can buy with a \$65,000 per year education. I've been incredibly privileged and blessed to participate in institutions of higher learning, but I've realized through this process my desire to take these practices and make them as accessible as possible. I want all people to be able to participate, no matter their socioeconomic class. My research inspired me to reconsider the ways in which I want to be involved in these professional practices. Ethnomusicology should not be an elitist discipline and deserves a place in more public conversations.

The most pressing, daunting, and important challenge I encountered during my research was accepting the reality that not everybody cares about these things as much as I do. It's hard to inspire people living in a habitually apathetic world to care about the causes I am most

passionate about. Cultivating an authentic connection for consumers to a platform or cause is tough, because the pathway must feel organic to the audience and align with their unique values and priorities. Once again, the worth of business acumen is shown, and I understand its power to enhance human transactions. The research was also a surprising reflection of my need to develop better time management skills for projects that are not people-oriented. I perform extremely well when others hold me accountable, but I struggle to deliver the same enthusiasm to self-guided projects. While I maintain a lack of expectation for the results of my research, I can say with confidence that the personal growth I endured came as a demanding yet pleasant surprise.

3. Process

Musically speaking, the organizational process for the Off the Wall show was quite clear. Choosing to perform the album front to back allowed me to reserve my creativity for the logistical task of booking and performing a live show of this caliber. My process began with a collection of resources, including my personal and professional network of people I knew I would need to collaborate with on this project. I partnered with Alex Canuto, owner of LiveX Entertainment to help me secure a venue, and manage the digital and physical marketing for my show in Valencia. With his help, I was able to find a host venue at Veles e Vents, and his resources allowed me to use this space free of charge, with the inclusion of technical sound staff. I consulted former colleague OJ Slaughter, a Boston-based visual artist, to produce graphic content that could be used for promotion of my show.

I recruited the help of the school librarian to help me track down the musical scores I would need to complete my arrangements. She acquired a plethora of texts on Michael Jackson, exploring his musicality, personality, and beyond, to ensure I was as well informed as possible

throughout the process. While I am able to arrange and compose music, I immediately understood the benefit of outsourcing some of the more tedious musical tasks, and requested Brenna Carroll, Jas Kayser, and Alejandro “Jon” Sabillón, three peers of mine, to assist with arranging of songs. While we all worked on our own arrangements, I was able to decipher exactly what instrumentation would be required to execute this show and I began recruiting musicians from each Berklee program to participate.

I sought out help with more involved musical aspects, consulting Carolina Araoz of the Contemporary Performance program to write for and lead the horns, because I am less experienced with leading sections and arrangements. A competent vocal performer, I was able to arrange and record each individual background vocal part and pass it along to the group of five rotating background vocalists who agreed to participate. We held a vocal sectional to begin the rehearsal process, and each arranged piece was shared with the band to allow time for study. The full band, and additional sectional rehearsals are yet to take place, but each person is scheduled, committed to attending, and equipped with all necessary resources to succeed in a rehearsal and performance setting.

While the musical organization was taking place, I partnered with Alex Canuto to create public awareness of the event on social media, as well as a ticketing platform. It will be a free event, but we’ve included electronic ticket sales to make a valid projection of attendance and encourage RSVP’s. Additionally, we copied and disseminated the city imagery provided to me by my visual consultant. During this time Alex and I had many meetings about ensuring the success of the event by communicating with the venue the exact technical requirements, providing a stage plot, and requesting a specific set up of the venue on day of show. We also considered the context surrounding the event and decided to host an after party at High Cube,

another venue secured by Alex Canuto and LiveX entertainment, for audience members and performers to attend.

This project is still ongoing, but I foresee the future of this endeavor running smoothly because I have the experience to complete this project, I have immense amounts of support, and a carefully selected community of people in active collaboration. With each person in direct relationship to me, I can trust their skills and work ethic to deliver what is being asked of them. With this assurance, I am hopeful for what is to come, and I'm confident that my team will be able to handle any challenges that arise.

The process of devising a future growth business plan for my consulting business actually began at an ICC appointment with Maxwell Moya. While discussing how to optimize my personal website, we arrived at the conclusion that hosting my music business profile would be most effective on its own platform. This forced me to consider exactly how I wanted to offer my services, as well as clearly articulate what services it is I had to offer. While this idea lie dormant, I participated in the emerging business practicum where I decided to fully explore other business interests of mine. During this time, I learned about the in depth the process of developing and creating a business and a business plan. I consulted the outline provided to us in class to critically develop my consulting firm. I considered my target demographic based on who it is I might be able to help and relate to the most.

I created and revised clear business activities, conducted market research, and surveyed my community. My findings giving me a clearer image of what career guidance is most craved by young musicians. By understanding the needs of the community I intended to serve, I visualized the most impactful delivery and packaging of my messaging and services. With my corporate identity and mission of the company clear, I felt prepared to test various business

models and formulate my own to discover what structure would sustain my work. I held a strong aversion to monetizing my consulting work, making it a frustrating and challenging facet of the business plan. While I understand its value, I was unable to justify demanding a monetary exchange for my services, making it feel more like a hobby than a business. Through multiple consultations with my advisor and professors, I was introduced to the idea of a social enterprise, which allowed me to reframe my perspective on the revenue collection of my company. Once I found a model that felt right, I completed extended market research and made data-based financial projections for growth costs and incorporation of my company. With a realistic understanding of finances involved, I was able to reevaluate the most effective practices for my business, revising the predictions and claims made in select sections of my business plan. Then I passed along a complete draft of my business plan to peers, colleagues, and professors for review, before finalizing my work.

The idea for the research paper came to me years ago during a surge in what was being called “cancel culture.” Should we “cancel” someone because they said or did something that is socially distasteful? Over time, my opinions and perception of this practice evolved, allowing me to enter this academic year with a precise idea of how I wanted to present this information. Again, the library research assistant proved invaluable. Inspired by live questioning with music business professionals, such as Yvette Noel-Schure, Georgia Meyer, Penny Ford and more, I consulted the school online databases to further explore theory that might help me question, understand, and develop best practices for socially-aware artistry. Having developed a written outline, I began inserting my supporting research into relevant sections, and consistently used a journal to record my new thoughts, reactions, and opinions. It is my ultimate goal to deliver this information verbally, so I wanted to write my thought process so the structure and flow of my

paper can be converted into a live and impactful dialogue, rather than a strictly structured research paper. I reconstructed data and sources into a compelling narrative, consulting writing support in my associate, Heather Brinson. With my editor's guidance, I refined the delivery of my content, and reevaluated relevance and validity of my compiled research.

4. Next Steps

I am on schedule with tasks, but there is still much rehearsal to be done and it's important to raise as much awareness as possible about our event. I will continue my work with LiveX Entertainment to promote the show. I will continue distributing physical flyers around the community, and I will utilize my upcoming performance opportunities to advertise. The quality of the music is integral to the success of the show, as well as proper documentation, so that the reach of these efforts does not fade after the live show. During the rehearsal process we will be taking headshots of each performer to use on a group poster and deliver on an offered incentive for musicians to play this show for free. I will soon be consulting my team of two photographers and one videographer to discuss best practices for capturing the show. I want the performers to have quality content they will be able to use for their own artistic purposes.

The business plan created for Grown, Gifted, and Black Consulting (GGBC) is for the expansion and growth of preexisting activities. Through the process of creating financial projections and specifically required start-up costs, I understand that GGBC's growth depends on an investment. Considering the business model I have chosen, I am going to research potential partners interested in and able to support a creative media social enterprise. I think this research could be done well at an incubator, where I could also receive useful feedback for how to start and carefully develop my ideas in a practical sense. Upon my return to the US I will be looking

at Smarter in the City Accelerator or Boston Founder Institute for compatible programs I might benefit from.

Focusing on the most immediate future, I am looking to expand our intangible capital and grow impactful content. We have already secured multiple artists in trial partnerships with our business acting as Grown, Gifted, and Black Fellows. They allow us to promote them and use their content in exchange for free services. These are upcoming and notable artists who perfectly represent our target demographic. The primary focus now is artist Jas Kayser, working on a music release campaign and brand activation with her cymbal sponsor, Pastie. The current status of the company assigns all the value to our current clients, making the next step delivering quality revenue earning material to the artists.

A goal of research is often publication, and I look to self-publish my findings on my own personal platforms. I have considered using my writing as an opportunity to build a relationship with media outlets and boost credibility, but my primary focus is converting the content to the medium I believe to be most effective: verbal speech. I will be using my research paper to activate a new outlet on my personal website where I will record short videos of my beliefs and findings for ease of consumption. I will also use the formatting of my website to treat my research as a living, breathing document, constantly being updated and revised. I will conduct this continued research and writing under the mentorship of Dr. William C. Banfield, renowned ethnomusicologist. Dr. Banfield has committed to supporting my academic ambitions by helping me prepare my writing samples and thesis proposal for a PhD. in Ethnomusicology. Additionally, these topical writings will serve as the basis for curated public speeches I hope to deliver in appropriate spaces. I have already inquired about a speaking position at Universal Music for a corporate event, and I will continue to focus on finding new platforms and

opportunities to spread my message. Once I've resettled in the United States, I will engage my booking efforts by fostering my current relationship with All American Talent Agency, and search for additional non-exclusive talent booking agencies to partner with.

The further improvement of the Global Entertainment Music Business masters, as well as the Berklee Valencia student experience, is of great interest to me. Personally, most necessary step for the improvement of the program is to include more women within faculty positions in the GEMB program. While some of the speakers, such as Yvette Noel-Shure or Cherri Hu, were able to offer a feminine perspective, short visits do not provide the necessary mentorship and council the students require. Of course there is much planning and institutional strategy involved in staffing decisions, but this should be an integral priority, because the absence of women in leadership positions within the program is palpable.

5. Contribution to Discipline and Profession

Choosing to perform "Off the Wall" was a selfish endeavor, it is my own favorite music and the challenge to achieve limited mastery of electronic bass is a self-serving interest. The byproduct of my mission is an opportunity to collaborate with a diverse community of musicians from all over the world, a chance to celebrate a piece of musical history, and connect an audience of strangers for a night of great music. My commitment to playing music of the caliber of "Off the Wall" helped me rapidly develop competent technical bass skills. This allows me to be a contributing member of the musical community in a new way, offering musical support to my peers.

The greatest contribution of my learned and developed skills will manifest in my work with my consulting company. Having the means to directly communicate the information I have

learned in my time at school and in the industry, I will relay education, and exercise my own refined professional skills to properly package and promote the artistry of young musicians. My vision of success in this practice is delivering service to young musicians, giving them the financial and professional security to focus solely on the creation and sustenance of their art. Providing an accessible platform for young artists of color to grow their career is a purposeful and necessary service.

The presentation of my research and findings is primarily a seed for the research I intend to conduct during a PhD. program in ethnomusicology. There is tangible value in my findings and I will make them accessible, but going forward, I want to go deeper into developing theory around social artistry. Informed by the research I conducted, I want to encourage a dialogue surrounding my findings and opinions in the artistic and academic community. My research directly ties into my efforts as a music business consultant, because the artists we develop will be taught and encouraged to seriously consider their own relationship to social artistry.

6. Impact on the student completing the work

In reflection of the past year, I find great appreciation for the developmental opportunities institutionally offered. Being allowed the space to study Global Entertainment Music Business and Contemporary Bass Performance, and studying under musical legends like Gary Willis proved for a transformative experience. While I assumed my growth would be predominantly as a businesswoman, my most dramatic improved discipline was as a bassist. Perhaps it is because that was my weakest competency upon entry to the program, but between live performance, private instruction, and musical encouragement from my peers I have become a competent bassist.

The execution of this entire project demanded I take the limitless ideas I generate and bring them to life. To realize the scope of what it means to complete a project, start a business, or conduct research was eye opening, and guided me to adopt a more practical mindset. To be able to achieve these results concurrently required discipline and effective time management, providing space for me to analyze what does and does not inspire me to be productive.

Performing these tasks at an educational institute is powerful, because you are provided the time, facilities, and support to develop your ideas and explore your fascinations. With a job waiting for me at JazzUrbane Cafe in the fall, I feel equipped to enter this new position able to communicate effectively and professionally, manage multiple business activities simultaneously, and respectfully maintain working relationships. After a year to focus on my academic and professional priorities in a safe space while valuable, has made me miss a working environment. Pursuing a PhD. will demand more time spent in an educational setting, so I appreciate the chance to acquire more experiential knowledge. With my career being of the utmost importance, the work I completed this year helped me accomplish my goal of becoming a more competitive, more competent, and more confident music business professional.