July 26, 2022

Dear Berklee NYC Faculty,

Submitting an application for the full-time position of Songwriting & Production (Songwriting Focus) faculty at Berklee NYC has been an invitation for me to evaluate decades of my own artistic career, to review what being a musician (and musical educator) personally means to me. As those of us who have dedicated our lives to the ever-changing (inner and outer) landscape of the musical arts may feel, professional years can seem to pass by in a whirlwind. To look back is to parse out compositions, collaborations, tours, projects, immersions, albums, workshops—moments of trial and tribulation, invention and reinvention, success and… (hopefully) failing upwards!

While I’ll aim to keep this letter short, I would like to articulate an excerpt of musical philosophy that I first encountered at Berklee in 1995, age 18, freshman year— a phrase that, through all seasons of my own artistry, has remained resonant. It is from the book *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*, by the well-known Indian musical educator Hazrat Inayat Khan. He wrote, “I had composed songs, I sang and played the vina. Practicing this music, I arrived at a stage where I touched the music of the spheres. Then every soul became for me a musical note, and all life became music.”

Like this, I’ve always looked at life—all matter and space— as music; a spectrum of BPMs and relationships of harmonic structures and useful dissonances. I do not think there is anything to which music does not belong. Whether directly writing music myself, teaching or applying “musical thinking” to creative direction, I find music as a motile mathematics, a resource that (while having already provided so much to the world), we’ve only begun to tap.

Having taught (and developed) a methodology of teaching music (voice and lyric-based work) for over 20 years and writing over 1,000 songs, I believe that embodied rhythm is the heart of all great phrasing, articulation, creative expression. I have supported individuals and groups worldwide to tap into performative excellency and master the command of their creative expression, whether applied to “the stage”, a musical score; developing a screenplay or innovating a company. As a music educator, I place importance both on mastering mechanics, theory and technique, but equally on providing a nourishing and safe environment, because this allows a student to exploratorily find their voice in the sea of so many voices. And, regardless of the “shape” of one’s profession in the industry, being able to “know our voice” is a skill we take, as musical people, into whatever innovative purpose we pursue. This is, I believe, the underscoring heart of a “songwriter”, and allows us not only to express our own lyrical truth, but to support others’ voices, which is a giant part of possessing a strong lyrical toolkit.

As an artist based in Manhattan, I would be honored to serve the role of fulltime faculty at Berklee New York, and have been anticipating the development of Berklee’s presence in this city. I believe my musical education, depth and spectrum of experience matches the type of educator you are seeking. I’ve worked globally with musicians from every continent, and thrive in cross-genre situations. I am an innovator and multidisciplinary collaborator by nature. Lyrically, my skills extend from writing songs, to writing governmental grants for the arts, TED talks, utility patents, multiple (top-selling) novels, bodies of poetry, curriculum; branding. I’ve released six of my own records, as well as sold full albums I’ve written; am a guitarist by trade but my entire master’s education was piano-based. I’ve licensed music to Sun Dance, Motown, Universal, worked in industries from commercial voice-over and music supervision to gaming. I lived (and toured) internationally for a decade, and have “bootstrapped” as an indie artist since the 90’s. I am currently growing a technology company at the intersection of music and science. I’ve musically trained top performers in fields of art and business; working in arenas from prisons to conservatories, corporate to artistic retreats. I believe my experience attending Berklee in the 90’s as one of very few women on the Boston campus (as a guitar major) and, again, mid-career (unexpectedly!) as an adult has given me a deep sense of Berklee’s capability, mission and role, from a unique perspective. I believe a graduate from Berklee should be able to look deep into the eyes of culture, and to be brave enough to ask where they can be in best service to the art of evolving music.

With a rich musical community, I’m happy to both draw on my own skills, but also call upon my musical resources, allies and networks to facilitate impactful experiences for Berklee students. Ultimately, I believe that, through both providing strong curriculum, nourishing mentorship and a creatively driven presence, I can support your student body to emerge fortified, empowered and deeply anchored in who they are as artists, creators and business professionals in the world of music.

Thank you so much for your time here and open mind as you seek your best candidate.

I’d be happy to provide any additional information or connect in whatever capacity best suits your team.

Warmly,

Leslie Helpert



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Manhattan, July 2022