

ARTISTS *who present other* ARTISTS *become better* ARTISTS

**“My purpose in performing is to
communicate the joy I experience in living.”**

John Denver

I love performing.

I love the magic of singing to an audience and watching their response. It doesn't matter if it's a theater, a coffeehouse, a living room concert or a front porch. It is a wonderful moment and I crave it. It is akin to picking flowers and handing them to your lover and basking in her response. Music, in its most organic form, is one of the greatest gifts and, in turn, rewards in human life.

Music is also the ultimate do-it-yourself occupation.

Most artists are self-employed and even run their own little record labels. Since the last of the music store chains died, performing is really the only way artists have to present their music to new audiences. The days of getting signed to a record company, releasing an album, getting it played on radio and followed by a big concert tour are over.

So, focusing on reality is important, spending precious moments on true action is critical. It applies to life in general, but most especially to music and art. In other words: don't just read about a garden ... turn off the TV, go outside and plant the ding-dang thing. Same with music: don't just listen to it on a smart phone, pick up an instrument and play it. Don't wish for it ... do it.

Don't whine there's no place to play ... get off your flabby duff and *create* a place to play.

What a great principle live on. Folks waste so much time dreaming about things they want to do. They think about it too much and before you know it, that clock ticks and the time to have accomplished it is gone. There is only so much young in the bank ... it gets spent with or without our participation.

Remember my previous reference to Van Gogh?

There is a huge difference between seeing a *real* Van Gogh painting in a museum verses seeing it on a computer screen. Online it sure looks beautiful ... but in person you stand in the spiritual presence of the artist himself, your eyes watch the direction of each brush stroke, your emotions ride every joy and pain the artist felt as he selected his colors. Seeing a Van Gogh in person is overwhelming because you are physically experiencing the life force and spirit of the artist himself.

It's the same with music.

Sure, you can hear the song in your earbuds and be excited and moved by the music, but watching the artist onstage you can be transported by the sheer emotion of the performance and by the crowd.

We live in a world saturated with musical noise yet deprived of art. Today fans are emailed an MP3 of a song, they Google the band, YouTube the band, iTunes the band, download the band ... and they're done. Never even saw the band live.

That's why so many performance clubs and theaters are shutting down. America is becoming venue-starved because so many have surrendered to the two-dimensional world. The opportunity to experience three-dimensional art is becoming harder to find. Two-dimensional art saturates people with an endless bombardment of mundane efforts, making the public numb to even the idea of art.

Presenting other Artists builds your own Audience

At the end of every WoodSongs broadcast I try to encourage the audience to use what they just heard as inspiration to play their own music. I've put this into action with a project called the WoodSongs Coffeehouse.



We ask the audience to consider using their homes, a barn, a local school basement or existing coffeehouse or club and, once a month or whenever suits them best, host a concert.

Most *WoodSongs Coffeehouses Concerts* are simple gatherings and most often happen in a host's living room. They invite 15 or 20 friends for music and a potluck dinner and pass the hat for the artist. You would be amazed at the high caliber of musicians on tour out there who would bend over backwards to get the gig.

I even wrote a *WoodSongs Coffeehouse How-To Manual* (free to anyone) You can start a music coffeehouse in your own backyard and WoodSongs will help you do it. There are nearly 100 hometown *WoodSongs Coffeehouses* operating across north America.

Our WoodSongs Coffeehouse in Germany is run by a fine songwriter Dieter Stoll. He and his group of friends started in a small barn they converted into a theatre. It is thriving and they were even featured on national German television. And newspapers. And radio.



Now think about that: our musician friends in Germany started a concert series that presents other artists ... yet *they* were featured on national television.

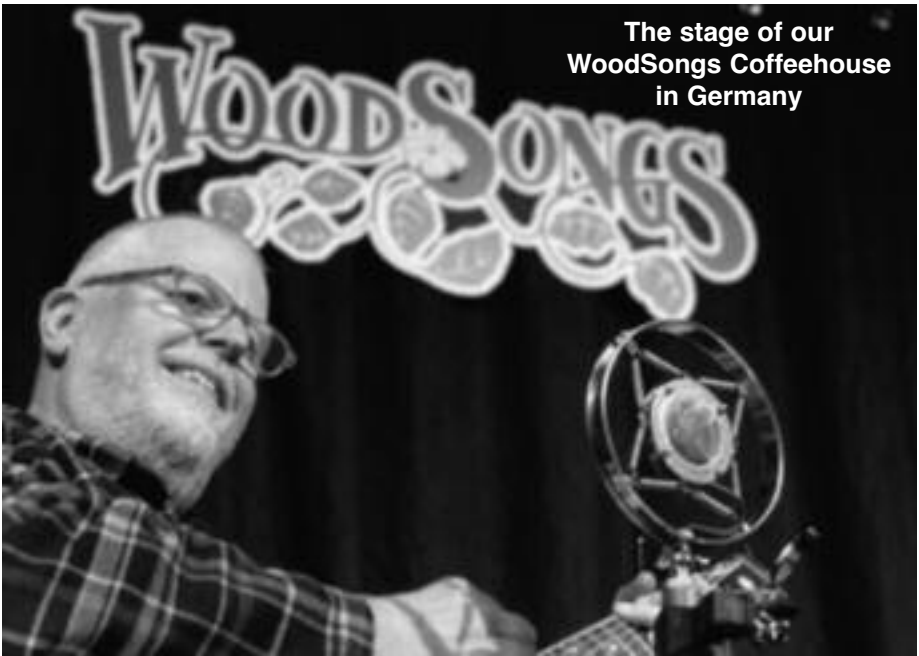
It's what I've been preaching about. Doing good work, even if for free, is the best PR campaign for any artist. You think they would have been featured on national television sitting around hoping to get discovered?

They got to work, they got creative ... and now they are reaping the reward of national recognition.

Understand the formula now?

It's impressive how much media attention artists that present other artists get. Our songwriter friends in Connecticut, Arkansas and across America that start a WoodSongs Coffeehouse ... a simple, mini hometown concert series ...enhance their reputations, endear themselves to their circle of fellow performers, attract a crowd and increase the size of their own audience.

Our SongFarmers Chapters are experiencing the exact same thing. I'll explain that next.



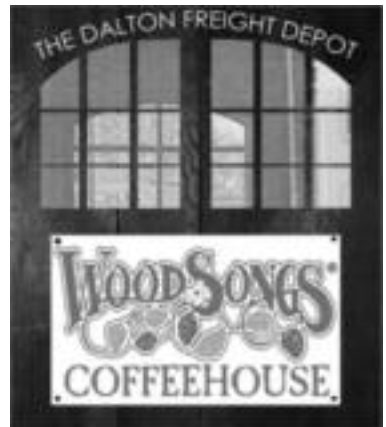
**“Happiness is a guitar, a microphone, a duet partner,
a great venue, and an attentive audience!”**

Dieter Stoll, Kusterdingen, Germany

We have nearly 100 *WoodSongs Coffeehouses* around the world presenting small concerts in their hometowns. The one in Dalton Georgia regularly has 300 or more at each concert event. They are held in cafes and living rooms, community centers and schools, book stores and cafes. The one in Las Vegas, Nevada is held in a converted auto mechanics shop, nicknamed the “Garage Mahal.”

If you love music, especially if you are an artist and musician, I invite you to start a hometown concert series. It can be as simple as a house concert in your living room or a converted barn like Dieter uses in Germany. It doesn't matter where.

Just go to WoodSongs.com, click on the Coffeehouse button and we will help you. It's free.





Alrighty, let's not get confused here:

A *WoodSongs Coffeehouse* is a hometown concert series with tickets, a way to help artists find an audience, sell their CDs and make a little money.

A *SongFarmers Music Chapter* is different. It's a gathering of friends, a musical picking jam. A place to bring people together as a musical community to pick, sing, learn and share. It's free.

One involves money, the other does not.

Let me make the case for a SongFarmers Music Chapter by stating a brutal fact:

FACT: Money will limit the size of your audience.

It's true. The more you try to get paid, the smaller your audience will become, defeating the effort to get paid. Where there is an audience, there are wallets and ... well, you can figure out the rest.



**"He is richest who is content with the least
for contentment is the wealth of nature."**

Socrates

Freedom is best cradled in the arms of contentment. We are sold on the idea that "stardom" and selling millions of albums is the goal of making it in the music business. Yet, all too often, those who "made it" are unhappy, frustrated and miserable.

Why? Because they over reached their ability to be happy.

Maybe the stage you seek is not an arena. Maybe it's a quiet moment playing alone in the woods, or on a front porch with your friends and family. It could be as powerful as performing to a group of school kids, bringing a joyful moment to residents at an old folks home or welcome distraction to a cancer ward in a hospital.

There is so much you can do with music that has nothing to do with "business." And, oddly enough, that's the best business model for all musicians to follow.

**"Music is the art of the prophets that calm the the soul;
it is one of the most magnificent gifts God has given us."**

Martin Luther

Twenty thousand people screaming in an arena isn't "calm." Paying \$100 or more for a ticket isn't exactly calming either. Sure, in its place it's fun. But sunsets, front porches in the rain, fireplaces when it snows ... now that's the stage for real organic, rural music. This is the music America was built on, families were built on, homes and communities were built on.

Let's turn the clock back a bit, let's build a front porch around the world together and calm things down.

Remember everything I've already said about the changes in the music business. The truth is you are not Bob Dylan, you are not Garth Brooks and you are most likely going to be a wonderful songwriter with a day job.

There is nothing wrong with that.

Now that we've gotten that out of the way: what do you do with all that passion, heart, music and song? Before you can step forward into a new path, you have to accept the destination.

For most folks, that would simply be: Joy. Joy in life, joy in the size of your audience. Joy in who your audience actually is.



**"I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself,
than be crowded on a velvet cushion."**

Henry David Thoreau

That's why I encourage everybody to gather your friends once a month or so, pick up an instrument, play three chords and the truth, and turn your living room couch into the greatest stage in the world.

How To Start ... it's Free

It was a great suggestion made during our first WoodSongs Gathering ... a simple picking jam and song swap of friends on a regular basis in your living room, front porch, local coffeehouse even a school room.

Join dozens of SongFarmer Clubs across America, we even have one in the Virgin Islands. They are bringing neighbors and friends together to pick, sing and share community friendship. It's simple:



First: become an active member of the WFPA. The folks who attend don't have to be members, although that would be nice. Only the organizer.

Second: create a Facebook page that looks like this: "SongFarmers of (your hometown)" and link to SongFarmers.org

Your SongFarmers gatherings should always be free, non-ticketed, pot luck and involve as many kids as you can. One of the amazing things about these clubs is discovering the vibrant seedling community of young players. It is amazing, its easy, and it's fun.

Ready to Start?

Contact us by sending an email to WFPA@WoodSongs.com and we will send you logos and artwork you can use to start your own SongFarmers Music Chapter. There's more info on the website SongFarmers.org



"Without music, life would be a mistake."

Friedrich Nietzsche

Our first SongFarmers Chapter



There's nothing more lonesome than the sound of a perfectly good front porch with no music on it.



Our SongFarmers Chapter in Shelby County Indiana held an event in a local theatre



The SongFarmers Chapter in Tellico Plains TN in the cabin home of Perry Brake

SongFarmers Jamming Tips



- 1- TUNING:** It's ok if you are not sure how to tune your instrument, others will help you. Being in tune is better for you, your instrument and the group.
- 2. TUNE OFTEN:** You are not being distracting or rude! Tuning should be done before you play your first song and you can easily check your tuning between songs and tweak when necessary.
- 3. TIMING:** This is the speed and tempo of the song. If you're not sure of the tempo try to focus on the bass player. The Bass player drives the tempo of the song. This is a fun thing to learn. Remember that as songs become louder, they tend to become faster. Just follow the song leader and you will be just fine.
- 4. SONG SELECTION:** A SongFarmer event is a community effort. There are no "stars" at a SongFarmer jam, everyone is equal. That means we want to pick songs that the group can play together. We want everyone to have fun!
- 5. SONGS WITH LYRICS** help the players notice chord changes easier. Tunes with no words - instrumentals - are generally more difficult for a group to play.
- 6. SONG KEY:** This is usually the first chord of the song. Tell the group what KEY your song is in so the group can join in. Remember: simple is best.
- 7. SING FROM THE HEART:** Nothing about a SongFarmer Music Club is about "perfection," it's about love, joy, community and music. If you are doing a song like *This Land Is Your Land* invite the other singers to join you on the chorus. Even if you don't play an instrument you can still sing and be a SongFarmer!
- 8. VOLUME:** If you can't hear the lead singer you are probably playing too loud. The harder you use the instrument the quicker it will go out of tune.

Remember – our goal in a SongFarmer event is to make everyone else have fun and sound better. The more you consider others the more you will shine. Your fellow SongFarmers will appreciate it ... so have fun!

**Prepared by Perry Brake
SongFarmers of Tellico Plains, Tennessee**

Good friends **PICK** together,
they don't pick **ON** each other.

That is the beauty of simple, organic, rural music.



The world is very angry ... but we don't have to be.

Have you ever considered that musicians are the greatest soldiers of peace in the world? People don't fight when they listen.
People don't argue when they listen.

Musicians get people to stop. And listen ... and feel.
That's why using music for things other than trying to sell albums is so very important. Have you ever picked up your guitar and made a four song visit to a battered women and children's shelter? Or a children's ward in a burn unit? Performing for aged folks in a retirement home will bring your heart payment far greater than anything you can put in your wallet.