

Last Minute Ways to Find More Summer Gigs- Five Things You Can Do Today!

By Anne Sullivan

Summer is fast approaching and perhaps your calendar isn't looking as full as you'd like it to be. There is still time to get more work this summer, if you take action now. Here are five suggestions to get you moving.

- 1. Showcase yourself at bridal shops and boutiques.** Ask a couple of nice bridal stores and boutiques in your area if you can come in on a Friday night or Saturday and play (for free) while the brides-to-be shop for their wedding dresses. You will add beautiful atmosphere to their shop in return for the opportunity to have brides hear your playing and hand out some business cards. Wear your best wedding gig clothes and play appropriate repertoire. You will find having a good relationship with the bridal shop very rewarding. Also, remember that most people find harp music relaxing, which could help soothe any potential bridezillas!
- 2. Research the summer festivals in your area.** Summertime is filled with festivals of all kinds. Sure, there are music festivals, but there are also ice cream festivals, strawberry festivals, and festivals for just about any reason you can think of. And all of those festivals need music! Maybe you don't want a headliner spot on the main stage, but often there are rotating musical acts on other locations at the festival or even a vendor who might want some live music to attract customers to his or her booth. Do a little research and a lot of networking to form a new business partnership.
- 3. Look for outdoor restaurants and cafes.** Even restaurants that don't have music during most of the year can be in the market for live music when they open their outdoor tables in the warm weather. Talk to a couple of local restaurant owners or managers and offer them some live music. They may have a budget, perhaps just a small one, or they may offer you the chance to play just for the exposure you get to their dining clientele. Either way, it can be a profitable way to spend an evening. Plan ahead for any summer breezes with clothespins and a heavy music stand to keep your music from blowing in the wind!
- 4. Try busking, harp-style.** As long as there have been musicians, there have been buskers, musicians who play in public spaces for whatever tips people will throw into their cases. And while harpists, especially those of us who play large concert harps, are challenged with logistical issues, busking is still possible, and can be a great way to earn some extra cash and build a following. Train stations, public parks, downtown corners, even parking lots can be great locations to add a touch of music to the environment. Do be aware that some communities have

restrictions on busking in public places, so check ahead of time with your municipality to see what the local regulations are.

- 5. Be prepared with your marketing materials.** This is the most important ingredient in your summer gig plan. Whether you implement any of the suggestions above or not, you need to do this one. You can't expect to get many gigs if you're not prepared for the business end of things. You need to have business cards with all your contact information including a phone number and an email address. You need to have a set of rates that you charge for specific services. You can either write them on a list to hand to potential clients or commit them to memory, but don't be stymied by the request for the amount you would charge. A website is terrific, if you can make one. It doesn't have to be complicated, but it should have all your contact information, along with some photos, a repertoire list, and even some recommendations from former clients. You can add videos or mp3s of your music for even better advertising. But be sure to have something with you at all times that you can hand people who express interest in your playing. Never leave home without your business cards!

There's no guarantee of work when you're a musician. But there's no work at all if you don't take action. Try these five steps to build your business and have fun playing this summer. You'll be glad you did!

Questions? Comments? Let me know either by email – ars@arsmusica.us - or on Facebook where you can like the ARS Musica page.

Also, please share this on your social circles, with students and colleagues. We want to make the world a "harpier" place!