Music: Art vs. Business

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Abstract
This thesis examines literature on the music industry that emphasizes the importance of basic business skills and why musicians should receive better business education. In order to create a sustainable career, musicians must have entrepreneurial and managerial skills, along with knowledge of marketing, branding and basic music law. The curriculum at the Iceland Academy of the Arts is lacking in terms of what business knowledge it provides for the students. Four alumni of The Iceland Academy of Arts were interviewed to find out how their experiences at the school related to their success as individuals today. Each interviewee claims they received little to no business education at The Iceland Academy of Arts. They all shared their thoughts on what can be done to improve the curriculum so that students finish the programs well prepared to launch a career in the music industry.
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1. Introduction

Labor in the music sector is indicated by expensive and long-term education, low salary, minimally regulated career paths, intense competition and severe market selection. Entering into a business that you know nothing about can be risky. There are many skills a musician must have to be able to make the right business decisions throughout their career. Without proper knowledge of basics such as entrepreneurship and managerial skills, marketing and basic music law, a large number of musicians do not feel confident once they enter the music industry after finishing their degrees. Thus making mistakes that can be avoided if they receive formal education about these aspects of the industry. In this thesis my objective is to find what can be done to help improve the curriculum at the Iceland Academy of Arts (IAA) to aid in students’ preparation for the real world. The curriculum as it is now does not provide sufficient knowledge of the business side of the music industry. I interviewed four alumni from IAA who had graduated within the last ten years in search of ideas for what can be changed at the school to better prepare future music students of IAA. All interviewees experienced a lack of business comprehension after graduation unless they had already worked as a musician before they enrolled at the school. IAA did not aid them with any business-like knowledge and they all believed that something can and should be done to improve the curriculum. Labor in the art sector is characterized by expensive and long-term education, low earnings, minimally regulated career paths, intense competition, severe market selection and high risk. Many people who study music have tremendous difficulty thriving in the industry and maintaining a stable income. It is often because they lack the practical tools to do so, and making a living off a business you don’t understand can be challenging. “Artistic labor markets expand along a path of highly unbalanced growth: competitive pressure, flexible specialization of the work organization and pervasive work contingency cross individual as well as entrepreneurial ideals such as self-achievement and innovativeness in ways that challenge conventional views of the skilled working process.” Many artists, including major ones, have never learned such basics such as how royalties are computed, what a copyright is, how music publishing works, and a number of other things that directly affect their lives. They don’t know this because, either they felt their time was better spent making music and they weren’t interested, it sounded too complicated, or

1 Bauer, Viola and Strauss, “Management skills for artists: ‘learning by doing’?”
2 Menger, “Artists as workers: Theoretical and methodological challenges.”
learning it was too much like being in school. However, without knowing these fundamental aspects, it is impossible for them to understand the intricacies of their professional lives. As their success grows, and their careers get more complicated, they become even more confused.³ A high degree of dedication to one’s art is sadly hardly rewarded with sufficient income, partly because many professional artists are not able to establish the value of their work. “Although individual work trajectories increasingly involve elements of both professional and entrepreneurial careers, artists require entrepreneurial and management skills to survive.”⁴

The purpose of this essay is to explore what practical skills are needed to help experience success as a musician. My objective is to answer the question: *How can we improve the curriculum in the music department at the Iceland Academy of Arts to help students and future workers in the music industry to thrive as individuals?*

Artists must learn to be self-reliant when managing themselves and their businesses. However, a musicians’ education generally focuses more on artistic skills than entrepreneurial and managerial knowledge.⁵ The development of a musician’s artistic skill is crucial to their success, but those skills alone are not sufficient to be successful in the music industry.

In this essay I conducted a qualitative research by interviewing four musicians who have all graduated from IAA within the last ten years, with the purpose of understanding their careers today and how their experience at IAA has related to their success, or lack thereof.

This paper is separated into three main parts: the first is an overview of academic research of what is generally needed for musicians to survive in the industry. Following is a summary of the interviews I conducted with four alumni from IAA. I will recount their answers to my most important questions and examine what they all had in common, what their experiences were like, and their recommendations on what can be improved in the curriculum. Following are the conclusion and discussion

⁴ Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
⁵ Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
2. Tools for Survival

Aside from talent, musicians require basic business knowledge to prosper, though many musicians do not generally consider the importance of it until it is too late. There are many aspects to consider when one decides to make a living in a risky business. Musicians need managerial and entrepreneurial skills to market themselves and their art. One could argue that an artist is a business and their art is their product. These are all tools that students do not typically learn at university. Without the security of long-lasting employment, artists are forced into self-employment, and an absence of business expertise is one of the reasons why artists cannot make a living from their talent.⁶

Donald S. Passman is an entertainment lawyer and author of *All You Need to Know About the Music Business*. In his book he states “The marriage of art and commerce has always fascinated me – they can’t exist without each other – yet the concept of creative freedom, and the need to control costs in order to have a business, are eternally locked in a Vulcan death match.”⁷ He elaborates on what it is like to work as a musician. Most artists do not like business and even though a musician’s skills are primarily creative, they are capable of generating a lot of money. Musicians are looking to reap profits off of their art, so it is crucial for them to understand the business aspect of art. Thus they need to think of themselves as a business. Also, musician’s careers generally have a limited run, which can mean anything from one to fifty years. In most other careers you can expect to have a longer professional life, but as an entertainer, their career is typically short lived.⁸

2.1 Managerial and Entrepreneurial Skills

Many Icelandic musicians work on a freelance basis since it is rare and difficult to find a steady job as a musician. The life of a working artist can be characterized by unsteady income, occupational risks and rough competition. According to Merriem

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⁶ Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
⁷ Passman, *All You Need to Know About the Music Business*, 311.
⁸ Passman, 412-430.
Webster an entrepreneur is “one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise.”9 But what does entrepreneurship in the music industry mean? In Pierre-Michel Menger’s essay Artists as workers: Theoretical and methodological challenges he examines the artistic labor markets. He states that artists may be prompted to practice supervisory or managerial skills and therefore blur the line between management and labor,10 labor meaning the creation of their art. The earnings of the artist, like any self-employed worker, depend on how well they perform the managerial and entrepreneurial functions. Not only their skill.11 “But artistic careers exhibit low loyalty to organizations, and artists very often have to operate like small businesses, by holding multiple jobs and by setting up more often than not companies or fringe firms.”12 While artists are obviously not expected to become financial or bookkeeping experts, all artist face ‘simple’ entrepreneurial questions during the course of their career, such as: who will buy my work? How much do I have to sell to make my living? How much should my work cost?13 “Some people argue that the ‘superimposition’ of a commercially accepted doctrine is problematic, as it may conflict with the aesthetic of artists […] However, Newmann (1981) produced evidence supporting our approach, arguing that commercial and aesthetic considerations can productively coexist.”14 “Nowadays, most artists develop such management and entrepreneurial skills on the basis of ‘learning by doing.’15 To the best of our knowledge, no statistical evidence underpins the notion that managerial education fosters success in art studies. Still, studies do support our assumption that managerial education is crucial for artists by highlighting that basic knowledge in, for instance, (self-) marketing … or financial management skills … foster artists’ success.”16 In the early 1980s, a study showed that the most successful art alumni of Chicago’s School of the Art Institute were more entrepreneurial than their peers and better prepared to navigate a challenging system. The resulting theory was that “…there will be a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation of an artist and

10 Menger, “Artists as workers: Theoretical and methodological challenges.“
11 Menger.
12 Menger.
13 Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
14 Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
15 Menger.
16 Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
success.”¹⁷ A British study […] revealed that graduates from art studies without obligatory managerial courses show strong deficiencies related to negotiation and networking skills, self-confidence, self-promotion, entrepreneurial skills and time management. The study recommended that educators further integrate career preparation activities into the curriculum and make these activities relevant to students early in their coursework.”¹⁸

According to Merriem Webster, a manager is “a person who conducts business or household affairs.”¹⁹ A person who manages an artist or a band has many different responsibilities: they help artists with major business decisions, such as which record company to sign with, and how much to charge for a gig. They also assist in selecting producers, photographers, aid in promotion, and help coordinate publicity campaigns. Managers introduce artists to lawyers and agents, make deals with promoters during tours, help develop budgets etc. They maximize advertising and marketing campaigns, and are generally a buffer between the artist and the outside world. They deal with inquiries for commercial endorsements, personal appearances, charitable requests, and take the hit for tough decisions that the artist makes.²⁰ “Consequently, an appropriate background in the field of management is – in addition to artistic talent – a key factor for success.”²¹

In Christine Bauer, Christine Strauss and Katharina Viola’s essay Management skills for artists: ‘learning by doing’? The authors analyze educational offerings related to management skills for artists in the DACH countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland), addressing questions such as ‘Do regular art curricula in the DACH countries include courses with managerial or business-related topics?’ and ‘If yes, to what extent are they offered? Are these courses compulsory or elective? What is their value in terms of ECTS points?’ They investigated 81 institutions and a total of 159 different managerial and business-related extracurricular courses and seminars were identified through the directory. They conducted analyses of the institutions’ websites and course brochures, with a focus on the contents of the art curricula and course

¹⁷ Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
¹⁸ Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
²⁰ Passman, All You Need to Know About the Music Business, 725-741.
²¹ Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
syllabi. The curricula of art programs were reviewed to locate examples of business-oriented training and topics relevant to economics or management; such topics include business studies, marketing, accounting, and law for artists, including intellectual property rights.\textsuperscript{22} They concluded that Art universities are responsible for preparing students for complex career paths: that is, they must get the students ready to enter new markets and work areas […] However, with only 5-10\% of courses in art studies devoted to business-related topics, university curricula bear no relation to the actual relevance of management skills to an artist’s professional success.\textsuperscript{23} As a result, future self-employed artists lack a possibly very important building block for their potential careers. If art universities and academies offered business-related topics in mandatory courses, artists would be able to avoid professional mistakes caused by ignorance and inexperience. Even making them aware about these subjects would show positive effects. They would know that these issues exist, where they can read about them and where they can ask questions. Nowadays, a comprehensive artistic education consists of more than just art-specific content; to have a successful, self-employed career, an artist needs additional competences. “Knowledge of business administration, marketing, organization and knowledge about legal rights and duties should be included in any artistic education, regardless of the specific art discipline.”\textsuperscript{24}

2.2 Marketing

According to The American Marketing Association, “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.”\textsuperscript{25} Increasingly influenced by social media and in this day and age, social network sites (SNS) role’s have significantly grown in marketing. “SNS allow individuals to build an online presence, to comment, share, and interact with friends and strangers and to build a social network.”\textsuperscript{26} This statement especially applies to artists who want to make themselves better known. Passman also asserts this fact:

\textsuperscript{22} Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
\textsuperscript{23} Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
\textsuperscript{24} Bauer, Viola and Strauss.
\textsuperscript{26} Kate Daellenbach, Rachael Kusel, and Michel Rod, “The ties that bind? Online musicians and their fans”, 170.
The biggest change in the concert business over the last few years has been the way concerts are marketed. Traditionally, it was all about advertising in newspapers, on radio, and for really big tours on TV. These days, most of the marketing happens over the internet; today, more than 85% of all tickets are sold over the internet. Accordingly, your visibility and presence on the Web (your website, social media, blogs, email blasts, tweets, etc.) go a long way toward bringing warm bodies into seats.\(^{27}\)

Social media has also become the main source of brand information.\(^{28}\) Without knowledge of how to properly market oneself and their art, musicians will have an extremely difficult time spreading their art and reaping the benefits of their creations.

### 2.3 Branding

According to The American Marketing Association, “A brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme. Brand recognition and other reactions are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary.”\(^{29}\)

In her Master’s thesis, „Hver er sinnar gæfu smiður: Persónuleg vörumerkjastjórnun íslenskra tónlistarmanna” Kristín Inga Jónsdóttir researches brand management for Icelandic musicians. She emphasizes the importance of personal branding for musicians and conducts a qualitative research by interviewing well-known Icelandic musicians. The results showed that the artists’ main goal regarding self-promotion was to build a relationship with the consumers. According to her research, social networking sites are what musicians mostly use today to create a connection with their fans and build a personal brand and the consumer-artist relationship boost the trust and reliability of the brand.\(^{30}\)

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\(^{27}\) Passman, *All You Need to Know About the Music Business*, 7536.

\(^{28}\) Smith, Consumer Perceptions of a Brand’s Social Media Marketing."


In Vikingur Márs Bachelor thesis, „Hvað eru uppnæandi rokkhljómsveitir á Íslandi í dag að gera til að kynna og markaðsetja sjálfu sig?” He explores what up-and-coming Icelandic rock bands are doing to promote themselves. He examines social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter to see how Icelandic bands use them to market themselves and use them to their advantage. He Interviews four promising Icelandic rock groups to see what they do in terms of branding and marketing. The results of the research proved that the bands mainly focused on developing their brand through these social networking sites. These sites help the bands to connect with their fans by posting news and updates about themselves, thus strengthening the relationship between the artist and the consumer. Artists should be encouraged and taught how to promote themselves online because without it, creating a relationship with supporters becomes nearly impossible and thus deters an artists’ success.

2.4 Copyright

Passman defines Copyright as “‘a limited duration monopoly.’ Its purpose […] is to promote the progress of ‘useful arts’ by giving creators exclusive rights to their works for a while. As you can imagine, if you created something and everybody had the right to use it without paying you, not very many people would go through the trouble of creating anything (including you and me).” Copyright is essential in the music industry and understanding it is important to make business decisions. Musicians need to understand who is allowed to use, perform, or download their music. In Simon Frith and Lee Marshall’s book Music and Copyright, they emphasize that for anyone with interest in music, copyright is more important than any other concept in “... making sense of the variety of social practices that make up ‘the music industry’. Copyright provides the framework for every business decision in the industry.” Musicians need to ask themselves questions such as, who gets recorded? What do they record? Who is allowed to use their song? Who makes money from this performance? Who is allowed to use their image? Who makes money from that? Will this song be heard on the radio? Used in a TV commercial? Will it be featured in the background of a cinematic film? Can you arrange it? Sample it? Download it? Copy it for a friend? All these questions concern copyright.

32 Passman, All You Need to Know About the Music Business, 4264-4272.
“Copyright, one might say, is the currency in which all sectors of the industry trade.” In a sense, copyright encourages inventiveness by guaranteeing benefits for the creator’s intellectual efforts, ensuring protection of his or her honor and reputation at the same time. Copyright also supports the availability of creative work and protects investments in production. All of this can directly or indirectly benefit the artist. Theoretically, copyright has a territorial right and has become one of the most international fields of law.

Passman explains that for something to be copyrightable, the work has to be original and of adequate creativity to constitute a work. But there is no specific test to know what is copyrightable; it’s decided on an individual basis. “For example, the five notes played by the spaceship in Close Encounters of the Third Kind are copyrightable because of their originality, even though they’re just five notes.” As soon as a musician makes a physical copy of something, they have copyright. When you have a copyright, you get the exclusive right to reproduce the work, meaning if you write a song, no one will be allowed to “... record it, publish it as sheet music, put it in a movie, or otherwise copy it without your permission.” You also get the right to distribute copies of the work, as in, for example, selling records to the public. “For example, if a record company hires a plant to manufacture its CDs, the plant gets the right to reproduce the songs, but not the right to distribute copies of them.” Furthermore, copyright gives you the right to perform the work publicly. With music, this means playing it in concert venues, on the radio, on television, through a streaming service, or anywhere else music is heard publicly. It doesn’t matter whether the performance is by live musicians or a DJ playing records; you get to control this right. Another right copyright grants is the right to make a derivative work, which is a creation based on another work. In the music industry, an example of a derivative work is a parody lyric set to a well-known song. The original melody is a copyrighted original work, and once you add parody lyrics, it accounts for a new, unrelated work. It is called a derivative work because it derives from the original. Another example would be a song with a sample in it. Lastly, Passman recounts that copyright allows you

35 Beckman, “Conditions for Creative Artists in Europe”, 47.
36 Passman, All You Need to Know About the Music Business, 4272.
37 Passman, 4272-4280.
38 Passman, 4288.
39 Passman, 4288.
40 Passman, 4288.
41 Passman, 4297.
to display the work publicly. “Generally, this is the right to put paintings, statues, etc. on public display, and in the music area, it applies to websites that display lyrics.” Without this information, musicians have an extremely difficult time understanding how the music business works and what rights they do or do not have as the creator of their art.

3. Curriculum at IAA

The music department at IAA offers a variety of courses. Most are academic and artistic, although it does offer a small number of courses that focus on practical skills as well. IAA offers five different undergraduate majors: Composition, Creative Music Communication, Education, Instrumental/Vocal Performance and Church Music.

All majors are required to take a handful of academic courses such as music theory, ear training and music history. In addition to these classes students are also required to complete elective credits, but the ECTS varies depending on the majors. Students also receive private lessons, which occupy much of their studies at IAA as well.

In terms of practical skills, the courses that students are generally required to take focus on artistic skills, such as, for example, choir, nýnemavika (e. freshman week) and samtal (e. conversation), which is a course designed to bring all departments from IAA together to work on a project.

Furthermore, what I deduced from charts of the curriculum is that IAA includes very few courses that offer any information on the business side of the music industry. The only course that covers any basic business aspects of the music industry is called Starfsumhverfi tónlistar (e. The working environment of music) and is mentioned later in the interview chapter. That course is only 1 ECTS and taught for one week, once a year. Over the course of a student’s time at IAA they are required to take that course twice.\(^43\)

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\(^{42}\) Passman, 4305.  
\(^{43}\) See Appendix.
4. Interviews

For this essay I interviewed four people: Hrafnkell Pálmarsson, Valdimar Guðmundsson, Guðrún Árný Karlsdóttir and Sunna Friðjónsdóttir. Hrafnkell Pálmarsson is a businessman who works for STEF and graduated from IAA in 2008 with a Bachelor’s degree in Composition. Valdimar Guðmundsson is a notable Icelandic composer and singer, who also graduated from IAA with a Bachelor’s degree in Composition in 2010. Guðrún Árný Karlsdóttir is an alumna who graduated from IAA in 2007 with a degree in Music Education. Today she is a freelance singer and piano teacher. Sunna Friðjónsdóttir initially studied Classical Flute Performance but eventually switched to Creative Music Communication and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in September of 2017. She is currently working on an album and teaching part-time at the music school in Hafnarfjörður.

I chose these people to interview because they all have distinctive job descriptions and I believed their experiences at IAA would differ from one another’s. I wanted to get the opinions both from people who graduated more than five years ago, as well as people who graduated recently and are taking their first steps into the professional world.

In preparation for the interviews I looked for alumni from IAA who have graduated from there within the last ten years. To construct the list of questions I examined what are believed to be some of the most important aspects of navigating the world as an artist today. I had strong opinions about the curriculum at IAA, therefore I was curious to hear their thoughts on it and how their time there has been beneficial to them after graduation. I generally asked them the same questions, however some were changed because their jobs are all different from one another.

Regarding the curriculum at IAA I was curious whether there were any courses available that focused on the business side of music. If so, I wanted to know whether it was compulsory or optional, how many credits were offered for the it, if they felt that they had an adequate understanding of the music business once they graduated, and what it was like recording their first album.
I began by asking all of them to tell me about themselves, their story as musicians, and how they got to where they are today. Throughout our conversation they made many interesting points, and overall they had one thing in common: they all agreed that something can and should be done at IAA to better prepare their students for the professional world.

I asked all of them a series of questions that pertained to their experiences at IAA and how it relates to the way they navigate the music business today. They all believe that there can be made changes to the curriculum at IAA, and that students deserve to have more opportunities to learn about the music business where they study. However, some mentioned that some students might not be as susceptible to such courses depending on what they are focusing on at that point in their education. Valdimar was the first to mention that he is not sure that he would have been receptive of this kind of information in a class like this while he was there, although it would have surely been a good idea to include it in the curriculum. “It all depends on what the students are thinking about and what their goals are while they are studying,” he said.

4.1 Questions and Answers

_Were there any courses at IAA that focused on the business side of the music industry while you attended the school? If yes, were they mandatory or optional? How many credits did they offer for the course?_

Hrafnkell recounted that IAA did not provide him with any business-like knowledge. “Bara núll” (i.e. “simply zero”). However, he mentioned that it might mostly have been due to his experience working as an artist since he was in a popular band called ÍSvörtum Fötum before he enrolled at IAA. There was one course similar to The Working Environment of Music course that IAA has now, but for him it was not useful mainly because he already had experience working as a musician. However, he thought it was great to incorporate this kind of a course in the curriculum for the other students that did not have the same experience or had any interest in this. Valdimar had composition classes, private lessons, folksong courses, but did not recall any courses that focused on the business of music. “Maybe there was a short course that went over a few basics but I’m not sure,” he said. Guðrún Árný did not remember receiving any business education at IAA. “Nothing about marketing,” for example. Sunna noted that had been one course called The Working Environment of Music, which is listed above.
“We did things like set up a website, which is something anyone should be able to figure out themselves. What bothered me about this was that this course was designed to help us with practical things but we were left with so many questions. We didn’t feel we knew anything about copyright, royalties etc. When we asked about it we were told that we would learn more about it the next year. But unfortunately that same course was taken away from us the year after. Due to Nordic Music Days in Harpa we completed a different project during this course so we never got the formal education or information we needed about things like this,” she said.

**Do you think you had an adequate understanding of the business side of music after you graduated from IAA?**

Hrafnkell was in his 30s while enrolled at IAA and had more experience than most other students did. He is in a band called Í Svörtum Fötum and they had been active and well-known since before he began studying at IAA. However he did mention that there was no guide about the business side of the music industry. “We need to know more about how the support systems work. A lot of people have worked as musicians for decades without understanding how they work. They usually learn through experience.” Sunna did not at all feel prepared to enter the music industry once she graduated. She was essentially clueless.

**On Marketing**

Valdimar claims, “selling yourself feels strange. But it is clever to educate yourself about marketing, and it would have been nice to learn about this in school.” Guðrún Árný expressed that there was nothing informative about marketing while she studied at IAA. “I personally would love to not have to try and market myself as an artist by posting to Facebook, but unfortunately that is one of the strongest ways to promote yourself today.” As soon as she began posting more online, the busier she became and the more job opportunities she received.

**On releasing music**

Valdimar had no idea what he was doing when he signed his first contract with a record label. “I found it quite uncomfortable to not have total control over my music,” he explained. Sunna felt clueless about what the process of releasing an album would entail. She says it’s wonderful how the power of the internet makes it
so that all of the opportunities for exposure lie in the hands of the artist, but only if you know how to use that power to your advantage. She ended up gathering most of her information from a website called *The Online Musician* which is a site designed to help musicians create an image, plan projects, strategize to give their work exposure, find their audience through online targeting and much more.

*How do you view the relationship between business and art?*

Valdimar says “A lot of artists don’t think business and art mix well, kind of like oil and water, but the fact of the matter is that that is not true. It’s a great quality to be able to sell yourself and your product, which is your art. Even though trying to sell yourself and your image feels strange.” Hrafnkell noted that “being an artist is, essentially, not so different from being a business person. For example, artists usually need to start companies, so it is important to gather information about things like this. As an artist, you are a business/company whether you like it or not. And for some reason this is all very taboo.”

*What can be done differently at IAA?*

Hrafnkell recommended incorporating a course about business and art open to The University of Iceland and/or Reykjavík University and IAA students that brings aspiring businessmen and artists together. “There they will be able to get to know their generation of artists and businesspeople. They can network and gain experiences on another side of their field. One week of The Working Environment of Music can surely help, but it will not necessarily stick with the students. An artist should, of course, look for information on these issues on his or her own, but a university should aid them in finding this information also,” he said. Guðrún Árný thought that there should be an optional course at IAA taught in the last semester at that covers all basic aspects of how to survive in the industry that pertains to the time period we’re living in. “For example, how do you bill someone for your labor? What is the most practical way to deal with those things today? Musicians used to have to buy and invoice block to bill someone but now there is a website called Inkasso that helps simplify the process tremendously today. It would be great to have a course that would cover things like this, to help make the students aware of what they can expect in the labor market and how to deal with them.” Valdimar recounted that as the interview went on, he gradually realized that there should be a course that covers these aspects of the music industry, especially for certain majors. He mentioned towards the end of the interview that as our conversation went on, the more he started to think that it would
be useful to have a mandatory course that covered marketing and how to run a business, because you are the business and your art is the product. Sunna was the last person I interviewed and she agreed with these ideas. I asked her what she thought about students’ differences in interests during the course of their education, specifically regarding classically trained performers and vocalists and she brought up an interesting point: “Classical musicians release albums too, so why should they not want to learn about the music business and the process of marketing, branding and releasing an album? Additionally, she mentioned that an open course that connected with The University of Iceland or Reykjavík University with IAA would be beneficial to anyone involved. She added that one mandatory course for everyone at IAA would be advantageous, and that another course that digs deeper into the concepts within the music business should be optional for those who want to learn more. When I asked if she felt confident in knowing the worth of her art after graduating, she said not at all, and feels that this is a very taboo concept in general. When I asked if she knew about concepts such as copyright, she admitted to still not fully understanding what it means.

5. Conclusion

Choosing a career in the art sector is risky and musicians need a certain set of practical business skills to create a sustainable career. Without managerial and entrepreneurial skills, knowledge on marketing, branding and basic music law, making a living as a professional musician is very difficult. The purpose of this research was to answer the question: What is necessary to improve in the curriculum in the music department at the IAA of Arts to help students and future workers in the music industry to thrive as individuals? The results of this analysis show that the curriculum at IAA did not aid in the success of the alumni that were interviewed. None of the interviewees mentioned that they acquired a significant amount of practical business skills during their time at IAA and all had recommendations as to how the school could improve it. Generally the interviewees did not feel well prepared to enter the professional world once they graduated from IAA. If there was any course that focused on these sides of the music industry, it was a one-week course called The Working Environment of Music, and the interviewees that remembered taking this course were not satisfied with it. The curriculum at IAA focuses primarily on composing,
performing and teaching. Without changes in the curriculum, students will most likely continue to feel this way when they enter the professional world.

6. Discussion

The results of this research are in accordance with my opinions about the curriculum at The Iceland Academy of the Arts. So far I have received minimal business education in the almost five semesters I have attended the school, and the outcome of the interviews I conducted with the alumni proved that I am not the only person to feel this way. After three semesters at IAA I decided to take two courses in the business department at the University of Iceland because I was not satisfied with the elective class options at IAA. At that point in my educational career I was starting to feel insecure about myself as an artist and felt like I had little to no practical skills that could help me promote my art in the future. I took the courses Framtíðarvinnumarkaður (e. future of work) and Tjáning og samskipti (e. expression and communication). Both courses were extremely practical and I urge every art student to consider taking a business course if they can. If IAA constructed a course or program that focused on the business side of the music industry, not only would the students graduate feeling better prepared to make a living off their art, they might even awaken an interest in other professions in the music industry. It could broaden their views and they will be aware of more opportunities. Furthermore, with the proper education on basic business knowledge on the music industry, students would be able to avoid making professional mistakes caused by ignorance and inexperience, thus helping them reap the benefits of their art.
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Appendix