

The Sillaman Sanctuary for Music and Performing Arts

Music and Performing Arts are deeply “wired” into the human psyche. Archetypal stories grounded in the magic of music “to soothe the savage beast within” have been handed down since the beginning of recorded time; their fascinating characters, lifted by the emotions rising out of performing arts, vital to the development of the human condition. For this power of music to express, to explain, to provide emotional release in the light of life’s frequently brutal and indifferent experiences is not only universally accepted but “practiced” each and every day.

From even the scientific perspective, we see the elevation of Music and Performing Arts. There have been recent and promising medical studies documenting the actual healing power of music. In a very real sense, science is extending the promise and restoration of good health – bringing the possibility to experience the positive side to life, the potential to understand intellectually, physically, spiritually, and emotionally what good is available – to even the most broken of spirits.

Perhaps one of the most telling and poignant testaments to the healing power of music came in response to a critic who was quick with a cynical comment when hearing the above declaration. This critic – well aware, as we all are, of the substance abuse problems so prevalent in today’s world of rock and hip hop music, of its complicity in the death of many talented musicians – retorted that music is indeed at the root, or at the very least, a part of these problems. The quick and heartfelt retort to the critic makes the point better than a mountain of scientific data.

“You have it backwards, sir. Music is the medicine that kept these deeply troubled individuals alive as long as they were. Good medicine doesn’t always work. Music is the one sanctuary these gifted souls had in a world gone mad for them.

“There is more than an equal amount of case studies demonstrating the long lives of musicians, particularly in the demanding world of classical music.

"As we say in our business sir, 'you're off key!'"

Some say the number of families who have lived with the horrors of substance abuse at more than half of the world's population. The cost – in terms of ruined lives, death, loss of productivity and money, not to mention heartbreak – is so great as to defy quantification. And yet, despite the efforts of determined and dedicated healthcare professionals and billions of dollars spent on treatment every year, the problem of drug and alcohol addiction has not disappeared and may, in fact, be on the rise.

Many say this problem is unsolvable. "There will always be those who abuse addictive substances," they state; "it has been going on since the beginning of time and will always be so," is their point of view. Perhaps. But many "impossible" illnesses have been eradicated, or their influences greatly mitigated, by breakthroughs in medicine or treatment. And so long as we have such a pervasive and destructive problem in front of us, it would seem all new and serious attempts at a solution would be welcome.

We believe that The Sillaman Sanctuary for Music and Performing Arts—dedicated to the elimination of substance abuse around the world—is just such a new and serious attempt.

The goal of the Sillaman Sanctuary is to provide what we believe is a missing link in today's chain of effective substance abuse treatment. Our theory is based not only on growing research in the area and the attendant empirical data but very personal experiences of the consequences because this piece is missing. Thousands of fine hospitals and clinics around the country provide 30-, 60-, 90-day recovery programs; some, unfortunately only a week to 10-day detoxification program. But regardless of the particulars or timelines of any given course of treatment currently in existence, the recovering addict must leave the program into perhaps the most vulnerable period of his or her recovery. Essentially, supported by "tools" provided during detoxification and abbreviated rehabilitation programs, the patient is "released" into society.

While there are physical, mental, spiritual and emotional services on the "outside," if the patient will only use them (AA, NA, churches and synagogues, counseling, psychiatric care), the recovering addict has simply neither been trained nor lived with these tools for a sufficient period of time to truly "own" them. And it is at this critical point that they are released relatively suddenly into the real world. It is no wonder that recidivism rates are very high, with comparatively few substance abusers able to make this transition the first time around, and that the norm is multiple visits to detoxification and traditional rehabilitation programs.

At The Sillaman Sanctuary, we believe this transitional period needs to be a much longer, more gradual one, which is why we will offer both one- and two-year programs designed to

provide an environment of “possibility,” with very structured milestones of accomplishment. As a result, over a longer period of time, the substance abuser realizes for himself or herself that:

1. It is possible to experience the constructive, joyous, positive side to life, and to do so drug- and alcohol-free.
2. It is possible to master the skills necessary to live a drug- and alcohol-free life.
3. It is possible to re-enter mainstream society with a credible track record of accomplishment and a plan to convince family, friends, employers alike you can live a drug- and alcohol-free life.

We also believe that substance abusers, for a variety of reasons, may not have had sufficient opportunity to experience the very real joy life has to offer. Whether such deficits are the result of family dynamics, chemical imbalances, early tragedies, or chronic illnesses, the addictive experience can train individuals to see only the negatives in life. Even the standard rehabilitation process, for all its positives, presents a rather bleak outlook. Not to expose the substance abuser to the genuine joy life has to offer, in our opinion, leaves out a major element of what it means to live successfully in recovery, of what it means to be fully alive.

Which brings us back to Music and Performing Arts.

The Sillaman Sanctuary will teach these disciplines but also give recovering substance abusers so much more than just education. We will build on our 80 acres a “Society of Possibility,” not much different than the work-a-day world...except that it will be established and run by former substance abusers; there will be more of an emphasis of ongoing counseling and psychiatric treatment than in mainstream society because of our fundamental belief that addiction is a disease; our bias will be toward Music and Performing Arts. They are the jobs to be done, though in most other ways The Sillaman Sanctuary will be traditional village life with all the same services, shops and, of course, responsibilities of citizenship.

We choose this village concept because substance abusers come from all walks of life, with all types of gifts. And while the purpose of our village will be to reduce substance abuse through immersion in the healing power of Music and Performing Arts, we want to provide productive pursuits to any and all, and that means providing opportunities for all professions and trades.

The Sillaman Sanctuary will teach but also perform: plays, television programs, movies, concerts, dance recitals, the list and performances are endless. We will invite guests from the theater, television, film, music and dance to lecture on theory, give instruction, conduct workshops, celebrate creative expression in all of its amazing forms. But putting on programs of this magnitude and frequency on 80-acres "takes a village," as they say. This is why we say the Sillaman Sanctuary is so much more than a teaching camp. Every recovering substance abuser, regardless of his or her gift, will participate in the successful projects produced here in some of these ways. There is a place at The Sillaman Sanctuary for both students and teachers; for architects, designers, decorators and landscapers; for carpenters, electricians, plumbers and roofers; for marketers and experts in advertising and PR; for lawyers, physicians and nurses; for cooks and shopkeepers; for every profession, talent and skill present in traditional society.

Embracing successful models in education, the Sillaman Sanctuary believes this approach – of a much longer, more gradual recovery program, supported by education in music and performing arts, participation in successful productions, sharing in village life and living with a new, joyful outlook – will reduce recidivism, reduce substance abuse in general and, in the long run, reduce the cost of fighting this problem.

In January of 2007, The SDW Group received the first donation to The Sillaman Sanctuary of Music and Performing Arts, including an 80-acre tract of land in the beautiful rolling forests of Southern Ohio near Athens. This incredible gift by the Sillaman family provides the Sanctuary not only with the place but the credibility we need to pursue fund raising and planning in earnest.

We have also raised funds to incorporate The Sillaman Sanctuary for Music and Performing Arts as a 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt, non-profit organization, which is currently in process. And we have also begun discussions with members of the medical community—including the UCLA Medical Center, physicians, addiction experts—substance abuse counselors and educators as well as business executives to build a solid foundation for the Sanctuary.

Equally important, Ed Sachs, President of Pioneer Mobile Entertainment, has agreed to be The Sillaman Sanctuary for Music and Performing Arts' national spokesperson. He is joined

by other dedicated and like-minded people will help us move The Sillaman Sanctuary for Music and Performing Arts aggressively forward in 2007, including:

1. Larry Rougas, from Pioneer Mobile Entertainment
2. Gregory Sabatino from The SDW Group of Companies
3. John Sillaman from the Sillaman Family
4. Jim DeNardo from UCLA, where he is a Professor and Co-founder of The Willows School, Los Angeles
5. Denise Garvey, M.D. from the UCLA Medical Center
6. Brian Williamson from Miami Valley Steel and with strong contacts at The Ohio State University Medical School
7. Patricia Morgan, PhD from the University of California at Berkeley where she is a Professor of Public Health and expert on drug and alcohol studies
8. Richard Coalson, M.D.
9. Garry Day from Sabatino/Day, a SDW Group Company
10. Joanna Thompson from Sabatino/Day, a SDW Group Company
11. Mary Leigh Hennings from Gregory Sabatino Productions, a SDW Group Company
12. Gary Hinsche from Sabatino/Day, a SDW Group Company
13. Sandra Clark from The SDW Group of Companies