



## *De's Dazzles – THE ARTS UNITE COMMUNITIES*

There are many reasons to support local art and entertainment in our community. We are social creatures, and we like to go out, meet with friends, and explore new experiences.

Even a dead fish can swim down a river, but it takes a strong live fish to go against the current! Oh, how the “world” tries to influence the opera house! I have occasionally listened to those “worldly” voices that “know better” and it always seems to turn out poorly. Take for instance, I was told a comedian would fill the house; if you have a comedian, I’ll invite my friends; I’ll be the first one to buy tickets and promote a comedian on social media and so on. Truth be told – we sold 4 tickets. Another time I was told we should get a ventriloquist, so I searched and found the #1 cruise line ventriloquist in the world. He drove from Arkansas to perform.... for 12 people – the event was a pay what you can. I could give you more examples of listening to the so-called experts. There is something to be said for knowledge, wisdom, and experience in operating a venue.

Our board decided many years ago that we are and will be a concert venue, not a bar with background music. People tend to think musicians have an easy life, you stand on stage and sing, whatever else could it involve? In a bar atmosphere, most musicians receive very little respect or notice. These people are just like most of us, trying to make a living to support their families. What could a singer or guitar player possibly spend money on? The most obvious is the travel to and from the venue, food, lodging and clothes. But they spend a surprising amount of money for their instruments (drum sticks, guitar strings, etc), lessons, training, rehearsal rooms, equipment, amplifiers, and the list goes on! For our small venue, a band will work onsite for about 8-10 hours from load in, set up, sound check, concert, and load out. Feedback and a thumbs up on Facebook cannot be turned into meat and potatoes, yes it makes the musician feel good, but it will not pay their mortgage or Corning Opera House utility bill.

On average, Spotify pays \$0.004 per playback, meaning 250 people listen to the song for the musician to be paid \$1. I know a musician who received his monthly check and it was for \$13 – that is hard to live on. Another way to look at it, the musician creates a demo costing conservatively \$800 and he makes 9 cents per sale of the song, so 8,888 people (that’s double the number of people who live in Adams County) need to buy the song before the cost of the demo is even covered. Supporting a musician gives him the opportunity to create more music! They deserve to be compensated for their work and for people to listen to their music.

Think of all those tomatoes you grow in your garden – ONE will be perfect size, color, shape out of the dozens growing on the vines. Same with songs, it takes a large quantity of songs before you finally hit a big one and have it pay off. How many one-hit-wonders do you know? These people pour out their hearts and souls as their songs touch our hearts and stay with us throughout our lives, because they are created with passion and artistry. Remember your first dance? Your wedding song?

Some could argue that musicians make a living from other sources such as merchandise sales, but that is very unpredictable. Would you want to work for free? Or have people ignore you as you sing your heart out? Probably not, so why should concert musicians be any different?

As for Corning Opera House ticket prices include a percentage for taxes, credit card fees, and ticketing fees built into the price of each ticket. We pay the performers – not just the lead singer, but every band member. We offer

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live entertainment and hope to make money to pay for the opera house utilities we use during the concert. By law, we are required to have insurance, elevator inspections, sprinkler inspections, kitchen inspections and it sure is nice to have internet access! That takes a boat load of ticket sales, rentals, and donations.

So, what should a 5-piece band that works for 8 hours on-site be paid? Don't forget to include their gas, lodging and food money into number! What would life be without music? Think about all those campfires, festivals, street musicians and beyond, because music is one of the strongest forms of social and relationship building.

81% of the population state the arts are a "positive experience in a troubled world," 69% believe the arts "lift me up beyond everyday experiences," and 73% feel the arts give them "pure pleasure to experience and participate in." Art and entertainment are an integral part of our local communities, according to Randy Cohen of the Americans for the Arts. Here at the Corning Opera House, we have patrons who used to have season passes to Des Moines Civic Center and switched to attending our high-quality intimate performances. Plus, Corning has excellent restaurants, shorter drive home afterwards or great lodging! Next time you attend a concert, think of the people behind the music and show them your support! Check our schedule out at [www.CorningOperaHouse.com](http://www.CorningOperaHouse.com)

Sincerely,  
*De Heaton,*  
Executive Director  
9/8/2023