Detroit Commedia Rap

BUSINESS PLAN

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**ky.rr@live.com**

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# Executive Summary

Detroit is a city that is experiencing a robust innovative rehabilitation comeback. This presents a vibrant opportunity for a unique expression of current issues in a timeless artistic format.

**Business Overview:**

* This is an effort for the formation of a Detroit African American and Community Artists’ based Commedia dell’ Arte troupe performing local and national political and social issues in Commedia personas and relationships:
* With improvisational and innovative contemporary rap transformed through Commedia to a timeless art form that has traditionally exposed social problems and political corruption in satirical comedy for centuries.
* In a city with glaring examples of social and economic problems; value is found in an eager audience of Detroit’s politically and socially conscious population ready to engage in identifying and executing solutions to these problems.
* Comedy gives rise to solutions.

**Success Factors:**

* Detroit’s core avante garde art community is rapidly growing due to low development costs and restructuring of ideas that are encouraged by the city’s renovation.
* Existing staged venues are accessible and relatively inexpensive
* Many community based meetings and events also provide performance venues
* Commedia lends itself to any type of venue, including street theatre and once the community based troupe is established, the low overhead costs are covered by the non-profit performance income
* Detroit has an existing audience that attends Improv theatre, Rap, & Comedy performances

**Financial Plan**

We estimate an approximate minimum of $85,000 will be required to initiate and establish the Commedia troupe:

* $4,000 for Commedia dell’ Arte training materials and creation of contemporary renditions of traditional Commedia masks and costumes
* $70,000 for artistic & business management salaries, travel, and misc. expenses during troupe formation
* $2,000 for rehearsal space rental
* $4,000 for website broadcasting development & various publishing requirements (ie postings for talent calls, Initial performance dates, etc)
* $5,000 for Portable set, Fill light, & Misc. Performance expenses, when developed troupe begins to run itself in its community

**II. Company Overview**

This project was begun in August of 2017 with a core initiating group of theatre & video artists & writers and community organizers based in New York City and Detroit.

A successful onsite research in Detroit for the viability of this Commedia troupe formation, and structure within existing artists and venues for its maintenance, was conducted in September of 2017.

# III. Industry Analysis

## Market Overview

Rap and theatrical improvisation has a strong foothold in Detroit:

* Local Improv performances are currently priced at $5 - $35.
* Rap performances of local groups are priced at $10 - $200 with exclusive venues priced as high as $75 - $350.

A brief one week run in August 2017of a Commedia performance in nearby Ann Arbor cost audiences $15-$20 on Friday & Saturday and a Commedia historically typical ‘pay what you can’ for the other performances, including Sunday.

There is currently no active Commedia persona troupe of performers in Detroit.

## Relevant Market Size

The Detroit Metropolitan area contains over 4 million people *(14th largest in the U.S.),* where attractions of theatre, art shows, restaurants, sports, and casinos provide a regular audience in attendance of events and performances in the city.

**IV. Customer Analysis**

## Target Customers

Socially and politically active African Americans, long time residents of other ethnicities that have stuck through Detroit’s hard times, and a growing young population returning to the city, provide an eager local audience.

Internet Broadcasts of live & recorded local performances invites a whole new national and international audience and market to be developed.

**V. Competitive Analysis**

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## Direct Competitors

There are no existing local Commedia dell’ Arte troupes in Detroit

## Indirect Competitors

Theatrical Improv groups performing in local area venues such as ‘The Planet Ant Theatre’ and ‘Go Comedy Improv Theatre’

Numerous Detroit Rap artists like Royce Da 5'9", Chavis Chandler, Payroll Giovanni, ELZhi, Drey Skonie, Seven The General, Nick Speed, Nolan The Ninja, Adam Reverie, Oba Rowland, Jibreel Price, Cool African, and Melanie Rutherford, etc.

*(These ‘competitors’ are also assets; as successful examples of the type of audiences that will be attracted to Commedia and provide accessible venues for performances)*

##

## Competitive Advantages

Commedia, with its outrageous masks and timeless relationships of satirical comedy, can be presented in any venue including street theatre.

*(A contemporary example from a review of an Elipses Theatre Company Commedia performance for a college audience in nearby Ann Arbor- traditional Commedia characters are underlined)*

* What is wrong with young people today? The Dottore thinks that they are in danger of giving in to libidinous urges. Pantalone and Babette have other complaints, but all are in agreement that a sound education is necessary. Can Lelio and Isabella’s love survive their schooling? Will Arlecchino ever get a meal? How will they all pay back their student loans? This story brings the traditional Commedia characters hilariously into the world of loan sharks and abstinence education.

**VI. Marketing Plan**

## Products, Services & Pricing

‘Detroit Commedia Rap’ is the creation of a non-profit community based Commedia dell’ Arte theatrical troupe, consisting of a selection of traditional Commedia characters as their performers are auditioned during its formation.

Performance pricing is expected to be $5 - $35; with additional historically typical Commedia ‘pay what you can’ venues along with expected funded community & school based performances

## Promotions Plan

* Introducing the troupe, and promoting performances of Commedia that will take place in performance theatres, art shows, restaurant and cocktail lounge cabarets, outside major commercial events as staged street theatre, community events, schools, live & recorded online web broadcasts, etc:
* Through local ‘ads’ and notices posted in colleges, theatres, art venues, community centers, and in their respective newspapers, local newspapers, and other community networking etc;.
* Online internet clips will be employed to introduce the troupe and to attract audiences on a continuing basis.

## Distribution Plan

Continuous ongoing performances and the distribution of live and recorded webcasts and clips of recorded rehearsals will maintain the troupe’s funding and organization.

# VII. Operations Plan

## Key Operational Processes

* Initial successes for potential members of the required troupe startup directorial, financial, promotional, maintenance, and artistic writing and performer leadership positions, along with possible venues for rehearsals, performances, and Internet broadcasting were developed within the existing Detroit artistic community during a September Detroit visit from the New York organizer.
* After the initial startup, Commedia dell’ Arte, as it has traditionally been, will be managed within the troupe.

## Milestones

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* Start up funding
* Selection and organization of Detroit Management team
* Rental of rehearsal & audition space, purchase of required masks, costumes, etc
* Successful conclusion of auditions and selection of Commedia personas
* Successful Rehearsals
* Successful Initial Performances

**VIII. Management Team**

## Management Team Members

The current temporary startup members:

* Ken Young; the New York organizer of the startup is a retired Director of Multimedia Services for Continuum Health Partners (now part of Mount Sinai Hospital in NYC) with professional experience in theatrical directing and technical directing, webcasting and documentary production.
* Estelle Bajou; Drama Desk-nominated actor, composer, and writer. New York City-based Development and Marketing Assistant for Detroit Commedia Rap.
* Maurice Greenia; published avante garde poet, artist, director, performer and originator of Detroit’s ‘Space Band’ and Puppet Theatre
* Andy Ann; Detroit improv playwright
* Marvin Surowitz; long time Detroit community organizer, political activist, & former professor in Detroit area community colleges
* Karl Schachter; local community organizer and political activist in Detroit
* Archie Lathon; local African American community organizer and youth mentor in Detroit

## Management Team Gaps

* Selection of Detroit management team members from potential candidates
* Funding for the recruitment of the Detroit management team is required.

## Board Members

Kenneth Thorwell Young President

Karl Schachter Treasurer

Kenneth Thorwell Young Secretary

Archie Lathon Vice President

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