

NATS Presentation Proposal for the 57th National Conference in Chicago, IL, July 2-6, 2022

“Own Your Own: How to start your own independent record label and plan, produce, market, release, and promote your music.”

Presenters: Patrice Jégou-Oyelese, DMA and Kolawole “Yinka” Oyelese, MD, MRCOG

In 2009 and I was about halfway through my doctoral studies in classical vocal performance at Rutgers University, Mason Gross School of the Arts, when my husband – who has a background in recording – suggested that I make an album of non-classical music. Although I had recently recorded an album of art songs in Spain, which was released by a small record label there, my husband heard popular qualities and sensibilities in my voice that he felt needed to be explored.

We began working on a “classical-crossover” album and released this debut “pop” album in May of 2014 called “Speak Low.” Completing the album wasn’t the hard part. Now we had to ask ourselves challenging business questions. What do you do with an album that you’ve recorded and produced on your own? We knew we could “shop it around” as it is known, to various record labels both big and small, and hope for the best. But what exactly did that mean, “hope for the best?” Hope that an executive at a big record company like Verve, Reprise, or Warner Brothers would pick up my record and sign me to their label? Hope that if a big label did sign me, that I wouldn’t have to sign away too much of my personal freedom and artistic control? Hope that a label wouldn’t ask for too much money up front to utilize their infrastructures like their marketing and PR departments? But what about doing it on my own? That’s a question I asked myself after seriously considering the difficulty and downsides of “shopping around” my debut album: an especially daunting task without an already tried and true reputation in the genre of “classical-crossover.”

Although I completed my Master of Music degree at Belmont University in Nashville – a college well-known for its Music Business School – I never took a course relating to the business of music, not to mention a course on how to launch a record label and market and promote independently produced albums.

My husband gave me the book “Start and Run Your Own Record Label, Third Edition: Winning Marketing Strategies for Today's Music Industry” by Daylle Deanna Schwartz. Her book started me on the path to becoming an independent record label owner, and in April 2012 I launched Prairie Star Records LLC.

Since the launch of Prairie Star Records, we have recorded and released three albums and numerous singles. The learning curve has been steep at times. I have had to find answers to questions that were not covered in my academic studies. Questions like, “When do I mail out the 1099-MISC form to that musician/recording engineer/arranger that I’ve contracted?” Or, “Did I triple-check the accuracy of my ISRC codes for each of the tracks on my album before I sent them to the mastering engineer?” Or, “Did I remember to register my album (or singles) with Nielsen Soundscan, Soundexchange, and AllMusic?” Or, “What about my music videos? Did I register those with ‘We Are The Hits?’” Or, “Did I buy the proper mechanical licenses for all of my tracks?” And, “What about the UPC bar code for my album, I use a different one for any pre-

release singles right?” Or, “Is this YouTube Channel banner the right pixel resolution?” And so on, and so forth.

In this presentation, I will discuss the resources I used to launch our record label, and how we have planned, recorded, and released my last three albums. Dr. Oyelese, will discuss his role as the producer of my last three albums. He will further discuss the definition and role of a producer, and why a producer is a valuable member to an artist’s team. It is our hope that singers, singing teachers, coaches, and conductors will consider the many upsides to owning and operating their own record label.

SESSION ABSTRACT: “Own Your Own: How to start your own independent record label and plan, produce, market, release, and promote your music.” Do you want to record and release your own album? What do you do once you’ve completed the recording aspect of the project? Gone are the days when “shopping around” a well recorded and well produced album is a guarantee of being picked up by a major record label. The internet has leveled the playing field for musicians, and now, more than ever, independent artists are launching their own record labels, and releasing music on their own terms. In this presentation the artist-producer team of Patrice Jégou-Oyelese, DMA and Yinka Oyelese, MD will share their experiences in establishing Prairie Star Records LLC, and what they’ve learned in the past 10 years about navigating the artistic and commercial aspects of planning, recording, marketing, and launching full-length albums and album singles. This presentation will provide practical information, and is geared for students, teachers, and artists interested in recording and releasing commercially available music.

PRESENTER BIOS:

Patrice Jégou-Oyelese, DMA

Patrice Jégou-Oyelese’s interest in a self-directed career path prompted her to establish Prairie Star Records LLC. Patrice holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Mason Gross School of the Arts - Rutgers University where she studied voice with Judith Nicosia. She is an alumna of the NATS Intern Program (2003) where she interned with Master Teacher Judith Nicosia. In 2019 Patrice won the Independent Music Award for 'Best A Cappella Song' for "Lover Come Back to Me" feat. Mark Kibble and Alvin Chea from TAKE 6. In 2020 she won the Independent Music Award for 'Best A Cappella Song' for "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" featuring TAKE 6. Patrice is a voting member of The Recording Academy (GRAMMY® Awards), and CARAS (Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences - The JUNO Awards).

Kolawole “Yinka” Oyelese, MD, MRCOG

Yinka Oyelese is a lifelong audiophile whose interest in recording engineering and record producing goes back over 30 years. He hails from a musical family that, as a singing group, performed throughout Nigeria. Yinka counts his influences from among Quincy Jones, Tommy LiPuma, Al Schmitt, Bob Clearmountain, Bob Ludwig, Jorge Calandrelli, and Tommy Vicari. Yinka is also a medical doctor who, as a perinatologist, specializes in high-risk pregnancy. He is a world-renowned expert on vasa previa, and has published over 50 papers, and authored 12 textbook chapters. He is currently the Director at Atlantic Maternal Fetal Medicine in Morristown, New Jersey.

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