Freddie Gershon <freddieg@mtishows.com>

To:David DeSilva (daviddesilva@att.net),David DeSilva (fatherfame@worldnet.att.net)

Cc:Sir Mark Featherstone-Witty (m.featherstone-witty@lipa.ac.uk)

Dec 3, 2018 at 1:22 PM

**Dear David –**

**I know I am dilatory at times and unfortunately, a book that you left for me got buried with a pile of “must attend to/must read” which I finally got to.**

**It is the book by Sir Mark Featherstone-Witty.**

**I also saw Sir Mark’s note to you.**

**I’m glad he memorialized the story of the performing arts schools in England, revealing what those of us have tried to do in the arts and have found (by this time) I would characterize as “predictable”. That is, one is always faced with a sea of naysayers, a very fast running stream running opposite you, not wanting change and if they are going to be part of it, want their names splashed across is, owning it and not doing it for passion but for ulterior motives.**

**I, fortunately, did not have to hustle to raise the kind of money he did but I remember that there are other things one has to do and I have (as you know) with my different careers with different entrepreneurs (ironically from his side of the pond), namely, Stigwood and Cameron Mackintosh. We all know that it’s an extremely risky business, no sure things and you have to believe in yourself and work with passion.**

**The true story of FAME and its impact on a number of people in the world who will never really be known. But it was good to see this example of an eye-opening experience, not only because of the relationship I have with you and had with the film and the soundtrack but also because of my sister being in the first graduating class, my mother being the publisher of the school newspaper and journal and my parents both being active in the PTA, the very first few years of the school.**

**It was freaky and, you know, I still have photos of graduation of the class of ‘51 which I attended when I was 11 years old.**

**Sir Mark definitely has told the story well and meticulously. I do think I will lift from his book the phrase “analysis paralysis” which I find most businessmen and accountants suffer from cause they don’t understand gut feelings and visceral reactions. And yet, those people in the arts all have antennae to succeed. They work based on a form of intuition… gut… and alchemy and passion.**

**I kept smiling as I was looking at elements of the book (I did not read it cover to cover/word for word – just selectively) but I saw many names of people that I’ve had dealings with through the years, including a lot of the people from the music industry with whom he dealt, some of whom dropped out, some of whom I could have predicted would, but it takes all sorts of people to make the world and it takes money to make some of these things happen. All in all, it was a lovely thing to do on a weekend, bringing back good memories of that high school and of FAME.**

**The irony now, of course, is that FAME is licensed to grade schools as well as to all high schools. The irony is that the team at MTI in London love the show and have now had their third celebration successfully involving (I believe) several hundred grade schools and the same has happened within Australia, where Stu Hendricks continues to build MTI’s education division.**

**It’s wonderful that the kids do FAME but it’s also wonderful that because they’re doing so many other musicals, they’re living the characters of FAME and the seeds of FAME keep spreading.**

**None of these people are performing arts kids. Although we license to the performing arts schools, of course, the grade school children don’t yet know what they want to do but because the volume of grade schools is so great (70,000 of them in the U.S.) and because there are well beyond 165,000 productions of these mini-musicals and a typical musical has 40-60 members of the case and crew, there have been millions of young people (somewhere between four and five million) who are really into it…**

**These kids don’t know the movie or the album or T.V. show. The principal of the school may.**

**What you did is quintessentially what a salmon swimming upstream has to do and I know that you were not offended when I told the *Wall Street Journal* that you were pathologically driven. I meant that in the nicest way because it’s the essence of what made Irving Thalberg, Louis B. Mayer, Steve Jobs and Stigwood build their empires. Stephen Sondheim writes his shows! All authors whether they are Sondheim or not who take a chance and create something know they are publically held up for review, sometimes scorn and ridicule and sometimes the world is not yet ready for what they have created or don’t really “get it”. So it’s wonderful that the world was changed by FAME/impacted by Sir Mark in such an indelible way and there are performing arts schools now blossoming more and more and the Jimmy Awards have been delivering a larger and larger application list and more and more people are ending up in Actor’s Equity and yes, Sir Cameron told it as it is. They are almost all triple threats and moreover, it’s important that they know when they are only double threats because if you can act and if you can dance, the singing becomes less important in the chorus. There are character actors. It’s learning comedy and of course, you know from the many casts you’ve seen and the many productions you’ve seen that this show and others, that theatre is a collaborative form of young people who are growing up learning to live in harmony with a common purpose/goal and each with special crafts that they learn as well. And being respectful of the craft and the art and familiar with it and knowing that they may not be selected at the audition and the most frequently heard open call remarks from the director of the line-up of people who think they are perfectly suited for the role is: “Next.” “Thank you but no thank you.” And so forth…**

**FAME tells it like it is and you have a living legacy with this work.**

**I congratulate you, David. I’ve told you before and tell you know that you are a rare bird and your drive, tenacity, perseverance, resilience, spraying your body with Teflon and surging forward, kicking open the next door, is who you are and because of that, many people have been given a great example of the temptations that come with “the biz”, the difficult path and choices people must take and make along the way, how much luck comes into play and how much hard work is involved. It only looks glamorous to the audience. They don’t know. But when you transport the audience to the stage and they are immersed in this world, you produce laughter and tears and awe. And that is magic and it’s not an accident!**

**Bravo, David.**

**It was wonderful for you to share *Optimistic Even Then* with me.**

**With warmth and appreciation and infinite respect,**

**Your friend,**

**Freddie Gershon a/k/a Freddie G.**