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16 rules for success in business and life

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1. Get and stay out of your comfort zone. Not much happens of any significance when we're in our comfort zone.

2. Never give up. Almost nothing works the first time it's attempted. Just because what you're doing does not seem to be working, doesn't mean it won't work. It just means that it might not work the way you're doing it.

3. When you're ready to quit, you're closer than you think. An old Chinese saying: "The temptation to quit will be greatest just before you are about to succeed."

4. With regard to whatever worries you, not only accept the worst thing that could happen, but make it a point to quantify what the worst thing could be. Very seldom will the worst consequence be anywhere near as bad as a cloud of "undefined consequences."

5. Focus on what you want to have happen. Remember that old saying, "As you think, so shall you be."

6. Take things a day at a time. No matter how difficult your situation is, you can get through it if you don't look too far into the future, and focus on the present moment. You can get through anything one day at a time.

7. Always be moving forward. Never stop investing. Never stop improving. Never stop doing something new. Remember the Japanese concept of Kaizen. Small daily improvements eventually result in huge advantages.

8. Be quick to decide. Remember what General George S. Patton said: "A good planexecuted today is ...bet-

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ASK JILL



JILL MCGILLEN

At Work With: *Juanita Ulloa,* *Latin-American singer/songwriter*



Bringing her operachi style to the symphonic stage, Juanita Ulloa hopes to share the beauty of Mexico's culture.

PHOTO BY TOD FRANKEL

By JoAnna Rodriguez

IT'S not easy to create a musical style all your own, but that's what Juanita Ulloa has done with "operachi." Applying her classical training in opera to the music sung by mariachis, she has established a sultry sound that's hard to define while breaking the bounds of the traditionally male-dominated genre. We talk with her about bringing operachi to the symphonic stage and breathing new life into traditional songs.

You are one of the only women in ranchera music. What drew you to the genre?

Growing up in Mexico City, I have memories of a popular restaurant called Caballo Bayo, which was right next door to my house. Mariachis would always play there and as the evening would go on, people would get very happy and start to sing. We would eat freshly made tortillas and listen to them play.

For birthdays, we always had mananitas who would come and sing. They would show up at your house in the morning and you'd have to have breakfast ready for all of them. I would just sit and listen to these gorgeous voices.

I have such incredible memories of the spirited fun this music brings to people. A friend of mine

came to see me at Yoshi's and said that though they didn't understand a word I sang all night, they left with the biggest smiles on their faces. And that's what ranchera music does for people. It just makes you happy.

What are some of the challenges of being a musician?

My music is more folkloric and doesn't have the mass appeal of pop. Because I'm in a niche, it's tricky because what makes you unique can take longer to catch on. People aren't familiar with it. You really have to know that what you are sharing is important and have a passion for it that comes from inside yourself.

Tell me about your education in music.

I was trained in classical piano growing up and was always playing the piano at home. My brothers claimed their careers were ruined because I would never get off the piano. I got a bachelor's in music at Yale. Then I went to U.C. Berkeley for my master's. There, I studied ethnomusicology, which is the study of music in other cultures. I specialized in Latin music, but didn't feel the courage yet to perform it. That's when I became an opera singer because I really wanted to work on my voice.

Where did you perform as an opera singer?

All over Northern California, working with the Berkeley Opera, Palo Alto's West Bay Opera, the Sacramento Opera, as well as in Spain. In Madrid I did various recitals of Spanish zarzuela, which is a cross between opera and folkloric music and is indigenous to Spain.

Did your experience in opera help prepare you for your other musical endeavors?

Yes. That was my vocal training ground for creating my own style: operachi. I missed doing the music from where I grew up and as I began to sing ranchera music, I realized my voice was so much more classically trained that I didn't sound



PHOTO BY SEAN CONNELLEY

Juanita Ulloa with members of *Mariachi Picante*, the only mostly female-based mariachi in the Bay Area.



PHOTO BY PATRICK JOHNSON

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Juanita Ulloa

Job title: Latin-American singer/songwriter

Place of employment: Freelance

Years on the job: 20

ASK JILL

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ter than a perfect plan tomorrow.”

9. Measure everything of significance. I swear this is true. Anything that is measured and watched, improves.

10. Anything that is not managed will deteriorate. If you want to uncover problems you don't know about, take a few moments and look closely at the areas you haven't examined for a while. I guarantee you problems will be there.

11. Pay attention to your competitors, but pay more attention to what you're doing. When you look at your competitors, remember that everything looks perfect at a distance.

12. Never let anybody push you around. In our society, with our laws and even playing field, you have just as much right to what you're doing as anyone else, provided that what you're doing is legal.

13. Never expect life to be fair. Life isn't fair. You make your own breaks. You'll be doing good if the only meaning fair has to you, is something that you pay when you get on a bus (i.e., fare).

14. Solve your own problems. You'll find that by coming up with your own solutions, you'll develop a competitive edge. Masura Ibuka, the co-founder of Sony, said it best: "You never succeed in technology, business, or anything by following the others."

15. Don't take yourself too seriously. Lighten up. Often, at least half of what we accomplish is due to luck. None of us are in control as much as we'd like to think we are.

16. There's always a reason to smile. Find it. Life is short. More and more, I agree with my little brother. He always reminds me: "We're not here for a long time; we're here for a good time."

Jill McGillen is president of NEXT TURN Consulting. Send questions to askjill@nextturnconsulting.com. For additional work advice go to www.nextturnconsulting.com

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like your traditional mariachi. I looked around and tried to find other classically trained singers in mariachi and there weren't any. There were three men who had been starving opera singers in the '40s. They turned to ranchera music to make ends meet and became very famous. What they did for that genre was uplift the vocal elements of the field. I realized the women hadn't had the same opportunity because they hadn't been classically trained. I thought, "If I don't step out and do this, no one will." I began my own mariachi and it was the only mostly female-based mariachi in the Bay Area. I have branched out on my own, but the band is still together in a smaller version.

When I wanted to make music a career, there was opposition — especially in my family. It's not an easy career to earn money in. But breaking into ranchera, after experiencing that opposition, was easier. For me it's been about bringing music to people in a very noble way. And maybe that's why I studied opera; it was very noble to me. I wanted people to be able to learn from it.

What has the reception been to your sound?

It's been wonderful. I was featured alongside Santana in a Spanish magazine article about artists who had created a style all their own. People want to know what operachi is. There will always be some purists out there who want to keep things the way they were, but others find it interesting. Music is meant to be everchanging and evolving. Women have a fuller range and that has not been explored in the mariachi style. Mariachi is a world of men. For me it's about sharing music in a world of men, sharing new ideas and being a composer. There are very few women composers in Mexican music. You have to be willing to have a voice and share your ideas, whether that's sharing children's songs or ranchera.

How many CDs do you have?

Seven, with our latest, "Paz y Alegria," being released last year. "Paz y Alegria" is a bilingual holiday CD and it won a National Parenting Publications Award and an iParenting Media Award. People will tell me they don't speak Spanish but they remember a song. I wanted to help people learn in a way that would be fun and stick with them. So far I have four bilingual CDs and we just found out "Paz y Alegria" will be carried at Best Buy.

Have you performed in Mexico?

Not a lot, but when I do the reaction is always very new. I have to prepare them so they know that this is not going to be a traditional mariachi style. It's going to be a more symphonic and operatic interpretation. It's operachi.

Last year you performed with the Oakland East Bay Symphony for their first sing-along "Messiah." What was that like?

I was so excited when Maestro Morgan approached me to sing Handel's "Messiah" with the orchestra. I wasn't sure how I was going to do it, but I worked with my voice teacher, Jane Randolph, and we went through the piece. I brought in a guitarist and percussionist to perform with the orchestra and I wrote in some high notes in the operachi style. We never changed the symphonic arrangement but we had this great rhythm going in a normally pretty sedate piece. Maestro Morgan said he'd never heard it sound so exciting and I'll be performing at this year's "Messiah" as well.

How do you like performing with an orchestra?

It's great. And this is one of the areas in which I would like to develop operachi more. I have performed with the Stockton Symphony. In fact, Peter Jaffe, the symphony's music director and conductor, has been responsible for a number of my mariachi arrangements that allow me to take Latin American music onto the symphonic stage. I have also performed with the La Jolla Symphony, Pasadena Pops and the Macon Symphony in Georgia.

I like performing operachi with an orchestra because I want people to see the beauty of Mexico's culture. It's about sharing that and letting people know what happiness this music can bring.

What does it take to be a full-time musician?

There is a lot involved. It's not just about how well you perform and how gifted you are. To bring your music to the world you have to step into areas that don't have to do with music. Always show that you believe in yourself. Be good at marketing, business and negotiating, or at least know enough to be able to talk in that language. It's just as demanding as any other field, but you have to put the courses together yourself. Even though I don't consider myself the greatest negotiator in the world I have to do it at every step. You have to know your earning power.

How important are mentors?

Very important. The people you study with help you prepare your instrument or your technique and who you bring around you, whether colleagues or teachers, is influential.

Be willing to pick up the phone and talk to people who are doing what you want to do. Glean tidbits of information to help you in your next step.

How would you recommend someone start a career as a musician?

I think there are two ways to go in building an artistic career. If you are convinced you need to go full steam ahead on the performing side, you will probably end up teaching as well, which lends some financial stability. I ran a private voice and piano studio for 20 years and I combined that with teaching at Community Music Center in San Francisco and at different community colleges. I know other musicians who have taught at elementary schools and high schools. The other way to go is if you decide to have another career as your main source of income and then use your free time for your creative work.

What advice do you have for prospective musicians?

I would suggest that people get as much training as possible during high school and college because that gives them a good foundation for their craft. Then they don't have as much pressure later on; they can just work on perfecting it.

It is also helpful to choose a direction that has longevity to it. If you want to be the next Christina Aguilera, you are going to be judged on your body shape and when it comes to submitting your music to a record label, many have age limits. It's important to work on building your craft from inside so you aren't judging yourself on the label's guidelines. That may be hard, but in the long run it gives longevity to your career.

Juanita Ulloa will perform in the Oakland East Bay Symphony's second annual sing-along "Messiah" at 8 p.m. Dec. 9 at the Paramount Theatre, 2025 Broadway, Oakland. Tickets are \$15-\$28. Call (510) 444-0801 for more information or visit www.oeps.org. Samples of Juanita's music may be heard at www.juanitamusic.com.