

SAMIA O'DAY

Samia O'Day describes herself as a "world citizen," saying she lived in various parts of the world growing up, as her father was a journalist who worked at BBC World Service when he was younger, before starting to work in TV in other countries. He was also a singer, and his voice can be heard in the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*. O'Day herself grew up as a musician as well, training as a pianist and singer-songwriter.

"Music is my oxygen and my life," O'Day tells *Canadian Music Trade*. "From a young age, music was my escape, as well as my connection and communication with others when words were not enough."

O'Day is known in the Canadian MI industry as the founder and director of Canada Music Academy, a Brockville, ON-based music school, and its store, All You Need Music.

"I established the Montreal Academy of Music over 25 years ago and the Canada Music Academy, serving Ontario and Canada, over 15 years ago," O'Day says, looking back on her long career. "Establishing and growing these schools was a true labour of love."

Originally starting with a team of six music teachers, O'Day now has over 300, whom she says were all handpicked for a mix of their quality and professionalism, as well as their care, kindness, and sense of welcome.

It is important to me that every student that walks through our doors feels welcome," O'Day continues, "and that they are able to explore the music they love and learn with teachers who inspire them, and who can help them expand their knowledge and who can share their true joy of music."

O'Day says she and her team are honoured to have supported over 21,000 students with their musical journeys, adding that many alumni have entered careers in music, and many have had used music to support them in other career paths. O'Day herself is an award-winning musician, having won the McGill Concerto Compe-

titution in her first year at McGill University in Montreal, and a FACTOR independent grant a few years later.

"The natural progress from music education to MI came about with the start-up of All You Need Music in 2008," O'Day explains. "We are able to help professional musicians, teachers, students, and hobby musicians, with their musical needs and rentals. We have also provided communities, places of worship, small halls and large school boards with the musical and pro audio equipment they need."

O'Day believes her experience in the education and MI industries was built on her lived experience as a professional and community musician, and the same goes for the rest of Canada Music Academy and All You Need Music's teachers and staff. With a consistently busy schedule, O'Day still takes time out of each day to reflect and be thankful for her continued success.

"My current day usually begins with taking a moment to listen to music and try to consider something that I am grateful for," she says. "Some days, it is gratitude for simply being alive, and living in a peaceful country. I'm not always successful, but I try to keep gratitude close to me when I start and end my day."

O'Day will typically start her week with a check in meeting with her school and store managers. She usually has several teacher interviews lined up, and touches base with team leads regularly. Other parts of her week will include working with her web design team, as well as marketing and SEO strategy. When she's off from her official work at the school and store, she works as Music Director at Wall Street United Church in Brockville, where she enjoys seeing the products she sells in action.

"From a personal perspective, this is where I get to connect with my community in a whole other way," O'Day says. "All my musical jobs are rewarding, intense, and demanding, but because it is about music, about sharing music, and about helping change lives, I love it most of the time!"

Outside of work, O'Day's life is just as



busy. She hosts international students who live with her family as they attend a local high school and is glad to act as a "Canadian parent" to them. O'Day loves to discover new places in Canada, but also finds joy in taking staycations and connecting with the beauty all around her for free.

"I love writing original music as a singer-songwriter, and have released a few albums over the years," she adds. "We visit friends and enjoy jamming with other musicians and love travelling—though that I would love to do more of!"

O'Day is looking forward to hosting special anniversary events to celebrate in various cities in Canada. She is also involved in planning a series of free music workshops hosted by some of her teachers over the next year.

One of the simple aspects O'Day enjoys most in her work is seeing the faces of happy customers leaving her store with their new instruments and sharing their excitement about going home to play them.

"Everyone is truly welcome at All You Need Music and the Canada Music Academy," says O'Day. "We live diversity, and we speak over 40 languages between our teachers and staff. We believe deeply that diversity is strength and beauty!"

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