

# WHO IS FREDDIE GERSON?

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An entertainment attorney/cocktail pianist/would-be songwriter who graduated from law school the same year the Beatles went on the Ed Sullivan show.

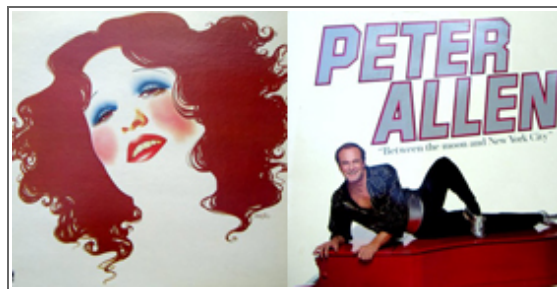
Freddie Gershon began his career as an entertainment attorney armed with eight years of serious music study at The Juilliard School and respect for artists and sensitivity to cultural change. He was a magnet for aspiring talent and attracted and represented many who became prominent artists in the music field as well as inventive, creative talents in the film and theatre worlds.

Ultimately, Freddie became a film and theatre producer, a part owner and COO of a history making, highly successful entertainment company, an early proponent in protecting intellectual property, and an active participant in some of the defining moments of contemporary pop culture and successes on the stage, screen, and in music.

As an author, lecturer, and music industry pioneer from the 1960s to today armed with a vast experience in media and communications, Freddie has utilized different perspectives and has an overview of the sociological/cultural shifts and climate in entertainment and communications. He understands "content" versus delivery of "content" and has a reputation for being able to keep his finger on the pulse of change and to act accordingly. Hollywood mogul chairman of MCA Lew Wasserman called him a *future scenarist*.

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After graduating from Columbia Law School in 1964, Freddie began practicing law. "Freddie-the-Lawyer" was a young practitioner in New York for such emerging talents as film director Michael Ritchie ("Downhill Racer" and "The



Candidate"), Ron Field (choreographer/director of "Cabaret," "Zorba," and "Applause"), playwright Tom Eyan ("Dreamgirls"), composers Neil Sedaka, Marvin Hamlisch, Carole Bayer Sager, Lesley Gore, and Shel Silverstein, and performing artists including Eric Clapton, Van Morrison, Dr. Hook, Orleans, Jack Bruce, Phil Ochs, Chicago, Peter Allen, and Bette Midler. He was also counsel to several theatrical projects including "House of Blue Leaves," "Lorelei," "Dirtiest Show In Town," "Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor

Dreamcoat," and "Women Behind Bars," and consigliere to Ellen Stewart of the Cafe La Ma Ma.



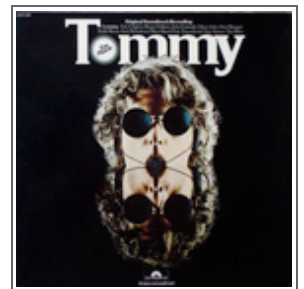
In 1971 Freddie became counsel to The Robert Stigwood Group Ltd. on matters in the United States. During this time, The Stigwood Group (aka The Robert Stigwood Organisation, or RSO) was establishing itself through its landmark "Superstar" concert tours and thereafter its London and Broadway production of "Jesus Christ Superstar."



They licensed the scripts' characters and plots for "Americanization" of two Stigwood-controlled U.K. television properties which became: "All In The Family" and "Sanford and Son." RSO subsequently produced a number of films for television during the heyday of the "Movies-of-the-Week" including "The Entertainer" with Jack Lemon, "Killer Bees" with Gloria Swanson, "Death Screaam" with Raul Julia, and the acclaimed series "Beacon Hill" (adapted from "Upstairs Downstairs").

As The Robert Stigwood Group moved its focus more to the United States, Freddie became involved in film financing and distribution. His first film was "Tommy," the trend-setting legendary sung-through production now recognized as the fore-runner of the MTV video style.

Robert Stigwood Group moved its focus more to the United States and Freddie arranged the film financing and distribution for his first theatrical film: "Tommy," featuring The Who, Eric Clapton, Tina Turner, Jack Nicholson, Ann-Margret, and Elton John.



By 1976, Freddie structured and oversaw a reverse takeover of RSO, then the publicly-traded parent U.K. Company, and became President, Chief Operating Officer, and a Partner in The

Stigwood Group of Companies worldwide. He proceeded to choreograph and implement a global structure with facilities in London, Amsterdam, Sydney, Los Angeles, and New York. RSO Records had recorded Blind Faith, Cream, Derek and the Dominos, and then continued with Eric Clapton, The Bee Gees, Andy Gibb, and Yvonne Elliman and released film soundtracks including "Fame," "The Empire Strikes Back," "Bugsy Malone," "Saturday Night Fever," "Grease," and "Return of the Jedi."

Freddie oversaw the operations of the RSO record and film divisions, the latter produced "Saturday Night Fever," co-produced "Grease," and went on to produce "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," "The Fan," and several others including a co-production with Rupert Murdoch of director Peter Weir's "Gallipoli," starring Mel Gibson.

"Grease" and "Saturday Night Fever" still rank as among the largest-selling soundtracks in motion picture history.



With the production of these films also came RSO's pioneering concept of cross-marketing films with motion picture soundtracks. "Grease" and "Saturday Night Fever" still rank as among the largest-selling soundtracks

in motion picture history while also cross-pollinating escalating motion picture box office revenues through radio air play resulting in selling 50M double albums in one year.

In addition to records, music publishing, artist management, television and motion pictures, RSO had a theatre division which (in London) produced "Hair," "Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," "Oh! Calcutta!" "Two Gentlemen From Verona," "Pippin," "Jesus Christ Superstar," and "Sweeney Todd." "Evita" was produced in London, New York, and Australia.



In 1982, Freddie elected to take a sabbatical from active business, leaving his then position as Vice Chairman of The Stigwood Group to spend more time teaching, lecturing and writing.

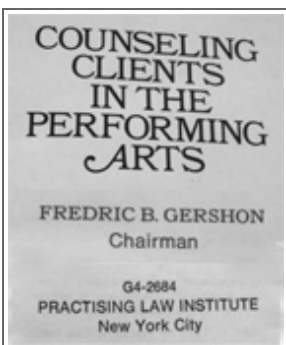


Cage...The Musical."

In 1982, Freddie elected to take a sabbatical from active business, leaving his then position as Vice Chairman of The Stigwood Group to spend more time teaching, lecturing and writing. In 1983, he also arranged the financing for Allan Carr's stage musical production of "La Cage Aux Folles" on Broadway and became Allan Carr's business partner in all musical productions of "La

In the mid 1980s, Gershon escalated his involvement with Columbia Law School and its alumni activities and became a guest speaker on subjects relating to entertainment law, recording, publishing, and the representation of artists and motion picture packaging. In addition to Columbia, he guest lectured at Yale, Cardozo, Pepperdine, New York Law, Pace, The Juilliard School, Columbia University's School of Fine Arts and their film school, The Fashion Institute of Technology, and New York University. He sought to get recognition in law schools for intellectual property rights to be integrated into their curricula.

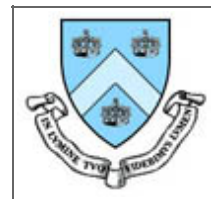
He addressed law students on what he perceived as the emerging significance of intellectual property as a separate field of law in the context of digital technologies which were emerging ... and which he also believed was under-appreciated by both the academic and business communities in terms of its significance.



Starting as early as the 1970s, Freddie founded and conducted the Practising Law Institute's ongoing legal education seminars in entertainment law and helped launch a federally-accredited and funded program to help the African-American community establish economic success through music and records. He also served as an adviser to George Balanchine (involved with a then-pioneering effort to memorialize ballet choreography on videotape) as well as to Lincoln Kirstein. Freddie also served as a member of the board of the School of American Ballet.

At the behest of Preston Robert Tisch, he joined the Development Committee for NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and has been on the advisory boards of Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts and the Cardozo Entertainment Law Journal and served on the board of ArtsConnection.

Freddie has also been active in Columbia University's Center for Law, Media and the Arts, dedicated to helping individuals and corporations protect intellectual property and to educate and guide them in the commercial applications of their creative product. He remains an active benefactor and patron of the arts, focused particularly on grade schools and school programs which use the arts to enhance the education of students, hone reading skills, extend attention span, and build collaboration and socialization skill sets for students in the inner city.





Freddie added best-selling author to his credits in 1986, when his novel "[Sweetie, Baby, Cookie, Honey](#)" was published by Hearst/Arbor House in hardcover and subsequently in paperback with worldwide sales of five

hundred thousand copies in multiple languages.

Freddie and Allan Carr initiated "Goya...A Life In Song." The project was commissioned as a concept album for Placido Domingo, based on the legendary Spanish artist, Francisco Goya. The theme, "Till I Loved You," was recorded by Barbra Streisand, Gloria Estefan, Dionne Warwick, and others and was successful throughout the world. Dionne Warwick sang in English with Domingo. He recorded it in Spanish ("Haste Amarte") with Gloria Estefan, with Seiko Matsuda for the Japanese markets, and with Simone for the Portuguese language markets.



After seven years of a busy sabbatical, in the late '80s, Freddie acquired and became Chairman and CEO of Music Theatre International ([MTI](#)), one of the largest, oldest licensing companies of dramatic stage rights to theatre musicals in the world, which represents the dramatic performing rights to such classics as "West Side Story," "Fiddler on the Roof," "Meredith Willson's The Music Man,"

"Guys & Dolls," "Annie," "Les Miserables," all of the works of composer/lyricist Frank Loesser (its founder in 1952), as well as over 400 other titles, including the large majority of the Stephen Sondheim's stage musicals.

Each year, MTI licenses more than 60,000\* separate productions in the United States of America. It also licenses its titles in 68 other countries. MTI represents the rights to "Avenue Q," "Rent," "Urinetown," "Spring Awakening," "Hairspray," "Mary Poppins," "Miss Saigon," "The Wedding Singer," "Legally Blonde," "Fame," "Godspell," "Shrek," "Pippin," and all the musicals written by Stephen Sondheim as both composer and lyricist... (viz.: "Company," "A Little Night Music" and "Sweeney Todd," among others), and the '50s classics "Damn Yankees," "Pajama Game," and "Kismet."

\*This includes Junior musicals, special needs musicals, and a series of those characterized as RECREATIONAL THEATRE for Seniors as well as special needs individuals of all ages.

May 29th, 2012, marked the 60th Anniversary of Music Theatre International, which New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg officially proclaimed "Music Theatre International Day."



In 2013, the New-York Historical Society honored Freddie and Myrna for their ongoing support of musical theatre education at the American Musicals Project Benefit Concert.

Cameron Mackintosh became Freddie's partner in MTI in the early 1990s, and Sir Cameron became the sole shareholder of MTI in 2018. Sir Cameron and Freddie are Co-chairmen of MTI, Drew Cohen is President and CEO and is responsible for global activities including the Pacific Rim, Australasia, and Europe with approximately 100 employees.

MTI represents the so-called "grand rights" in musicals. However, Gershon decided to venture into the area of building another entity whose purpose was representing "small performing rights" in the fall of 1992. (Known to most people as the rights policed and licensed by ASCAP and BMI). He became Co-chairman and a principal of SESAC, a privately held small performing rights organization representing music publishers and songwriters to license and police their music for performance use in broadcast and non-broadcast exploitation in the United States of America. SESAC redefined the value of music and became a boutique for Neil Diamond, Bob Dylan, and great television series such as Seinfeld ... and others. SESAC was sold to [Blackstone](#) in 2017.

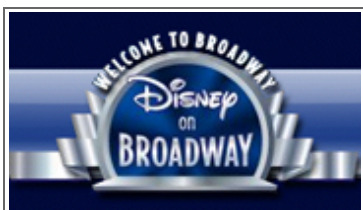
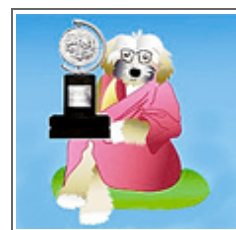


In 1994, Gershon conceived MTI's [Broadway KIDS/Broadway JR.](#) introducing musical theatre in 30- and 60-minute versions of Broadway works to elementary and middle schools adapted for performance by students (author approved). These "Juniors" are re-thought with musical keys designed for age appropriate vocal range and materials abbreviated with cross-curricula guides to tie the musicals into their academic subjects and into the entire school community. Broadway JR. was Freddie's solution to a challenge and a serious concern brought to his attention by his friend

and client, Stephen Sondheim, who realized the greying of the live musical theatre audiences and lessening of young people attending theatre as they were discovering a variety of new forms of entertainment and as cultural tastes changed. Sondheim became the ally to Freddie and an indispensable support in convincing schools, parent/teachers associations, and music teachers to embrace the idea of experiential theatre, arts programs, and the teaching of social skills, so they all might become part of school curricula.

Since 1994, hundreds of thousands of separate productions of JR. Musicals have taken place involving grade school children performing in such shows such as: "Thoroughly Modern Millie," "Guys and Dolls," "Fiddler on the Roof," "Into the Woods," "School House Rock," "Once on This Island," "Bugsy Malone," "Meredith Willson's The Music Man," "Godspell," "Annie," "Seussical," "Avenue Q," "Legally Blonde," and many others.

Freddie was awarded THE 2012 TONY AWARD HONOR for his work with young people and musical theatre.



MTI is proud to be the exclusive worldwide secondary rights representative of the Disney Theatrical Productions for titles

which have been performed on Broadway ("Beauty and the Beast," "AIDA," and others). In addition, Disney Theatrical Productions and MTI have collaborated pursuant to a joint venture to build a

new collection of young people's musicals based on Disney titles which were originally animated cinematic experiences. As a result, MTI licenses: "The Jungle Book," "101 Dalmatians," "Cinderella," "Beauty and the Beast JR.," "High School Musical," "Aladdin," "Alice in Wonderland," "Aristocrats," "Mary Poppins," and "The Lion King," among others, and continues to introduce new titles into the school markets (i.e. "Frozen"), serving grade schools in the United States as well as in the U.K. and Australia.

Culminating a life of business successes and legends, Freddie and his wife, Myrna, have expanded their activities as they embrace a philosophy of helping younger generations and, more recently, older generations with educational and cultural programs they are creating and usually fund. They are devising, through experiential learning and

mentorships, and strategic alliances, inventive and engaging programs designed to provide others with the experiences and tools to better society and enhanced quality of life through the arts.

Freddie, concerned that he was planning on turning over the reigns of CEO and Chairman to his successor as he approached his 80s, began to explore a new venture which has (as of 2021) been piloted in a number of states, within community theatres and centers, senior centers and communities, and assisted living homes. It was inspired by Broadway JR., and is, naturally, called BROADWAY SENIOR. While still a work in progress, it has been embraced wherever seniors gather, seek purpose, and have adventure, fun, and collaborative experiences with fellow seniors. They have performed "Fiddler on the Roof Senior," "Guys & Dolls Senior," "Singing in the Rain Senior," and soon will be performing "Meredith Willson's The Music Man Senior."

Even with pandemic restrictions, BROADWAY SENIOR is proving to be gratifying to people of advanced years, giving a sense of purpose and providing a bonding social experience, requiring music and movement and other challenges, all of which result in therapeutic benefits as seniors rehearse and perform a staged musical show, regardless of their physical limitations.

Among the non-profit programs the Gershons conceived are:

— **THE FREDDIE G FELLOWS** are a group of eight teachers selected each year at the Broadway JR. Festivals. Freddie and Myrna bring the teachers to New York to participate in Master Classes with some of Broadway's leading choreographers, directors, producers, actors, and designers. They attend special receptions and dinners, teacher workshops on topics including musical styles, vocal techniques, marketing, directing, and backstage tours. Each of the teachers' schools also receives \$5,000 from Freddie and Myrna to enhance their arts program.

— **THE KENNEDY CENTER/STEPHEN SONDHEIM INSPIRATIONAL TEACHER AWARDS** are \$10,000 annual grants named for Tony Award winning composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim which are given to "inspirational teachers" by The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The multiple grants were presented on Mr. Sondheim's birthday, March 22, to teachers from kindergarten through college levels who are nominated through the Kennedy Center website by their former students. The grant of \$1M was funded by Freddie and Myrna as a birthday gift to Maestro Sondheim.

— **ARTSCONNECTION and THE SPECTRUM SCHOOL P94M** The Spectrum School is a New York City public school for children on the autism spectrum. ArtsConnection is a citywide, not-for-profit, arts-in-education organization. For ten years the musical theatre program has been made possible by ArtsConnection funded by Myrna and Freddie. The program contributes to students' acquisition of social skills, emotional literacy (the ability to identify and label emotions), builds verbal communication skills, and highlights the hidden talents among the faculty and staff. They produced a full length film about these special needs students entitled SPECTRUM OF HOPE which is available to anyone who is concerned about autism, at no charge from MTI.

Freddie and Myrna live in New York City and have been married 52 years. And after nine wonderful years with Sherpa-The-Wonderdog, they currently live facing the EAST RIVER with Sherpa's fellow Tibetan canine,..."Buddy"... (Yes, he plays electric piano and paw paints and is a ham ... and likes performing in holiday season videos ... now all on YouTube.)

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