

## **New Tax Guide for Writers, Artists, Performers & Other Creative People**

By Peter Jason Riley, Certified Public Accountant

Reviewed by Carolyn Gage

As a playwright who has done her own taxes for more than two decades, I have read my share of books and pamphlets on taxes... and I learn something from all of them. The first one I read told me what kind of records I needed to keep in order to be able to prove that I was not a hobbyist, in spite of the fact I might not turn a profit *ever*. I found that the record of my playwriting-related activities became an invaluable database for following up on contacts and submissions, and that it also helped me take myself seriously. On a day when I felt I was not accomplishing anything, I could turn to this record of business letters, artistic networking, writing and rewriting... and know that I was a professional. That was twenty-five years ago.

Responding to a notice in the Dramatists Guild email newsletter, I acquired my most recent tax book, *New Tax Guide for Writers, Artists, Performers & Other Creative People*. It's written by a professional CPA and amateur guitar player. What I appreciate about Peter Jason Riley (the author) is that he is also a storyteller. This is a tax book with characters: Ima Starr, Sonny Phunky, Liz Brushstroke, and Guy Focal. You can probably guess that they are: an actor, a musician, a visual artist, and a writer.

But they are not all that fictional. What they have in common is many different streams of income. Some of it comes from a day job, some of it is freelance work, some of it contracted. Some of the money is royalty, some of it wages, some of it salary, and some of it in-kind. All of it needs to be treated very differently when it comes to reporting to Uncle Sam.

Personally, I make money from touring in a one-woman show, from lecturing at universities, from royalties from plays, and from publishing fees and occasional grants or awards. I appreciated Riley's checklists of deductible items for performers (wardrobe... what it is and what it isn't, for example). I also appreciated the sample forms illustrating where and how to enter the deductions. He does the math to shed light on the ever-vexing question of whether or not to take the standard mileage rate, the standard meal allowance... or to itemize.

In the middle of the book are twenty-five pages of sample tax forms. Very helpful.

But what I love most about Mr. Riley is his optimism. Starting with the assumption that one must prove one is not a hobbyist, and that one is truly a "QPA" (Qualified Performing Artist...yes, there are official criteria!), he ends the book with advice about the different ways to incorporate in order to handle the tremendous revenues that one can anticipate. My kind of CPA...

But, wait... there's actually something I love even more about Mr. Riley: His website. He *gives it away*. That's right... he gives it away. Check it out: [www.artstaxinfo.com](http://www.artstaxinfo.com). It's organized like the book, with sections for performers, musicians, visual artists and writers, and he has downloadable forms, tax calendars, sample forms... you name it. A money man who gives it away. How can you not love him? Peter, if you're ever Downeast, I'll buy you lunch... and, of course, I will deduct it, but since it won't cost more than \$75, I won't bother to save the receipt.

Reviewed by Carolyn Gage

[www.carolyngage.com](http://www.carolyngage.com)