

Ask Mike!

Stressed about an upcoming gig? Work got you singing the blues? Local 47 member Michael I. Goode can help!



In my last column, in November, talked about how you can manage in these difficult financial times and why contributing to the union pension fund is important for every gig you play. Today, we are going to revisit some previous issues that haven't changed in their importance from when I first wrote about them in July 2006: playing consistently and why record keeping is always important!

Q: So, I have been doing all the things you have talked about, writing anger letters, singing in my head when I play, taking a lot of air, listening to great musical models and things are going great. However, I just can't play great consistently. Why not?

A: This is a question we all ask ourselves, but it can be answered. Dale Cleverger, the legendary principal horn of the Chicago Symphony, talks about "having to climb the mountain" every day. What he means is that in order to get truly consistent in our playing we

really have to start from scratch every day, clear the slate, clean the blackboard and start fresh. But you must have a set of things to get you thinking in a musical way, of making art before you play or touch your instrument or sing a note if you are a singer. Like Adolph Herseth, the legendary principal trumpet of the Chicago Symphony, always says about playing; "you gotta be turned on." The point is, you must get your mind thinking about making music, making art BEFORE you practice or perform. You need to figure out what that will mean for you; ask yourself what are the things that put you into an artistic state; where you best playing is.

For starters, one of the best things you can do immediately before playing is to imagine your mind as a blackboard, then erase it. Then immediately imagine the best time you ever played when things were REALLY working; when you were REALLY "in the zone" and if you don't have any strong experiences like that, simply remember a time when you felt your absolute best, like when you might have been on vacation. Then imagine you are there. Stay in this state whenever you play, making sure

you are taking huge amounts of air when you breathe if you are an instrumentalist (strings too!), singers must breathe of course, and sing everything that you are playing or singing in your mind as you play or sing it.

Arnold Jacobs, the great tuba player and teacher from the Chicago Symphony, always told me, "there should be an instrument in your head and one in your hand; the instrument in your head should be perfect; make the outer instrument the same as the one in your mind." All these things I have mentioned should be reviewed in your mind right before you play every day. If the instrument in your head is not clear and you don't know what your artistic standard is, listen to somebody great on your instrument that you admire before you play and play this back in your mind as you play as I mentioned in June's column. This is how you can create your own "instrument in your head" that you can always count on.

Q: I have been playing professionally for some time, but I hate doing paperwork. Do I really need to keep track of all the money I make and

who really cares?

A: You DO NEED TO keep track of EVERYTHING that you do. Business and accounting paperwork is not an option for us. Finding a good accountant who understands musicians and is honest and thorough is a must. You do not want to be audited by the Internal Revenue Service and if you are, keeping good records and having a good accountant to help you organize them is essential. There are too many stories of musicians who have made it big, never kept great accounting records and ended up paying millions of fines to the IRS. Don't let yourself be in that category!!! If your records are a mess, get on the phone to a good accountant right away!

Send your questions to: Ask Mike!, Trumpetworks Press, P.O. Box 11574, Marina del Rey, CA 90295 or you can check out my website at www.trumpetworkspress.com and see information on my book, "Stage Fright in Music Performance and Its Relationship to the Unconscious" and my upcoming book, "Your True Self." All names are confidential and will not be published.

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One legal service that everyone should think about (and will ultimately need) is estate planning. Many people think that estate planning is simply the writing of a will. Actually, it is significantly more. Proper estate planning allows you, and not the Court, to determine who will take care of your minor children. A well drafted estate plan will also protect you in the event of your incapacity. It will determine who makes important decisions regarding your medical care should you be unable to speak for yourself. It will allow you to determine who will receive your assets after you die,

preferably with as little money going to legal fees and taxes as possible.

The best time to plan your estate is now – while you can and before you need it. None of us likes to think about our own mortality or the possibility of becoming incapacitated. Unfortunately, that is exactly why so many families are caught off guard and unprepared when incapacity or death strikes. In these tough times, spending a relatively small sum now can save thousands of dollars later.

We urge you to contact our office to take advantage of the Union Plus program.

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