

Ask Mike!

Stressed about an upcoming gig? Work got you singing the blues? Columnist Michael Goode can help!



BY MICHAEL I. GOODE,
LOCAL 10-208 MEMBER

In my last column, in January, we talked about what to do when your playing is going downhill and how young players can manage the overwhelming amount of information available on their instrument. Today, we are going to talk about how big lifestyle changes can affect your playing and what to do with a sudden bout of stage fright. Thanks for writing! Here's February's Q&A:

Q: Hi Mike! I am a freelancer and have just moved to L.A. and am freaking out a little bit. How long will it take me to get adjusted and get as much work as I had in my old city?

A: That will depend on you, your motivation, drive and willingness to get to know people; it's not hard to do and L.A. is a very friendly town! Make sure that you have plenty of business cards with you, professional-looking resumes and some professionally produced demo tapes. Keep some of each of these categories with you whenever you go out anywhere. Don't hesitate to give people your business card after some polite conversation. Don't make people feel like you are pushing it on them; say simply that you are giving them contact info if they "need another player." Make it clear that you are new in town and have an open schedule and would be glad to help out.

At all times you should have with you a good, reliable PDA or a calendar so that you can book a gig with someone if they ask right on the spot rather than waiting for them to call you back. However, with that goes a word of advice. In your enthusiasm to help, NEVER double-book; that is, don't get yourself slotted for two gigs at the same time and see which one ends up paying the most! Unfortunately, some players do this intentionally and get away with it for a while, but sooner or later contractors get tired of this and stop calling you once the word gets around.

If you ever do have to miss a gig you must have a very reliable high-quality colleague to substitute for you and you must call the contractor as

soon as you know there is a problem. And generally, it had better be a true emergency of some sort that you absolutely have no control over. Reliability and great playing are key with contractors. There is a lot of competition out there!

Also, being gracious and cooperative will go a long way to making a first impression as well as good grooming. Try to watch and find out just what the unwritten or written dress code may be and ask questions if you need to, but try to learn most things by observing what others do and say. You can gain so much on the job by listening and watching what others do. Every gig has its own customs. Good luck!

Q: I've been playing a long time and all of a sudden I have lately been having tremendous bouts of stage fright on stuff that I know backwards and forwards and have played for years with no problems at all. What is going on?

A: Something must have changed drastically in your personal life, or maybe something is going on physically. If everything else is pretty much the same as before you have to ask yourself the following questions: Is my physical health okay? You might want to see a doctor in case there is some new physical problem that is contributing to the stage fright. Have there been any drastic changes in relation-

ships with your family, wife, or others that are close to you? People don't realize the impact life can have on you even if you are a very solid, dependable player. Unresolved emotional issues will tend to bubble up from your unconscious until they are resolved one way or the other; you want these issues to be solved in a positive way! Our thought processes really do determine how we play on any given day, and so does prior smart practicing!

Write an anger letter as I have been suggesting in previous columns in order to get insight into what particular emotional issue or issues are causing your stage fright, and by all means seek professional and medical advice at once if you are feeling depressed or out of control.

Resorting to drugs or alcohol will only postpone dealing with the problem and will ultimately make the situation worse in the long run and may even make it life-threatening. The trick is not to sit with problems, ignore them and let them fester; instead take a proactive attitude!

Send your questions to: Ask Mike!, Trumpetworks Press, 715 Lake Street #269, Oak Park, IL 60301, 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." All names are confidential and will not be published.

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