

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 May, we talked about stress and not-so-great gigs and how to deal with both of these issues. Today, we are going to talk about diet, instrument repair, and how to deal with a neighbor who complains about your practicing. Here's June's Q&A:

Q: Hey Mike, is there such thing as a "musician's diet"?

A: I have never actually heard of a "musician's diet," and we are all free to eat whatever we like. On the other hand, I have found that there are some things you can do in your diet that will help your playing and your mental alertness as you get older or even if you are a younger player. Staying away from excessive fat, cholesterol,

salt and sugar can only help your nervous system and your overall health. These four things when eaten in too large of amounts can have a detrimental effect on your nervous system and overall health, which will mean your playing efficiency will go down. The nervous system functions in watery fluid and if this fluid gets contaminated with too much junk, the conductivity of the nerve system signal slows down, affecting all processes in the body, from thought, emotion, breathing, digestion, you name it.

Our playing is a direct response to how healthy we are and how responsive our bodies are. When we are younger, we have not had enough time to ingest as many contaminants, so we can function better and still eat poorly and play well. As we get older, we have to be far more careful of what we eat, because it can have a detrimental effect on our overall nervous system function and health and our playing. So think twice about having that second bag of junk food!

Q: The clarinet I am playing now is in need of either repair or replacement. I have a steady gig way out here far away, but not much time to see about getting it fixed or evaluated by somebody. Should I send it off to one of those Internet repair sites?

A: No. I would strongly encourage you to give Local 47 a call and get the name of a reputable clarinet player who can suggest a great repair person who can evaluate and/or repair your instrument for you. Our instruments

are a key part of our life as musicians, and most of them are expensive. You must only have your instrument looked after by an expert repairman; some poorly done repairs can be unfixable! Unethical repair persons have even been known to unfortunately remove parts from valuable instruments and then resell them! So, please get an experienced player to recommend an outstanding repair person for you to look after your instrument.

Quality repair persons can make secure arrangements with you to get your instrument safely to them and back; the best idea is to make a road trip to see the repair person or have someone you trust take it to the repair shop and back if you do not have time. I do not recommend shipping a valuable instrument for repairs. Too many priceless instruments have been damaged in this way.

Q: I live in a condo and lately the new neighbor to the east has been complaining about my practicing. I never practice after 9 p.m. I most often practice between jobs during the day. My neighbor is so crazy that she is threatening to call the police on me! I want to practice and I play the oboe. What do I do about this?

A: Remember the anger letters that I have been talking about? For starters, write one of those to your neighbor, something like, "I am angry that this neighbor is hassling me about my practicing." Tear it up when you are done, and of course never send it! This will clear your head about the

matter emotionally and enable you to not get entangled in whatever unresolved emotional issues your neighbor has regarding oboes!

Then, check with your condo association rules that you should have a copy of, and see if there are any rules against playing or practicing a musical instrument in your room. Believe it or not, some condo associations have rules regarding this! If it's OK to practice (and check the hours allowed for practice if there are restrictions), then you could try talking to the neighbor directly and see exactly what the complaint is. Sometimes people that complain are so embarrassed when they find out you are a professional musician they get off the whole issue and apologize and that's it.

If this doesn't solve it, you could either soundproof your condo, which could be expensive, or use egg cartons which is cheaper, or you could find another place to live. It's a shame non-musicians get entangled with musicians in matters like these but it does happen. Try to be as gracious as possible under the circumstances!

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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