

# 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 April, we talked about how to keep in touch with yourself and keep your artistic focus and your muse as an artist in the midst of ever-changing situations and work schedules. Today, we are going to talk about stress and not-so-great gigs and how to deal with both of these issues. Here's May's Q&A:

**Q: Wow, have I had a lot of stress lately, Mike. Between gigs and family issues, and moving to a new house, I am getting stressed out. I am a little worried about how this could affect my playing and my consistency on the job. Should I be?**

A: It is perfectly normal to be con-

cerned when the stress level in other areas of your life is high and whether it will have an effect on your playing. Outside stress can affect your playing as time goes on so it is a good time to deal with it now. As I have mentioned before, it is very important to organize our lives as performing musicians so that we have some down time to recharge our batteries and refresh ourselves. At no time is this more important than when we are under stress. It may seem like it is harder to do when we are in the middle of so many things but this is the time when it is most important to take some time for ourselves even if it is only a few minutes. Taking a walk, or exercising or meditating or something pleasurable, even going out to eat with friends will go a long way to relieving your stress. It is most important to do activities that have nothing to do with music, whether it may be sports, antique collecting, or whatever relaxes you and gets you away from music. My teacher, Adolph Herseth, Principal Trumpet Emeritus of the Chicago Symphony, used to take his golf clubs with him on world tours and go golfing!!!

Whatever you can do to relax is great as long as it's legal! Also, you should build in some meditation and/or exercise into your daily routine even if it's only a few minutes. The body needs some physical activity every day to stay relaxed and focused and besides, it's good for your health!

**Q: Hi Mike. I am used to playing at very well-attended venues but I got a**

**gig recently where the audience was kind of small, the promoter did not market the event very well. We played, and things went okay, but for the first time, I started getting stage fright symptoms, starting worrying about the situation with a small audience. Any clue as to what that is about and how to deal with it?**

A: If we are used to playing at well-attended gigs at great venues where everything is taken care of, it can be a little traumatic to all of a sudden play at a place where the audience is small and not very responsive because the marketers didn't do their job. Your anxiety and stage fright over this is normal and typical. We sometimes don't realize how important it is to have a great crowd to play for in a very supportive environment where the contractor makes sure we have everything we need until we get a gig where that is not happening.

Recently, the Washington Post ran an article about Joshua Bell, the great violin soloist, who in an experiment played unannounced in a very busy subway station in Washington, D.C. for 45 minutes, and only two to three people even noticed! He began to get stage fright symptoms and worry about the fact that no one was paying attention to him or his playing. Audience involvement is part of the reason we play, and when we don't have a positive experience with an audience and the environment isn't automatically set up to be positive with great promo and marketing, it can be very

traumatic.

Certainly, you should also think about the issues that did get raised because the audience size was small and promoters didn't pay the usual attention to comfort details like they are supposed to in your contract. If there is a stage fright issue that has reared its ugly head, you need to deal with it immediately and write a private anger letter about it, something like, "I am angry that the promoter didn't do his job, the audience was too small, the lighting was terrible, the chairs were lousy," whatever has aggravated you about the situation. This will help clarify issues so that you will ask more questions so that you will think twice about playing such a gig next time.

The details do matter on jobs, and taking care of all the things that make us comfortable on the job will go a long way to help us play our best. We can "tough it out" as professionals if we need to, but it is always better to think about what kind of performance conditions we want and to ask questions before we take the gig if we can.

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](http://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.

© 2007 Michael I. Goode

## Join Our List of Solution Pledge Activists!

Bain, Robert	Kelly, Wendell Clay	Rodríguez, Dr. Bobby
Bergantino, Dr. Len	Kostelas, Andreas G.	Rosen, Jay A.
Boyver, Gary	Lasley, Gary	Rucker, Washington
Cassidy, Ed C.	Le Vang, Maurice	Ruiz, Adrian
Chilcott, George W.	Levieu, Milcho	Schubach, David
Cron, Rosalind	Lewis, Louis W.	Sitterly, Jim
Espinosa, Hal	McGarity, Kent	Thompson, Sir
Gilmore, Thomas D.	Mitchell, Glenn A.	Charles P.
Goodman, Allen	Mitchell, John J.	Trombetta, Vince
Greene, Richard S.	Newman, Mitchell	Wang, Tze-Koong
Hancock, Joseph F.	Pastor, Luis (Louie)	Williams, Serena Kay
Hill, Cecil	Peek, Adrian	Winnick, Sherman L.
Ingber, Ira B.	Ramsey, Gloria C.	Wolf, Kayte
Ingui, Thomas C.	Rasmussen, Chelsea	Zepeda, Magdalena
Kaplan, Larry	Rice, Richard K.	

If you would like your name added to this list, please fill out and return the Solution Pledge form on this page. If you wish your name to be removed, send notice to the Secretary/Treasurer's office.



Don't be part of the problem...

Be part of the solution!

## THE SOLUTION PLEDGE

"I'll be there..."

...standing up for my fellow musicians in their fight to preserve jobs, retain live music and promote respect for our profession;

...supporting the cause of our brothers and sisters in the labor movement;

...lobbying politicians in support of legislation that will improve the lives of working people;

...helping wherever possible to advance the arts and arts education for our children.

Please fill out the following information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE SEND THIS PLEDGE TO:** Secretary/Treasurer, Professional Musicians, Local 47, 817 Vine St., Hollywood, CA 90038 or e-mail [secretary@promusic47.org](mailto:secretary@promusic47.org). Call President Espinosa or Vice President Trombetta for more information.