

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 October, we talked about how to get out of a playing rut and the importance of breathing and singing. Today, we are going to talk about playing with asthma, allergies and non-toxic valve oils.

Q: Dear Mike, as I have gotten older, I have started to develop allergies and asthma. Like you, I am a brass player. I also smoke. Will I be able to continue playing or will this be the end of my career? I'm scared because I don't know how to do anything else.

A: If it's any help, I have had asthma all my life and so did one of my teachers, Mr. Jacobs from the Chicago Symphony, and he was a tuba player! My air capacity has been measured at over five liters in spite of this. First, go to your doctor and have him thoroughly check you and your breathing apparatus out — your lungs, bronchi, heart, etc. — to make sure everything is in working order and that there are no underlying medical conditions that are making it

unsafe to play that you don't know about. If the doctor gives you a clean bill of health, then you can start working on developing a better ability in using your breathing apparatus better.

For current asthmatics, or former asthmatics, the issue always is the flexibility of the tissues and musculatures that expel air. In asthmatics, these are usually stiff because of the asthma, and as a result an asthmatic will normally not be able to expel the air and/or get it all out of the body as fast or as well as someone who hasn't had asthma. The last time I saw my allergist, he said my expulsion of air was completely normal. I had to train myself to do this and have been able to play with huge volumes of air in orchestras. At times you will also need such air capacity and expulsion rates for commercial, studio, movie and jazz work. Stopping smoking will also go a long way towards helping this process as it tends to constrict tissues and disturbs the function of the alveoli in the lungs that exchange carbon dioxide and oxygen.

So, do these things and you will be alright. I have trained many people how to use their air who have been asthmatics starting with myself so it can be done. But see your doctor first as I sug-


gested and make sure everything is alright before proceeding. Many physicians may suggest an aerosol inhaler such as L-albuterol, (trade name Xopenex), but most musicians tend to use it too much and may begin to suffer from side effects such as premature glaucoma. This is why I would strongly recommend against it and instead train yourself to breathe normally without it as my allergist encouraged me to. Again, ask your doctor about this.

Q: Hi Mike, I heard that most valve oils are made out of kerosene. Is this true? Would that be safe? Are there any safe alternatives out there?

A: A number of years ago, as my own allergies increased, I personally became increasingly concerned with what was in my valve oil. After having a history of both asthma and allergies, I did some investigation and found that yes, it is true that most all valve oils are either made from kerosene or silicone; both are toxic. The U.S. Federal Materials Data Sheet says that kerosene, when airborne as a vapor once inhaled, condenses into droplets in the lungs. So, when you play and certainly right after you oil your valves or keys, you inhale this


vapor and it converts into liquid kerosene droplets in your lungs. According to Proposition 65 from the State of California, all kerosene pumps must have the following warning placed within the area in which kerosene is stored and being dispensed: "This Area Contains Chemicals Known to the State of California to Cause Cancer and Birth Defects or Other Reproductive Harm." Most synthetic valve oils have some kind of silicone compound in them which is toxic. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) considers silicone to be a "potential occupational carcinogen." There is only one valve oil to my knowledge that has been tested as safe on its MSDS that contains no silicone or kerosene and it is called Binak, developed together by a lubrication engineer and an allergist MD.

Ask Mike!, Trumpetworks Press, P.O. Box 11574, Marina del Rey, CA 90295 or you can check out my website at www.trumpet-workspress.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. © 2009 Michael I. Goode



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Advance Health Care Registry

You may no longer assume your family will be making decisions about your health care should you become unable to speak for yourself unless you have signed an Advance Health Care Directive (AHCD). In response to the growing importance of every adult having a written AHCD, the California Secretary of State established a statewide AHCD Registry. Should you become injured, ill, or otherwise unable to speak for yourself, your health care provider or legal representative may request information from the statewide registry regarding your healthcare.

In an AHCD, you designate an individual whom you direct to carry out your wishes regarding choice of hospital, your doctor, support staff, treatment, and end-of-life issues if you become unable to speak for yourself. Health care providers must follow

your Agent's instructions.

The significance of having an AHCD cannot be overstated. Privacy laws and liability issues have made it increasingly difficult for doctors and hospitals to discuss medical matters with family members. In some instances, health care providers have declined to discuss private health care matters with any next of kin, including parents and spouses. Without an AHCD, it may be the courts or hospital administrators determining your care.

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