

# Ask Mike!

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



how to get out of a playing rut and the importance of breathing and singing.

**Q: Dear Mr. Goode, you know I have been getting in a rut with my playing and it all is getting to be so boring and mechanical. I am very consistent and accurate, but I'm bored stiff. I need something to make it more interesting or I am going to go crazy here. Any suggestions?**

A: One of the best things you can do if you haven't already is do a personal inventory of how you are playing. Are you breathing enough? Are you singing everything you play in your head while you are playing? Can you sing everything you play just like you want it to sound when it comes out of your instrument? If you are not doing these things, then your playing will become mechan-

ical and not exciting either for you or your audience.

I know that sometimes we are expected to have a formulaic kind of a sound for a particular gig; that's fine, but you can still get whatever sound the contractor or conductor wants and you can make it even better for them and more interesting for you as well. How you do this is by having a specific idea in mind in your imagination of what storyline you want to deliver to the audience, conductor or contractor. This is some kind of artistic vision and you can simply put your ideas into whatever kind of sound or style your boss wants to hear.

My teacher in the Chicago Symphony, Bud Herseth, told me that when he plays the orchestral piece "Scherzade" based on "Stories of 1001 Arabian Nights," he thinks of a book of the same title that he read when he was a child and imagines turning the pages in his mind while he is playing the piece. If you are doing jazz or commercial work, you can think of a mood or an emotion related to a personal memory as a story that you want to sell to the audience while you are playing, like an actor would. When you think about your

playing this way, you are making it more interesting for both the audience and yourself and you will have some imaginative control of what you are doing instead of just cranking the notes out in a robotic way.

**Q: Hi Mike, I know that you have talked about breathing a lot in your column before but could you give us a heads up and talk about it again? My breathing on the trumpet seems to be all screwed up and I want a review. Thanks.**

A: Breathing is not a complicated subject but it is important. Arnold Jacobs, one of my other teachers from the Chicago Symphony, always said, "Breathe like a baby, sing like an angel." That's the whole idea in a nutshell. All you need to do is suck the air across your lips and do not worry about what your body does as long as you are sitting or standing upright. If you are sitting, make sure the weight of your body is resting on the sitz bones in your pelvis and that your head is like a puppet on a string. And just suck the air across your lips. That's all. No worries about what the rest of your body is doing. The body

will perform correctly if you just suck the air across the lips and don't worry about anything else.

As for your mind, you should practice singing in your head everything that you play, this will give your brain a very strong signal to allow your body to do whatever it needs to do to make the same beautiful sound out of the instrument in your hand. If you don't know what a beautiful sound should sound like, listen to a recording of your favorite artist on your instrument and copy that. It may be a step of faith at first to sing something in your head and expect it to come out of your instrument, but if you have been playing long enough you can do it. The artistic benefits and the ease of playing that happens from this process are enormous.

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](http://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. © 2009 Michael I. Goode

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STEPHEN W. KRAMER

5858 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD, SUITE 205

LOS ANGELES, CA 90036-4521

PHONE 323-964-7100

WWW.KRAMERLAW.BIZ

