

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 September, we talked about how important it is to go your own road and do things your way, the way that works best for you in spite of what others may say. We also revisited the idea of taking time off and talked about support. Today, we are going to talk about something that I touched on in June's column; how to adjust to getting that first great gig or going from a great gig to one at an even higher level of achievement. Here's October's Q&A:

Q: You know, Mike, I have been preparing to get this symphony job

forever and I finally got it. It's a lot more work than I thought but it's still great. However, the schedule is really demanding and doesn't leave much time for anything else in life! And the pressure - even though I love what I am doing, sometimes I think brain surgeons have a calmer environment!!! How do I cope with this?

A: Orchestra schedules today are very demanding. The job requires much more energy and concentration than most and means that you have to be at your absolute best at all times, otherwise it will be hard to keep your job. It is really important that you structure your life to make sure that you are able to be prepared for your symphony responsibilities, but also that you must set aside time every day, even if it is only a little bit of time, to do things for yourself outside of music.

Arnold Jacobs, one of my teachers from the Chicago Symphony, told me a story that at one point he went to the doctor to find out what was wrong with him during his symphony career. The doctor checked him over and said: "Arnold, there is nothing wrong with you. The problem is that all you do is music. You need to get a hobby." Well, Arnold took his doctor's advice seriously and started becoming an expert researcher and authority about breathing for wind players and became a medical authority and consultant on the subject as a hobby. He had always been

interested in medicine and enjoyed studying it. His "hobby" also helped him have a very long career, and contributed to him being one of the greatest brass, wind and vocal teachers who ever lived. It also probably saved his life, as he had lifelong asthma.

The point is, you have to make time to do things for yourself in this business, and when you do, the payoff is big. It will help your music and your overall outlook which in turn will improve your health. Once you get activities and time for yourself in your daily routine, you will have a reference point that helps you understand who you are. This is very important when dealing with the tensions and stresses in the symphonic and music workplace whatever the type of music. You must spend time at the start of every day connecting to yourself by some meditative or spiritual-type activity to get you relaxed and to clear your mind for the day to come. Some people do yoga, tai chi, qi gong, prayer, or they simply meditate. Some practice golf in the morning or walk on the beach. Whatever it is you need to do it every day when you get up even if only for five minutes. You need time to think about yourself and your life for a few quiet moments each day. Otherwise, you will not be centered and will tend to be far more affected by everyone else's negative vibes on the job which you certainly don't need! Music is stressful enough.

You don't need to be influenced by other people's stress on the job! Remember that their stress is not your stress. You can play in your own little space and enjoy the gig and play even greater than before!

Q: I have been in a local big band and have done some studio work. But I really want to "step up" and get some even bigger gig and do some movie work. How do I get there?

A: First, you need to make sure that your playing is absolutely solid and that there are no weaknesses. Be honest. If there are weak spots, spend the extra money and have the courage and humility to find the best teacher in your field and take some lessons. It will make a huge difference! Then network and start hanging out with people that play these kinds of gigs and learn from their stories what it is like at that level. When you are totally comfortable in both your playing and the people side, then go on your first "test gig." If all goes well, you are on your way!

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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