

# Ask Mike

By Local 10-208 Member Michael I. Goode



In my last column, in November, we talked about psychic self-defense, focus while performing, practicing and auditions, and how to get the best out of your playing overall as a result. Today we are going to talk more about focus and practical little tricks you can do to get unstuck on a piece you are working on. So, here is December's Q & A:

**Q. I just read last month's column and have been reading all the ones before that and I have been trying the anger letters and all the advice that you have given so far. But I just had a death in the family and will only have a few days off, how can I possibly focus? The band-leader won't give me more time off. I have to keep my job!**

A. First, I am sorry to hear of your loss. I recently had a best friend since childhood suddenly die and I was able to play well even at his funeral even though I was VERY upset. What happens is that if you write the anger letters on a daily basis your emotional physical and spiritual systems start to open up more and you can still function in spite of how bad you may feel. In my last column, I talked about how you could use the imagery technique of imagining your person B negative thoughts as graffiti on a blackboard that you could erase with your mind. Do this right now. And as I said before, in spite of how you really feel, imagine a time when you played your absolute best and were "in the zone" that we have talked about, being the real you, person A, directly connected to your unconscious. This is where all the great music comes from. Then play and continue to focus on the time when you felt and played great and things should work out OK. But right now, in the practice room, imagine yourself in the playing situation exactly as if you are there while you practice to give you some practice in doing this technique before you are on the job. If it doesn't come easy at first and you are not playing as well as you would like, then right away write an anger letter stating that you are angry that you can't stay in this positive playing state, and go back and practice after that. Things will go much better in spite of your grief. Tear the letters up when finished, because they should always be private and uncensored.

**Q. When I practice sometimes I get stuck on a passage and I keep**

**making the same mistake over and over again and it just won't come. What can I do to solve this?**

A. First, if you are like the musician above, if you have any grief or big emotional issues going on in your life, put your instrument down or stop singing if you are a singer and write an anger letter following the imagery and other directions above adjusting your letter to fit the emotional situation in question. If you are not in a big emotional or grief issue, then first try the passage much slower three times. If that doesn't work, then play the passage backward reading it right to left instead then play it forward. If this doesn't work, hold your instrument upside down and attempt to play or sing leaning backward. Any attempt to do things differently will cause the right brain, the creative person A part, to play and cause the person B part to shut down. Arnold Jacobs used to call this the "phenomenon of strangeness." If this doesn't work, take a break and then come back. If when you come back it's still bad, stop practicing, write an anger letter about it, and start back again on it the next day.

Next month: More practice tips.

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 replies are confidential and names will not be published.

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Furtwängler said: "Staccato notes in Beethoven should not be too short." Erich Kleiber said: "One word separates Beethoven from Mozart: *Forza* (Strength)." Learn also how they kept the line going in spite of the rests. (Kleiber called them "sonorous rests.") These and many other interpretation "tips" from the Great Maestros of the last century, the carriers of the oral tradition of the Classical Symphonic Composers will be discussed.

If you are interested, please call or write to

**MAESTRO EFRAIN GUIGUI**

Ditson's Conductor Award

[Eguigui@aol.com](mailto:Eguigui@aol.com)

(310) 474-3028 / Cell: (310) 709-3799