

Ask Mike

By Local 10-208 Member Michael I. Goode



In my last column, in October, we talked about what anger letters do for you in the practice room and how to use them if things come up during a performance, the beginnings of something I call psychic self-defense. Today we are going to talk further about psychic self-defense and focus while performing, practicing and

auditioning and how to get the best out of your playing overall as a result. So, here is November's Q & A:

Q. I read last month's column. I had a performance and I did what you said with writing the first letters of a quick anger letter on a post-it note on my stand. But what happens if I get crazy thoughts during a solo where I am out in front of the orchestra and can't possibly write a mini anger letter in front of an audience?

A. In this case, you can write one in your head. Quickly, write in your mind "I am angry this is not working well" about whatever is not going well or about whatever is distracting you. You can also use imagery to kill off the negative thought processes if necessary. Be graphic, you can imagine you are blowing these negative thoughts up.

You can also tell these negative thoughts to "shut up," something Don Greene, Ph.D. reinforced to me some time ago. I began to do this a

number of years ago and it was very effective. The funny thing is, is that in the beginning, you will be either blowing up or telling any negative thoughts to "Shut Up!" while at the same time you are hearing and sending in your mind a strong, beautiful musical message of what you want the piece you are playing to sound like. This takes a little getting used to but it is well worth it!!! I did this during a very exposed solo on the Shostakovich fifth symphony, and when the recording came out, it came out very very well and the audience loved it. I got a standing ovation for that solo! The amazing thing is that the audience will have no idea that this is going on while you are playing!!!

After a while, you will rarely, if ever, need to do this self-talk to slam the negative thoughts quiet as long as you continue to write anger letters on a daily basis. The anger letters will reorganize the unconscious to such a point that you won't have any negative self-talk in your head while playing, just the sound of the beautiful music that you want to come out of your instrument or your voice. This kind of self-talk to keep only positive musical thoughts in your head is part of what I call

psychic self-defense.

Q. This psychic self-defense stuff sounds great. Can I use it in practicing too?

Absolutely. You must use it in practicing. Every time you are going to sing or play, imagine clearing your mind like erasing graffiti off of a blackboard. These negative thoughts are the graffiti. After you erase the thoughts, think of the best time you have ever played, or think of the time you were the happiest in your life. Then go sing or play! This, and the psychic self-defense mentioned above, will help you get a clear focus as long as you keep doing the anger letters daily. Next month, we will talk more about focus and little tricks you can do to get unstuck on a piece you are working on.

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 replies are confidential and names will not be published. © 2005 Michael I. Goode

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