

Ask Mike

By Local 10-208 Member Michael I. Goode



In my last column, in August, we talked about tools to get you from stage fright to "the zone," the anger letter. Today, we are going to talk about what happens once you start using this tool and how and why it helps your playing. So, here is September's Q & A:

Q. So I am writing the anger letters, one of the tools to conquer stage fright that you mentioned last time. All these new things are happening to me. What's that about, and how can it directly help my playing and stage fright?

A. This is a completely normal result of writing the anger letters... Many things will come up as a result of writing. You will probably remember and feel all kinds of situations and experiences from the past as a result of writing the anger letters. This is fantastic! When you feel and re-experience old stuff, this means that your unconscious is dumping the old emotions and memories that have been blocking you from playing your absolute best and have been helping cause your stage fright.

See, we have different parts of our psyche - who we are - and who we are is what comes out of our horn

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whenever we play. Most of us have a HUGE garbage pile of old negative thinking about ourselves and about how we play that we have accumulated over the years and this garbage pile is blocking our real genius artist self from coming out. And all these pieces of garbage on the garbage pile are stuck there because of anger.

The unconscious is very smart, and whenever it senses that something wrong has been done to us, somebody treats us poorly, has a bad attitude towards us, or is just downright mean, the unconscious creates a piece of garbage in our psyche to save to be dealt with at a future time when we feel safe enough to do so.

Every time we write an anger letter about a subject, the particular piece of garbage related to that subject gets picked up off the garbage pile in our psyche and gets thrown away permanently.

As you do more and more anger letters, the garbage pile gets smaller and smaller, and your real genius self, let's call this person A, starts coming out and man, you really start to PLAY.

Q. But how can I use this to improve my performing and practicing?

A. Whenever you are in the practice room, and you get stuck on a passage, stop and write an anger letter about it. Then after you have written the anger letter, using the word anger or angry in it, play the passage again. You will be amazed. More about this next month.

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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Lyle "Spud" Murphy...continued from front page

Orchestra. Even Fletcher Henderson, who was also writing for Goodman, commissioned Murphy to arrange several numbers for the Henderson orchestra. Turning to the end of the ledger, he said, "The last page says 'Abandoned'. I figured I had made it by then - and decided not to continue the entries."

During the swing era, more than three hundred of Murphy's stock arrangements were published by Robbins Music Corporation and Leo Feist Inc. They have been out of print for years and are highly valued among collectors. Orchestras throughout the world are still playing these "stocks" - an impressive testimony to Murphy's writing skills.

When I asked him how he could write without formal piano training, "Spud" laughed, and said, "Arrangers are born, not made. You either are one - or you are not. I knew the instruments. I could play flute, oboe, bassoon, saxophone, trumpet, and valve trombone! I played 'arrangers' piano - I plunked a few notes!"

Leading his own moderately successful orchestra in the late '30s, Murphy arranged and recorded Ray Noble's "Cherokee" before the composer's version was issued - and three months ahead of Charlie Barnet's smash hit.

He also recorded his arrangement of "Quaker City Jazz" a year and a half before it appeared on record by band leader Jan Savitt, who wrote the tune and used it as a theme.

During the interview, I asked "Spud," "Of your many accomplishments, is there something you look back upon with most pride - a number one activity?"

Without hesitation, he said, "Well, sure, Floyd! The course that I wrote! That's more important to me than anything I did before that. I teach two days a week in my home. I have for the last forty years. I don't have many graduates because I don't have too many students, and it's a long course. It takes about five years to go through it. But all of my graduates are working, - everyone is doing fine!"

"The course for advanced music students is a system of horizontal composition based on equal intervals - an original method of creating and developing a new world of sound. It is contained in a dozen large volumes. Four hundred and some pages in volume one, alone!"

Graduates of "Spud" Murphy's Equal Interval System course have all become successful members of the music fraternity. Among those who completed the difficult study are: Irving Ashby, Walter Bishop, Jr. Buddy Collette, Abe Most, Tommy Mancini, Gerald Wiggins, Oscar Peterson, and more.

Several of his graduates are prominently active in films and television. Some are directors, composers, arrangers and teachers - and one operates a modern 10,000 square foot recording studio.

He has received many accolades over the years, but, like any great teacher, takes more pride in the achievements of his students.

"If a teacher has one outstanding student out of a hundred, he or she can be considered a successful educator. I can proudly say that all of my students have been outstanding - most of them are millionaires!"

"I don't advertise and I can't be found, and I have no phone number, as you know! And, I have no street address - I don't exist."

Despite his idiosyncratic reclusive attitude, he did have a "large batch of friends." He was a beloved and highly respected "character" on the local music scene and as a long-time Board Member, he conducted Union business with clear and insightful vision.

When my interview was completed, he said, "I don't remember when I've talked this long!" He was pleased to know that details of his life depicted in our one hundred page interview were available to students and researchers at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and the Jazz Archives of Tulane University in New Orleans - and later published as a chapter in my book. Included are details of the many triumphant musical achievements - by a man who never took a lesson in his life!

Since then, he always called me his "biographer" - a moniker of which I am extremely proud!

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