

Ask Mike!

Stressed about an upcoming gig? Work got you singing the blues? Columnist Michael Goode can help!



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In my last column, in August, we talked about volume levels on gigs, how much you should socialize on a gig and keeping your dignity in social situations outside of music. Today, we are going to talk about how to get your playing back after a vacation or long absence due to illness and how important it is to keep yourself in great physical shape.

Q: I had to be hospitalized for three months and couldn't play a note. I am terrified I won't be able to get back in shape and get back into the loop quickly enough. The contractors that I have worked for cut me some slack and have gigs lined up for me about a month and a half from now. Is it possible to get in shape in

such a short time?

A: Yes, it is certainly possible to get back in shape after extended time off. The body and the mind have an amazing way of remembering what you were able to do before at your peak when you were healthy and playing great. One of the best ways to access this is to find tapes or CDs of yourself playing at your best and listen to these as a model to get back in shape. Use these to imitate and encourage yourself; if you could do it before, you can do it now.

The mind is a very powerful instrument and tool; the most powerful force on earth. Use your mind to help your nervous system direct your body to get back to where you were before. This will take some time and you do need to make sure that you go slow as you get back into it. If you are a brass player, start by buzzing for a few days and then try a little bit on the horn each day. If you are a string player, start with some scales and simple melodies, but don't spend too much bow time in the beginning; you want to build up gradually as well. Wind and percussion players use the same idea, going gradually is best; adding a little more each day. For all instruments, let the quality of your sound serve as your guide as to how things are going.

Getting back in shape after a long absence is a golden opportunity to start fresh with correct habits in playing. It is helpful to get a teacher or a

trusted colleague to give you either a lesson or advice or both to help you get back on track. Think of the times when you played your absolute best and use these as a model to restart your playing back to where it was before. Be patient; the interesting thing is that when you start over, by going slow each day and not pushing it too hard, you will actually get in shape faster than if you try to get as many hours in as you did before too soon. The body and mind have been off for a while so they do need recovery time to build back up again. You can do this! Before you start, get yourself completely checked out by your doctor to make sure there are no physical things in the way that would hurt or hinder you.

Q: As I am getting older it gets harder and harder to play, it seems. I get tired more, it takes longer to warm up and get where I used to sound; all in all it's taking a lot more work to get where I used to be. Is there anything I can do to make this easier?

A: First, check with your physician and get a complete physical to make sure everything is OK. If everything checks out fine, then we are talking about things that are slowing down due to aging. We don't always take aging and our health seriously enough. We sometimes tend to take it for granted. If you haven't started some kind of exercise program, you need to start one now. You also need

to start looking at your diet and what you have been eating or not eating.

A good place to start is to get some dietary recommendations from books either by Dean Ornish, M.D. or Andrew Weil, M.D. These books offer sensible and not-too-radical changes in diet and lifestyle that would be a good place to begin. As we age, the body starts to react to how we have treated it. If we haven't treated it well, it starts to react back at us as we get older. If we haven't exercised, the body will start to break down with aging; if we haven't eaten well, the same thing will occur. You need to start some gentle exercise program right away and make it a regular one. Nothing will help us more than the alertness and energy we get from regular daily exercise, whether it be walking, bicycling, yoga, qigong, or something more vigorous. But do consult with your physician and a good personal trainer on starting slowly and gradually building up to longer exercise in order to avoid injury. The benefits in playing of being in great physical shape are tremendous!

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 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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> AFM Convention *continued from page 5*

Chamber Symphony, conducted by Frank Leone, played quietly in the background. It was a moving tribute to our departed brothers and sisters and a time of quiet reflection in the room.

In the afternoon, President Lee presented the Diversity Awards, given each Convention to members or locals whose accomplishments exemplify a diversified Union. This year the Charles Walton Diversity Advocate Award went to Dr. Fred Wheatt of Local 4 in Cleveland. The President's Local Award went to Local 65-699 in Houston, and the President's Youth Award was presented to 15-year-old Tyrone Martin Jr. from Local 101-473 in Dayton, who wowed the delegates with some unbelievable saxophone playing at the Sunday evening reception.

A long day on Wednesday was spent on recommendations and resolutions. After the installation of new officers, the 97th Convention of the American Federation of Musicians ended around

8:30 p.m.

The results of the election were as follows:

- *President: Tom Lee*
- *Vice-President, U.S.: Harold Bradley*
- *Vice-President, Canada: Bill Skolnik*
- *Secretary/Treasurer: Sam Folio*
- *International Executive Board (IEB):*
Joe Parente, Local 77, Philadelphia
Ray Hair, Local 72-147, Dallas/Ft. Worth
Bob McGrew, Local 65-699, Houston
Erwin Price, Local 802, New York City
Billy Hinneman, Local 257, Nashville

Highlights of legislation included recommendations calling for performance rights for sound recordings, diversity and localism in media ownership, and condemnation of music piracy. The Convention will now be held every three years, instead of two. This change was made in order to save about \$100,000, or roughly 1 percent of the AFM's annual budget.

The most important and most con-

troversial issue was, of course, financial. Numerous proposals were put forth by the Revenue Committee, the IEB, and others seeking to raise approximately \$1.3 million in the most equitable way possible. As what usually happens, the Finance Committee disposed them all and came up with its own financial package, which was adopted by the Convention. It calls for a one-time \$2 increase in per capita dues, with the remainder to be paid by recording musicians in the form of 4.5 percent work dues on scale wages, 12 percent work dues on new use, and a 2 percent tax on secondary market income.

Abraham Lincoln said, "A house divided amongst itself cannot stand!" This was a particularly polarized Convention of a famously divided Union. We had the Canadians vs. the Americans, the small Locals vs. the large Locals, the Locals vs. the player conferences, the professionals vs. the hobby-

ists, the "haves" vs. the "have-nots" and just about everyone vs. the working musicians of Los Angeles, whose only crime appears to be making a living ... as musicians.

"Divide and Conquer" may in the short term serve as useful in achieving short term ambitions, but in the end only leaves us weaker. Our strengths lie in our solidarity and our commitment to defend one of the core values of trade unionism, the right of a worker to have a voice in the decisions that affect his or her livelihood. The coming months and years will be challenging for all of us. Our success will depend upon each and every one of us putting aside our differences and petty jealousies, and making a commitment to uphold and strengthen all of our collective bargaining agreements, so that we and future generations may continue to reap the benefits of Union membership so gallantly fought for by our predecessors over the last century.