



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
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ON THE WAY TOWARDS A PROFESSIONAL
ORCHESTRA

A Violinist's Battle with Bow Technique and Stage Fright

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1 INTRODUCTION

In my graduation work I concentrate on three things: bowing technique for violin, stage fright and being a part of a symphony orchestra. For me these things go hand in hand and reflect my growth as a professional orchestra musician. For a violinist a good bowing technique and complete control of muscles in right hand and arm are extremely important. Since I am left-handed, the coordination and control of my right hand are not as strong as in my left hand. Bowing exercises have always been a great part of my studies, although I am sure that the same goes to both right- and left-handed violinists. I started playing the violin when I was 5 years old and it was 20 years later when my violin teacher asked me a question about the fingers of my right hand. I could not quite answer the question. As a part of my bachelor studies in violin, I studied pedagogics. Part of the studies was naturally learning how to teach a student to play the violin. I remember studying a great deal of information on how the fingers should hold the bow but nothing on what each finger is supposed to do. I noticed I had no idea of what is ring finger's part in bow grip. After the lesson I went straight to internet and searched for the answer. All that really made me think: how can bowing technique be complete, if the knowledge is not?

Probably because of incomplete bowing technique, I am always nervous with my bow hand. Obviously I know that stage fright is psychological but the symptoms focus mainly on the muscles of my right hand and arm. For me, stage fright began about five years ago. I was on a Baltic tour with Sigyn Sinfonietta, the symphony orchestra of Turku Music Academy and Turku Conservatory. I did not have time to eat before one of the concerts and due to that I started trembling during the first piece. All my muscles were shaking but I felt it mainly in my right arm, probably because the movements of the right hand are fairly big and really need a lot of controlling. I got to eat during the break and everything was back to normal when we continued playing. The trembling was surely caused by low blood sugar but the memory and the feeling of not being able to control my muscles stayed at the back of my head for years. Ever since the incident I would ask myself the same question before every performance: "What if my arm starts shaking again?" Needless to say, the shaking started. It was worse at times and better at times but I never felt quite in control of my arm and hand when performing. I tried different breathing techniques and mantras to better be able to control my nerves. They seemed to calm me down but never took away the fear of losing control again.

Then, around two years ago I faced a situation where I had no choice but to play despite the shaking. When I had a concert with an orchestra, I could always tell myself that no-one in the audience would hear me shaking. But now I was playing solo, just me and my violin. The situation itself was terrifying: funeral service of the brother of one of my friends. I wanted to be there for my friend the only way I knew how to so I offered to play something. I chose to play my own arrangement of Schubert's Ave Maria – something I had performed several times, once to a crowd of around a thousand people. And still, there I was, about to play to maybe twenty people, feeling so horrified I wanted to walk away. The chapel was really small and I knew I could not hide my nerves. I made the only possible decision: I would play to the family of the deceased with as much emotion I could find inside of me and not care about the trembling. I am sure everyone could tell I was nervous but I also know that I interpreted all the words and all the feelings I wanted to.

From that moment on I have not once been afraid of the shaking. The stage fright and trembling are not gone but mentally I feel in control. The only thing that I am lacking is the ability to relax the muscles of my right arm when the wave of panic strikes. As a violinist in the orchestra, there is a lot I can do in advance to decrease the odds of panicking. Preparing my part well is of course very important. When I do not have to be nervous about the music in the rehearsals, I do not have to be nervous about it in the concert either. Listening to the piece of music is also really important to me. That is the best and easiest way to learn the big picture. Having good relations with the person you sit next to helps, as well as respecting the section leader. The better I get along with the people I am playing in the same section with, the safer I feel. When playing as a section leader, it is also nice to have good contact with the other section leaders. If I can prepare myself to all the above even before the first rehearsal, it will certainly help me feel confident when the concert starts.

Mental preparation is really important but I am sure that knowledge is the key for me to fight the physical symptoms of stage fright. As soon as I noticed I did not quite know what I was doing when playing the violin, I started creating my own bowing exercises. At first I tried several different things. Whenever I felt like I found something useful, I wrote the exercise down. After a couple of weeks I had created a routine that seemed to suit my needs well. I still kept writing down notes whenever I invented something new or just noticed that something worked really well. At the same time I kept a diary of orchestra projects. I tried to pay attention to preparation, its affect on rehearsals and the concert, feelings of nervousness, stage fright at the concert etc. And in my third concert in Swedish National Orchestra Academy (SNOA), that is, having concentrated on my issues for only two months, I could already notice the difference. I knew the music when the rehearsals

started and I could focus on my right arm and practice relaxing it. In the concert it all really paid off. I felt the wave of panic at a really quiet place and usually that makes my hand stiff and hard to control. But at that concert I just relaxed my arm the way I had practiced in the rehearsals and could completely avoid the “scary vibrato”, i.e. the bow jumping on the string when it is not supposed to jump.

My graduation work is about my journey to become a professional orchestra musician. My work is based on my bowing studies and the diary I wrote about my experiences as an orchestral musician. I feel sure that by solving the technical problems I will defeat the physical symptoms of my stage fright and that way find the feeling that I do belong in a professional orchestra. In this work I concentrate on my first study year in Swedish National Orchestra Academy and the 9 orchestra projects we played during that year.

2 BOW CONTACT

2.1 Practice makes perfect?

Bow technique is certainly not easy for any violinist but for me as a left-handed person it has sometimes felt almost impossibly hard. I have spent countless hours with different violin schools practising on bow technique. Otakar Ševčík's *School Of Bowing Technique* and Rodolphe Kreutzer's *42 études ou caprices* have been a part of my everyday life for years. Now, after playing the violin for 20 years I have come to realize that I do not know exactly what it is that I am trying to achieve.

Of course, my goal is to be able to play perfectly controlled and even spiccato and play even quiet long notes smoothly. But can I actually learn to do that if I do not know how to do it? I do not remember anyone of my teachers ever telling me how certain things should feel like and what does each finger do when playing for example springing bow strokes. "You have to keep your wrist relaxed!" is the advice I have heard a million times and of course therefore the main thing I have concentrated on while practising my bow technique. Then came a teacher who told me to move my fingers. After the lesson I took my violin, went to the mirror and started observing what my fingers did when I was playing

different bow strokes. And noticed that they did not in fact do that much when playing faster things. Maybe the problem was not the wrist afterall, I thought. Maybe it is the fingers that are not functioning the way they should.

After searching through the internet I found surprisingly little information on fingers' tasks when practising bowing techniques. Most of the information concentrated on the bow grip, in other words the stationary situation. But not many words on how to handle the bow when actually playing the violin. Because I could not find a sufficient answer, I decided to research the movements on my own.

2.2 My exercises

Playing scales is a very important part of daily violin studies, at least in Finland. For several years I have had the habit of playing all 2-octave scales, following the cycle of fifths, as a part of my daily warm-up routine. That is why I chose these scales as the base of my bowing exercises. By carefully concentrating on the way my fingers hold the bow and observing this in the mirror, I started playing the scales first really slowly. Based on the feeling in different fingers I started making bowing variations still on the notes of 2-octave scales. I would try playing different bow strokes in different tempi, then choosing the ones I found most useful. After trying one exercise for a couple of days I would either write it down as an exercise to keep on doing or just give up on it, if I did not find it that useful.

After a couple of months I had discovered a couple of dozen good exercises I was practising daily. All the exercises are enclosed here as Appendix 1. As there are 24 scales, my aim was to find 24 good daily exercises, one to play with each scale. I would often repeat the first eight exercises in order to find the right, flexible feeling in my fingers but in Appendix 1 you only find each exercise once. The exercises listed in the Appendix 1 are the base I use for my daily exercises but it can vary from day to day, depending on the technical challenges in the repertoire I am preparing.

2.2.1 How to play my exercises

The pulse should remain the same throughout the exercises and to make sure of that, I often use a metronome. A suitable tempo usually lies somewhere between 60-80 M.M. depending on the day. Some exercises, however, demand a faster tempo (such as ex. 17) so I double the tempo to be able to keep the same pulse. When playing scales following the cycle of fifths, I start every scale from the g string. I start all the scales with the second finger, if possible. This rule goes in fact to all the scales starting from Bb major and upwards. Keeping the fingerings as similar as possible gives me more time to concentrate on the movements of my right hand and arm.



The basic idea is to play the scales up and down following the examples given in Appendix 1. I use melodic minor scales. I start with slower bow strokes and go slowly towards faster ones. If the fingers feel tired, I go back to the first exercise (but continuing on with the next scale) and repeat the first four exercises until my fingers feel ready to move faster. After the first 8 legato exercises I have chosen the 9th exercise in order to really work on the fingers of my right hand. I usually play the exercise in all three parts of the bow – at the frog, in the middle and in the tip – and try to move only my fingers, not the wrist.



The same goes when I am playing for example the 12th exercise at the frog. Exercises 12-16 can also be played as a détaché exercise, rather than spiccato or martelé as suggested in the examples.

14 12 Fr. / M.

16 14 Fr. / M.

18 16 Fr. / M.

13 13 Fr. / M.

15 15 Fr. / M.

After more active and demanding exercises I like to end with an exercise like 24 and really concentrate on smooth string changes, flexible fingers when changing from down-bow to up-bow or vice versa and keeping an even bow speed.

29 24

2.3 Yehudi Menuhin's second lesson and other useful books on bowing technique

Yehudi Menuhin's book *Violin – Six lessons with Yehudi Menuhin* (1981) is without a doubt one of violin literatures classics. I was familiar with the book and knew basically what it was all about when I a couple of years ago met a professional violinist who told me how incredibly useful he had found Menuhin's lesson on bowing exercises. Considering my troubles with the right hand technique, I was immediately inspired. I was especially excited about the thought of Menuhin's exercises without the bow. Reading about Menuhin's thoughts on right hand exercises made me wonder why I did not explore all this information years ago. I took the time to thoroughly analyze the second chapter of the book *Preparatory Exercises –Right Hand* and found useful exercises that I will take as a part of my daily routines in the future. The idea behind Menuhin's exercises is based largely on meditation, yoga and breathing exercises.

Other schools on bowing technique that I have found useful are the previously mentioned

School of Bowing Technique op.2 and especially *40 Variations op.3* by Otakar Ševčík.

School of Bowing Technique consists of 6 parts. Each part concentrates on a certain type of exercise, such as exercises on one, two, three or four strings. All of the exercises are based on a simple melody or a chain of chords. Op. 3 offers in a way a collection of the booklets of op. 2, with even variations on the variations.

Finally, Rodolphe Kreutzer's *42 études ou caprices* is an extremely useful collection of a more challenging pieces of music, especially tricky for the right hand, and therefore an excellent addition to daily routines when concentrating on bowing technique.

3 BEING ON STAGE

3.1 Stage fright

Stage fright, or performance anxiety, is the fear caused by performing in front of an audience. It is a nuisance most of the performing artists suffer from in one way or another at some point of their career. The symptoms may start long before the performance and are often physical – the individual symptoms include a racing heart, a dry mouth, a shaky voice, blushing, trembling, sweating, and nausea. The symptoms are caused by activation of the sympathetic nervous system, which causes the fight-or-flight response. (Vuoskoski 2007)

“[Fight-or-flight response] is characterized by the release of large quantities of epinephrine from the adrenal gland, an increase in the heart rate, an increase in cardiac output, skeletal muscle vasodilation, cutaneous and gastrointestinal vasoconstriction, pupillary dilation, bronchial dilation, and piloerection. The overall effect is to prepare the individual for imminent danger.” (Encyclopædia Britannica 2011b)

In plain language, when facing a threatening situation, one's heart starts beating faster, blood flows away from the digestive system and skin and to the skeletal muscles, lungs prepare to get more oxygen, pupils dilate and one's hair rises. All this is understandable and of course

useful in a situation where one's life is threatened, to help the human being to fight against the threatening danger or to run away from it.

The same reaction, however, can be very inconvenient when a musician steps on stage to perform in front of a jury or an audience. Rationally thinking it is of course clear that a performance is never a question of life and death but persuading your mind to believe it in a stressful situation is not easy. Since fleeing is not a valid option in a performance situation, the only chance is to stay and fight. The rush of adrenaline gives you extra energy for the performance but it can also cause a violinist's hands to sweat and tremble, and a flute player's mouth to dry. Blushing may not affect the performance itself but can be very awkward. A good performance requires full concentration and even the smallest discomfort can affect that.

3.1.1 How to deal with stage fright

Throughout the last decades several studies have been made about performance anxiety among professional musicians. These studies show that about one third suffers from intense stage fright and up to two-thirds suffer from it at some point. (Higgins 2006, Vuoskoski 2007)

One very common means to treat the symptoms of performance anxiety are beta-blockers. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2011a):

“Beta-blocker, in full beta-adrenergic blocking agent, [is] – a group of synthetic drugs used in the treatment of a wide range of diseases and conditions of the sympathetic nervous system. --- Beta-blockers diminish reaction at the beta-adrenoreceptors, thereby preventing or decreasing excitation. The drugs are prescribed to control anxiety---.”

Beta-blockers do not stop you from being nervous but they can help you control the symptoms. Studies reveal how common it is to treat the anxiety with beta-blockers. For example in Finland 10-30% of professional musicians use or have used beta-blockers at least once during their professional life and in Sweden the number is 44%. These drugs have in

many cases replaced the use of alcohol as a “medicine” and when using small dosages, beta-blockers do not have any side effects. (Aro 2010) This makes them a good choice for someone who feels the symptoms of stage fright prevent them from performing. However, no matter how common the use of these drugs is, it is questionable whether chemical remedy is truly the best way to treat a problem that is actually caused by psychological issues. Beta-blockers may help you find the positive feeling of success that can give you confidence to perform without them. But finding the courage to perform without them might also be very hard.

Whereas beta-blockers might help with the symptoms, the truly important issue is to learn to live with the nervousness. The fight-or-flight response is not the problem, it is not knowing how to deal with it that causes us to panic on stage. The first step into dealing with stage fright is to admit that you get nervous when performing in front of an audience. This way you can develop ways to deal with nervousness. For me, the problem was the trembling of my right hand and to prevent that from happening I decided to work towards having a better control on my muscles. For someone suffering from shortness of breath, different breathing exercises like yoga or meditation may be the key to keeping the calm even when performing. For people suffering from nausea, eating things that soothe your stomach can give you the extra boost to fight against the anxiety. (McDonald, n.d.)

Several universities now offer some sort of mental and performance training as a part of music studies. For example in my degree program Swedish National Orchestra Academy we have a subject called “stage presence”, lead by professor Robert Shenck. This subject consists of learning about different mental training methods, efficient practicing and preparation, and evaluating your own performances in a constructive way. Subjects like these will without a doubt provide the kind of tools young musicians need to cope with the stress of auditioning and of course working life. The mental training methods used among musicians are mostly based on sports psychology, a pairing that for a musician seems quite natural. A musician's profession is very physical so it makes sense that the mental aspect of it should be similar to that of professional athletes as well. One famous example of this is Timothy Gallwey's *The Inner Game of Tennis* (Gallwey 1974) which he later modified into *The Inner Game of Music* (Green, Gallwey 1986), together with Barry Green. Gallwey's ideas of inner and outer game, where the inner game is all that happens inside of you while the outer game is the circumstances around you, really made an impact on me.

Where young (future) professionals are trained to deal with the stage fright as a part of their studies, all the previous generations have not had the same privilege. Besides, knowing about mental training does not necessarily fix the problem if you cannot find the means most suitable for you. That is why I was happy to learn that in Bonn, Germany, the University Hospital has opened Lampenfieber-Ambulanz, a clinic for musicians who suffer from stage fright. This clinic is open to all the musicians who feel that performance anxiety gets in the way of their work (Lukkarinen 2011). I wish to read about the openings of more clinics like this so that professional musicians could get the help and the tools to overcome their fear without having to rely on beta-blockers or, in the worst case, giving up their careers.

4 BEING A PART OF AN ORCHESTRA

When I first started my studies in Swedish National Orchestra Academy, I did not know what to expect from the other students, my colleagues. Before my first ever SNOA project I felt terrified. I had, as explained in the introduction, suffered from stage fright for some years before beginning my studies in Sweden. This had led to a somewhat lacking self-esteem as a musician. I prepared for the project as well as I could but felt extremely nervous. I sat in the second desk of the second violin which was actually one of my favorite places in an orchestra because of the clear sight to the section leader as well as the concert master and the conductor, yet lacking the responsibility and also, a little hidden from the eyes of the audience. Still I failed to feel comfortable and secure. The concert itself went good but the feeling of panic I suffered from all day made me realize that something had to be done.

I set myself a goal: if I could strengthen the muscles on my right hand as well as the overall control of the bow, I should be able to accept that I get nervous and just enjoy performing without fearing the “scary vibrato”. When reading my orchestra diaries it is clear that the nervousness stayed with me throughout the year. However, the occasions when it affected my performance were only a few. Of course getting to know the concert hall and other students in our orchestra paid their part but after years of dreading every single performance, I truly feel that something has changed. I feel more confident about myself as a violinist and have stopped questioning my abilities. I know there

is still room to improve but learning is a life-long process. I have admitted the fact that I get nervous but I suffer from hardly any physical symptoms. As I stated in the introduction, I know how to relax the muscles of my right hand and arm if they start feeling stiff and most importantly I have stopped dwelling on the thought of getting nervous.

In the orchestra there is an unwritten hierarchy where the conductor comes first, followed by the concert master, then the section leaders and only then the tutti players. With the power comes responsibility and possibly more stress. That is why I was happy to be a tutti player in the first two projects. The first project was mostly about finding the confidence that I belonged to this orchestra. Of course I did my best to learn from others (and their mistakes) but it was not before the second project that I felt I could concentrate on what was going on around me, other than musically, that is. By then I already knew that I was going to sit as a section leader of the second violin in the next project, so I especially paid attention to what my section leader was doing well and what I would maybe have done differently.

At first I was a little disappointed to find out that out of the four projects we had before Christmas I would be in second violin for three times. I felt I had been labelled as a second violin player without even giving me the chance to try my luck in the first violin. I was also a bit surprised because to me, first violin is more about the virtuosic left hand where as second violin is more about the outstanding bow technique, which I strongly felt I was lacking. Of course, the situation turned upside down after Christmas and I sat in the first violin for most of the spring semester, and on the other hand I was happy I got the chance to pay such a close attention to what was happening in the first desk of the second violin before it was my chance to sit on the first chair. I was nervous about the responsibility but I took it seriously and did well. I enjoyed playing in the pit, out of the sight of the audience, when performing *Der Silbersee* by Kurt Weill but I was genuinely excited to get to sit as a section leader to the second violin again in the fifth project. I realized that, given the chance, the responsibility actually gave me confidence and a boost to perform well. I did not feel the need to hide anymore. So, when it was my turn to be the concert master in project eight, I was both excited and afraid. I smiled throughout the week to give myself confidence (a good tip from my violin teacher Øyvør Volle) and during the second half of the concert I actually enjoyed myself. All in all, I actually learned to enjoy being noticed but would still prefer to avoid the responsibility, at least most of the time. When it comes to the question between first and second violin, I love to play the beautiful melodies in the first violin but I also quite enjoy the chamber music aspect of being in the second violin: I never feel more like a part of the group than when I sit in the first desk of the

second violin section. Then I can really focus on making my accompanying part as interesting as possible and in that way try and give a boost to the group playing the melody.

Apart from the position where you sit in the orchestra, there are several other things that affect the experience either in a positive or a negative way. Personal relations, for example. Any work is more enjoyable when you enjoy the company of the people closest to you. To be professional about it, you of course have to put aside all the negative feelings you might have but the positive feelings can give an extra boost of confidence. Being an orchestral musician is team work and having eye contact and smiling to one another makes it all the more enjoyable.

The music itself also plays an important part in the whole process. It looks quite clear that the more I liked the music, the better I prepared for the project and therefore the less nervous I was. For example in the project 9 I listened to the *Kindertotenlieder* and the Shostakovich *Symphony no 9* a lot before the project but since I was not too fond of the Nielsen *Helios Overture*, I did not listen to it quite as much and that was the piece I was the most nervous about in the concert. Playing with a soloist is also exciting. The orchestra parts are usually quite simple but accompanying can be daunting with all the silent, soft notes. On the other hand, the solo pieces are usually the ones that I most enjoy while performing because even if they make me nervous, I have a front row seat to enjoy the performances of true talents.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The goal I set to myself when I started this project work nearly two study years ago was to find out if by working towards a better bow hand control I would stop having nervousness symptoms in my right hand. Based on my experiences and the orchestra diary I wrote during the first year of my studies in Swedish National Orchestra Academy, I would say that I succeeded. Having suffered from trembling or stiffness in my right hand and arm for several years every time I performed, I have come to a situation where I do not even think about my bow hand when I play - at least not in a negative, panicky way.

The first thing I gained from all this, and something I will get to enjoy for the rest of my career is better bow technique. For a left-handed violinist it has been a long struggle but I finally think I have

achieved an adequate level to be able to technically play everything that is needed to survive in the life of a professional orchestral musician. By achieving this, I have also built up my confidence as a violinist and gained a lot of positive performing experiences. I have had situations where I felt the old stiffness in my right hand but could relax the muscles and, if not completely forget about it, at least put the worries aside and focus on making music. A big thank you goes also to my violin teacher Øyvør who taught me to think, analyze and most of all, listen to every single note I play. Not once did I hear the dreaded phrase "relax your wrist" from her but she inspired me to really work towards achieving the best possible sound. I was motivated to work hard and am therefore happy to notice the change in me and my playing.

While I was glad to achieve my goal, it made me even happier when I read my diary and noticed how many other things I learned from this process. In the second project I suffered from pain in my back and my shoulders. After that I made an effort to find the most ergonomical way to set my chair and to sit. I certainly learned from my mistakes and have prepared my parts better during the second year of my studies in SNOA, especially when I have not been too thrilled with the music. My orchestra diary clearly shows that a good preparation gives me room to be more relaxed throughout the week and in the concert as well. I have quit mumbling the old mantra "what if I get nervous" and learned to take a deep breath, put a smile on my face and enjoy the possibility to play in an orchestra and make music together.

I noticed from my diary that I often have a problem giving my all during the first piece or the first half of the concert. That is something I might have never really thought about if I did not see it in writing. I have actively tried to work on that issue during the second year of my studies by mental training: trying to find the extra drive already before I walk on stage and especially if I feel nervous. The progress is slow but I am willing to believe that I will find a solution.

I have learned to think about what I do, really read the music, listen to what is going on around me when I play, work hard when working with conductors that I like and even harder when working with conductors I do not like as much, prepare well for every project and especially when I do not like the music. All this in addition to achieving my goal of bettering my bow technique.

I still suffer from stage fright but I have learned to live with it. I do not waste energy on thinking about being nervous because I need it to give a good performance. Most importantly I have learned that I have a true passion towards playing in an orchestra and that I am willing to do whatever it

takes to achieve that. With this newfound confidence and all the knowledge I have gained just by focusing on the inner game, as Gallwey calls it, I am positive that I will reach this new goal of mine, now that the old one is conquered.

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APPENDIX 1 BOWING EXERCISES

BOWING EXERCISES

The terms used: W.B. = With the whole bow H.B. = With half of the bow
 Fr. = at the frog (Frosch) M. = in the middle (Mitte) Sp. = in the tip (Spitze)

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Musical score for three staves in G major (one sharp). The score consists of three staves of music.

- Staff 1 (Measures 21-23):** Measure 21 starts with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4. Measure 22 begins with a quarter rest, followed by a half note G4, and then a series of eighth notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Measure 23 features a triplet of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4.
- Staff 2 (Measures 26-27):** Measure 26 contains a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. Measure 27 contains a half note C5, followed by a half note B4, and then a half note A4. Fingering numbers 5, 6, and 6 are indicated below the notes.
- Staff 3 (Measures 29-30):** Measure 29 is a continuous eighth-note run: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. Measure 30 contains a half note G3, followed by a half note F3, and then a half note E3.

APPENDIX 2 ORCHESTRA DIARIES

PROJECT 1

Position: second violin, second desk

Conductor: Joachim Gustafsson

Program: Rossini: William Tell Overture
Brahms: Variations on a Theme by Haydn
Mendelssohn: Symphony no 5

Before the project

4. Extreme nervousness, I did not know what was expected from me.
5. Amazing Brahms rehearsal with Dudamel!
6. Sectional rehearsal made me realize that we are all on the same level.

Project week

3. Having had so many rehearsals on the previous week, I felt secure.
4. Everything did not work in the way I was used to, cultural differences in changing bowings etc. (I was used to section leaders discussing about any changes before they made them.)
5. My parts felt quite easy which made me feel relaxed and maybe even a little bored during the week.

The concert

2. I was extremely nervous all day before the concert, feeling was feverish.
3. I was not at my best, could not have contact with the conductor the way I had in the rehearsals.
4. No shaking in the right arm, I was able to play everything.
5. I did not experience the positive chills I got throughout the week when playing at the concert.

PROJECT 2

Position: second violin, second desk

Conductor: Kjell Ingebretsen

Program: Sibelius: En Saga
Tchaikovsky: Symphony no 5

Before the project

2. I was familiar with Sibelius and my part in Tchaikovsky seemed quite simple as well.
3. False feeling of security made me prepare inadequately.

Project week

- 3 My first impression was that we were about to have a week full of work – promising!
- 4 Week turned out to be almost too hard physically.
- 5 The whole orchestra seemed to be nervous about the slow progress.
- 6 My shoulders and back were aching badly.

Concert

I was not at all as nervous as in the previous concert.

I had the same troubles in the last long and quiet notes at the end of Sibelius as I had when playing the chamber music version at my examination concert in Turku: I remembered the feeling and let it take me over.

After the break I felt relaxed and gave a 101% when playing the symphony!

PROJECT 3

Position: second violin, section leader

Conductor: Cecilia Rydinger-Alin

Program: Grieg: Peer Gynt Suite no 1
Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique

Before the project

- I felt extremely nervous about being a section leader.
- Getting to know the symphony was hard work and took a lot of listening.
- I had practised almost too much before section leader support – no-one else knew the music completely.
- I had symptoms of nervousness in my right arm at the sectionals but I was able to relax the muscles within seconds.

Project week

- I knew what I was doing so I felt extremely confident.
- I enjoyed having responsibility and got positive feedback from other violinists in my section.
- I had a great time communicating with the other string section leaders.
- I had severe pain in my right hand and wrist in the middle of the week but I did not let it bother me. Fortunately I had done the work already before the orchestra week so I didn't have to practice that much with my aching hand.

Concert

- I felt a little nervous but also extremely confident.
- I had the same great communication with the other section leaders as I did during the week.
- I kept the nervousness from getting to my hands and tried to enjoy every moment.

PROJECT 4

Position: first violin, second desk

Conductor: Kjell Ingebretsen

Program: Kurt Weill: Der Silbersee

Before the project

- Rehearsals started directly after the previous orchestra week, so no-one had enough time to practice their parts
- I wasn't too thrilled with the music we were playing.

Project week

- Only SNOA string players, good for the team spirit!
- Rehearsals with and without the actors went quite fluently.
- Conductor was concentrating on the big picture which made me happy (rehearsing whole phrases instead of picking on individual bars, for example).

Performances

- Playing in the orchestra pit made me feel really secure.
- Knowing that I could not be seen made me feel calm and in control.
- I gave my all in all performances.
- I enjoyed playing together with my section, we even had our own small choreographies.

PROJECT 5

Position: second violin, section leader

Conductor: Olof Boman

Program: Schubert: Die Zauberharfe Overture
Haydn: Symphony no 103
Beethoven: Symphony no 6

Before the project

- I was not too nervous about being a section leader since it was not my first time.
- I was thrilled about getting to play the Pastoral Symphony!
- I tried to listen to the music quite much because there was not so many difficulties in my part and I therefore had more time.
- Section leader support and sectional rehearsal were both really educating, made me think about the classical style.

Project week

- From day one it was clear that the conductor had planned everything and knew what he wanted.
- I had an easy time communicating with concert master and other section leaders.
- There were some problems in my section that I didn't handle right away – luckily they were solved anyway.
- I felt like I had one of the best learning experiences so far.

Concert

- Concert itself went ok.
- I was able to keep the eye contact with conductor and other section leaders.
- I felt nervous but could prevent it affecting my playing.

PROJECT 6

Position: first violin, first desk

Conductor: Kjell Ingebretsen

Soloist: Elena Hämäläinen

Program: Weber: Der Freischütz Overture

Elgar: Concerto for cello

Hindemith: Mathis der Maler

Before the project

- I didn't get to know the music well enough.
- I had a hard time finding motivation for some reason.
- I was excited about Elgar, this would be our first time playing with a soloist.

Project week

- In the beginning of the week I felt really comfortable sitting at the first desk.
- I started questioning my way of moving and leading now that I wasn't a section leader. I did not want to disturb the concert master but wanted to let her do her job.
- I loved the Hindemith and almost burst into tears when the soloist came to her first rehearsal of Elgar.
- I found some co-operation problems between all front desks, kept thinking what I would do differently if I was the concert master.
- It was great having guest students, possible new fellow students!

Concert

- I tried to focus on the music and not care about the lack of co-operation.
- I could not prevent the physical symptoms of nervousness in the beginning of the overture.
- I managed to pull myself back together after a very disappointing overture and enjoyed every moment of the cello concerto.
- Hindemith went well, too. I played better than in any rehearsal all week.

PROJECT 7

Position: first violin, 4th desk

Conductor: Rolf Gupta

Soloist: Peter Friis Johansson

Program: Adams: The Chairman Dances

Beethoven: Piano concerto no 5 "The Emperor"

Bartok: Dance Suite

Before the project

- I already mentally concentrated on the next project.
- I felt the program was quite hard to practice on one's own. The difficulties in all the pieces came more from ensemble playing than the actual notes written in my part.

Project week

- The conductor did not seem to be very well prepared (I later found out that he was called in on a short notice) but he had a great and enthusiastic attitude.
- Because the music was hard to play together, I felt quite stressed during the week of rehearsals.
- I was taken aback by the attitude of some other students - giggling and talking all the time is not professional behaviour.

Concert

- For the first time I felt insecure on behalf of the whole orchestra - I was not sure if we could do it.
- Fortunately my worries were for nothing and even though I did not play perfectly, I sure gave my all and tried my best as did everyone else.
- The soloist played beautifully and showed that he was a true professional.

PROJECT 8

Position: concert master

Conductor: B Tommy Andersson

Program: R. Strauss: Also Sprach Zarathustra

Ravel: Daphnis et Chloé, Suite 2

Before the project

- I started stressing about the concert master solos in Zarathustra in January.
- I heard a lot of stories about the conductor's strictness so I felt nervous.
- I practiced more than ever and actually started to feel comfortable about the pieces.
- I did a good job at sectionals when it comes to passing down information, so I felt quite relaxed about going in to the first rehearsal on Monday.

Project week

- I knew what I was doing but I could feel that not everyone had prepared as well as I had.
- I noticed that my section was so overwhelmed by the difficult music, that they paid hardly any attention to what I was doing or saying.
- Conductor was really nice and encouraging all week.
- I was nervous about my solos on Monday but as the week went by, I got used to playing alone.

Concert

- I was extremely nervous all day before the concert.
- When I got on stage, I decided that since it was too late to flee, I would continue smiling as I had done throughout the week.
- I did pretty well in Strauss, both with my solos and with leading.
- After the break I felt like a weight had been lifted and played better than ever!

PROJECT 9

Position: second violin, second desk

Conductor: Tobias Ringborg

Soloist: Monica Groop

Program: Nielsen: Helios Overture

Mahler: Kindertotenlieder

Shostakovich: Symphony no 9

Before the project

- I listened to the music a lot.
- I found Mahler so touching, that it was difficult to listen to without tearing up.
- I felt comfortable about the project and I was excited to get to play with Monica Groop!

Project week

- Everyone seemed to be a bit insecure in the first rehearsal. Maybe the soon starting summer vacation was already in people's minds.
- Our second violin section could not play what seemed the only difficult passage we had but the problem was solved by staying behind after one rehearsal by the conductor's request and playing it through with him.
- To get to work with a star like Monica Groop was truly amazing!

Concert

- I was a bit nervous during the first half - I was not especially fond of Nielsen so I let that affect my performance.
- Second half went really well and I enjoyed every moment of it!