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A MUSICIAN ON STAGE

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Abstract:

This work discusses issues around performance; mental training, some exercises for instrument practice, nerves and reactions after mistakes. It includes both my own experiences as well as that of others through interviews.

Key words:

Musician – stage fright – interview – orchestral auditions – mental training – nerves
– pressure

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Introduction

There are many factors that can affect the interpretation made by a musician. The words: nerves, pressure, insecurity, concentration, stage fright, etc. are widely used by us. Some even go on to become major concerns.

Some of the types of musical performance are: soloist with orchestra, chamber music, orchestral auditions, competitions, recitals, concert as a member of an orchestra, graded exams... In this thesis I have studied what happens since the musician begins to prepare a performance until he/she goes on stage (or just until he/she starts to play for any audience) and what happens also after the performance; what the factors that affect his/her musical interpretation are; and how the body and the brain react when they are under big pressure.

Throughout my career as a clarinetist I have had the opportunity to experiment in many different situations. Although I really enjoy playing (otherwise, how I could be musician), unfortunately not all of these experiences were pleasant, and this was almost always caused by nerves or insecurities. For that reason I decided to write about this topic, as I wanted to know why I am not always able to play one hundred percent. To do this I needed to study in detail my own experiences so as to know exactly what changes between when I am practicing and when I perform for people, and also in what situations the quality of my performance is lower.

However, I intended not only get an exhaustive analysis about myself but also about other musicians. This meant that I also held some interviews, with both professional musicians and students, that asked among other things, about the preparation of a performance, the differences between playing at a concert or at an audition, the feelings after an interpretation which did not go well, or the point of view as a member of a jury.

I have used the interview material to write a discussion about the issues we care most about, and have gained an overview of the most common strategies that performers use in their daily lives. With this information I have tried to draw a final conclusion to help myself and others overcome the issues and remember that the music is above everything else.

How the nerves work

When a person, usually a child, decides to learn to play a musical instrument, he/she does so because he/she loves music. He/she chooses an instrument without really knowing why and starts his/her career. But the fact is that at that time he/she cannot even imagine what to be a musician really means.

Of course, nobody tells beginners that they will have to be very strong to be able to play in public, and still stronger if they want to get a job as a player, even though this is the reality. In my opinion, with rare exception, a person who is mentally weak will not be able to express what she/he wants with the instrument when she/he has some audience in front of her/him.

At the beginning of my musical life I always became nervous when I had to perform in public, but it was many years before I began to see it as an inconvenience and think a lot about it. My question is not how to avoid getting nervous, because I believe that some nerves help to bring the music alive, but the big question is why it happens to me and how to make it not affect me too much. In this way I can learn how to stay calm despite the pressure I experience at the time, and still carry out the performance without major shocks.

Fortunately for me, I am not the only person with this concern. This is a topic that is often discussed and there are many debates about it. W. Timothy Gallwey, in his book *The Inner Game of Tennis*¹, cites some of the most common complaints among athletes, which can be translated almost literally to the musical field², for example:

- *The problem is not that I do not know what to do, the problem is that I do not do what I know!*
- *I play better during the rehearsal than during the concert.*
- *I know exactly what I am doing wrong, but I can not leave that habit.*

¹ W. Timothy Gallwey *The Inner Game of Tennis* (New York: Random House, 1974).

² W. Timothy Gallwey *The Inner Game of Tennis* (New York: Random House, 1974), page 23-24 (Spanish edition).

- *When I really effort to play a passage in the right way, I fail every time. When I concentrate on one thing that I am supposed to do, I forget another one.*
- *Every time I am going to arrive to the decisive point during a concert, I get so nervous that I lose my concentration.*
- *I am my worst enemy; it is usually me who makes that I fail.*

Most musicians have to face problems like these on a regular basis, but it is not so easy to learn to deal with them.

Because of this, firstly I am going to explain why we get nervous, and to do this I will rely on the book *Becoming an Orchestral Musician, A Guide for Aspiring Professionals* by Richard Davis³, chapter 6.

At worst, the worries of performing can lead to you sweating, to uncontrollable shakes and panic attacks and to you even feeling sick. But nerves can also help you to excel. The increased flow of adrenalin can move you into a higher gear and create extra excitement and atmosphere⁴.

The first thing that a musician must do is to diagnose if his/her nerves are a reaction to the stress of the performance or whether they are caused by having insecurities about her/his playing. Only then he/she can know which way he/she has to work.

Children generally do not get as nervous as adults, because at that age we do not worry so much, are more carefree and everything seems easy and fun to us. But as we mature and our technical skills grow, our awareness and the importance we give to the difficulties increase as well. And in a way, becoming nervous is a natural reaction to being the centre of attention.

³ Richard Davis *Becoming an Orchestral Musician: A Guide for Aspiring Professionals* (London: Giles de la Mare, 2004).

⁴ Richard Davis *Becoming an Orchestral Musician: A Guide for Aspiring Professionals* (London: Giles de la Mare, 2004), page 112.

In my career I have often been in the situation when I could play, without problems, a piece, a symphony part or the selected audition repertoire, in the days leading up to the concert/audition, but then unable to do it without mistakes on the big day. Also, the exact same piece or repertoire then seems easier to play the next day. This does not mean that we should downplay our performances but instead we should learn to separate the technical problems of our instrument and just play. For this we must reach a certain level and fluency in the domain of musicality and on our instrument.

In case we feel that stress is because we think we can not play a particular passage well enough, then perhaps practice is the key. By working hard in an intelligent way we gain confidence in ourselves and come to believe that we can play a passage perfectly. This new confidence enables us to conquer our nerves.

One of the most effective strategies is to work with the memory. Practicing the most technically difficult passages slowly and without looking at the score will help us to understand better the harmonies and structures of what we are playing. Thus not only can we better appreciate the music but also, under the stress that comes during a performance, the notes will then play themselves.

“You should have the score in your head, not your head in the score.” Hans von Bülow, pianist and conductor⁵.

I remember one of my auditions during my higher studies. I had to play the *Solo de Concours* by Messager. Towards the end of the piece there is a fast passage that I found quite difficult⁶.



⁵ Richard Davis *Becoming an Orchestral Musician: A Guide for Aspiring Professionals* (London: Giles de la Mare, 2004), page 115.

⁶ *Solo de Concours* for Clarinet and Piano, by Andre Messager, 1899. Edited by Daniel Bonade. Southern Music Company.

I had studied hard that part but could not play it perfectly and the day of the concert I was concerned about it. I do not remember exactly what mistakes I made during my performance but I left the stage very angry. Then, my teacher at that time asked me to write down on paper the things I thought I had done well and I thought I had done wrong. At first I found it was a stupid idea because I really thought that it had been a disaster from start to finish, but I surprised myself when on the short list of good things I wrote that I had played the quick passage which worried me quite acceptably. I had had the feeling that my fingers had played on their own, without my help.

Another time, years later, I was playing first clarinet in *Scheherazade* by Rimski-Kórsakov with the youth orchestra of my place, Galicia. As I always say, the famous three cadenzas⁷ are striking but not terribly difficult.



I could play them without difficulty in all the rehearsals, I did not make a single mistake and therefore I was completely convinced I was going to do it well in the concert. However, right after this *solo* there is a group of sixteenth notes that I was not always able to play cleanly.



⁷ *Scheherazade*, op. 35, by Nikolay Rimsky-Kórsakov, 1888. Edited by Leipzig: M. P. Belaieff.

During the concert everything was fine until the middle of the third cadenza, when one of my fingers did something strange. Still today I do not know what it was, but there started to sound harmonics and all the ugly sounds of the world. But afterwards, to my surprise, the sixteenth notes group was perfect.

At that moment I did not understand why my fingers had reacted like that on those two occasions. Now however, I think that in the first instance they just played in the way that we colloquially call ‘memory of the fingers’ in that they played what they had studied and repeated many times, even though my head was thinking only negative thoughts. And the same thing happened the second instance, with the added bonus that this time my brain was still in shock after failing in the cadenza. This meant that it did not have time to absorb the error and therefore was busy absorbed with that instead of paying attention to the group of sixteenths. So, again, my fingers played what they had repeated many times, without the help of my brain.

These two examples from my personal experience show that the theory that W. Timothy Gallwey explains in *The Inner Game of Tennis*, is true. He says that each player has two “I”, I number 1 and I number 2. The I number 1 is who speaks, who complains when something goes wrong, and the I number 2 is who performs. Well, after a period of training, the I number 2 knows how to play but sometimes his game is hindered by the I number 1. That is, sometimes we ourselves think that will not be able to do something and yet are those negative thoughts that prevent us we can do it. It is about getting that the I number 1 does not interfere in the I number 2. To do this we must learn to silence or distract him. In my case, in the experiences I wrote before, I understand that my I number 1 was distracted thinking about the earlier mistakes, which allowed my I number 2 could play without difficulty.

Some time after this, and during the writing of this thesis, I played first clarinet in the *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra* by Carl Nielsen with the University of Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. At first, I found my part hard and thought I would get very nervous, but over the week I realized that doing enough practicing means a gain in confidence and that nerves are then minimized.

If you are constantly extending your playing into new and higher realms, your performing standards will also be raised, even when you are under pressure.

Disciplined practice and patience are usually all that is required to combat minor nerves.

Furthermore, we have auditions. Auditions for jobs in professional orchestras, to study a master program or even for competitions. These are all situations where there is some other goal besides your reputation. So then you get nerves, but with the additionally knowledge that the jury is not only there to enjoy the music, but to assess you technically. They do not want to hear mistakes, or a note that is out of tune or with bad rhythm. And still you should be, of course, very musical. If you are lucky, in an orchestral audition you will have around five or ten minutes (maybe longer if you are in a competition) to show your best playing under high pressure.

This audition situation makes me think a lot about how to prepare myself and how to not let the pressure I feel destroys my music. For this reason, I want to know what other musicians think and do, so I have asked some of them, professional, students and freelancers, in an interview. I have then compared their experiences with my own experiences, trying to see exactly what happens, where the problems are and what the solutions for improvement are.

Interviews

I interviewed five professional musicians, three of my colleagues from the Master in Orchestra Performance and two players from Göteborg Opera. Four of the interviews were done in person and the other was by e-mail.

I asked the following questions:

1. How do you prepare a performance?
 - 1.1. Do you use any planning to organize the practice per week before?
 - 1.2. What is the difference for you between an audition or competition and a concert?
 - 1.3. Do you do any mental training?
 - 1.4. During the preparation, how do you use the time when you are not practicing?
2. In the case you are/were going to do an orchestral audition, do/did you try to know the orchestra and play similar to them or will/did you play always like you want? Why?
3. What is in your mind when you are performing?
 - 3.1. Is there any difference between audition, orchestra concert, chamber music concert, competition or soloist concert in the concentration?
4. When we are in the audition and never played before with the pianist perhaps the tempo at which begins is not comfortable for us. Should we decide the tempo and move it or just follow him/her?
5. How do you use to feel after your performance?
 - 5.1. How to learn to be ok if something bad happens?
6. Imagine that you are in the jury of an audition for a job in an orchestra, what do

you look for?

6.1. And if it is a competition?

Now I present the material from their answers, writing only the most relevant things, always anonymously.

In the first question, about how to prepare a performance, they all agree and say practice as the first thing. But it depends if it is a solo concert, or a concert with an orchestra or chamber group for example. And if it is a concert with an orchestra or chamber music group, it depends on the difficulty of the part. If it is a solo concert then the practice should be harder, and everything has to be “very precise”. If the performance is with the orchestra then it is good to listen some recordings while practicing your part. And also it is very important to record ourselves.

They try to practice in “all different kind of ways” but one of the interviewees emphasized on the really slow practice so the muscles must be prepared in case the brain does not work.

When I asked if they do any planning to organize the practice for the performance almost everyone said yes. And if they said “not so much” it was because of the job, but anyway they try to work as little as possible before the concert.

The plan can be from one month until half a year. In the beginning they start with the music that they do not know very well or that is maybe completely new. For example, in the case of an audition, it would be strange not to know the pieces for the first round but maybe there are some excerpts that you have never played or practiced before. So the first week/s should be spent listening to recordings of that music more than “jumping immediately into the physical practice”.

In the last two weeks it is a good idea also divide the day and pay attention to the music which we “need to focus on”.

One of the interviewees told me two kind of exercises to add to the planning. The first one is to use the passages that are really difficult as our daily warm up, playing them slowly and make them normal so we are not going to get stressed because of them. And the second one is the ten minutes exercise. We only can play each passage, excerpt or whatever for ten minutes. This makes us to start working quickly, be very focused on the real problems that we have and solve them faster. Then you see how much you can get done only in ten minutes. This work is a bit boring but effective in making yourself learn to play something that you could not play.

Concerning the differences between an audition or competition and a concert, they gave me very similar answers. The main one is that we do not have the same energy. The people, the audience that goes to your concerts want to enjoy what you are doing, “they pay the ticket and they want to hear something beautiful or they want an artistic experience”. In the case that you play as a soloist with an orchestra, or even with piano or a chamber music group, you have other people playing with you, sometimes they are your colleagues and “they have positive energy for you”. “You are also wearing a nice dress and the whole thing is nice”.

An audition is totally the opposite, “it is not a real musical situation”. “You are not there because they have chosen you, you are there because you want to show them how good you are, but they do not care if it goes well or bad, so the energy is completely different”. We should think of it like a “different musical experience, not real, with a screen, playing with a pianist who does not even know, everyone comes from another country... the whole thing is funny in a way”.

I received two important opinions about mental training. One of them is visualization, which means to “imagine the situation”, see and hear yourself playing how you want to play. “I close my eyes for ten minutes and run through the whole thing”. They also talked about meditation, but not like a real meditation, “just switch off the music and the television, sit and relax for at least one hour on the same day of a big concert”.

The other opinion was that mental training is not “something that we have to concentrate on as musicians” because we have been learning the concert situation

from we were children playing with orchestras and bands. We grow up “knowing that when you sit there you have to concentrate a bit”.

Two of the interviewees said that they don't do anything special or different when they are not practicing during the preparation period. The other three talk about going really deep inside themselves. They only watch and read nice things, listen to recordings, visualize the hall, how to walk on stage, not talk to many people, and “sleep more, eat well and do some exercise”.

In the question number 2 I asked if we should know the orchestra before doing the audition for it or not. They definitely say no. Some of them tried, at least once, to change a bit their playing but it did not work. Even if you only try to imitate the soloist of your instrument, in the audition you will have maybe ten or twenty people listening to you. We have to play naturally, otherwise it is difficult to convince the jury.

In the third question they answered that many thoughts can pass through our mind in one second so it is very difficult to say what is there during the performance. It is important to pay attention to how we want to sound, to the intonation, listening to the orchestra in the case you are playing with it. But we should be focused always on the concert and the music.

I also asked about the concentration, and what changes about it in the different performance situations. They mostly answered that the concentration is the same in all cases but one of them said that the concentration is harder if it is a solo concert. You can not relax and listen to your colleagues like you do in the orchestra, “it is all focused, all the energy”.

The fourth question is about the pianist of the auditions. Usually we can see them before but not always, so what to do if they play faster or slower than you? Well, in one case the answer was “I bring my own pianist”. But the others agree about

playing in the tempo we have decided and practiced. It is also fine -they say- to stop playing and start again if something happens or even tell to the piano player stop and play alone. "They are not going to get the job or lose the job, so I think we can be quite hard".

In the question number 5 they said that the feeling after a performance depends on how they played, but in general they are happy. If something happens you can be thinking about the mistakes for maybe two hours but "there are always a new concerts". "Sometimes you think you played really good in the audition and you did not pass the round, so you get a bittersweet taste after this situation", but that is life, and the mistakes are not going to make you a "bad person".

And also, when you have been working hard on preparing some music you would like to play more than one concert, and so it is a shame when this is not the situation.

Anyway, all the musicians are very critical with themselves and quite often they only see the mistakes. "I think that there are much more important things in life than one mistake, I mean, it is not life and death". It would be good maybe to stay and practice a little bit the passage failed, just to know that we can do it but it is better to think that we will have other opportunities and just let it go. And sometimes when you listen to the recording of something that you think was terrible you realize that it was not that bad. Even "in professional and really good orchestras stuff happens".

In the sixth question I asked them if they could think from the other side, in the jury position and I asked about auditions and competitions. They gave me different answers. for some of them the most important thing is the musicality, Of course the applicants should play in rhythm, in tune and beautiful but for some of the interviewed the musicality is first of all these things. And also it is important to see the applicants relaxed and enjoying what they are playing.

The other hand is that the most important thing, at least for the first rounds, is that the intonation should be ok, "if intonation is bad, nothing else matters, in the first

round, the phrasing or musicality are like a bonus”. Then in the second round, when it is supposed that people can be in tune, “I want to hear that you can make some music”. Of course if we want to win an audition we should not think only in the notes and intonation, “but I do not know anyone who won an audition without being technically in control and with intonation correct”. And the jury can understand the nerves of the applicants, but “they know if somebody is out of control or just nervous”.

Other important thing in the auditions is if the applicant is very soloistic or not. Sometimes “they want to become orchestra players because it is very hard to become soloist but often it is very hard for their sound to blend in the group”. So it depends on which position the job audition is for.

In the case of the competitions, they say that it must be the same thing. Maybe they would appreciate how virtuoso the applicants are.

Discussion

I decided to include interviews in this work mainly because I wanted to learn from other musicians and compare their methods with mine. But now I realize that they don't do anything really new compared to myself. I think the differences are based on mental security issues due to the nature of each person and also due to the work done. Anyway I will try to discuss their opinions with mine, although in most cases these coincide.

For the preparation of a performance, I think it is quite logical and obvious that the first thing to do is practice, so I agree with the opinions of the respondents. Maybe nerves bother you during your performance and, despite having practiced, you do not play as well as you can. But clearly without working very hard you do not get good results.

I also agree with them that it is easier to play in an orchestra, even if your part is difficult because you play with a lot of people and are not the centre of attention all the time, so you have more moments of relaxation where you do not play. You are part of a group and everyone is making music together.

When it is a solo concert then we must practice harder as everything is focused on our instrument and we can not afford to lose concentration at any time.

Regarding recording ones self, I have to say that I do not practice it as much as I should but I realize that is a very good exercise as we can not have a better teacher than ourselves. Sometimes when we hear someone and have to be critical in order to help, we never say what we really think because we do not want to hurt their feelings. But that does not happen when one is critical to ones self, instead we listen to every detail and find absolutely every single fault.

I was struck by the comment about slow practice that one of the interviewees told me. I usually play fast passages starting from a very comfortable speed, playing all the notes correctly and trying to make my fingers learn. Then when you play fast not even have to think about it. But I remember this person saying "but the way I

practice slow is really slow", as to make me understand that he/she practices much slower than what is common. Even when he/she rehearses with his/her chamber music group, they practice together slowly. The theory is that if you play really slow, the fingers learn to make the movements well and then they can also do it when you play faster. This is something that I undoubtedly will test in the future.

As for planning the preparation of a performance, I have to say that previously I was not very strict with myself in this way, just practicing, but without any plan to structure the practice. I have improved a lot with this. I try to be prepared in advance to play my part as best as possible, in either orchestra, chamber music group or solo concerts. To do this, I analyze what I have to prepare and how much time I have for it, and not forgetting to include my daily technical practice (long notes, scales, arpeggios...). If what I have to prepare is an audition I especially try to start preparing from one month to six weeks beforehand. But when I was talking about this with one of the interviewees, coincidentally the same who told me about the very slow practice, she/he said that she/he began to practice for six months before to the audition. Six months! I do not think I can be playing the same music every day for six months, but it might be, for sure, a good method.

Another thing that I agree on with the respondents is that when we have to prepare orchestral excerpts, we should listen to the pieces from which the excerpts come from. In my opinion, it is very important to know the whole piece and not just our solo, as we need to have the whole work and its style in our head, and know what the other instruments are doing. The excerpt cannot be seen without context and as just a few bars of music, as after playing many times it will become a boring routine. I think the case of chamber music is also like this, however, I do not like listening to other versions of pieces for solo clarinet. Several of my teachers advised me not to do it because it becomes very easy have our interpretation conditioned by the playing on a certain recording, and I believe in it, instead of making ones own interpretation. Instead, I think that it is better to listen pieces by the same composer but written for other instruments, so we know and understand the composer's style and how it works in other instruments.

When they told me two effective exercises to work as productively as possible I learned something new. I already knew the first one, do the warm up with a difficult

passage, and I actually do it occasionally, but had never heard of the ten minutes exercise. I think it makes sense, you become focused quickly and do not waste time, dedicating your practice to the top priority issues. Otherwise we can spend one hour or more on an excerpt, an hour that will never come again. So ten minutes seems to be a short time but the reality is that we will solve problems faster.

I disagree with their idea to make a plan of each day in the last two weeks before an audition. I think it is too much, as not every day can we give the same energy or level of effort and it could instead put more pressure on our body.

When I decided to write my thesis on this subject, it was because I find that it is hard for me to play well in auditions particularly. In the clarinet auditions, they always ask for the *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra in A* by Mozart, which I had the opportunity to perform as soloist with the University of Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. When I received the proposal I would have preferred that they chose another concerto, just because I associate this with auditions and so I was afraid I would not be able to play it well because of the pressure of playing such a famous concerto. Then the concerts came and I could see that the feeling was completely different, playing the same music. It was one of the most positive things that I lived in the last years and I was so happy. Furthermore, this experience gave me confidence for the next audition I had, as I just had to repeat it. However, it was not possible, and again and as usual I was very disappointed. At that time more than ever, I wondered why.

This was the perfect example for me to understand what some of the musicians would say later in the interviews and, in my opinion, is a key that we have to assimilate and work: the energy you feel is not the same at all. You can not see it but it is there, in its positive or negative version.

At a concert, everything in general is nice, we dress in nice clothes, people come to the concert ready to enjoy your music, if it is orchestra or chamber music we play with more people who are almost always our colleagues, etc. The audience and the other musicians have positive energy for you, all that makes you have positive energy. Then is when you get to enjoy the music you are playing.

An audition is a completely different experience. Sometimes we have to perform

after a long journey, spending money on it and knowing that the jury is not there because they want to hear your music, but to find the best player. Everything is very materialistic and, from my point of view, it has nothing to do with what music means. Despite this, one of the answers I got in the interviews made me to change a bit the way I see the auditions. She/he told me that an audition is not at all a real musical situation and therefore we should think on it, even from the beginning of its preparation, as a different process. If we stop to think about all the aspects that are around it, like traveling from other countries or play behind a screen and with a pianist who, in most cases, you do not know, the auditions take a funny character. I think to approach it from this perspective is more accurate and will help us to be able to play better.

To think that an audition is a funny situation can be a kind of training and mental relaxation. But there are also other forms of mental training and I asked them about it. Overall, I did not perceive that mental training was something that musicians practice often, at least not the most popular exercises such as meditation or yoga. But they do try to relax in certain way and have their moments of physical and mental calm, something that I think is absolutely necessary. Here was when I learned the word “visualization”, which means to imagine ourselves playing what we have been preparing for a specific performance. We can imagine how we want to play and what kind of sound we want to produce, watching ourselves with a relaxed attitude and enjoying the music.

On the other hand, and I fully agree, some people think that musicians should not worry too much about these issues, and the reason is because since we were young we have been growing up and exposing ourselves to all kind of performances, and that, the experience, may be the best mental training for us all.

As for how to invest the time in which we are not practicing the truth is that I do not think much about it but I usually tend not to socialize as much. I practice several hours a day and the rest of the time I try to rest at home. I think it is a way not to lose concentration while you let your body relax. However, not all respondents think like that, some of them say they are locked in themselves and in their own world, not talking much with other people and watching or listening only nice news. I guess everyone is different and has to do what they most want so as to avoid stress.

Trying to listen and investigate the orchestra for which we want to do the audition was something I doubted a lot, so I included this question. They said unanimously that it is not a good idea, everyone must play like always, naturally. Otherwise it will be very difficult to convince the jury. I think there is no big discussion here, not when everyone responds in the same way and I trust their approach.

In my opinion it is very common to lose concentration during the performance and often thoughts that have nothing to do with the music we are playing can appear in our mind. In my case I often have to force myself out of complaints about the reed not being good or about doubts as to whether I can take the whole phrase without breathing. Actually I do not think there is much one can do about it, or at least none of the interviewees gave me any method to work on this. In my opinion we should try to be as concentrated as possible to get into music so that nothing can disturb it, and that is the most important thing. Of course, it is more difficult to achieve it when we are playing a solo concert because the effort level is higher, but I do not think there is a big difference in the type of concentration.

Now another of my big concerns comes, having to play an audition with a pianist with whom I have never or almost never played with before. I worry if I get distracted by something external to me when I am supposed to play at my highest possible level. I rule out the option of bringing my own pianist because of economic issues as to take myself and my musical instruments to the audition is already expensive enough.

I liked the confidence with which one interviewee told me that if she/he saw that the pianist was not doing well or was not letting her/him play the way she/he wanted to just tell the pianist to stop. She/He seemed very sure and maybe that is the best solution, but I do not know if I would be able to do that and in any case I hope not to have to make that decision ever. But I think, like them, that we are who should decide the tempo and pianists should follow us. It should be like that.

As for how it feels after a performance, they often say that they are happy. I am not in agreement with that. We all make mistakes, even the best musicians in the world, and I doubt they are really able to let it go so easily, especially if something has gone wrong or really far from what we expected. If it becomes usual to not feel good after a concert maybe we should dedicate our lives to something else, that is true, but when something goes wrong it is also normal to feel sad or disappointed, and that does not mean it is a bad thing. In that sense I think we must keep our feet on the ground and try not to let it affect us too much.

I now pass to the other side, the place of the jury. I was very interested to know what they think, what they pay more attention and do less. This is one of the reasons why I interviewed two musicians who are working in a professional orchestra and therefore had been part of a jury on more than one occasion.

I am surprised about they both think quite differently, one saying that the most important thing from the first moment is the musicality, and the other one saying that they would not listen for a long time to someone who has problems with intonation. I could not say with which I agree more, probably with both at the same time because I think these two things are both extremely important. A musician has to be musical and of course be in tune. And do not think it is very difficult to reach this reasoning. Super simple and complicated at the same time.

And finally, another thing that I strongly believe and even had to experience sometimes is the difficulty to play with someone who is very soloistic, both musically and character issues. I would decide not to work with them either.

Conclusion

I think I was never very ambitious. I am a quiet person, I like music, I like to play the clarinet, and I love when I am inside an orchestra. But I never tried to be the best. Still, almost always got good results in what I did and I conducted my studies without difficulty. Perhaps because I did not give myself great goals in life.

Since I was a child I always got nervous playing for people, but never saw it as a serious problem because it happens to everyone. My concern came when I started auditioning for orchestras, both youth and professional. The feeling is a mixture of nerves and negativity, a very bad feeling. I wanted to know why, why there was so much difference between the auditions and a normal concert, for instance.

Doing this thesis I realized that the secret is there is no secret. Everything is achieved successfully if there is work behind. It is very unusual that your body will not respond to all the work done even if the brain is not focused.

Practice, practice, practice.

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