



TAKE NOTE

The newsletter brought to you by the Centre for Musical Arts
'Bringing Music to Everyone'

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ANA KOVAČEVIĆ VOCAL SPECIALIST

Someone once said, 'once you do what you love, you never have to go to work'. I think that I was lucky to discover what my talent and passion was and I was even luckier to have the opportunity to make my living out of it.

Singing was always my greatest love and joy. I never longed to have the talent for anything else. There is always debate about what is more important; Talent or hard work. My experience shows that one can not function without the other. I would always say that hard work is worth more than just raw talent.

I always had a driving passion which showed me the right way, but the most important skill, I found, is the ability to adjust. Sometimes that means choosing a completely new path over the current one. So even though it is not a motto specifically, something I always keep in mind is, 'Panta Rhei'.

CHARLOTTE O'CONNOR CMA PARENT

As a child, I was regarded as 'bookish'. I would devour everything I could get my hands on regardless of the content.

I realise now that this is in fact because I am, by nature, a curious person. There is so much out there that we are all ignorant about, regardless of how much we think we have studied or learned in our lives. Whether it be a book about the history of salt or a podcast about the mysterious Ista woman of Norway, I am always interested in being interested.

I would love to be able to draw. In my mind I am an amazing artist – I can see exactly how I would like something to look... The reality could not be further from this.

I'm quite a hard task master on myself and the people around me. If I had a motto it would be this – 'Work hard, be nice.'



PRACTICE LIKE A SONGBIRD

BY RUSNE MIKISKAITE WOODWIND SPECIALIST

Did you know that there are only a few species of animals that have to learn to vocalize?

One of them are the Songbirds. As scientists have figured out, Songbirds are not born with a natural talent to sing. Actually, they have to practice long and hard to perfect their melodies and build a vast repertoire of different tunes! Chirping a perfected song helps them find a mate, defend their territory and communicate with others. Not only these birds learn how to sing when they are little, they also keep on practicing their songs throughout their adult life! One study shows that this kind of playful practice is also rewarding and enjoyable. Here are some things we can learn from Songbirds in order to make our own musical practice better:

Birds start practicing when they are young

Chicks grow up hearing older birds sing and have a unique ability to recognize songs specific to their species. They cannot sing yet, but they keep on practicing and practicing until they

master the whole bouquet of different melodies. For us humans, it is good to be surrounded by music at the early age too. "If you learn music as a child, your brain becomes designed for music," says Neuroscientist, Kiminobu Sugaya, who is conducting research into music effects on the brain.

Songbirds learn a song better from live, socially interacting tutors

Scientists tried playing recorded bird songs to white-crowned sparrows and zebra finches, to see how quick they could learn new melodies. As it turns out, the chicks learn quicker and better when hearing live singing in social settings! We too are social creatures so it helps us to learn in a supportive, friendly environment where we can listen, interact and mimic. The opportunities to play together with our peers in ensembles, orchestras or projects are thus extremely helpful.

Birds practice short phrases by repeating them

After many repetitions and some improvisative mixing and matching of those phrases, they put it into a full song. In this way, some species learn up to a thousand different songs! I am amazed at how smart the bird practice is! We too need to divide a song or a piece that we are working on into small chunks. Practicing that one difficult bar five times is so much better than playing the whole piece five times and still stumbling

on the hard bit!

Birds do get upset when their song is not good enough. But they never stop!

In fact, migratory birds keep on perfecting their songs even when mating season is over and they are off to the southern hemisphere. Practicing is not always easy. It constantly requires us to do something that we are not yet good at. It is hard to stay motivated all the time and sometimes we just need to be disciplined. Setting a timer for the practice session can be a good idea. Other times, starting the session with something more fun and easy can be inspiring! Setting small and achievable goals for each practice session can be very helpful too. It is so important to not get discouraged when hearing criticism. It is only a tool for improvement!

Birds learn while sleeping

Baby birds learn to sing by replaying songs in their heads while sleeping, scientists have found. After a good night's rest, chicks that had been taught to sing the day before performed far better, suggesting their brains had worked on the songs as they slumbered! Taking a good rest after an intensive learning session is very important. There are many studies showing positive effects of good night sleep in academic performance too. So taking good rest is as crucial as spending time mastering your musical instrument or voice!

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

WHAT IS IT AND HOW DO YOU OVERCOME IT?

BY ANDREW MCCOY
SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR AND
BRASS SPECIALIST

If you haven't been following the Take Note podcast then go check it out on Apple, Google and Spotify podcast platforms! A new episode is released every Saturday and this week's episode asks this very question.

In the podcast, I speak to Mike Cunningham, a performance coach to actors, musicians, sportspeople. I know Mike personally, as I had a number of sessions with him a few years ago when I was a young trombonist studying at conservatoire in London, UK and found myself struggling with performance anxiety, something which is more common than one might imagine.

The podcast is well worth a listen, and having known Mike for many years and heard him talk about many of the things mentioned in the podcast before, I am always amazed at how seemingly simple and straightforward many of the concepts are, yet, seem to hide in plain sight.

The purpose of this article is not to spoil the podcast, but to offer some additional advice based on my own personal experiences, as a musician who has not only found themselves struggling with performance anxiety, but who has come out the other side, so to speak, now equipped with the knowledge and tools to detect and mitigate the early signs.

The most important thing to recognise is that anxiety is solely created by us.

It is an entirely internal phenomenon. No one imposes anxiety on you.

It may feel that external pressures and **expectations** cause the anxiety, however, in reality, it is our own predetermined responses to those situations which pave the way for the anxious thoughts and consequently the physical symptoms.

How does anxiety manifest itself, physically?

Well, this depends on the person,

however there are some common symptoms as a result of anxious thoughts. These can range from an increased heart rate or palpitations, to sweating/sweaty palms, shaking and/or a dry mouth. As a brass player, my fear was always getting a dry mouth as, if this happens, it becomes very difficult/impossible to play. What can happen, is, the fear of the symptom can actually be the main cause, in effect, a self-fulfilling prophesy.

To reiterate, all anxiety is made of two parts - the psychological and the physiological. In order to avoid the physical part, you must resolve the psychological.

What causes anxious thoughts?

Again, this is highly dependent on the individual, but there is an obvious example;

Expectation

This is two fold;

On the one hand, we have this idea that we are always trying to live up to other people's expectations on our ability. This may be our parents, our teachers, our peers etc. By constantly evaluating ourselves against what we think these people are expecting and want to hear, we succumb to something beyond our control. We will never be able to reach this goal, as it is something intangible and in a subjective field, we will never please everyone.

On the other hand, we are trying to live up to our own expectations, the ever distant goal of 'perfection'. Chasing this constantly evolving and elusive abstraction is a fools errand. Reaching perfection means that something cannot be improved upon and by its very definition, in any subjective field such as the arts, this is an impossibility.

If we can remove this self-imposed expectation, both of perfection and of appeasing our audience, we can get to the very essence of good music making, that is, enjoying the process of developing, learning and performing.

CMA TURNS 14!

On 14th September 2006, the Centre for Musical Arts first opened its doors in DUCTAC, Mall of the Emirates, with just 6 teachers and 2 administrative staff. Word spread of the exceptional quality of music lessons on offer and within a month, all the lessons were running at full capacity on a daily basis. By December 2006, the waiting

list had swelled to close to 150.

By staying true to its mission of providing high quality and affordable musicianship to the young and the young at heart, The Centre for Musical Arts has continued to grow and attract the finest musicians who were keen on imparting their skills to the community.

