



## **MINDFUL PERFORMANCES:**

### **Where Preparation and Confidence Intersect**

Saturday, January 30, 2021 | Mark Davis, Milwaukee Jazz Institute

#### I. Motivation to Play Music

- A. Why did you start?
- B. Why do you play now?
- C. What do you love about it?
- D. What are your overall musical goals?

#### II. Musicians Who “Care Too Much”

- A. Self-worth and quality of performance
- B. Fear of Failure
  1. Fear based practicing
  2. Fear-based performance
- C. Anxiety
  1. Anxiety about the past
  2. Anxiety about the future
- D. Keep things in perspective

#### III. Pathways to Performing with Confidence

- A. Types of Confidence
  1. Innocent
  2. Enduring
- B. Let Go of Obsessive Need to Sound Good
  1. Give yourself permission to fail
  2. Dealing with nerves
    - a) Don't criticize yourself
    - b) See how much you can notice about a problem
    - c) Accept and move on by placing focus elsewhere
- C. Stay True to Your Musical Goals
  1. Send energy out by expressing passion and meaning
  2. Avoid thoughts of “What do they think of me?”
  3. Positive visualization

#### IV. Musical Preparation

- A. Goal-oriented Practice
  1. Keep timeline in mind
    - a) Learn your piece(s) so that you own it well before the date
    - b) Practice hard but take breaks
    - c) Find opportunities to perform your piece before the audition

## B. Memorization

1. Practice starting in different spots
2. Use multiple methods for memorizing
  - a) "muscle memory"
  - b) playing by ear
  - c) theoretical understanding

## C. Working with an Accompanist

1. If possible, practice together well in advance of the event
2. Practice non-verbal communications
3. Learn to tune to the piano (if necessary)

## D. Relaxation

1. Breathing
2. Exercise and healthy lifestyle
3. Stretching
4. Posture

## V. Performance Time

### A. Arrival and Preparation

1. Check instrument for potential problems well in advance
2. Be early to be comfortably ready at your assigned time
3. Warm your instrument and your body (fingers, face, etc.)
4. Pre-tune your instrument

### B. Waiting to Perform

1. Relax and mentally review your tempos
2. Make sure that you are properly hydrated

### C. Entering and Performing

1. Be calm, don't rush. Take the time necessary to adjust your chair or stand and music
2. Tune your instrument to the piano if necessary
3. Mentally establish your tempo and signal your accompanist
4. If you make a mistake don't stop, let it go and keep playing, save your critique of your own performance for later after you've left the venue
5. End the piece musically; hold your ending position until the music clears the air.

## Suggested Reading:

*Effortless Mastery* by Kenny Werner

*The Inner Game of Music* by Barry Green

*Notes from the Green Room* by Paul Salmon and Robert Meyer

*The Mastery of Music* by Barry Green

*The Perfect Wrong Note* by William Westney

*The Art of Practicing* by Madeline Bruser