## Magic Line Method - A Performance Guide

There is a Magic Line between backstage and onstage. Every time you cross this line you bring every choice you've made your entire lives with you. Yes, excellent performance is a big deal. By crossing the Magic Line daily, you can experience as many, or more performance situations as the professionals do. Whether the onstage situation is real or a simulation, through planning for and executing Magic Line Performances, you can learn what choices you make in performance, how to choose better, and ultimately how to consistently perform your best when it matters most.

## Set-up and Pre-Performance

## **Performance Day Morning**

- Wake up knowing you have an important performance at X O'clock.
- Spend your day in the simulation so you can learn the most about what you choose to think about
   two ways make the performance day a big deal and learn how to stay well focused, and/or learn how to have performance days just like any other day and stay well focused.

## Pre-On-Deck (Once you take your instrument out of the case) Make sure of your stage.

- Set up and start your recorder so you can be present in your performance listen and learn later. *"If you're listening, and the audience is listening, then who's singing?"*
- Check your stage make it exactly how your future performance will be.
  - Move extra chairs, set stand to right height, put music on stand/mutes/extra instruments
     If you will carry your music with you into your performance, do that here too.

## Think of your audience - Remember good reasons WHY you're about to perform

- **TELL A STORY!!** Ensure your music is more than just the right notes by having a story to tell! You are not there to show off your technical abilities (your "HOW"). If you tell a great story, your technique will end up looking impressive. It's about great "WHAT" that is done within great "WHY"
- **Best fear replacement Great reasons WHY you are performing**. "I am sharing great music. I get to connect to people. I get to give the audience a break from their daily concerns."

## Tell your audience "applause" or "no applause"

- Saying "No applause please" is done to experience an audition/excerpt performance where you would walk into your performance and begin performing in silence.
  - **TO DO:** Say, "No applause please." Get ready, and leave your performance area.
    - You verbally tell your story after you've performed, and happily received your applause...and before or after you "Strength Collect" (explained below)
- o **Saying "Applause please"** is done to experience any non-excerpt type of performance a solo, etude, etc. anything performed after receiving applause.
  - **TO DO:** Say, "Applause please." Get ready, and leave your performance area.
    - Your performance will begin, mentally and visually/physically, the second you cross the magic line.
    - Walk into the performance area **accepting** applause
      - Priority 1 during a stage-entrance-to-applause is being seen, not to bow. Share yourself! Make some eye contact, smile, walk naturally, with presence and authenticity (without self-centered shyness or fake "performing" motions), stop at your spot, look around, be seen

for a moment, take it all in. *Then* bow well, finish your bow – stand there, openly - be seen again.

• When the applause ends, you verbally tell your story. We get to practice public speaking! Be ready, either before or after your performance, to say your creative version of something like, "My name is abc, and I performed def. The composer of this music lived ghi and had jkl in mind when he wrote this. I feel mno about this piece, and today's excerpt depicted an event in pqr where stu is filled with vwx emotions. All of a sudden, etc..." Be creative, and discover the "storyteller who connects to an audience" in you!

## On Deck - (In the actual backstage area)

**Over-empty your horn** - Make sure it's empty! Ok good....now make sure again. **Get Ready** 

- Breathe/Get centered
- Read your inspirational sheet "They want you to play well." etc...
  - o Choose to think well, surrender well and embrace your opportunity, and then...

## **Cross your Magic Line!**

## **Performance (Onstage)**

**Enter** within the best simulation of the performance type for which you are training:

- "No applause" Enter in silence
- "Applause" Enter with calm authenticity, to applause, visually connecting to your audience (Ready to be seen, bow, be seen again, and tell your story)

#### Perform your music - to BOTH (Back Of The Hall ⊕) you and the audience!

- Tell us, through your instrument, how you would LOVE to hear this music played.
  - Beautiful sounds that connect to your audience in moving ways that glorify the horn, music, and life. (yes, it's a big deal.)
  - No negative critique...actually, no critique. Stay present on each phrase, and in what you
    are doing. Listen to your recording later, and critique constructively then. During
    performance you are only now, now...aggressively and creatively executing your
    artistic plan.
- Finish playing and then **show your audience that you are finished** the instrument playing part, and that it's time for us to applaud smile to us with a big "Ahhhh yes...you may applaud now!" "Strength Collect"
  - Without being prompted, tell us something 100% positive about one aspect of your performance.
    - O It can always be better. Get over it, yourself, and your "failures" and say something good. Saying it might make it a bit true, and we might decide we're good at a few things along the way! We might even begin to enjoy performing...yeah!
    - o Speak about some sort of emotional aspect you succeeded at conveying through your playing. Use language that shares your rich creative vocabulary of description. This should be easy, because we already have richly descriptive descriptions of our musical goals before starting our performance...right? ☺
    - o "Out of the 100's of things you did well, pick one and speak 100% positively about it."
      - 100% positive (and not relative "better than last time" is not 100% positive.)
      - 100% true (Be specific even if it has to be one note or one color change)
      - 100% responsible start with "I told the story of..."
      - Start with your story-telling success, and then tell us what technical success helped you tell that part of your story - "I succeeded at showing Beethoven's abc moment by playing def in a way that conveyed ghi emotion to my audience."
      - We don't usually speak this way. The best performers we know DO. They walk out on stage, and say, "I think this!" They might walk off stage after and think, "wow...ok, I won't play it THAT way again!" But at least they went for it, and now they know for next time! Perform as much as possible. When in performance:

Don't ask. Tell. Make the decision easy for them. @



## A quick, simple, easy way to create a story to match the music

When Canadian Brass would coach a chamber ensemble, we'd always point out there are only two types of music: love songs and pirate songs! That's it.

Not true of course, but it's a good story, and surprisingly more true that one would think! I've developed a process through which one can create a story to match any moment in any piece of music. Answer yourself these questions, dive in and try it, and then answer them again if it wasn't all you imagined it could be...repeat ad infinitum.

#### THE SCENE - THE CURTAIN OPENS.

What country are we in? Italy? Argentina? Egypt? Canada?
Daytime, nighttime, sunset, dawn, or...?
Indoors or outdoors?
Sunny, cloudy, rainy, snowy, or...?
What kind of place are we in? Bustling city or a meadow or...?
Specific details about your scenery? Near a river? At a circus? In a courtroom?
What approximate decade in history are we in? 1920's? 1770's?

## THE CHARACTER – WE SEE PEOPLE!

One or two?

Male or female?

How old? In what decade of their life are they? Ambitious 30's? Reflective 70's? Social status, occupation? Debutante, cheese monger, pig-farmer, opera singer? What is/are the character(s) wearing? Uniform, tuxedo, hockey mask, hospital gown?

## THE ACTION – SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN OR JUST DID!

Is the character coming from having done something, or going to do something? What is the character coming from/going to? Funeral, lunch, war, biology class?

## <u>THE EMOTION</u> – MOST IMPORTANT - WE FEEL SOMETHING THROUGH THE CHARACTER!!

How does the character feel about where they are going/coming from? Furious, ecstatic, disgusted, giddy, impudent, mischievous, suspicious, regretful, pompous, fearless...?

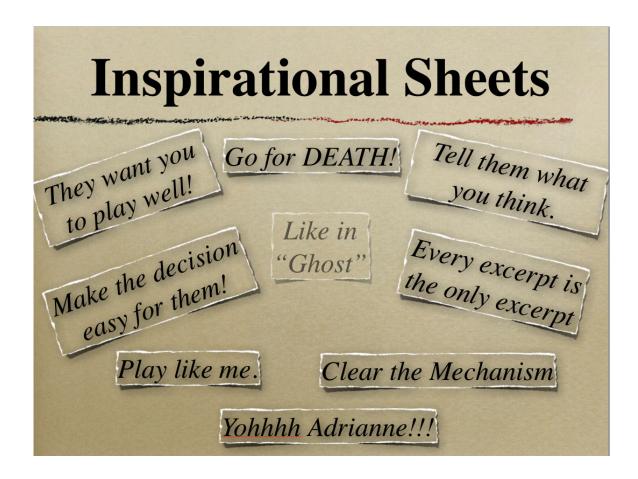
Put these story aspects on your 'Segues' (post-it notes)!

JEFF NELSEN PRESENTS



FOR MUSICIANS

Because life is live.



#### FOR MUSICIANS

## is your Sound...

Robust Full Beautiful Round Golden Big Solid Lively Brilliant Sonorous Open Centered Steady **Pleasant** Clear Strong Pure Colorful **Vibrant** Resonant Controlled Warm Rich Dark Weighty Ringing Free

## or is your Sound...

Foggy Raucous Annoying Rough **Fuzzy Blurred** Hard Small Brittle Harsh Strange Closed Hazy Tight Coarse Thin Labored Colorless **Narrow** Ugly Dead Nasty Unpleasant Diffuse **Pinched** Weak Dull Woofy Raspy Edgy

# Depending on the musical context, can your Sound sometimes be...

Bright Hot Rugged **Broad** Intense Sensuous **Calming** Light Singing Concentrated Loud Soft Cool Masculine Solemn Massive Deep Sparkling Delicate Mellow Subtle Muted Exciting Supple **Plaintive** Sweet Fat **Feminine** Powerful Tender Gentle Thick **Projecting** Relaxing Violent Grotesque Reserved White Heavy Hollow Restful Wide



#### FOR MUSICIANS

Pleading

**Astounded** 

Troubled

Tender

Proud

Rapturous

Reverent

Miserable

Suspicious

## is your Adagio...

Depressed **Apologetic** Sullen Regretful Loving Melancholy Seductive Groveling Compassionate Desperate Sorrowful Contented Tragical Innocent Majestic **Furious** Glad Doughful Contrite Sulky Mocking Sad

is your Andante...

Cool Inspired Confident Satisfied Нарру **Arrogant** Ingratiating **Embarrassed Pompous** Haughty **Flirtatious Amused** Sympathetic Incredulous Gracious Bitter

## is your Allegro...

Frantic **Angry Terrified** Shocked Condemning Mischievous Fierce In Awe Teasing **Thrilled** Jealous **Impudent** Playful Suprised Alarmed **Astonished Excited** Exultant Bold Horrified Disgusted Decisive **Passionate Impudent Ecstatic** Joyful Contemtouus **Defiant** Giddy Sarcastic



## **Practice and Performance**

Practice and Performance can seem light years different. In one you are alone in a room, while in the other you may be standing on stage with a hundred performers in front of a thousand listeners. There is an arguable difference. But with deeper understanding and maturity Practice and Performance become more and more similar, eventually having the same balance of intention and attention, slowly becoming nearly indistinguishable from each other, at least in regards to the qualities of focus and ease, technique and musicianship.

In the beginning, musicians tend to relegate a sense of discovery and playfulness to the Practice room, while deep focus and seriousness are saved for Auditions and Performance. Time practicing is seen as "me time", while Performance is seen as giving to "others. In fact, each needs what the other is too often given: more seriousness and focus belong in the Practice room, while more ease and play belong in Performance. Both time in the practice room and time on stage should have the same intent- playing music, for both self-enjoyment and the pleasure of others, always receiving, always giving, always playing.

- Jeff Nelsen and Saral Burdette



## A powerful definition of presence

FROM THE BACK COVER OF "ELEMENTS OF POKER"

BY TOMMY ANGELO

All of my good streaks and all of my bad streaks of every length and depth have had one thing in common. They did not exist in your mind. They only existed in my mind. And this is true for everyone's winning and losing streaks. None of them actually exist. They are all mental fabrication, like past and future. Everything that ever happens happens in the present tense. But how can you have a "streak" in the present tense?

You can't. And therefore, if you are in the present tense, which, in fact, at this time, you are, then at this moment there is no streak in your life. There is no inherent existence to streaks. The streak is there when you think about it, and when you stop thinking about it, it goes away. It blossoms and withers, all in your mind. And when your mind invents a streak, you believe it exists, because you believe what your mind tells you. But the truth is there is only the hand you are playing.

# Ways to Understand and Evolve your Learning



The 12 Blocks to Listening
By PJ Germain

Because life is live.

There are 12 blocks to listening. You will find that some are old favorites that you use over and over. Others are held in reserve for certain type of people of situations. Everyone uses listening blocks, so you shouldn't worry if a lot of blocks are familiar. This is an opportunity to become more aware of your blocks at the time you actually see them.

### 1. Comparing

Comparing makes it hard to listen because you're always trying to assess who is smarter, more competent, more emotionally healthy – you or the other. Some people focus on who has suffered more, whose a bigger victim. You can't let much in because you're too busy seeing if you measure up.

### 2. Mind Reading

The mind doesn't pay much attention to what people say. In fact, it often distrusts it. It's trying to figure out what the other person is really thinking and feeling. The mind reader pays less attention to words than to intonations and subtle cues in an effort to see through to the truth. If you are a mind reader, you probably make assumptions about how people react to you. "I bet he's looking at my lousy skin....She thinks I'm stupid."

## 3. Rehearsing

You don't have time to listen when you are rehearsing what to say. Your whole attention is on the preparation and crafting of your next comment. You have to look interested, but your mind is going a mile a minute because you're got a story to tell, or a point to make. Some people rehearse whole chains of response: "I'll say, then he'll say, then I'll say," and so on.

## 4. Filtering

When you filter, you listen to some things and not to others. You pay only enough attention to see if somebody's angry or unhappy, or if you're in emotional danger. Once assured that the communication contains none of these things, you let your mind wander. Another way people filter is to avoid hearing certain things – particularly anything threatening, negative, critical, or unpleasant. It's as if the words were never said: you simply have no memory of them.

## 5. Judging

Negative labels have enormous power. If you prejudge someone as stupid or nuts or unqualified, you don't pay much attention to what they say. You've already written them off. Hastily judging a statement as immoral, hypocritical, or crazy means you've ceased to listen and have begun a "knee jerk" reaction. A basic rule of listening is that judgments should only be made after you have heard and evaluated the content of the message.

## 6. Being Right

Being right means you will go to any lengths (twist the facts, start shouting, make excuses or accusations, call up past sins) to avoid being wrong. You can't listen to criticism, you can't be

corrected, and you can't take suggestions to change. And since you won't acknowledge that your mistakes are mistakes, you just keep making them.

#### 7. Dreaming

You're half-listening, and something the person says suddenly triggers a chain of private associations. Your neighbor says she's been laid off, and in a flash you're off to the scene where you got fired for playing hearts on those long coffee breaks. And you're gone, only to return a few minutes later as your neighbor says, "I know you'd understand, but don't tell my husband." You are more prone to dreaming when you feel bored or anxious, but if you dream a lot with certain people, it may indicate a lack of commitment to knowing or appreciating them or that you don't value what they say very much.

#### 8. Identifying

In this block, you take everything a person tells you and refer it back to your own experience. They want to tell you about a toothache, but that reminds you of the time you had oral surgery for receding gums. You launch into your story before they can finish theirs. Everything you hear reminds you of something that you've felt, done, or suffered. You're so busy with these exciting tales of your life that there's no time to really hear or get to know the other person.

### 9. Advising

You are the great problem-solver, ready with help and suggestions. You don't have to hear more than a few sentences before you begin searching for the right advice. However, while you are cooking up suggestions and convincing someone to "just try it" you may miss what's most important. You didn't hear the feelings, and you didn't acknowledge the person's pain. He or she still feels basically alone because you couldn't listen and just be there.

## 10. Sparring

This block has you arguing and debating with people. The other person never feels heard because you're so quick to disagree. In fact, a lot of your focus is on finding things to disagree with. You take strong stands, are very clear about your beliefs and preferences. One subtype of sparring is the put-down. You use acerbic or sarcastic remarks to dismiss the other person's point of view. A second type of sparring is discounting. Discounting is for people who can't stand compliments. "Oh, I didn't do anything...What do you mean? I was totally lame...It's nice of you to say, but it's really a very poor attempt". This basic technique of discounting is to run yourself down when you get a compliment. The other person never feels satisfied that you really heard their appreciation. He they're right – you didn't.

## 11. Derailing

This listening block is accomplished by suddenly changing the subject. You derail the train of conversation when you get bored or uncomfortable with a topic. Another way of derailing is by joking it off. This means that you continually respond to whatever is said with a joke or quip in order to avoid the discomfort or anxiety in seriously listening to the other person.

## 12. Placating

"Right...Right....Absolutely...I know....Of course you are....Incredible...Yes...Really?" You want to be nice, pleasant, supportive. You want people to like you. So you agree with everything. You may half-listen, just enough to get the drift, but you're not really involved. You are placating rather than tuning in and examining what is being said.



**Growth**: Success-based practicing

Perform something 10 times. For each performance, constructively assess each as either a success or lesson, record why, and write a plan for your next performance.

Name:	Passage Description:
Date:	

Performance	Success	Lesson	Why?	Plan for next performance
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

"Talent is developed in stillness. Character, in the current of every day life." - Wolfgang van Goethe (1749 - 1832)

## "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

- Winston Churchill (1874 - 1965)

## Self-Teaching Table

This table exists for you to experience practicing with your mind focused ONLY on deciding that what you just performed was either a Success or a Lesson.

"There are no failures in life, only success or lessons."

- Denis Waitley (1933 - )

"A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery."

- James Joyce - (1882 - 1941) Ulysses, Episode 9

Play an excerpt, a passage, or even just a note 10 times. For each performance, put a check-mark in either the "Success" or "Lesson" column. Yes, there are a TON of variables at play here, so you have to decide between only those two options of assessment. Your goal is: Out of all the variables at "play" here, can you find SOMETHING that gets you to have your performance be a success? :) If not, then it was a lesson! Yay for that too, eh?!

Through the process of playing something ten times while looking for only either a Success or Lesson as the overall critique of your performance, you will get better at finding some Success element to your performance. There are NO small Successes. If it was 0.0001% better, that is a Success! Over time, you collect successes. You will also find that you can learn to live with less assessment choices involving failure as an option. (see cool guotes above!)

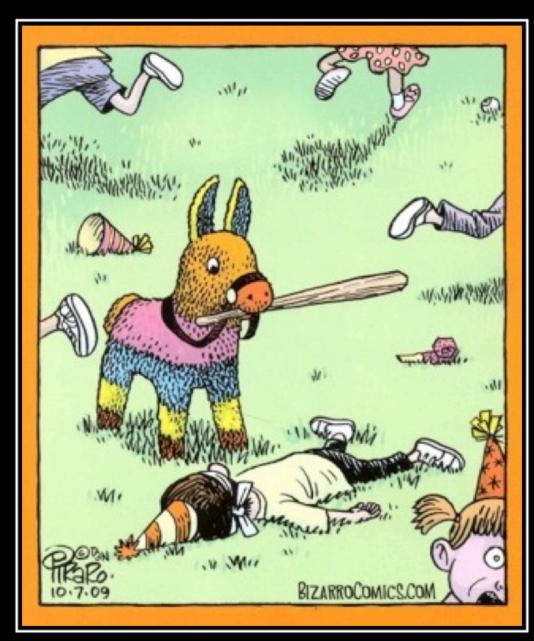
After you note whether the performance was a Success or a Lesson, then you write why you chose that assessment. You can guess at why it was a bit better or you can write specific details you're sure of....or write anything in between. To learn, you must be an expert variable finder, watcher, and controller. If your assessment was that you crapped all over it that time, then that performance is a Lesson. How did you get in your way, and what did you maybe learn that you could do less or more of the next time? Ask yourself what might have been better, and what might have been the reason. Let go of control, and dive into the messy mysterious discovery of learning, and keep moving forward.

After writing "Why" it was a Success or Lesson, write a quick/short plan for your next performance. What variable are you going to either keep (and refine/study/habit) or change (and experiment with)? Keep going until you've done it 10 times. If you do this daily, you will get better at being solution based in your critique of your performances, build trust in your abilities, and raise your odds of performing your best version of something in your first performance.



# **REGURGITATION**

Your performance potential is severely limited when you thoughtlessly copy others.



# PINATA PRACTICING

At some point, swinging away at the notes will backfire.