

## Three Little Words



*Three Little Words...*

*by Patricia Surman*

Preparing for a new school year is a great opportunity to set our intentions, and sometimes three little words can make all the difference. These simple meditations are designed to assist the student in all of us.

### **Invest in Yourself**

Gather the tools of your trade so that you ensure future success. These include an instrument that is in excellent working order (after all, it will need to be able to withstand many hours of practice), a metronome, a tuner, music stands and instrument stands, and a growing library of sheet music. Think of these purchases as investments into *your* future. Who else is more worthy of receiving such an investment other than you? Get a good teacher. Find someone that you can work with and foster a mentoring relationship with that person. Develop a savings plan so that you can afford to attend summer classes, festivals, and conferences. You will learn about your instrument and its repertoire and the people you meet at these events will become lifelong friends and colleagues.

### **Conquer Your Fears**

Fears, we all have them. The quickest way to improve is to name your fear and make a plan to conquer it. Learn how to turn what you see as a weakness into a strength. How? When you name your fear, you can claim your fear. Use your practice time to mentally and physically rehearse in a calm, confident manner.

### **Be Early, Always**

Learn rehearsal protocol, the most important tenant is to always be on time and prepared. There is no room for tardiness in the world of professional music, so if you are chronically running late, learn

how to manage your time and change. Treat your classes the same, if you are late to class your teacher will not consider you for performance opportunities that may arise.

### **Take the Initiative**

You don't have to wait for your teacher to spoon-feed you every piece of information. Be proactive and let your thirst for knowledge drive your actions. There is so much information available at the click of the mouse, don't wait for your teacher to ask you to listen to music and research about the flute. Let your natural curiosity be your guide.

### **Learn from Others**

Some of the best lessons in life are learned by our own observations. Teachers, mentors and guides are all around you if you are open to learning and you are the only person that will prevent yourself from learning.

### **Develop your Ear**

By profession, our number one duty is to hear well. Refine your sense of pitch and rhythm through practice. Whether it is as simple as transcribing a favorite tune or as formal as aural skills courses, this should be a daily endeavor throughout your lifetime.

### **Learn the Literature**

Listen to more music! For a musician, there is nothing more exciting than first uncovering the beauty in a piece of music. No matter how much music you know, there is always more to know. Expand your musical world, you won't regret it!

### **Use a Metronome**

There's an old saying "You can't fool father time" and that is equally true for a practicing musician. Not only does practicing with the metronome help you develop consistency of tempo through technical work, but it also is a tool for practicing and can help you learn how to gauge your breath through a phrase.

### **Always Be Prepared**

Showing up prepared to lessons, rehearsals, and concerts is an absolute must in this business. Music isn't baseball, you don't get three strikes before you're out. You often only get one opportunity to perform. When you show up prepared, you get asked back. It is that simple.

### **Earn Others' Respect**

Why is it important for musicians to earn respect? The way you play certainly holds weight, but nobody wants to spend time with a jerk! Your reputation will precede you wherever you go. The world of music is very small, and you can bet that disrespectful actions (intentional or not) will haunt you. It is best to get in the habit of earning respect while you are in school because this is one lesson you don't want to learn the hard way!

### **Develop Self Confidence**

There's no way around the simple fact that music is a tough business! It is better to learn this earlier rather than later. The road to success is paved by many failures and the quicker you can learn to not let setbacks bother you; the better off you will be in the long run. There is only one way to develop an unshakable inner strength, and that is with experience. Practice the art of not letting your cage get rattled when you are under pressure. Build faith in your abilities by utilizing the combination of preparation and experience and you will find that soon you will be dripping with self confidence.