Notes from Dr. Blake Cooper's Lecture on Freelancing

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**Outside of the Gig**

1.) Proactively expose yourself to as much music as possible, both in listening and for practicing. (For example, pick up a Real Book of jazz tunes and read it down over a few months.) Being able to comfortably perform rhythms used in jazz, rock, and pop music is essential to surviving in the freelance world. At the same time, don’t neglect the basics: make sure you’re well-versed in the basic orchestral, solo, and quintet repertoire for your instrument.

2.) Have an online calendar that you keep well-organized. Be sure to update it immediately after you schedule a gig, rehearsal, or social event. I keep everything color coded... Red means recording, green is for private lessons, etc.

3.) Play for as many people as you can. By that, I mean everyone: fellow freelancers, people with orchestra jobs, people who play different instruments. This is one of the best ways to get your name "out there." As soon as you start communicating with whomever you’re playing for, always be respectful as well as mindful not to be pushy. Simply saying "I'd love to play for you sometime" is plenty and will allow you to gauge the other party’s interest level.

4.) Equipment: I have a large variety of equipment; the right tool for the job is very important, especially when working in big city like Los Angeles. If you're a pro tuba player - or if you are aspiring to be -you'll have to have both a CC and an F tuba. You should also own or have regular access to: a cimbasso, a sousaphone, and a euphonium.

* I have different CC tubas for different applications. My large 6/4 CC is just for the orchestra and most traditional *live* performances. My small 4/4 CC is for close-mic performances, such as recording studio gigs or outdoor concerts. Large 6/4 tubas don't translate well to the mic in studios. Plus, a horn of this size is designed to fill a large acoustical space; that’s the opposite of what you want in a studio orchestra/recording session application.
* The F tuba I use is great in all settings: studio work, jazz, quintet, orchestra, and anything in between.
* I use a cimbasso in F. I find I can do anything needed in the studios just fine with this size of cimbasso and then go play a Verdi orchestra concert that night and feel very comfortable. Again, having the right tool for the job.

5.) Know when to promote yourself and when to keep it to yourself... Especially early in your career. The distinction isn't always clear, so use your best instincts. (For example, if you're performing with an orchestra for the first time, don't blow up your Facebook profile with pictures of you and your hero musicians. A single, tactful photo may be the way to go, but, if you have any doubt, it's better to take the route of caution.) Some examples of things that usually are worth promoting are: solo recitals, pieces you've commissioned, winning a job, giving a guest master class, etc. Again, err on the side of caution by keeping photos and posts professional and tasteful. Avoid "Facebragging." If you're freelancing and playing as a guest in an orchestra, it's not YOUR job, so keep it tame. You're lucky to be playing with the group, don't make others in our musical community jealous unnecessarily. If you're working, people will talk and know... No need to push the issue, just play your ass off.

**The Workplace Environment**

1.) Dress for the job you want, not the job you have; people notice when you're well put-together. Closed toed shoes, a button-up shirt and a nicer pair of jeans or pants broadcasts to people you care about how you present yourself. Generally, people like that in our business.

2.) Networking starts at small gigs: other musicians notice if you're a good hang, well-prepared, and take the execution of the job seriously. If they like you, they might recommend you for more work.

3.) Play your ass off, be ready and sound good... Every gig is an opportunity for future gigs. Every day is an audition.

4.) Tips for on-the-job networking:

A. Remember that musical community is small; how you behave on the job can - and usually will - spread quickly to other musical circles, for good or bad.

B. Remember people's names. This is something that I still struggle with from time-to-time, but it makes for a wonderful first impression and shows that you're engaged. Learn those names!

C. Play your ass off and be a good hang. Remember that freelancing is (approximately) half how you play and half how you hang. Of course there is more to it than just that, but let's not make this business overly complicated. At the heart of the music business, other musicians want someone that plays great, is well-prepared, and takes the job seriously. But they also want someone who is easy to talk to and who they'd feel comfortable "grabbing a beer with."

**Being a Great Performer (In Rehearsal and In Concert)**

1.) Know the score and play with your ears open! Listen for and match the instruments that you play with. For an orchestral tuba player, always tune your ears into the basses, trombones, and horns. For seeing the rhythm, keep your eyes on either concertmaster and/or conductor... Or fellow brass player, as appropriate. The orchestra is like a school of fish all moving together at once: you have to be engaged at all times if you're going to stay with the group.

2.) Be aware of when you'll need to engage your **practice brain** vs your **performance brain**.

* The practice room brain is analytical, and focuses mostly on the past (i.e. chipped notes, intonation, rhythmic mistakes) as well as the present, and the future. It's that inner monologue we all have when we’re really digging into the music during a practice session. The practice brain is the one that makes the decisions that will become habits of performance.
* The performance brain is fully engaged in the moment and knows no history; it knows only the now and the future, with focus on making music at its highest potential. I also think of performance brain as "musical tunnel vision:" unrelenting focus on the music happening *right now.*

3.) Nerves: experience gets you off the page and into the *doing* side of things. Be proactive about the things you want to do. Create your own opportunities: put on recitals or other performances at new and unique venues. Goals goals goals... Both short and long term.