

## Acting for Musicians

With Professor Mark Krawczyk

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Embrace the unknown!

Warm up your body and your breath

- Everyone has a narrative
- *Your* narrative is in the breath
- Music without breath is just sound

### Assignment:

Write down

- 3 words to describe you as a performer
- 3 words to describe the composer of a piece you are playing
- 3 words to describe the piece you are playing
- 3 words to describe you performing this piece in a performance environment

Circle your favorite of each group. Create a story that includes all these and describes your playing this piece. Write for two minutes without stopping. Then... read the text as you play it. Breathe before you begin. Mock play as you read. Then try it again. Tell the story through your playing.

### Conclusions:

- Explore your narrative
- We need to have a mental and physical process to prepare for performance AND for coming out of one! The emotional stake is a very intense one.
- Would you rather see a performer muscle their way through performance, or (in the words of Bruce Lee), flow through it like water
  - Example of talented musicians: "Their ability to play was not in question. Their ability to relax often was."
- How many of you obsessively check your instrument but never check yourselves before/after a performance? How many of you make that a regular part of your practice?
  - Dancers, actors, and musicians can hurt themselves without taking care of themselves
- How do you perceive yourself vs. the composer?
  - *Should* vs. *Could*... What are the possibilities you have and want?
  - You wrote about the composers as Gods but of yourselves as less than mortal.
  - Look at yourselves as the artist you are, and at the composers as the people they are to balance it out. Bring one up and the other down so that you can find that meeting point.
- Too often as performers we take our bodies for granted.

- You're not a diva for taking time for yourself. You have to take care of yourselves. You need to know how to prepare, how come out of it, and how to learn something during the actual performance
- Why do we still watch Hamlet... after 400 years? We don't want to hear a perfect machine. We want to hear an individual artists' interpretation of this work.

### **Chopin Without Piano:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAkoAebJERc>

<http://www.chopinwithoutpiano.com/>

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### **Additional thoughts (from Prof. Elizabeth Borowsky)**

#### **Body awareness:**

- Tension / Breath
  - Holding breath creates tension and increases the difficulty of the phrase we are holding our breath to get through
  - Breathing with a phrase (the way we speak/sing it) can help us understand the natural direction of emphasis, and where to breathe
  - If we don't breathe, can our audience?
- What do I look (and sound) like? [Posture/facial expressions]
  - Do we REALLY know? How does video feedback, working with a mirror, etc. allow us to improve?
  - Do I carry excess tension?
  - Is what I am trying to say/play coming across to my audience?
  - Is my body language detracting from my performance?

#### **Taking on a character - communicating meaning through your sound and through body language**

- Dynamics (piano/forte, sforzato, subito piano)
- Articulations
- Mood / character
- Facial expressions
- The art of the follow-through (basketball, baseball, golf... you must go beyond the note that you are playing and lead to the next one... make your intention clear)

#### **Expression / Phrasing**

- When there is repetition of the same words... the meaning must change (when there is repetition of the same phrase, the meaning must change).
- Musical conversations (e.g. pianists between the hands, or in chamber music, between instruments)

Musically: Where is the phrase leading? Context (harmony, beat hierarchy, etc) will help determine the answer and must be explored.

**Phrase direction / Emphasis of words...**

- I'm really excited to be here (without any)
- **I'm really excited to be here (all)**
- **I'm** really excited to be here
- I'm **really** excited to be here
- I'm really **excited** to be here
- I'm really excited to be **here**