

Some Questions for Music Majors

1. Am I curious enough?

Do I listen to enough kinds of different music? Do I read enough books? Do I look at enough art? Do I have a global view of music as an art form, or am I a jock on my instrument? Do I sight read enough? Is my reading attention span longer than 140 characters? Am I open to different points of view?

2. What are my goals?

How do I get there? Does the long game allow me to eat food and sleep indoors?¹ Do I have a plan to help me meet my goals, one step at a time? (Avoid the urge to skip rungs on the ladder... place your foot firmly on every step) Are my goals realistic? Are my peers that have similar goals as mine working harder than I am?

3. Did I attack my weaknesses today?

Am I even aware of what my weaknesses are? Am I honest about them? Is it okay to have weaknesses? (Yes, as long as they are temporary and replaced with a new recognizable weakness to conquer) What if focusing on my weaknesses makes me feel bad about my playing? (Suck it up. Deal with it. If a problem comes along, you must whip it.²)

4. Is that good, or just good enough?

Who are my role models? Do I sound like him/her yet? Should I compare myself to the finest players in the world? (Yes. Aim high) Am I doing more than it takes to meet the minimum of what should be expected from me? Am I striving on a daily, weekly, monthly basis to raise my bar?

5. Am I saying anything worth hearing?

The right notes, in the right place, is the bare minimum... am I striving for expression rather than mere competence? (Music is a communicative art form... if you aren't saying *something* you aren't saying anything.) Am I ever going to win an audition if my artistic expression isn't at least marginally captivating? (No.) Can I articulate the aesthetic principles, and the steps to meet those principles, that will make my work compelling?

6. Have I scheduled productive artistic time into my daily schedule?

Do I use a calendar to remind myself of my obligations? If so, do I have my practice/creative time scheduled? Am I lying or rationalizing to myself right now? What is my attendance policy for my practice/creative schedule? Is my creative time relegated to "If I have time for it" status? (If so, you aren't going anywhere) Do I want a life in the arts badly enough to prioritize my time?

¹ Andrew Hitz and Lance LaDuke

² Devo

7. Did I extend a kindness today?

Do I treat others the way that I would want to be treated? Do I present myself as the kind of person that people with whom people would be eager to work? Is there anything toxic about the way that I interact with my peers? (If so, stop it.) Is there anything that I can do to improve my profile in regards to professionalism and common courtesy?

8. Am I proud of my work and work ethic?

Do I go to bed every night feeling as though I did an honest day's work toward being a viable and effective artist/ educator? Did I work as hard as the guy/gal that I will meet at the audition? Will I meet someone at the audition that worked harder than I did? Do I think I'm doing enough to be competitive in a very competitive field?

9. Did I have fun today?

Is my life balance good? Do I enjoy the work that it takes to be an effective artist, or is it drudgery? Do I spend enough time laughing and loving?

10. Did I spend more time this week crafting an image that I am a good musician than working to become a good musician?

Did I spend more energy telling everyone on social media what a great artist I am than energy spent on being a great artist? (In the final analysis, your work will be what defines you, not your social media and/or self hype apparatus. Talk less. Do more.) Is it possible that people could perceive me as being "All hat, no cowboy"? Is your image one of slick marketing or one of hard work?

11. If I don't care, who is going to care on my behalf?

(No one. Period)