

A split-second is what it takes to become a winner. The moment of victory is so close and all sense of self-control is burning up. The finish line is approaching ... This is the world of pro-athletes. And musicians.



IRA YUGAY

# The Power of Visualisation

It takes courage to become the first musician in a family of professional athletes. My innate enthusiasm for music was undeniable and so my parents never pushed me onto a training circuit. Over time, we discovered a great mutual understanding for our craft and till this day we discuss topics that connect the two very similar worlds: professional sport and musicianship. Take for example the importance of visualisation. Athletes know that the very thought of victory during a match can shatter years of preparation. Musicianship requires the same mentality. But if thinking about victory is out of the question, what is supposed to be going through their minds?

Visualisation: “A technique to achieve a particular goal, involving a focus on the combination of two kinds of positive mental images: an aspiration (ambition) and a concrete ability (skills).” The level of thoroughness in a musician’s preparation is the same as an athlete’s. Both worlds visualise similar basic principles: controlled breathing, laser focus and a schedule. Their thinking during the study of new material is also similar: the imagining of a physical state, the structure of a piece and the solution to a difficult technical passage. On top of that, the specifics of a musician’s visualisation involve conveying the message that the piece of music contains by shaping and colouring sound. In a performance-context, it is worth focusing on every inspiring personal accomplishment up to date. Imagine the audience in the concert hall while expressing inner gratitude for them being there. Imagine having warm hands, remembering every detail of the score in succession and having a conversation with the composer while performing. In the end we’re preparing every aspect of our being to perform at the best of our ability.

After completing the preparation for the competition, it starts to be possible to experience every performance as a Zone of Growth. This level of readiness can be tested by, for example, visualising all rounds or days of a competition, with all of its separate performances as one whole. With performing then comes a state of enhanced Sense and Touch: the sense of being on stage and connecting with the audience, while physically touching the keys beneath our fingers and having our feet firmly grounded. This dual state of Sense and Touch proves to be undefinable, but is often lovingly referred to as “the flow-state,” or “the zone.” However, a small percentage of this final state of Sense and Touch will always be left up to fate. For some, this can seem like a lack of control over the situation during a performance. Realise that this is in fact a priceless individual experience, because it determines where we are in our development – for now.

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