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The Secret Psychology of a Pianist

By Paul Tobey

As a professional concert pianist I have over time developed a secret psychology that helps me in

any situation. You see, quite frankly I need a psychology that helps me because the music business is a tough business. If you're not sure you agree that it is tough then consider this; how many professional concert pianists do you know? Comparatively, how many doctors, lawyers, accountants, car salesmen, teachers or nurses do you know? Are you getting the picture?

The fact that very very few pianists actually make a professional concert career out of it shows us that it may not be that easy to do. Therefore, to keep going in an industry that continually turns talented pianists from aspiring concert professionals into teachers, one must develop a personal psychology to not only cope with the demands of the profession but, to keep going when all the odds say that it's not possible.

My personal psychology includes focusing on four main areas which when developed can propel me forward regardless of the competition or the demands of the job itself. These are the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical parts of my life. However, it is the first three that I focus on the most. In fact, the mental, emotional and spiritual parts of myself that I do have control over are reflected in my physical world. My physical world is just a printout of how I am feeling mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

So, when I feel like it's impossible to do something or achieve something in my career I turn to the three things that I can control. For example; let's say that I have a new concert opportunity coming up that's different than anything I've ever done before. As a matter of fact this is true. In a few months I'll be performing an entire evening's concert of my own music with a professional orchestra. That's right, I have to compose, arrange and practice nine movements of "The Road to Santiago" suite, a selection of songs that I wrote while walking a pilgrimage in 2004.

To many people this would seem like a huge undertaking. Well, it is. But, I don't really think of it that way. If I did, I'd never get it done. I cannot for one moment allow myself to get drawn into any negative state of mind. Therefore to cope, I turn to my mental state, emotional state and spiritual state to get me through it.

The Secret Psychology of a Pianist

How does this work? First of all let's focus on the mental state. My mental state means my logical mind. This is the part of my brain that draws upon its past experience to carry out the academic challenges of the job. In terms of my concert that would mean the preparation, practicing, business challenges and anything else that my brain has to figure out. To survive mentally with so many things going is only possible if I focus on one thing at a time. To achieve this I give one single task 100% of my energy until it's completed. Or, if I'm practicing, I give one piece 100% of my energy until I've learned it, then I do it again in 24 hours then again in 7 days. My retention rate for learning goes up 85% if I follow this formula.

Emotionally, it's far easier for me to remember that the outcome is part of my journey. Will I get everything right? Probably not. I will learn many things on this project, some of which I do not care to learn. But, everything I learn will get tucked away in my toolbox to use for next time. My emotions will be easier to handle if I just remain calm about everything and not let others distract me from my true

purpose, which is to do the best that I can do.

The spiritual parts of myself are most important in any situation. My belief system includes many teachings which I have adopted as my own truth. Examples of this are; I believe that everything happens for a reason. Therefore, no matter what happens up until the concert and no matter what happens during the concert, everything is perfect.

So far in this project many things have happened that I don't like. But, the spiritual parts of me know that it all comes out in the wash. I can push the envelope of a higher calling without having to worry about the outcome. The fact is if I shoot for the stars I'm at least going to hit the moon. And, no matter what anyone says about me before, during or after this concert it doesn't matter. What really matters is that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing and I'm going to learn something. Spiritually I believe that learning is the key to life itself. Otherwise, what would be the point?

If you are struggling in your own situation to find some answers consider adopting similar psychology. The, dive in and learn something. You'll be far better off than if you don't take the chance in the first place. I've never written or performed nine symphonies before. But, to me, the only risk is not taking one.

Paul Tobey's career as a

pianist

has earned him several awards and has taken him around the world.

He has recorded several CDs and performed hundreds of solo piano concerts and performed with various ensembles and orchestras.

Adrien Brody - Zero To Hero

By James Shenton

One of the least typecast actors in Hollywood, Adrien Brody — star of the new period biopic *Hollywoodland* — has defied critics by choosing a wide range of roles on the basis that they "look like fun". This approach has taken him from the most serious role imaginable, as a Polish Jew in Roman Polanski's *The Pianist*, to portraying Jack Driscoll in Peter Jackson's big budget adventure *King Kong*.

Despite Brody's seemingly overnight success in *The Pianist* — a role that made him the youngest actor to win the Oscar for Best Actor — he had actually been struggling to make a name for himself since he appeared in Steven Soderbergh's 1993 movie *King of the Hill*. He went on to receive praise for his turns in *The Thin Red Line* and *Summer of Sam*, but wasn't widely noticed until the success of *The Pianist*.

Since his Oscar success, however, Brody's movies — with the exception of M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village* — have tended to underperform at the box office. His 2005 psychological thriller *The Jacket* made only \$15million at the worldwide box office, barely half of its \$28million budget. Even the blockbuster *King Kong* failed to live up to expectations. In fact, his only success since *The Pianist* came from *Esquire Magazine*, who voted him Best Dressed Man in America 2004.

All this may be set to change, though, with the release of *Hollywoodland*, Brody's crime drama/biopic of Louis Simo, the detective investigating the suspicious death of TV's Superman, George Reeves, in 1959. Including Brody himself, the movie boasts two Oscar winners and two nominees — Ben Affleck, Bob Hoskins and Diane Lane. Such star power, combined with reports that *Hollywoodland* was described before production began as "one of the best scripts unproduced", will have Brody hoping to return to our good graces and box office success. Will it work? Well, we'll have to wait and see.

James Shenton is an oft-published entertainment writer and celebrity gossip columnist from New York. He has written about all subjects related to Hollywood, from movie star fashion to movie downloads. For more on this subject, please visit

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