

GET FEARLESS WITH JEFF NELSEN

FEARLESS AUDITION TRAINING FOR HORNISTS

JULY 31-AUGUST 4, 2008
INDIANA UNIVERSITY – JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC
BLOOMINGTON



Testimonials from three 2007
“F.A.T. for Hornists” attendees:

Audrey Good

Student at Rice University with Bill VerMeulen

Audition results since F.A.T. Seminar 2007:

Houston Symphony	4th horn audition	Finalist
San Antonio Symphony	2nd/4th horn audition	Runner-up
Charleston Symphony	2nd horn audition	Winner
Nashville Symphony	4th horn audition	Finalist

Excerpt from her testimonial. Full version found below.

“...by going to Fearless Camp last year and openly addressing those feelings of nervousness and lack of control we get when we’re about to audition, that alone was a relief! Then, luckily, in addition to addressing the fear we experience, you gave us tools and strategies to begin to eliminate the self-defeating thoughts and habits we all pick up along the way...”

Alena Zidlicky

Student at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with Kaz Machala

“Getting fearless is GREAT!!! I never realized how much your perceptions and attitude about your own horn playing can be so

effective! When you really learn how to let go of all those negative thoughts, it's really liberating! It's really a life changing experience. Since I've gone through the fearless camp, I've found that performing in front of others has been very easy, and I feel great about playing! It's like getting back to the days when playing horn was FUN!"

Jenny Smoak

Student at Indiana University with Jeff Nelsen

"With the intense auditioning training that we had every day throughout the week in FAT camp, I learned the excerpts I was working on better than I have ever known any piece of music. When the fall orchestra audition came around, I performed the best audition I have given to this day. I had never felt so prepared musically and fearlessly as I did for that audition. I also used all of the knowledge and lessons from FAT camp for the next orchestra audition, and again they served me so well! I felt so comfortable walking into the audition room because I had practiced that walk and that feeling hundreds of times prior to that one. When I sat down, I remembered that the judges "wanted me to do well" and I successfully played as fearlessly as I could!! I felt so great about the auditions I played for since FAT camp...I take the lessons and techniques everywhere I go: the practice room, the stage, or the audition room because they help every aspect of my playing."

SOME RANDOM THOUGHTS ABOUT "FEARLESS AUDITION TRAINING FOR HORNISTS"

Do you get nervous in performance situations? I do too. Everyone gets nervous. Getting nervous is a direct result of choosing to fear something about a situation.

Fear can be healthy. Fear of death gets us to look both ways before crossing a street. Fear of a bad performance gets us into the practice room.

When our fear (or the opposite: our love of music) gets us into the

practice room, most of our time is spent improving our technical abilities and honing our musical sensibilities. These are useful practice-room goals. These two aspects help us operate a horn well. The nervousness comes into play when we enter a **performance** situation. This is where the third aspect, fearless performance training, gives us tools with which we can transcend our nervousness. We learn how to replace getting nervous with setting higher goals, like making wonderful music.

A very broad definition of **performance** is: “When what you do, matters.”

In performance, you share three fundamental abilities. Your execution of them creates an overall impression that your audition panel takes with them when they go to make a decision about you.

Technical Abilities – your technique of making sounds

Music Making Abilities – your musical sensibilities

Performing Abilities – Fearlessness - what you think while performing

Our level of nerves is inversely proportionate to our level of preparation. Our level of preparation is optimally increased through training in all three areas mentioned above. The third area (fearlessness) is the most neglected. This is where we learn how to replace our choice to fear the stage and what consequences lie ahead with optimism and trust in our technical and musical preparation.

We can learn constructive performing abilities. These abilities refine what we think right before we walk onstage, when we miss a note, or when a cell phone goes off during a performance. If we play well in spite of destructive inner dialogue, imagine what we can do with a naïve or stupid inner dialogue saying, “Yeah, awesome, go for it, oops, yeah, cool, you’re doing great!”

Fear is a choice.

Through “Fearless” training, we can replace fear with higher goals,

like spinning an amazing phrase and connecting to our audience. *“Most people don’t aim too high and miss. They aim too low and hit.”*

If we set our practice room goals for accuracy, a steady rhythm, and “getting all the printed musical instructions right”, then when we nail that in performance, we’ve only achieved that goal. A computer can make this achievement. This is also a goal that 20% of every auditioning crowd is reaching!

If we make every note we ever play be the most amazing musical experience of our lives, this goal includes accuracy and crescendos, but also replaces “don’t miss that note” thoughts, and brings with it your unique musical opinions. This listening experience is what connects to an audience, and stands out at an audition.

For most people who are not succeeding at auditions, it’s not because they can’t operate a horn well. It’s because they can’t operate a horn well when they decide they’re in pressure situations.

I believe someone can never be too smart, but I think we can be too intelligent. I define intelligence as the amount of knowledge and information someone has in their brain. I define smartness as the way someone uses (or forgets) this knowledge or information.

We are being too intelligent when we know certain thoughts are destructive, but we choose to think them anyway. Thinking these thoughts is fine. Not replacing them with constructive thoughts is less that optimal.

For example, I’m not being smart in performance if I choose to think about how the audition panel’s decision will map out my entire future. We don’t control their decision. We can’t control perception, only presentation. Thinking about our futures while we’re in performance only clutters our minds with destructive thoughts. When those thoughts linger, I’ve trained myself to leap to another thought. These are replacement thoughts, like “I love this excerpt! Beethoven has so much passion. Check out this version of Mahler, everyone!”

We are being too intelligent when we choose to think about how

much we want to win an audition while we're performing in the audition. "Wanting" is intent. "The smallest action is worth more than the biggest intent." Wanting can only get us into the practice room, and get us to practice well. Thinking about how much we want this gig while we're in performance only clutters our mind with thoughts that get in the way of our music making.

Being smart comes down to choosing well. We are responsible for all the choices we make. We can learn to choose naïve realities if it serves us well. It does serve us well when we're onstage performing to think that the audience wants us to perform well. Even if there's someone out there we know doesn't want us to play well, we're better set up to succeed if we are blissfully unaware of that person, and we just pour our hearts openly into our music for that simulated appreciative audience.

Choose music over fear!

Getting nervous is not destructive on its own. It's when we don't tend to the "I'm nervous" signals with constructive response and replacement thoughts that we get into trouble.

Why do only some of similarly technically proficient players win auditions? It is because only some of them are training in all three areas of performance – technical abilities with the body, musical abilities with the heart, and performance abilities with the head.

The people succeeding at performing well are studying and combining all three performance factors together. Neglecting or elevating one ability over the others will make one's performance suffer. If you want to look deeply into your performing abilities, come to Fearless Audition Training for Hornists. We'll look deeply into horn technique and music making throughout the seminar as well!

Fearless Audition Training for Hornists is open to professionals, students, and teachers interested in becoming fearless performers. During this five day seminar, participants will learn 'fearless tools' which build consistency in performing optimally in any situation. Training

will take place in the environment that holds the most potential for a fearful experience – an audition!

Extensive preparation and performance experience in an audition setting will be the focus of the seminar. Frequent mock auditions will include pre-performance coaching, videotaping of participant's auditions, and post-performance critiques...followed by more mock auditions.

Jeff will share his fearless auditioning techniques throughout the seminar in lecture, master class and private lesson settings.

Full testimonial from 2007 "F.A.T. for Hornists" attendee

Audrey Good

Student at Rice University with Bill VerMeulen

Post "Fearless" training audition experience:

Houston Symphony	4th horn audition	Finalist
San Antonio Symphony	2nd/4th horn audition	Runner-up
Charleston Symphony	2nd horn audition	Winner
Nashville Symphony	4th horn audition	Finalist

Those are the successes. There was also one sub-list audition that went horribly, and I almost think THAT is the most important thing for me to tell you about. About two months before the Houston 4th audition, they held an audition for their sub list. VerMeulen prepared us all for it very well...I felt ready on the excerpts...and then the day of the audition??? I totally crashed and burned (an elaborate and now-humorous story), and truthfully, the only reason I totally screwed it up was because of the attitude with which I approached it.

Going against everything people tell you before you take an audition, and going DIRECTLY against everything we learned at Fearless Camp, instead of trying to make music and show them what I had to offer, I tried to hide, and rather than make any kind of statement, tried hard instead to play things that wouldn't "offend"

anybody on the panel. I played with fear about accuracy...intonation...style...and wow, that didn't work. Just as you and VerMeulen had predicted, apparently the panel was looking for people who had something to OFFER, not somebody who could play notes blandly and non-offensively...ha ha...

All of my friends made the sub list; I was the only one who didn't. Ouch.

I wasn't upset because of the failure, so much as the reason for it. It's a terrible feeling to spend all of that time training yourself and honing your craft on these excerpts, only to go in and cheat yourself out of a good audition because of what might go wrong. For the Houston audition shortly thereafter, I knew I had to change my mental approach. Once I did, things turned around immediately. The DVD of my Fearless auditions came right before the Houston audition, and I sat on my bed a few days before the audition and reviewed how I had sounded then and all of the concepts we had covered--coincidence? I think not!!!

Fearless Camp did help the actual nuts and bolts of my playing improve, and the musical concepts we discussed for each excerpt certainly added a level of sophistication to my performance. By far the MOST IMPORTANT concepts were those related to the mental process of auditioning. Talking about the feelings of audition anxiety and fear we all experience seems in many horn studios a "taboo" subject, as though perhaps we're the only musician in the whole wide world who feels panicked when we're about to perform. It sounds silly, but I used to think that, too! By going to Fearless Camp last year and openly addressing those feelings of nervousness and lack of control we get when we're about to audition, that alone was a relief! Then, luckily, in addition to addressing the fear we experience, you gave us tools and strategies to begin to eliminate the self-defeating thoughts and habits we all pick up along the way.

For more information visit:

www.music.indiana.edu/special_programs/fearless/

or

www.jeffnelsen.com