

## Desire and Motivation Pt. 1

None of us can predict the path our success will take. In the orchestral world, a rare few win their first audition, but a more common experiences is around 20-30. My personal magic number was 6. What I wasn't expecting was the flood of thoughts and insecurities that arose AFTER winning my first audition. You would think that winning an audition would provide some kind of external validation, but that feeling was fleeting. Starting your first job as a young professional can feel a bit like being a Freshman again, except that now your colleagues include every player you ever idolized as a student. As soon as my position in the Houston Symphony became my new baseline reality (I know, just leave it there), a whole host of unexpected new worries arose. What if that was it? What if that was my one shot? Was I just "lucky" at the audition, or did I really have what it takes? What if I took another audition and didn't make it out of the Prelims? Would everyone think my success was a fluke? I found myself wholly unprepared to address these questions.



I decided to play a mental game with myself to test my resolve. I fantasized a number of scenarios to see what my gut reaction would be. This strategy can be applied to any

situation, but I will describe it in the context of my “post success apprehension”. It involves a series of “what if” questions about possible outcomes. As Malcolm Gladwell points out in his book “Blink”, when presented with a choice, our subconscious frequently makes snap decisions outside of our conscious awareness. As I asked these questions, I tried to pay attention to my initial reactions before I had a chance to script my responses. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. The idea is to simply be as unfiltered as possible. It takes a lot of focus to give an honest answer and not to craft a response that you wish you would make, think you should make, etc. Gladwell notes that our conscious awareness of a choice is frequently a rationalization generated to explain the unseen workings of the subconscious.

Here is a set of questions that I actually asked myself, complete with any associate excursions down the “rabbit hole”.

-How many more auditions are you willing to take?

-What if 6 actually was my “magic number”?

-Would you be ok with winning only every 6th audition?

-What if the result would be “guaranteed”, but only if you went “all in” on every audition, knowing that you would come up short 5/6 of the time, and there would be no way to avoid the feelings of disappointment and rejection even though you were eventually promised a win.

-What if the rate of success was exponential instead of parallel? For example, first success at 6, second at 12 (6+6), third at 24 (6+6+12), etc?

-At what point do you start to waiver in your resolve, and say “no more”?

As I mentioned before, there are no “correct answers”. I found for myself that there was no weakness in my resolve. This was oddly liberating. I realized that it didn’t matter how many auditions it took or what the circumstances were; I just needed to shut up and get to work. I believe I had a certain advantage in that I had high-level professional experience before I actually won my first job. I distinctly remember how it felt to realize that all of the hard work, sacrifice, and disappointments would be worth it in order to gain and retain the experiences I was having substituting for a year in the Los Angeles Philharmonic. This epiphany was at

least as important if not more important than the actual on the job experience.

It can be hard to come to terms with the idea finding success can be fundamentally unfair. Most of the time you don't achieve something just because you want it, or if you deserve, and certainly not if you think you are owed it. Examining your resolve can help you come to a deeper understanding of the true nature of your motivations, and whether or not you are really willing to do "whatever it takes". Desire, no matter how intense, can be fleeting. Need, much like Life, "uh, finds a way."



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If you have any questions, comments, ideas you'd like explored, or inspiration you'd like to share please email: [davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com](mailto:davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com).

With Love,

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