

## Confidence

When my phone rang after a BSO concert where we performed Debussy's La Mer (and I played the 14 notes of the ever challenging 2nd cornet part.ha!), I assumed my parents were calling to let me know how much they enjoyed the performance, but before talk of lush sonority or intricate writing emerged from our conversation, my mom, as grounded and supportive as she always is, announced that I need to be more cocky.

You see, my high school, by sheer coincidence, had a field trip the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall in Baltimore to see this performance of La Mer, and when they found out I was playing in the orchestra, they requested to see me after the concert. I went to the green room and talked to them for a few minutes before they loaded onto their buses and departed for Pennsylvania. We talked about being an orchestral musician and the amount of hard work and dedication it takes to make it (though I am only a sub and haven't yet made it). I joked with them about who practices over three hours a day like I did in high school versus who had a social life, which I certainly did not. But, when my parents proclaimed that I should be cockier, I really started thinking about confidence, ego, cockiness, and what we should or should not be in our lives.

That leads me to the topic of this article: what is confidence? A friend articulately described confidence as "knowing you can gracefully handle anything that comes up." You'll notice that this definition has nothing to do with ego, in fact it deals with the opposite: grace. Personally, I think confidence could be defined as "the ability to successfully rely on past positive experience." Again, most adjectives commonly associated with a confident person are missing from these definitions. Often the people that talk the loudest, the most, or the funniest are interpreted to be the most confident. Think of someone you know that you describe as ultra-confident. Do they display these traits? I would venture to say that what we perceive as confidence is really quite the opposite; it is masked insecurity.

So then, what is confidence? Confidence can be quiet, humble, and mild. Confidence is knowing who you want to be and sticking to it, not allowing others to negatively influence your character or personality. Confidence is courage to be an individual and stand on your own legs and walk through the world as you. Confidence allows for creative freedom. Confidence builds and conformity destroys. True confidence comes from within each person. To be truly confident, you must search within and find the core of who YOU are. Being all of your true "YOU" is confidence. Understanding who you are, who you strive to be, and sticking to that path, regardless of where it takes you, is confidence.

Throughout the music business (and especially the trumpet end of the business) many people misunderstand the association between confidence and cockiness. They believe that one includes the other. This is simply not the case. The greatest trumpeters that I know (ie. David Bilger, Chris Gekker, Peter Bond, Craig Morris, etc) are the least offensive, arrogant, and egotistical people I know. They are down-to-earth, humble, gracious, and generous. Do they not have confidence? Of course they do, but they understand no one is better than anyone else, and that everyone deserves to be treated with respect. Therefore their confidence and their personality have not unraveled like so many others who come off as rude, harsh, irritating, gossipy, obnoxious, or completely self-absorbed.

The point of this article is simple: If you want to be truly confident, first, decide who you are. Are you happy with your current choices? Do you want to become someone different, a more believable façade of yourself, or more of your true self? Once you make that analysis and choice you have reached the summit and the rest is downhill from there. Climb with caution though, because the more you realize what is real and what is fake in your own personality, the more other peoples' masks will be obvious to you.