



Taking Charge of your
Performance Career:
Performing Online

10 - 16 December 2020
musicnetwork.ie



Wednesday 16 December, 11am

Extending your Practice Online with
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and Gwendolyn Masin

Extending your Practice Online

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Self-inquiry 1: Sitting in a relaxed but balanced way, release any tension you are aware of and notice your peripheral vision if you find that you are pulled into “narrow focus” attention. *Ask yourself: what would make you truly happy?* This can include both “worldly” (career, places, people, things) and more “spiritual” concepts, long and short-term. Second question: *What tools do you currently have at your disposal (or can develop) to support physical and mental wellbeing in the current situation and long-term?* Think about the analogy of not being able to pour from an empty cup. Cultivate your own toolkit.

Self-inquiry 2: *Is there an existing or new interest related or in addition to making music that is waiting to be nurtured? Is there anything you already do that you can share with others?* Adversity can be catalyst for positive change. It's OK to TAKE TIME to use this opportunity to mourn, reflect, decide on what to do next without putting on pressure or rushing if at all possible. Remember that in order to take your work online, you don't have to be active on every social media platform all the time. Identify your “market niche”: consider interviewing your target audience to find out what they need in their own words (see “resources”).

Self-inquiry 3: *Thinking back to what would make you truly happy, what would you like to receive as support from others? Envision this happening as and when needed. Is there anything that you need to let go of that is holding you back (habits)? Imagine releasing these on your exhale. What “virtues” / skills can you grow in yourself, like seeds? See these expanding with every inhale. What would you like to give back to the world based on your unique experience, education, interests and capacity (what is it about performing that you love - are there transferrable skills that can be used in other contexts)? Envision everyone delighted with your gifts, your unique participation. Finally, relate to the here and now: what steps can you take today to facilitate your happiness? Don't wait until “ideal conditions”.*

Resources:

- The self-inquiry practice of finding “happiness” is based on the “Maitri Vision Quest” exercise from the Insight Yoga teachings of Sarah Powers.
<https://sarahpowers.com/sp/>
- A recording of one of my webinars on performance anxiety and the inner critic is available here (with specific focus on teaching, but the same concepts apply to all performance situations including reflections on what to do before we perform to get out of negative “worry-loops”): <https://youtu.be/AA4nx7menDg>
- Tips on starting an online (wellness) business: “Wellpreneur” book by Amanda Cook
<https://wellpreneur.com>
- Mindful computing: “The Distraction Addiction” by Alex Soojong Kim Pang, “Deep Work” by Cal Newport, “Indistractable” by Nir Eyal, resources by Alexandra Franzen (for example, “Is it possible to run a business without social media?”
<http://www.alexandrafranzen.com/2015/08/20/is-it-possible-to-run-a-business-without-using-social-media/>)



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I TEACH TRAD

Professional Development for Irish Traditional Music Teachers

Here are my top 10 tips for re-imagining your practice online:

1. Be open to re-invention – and keep a growth mindset
2. Mine your own experience – there is gold there!
3. Don't be afraid to be seen learning (and sometimes failing) in public
4. Ditch perfectionism
5. Look after yourself
6. Give TIME to the business side of things
7. Reflect often
8. Seek out any supports available (financial and other)
9. Try new things ... and outsource what's not for you!
10. Find a Mentor *"Our chief want in life is somebody who will make us do what we can."* (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

... and, of course, keep reading anything and everything!

Here is one of my current favourite books:

[Big Magic - Creative Living Beyond Fear](#) by Elizabeth Gilbert

Please feel free to get in touch if I can be of any help – liz@iteachtrad.com

Best of luck with it all!

Liz Doherty

EXTENDING YOUR PRACTICE ONLINE

With Dr Gwendolyn Masin
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Thank you for the privilege of speaking and sharing with you.

I think that two of the continuous briefs inherent to being an artist are:

1. Giving back to the community, if you can
2. Being a critical observer of time

Since many years, I've carried around with me a wish to create a place for musicians and artists to be able to experience a retreat, as opposed to a straight-forward music course. I feel that

FOR US TO LIVE IN AND THROUGH MUSIC, WE NEED A PLACE WHERE WE CAN BEGIN AN INNER JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING, WITHOUT OUTWARD EXPECTATION. WE NEED A PLACE WHERE WE CAN LEARN TO EXHALE.

I have wanted to create that retreat where at the end, there is no concert for the audience – the connection we build is to ourselves and to our community, so that when we do go back on stage, we have a sense of having discovered something about ourselves and music that allows us to story tell and perform music with utter commitment, passion, conviction and stage presence – to be in the moment, freed of concerns of what everyone else is thinking, and completely engaged in the contract we have gone into with the composer we are playing.

After years of somatic study and practice, and my own journey through repetitive strain injury, I designed The Exhale early on in 2019. Pregnant with the creation of this first iteration of The Exhale that was to take place at the lake of Biel in Switzerland, as well as pregnant with my first child, I put things together with the help of one assistant.

The Exhale offers musicians a safe space to pause, explore and refresh, free from the competitiveness that we are only too familiar with, and open to inclusion of people and subjects that aren't commonly found in third-level institutions. It is part of my objective to destigmatise the vulnerability that is part and parcel of being a musician, and see that vulnerability as a precious strength. Behind the discipline, professionalism and creativeness that music-making demands, I recognise a need for an internal wellbeing, both emotional and physical. My vision is a retreat for professional, student and amateur players alike, with exceptional music-making running alongside sessions for the mind and body. The Exhale originally hosted eleven artists who would guide participants along various paths through music, movement, coaching and nutrition. World-class instrumental-teaching would be intermingled with yoga, explorations in nutrition, Alexander Technique, psychology, Feldenkrais Method, Dispokinesis, improvisation, meditation, breath awareness and coaching. The Exhale had 48 participants initially, who would come from all over the world to gather and learn. It was set to take place during Easter 2020.

Like everything else, The Exhale has been impacted by the necessary measures against the spread of COVID-19. During a time when the live music experience has, by and large, little option other than to admit defeat, I decided to rise to the challenge and rethink. As Goethe wrote, “fresh activity is the only means of overcoming adversity”. Instead of cancelling The Exhale, I decided to bring it online. I wanted to keep the commitment I had made to the participants, and the faculty.

Within its first two weeks online, we had over 1000 registrations for our classes. We were positively overwhelmed and quickly learned to upskill to keep abreast of ever-changing digital possibilities, the shifting sands of social media, and the intensity of taking music online. We have always maintained that what we teach online is not a replacement for the live experience, but an extension of it, complimentary to what we do in a live context. As it turns out, some things are more effective to explain online than they are offline.

I see a growth in feelings of isolation and loneliness since a number of years, not just amongst musicians, but also amongst the general population. So I decided to ensure our classes and sessions are interactive and welcoming to all.

We now number more than 40 core faculty members, 35 further guest artists, and a team of 7, who bring the classes to the public.

I really want to continue to ensure that The Exhale remains, in the words of one of our faculty members:

“a very special place where there is a mutual respect and open trust for sharing resonating thoughts and ideas that come from an honest and sincere place in all of us”

Feel free to come along sometime – we would love to meet you and grow with you.

View presentation slides

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ohmd4fyk76657ys/Gwendolyn%20Masin%20presentation%20slides%20%282%29.pdf?dl=0>

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