
Subject: OT: Astounded at this musician's tenacity and drive
Posted by [Aaron Allen](#) on Sun, 30 Jul 2006 00:14:48 GMT
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This is a multi-part message in MIME format.

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This is just too good not to share with all of you here.=20

I encourage your heartily to explore her website. Be warned, you will =
very likely find immense inspiration there.=20

http://www.evelyn.co.uk/live/hearing_essay.htm

This is just a sampling. Below find her refreshing thoughts in an open =
letter to her professional music peers.

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Dear Colleagues,

My comments here demonstrate my huge concern over what our business is =  
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naturally "stubborn" and do not just accept the dismissal of a need when =  
there is an urgent requirement for its address in a healthy, open, =  
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I'll just repeat that:- an urgent need for healthy, open, honest and =  
constructive dialogue from all quarters of the business and beyond.

So who are our customers ? While my employer may be the many orchestras =  
and other promoters that hire me to perform over 100 performances per =  
year, my customer is actually the paying public who come to these venues =  
and events to be entertained and stimulated by our artistic endeavours =  
and experience the passion which we bring to our specialties. An artist =  
without passion is the same as any other employee who is just doing =  
their job - the extra effort makes the difference.

I was rehearsing in the wonderful Disney Hall in Los Angeles - the new =  
building designed by Frank Geary - and looked up and counted =

approximately 200 fixed lighting features and about 20 moving light = fixtures - I walked past far more backstage. There is also a fantastic = sound system built into and especially for the space. I was banned from = using all of it and was told that "This is a concert Hall and not a = theatre" and that the logistics of the event in which I was involved = excluded even the modest audio reinforcement that I and the composer had = requested. We have all the ingredients right in front of our faces to = consistently put on great events but at this point I see this part of = the music business and many of our performances like the ingredients of = a cocktail sitting in a glass and needing to be shaken or stirred.

So what is the difference? Is it only the monotone costumes which are = worn, a throwback to 19th century waiter's attire? Or is it that an = orchestral concert is 'culture' and therefore above the crude wrappings = of theatre and entertainment ?=20

Brushing aside the arrogance of this assumption I must reply with = another question: =20

"Why can a questionably talented teenager fill a 50 thousand seat = stadium with top priced tickets and put on a great show when a hugely = talented 100 piece orchestra struggles to fill 1 to 2 thousand seat = venues?"=20

The elitism and refusal to accept that what orchestras are doing now is = far less relevant to the general public is answered by the old mantra = "they need to be educated" .=20

Perhaps "They" are not the problem.

Similarly, I do not believe that entrenching ourselves in tried, trusted = and accessible repertoire is the answer. It cannot be denied that the = composers of these pieces are great composers with many wonderful works = available to us to experience. It is the only reason why these pieces = continue to be performed. However, with the advent of the myriads of = alternative entertainments available to the public why should they want = to come to hear the same thing time and time again done in exactly the = same way? We would not expect a contemporary artist to continue to play = the same repertoire endlessly and continue to make a living yet this is = exactly what we see the orchestras doing.

There is currently a surging interest in seeing live events, the general = public is willing to pay to see attractions onstage and to be = inconvenienced for the pleasure. Yet we see a continued decline in = attendances at the many classical venues around the world. The argument = that "the audiences will return when they get rid of the kids" is = proving to be untrue. Costs and expenses rise relentlessly and in the = "Cultured" arts these costs are born by long suffering sponsors and =

patrons which is both amazing and testament to the goodwill of the many = that do. Think what has been spent in time and money to organize fancy = receptions, after concert dinners, luncheons and suchlike and how that = money could be spent on improving the event we experience on stage.

How long can this generosity and benevolence be expected to continue?

In the many stages that I visit throughout the world I see varying = levels of support but labour laws in the USA allows for the insistence = that any number of crews be allowed to work an event irrespective of = what is actually required. I travel with my own technician and with one = sound and lighting technician from a venue can set up and rig my = increasingly technically demanding performances in one day from scratch. = This, when contrasted against the nauseatingly labour intensive New York = venues would appear to be a minor miracle. As an example of this I was = invited to perform at Carnegie Hall a few years ago and my 20 flight = cases were removed to the sidewalk from the truck by a crew of 9, a = second crew then brought the cases the remaining 30 meters to below the = stage where the venue crew had the right to insist that they exclusively = build my instruments despite my own technician being present and indeed = the only person who knew how to assemble the instruments. He could only = stand watching but was allowed to "point"! The apathy shown to both the = orchestra and I - who were unable to finish the rehearsal because of the = crew having to go to dinner - is beyond belief. Be under no = misunderstanding: while the venue at Carnegie hall is indeed wonderful, = working there is a trial and some balance is required where each person = working on an event is justified and knows what we are ALL aiming for as = a team - to please our customers.

And all the time the sponsors are paying for this.

I have had the good fortune of having led a successful career for over = 21 years. I have performed on many stages throughout the world to Kings, = Queens and Presidents, the great and the good. I will be the first to = admit that I have been most fortunate. I can only put my success down to = MY mantra:=20

"Making a difference".

Putting it another way, if we believe in what we are doing and do our = best to achieve it we can do no more. This is proven historically with = motivated individuals succeeding despite the huge odds stacked against = them. I believe in what I do as does the committed team that I have the = pleasure of working with. I expect nothing less from the orchestras and = other performers I visit and work with and this must include the = assorted managers, agents and backstage folk who are needed to play = their part. We are all part of the chain. Excellence is required from me = as a performer on stage. It will be my name in the paper the days after =

the event. I expect, not ask, the same dedication from all members =  
involved in the event.=20

I will not sit idly on one side when there is an urgent need to rethink =  
what and how we do things. The times have changed from when we could =  
rely on a fresh audience turning to our activities in mid-life and the =  
business model has changed immeasurably. I do not wish to be performing =  
the same pieces in the same way next time I am asked and will not be =  
doing the same thing in the same way in 5 years time; we must =  
continually reinvent what we do to remain fresh and appealing to our =  
customers.

I believe that one of the first things that must be done is to set the =  
stage for our audiences. I recently had the pleasure of seeing the Blue =  
Man Group in Toronto. From the minute that I walked through the door =  
there was a total 'Blue Man experience'. This approach must be =  
considered from the orchestras. I feel it is unacceptable and scruffy to =  
be able to watch the musicians wandering around on stage practicing the =  
pieces they will be performing while the audience is walking in. It =  
doesn't happen at the Opera, the Ballet or at the theatre. Even a bar or =  
wedding Band doesn't spend the beginnings of their set practicing and =  
warming up - how has it become acceptable for an orchestra to do so? =  
Players can arrive to warm up on stage but depart once "doors open" =  
which I as a soloist need to do - it would be absurd to see any soloist =  
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dressing the stage, presenting the performance appropriately and =  
engagingly with performers who appear happy to be there and welcoming to =  
the audience are small and totally inexpensive steps which will =  
radically change the current orchestral experience.=20

To further expand on possibilities, the increasingly affordable =  
technological opportunities available to us all allows a degree of =  
audience participation and involvement which was previously unaffordable =  
except for special occasions. It is now possible to run a visual =  
presentation during a performance which expands the experience to the =  
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to suggest that to be true?

I am a performer now because at the age of 12 I saw my school orchestra =  
on stage during an assembly which whetted my interest in percussion. I =  
was encouraged by my Head-teacher, school teachers, and subject teacher =  
to take the opportunity to participate in music-making. I was lucky that =  
this universal enthusiasm and vision was prevalent throughout the whole =  
school for all subjects. This was an unusual situation and is now =  
virtually unheard of after successive governments in the UK, America and =

other countries have continued to cut back on funding for the Arts and =  
for education in the Arts. On the rare occasions when a younger audience =  
is present we should not be compounding the problem with aloof and =  
distant performances. If the performer is not excited by the prospect of =  
their performance, how can our audiences be expected to be excited. So, =  
our question is: why should an audience come to our concerts?=20

Despite the classical orchestras being perhaps the older of the Arts we =  
have not learnt new tricks. The pop world, theatre, dance and the =  
graphic and written arts have all reinvented themselves and where =  
deserved, thrive. This is also known as evolution.

Is this old dog going to learn new tricks or should it be taken to the =  
Vet for that final, kind, last injection ?=20

Every single time someone comes through the doors of our venues it is =  
the opportunity to plant a new seed, to inspire . Perhaps they could =  
become the next great performer, perhaps the inspired performance they =  
see will inspire still further and another great incarnation will occur. =  
Perhaps they will feel compelled to donate to the Arts or perhaps they =  
may simply and quietly buy a subscription ticket.

Please consider your actions, your inactions and remember to ask, "What =  
can I do to make a difference today?"

Evelyn Glennie OBE, June 2006=20

I choose Polesoft Lockspam to fight spam, and you?

<http://www.polesoft.com/refer.html>

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