

PREPARING FOR MY RECITAL

A Senior Honors Recital

by Sherry R. Jones

Thesis Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "W. J. Keintrop", written over a horizontal line.

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May 1990

Graduating May 5, 1990

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Timothy Gallway has written a book entitled The Inner Game of Tennis that outlines the principles, both physical and mental, of the tennis player and his game. In recent years, athletes and musicians alike have begun to draw correlations between preparing for an athletic event and a musical performance in terms of the demands that are placed on the individuals' body. In fact, Timothy Gallway was recently joined by Barry Green, string bassist with the Cincinnati Symphony, in writing a follow-up to Gallway's book, in which the principles of tennis are applied to music. This book is entitled The Inner Game of Music. As a musician, I believe that a solo performance can be approached in much the same manner as an athletic competition, with particular attention to the technical, physical, and mental demands.

I have chosen to discuss the technical demands first as this is the area that requires the most attention, with particular emphasis being placed upon coordination, determination, and dedication. Playing a stringed instrument may very well be one of the most difficult in terms of coordinating the bow arm to the left hand finger action, and the hand and eye coordination that is involved in reading music from the page and then translating the information to the instrument itself. There are no frets on a violin, like there is on a guitar, so violinists learn to play by feel as well as by sight and by ear. This type of technical training begins as soon as the instrument is taken up and must be continually fostered and developed if the musician is to someday enjoy a successful and pleasing solo performance. While it is always important to strive for perfection, one must realize that the process is ongoing and improvement will continue to be made as long as he is determined to stick with it, and is dedicated to the cause, so to speak. A single level of perfection does not exist, therefore one must always continue to strive for the next step beyond. I believe the saying goes that the musician should never practice only

until he gets it right, but until he cannot get it wrong.

The next stage in preparing for a performance is physical. The process of practice and music analysis is exhausting and requires that the musician be in excellent health and physical condition. He must have developed a high level of endurance and stamina which results in part from the process of technical training. I gave particular attention to my diet and exercise schedule in the months before my recital. Regular exercise made me feel at my physical best, and I was able to maintain a healthy routine of sleep and activity so that I was not physically run-down prior to my recital. A good night's sleep the night before my recital was undoubtedly the best present that I could have given myself, and helped me to have the proper mental attitude when the day finally arrived.

The stress of anticipation is enough to drive even the sanest person crazy, and the ability to control that stress is the key to a successful performance. About three days prior to the recital I experienced a horrifying emotion: fear. I took a complete leave of my senses. Fortunately, my practicality took over and I was able to analyze the situation at hand to the point of control. Technically, I was prepared. I could play everything on my program with a good deal of comfortability and didn't expect any surprises. Physically, I was in the best shape that I had ever been, and I knew that I had the endurance and stamina needed to get me through the hour long performance. Mentally,...well, I was slowly pulling myself together. This was now the most crucial aspect of the day's performance, I simply made up my mind that I was ready, I was not going to fret, and I was going to give a good, if not great, recital. And, I did. I was completely at ease by the time I took the stage Sunday afternoon, April 29, 1990 at 3:00 p.m., and was able to perform in such a way that touched both audience and performer alike.

While I'm glad that it is finally over, I must look now to the future for the next performance. I must continue to push myself to overcome the next technical difficulty and to maintain a positive and healthy physical and mental state. There is a science to the performance and once a formula is developed and internalized, subsequent success is sure to follow.