Angela Answers

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Whatever Happened to My Summer Break?

BY Angela Myles Beeching

Dear Angela: Every summer I travel to and perform in three festivals. One of them is my own, and includes a host of administrative and interpersonal duties. It's a lot, and though I love most of this, I end up feeling totally depleted. Any suggestions?

I'm exhausted just hearing what you pack into your summers!

When we're young, being busy may feel just right. We're out to "prove" ourselves and we want to build our bio with performance credits and noteworthy projects. But eventually, we start to consider our quality of life. And since COVID, musicians of all ages have been rethinking their priorities.

How we use our time and attention matters

. . . because these are our most precious resources. Summer is especially important because it's prime time for renewing body, mind, and spirit. This can happen through traditional R&R, like being more physically active and connected to nature, or spending quality time with family and friends. Or it can be a time to recharge your inspiration, such as by reading and dreaming, seeing films and plays, experimenting with fresh ideas, planning projects for the coming year, and clarifying goals—for your artistry, your career, and your life.

Even during the busy summer festival season, it's possible to work some of these renewal activities into your schedule. But you need to prioritize this to make it happen. That means turning off screens and interacting with people, nature, art, and your inner world. In other words, connecting with *life* itself.

And if the festival workload is so hectic that the stress erases the benefits of your renewal activities, then it's time to rethink your commitments.

The real reasons we stay busy

See which of these fit. You may be . . .

- Afraid to say no and disappoint others, or worried you won't be invited back
- Unwilling to delegate tasks and responsibilities (especially with our own festival)
- Uncomfortable with change, so you stick with what's familiar
- Perfectionistic: you work harder and longer instead of working smarter
- Reluctant to negotiate for a better schedule or lighter workload, for fear of being regarded as "difficult"
- Secretly *proud* of how busy you are—believing that being busy is a badge of honor, as though there's a prize for sacrificing your wellbeing for your work

Focus on the long-term

In the end, it's not about how many concerts you play, how much money you make, or how much applause you get. In the long-term, it's about living a life committed to ongoing artistic growth.

So, if you were to prioritize your own artistic growth, how would you choose to spend this summer? What changes would you make in how you spend your days and weeks? What would you do differently to enhance your artistic growth and wellbeing?

Would you play fewer concerts or teach fewer students? Play different repertoire or take on different projects? Work in more time for friends and family? Actively seek out new inspiration? Or make time to read, swim, hike, and fall in love with life again?

In the end, summertime—and life itself—is short. Plant what you need to make your summers into a garden of artistic growth.

Angela Myles Beeching is a career consultant and the author of Beyond Talent: Creating a Successful Career in Music. *Angela works with individuals, ensembles, and organizations to facilitate positive change.*

