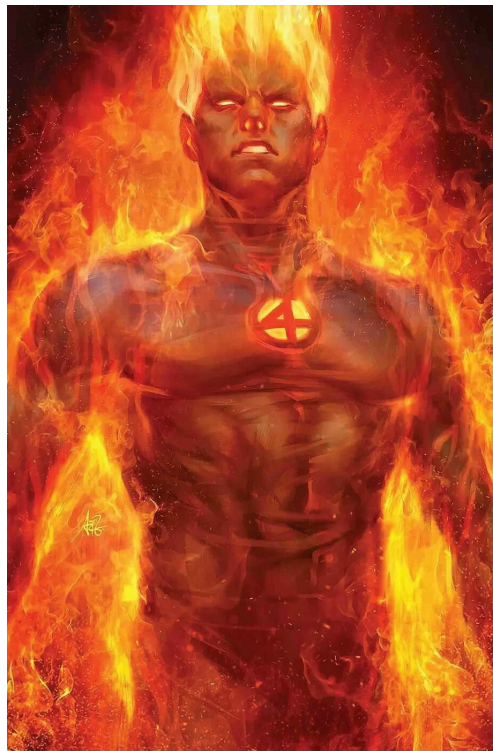


Persistence and Passion

There are so many valuable resources about the audition preparation process available online these days that it is almost an embarrassment of riches. Many successful performers have shared their strategies on Jason Heath's Contrabass Conversations podcast and Noa Kageyama's Bulletproof Musician just to name two. What is evident, from the preponderance of this information, is that the path is known, well-trodden, and there are strategies out there that you can access with a tap of a screen. (10 years ago I would have said "click of a mouse", but time marches on. See you in 10 years for "activation of a synapse"). This also lays bare the commonly accepted fallacy that success is about "goal setting". EVERYONE who goes to the audition has the same goal: to win the audition. Obviously not everyone wins, and so there is more to it than motivational platitudes. Knowing the path is half the battle; sustaining consistent, focused, and deep practice through setbacks, fluctuations in motivation, and other life circumstances is the ingredient that I feel all too often gets overlooked. Re-examining and reaffirming the passion and inspiration behind why we are doing this in the first place can help put everything in the proper context.



I believe we benefit from understanding that perspective is everything. Framing experience, dealing with inevitable "failure", and contextualizing events to propel us toward our objectives. This is distinctively different from Pollyanna-ish "positive thinking" or simple

acceptance. “It is what it is” is one of the worst platitudes. It assumes that there is some kind of objective immutable reality that we are all subject to. “It is what ever YOU THINK it is” would be a more appropriate mantra. Denial that there will be bumps in the road only makes you less prepared to deal with the inevitable need for an occasional course correction.

I have always dealt with this by envisioning myself as a version of the Human Torch. The flames are the embodiment of my passion and love for music, bass playing, etc. Challenges will come in the form of professional rejection, personal frustrations, self-doubt, and conflicts with colleagues for example. I imagine that this takes the form of anthropomorphized “b*llsh*t” (I actually envision little “poo goblins” with faces and personalities) that the world throws at you in order to stick to you and weigh you down. If your passion burns brightly enough, the goblins will stick briefly as a momentary impediment before being metaphorically immolated. When the focus becomes too much on employment or ego-gratification, the fuel for the fire runs low, and the goblins can stick, accumulate, and weigh you down on your path. I have heard it said that there is only growing or rotting; there is no stasis. Look for ways to stoke the flames.



Here are just a few examples:

-Actively rekindle your relationship with your initial passion for playing. What brought you to the instrument? Was it the sound, the feel, a style of music, a player or particular performance? Just like any long-term relationship, your connection with music and the instrument takes work! It’s not a fairy tale.

-Teach! Giving back, passing on what you have learned, and helping someone else along their path is a great way to fuel your own fire.

-Listen! I have found that the busier I get as a professional the more I have to make an effort to listen to music for pleasure and not just study or professional development.

Lifelong growth, change, and learning have always been one of the main fuels for my personal fire, and I hope this opportunity for reflection helps you to find this “super power” to sustain you through challenging times.

“Flame on!”

-Johnny Storm

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If you have any questions, comments, ideas you'd like explored, or inspiration you'd like to share please email: davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com.

With Love,

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