

2015 Interaction with New York Philharmonic Musicians: Reflections by Participants



Photos by Peter Smith Photography

While many participants ranked their most valued experience of the afternoon as having the chance to speak one-on-one with the musicians, the deeper value in those conversations came from the connections participants drew between music and medicine.

Afterwards participants spoke both about how fascinating it was to discuss musician-specific injuries as well as to learn how musicians work to sustain their bodies. Participants “had not reflected on how repetitive motion takes a toll on musicians’ bodies.” These lessons could apply to understanding other possible patients’ work-related injuries as well. Speaking with the musicians “underscored the importance of getting a good sense of patients’ daily lives to ensure they received the best possible care.” Moreover, participants said they realized “many patients are artists or craftsmen who rely on their physical health to produce great works, and that as physicians; we have the power, in some cases, to maintain their abilities.” Music and other art forms contribute greatly to living a healthy, happy life, while medicine helps us continue to enjoy that lifestyle.

Links were drawn for the professional lives of musicians and doctors in how “we must move past inevitable mistakes while we continue to reach for our impossible goal of

perfection through constant practice and evaluation.” Participants also took away from the conversation how stressful and nerve-wracking performing can be even for professional musicians.



Just as professional musicians continue to train without formalized external critique or coaching, attending physicians at the peak of their profession must continue to improve through personal effort and by having the “gentleness of spirit” to try suggestions peers give. When thinking about peers, they also understood the “similarities of individuality versus teamwork that occur for musicians and doctors” who are often trained with the mindset of independence and then find work in orchestras or medical teams that require a very different way of working together.

Another connection that participants found in the conversation was the “importance of listening and responding to the audience” or patient. One musician shared how much an attentive audience improves a performance. Likewise, a participant noted, “As a doctor, performance in the medical world can be much higher if there is interaction.”



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