

Playing for an invisible audience

For the Fall, from September to the end of December, we presented five concerts, five, or maybe six, I think five concerts—I was in three of them. They were excellent. Very well produced—but there's no audience. It's very difficult to play without that energy there in the concert hall. We've gotten used to it. We're really giving the energy, but you know, normally you do get a lot of energy from having 2000 people there in the concert hall. And then, you know, I think my first concert was in October, so from March until October is the longest stretch of my career since I don't know, probably my undergrad. That's how far back I'd have to go, to the 90's, where I had a stretch that long that I hadn't done an orchestra concert. In my first concert back it was, you know, I mean—it's like riding a bicycle, but at the same time, when you haven't done it for that long it's... it was an interesting feeling that first concert back, no one's in the audience, with masks on, I have a cover on my tuba bell, playing to a video camera. It's sort of sad. It's, you know, we cannot wait for this to pass.

A concert with no applause

I suggested to them that they put in virtual fans like they did for the NBA, or pump in applause. I think that they want to highlight the fact that we're in Covid and that there's something missing and there's something to look forward to. And I think that there's that feeling of emptiness at the end of the concert is—it's deliberate. And it's an obvious—it's obvious that something's missing, that the audience is missing, and we want them back, they want to be back. And it's it sort of shows that this is not enough. You know, we can't—we're not going to just go to this—with performing for the video cameras. We need to get the audience back in there, and it's urgent. And I think the feeling is mutual, and I think as an as someone watching it—you feel that this doesn't feel right, someone needs to be in there, I want to be in there, I wish I was in there applauding, I wish I could be there to applaud. And like you said, there's no tuba on some of these, so I've been at home watching the Beethoven concert and the first concert, so I was in three of the five. And that was how I felt—I felt like I wish I could be there and applaud for my colleagues, applaud for James Ehnes. And are these, you know, we've had some great young soloists play, and [I] just felt like: oh, I wish I could be there and show them, you know, how they're making me feel, you know, with the applause, but it wasn't possible. So, it creates this—maybe it's like advertising or showing those audience members, you know, making them have that desire to come back. So, maybe it's a good thing to have it not there.