
TO CONCLUDE

Inspiration...

When Prof. Marjolein Drent asked me years ago to become an ambassador for the child care foundation, I didn't hesitate even for a moment, and of course said yes immediately. That was because I realised that we all share a responsibility for the environment and have to be aware of the dangers of environmental pollution. I know how important it is to be able to breathe freely and I'm aware of the importance of clean air. When I look at the singers and those playing wind instruments in our ensemble, I know they depend on clean air to be able to function in the orchestra.

When Michael Jackson died in 2009, just as we were about to perform our concerts at Maastricht, I decided to play a number of his songs during the concert. One song that we definitely had to include was his 'Earth Song', with its beautiful lyrics telling us how important it is to care for the earth, the oceans, the animals, the trees and the air. We need to do that to ensure that our children and grandchildren will also be able to live in freedom, to enjoy our beautiful planet and especially to breathe freely! Besides having enough to eat and taking enough exercise, clean air is an essential requirement which is literally a matter of life and death.

Most people breathe without ever thinking about it. It's only when you develop breathing problems that you realise what it means to find yourself in situations that literally take your breath away. We experienced this ourselves when employing special effects on stage.

We used to have so-called smoke machines to achieve special lighting effects, but then we were told by people in the audience and members of the orchestra that this bothered them; they started coughing and even became short of breath, especially those with a predisposition for asthma. When we heard this, we decided to do without these effects in future. After all, we don't want to spoil the audience's evening, and that was more important to me than having these stage effects! To me, music is a hobby

that just got out of hand. It inspires me and it's what I live for! I feel privileged to be able to contribute to the quality of life of many people. Each night when I'm on stage it is so wonderful to see how people enjoy the orchestra. Enjoying yourself is so important, and it does benefit your health. People feel happy, forget their everyday problems for a while and feel lifted up. Positive energy and the right 'flow' are just as important as healthy nutrition, exercise and a good balance between stress and relaxation, and I'm happy to be able to contribute to that. I have personally experienced what it means to be temporarily unable to do what you want to do and to have to stop doing what you're good at. It was awful for me to have to cancel concerts. I felt burdened by the double responsibility I had. I wanted to get well soon to enable my musicians to keep their job. But at the same time I had to take enough rest to make a full recovery. I started to take more exercise and adjusted my diet. I felt like a new man and also lost a few kilos. I now enjoy the exercise so much that I take my personal coach with me on concert tours abroad. And my exercising proved to be contagious: in the end, the entire orchestra was working out at the gym. So I'm not the only physically fit person on stage now, and together we're able to turn each concert into a feast!



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