Enjoyment and Anxiety in Music Performance

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Aims

• Define Music Performance Anxiety and its components
• Distinguish adaptive and pathological anxiety
• Explain and exemplify multiple sources of MPA
• Reflect on your own and pupil’s experience of emotions in performance
• Identify strategies for enjoying performance and diminishing MPA
Some examples…

…who experiences emotions in performance?
…what are those experiences like?
Steven Osborne

“About ten years ago, during a performance of Mozart’s 23rd Piano Concerto, he suddenly started worrying that he was about to forget the next note. ‘The feeling got stronger and stronger… I didn’t actually forget anything but it felt like the water was rising and lapping just under my nose.’

Then, a few years later came the real bombshell, during a performance of Rachmaninov’s First Piano Concerto. ‘This was like an earthquake because this time I really did have some memory lapses, and this made me think the whole performance was about to go off the rails. It was so disturbing, and it kept happening. I really began to wonder whether my career was over.’”
Adele

“I have anxiety attacks, constant panicking on stage, my heart feels like it’s going to explode because I never feel like I’m going to deliver, ever… I will not do festivals. The thought of an audience that big frightens the life out of me.”

“The more successful I get, the more insecurities I’m getting, it’s weird… I don’t know if it’s because I’m so blown away that people like what I do, but I just feel that I’m never going to live up to it.”
Definitions

Fear: Emotional and adaptive reaction to present threatening stimuli.

Anxiety/stress: Anticipatory, usually irrational fear. Detrimental effects on health.
...definitions

• Music Performance Anxiety (MPA): an anxiety disorder (social phobia) if the performer demonstrates significant impairment.
Is high arousal always detrimental to performance?

Yerkes-Dodson model (1908)
...is high arousal always detrimental to performance?

Catastrophe model (Hardy 1990, 1996)
How does MPA effect performance?

Figure 13.1 Performance quality and subjective distress in anxious (light bars) and non-anxious (dark bars) pianists playing alone or in front of an evaluative audience. Performance quality (left-hand axis) was judged by assessors blind to the pianists' group, and higher scores indicate superior quality. Distress (right-hand axis) was assessed by combining ratings obtained before and immediately after playing, with higher scores indicating greater distress. (From Craske & Craig 1984.)
Your experience...

1. How do emotions in music performance impact on your own or your students’ performance experience?
   a. Do you/they enjoy music performance? (Under what circumstances?)
   b. Do you/they deliberately do anything to better enjoy/cope with performance?
   c. What meaning and value do your/their musical performances have for you/them?

2. Compare with the person next to you.

Components of emotion
Physiological

- Bodily responses similar to fear reactions
- Activation of autonomous nervous system: release of adrenaline hormones into bloodstream
- Examples: racing heart, sweating, butterflies in stomach, muscle tension.

**LUNGS**
- Breathing becomes faster & shallower
- Consume more oxygen
- Expel more carbon dioxide

**SKIN**
- Sweating begins

**HEART**
- Beats faster
- Pumps more blood
- Blood pressure rises
- Blood increases to muscles
- Blood decreases to organs

**ENDOCRINE SYSTEM**
- Pumps out adrenaline, noradrenaline & cortisol
- Noradrenaline constricts blood vessels
- Releases less growth hormone
- Produces fewer sex hormones

**PANCREAS**
- Pumps out glucagon
- Produces less insulin
- Blood sugar level rises
Behavioural

• Observable actions or tendencies to act out the anxiety.

• Examples: not sleeping, facial expressions, making mistakes while playing.
Cognitive (thoughts and beliefs)

• Negative thoughts about the situation and self.
• Examples: thinking the performance will be a disaster, assuming that the audience will be looking for mistakes, assuming past success was luck.
Sources of Musical Performance Anxiety
The musician’s personality

- Trait anxiety
- Introversion
- Neuroticism
- Perfectionism
- Implicit theories of musical talent: *incremental v. entity*
The situation

- Circumstances that intensify a performer’s sense of threat.
- Relative to the musical culture

- Number and significance of people in audience, co-performers.
The musical task

Difficulty of piece/performance versus task mastery
MPA as fear of negative evaluation

- Personality traits
- Perception of a threat
- Cognitive-behavioural interventions
- Music performance
Enjoyment of Musical Performance
Flow

Mental state in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energised focus, full involvement which is reported as highly enjoyable (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).
Narratives

- Self-oriented
- Transcendent
- Other oriented

(Perdomo-Guevara, 2014).
Prevention and treatment of MPA
Managing MPA

• Treating physical symptoms
  • Deep breathing
  • Muscle relaxation techniques
  • Biofeedback training
  • Alexander Technique
  • Medications: *Beta-blockers*

• Dealing with situational stress
  • Mental rehearsal
  • Practice performance
  • Systematic desensitisation
  • Combining solo and ensemble pieces
...managing MPA

• Dealing with the musical task
  • Choice of repertoire
  • Allocating enough rehearsal time before performance

• Dealing with irrational thoughts
  • Cognitive restructuring therapy
  • Constructive self-talk
  • Establishing process and task-oriented goals
  • Learning to accept a degree of anxiety and errors
  • Finding meaning in performance
References


To Discover And Understand.