Mindfulness for Musicians: Bringing sport psychology and mindfulness-based therapies to the practice room and the concert stage

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Abstract
Due to the profession’s competitive nature, time-consuming demands, and frequent evaluations, many musicians experience debilitating music performance anxiety, hypercritical thoughts, and/or avoidance of specific performance situations. To cope with these experiences, musicians can cultivate mindfulness. Mindfulness is purposefully and non-judgmentally paying attention to the present moment, developing awareness of emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations, and acknowledging the reality of one’s experience. “Mindfulness for Musicians: Bringing sport psychology and mindfulness-based therapies to the practice room and the concert stage” discusses how cultivating mindfulness helps musicians cope with intense emotions, such as panic or fear, and explores how cultivating mindfulness helps musicians develop psychological flexibility, embrace acceptance, quiet their inner critics, soften perfectionism, and experience a desired state of flow during practice sessions, rehearsals, and performances. “Mindfulness for Musicians” references psychology and sport psychology sources, and reinterprets mindfulness-based therapies and models for musicians, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment model. Additionally, “Mindfulness for Musicians” includes tools to help musicians cultivate mindfulness, such as yoga practices, breathing exercises, exercise regimens, and meditation practices. Lastly, “Mindfulness for Musicians” includes a “Mindfulness for Musicians” course for undergraduate or graduate music students. The course includes a syllabus, a schedule, assigned readings, and a description of assignments.

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“Mindfulness for Musicians: Bringing sport psychology and mindfulness-based therapies to the practice room and the concert stage” discusses how cultivating mindfulness helps musicians cope with intense emotions, such as panic or fear, and explores how cultivating mindfulness helps musicians develop psychological flexibility, embrace acceptance, quiet their inner critics, soften perfectionism, and experience a desired state of flow during practice sessions, rehearsals, and performances. “Mindfulness for Musicians” references psychology and sport psychology sources, and reinterprets mindfulness... 18 - Mindfulness in Music. from IV - MINDFULNESS AND THE PERFORMING ARTS. By Tim Patston, Geelong Grammar School and University of Melbourne, Australia. Edited by Amy L. Baltzell, Boston University. Research about the integration of mindfulness into music teaching and learning is still in its infancy. Much of the writing on music and mindfulness relates to the use of music listening as an external entry point to support focus and facilitate mindfulness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Diaz and Silveira, 2013). Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, and other mindfulness-based trainings are available across North America. We've organized a list of centers here. Daily guided meditations are also available by smartphone app, or you can practice in person at a meditation center. Mindfulness strengthens neural connections: By training our brains in mindfulness and related practices, we can build new neural pathways and networks in the brain, boosting concentration, flexibility, and awareness. Well-being is a skill that can be learned. Try this basic meditation to strengthen neural connections. “Mindfulness for Musicians: Bringing sport psychology and mindfulness-based therapies to the practice room and the concert stage” discusses how cultivating mindfulness helps musicians cope with intense emotions, such as panic or fear, and explores how cultivating mindfulness helps musicians develop psychological flexibility, embrace acceptance, quiet their inner critics, soften perfectionism, and experience a desired state of flow during practice sessions, rehearsals, and performances. “Mindfulness for Musicians” references psychology and sport psychology sources, and reinterprets mindfulness... practice is the deliberate, creative process of improving musical ability and of mastering music for performance. The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex, overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one - Mark Twain. As a general rule, rest 10 minutes of each hour that you spend in the practice room. Rest more if you're working vigorously or adopting new techniques. First and foremost, you should enjoy the music that you learn.