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Performance Anxiety in Young Musicians: A Case Study of Music Educators' Experiences

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**PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN YOUNG MUSICIANS:
A CASE STUDY OF MUSIC EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The College of Music and Dramatic Arts

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iv
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Music performance anxiety: Positive and negative	3
Chapter 2. Review of Literature	5
Introduction.....	5
Music performance anxiety in young musicians	5
Factors that influence MPA	6
Coping strategies.....	9
Need for the study.....	11
Purpose	12
Chapter 3. Method	13
Study design	13
Case study rationale	13
Sampling and participants.....	14
Data collection	16
Data analysis	16
Chapter 4. Findings	18
Research question one. Strategies implemented by educators in their teaching	18
Research question two. Young musicians cope with performance anxiety:	
Educator’s help	24
Emergent themes beyond the research questions.....	29
Chapter 5. Discussion	34
Introduction	34
Limitations	34
Discussion of findings	35
Implications for practice	40
Suggestions for future research	41
Concluding thoughts	42
Appendix A. Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board Approval.....	43
References	44
Vita	47

Abstract

Anxiety is a common emotional reaction in musicians that can negatively influence their performance. Some studies have proved that Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) can be found not only in adults but also in adolescents and children from 3 years old. Since MPA is a significant aspect of musicians' development, it is essential that music educators take preventive action against MPA in young musicians, specifically under 18 years old. The purpose of this study is to examine the strategies used by music educators to address MPA in young musicians. Educators were interviewed regarding musical performance anxiety and its presence within their students. Major questions guiding this inquiry are: 1) What remedies and strategies do teachers use when preparing students for their musical performances, and 2) How can experienced teachers help young musicians cope with performance anxiety. Results may also contribute as a guide for music educators on how to implement strategies to help young musicians to cope or reduce the potential development of MPA.

Chapter 1. Introduction

When I was in my early adolescence, I did not yet have any formal music training, though I did know how to play chords on the piano by ear. At my church, there was a small amateur choir that used to rehearse after mass on Sundays. One day, I was listening to their rehearsal. I walked over to the keyboard just for fun and played along with the guitarist, not realizing this would be my “audition,” leading to my acceptance into the choir as a keyboard player. Accompanying the choir was my first exposure to playing in public. Now, out of my comfort zone, the small keyboard where I learned a couple of chords stayed at home. I felt shaky, nervous, and self-conscious, experiencing for the first time what I now know to be Music Performance Anxiety (MPA); during that time and many years later, I used to think that it was just “nervousness,” not grasping the full nature of this anxiety.

During college, I taught in a couple of music programs where I used to address superficially the “nervousness” in lessons without any other further deeper understanding about it. I used to consider that it was something natural that some people were able to handle better than others, and that was all. It was not until I had the experience with a specific student that I got interested into the MPA topic: An incredibly talented, creative, and very extroverted elementary school student. The student used to bring new ideas every lesson to sing and play the double bass together with other students, loved performing for others, and had a spark of joy and fun with music. In my perspective, this young musician did not show any potential sign of anxiety in the music lessons.

At the performance day, the student completely froze on stage and could not perform anything that we had been practicing before. Another student and I tried to help on stage, without any positive result. It was the first time I saw something like this, and I could not understand what happened that day since the student seemed excited to play music before. The thought of

the student quitting music because a bad performing experience was bitter. That moment was life-changing for me. I realized how ineffective were my advice for this student, and I decided to learn more about the topic to be able to help students and avoid as much as possible that other students go through the same situation.

My music education did not include how to cope with this problem. While my former teachers cared about my development as a music student, the topic of performance anxiety was mentioned vaguely. Being “nervous” was referred as a typical reaction to music performances, and anxiety was not called by its name. Looking back on my experience as a student, I inferred that perhaps my former teachers were unaware of the complexity of the issue and did not consider pertinent including the topic on classes. However, I know that many music educators do have strategies to help their students cope with MPA, and it seems important to identify those techniques for study.

This case study was an initiative to explore further about MPA in young musicians and learn from the experience of accomplished music educators in the field. The goal is to help current or future music educators to gain a deeper understanding about the topic as well as strategies they could implement in their teaching to help young music students. Throughout this study, "young musicians" refer to students who are under the age of 18.

This document is divided in five chapters. In this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of literature about MPA, its definition, as well as the positive and negative effects on musicians on all ages. In Chapter 2, I describe research about MPA in young musicians and factors that influence on MPA, along with the need for the study and purpose. In Chapter 3, I specify the methodology used for the research and a brief description of the participants in the study. In Chapter 4, the findings of the study are presented into topics that answer the research

questions. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study and its limitations, along with the discussion of findings of Chapter 4 and the implications for practice. Chapter 5 also includes suggestions for future practice and concluding thoughts.

Music performance anxiety: Positive and negative

According to Kenny and Osborne (2006), music performance is an activity that requires high abilities levels on skills such as fine motor dexterity, memory, and interpretation. The development of such skills requires years of training with continuous self-evaluation aiming for near perfection. MPA is a common emotional reaction in musicians that can negatively influence their performance. MPA can cause overwhelming psychological and physical discomfort that can negatively affect musicians' ability to perform (Ryan 2004; Sieger 2017). Studies demonstrate that MPA can be developed by adults, adolescents, and children (Osborne and Kenny 2008; Errico 2012; Ryan 2005; Osborne, Greene, and Immel 2014).

Depending on their positive or negative effects on musicians, researchers have divided MPA into two types: maladaptive or debilitating, and adaptive or facilitative (Papageorgi 2022; Kenny 2004; MacAfee and Comeau 2020; Taborsky 2007). According to Papageorgi (2022), maladaptive or debilitating MPA have negative effects such as physiological, mental, and behavioral symptoms; while adaptive or facilitative MPA have facilitating effects such as improving physical readiness, motivation and concentration, and the quality of the performance. The researcher found that highly anxious performers were prone to experience maladaptive MPA, while low anxious performers were prone to experience adaptive MPA. Similarly, MacAfee and Comeau (2020) cited previous research that suggests people have an optimal zone of pre-performance anxiety that can help achieve peak performance (Hanin 2000, as cited in MacAfee and Comeau 2020). Researchers found that some students needed a certain amount of

facilitative anxiety to feel they could perform well. They concluded that decreasing MPA may be beneficial but only to a certain point, since it can be counterproductive getting rid of MPA completely (p. 472).

Some physical signs of debilitating MPA are related to tension. Wind players' physical signs included dry mouth, shallow breathing, and shaky jaw. String players' physical signs are described as cold hands, and shaky bow arm. Some psychological signs are apprehension or panic (Sieger 2017). Emotional and psychological issues faced by music students include stress, pre-performance nervousness, burnout with musical progress, conflict between music and personal life, depression, stage fright, and concentration, in addition to internal sensitivity/motivation and perfectionism (Dews and Williams 1989, as cited in Smith and Rickard 2004).

Researchers have found that anxiety is not necessarily perceived by the public, even when they have been specifically requested to observe signs of MPA (Braden, Osborne, and Wilson 2015). Since MPA signs are not always visible to external observers, students who do not demonstrate somatic reactions may still suffer from MPA (MacAfee and Comeau 2020).

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

Introduction

In this section, I describe existing research and relevant literature about MPA. Specifically, detailed topics include MPA in young musicians, internal and external factors that influence the development of MPA, as well as coping strategies that previous researchers have suggested. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic, I found it appropriate to investigate the existing literature in each one of the areas mentioned. This review of literature is divided into the following subsections:

- a) Music Performance Anxiety in Young Musicians
- b) Factors that influence MPA
- c) Coping strategies
- d) Need for the study
- e) Purpose

Music performance anxiety in young musicians

Researchers have found that young musicians can suffer from MPA. However, researchers also agree that MPA in young musicians has received minimal attention compared to anxiety studies in adults (Ryan 2005; Osborne and Kenny 2005). Ryan (2005) found that third-grader children experience high levels of anxiety prior to a school concert. High levels of cortisol and anxious behaviors had been found in young children between 3 and 4 years old in performance situations, even since their very first performances (Ryan 2011). One of the earliest studies about anxiety in children found that the highest anxiety level was described by children performing a solo on a musical instrument (Simon and Martens 1979, as cited in Ryan 2005). Characteristics of MPA early in a musical career are similar to those experienced by adults

(Kenny and Osborne 2006).

The stage of child and adolescent development can influence to the developing MPA. As mentioned by Kenny, Osborne, and Holsomback (2005), the formal operational thought of Piaget (1970) in the cognitive developmental theory explains how the transition from childhood to adolescence is associated with cognitive change. The person develops an increased retrospection and self-evaluation, typically in areas of great interest and involvement. The adolescent can develop the ability to imagine opinions from other people, which can lead to anxiety and self-criticism according to the researchers. Likewise, Dempsey and Comeau (2019) found that age has a significant influence on MPA. Findings suggested that MPA in young musicians intensify with age, with adolescents perceiving higher levels of MPA than children. Finally, some students described that anxiety prevents them from enjoying music at all (Sieger 2017). Papageorgi (2022) cited previous research where 20% of young musicians quit music lessons due to MPA (Dalia 2004, as cited in Papageorgi 2022).

Factors that influence MPA

Several factors can influence the development of MPA in children. According to Ryan (2011), some children are innately performance anxious, while others develop anxiety as a result from different experiences. Ryan (2005) found that children with higher trait anxiety experienced greater state anxiety on the concert day, suggesting that the anxiety of students can be used as an indicator of how they are likely to respond to performance situations.

Osborne, Kenny, and Holsomback (2005) found that level of musical ability and performance environment influence the level of MPA in young musicians. Students who were highly trained in music under a higher expectation of excellence reported higher levels of MPA, contrary to students who were less advanced in their musical training under a more relaxed

performance environment. Students in a challenging environment had increased fear and probability of negative evaluation. Similarly, students in gifted classes had higher test anxiety scores than students who were in mixed ability mainstream classes (Zeidner and Schleyer 1999, as cited in Osborne, Kenny, and Holsomback 2005.) These results were supported by Wilson (2002) three-dimensional model of performance anxiety, which includes the performer's trait anxiety, the degree of task mastery of a piece, and the degree of situational stress. According to this model, a person who is high in trait anxiety would probably perform better with an accessible and well-prepared piece in a calm environment, while a person who is low in trait anxiety would perform better with a demanding piece in a challenging environment. (Osborne, Kenny, and Holsomback 2005; Kenny 2004).

Papageorgi (2022) found that higher levels of MPA was predicted by:

- a) Individual characteristics affecting susceptibility to anxiety: nationality, age group, perception of high levels of anxiety, perception of parents being critical, low self-concept in music and perfectionistic tendencies
- b) Task-efficacy: Low perceived self-efficacy level
- c) Performance environment: Sensitivity to audience presence and to the degree of self-exposure, and uncomfortable performance environment. (p. 116).

Similarly, Kenny (2004) cited the performance catastrophe model by Fazey and Hardy (1988) in which several variables combine to produce a performance catastrophe, or as defined by Kenny, "freezing up", panic, or leaving the scene. The variables are level of competence, low self-efficacy, negative expectancies, high cognitive anxiety, and high physiological arousal.

Internal factors that influence MPA

The prevalence of MPA can be influenced by various internal factors. Research suggests that lower levels of confidence are related to high levels of performance anxiety (Kenny 2006; Papageorgi 2022). Researchers have also related perfectionism to high levels of MPA (Patston

and Osborne 2016). Thomas and Nettelbeck (2014) cited multiple studies where low self-esteem and over-perfectionism are positively correlated to MPA. (p. 626). Similarly, Stoeber and Eismann (2007) found that young musicians' motivation, effort, achievement, and distress are heavily influenced by perfectionism. Papageorgi (2022) suggested that high levels of anxiety in Western classical musicians have been influenced by “the demands for precise emulation, technical perfection and virtuosity inherent in the culture of the classical music” (p. 117).

Dempsey and Comeau (2019) found a significant relationship between self-efficacy and MPA, where students with low level of self-efficacy are susceptible to higher levels of MPA. Some studies found that trait anxiety provide a significant prediction of MPA (Smith and Rickard 2004; Thomas and Nettelbeck 2014; Kenny, Osborne, and Holsomback 2005; Kenny 2004). Similarly, Rae and McCambridge (2004) found that trait and state anxiety have a large positive correlation. They suggested that MPA does not lessen—regardless of years of playing or accomplishments achieved—in individuals with high trait anxiety. This is likely related to the tendency of highly anxious students to overestimate the consequences of negative evaluation (Kenny 2004; Osborne and Kenny 2008).

External factors that influence MPA

External factors can also influence the prevalence of MPA. According to Papageorgi (2022), external factors such as culture can influence the levels of MPA. Researchers have demonstrated that perceived societal demands, such as academic achievements, can trigger higher levels of anxiety. Similarly, environments with high expectations as well as early exposure to evaluation and competitive environment may develop psychological vulnerability to experience elevated levels of MPA (Osborne and Kenny 2008; Osborne, Kenny, and Holsomback 2005; Kenny 2004). Music students that had negative music performance

experiences show high levels of MPA (Osborne, Kenny, and Holsomback 2005).

Coping strategies

Some music educators can be unaware of MPA until they begin teaching. Participants in Sieger's (2017) study agreed MPA was given little or no attention in their music education training, and they learned more about MPA when their students exhibited signs of pronounced anxiety. Ryan (2004) suggested that music students' families, teachers, and friends have been given little advice on how to deal with performance concerns. Findings show that some common advice were: "don't worry", "pretend there's no one there and it's just a normal day – you're at home practicing." Ryan also found that students from ages 11 to 12 were finding their own coping strategies such as: "I take a deep breath and tell myself I can do it. I pretend no one's there – just my parents – and tell myself to play my best. Then I relax a bit.", or "I block my mind and just play" (p. 101)

In order to create a safe learning environment, it is necessary to consider all environmental aspects that impact the development of students: physical, intellectual, and emotional (Thompson and Wheeler 2008). Psychology training for music students can increase their capacity to overcome MPA. Osborne, Greene, and Immel (2014) found that with the implementation of MPA coping techniques, self-reported MPA was significantly reduced, and students improved their performance success. There have been studies for MPA treatments in cognitive, behavioral, and cognitive-behavioral interventions, Alexander Technique, meditation, hypnotherapy, biofeedback, and music therapy (See Kenny, 2006 and Ely, 1991 for a full review of MPA treatments). Kenny, Driscoll, and Ackermann (2012) mentioned that adult musicians use strategies such as increasing their practice time before stressful concerts and practicing relaxation techniques. Ryan (2005) suggested that anxiety management training that focus in reducing

stress and anxiety can help to reduce states of anxiety in children, specifically MPA.

Literature suggests that MPA can be reduced through cognitive strategies such as piece dissection and structural analysis to support music memorization. (Haid, 1999; Hallam 1997, as cited in Osborne and Kenny 2008). Kenny, Osborne, and Holsomback (2005) found a significant difference in the levels of MPA between groups of students with different performance frequency. Those who had more performance exposure had lower anxiety, which confirms previous research where exposure is implemented as a strategy in anxiety management programs for children and adolescents. (Velting, Setzer & Albano 2004 as cited in Kenny, Osborne, and Holsomback 2005). Similarly, Osborne and Kenny (2008) suggest that students can learn to associate performances as a pleasant and manageable part of their music education, if they are offered performance preparation programs with regular and low-stress performance opportunities. Ryan (2011) suggested that teachers can reduce the impact of MPA in their students by familiarizing them with the performance venue for a more comfortable performance.

Osborne and Kenny (2008) also advise that the repertoire should be chosen according to the student's technical capabilities and, prior to performing the material, it should be learned to the point of automaticity. Another suggestion to prevent MPA is to include psychological skills exercises such as encouraging students to provide feedback on their own performances as well as teach them how to modify problematic cognitions with helpful and realistic expectations (Kenny 2004; Rae and McCambridge 2004).

Braden, Osborne, and Wilson (2015) developed an 8-week psychological skills program focused on cognitive skills for optimal performance. The program demonstrated an effective reduction in self-rated MPA in adolescent musicians, but not a decrease in judge's scores of behavioral signs of MPA in students. According to the research findings, one observer's

judgement of another's performance anxiety and quality is subjective. The researchers also found that cognitive behavioral interventions do not necessarily lead to a significant improvement in performance quality, since they are designed to target symptoms of MPA rather than accomplish performance excellence.

Ryan (2004) suggested that teachers could help reducing the fear of errors, which is related to MPA, by emphasizing musical expressiveness instead of technical perfection as the goal of performances. Ryan also suggested that teachers can help children to understand how their feelings are normal and manageable by acknowledging students' perceptions and offering suggestions for dealing with anxiety.

Need for the study

Researchers have demonstrated that MPA exists in children and adolescents. It is important for music educators to gain a deeper understanding of the issue in young musicians to integrate the topic into their teaching effectively. Music educators can help students to reach their potential performance without being hindered by anxiety. However, there is little existing research on what pedagogical tools and techniques music educators might use to help their students cope with MPA.

Researchers suggest that techniques applied from the beginning of the musical training of young musicians could help reduce the potential development of MPA (Ryan 2005; Osborne and Kenny 2008; Errico 2012). Since many musicians begin their lessons at an early age, it seems pertinent to start implementing strategies early in their education. In this study, the identified strategies implemented by the participants can serve as guidance for future music educators in their teaching.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences and strategies used by music educators to address MPA in young musicians. The findings may provide to music educators a set of techniques they could implement in their teaching to help young musicians to cope with, or reduce the potential development of, MPA. Primary research questions that guided this research were:

1. What remedies and strategies do teachers use when preparing students for their musical performances?
2. How can experienced teachers help young musicians cope with performance anxiety?

Chapter 3. Method

In this chapter, I describe the research design and investigation method for the study. There is also described the participants selection, data collection and analysis procedures. This chapter is divided into study design, case study rationale, sampling and participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Study design

This study was conducted using qualitative case study methodology to explore insights from experienced music educators in different music settings. According to Bhattacharya (2017), qualitative research “aims to work within the context of human experiences and the ways in which meaning is made out of those experiences”. Before beginning the study, ethics approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at the Louisiana State University.

Case study rationale

Case study design is a comprehensive research strategy useful in the study of “why” and “how” of contemporary events. (Stoecker, 1991, as cited in Yin, 1994, p. 13; Benbasat et al, 1987, as cited in Wildemuth, 2017, p. 51-52). According to Bhattacharya (2017), case study “involves in-depth contextual study of a person, people, issue, and place, within a predetermined scope of the study” (p.26). Case study is defined by Yin (1994) as a “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.13). As Yin states, case studies benefit from the prior development of theoretical prepositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p.13).

By using a case study design, I was able to understand and interpret the descriptions and context of the participants’ experiences regarding students with MPA in their teaching. Through

a qualitative research design, The insights provided by the music educators in this case study provide a foundation for future research on MPA in young musicians. According to Benbasat (1987), case studies are used often in exploratory studies to define phenomena that merit further investigation. As cited by Wildemuth, “case studies are more suitable for the exploration, classification, and hypothesis development stages of the knowledge-building process; the investigator should have a receptive attitude toward exploration.” (Benbasat et al, 1987, as cited in Wildemuth, 2017, p. 51-52).

Sampling and participants

A sampling process involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals with particular knowledge or experience about a phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011, as cited in Kyakuwa 2020). The individuals should also “be available, prepared to participate, and can expressively articulate experiences and opinions thoughtfully” (Bernard, 2017; Spradley, 2016, as cited in Kyakuwa 2020).

Participants for this study were chosen based the criteria of years of music teaching experience and music field. Participants had a minimum of ten years of music teaching experience in either elementary, middle, and/or high school programs. Each participant was purposefully chosen as a representative of the following music teaching areas: applied lessons, band, choir, and jazz band. The variety of music teaching fields from the participants allowed me to identify similarities and differences in the phenomenon of interest in terms of music teaching experience and MPA in young musicians. Considering that all the participants are educators with many years of experience, I anticipated they are likely to have a comprehensive understanding of the manifestations of MPA among musicians, as well as a well-developed set of strategies for dealing with it. Participants were contacted in-person and through email. All participants have been given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

Lucia: Piano lessons

Lucia has taught applied individual and group piano lessons both in United States and Latin America. She got her Bachelor in Music Performance and Pedagogy degree in Latin America before coming to the United States to pursue her M.M. in Piano Pedagogy and Ph.D. in Music Education and Piano Pedagogy. She had 15 years of teaching experience at the time of the study in programs with children and adolescents' students, as well as at college level.

Steve: Elementary, middle, and high school bands

Steve has experience teaching in elementary, middle, and high school bands as well as private lessons in United States. He holds a Bachelor in Music Education degree, M.M. in Music Performance and a DMA in Wind Conducting. Steve is currently a faculty member of a university in the United States. He had 11 years of teaching experience at the time of the study between the public school system and at college level.

Julia: Choir and voice lessons

Julia is an active choral conductor. She has also taught voice and piano lessons both in United States and Latin America. She studied in a Conservatory and a University at Latin America before coming to the United States to pursue her M.M. in Choral Conducting. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Music Education. She had 20 years of teaching experience with choirs of all ages at the time of the study.

Zach: Jazz band, elementary, middle, and high school bands

Zach has taught jazz band, elementary, middle, and high school bands as well as private lessons in the United States. He holds a Bachelor in Music degree, a Masters of Arts, and a DMA in Conducting. Zach is currently faculty and head of the Music Education department at a university in the United States. He had approximately 33 years of teaching experience at the time

of the study, between the public school system and at college level.

Data collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews to explore the participants' experiences with MPA among their students. According to Barriball & While (1994), semi-structured interviews facilitate the exploration of the opinions about complex and sensitive issues, as well as the examination and clarification of the information provided by respondents (p. 330). Robson (2002) described that semi-structured interviews have predetermined questions, but the order can be modified according to the interviewer's perception (Robson, 2002, as cited in Wildemuth, 2017, p. 249). For a better comprehension of the participants' MPA perceptions, questions were formulated to explore insights in their music education background, reflections on their students' susceptibility to MPA, and impressions of the coping strategies used in their teaching.

The semi-structured interviews were scheduled according to the participants availability. There were four total interviews; three interviews were made in-person, and one was made through Zoom over the course of one week. Interviews varied from approximately 20 to 30 minutes and were audio recorded for transcription. The interviews resulted in approximately 1 hour and 35 minutes of audio data in total.

Data analysis

Following data collection, interviews were transcribed using transcription features from Microsoft Word for interviews held in person and Zoom for online interviews. Transcriptions were revised with the interviews audios to identify errors and missing information. The interviews totaled 14, 223 words after review of transcription errors. After the revision, the information was analyzed and coded.

Coding is the process of reducing the entire content of data into themes. According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2017) in order to analyze qualitative data, valid inference and interpretation are used to group raw data into categories or themes. In the coding process, I looked for commonalities and notable ideas from the participants about their perceptions and ideas about MPA and teaching. I summarized the data in larger themes across all participants and categorized them into sections that are delineated in the Findings chapter.

Chapter 4. Findings

The use of case study led to understand the dynamics of four experienced music educators and their teaching strategies to prevent and alleviate MPA in young musicians. The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first and second sections there are presented the findings associated with the two research questions. 1) What remedies and strategies do teachers use when preparing students for their musical performances. 2) How can experienced teachers help young musicians cope with performance anxiety. The third section encompasses significant findings that emerged beyond the research questions.

Research question one. Strategies implemented by educators in their teaching

What remedies and strategies do teachers use when preparing students for their musical performances?

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I was able to understand different strategies that educators implement in their teaching while preparing students for performances. The following themes were identified: Preparation, Accommodations, Physical and mental Exercises, Public exposure, Students in good condition, and Create a safe learning environment.

Preparation

The preparation before a performance was identified as an important strategy among educators. Julia expressed the importance of the preparing the repertoire with enough time: “when you don't feel secure enough about something, it's a very fine line and you can break easily... it makes it so much worse not being fully prepared.” The educator also referred to sending students to a performance “with something they have barely practice”: “You cannot expect them to feel confident. They're going to be nervous.”

Steve describes of what could be an example of a private lesson setting, where recurrent issues can lead to frustration and anxiety:

You've had the same issue for multiple lessons, it's still not getting fixed, and then people start getting frustrated as soon as you (begin?) getting frustrated. You have more anxiety about it, and then it snowballs and becomes this thing to where you don't want to have that experience so then you shut down. Or now you know this is a problem, and then you get to the concert or whatever performance of it, and all you can think about is the frustration and the anxiety because you know it's a problem and it could go wrong.

Zach mentioned that one of the concepts learned was: “Be really prepared, then you don't have to worry about so much” and quoted a former professor: “Don't worry about it the night of the concert that you're not going to change anything now. Worry about it 3 weeks before the concert, so that you've really done the preparation.” For this educator, setting the deadlines early enough has been a really good advice that has a big effect on how nervous and uptight the students get about the performance: “the students come into that performance with a level of confidence and feeling like they're going to be successful.”

Lucia explained the students' preparation process for recitals: “since the first day that we meet, we try to address any technical and musical hesitations.” The educator talked about how they address difficulties from multiple fronts, either technical, rhythmic, notes, or even pulse. “My work with them is most of the time to make sure that they feel comfortable, fully comfortable with the music.”

Accommodations

Educators shared the strategy of implementing accommodations in their music teaching. For example, Julia explained that if there is a situation where a child is too anxious, they work on the student's confidence first by giving them pieces to sing in duo instead of “throw them to sing that by themselves.” Then, after they feel more confident, the educator can start giving them more responsibility. Similarly, Steve explained a strategy in case there is a student who has a solo and struggle with performance anxiety: “they would just ask the like the rest of their section to just put their instruments up, so it looked like they were all playing together.” The educator

explained that it made the students feel more comfortable about performing: “it made them feel like they weren't as exposed because... you look at the stage and all of a sudden there's seven people have their bells up and only one is playing, and you're not totally sure who it is.” The educator described that this strategy is possible when there is a “really good culture with the sections.”

Lucia mentioned about being open to switch repertoire if there is a performance coming up soon and the student is having difficulties such as technical issues: “I do a switch to something that they will definitely kill, to something that they already have on their fingers. Maybe they have to learn the notes, but it's just something that they will be happy to play.” The educator talked about how they switch repertoire “a month before, or it can be more or less” depending on the student. The educator also mentioned how recitals are a moment where musicians can feel very vulnerable: “It is a moment in which you are very emotional, your emotions arise.” One important aspect mentioned by Lucia is that educators must be careful on how to switch repertoire without making the students feel that they failed working on a specific work, and that they are just switching to an easier one. Instead, the educator can explain to the student that they can continue working more on the other work: “I feel like this one maybe need a little a little bit of more long term... we can dissect more the music. How about if we try to explore this one?” Lucia mentioned that most of the time students are “very happy and they feel such a relief.” And then, after they agree and are completely comfortable, they perform the piece in informal settings.

Zach talked about the possibility of implementing alternative assessments to students. The educator noticed differences in the response to assessment in high school and middle school students, the latter being the ones that are most susceptible to judgement: “I could test the high

school kids as well right on the road like for the scale play the scale, play the scale.” On the other hand, with middle school students, the experience was different: “I realized that wasn't as good, because if they had a bad day in front of all their peers, it destroyed them.” The strategy implemented by the educator was to set a recorder in the practice room and taught the students how use the device to record the material for assessment. “It didn't make any difference to me. I could just listen to it in the car driving home, but they didn't freak out like everybody in the room saw them mess up.” For this educator, a bad experience can be decisive for a student: “I think kids will walk away from music completely if they have a bad experience in front of their peers.”

Physical and mental exercises

Physical exercises such as breathing exercises was mentioned by educators. Steve shared some strategies that students felt good about: “Physical things like either breathing strategies” or “tighten all of your muscles as much as you possibly can, and then release them completely a number of times” as well as “trying to ground yourself.” Also, Zach mentioned that part of the activities with students was to practice breathing exercises “to get them [students] to calm down”.

Lucia shared the experience about working with a former professor on how to avoid intrusive thoughts: “every time that we were in a lesson, we were working on how to direct your mind and your attention to specific things. So, in that way, you avoid having intrusive thoughts in the moment in which you are playing.” The educator also shared that, in that moment “started to actually work on managing performance anxiety” since the experience was “very specific”.

The participant described the process of every practice session and weekly lesson:

It was a matter of: Ok, I am focusing on this passage, on my breathing rhythm here... I know that here I start to get nervous because this is a fast passage. Where exactly will I be breathing? So, in that way, I avoid a fast heartbeat.

Julia shared the experience of providing reassurance to students before concerts, such as positive thinking about the upcoming presentation and how the previous work done in rehearsals was great: “try to give them a short talk to prepare them for what it is and calm them down. That’s normal, I think, for every young performer to feel a little bit nervous.”

Zach mentioned how experienced mentors would discuss strategies on how to get their kids to focus. Some strategies included to practice having a little bit of quiet time and focus time on groups. Another strategy shared by the educator is to manage the anxiety and keep it as a positive energy. In this case, the educator would tell the students: “Keep the focus there, keep all that spirit, keep all that you're feeling all that stuff. That's okay. Just acknowledge that. You got butterflies? Awesome! Tell the butterflies to chill out a little bit and let's go do our thing.” In another strategy, the educator created a system that feels familiar to the students before every performance:

We had rituals before my group would perform: “I would wish you good luck in your performance today, but I don't believe in luck, but I do believe in skill, so I wish you good skill!” And they would all just be like: “Yeah! We are in this together! We got you!”. It sounds silly, it sounds hokey; but to those kids, if I forgot to say that before we went out to perform, they would remind me like it was like bad *juju* if we didn't do “the thing” you know, so I think that you can't affect the kids if you get them into a system where it feels familiar to them, it's just like another day. It's going to go out there and do our thing.

Lucia shared the strategy of trying to change the attention away from the ego component in the students’ performances:

My experience in focusing on trying to change the attention from the ego component to: Let's make this music beautiful. How can we do it? How can we do this phrase beautiful? How am I going to work that at home? And so, trying to take the idea of: “Here I am, Lucia, the pianist” for: “Here, this is the music that I want to share with you today, this is the message that I want to convey to you today.” So, it's just taking out the ego component.

Public exposure

Lucia shared the experience of creating spaces for students' public exposure practice. They organized one day per week to host an "open stage", which was an open performance opportunity for all students: "That was the day in which they could go, give it a try and see what happened... At the beginning nobody was playing, but at the end everyone was playing, and it was very fun because it was super informal." The educator shared how at the end of the semester they discussed how the experience had a positive impact, since they were more used to public exposure: "This is what we do, we go and play in the stage, but... this is a process so we need to give it a try a few times to see how we feel, not to see if this time I'm not going to be nervous."

Students in good condition

Zach mentioned the importance of making sure that students are in good shape: prevent students to be fatigued, hungry, or extremely tired. "If they were extremely tired you would see their behavior get weird one way or the other. Either they get super depressed, and they don't want to do anything, or they would get super hyperactive and very uptight.". The participant shared that they make sure students have a little snack and water to stay well hydrated, "keeping them toward the blood sugar did not take big spikes and dips... If you've got 150 high school kids and they haven't eaten in 5 hours, it's going to get ugly!". Also is important to make sure they get a chance to rest and chill out. "They always did much better than if we just kept pushing, pushing, pushing. That was never going to be the way to get them to where we want it to be."

Create a safe learning environment

Zach mentioned that educators "have to think about being really mindful of what all the students are going through". For this participant, communication is important: "we only find out

about those things often by creating an environment with our students where they feel like they can talk to you about it. And you're checking on them”.

One strategy to create a safe learning environment is mentioned by Lucia, where weekly studio classes with a healthy and safe environment are successful with students: “you as a teacher have to model”. The educator guides the students on how to provide feedback: “it’s a very safe environment built around feedback from every peer... (First) we usually acknowledge something positive, then two, something that can be improved, and then three, how do you advise or what advice do you have in order to tackle that point that you just mentioned”. The educator also expressed that teachers should be careful with showing favoritism to certain students: “you have to be very careful with the words that you choose, when for example, someone played very well”. In that case, the educator recommends trying to avoid praising the student as just exceptional: “It's just not a matter of: You are the one that is amazing in the studio”. Instead, the educator recommends addressing that the student has been working hard, explain the reasons why, and encourage that everyone is capable of doing it.

Research question two. Young musicians cope with performance anxiety: Educator’s help
How can experienced teachers help young musicians cope with performance anxiety?

Educators shared experiences about actions they implement in their teaching to help young musicians prevent or cope with MPA. The following themes were identified: Discuss about MPA with students, Cultivate a relationship with family, Continuous education, Plan on time, and Be mindful about mental health.

Discuss about MPA with students

Educators mentioned about discussing MPA in their music teaching. They would choose to talk about it in certain cases or with all the students depending on the setting of the music classes, either private lessons or group ensembles. Lucia mentioned: “I am very open about it

with my students”. Steve mentioned that the topic was discussed with high school students since “a lot of those students get super nervous because it's all based around assessment of some sort, particularly some ensemble, or [they] have some big, exposed solo in front of [their] classmates.” Also, the educator discusses the topic “more so in times when I know what's happening or detect is happening, or a student comes and says like I'm struggling with this.” Similarly, Julia mentioned: “in my experience is a one-on-one situation... depending on the student, then you implement strategies or topics with that student”. Zach mentioned: “I would just bring it up in anticipation of what was going to happen, like big concerts, to get them in the right frame of mind, to get them thinking about it.” This educator introduced the topic before bringing out a series of copying techniques into student’s practice: “We talked about it with them, and then we just tried to implement it as a way to have successful performances.”

Cultivate a relationship with the students’ family

Some educators mentioned about the inclusion of students’ family in the education process. Zach shared the experience on how there are times where a student faints. The educator mentioned how there can be “a massive stereo thing happening where you'll get 10 or 15 kids that all faint too... We wanted to be careful that they didn't become so emotional that it created a train wreck kind of thing of all the students.” The educator specified the help received in those experiences: “I had some really great assistance and band parents, one of them who was a pediatrician and traveled me for years.”

In an anecdote shared by Lucia, the communication with parents was part of the children’s music education. The student was able participate in a summer camp for the first time after the educator suggested it to the parent. Also, the educator was able to address a MPA episode the student had on the music camp with the help of the parent: “the [parent] told me that

during the night [the student] was with a stomachache and didn't want to go the next day.” After the episode, both the educator and parent managed to handle the anxiety episode and the student continued music studies.

Continuous education

All the educators that participated in this research mentioned different types of educational resources they have had implemented in their teaching. For example, Julia explained that the strategies used were learned first through experience, and later, through “more education on better ways to approach teaching in general... and therefore, challenges”. The educator shared the experience:

Through going to school and learning about child development, regardless of anxiety or no anxiety, you kind of learn what to expect from that age group, so you adapt. And some things that might work with a 5-year-old might not work with a 10-year-old because of the developmental stage, so that background knowledge gave me a better foundation to deal with students’ reactions, what they need, and what I need to provide, which might not be the same for a 14-year-old and for a 5-year-old.

Educators mentioned books that have served as guidance in the topic. Books of Tim Gallwey were mentioned by three participants: *The Inner Game of Tennis* (Gallwey 1974) and *The Inner Game of Music* (Green & Gallwey 1986). Steve mentioned that he has read *The Inner Game of Tennis*, which relates to music, and the book *A Soprano on Her Head* (Ristad 1982), which is about MPA. Lucia mentioned that they discussed about *The Inner Game of Music* in a music education class in their undergraduate studies: “The teacher in that moment assigned us to read the inner game of music... so I read about it. I felt super identified.” Zach worked on *The Inner Game of Music* with a major professor, in music education preparation classes, as well as in a leadership workshop. The speaker was a director that studied and attended a demonstration of Barry Green and Tim Gallwey book. The educator recounted the event:

He was standing on the stage, and there was a bucket on the side of the stage, and he had a little basket full of tennis balls. He just looked at it in the audience at one of the young ladies that was there for the workshop, and just had her come up on the stage. He just kind of looked at the basket, and she picked up the ball, and she threw it, and it went into the bucket, and he was like: "Nice!" So, then he looked at again, and she did it again. And so, this were on like 4 times, and then he looked at her and said: "Take a tennis ball and throw it into the bucket." And she missed it. It was just that kind of idea of when you know: "Oh my God, I gotta do this now!"

The educator then mentioned that this experience was a motivation: "That kind of got me interested in anything I could do to try and lower the anxiety of my students."

Lucia also shared about The Bulletproof Musician website (Kageyama, 2022). She found this blog while doing some research about MPA on the internet. In the educator's view, it is an amazing blog that has very specific advice and is very easy to understand.

Plan on time

Educators mentioned different factors that can cause or boost state anxiety, which can affect the students before performance, especially students who suffer from trait anxiety. Zach shared the importance of planning and arranging details related to the performance in advance, including eating and stay hydrated:

"Make sure you do things enough in advance that when it comes down to it, you got plenty of time to get dressed, you got plenty of time to go tune, you got plenty of time to just sit and relax for a few minutes before you start. I noticed it when they're rushed, when they're behind schedule, when the room didn't open on time, all those kinds of things just contribute to that [anxiety]... Is it really the performing? Is the anxiety? Or is it just like no different than wedding day jitters where you know there's all this is going on."

Be mindful about mental health

Lucia mentioned how anxiety is a topic that some people are not open to talk about: "Musical Performance Anxiety is something that people, or at least in the environment I grew up, were not very open to talk because that can be seen as a weakness." Similarly, Steve

mentioned that “people don't like people to know that they're struggling... just as human nature, they just don't want to.”

Zach talked about the importance of mental health: “It's really good for us as educators to try and understand as much as we can about... just because something feels natural or works for us doesn't necessarily mean that it works for all of our students.” Furthermore, the educator shared the experience with gaining the trust of the students by creating “an environment where it's family.” The educator expressed that the students would feel confident to talk to you about situations:

They'll tell me things like: “Hey, something's going on at home”, “somebody's sick at home”, “I've got something”; and that's part of it too... we don't know what they're bringing to the rehearsal or to the performance that came with them... it gives me a little bit better idea of where they're at, and maybe what I could do to make it go better for them that day... Sometimes there's things going on in their lives that just are more important than the rehearsal right now.

Lucia shared the experience of a teenager student which had familiar conflicts that were affecting the student's performance: “I do think that practicing was not a pleasant thing to do, so I don't think that the space for practicing allowed... meaningful, effectively practice.” The educator focused on working to improve the students' self-esteem: “[The student] was a conflicted teenager as any teenager.” A year later, the student began gaining more confidence. The educator also specified that does not think that a person that suffers from MPA necessarily has personal issues: “I don't think that's the case. I just think that there's not one-size-fits-all... But the matter of really paying attention and exploring different dimensions of your students, where can you fit them, I think that's the first step.”

Similarly, Julia mentioned about working on improving the confidence of students that doubt themselves: “I reassure them... Just like walking them through all the things that they do

know how to do, so they remember and realize, internalize: I'm ok, I know this, I know what I'm doing, I am worth it.” The educator also noticed the challenges that educators can face with students that suffer from trait anxiety: “Is whether you put a Band-Aid and you try to help them through with preparation and reassurance and having them feel comfortable and in a safe place.”

Julia shared a performance where a personal difficult situation interfered in a student’s performance. The student had to sing a solo and, about 2 minutes before going to the stage, requested the educator to sing a different verse. The educator had to quickly find the way to help the student: “I had to just ask somebody else to do this whole change verse, but it got me out of guard because I didn't know what I was dealing with.” The educator described that later was able to find out that the student was going through a sensitive family situation: “It was something specific that triggered that reaction that day.”

Emergent themes beyond the research questions

In addition to finding the answers to my research question, some themes emerged related to experiences related to teaching and MPA. The following themes were identified: Awareness, Assessment and Exposure, and Difficulties.

Awareness

Lucia mentioned the importance of being aware of and analyzing the case of every student in order to suggest strategies that are tailored to their needs: “Being very aware that I needed to really listen: What was [the student] situation? And not just giving her things that works for me because my kid was different.” The educator also referred about performance anxiety in musicians, as well as the importance on the education received in early ages:

I think that performance anxiety is something that we all [musicians] have... We all experience in several dimensions.... I think since day one in the way that you approach the music, in the way that you practice, in the way that your teacher is feeding you... Directing those things when you are young is where it's going to make a difference if you

decide to go into a career in music. Those formative years.

Lucia shared the experience where a former professor commented: “I am 60+ years and every time that I am going to play, I get very, very nervous. So, this is not anything that fades.”

Steve mentioned about how there are people who do not have performance anxiety and do not understand how others have it: “I think it's different for everybody, because I have lots of friends who don't get nervous about anything. They have no performance anxiety, and they also don't understand how people have performance anxiety because they've never experienced it.”

Assessment and exposure

There is a common perception among the participant educators that assessment and exposure are related to MPA symptoms. Lucia shared the experience of a student that was exposed to an unfamiliar environment. The student went for the first time to a music camp: “[The student] was out of his safety.” There was a change in the environment from having individual lessons to another place, a “different social environment that [the student] was not used to.”

Steve shared that have noticed more MPA when there is an exposed moment in a large ensemble: “you're most often going to see it when somebody has an exposed solo, and all of a sudden, they're by themselves... it's like a higher level of anxiety because they know they have 59 peers that are watching it.” The educator also mentioned that did not notice any MPA case among students until “early high school age, or somewhere around there, when all these events start happening where you're being judged by somebody.” Likewise, Zach discussed how middle school students often face a lot of changes during this time which can make them susceptible to exposure in front of their peers.

Steve made the following distinction between children learning a new instrument and

teenagers who might be under judgement:

A little kid who's learning an instrument, it's just playing and nobody's judging you when you just play. You're just playing, you're discovering, and you're exploring. But as soon as all of a sudden, you're in a scenario where now somebody is going to rate you on your play, it's no longer playing... it becomes, like, stressful. And I think that moment when you're young and it becomes more about like what's sort of measure and assess where you're at, I think that moment is a critical moment.

For the educator, the relationship between assessment and anxiety is not limited to music, since once people start getting judged by other things, they become self-conscious: "As soon as you realize there's some sort of measurement, that I think it plays a role in the anxiety piece of things."

Julia mentioned the case of a good student, who was very extroverted but could not perform a solo. The educator then gave the student option to perform in duos or trios. Nowadays, even though the student is currently a professional musician, the educator mentioned that "still struggles with it, with what people might think of the performance. But [the musician] learned how to mask it and just perform." Additionally, the educator also referred to students that show signs of MPA and appear to be afraid of assessment:

They appear a bit more insecure sometimes with their responses, even in a low-pressure environment they might hesitate, because maybe they think if they say the wrong thing, their peers might say something, or you are going to say: 'you're wrong!' (and) humiliate them in front of people. But as part of creating the environment, if they know their teacher well enough, they should feel safe to do that.

Zach shared that it is easier to observe MPA symptoms in students who are in situations such as "jazz ensembles where you've got featured soloists, marching bands where you got the drum major... they make one big mistake, and you know: Argh!" The educator mentioned that those situations were kind of similar to working with applied students that are putting on a recital where it's just the piano player and the performer: "even though they were in an ensemble, they

were in a really visible, stressful situation that was pretty similar to students at college level.”

Difficulties

Educators might face difficulties while dealing with MPA situations with their students. Some students may not feel comfortable opening up about situations that are negatively affecting their performance, depending on their environment and relationship with educators. For example, Steve mentioned how students are more willing to talk about struggles with other students first: “if they have somebody in their section they know they can trust, it's easier for them to go to that person rather than somebody who might sit in a position of authority or power”. The educator also shared the experience of advising large groups of:

When you're teaching particularly like middle school or high school, you're sort of serving like the math private lesson instructor for everybody, and you're just throwing tons and tons of strategies to the students, hoping one of them resonates and then they can try it and use it, but you often don't get feedback then about what worked or what didn't.

Similarly, Lucia mentioned about how advices provided by professors can often not resonate with the student situation. The educator referred to an experience as a student:

I think teachers may mean very well, and they really care about you. But I think that most of the time the advice is very general and vague. So, for example, breathe, or eat a chocolate before, eat a banana or that kind of things... At least I felt that for me, it wasn't very meaningful.

Lucia also referred to how advice that happen at the end and not during the process, as well as advice that are directed to the ego component of the person might be ineffective. The educator gave examples such as: “You know the music, nobody is going to notice in the in the public”, “only you and I will know if you do a mistake”, “it's ok to make mistakes”, or “nothing is going to change if you messed up.” For the educator, those kinds of advice are very ineffective since “they are trying to take the ego component of the person... All of us have a huge ego, and

this ego doesn't want to get hurt... and in the moment of playing, you are not going to remember those things.”

Steve discussed how teaching methods can also influence on MPA in students. The educator shared that thinks “it also depends on how you teach. In a large ensemble setting, if you're doing part assignments in sort of the old cemented traditional way, you're always going to have the person who plays first chair, play the solos.” The educator gave the example that this student would probably be very confident, played solos before, have a lesson teacher, or have a really strong capability on the instrument, and probably have less anxiety about it. Then, compared the situation with a student who “maybe doesn't sit first chair and hasn't been first chair but now has a solo opportunity”, and gave the example on how probably this student doesn't take lessons, doesn't have access to lessons, or doesn't have a lot of experience playing other solos. The educator mentioned how is possible to run into students who could have a combination of: “Maybe it's their first solo ever, in addition to they're already nervous because maybe they don't feel like they have the best facility on their instrument in the first place.”

Chapter 5. Discussion

In this chapter, I revisit the purpose, research questions, study design, and limitations of the study. Following, the discussion of findings is presented in relation with relevant literature, and it is divided into Safe learning environment and Awareness. I include implications for practice, suggestions for future research, as well as concluding thoughts about the study.

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore music educators' experiences with students with performance anxiety. Four music educators shared their insights from settings of elementary, middle, and high school programs, including applied lessons, band, jazz band, and choir. The questions that guided this research were: 1) What remedies and strategies do teachers use when preparing students for their musical performances? and 2) How can experienced teachers help young musicians cope with performance anxiety?

Using a qualitative research design, I employed an instrumental case study approach. Through this approach, I was able to get a deeper understanding of the educators' experiences with MPA and young musicians. I collected data through semi-structured interviews to explore their insights and reflections on their teaching experience. Interviews were transcribed and coded as part of the analysis process to get findings that answer the research questions.

Limitations

This case study is based on a small sample of music educators' experiences. As a result, the findings are not generalizable to all situations with students and MPA. However, the participants had many years of music teaching experience, and their insights can be applied in different music teaching areas. Findings might represent a guide for current and future educators who are interested in offering tools for their young music students.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study support significant topics that are discussed in current research and theoretical practice of music education. Findings include a series of strategies and advice that can be implemented by current or future music educators in their teaching. In this section, I discuss each of the major findings in relation to relevant research literature.

Educators discussed their teaching experiences with students and debilitating MPA. Among the commonalities in the findings of the study is one of that corresponds with the literature on MPA and its relation to age, where higher levels of MPA are being perceived in adolescents due to increased self-evaluation related to the formal operational thought of Piaget (Dempsey and Comeau 2019; Kenny, Osborne, and Holsomback 2005).

Safe learning environment

A safe learning environment is an important approach for MPA prevention and coping. Many of the approaches and strategies implemented by the participants of this research take into consideration the physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects that impact the development of students, which are the characteristics of a safe learning environment (Thompson and Wheeler 2008). Zack mentioned the importance of communication to create this environment. Educators often work with many students, and each individual has their own unique characteristics and background. Assertive communication between teachers and students can help to cultivate a place where physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects are discussed and attended equally. The recommended first step would be to implement general strategies that can have a positive significance for everyone.

Lucia mentioned how teachers have to model this environment. She gave the example of the approach of studio classes, where students give constructive feedback to every peer.

Researchers have suggested encouraging students to provide feedback on their own performances and teaching them how to modify issues with helpful and realistic expectations. (Kenny 2004; Rae and McCambridge 2004). Ryan (2004) suggested that teachers could help reduce the fear of errors, which is related to MPA, by emphasizing musical expressiveness instead of technical perfection as the goal of performances.

Participants mentioned that proper preparation of the repertoire is a significant strategy to prevent MPA. Choosing repertoire accordingly to the student's technical capabilities (Osborne and Kenny 2008) is essential as a first step. Participants of the research emphasized that preparing the repertoire with enough time and addressing technical issues from the beginning can help students feel comfortable with it. These recommendations are consistent with previous research that suggest strategies that help to learn more thoroughly the music, such as piece dissection and structural analysis. (Haid, 1999; Hallam 1997, as cited in Osborne and Kenny 2008).

Being open to adopting accommodations in music teaching can help music students to avoid negative performance experiences, which according to the literature, are related to high levels of MPA. (Osborne, Kenny, and Holsomback 2005). Participants mentioned situations that educators may come across at any point in their teaching experience, such as students with high trait anxiety, students having difficulties with the music close to a performance, or adolescent students who are highly susceptible to judgment, consistent with Piaget's cognitive developmental theory. These situations can be compared to literature that has demonstrated how the performer's trait anxiety, the level of musical ability, and degree of situational stress can influence the experience of high levels of MPA in young musicians (Osborne and Kenny 2008, Osborne, Kenny, and Holsomback 2005, Kenny 2004). Educators should be encouraged to

explore and implement accommodations in their music classes according to their students' needs. Even in an environment of high musical expectations, educators could implement accommodations so their students can enhance their confidence in playing. As Steve mentioned, strategies such as involving students to support each other can be possible through a good culture within the students. Educators can implement creative alternatives assessments methods in their teaching where the student does not feel exposed, as well as switching repertoire if the student would potentially have a bad performance experience due to not feeling comfortable enough with the repertoire.

Cognitive strategies are an important strategy for managing MPA. A common finding among music educators was their perception of how assessment and exposure environment can influence MPA, either by unfamiliar environments, exposed solo performances, and high expectation environments. Educators mentioned some mental exercises before concerts that address anxiety relief, such have quiet and focus time with students, as well as breathing exercises. Since low levels of self-esteem and confidence are related to higher levels of MPA (Kenny 2006, Papageorgi 2022, Thomas and Nettelbeck 2014), strategies mentioned by Julia and Zach, such as reassurance or positive rituals before concerts, could boost student's confidence and self-esteem, thus lowering the probabilities of high levels of MPA. Zach also mentioned the approach of managing the anxiety and keeping it as a positive energy, which is an important strategy that could help students realize the potential benefits of adaptive anxiety, such as improving physical readiness, motivation, concentration, and quality of performance (MacAfee and Comeau 2020), but most important of all: The enjoyment of music making. Likewise, Lucia mentioned the strategy of changing the attention away from the ego component. Teaching young musicians how to put their attention into the music making instead of themselves could help

reduce the chances of MPA.

The strategy of frequent public exposure has been largely supported by previous research. Lucia shared the experience of organizing the “open stage” as a performance opportunity for all students who wanted to practice with the public. Performance preparation with frequent and low-stress performance opportunities has been recommended as a strategy to lower anxiety (Kenny, Osborne, and Holsomback 2005, Osborne and Kenny 2008, Ryan 2011). This strategy addresses the potential situational stress that sudden public exposure can cause in students who are not familiar with frequent public performances. With more public exposure practice, students could get more comfortable with the experience.

Students’ physical well-being can also influence students’ mental well-being, as suggested by Zack. Educators can face situations where students have not eaten or rested before a performance, thus creating potential situational stress for the young musicians. Taking care of both aspects is part of creating and keeping a safe learning environment. Helping the students to be in good condition by preventing them from being hungry or extremely fatigued may decrease the chances of situational stress for the students. This is also related to Zach’s recommendation to plan on time different aspects related to the performance to avoid situational stressors, such as having the performance venue ready, or having enough time for students to prepare. Educators can help facilitate an environment where students do not have to worry unnecessarily, perhaps with the help of school administration, parents, or volunteers.

A close relationship with family can play an important role in ensuring the safety and well-being of a student. Some educators mentioned the communication and assistance from parents. The relationship between parents and educators helped to manage potential situations of MPA such as in Zach’s experience, as well as the implementation of adequate strategies in a

timely manner, such as in Lucia's experience. Communication will be always an important strategy to develop, both with students and parents.

A safe learning environment can also be encouraged in the families of young musicians. Since researchers have found that high expectations or cultural factors can influence to MPA (Osborne and Kenny 2008; Osborne, Kenny, and Holsomback 2005; Kenny 2004; Papagerogi 2022) there can be situations where there is a complicated relationship between family and music. A study analyzed the relationship between achievement goals with anxiety in young athletes and their parents (Frith & Vosloo 2014, as cited in Kageyama 2015). Findings of this study show that parents who "wanted their kids to do better than their peers", or performance goals, tended to have kids who worried more. On the other hand, parents who "wanted their kids to do their best and perform up to their abilities", or mastery goals, did not appear to contribute to increase their children's worry. To avoid development of MPA, music educators and families could communicate and set balanced music goals for the young students. The adoption of mastery goals, which is performing up to their abilities, could support young musicians in setting realistic goals, which is a strategy suggested by previous research (Kenny 2004; Rae and McCambridge 2004).

Awareness

Music educators expressed how different learning activities contributed to their knowledge about MPA. Examples of continuous education for educators include attending workshops, reading books, or websites related to MPA. Educators were able to gain a deeper understanding of MPA and how they could help their students. Julia also shared the importance of having the opportunity to learn more about education and better ways to approach teaching. Some educators shared they had little attention to MPA in their music education training, similar

to findings in literature where educators are often unaware of MPA until they begin teaching (Ryan 2004, Sieger 2017). There can be also educators that might not be aware of the characteristics of debilitating MPA since, as Steve mentioned, they might have never experienced it. For this reason, awareness is fundamental in music education.

Every individual has their own unique characteristics, and as educators, we should be mindful and open to learning more about topics that influence the learning of our students, especially young musicians. Ryan (2004) suggested that teachers can help children to understand and manage their feelings by acknowledging students' perceptions and providing adequate tools to deal with MPA. The education received in the early years can make a difference in the student's life. Researchers have demonstrated that students might not show somatic signs of MPA but still suffer from it (Braden, Osborne, and Wilson 2015, MacAfee and Comeau 2020). Nowadays, it is more usual to hear about mental health and its importance. As educators, learning and understanding more about it can help us and our students. Lucia and Julia shared experiences where they were able to explore and work on improving the self-esteem and confidence of their students. Zach shared the importance of creating an environment where students can feel safe to share their experiences. We can facilitate a positive learning experience for our students if we are open to learning and analyzing what tools we can apply to our teaching.

Implications for practice

The role of music educators is fundamental in the development and learning of students. Educators can help young musicians to prevent and manage MPA from a very early age on. The transition from childhood to adolescence is central in the students' development, and strategies applied promptly can make a difference their musical and personal growth. MPA is a complex

topic that involve many aspects and variables. However, educators can apply advice and strategies that aim to create a general safe learning environment for students. By paying attention to the physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects that influence on student's learning, educators can create an environment where students can strengthen their confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, as well as lower the probabilities of situational stressors that can cause MPA.

It is essential to apply MPA preventive action in our teaching. Prevention would benefit vulnerable students, as well as the general culture within students by creating a space where everyone can look after each other. Educators should strive to create an environment where every student can have a positive learning experience and develop holistically at the same time.

Awareness should be an integral part of music education. A deeper understanding about the complexity of MPA can benefit teachers and students from all ages. Colleges should include trainings about the MPA topic as well as specific efficient strategies that could be implemented by music educators and performers. Lastly, it is important to recognize that young teachers are still able to help their students even if they are still trying to understand and cope with their own MPA.

Suggestions for future research

This study focused just on gathering data from 4 music educators regarding their experience with students with performance anxiety. Future research could broaden this study by examining a bigger sample of music educators that can provide more perspectives on their experiences and strategies implemented in their teaching. Research could also examine the experiences of both music educators and students. Educators can implement strategies supported by data during a specific period of time, and students can provide feedback as well as measure their MPA through standardized measures. The effectiveness of implemented strategies could be

evaluated in accordance with specific student cases.

Future research can also include the participation of specialists in the psychology and medical field. Specialists can collaborate with educators and provide new approaches to develop strategies supported by recent research findings.

Concluding thoughts

The experience I had years ago with my elementary school student, who froze on stage without having previously exhibited any signs of anxiety, motivated me to conduct this research. Before this experience, I was not fully aware of the complexity of this issue. I knew that musicians experience performance anxiety but had not explicitly given this concept a name, nor considered its possible roots or implications. Through the examination of this topic, I realized that not only music educators but musicians in general could benefit from previous research findings and literature about this issue. Musicians could work on self-analysis and introspection which could help to achieve our best performing-self and contribute to our musical enjoyment regardless of the circumstances.

Participants of the research shared their experiences with MPA and young musicians. In addition to the sharing strategies they have implemented in their teaching, participants also discussed other insightful approaches to MPA which could serve as guidance for music educators and students' families. Previous research has shown that young musicians can experience MPA characteristics similar to those experienced by adults (Kenny and Osborne 2006), which can prevent them from enjoying music at all (Sieger 2017) and can lead them to quit music lessons (Dalia 2004, as cited in Papageorgi 2022). Therefore, music educators could help to prevent and manage MPA in young musicians, so they can overcome any debilitating anxiety and find full enjoyment in music performance.

Appendix A. Institutional Review Board Approval



TO: Ann Marie Stanley
LSUAM | Col of MDA | Music | CC00229

FROM: Alex Cohen
Chairman, Institutional Review Board

DATE: 30-Jan-2023

RE: IRBAM-22-1455

TITLE: Performance Anxiety in Young Musicians: A Case Study of Music Educators' Experiences

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial Application

Review Type: Expedited Review

Risk Factor: Minimal

Review Date: 30-Jan-2023

Status: Approved

Approval Date: 30-Jan-2023

Approval Expiration Date: 29-Jan-2024

Expedited Categories: 07

Requesting Waiver of Informed Consent: No

Re-review frequency: Annually

Number of subjects approved: 5

LSU Proposal Number:

By: Alex Cohen, Chairman

Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.**

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/research>

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Vita

Carmen Liseth Rodríguez is a native of Panama. She got both her bachelor's in music and business administration degrees before coming to Louisiana State University for her M.M. in double bass performance. After spending some time back in Panama, she returned to LSU to pursue her DMA in Double Bass Performance with a minor in Music Education. Carmen has taught in the Instituto Nacional de Música in Panama, as well as several string music programs, including Kids Orchestra in Baton Rouge. As a double bass performer, Carmen has played in various countries around the world. She has a great interest in chamber music and music from culturally diverse repertoire, especially Latin American composers.