

Dealing with Performance Anxiety

Relaxation

- Relaxation away from performance.
- Find a neutral body position that is relaxed.

Inner state

- Pay attention to your inner state with your instrument, and more broadly in your life.
- Do you have a relentless inner critic that berates you over everything that you do?
- If so, I invite you to replace it with what I call the “**benevolent observer**” who is kind, who sees your conditioning and habitual responses and judgments and meets them with compassion and unconditional love.

Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset

You can also counteract any fixed mindset, such as “I can’t do this” by adding just one word, “yet”. “I can’t do this yet”. This is the growth mindset. You are in a process of acquiring skill through practice. Your results will come from showing up and being gentle with yourself.

Six Tips to help you deal with performance anxiety.

1. Breathe

Exhale is longer than the inhale, simple breaths.

2. Reframe nerves as excitement.

Physical symptoms of nerves are similar to excitement. Emotional component that we put on top is what is different.

3. Think about what the audience wants.

The audience is there is have a good time. They want to enjoy the music. It takes the focus off your nerves.

4. People don't pay as much attention to you as you think.

Research shows that the audience is thinking about their day, what they will do later, what other people in the audience are doing. They are planning their shopping list. They are not necessarily judging you.

5. Remember the audience is on your side.

They want you to do well. They are supporting you.

6. Replace unhelpful thoughts.

It is normal for criticisms to come into your mind. You don't have to accept them as true. Replace them with a simple thought. “It will be fine”.

SUMMARY

1. Breathe
2. Reframe nerves as excitement
3. Think about what the audience wants
4. People don't pay as much attention to you as you think
5. Remember the audience is on your side
6. Replace unhelpful thoughts. The Inner Critic vs. the Benevolent observer

When performance anxiety arises in the weeks or days before a performance, break the cycle by choosing a strategy from any the above.

BONUS TIPS

1. Anticipate that you are likely to feel this way when you are in a pressure situation. There is nothing wrong with you. Be prepared for it to be like that.
2. Choose a focus or action ahead of time. Focus on an aspect of the music ahead of time. Which one of the tips that we talked about will you focus on to use? Is it the excitement one?
3. Set realistic expectations for yourself. We are all human. Mistakes happen. Set aside expectations of perfection. It's fine if it isn't perfect!

Best wishes for your performances!