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# **Beyond Anxiety: Inspiration, Connection and Joy in Music Performance**

by:

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*I dedicate this thesis to all performers and, in particular,  
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## Abstract

Research on emotion in performance has mainly investigated anxiety, while little is known about performance-related joy. This research aimed to identify factors associated with enjoyment of performance, and design an intervention that would increase performers' joy in performing. It included an Exploratory Study (an on-line survey) investigating the performance experiences of a large population of musicians ( $N = 625$ ), and an Intervention Project comprising an on-line course.

The Exploratory Study showed that performers had different, coherent narratives about performance, that were associated with the groups to which they belonged (i.e. classical or non-classical; students, professionals or amateurs), and that predicted the overall quality of their performance experiences. Notably, the 'people-oriented' narratives appeared to both promote 'highly enjoyable' and prevent 'stressful' performances.

The intervention sought to enhance performance experiences by enabling performers to cultivate a more self-transcendent approach to performance, and design performance-related narratives that they viewed as personally meaningful and inspiring. The impacts of the intervention were investigated using one pre- and two post-intervention questionnaires in which performers were asked to describe and explain their last 'highly enjoyable' performance. Compared to their pre-intervention scores, three months after the intervention, the participants scored significantly higher in performance-related joy, self-confidence and inspiration; they reported reduced anxiety, improved quality of performance, deeper connection with the audience, and an increased appreciation for the value of music and the privilege of being a performer.

The findings suggest that performance-related emotions are socio-culturally shaped; that music institutions may be partly responsible for the high prevalence of MPA among musicians, and should therefore be involved in enhancing performance experiences; and that short interventions can succeed in increasing the meaningfulness of the performers' narratives, reducing their anxiety and rendering their experience more enjoyable.





# Chapter 1. Performance and Emotion

## 1.1 Introduction

Musicians invest huge amounts of time and energy preparing for their performances, and most of them experience these performances as emotionally intense. However, the quality of the experience may differ dramatically among performers, ranging from intense performance anxiety to transcendence and elation. The question is, what factors foster these contrasting experiences? Extensive research has been conducted on the emotions elicited by music performance, but most of it has focused on its most painful aspect: the fear of performing. Much has been written about the factors that promote anxiety, the way in which it manifests and the methods that have been found to successfully combat it (Gabrielsson, 2003; Kenny, 2005, 2011; Wilson & Roland, 2002).

However, the fact remains that some performers describe their performances as being immensely enjoyable, and even as the most rewarding moments of their lives (Guevara, 2007; Lamont, 2012), and we know much less about these types of experiences. For instance, how do performers describe these high moments? What factors contribute to such enjoyable performance experiences? Which emotions typically constitute these experiences? Do these experiences correspond to the construct of *flow*? How do performers who consistently enjoy their performances differ from those who do not enjoy them fully, or from those who suffer from anxiety? Is the quality of the experience associated with a performer's gender, age, musical genre or status? How frequent are highly enjoyable performance experiences among musicians? Lastly, what can we learn from performers who enjoy performing, and how can we use this knowledge to improve the performance experience of musicians who do not enjoy their performances fully or, perhaps, suffer from anxiety?

Joyful performance experiences deserve to be investigated *per se* as they are intrinsically rewarding, may promote best functioning and may positively impact on performers' general wellbeing (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). Moreover, negative and positive emotions are relatively

independent of each other, and performing without anxiety does not necessarily mean enjoying performance (see Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999). Consequently, understanding the mechanisms of anxiety and finding efficient methods to combat it, although important, will at best give us the tools to help performers perform with less fear, but not necessarily with more joy.

However, I suggest that positive performance experiences should be investigated in comparison to other types of performance experiences rather than in isolation (as has been the case of most studies up to now). Including and comparing different types of performance experiences within a single study (i.e. stressful, highly enjoyable and only moderately enjoyable performances) may reveal the factors that impact on the likelihood of performers assessing their performances in such differing ways. Research that integrates and compares different types of performance experiences may perhaps identify factors that simultaneously increase performance-related joy and decrease anxiety (such factors would not emerge from the data if these different types of performance experiences were studied in isolation). This is one of the main goals of this research.

This thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 1 considers the complexity of musicians' emotional experiences during performance, and gives an overview of performance-related research. First, research on music performance anxiety (MPA) is discussed and current approaches are critically analysed. Then, research on highly positive performance experiences is discussed, and the construct through which these experiences are the most often investigated – 'flow state' – is introduced. The construct is critically analysed, and it is argued that flow is an insufficient construct for describing the richness, uniqueness and meaningfulness of highly positive performance experiences. Chapter 1 ends with a discussion on the impact of meaning on emotion, and highlights the link that has been found between joy and viewing one's activity as being meaningful and self-transcendent.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical foundations of the research. It discusses different theoretical perspectives on emotion, and presents hypotheses that aim to explain why joyful performance experiences may be linked to self-transcendence. The chapter introduces appraisal theories of emotions. The criteria according to which

interpretations are made – goals, values and needs – are discussed and underpinned by a theorisation of ‘needs’, which argues that well-being and fulfilment result from striving for goals that simultaneously actualize and transcend self. This discussion is followed by the introduction of a biological perspective on emotion, which suggests that emotions play a key role in the ability of organisms to strike the balance between satisfying their own needs as well as the needs of the larger group, which balance being a requirement for the preservation of life. A complementary view of emotion is provided from neuroscience, as it highlights the role of conditioning and unconscious processes in emotion as well as the link between emotion and mental images. Then the discussion centres on what makes human emotions unique: the way in which humans create meaning through the stories they tell themselves, and I argue that such narratives shape emotions. Evidence that socio-cultural factors influence emotions are presented, and the chapter concludes by showing how these different perspectives contribute to provide a broader picture of emotion and a deeper understanding of music performance experiences.

Chapter 3 describes the first study of the research: the Exploratory Study. It consisted of an on-line survey, the main goal of which was to explore the performance experiences of a large population of performers, and in particular, to investigate performances that performers assessed as being ‘highly enjoyable’, and to identify the factors that may facilitate this kind of experience. Findings showed that the highly enjoyable experience was described and explained mainly in terms of self-transcendence (i.e. connection with the audience, a sense of contribution, a broader connection with the ‘source’ of the music). A principal component analysis of the performer’s statements identified coherent and different ‘narratives’ or stories that performers told themselves about performance. These narratives predicted the quality of the performance experiences they reported having had during the previous year. Notably, the ‘people-oriented’ narrative predicted both a higher frequency of ‘highly enjoyable’ performances and a lower frequency of ‘stressful’ performances. The findings suggested, moreover, that the performers’ narratives were socio-culturally shaped.

Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the Exploratory Study in the context of previous research on performance experience. It also seeks to explain the reason why each of the narratives identified might enhance the performance experience, and why the ‘people-

oriented' narrative appeared to be superior to the other narratives, simultaneously increasing joy and reducing anxiety in performance. The findings are discussed through the lenses of theories of emotion, theories of needs, and of the approach and avoidance motivation theory. The chapter discusses the methodological considerations of the study, and points out that the research is exclusively based on self-reports, and that it may therefore suffer from systematic biases, remembered and lived experiences not being the same thing. The highly enjoyable performance is discussed in relation to the construct of flow, and I argue that flow is only fit to describe the full engagement performers reported experiencing during their highly enjoyable performance. In other respects, flow may be incompatible with the positive emotions performers reported, and unfit to render the meaningfulness and transcendent quality of their experience. The chapter concludes by discussing the contribution of the research.

Chapter 5 introduces the Intervention Project, which included a short on-line intervention aimed at enhancing the performers' performance experiences, and questionnaires, which measured the performers' narratives and emotions before and after the intervention. It explains the aim and theoretical foundation of the intervention, and the reason why it was primarily based on narratives. Chapter 5 describes the intervention, how it was delivered, and the questionnaires designed to measure whether the performers' narratives and emotions improved after the intervention.

Chapter 6 presents the findings of the pre-Intervention questionnaire. These findings were consistent with the findings of the Exploratory Study, which suggested that highly enjoyable performance experiences were characterised by self-transcendence. In addition, focusing on the benefits for the audience was the preparation method that correlated the highest with enjoyment, self-confidence, willingness to perform, inspiration, connection with the audience, feelings of contributing, and with the perceived quality of the performance. On the other hand, the correlations found between performance and practice-related variables were low, which suggested that the quality of the performance experience is not primarily dependent on the quality of practice. A principal component analysis of all the variables related to the performance and practice experiences, and to the performers' preparation methods and goals, identified two main approaches to music-making: one in which the primary goal was performance, and the other in which the goal was to make music for oneself.

Chapter 7 introduces the reader to the method and findings of the Intervention Project. Findings showed that, at the post-Intervention and at the follow-up questionnaires, participants scored significantly higher in enjoyment, self-confidence, absorption, inspiration, connection with the audience and feelings of contribution compared to their pre-Intervention scores. Significant increases were also found in the perceived quality of the performance, and also significant decreases in anxiety. Notably, three months after the end of the intervention (at the follow-up questionnaire), inspiration, connection with the audience and the perceived quality of the performance were at their highest levels, and anxiety at its lowest level (compared to the pre- and the post-Intervention values). These findings suggest that the intervention was successful in enhancing the performers' narratives about performance and their performance-related emotions.

Chapter 8 summarises the findings of the research and discusses its implications, contribution and openings. It suggests that when performers are helped to align the meaning they make of performance with their values, core-beliefs and psychological needs, their performance experience becomes more meaningful (self-transcendent) and rewarding, and anxiety is reduced. It contends that the practices and narratives prevalent within certain musical milieu (in particular, within western classical music institutions) promote the association between performance and threats (because of their emphasis on evaluation and achievement) rather than promoting an association between performance, joy, connection and contribution. As the performance experience is partly shaped by the socio-cultural groups to which performers belong, I claim that the groups should be involved in preventing and reducing anxiety, but most importantly, in inspiring performers so that they can preserve their joy. Researchers, too, should contribute to render the performance experience more fulfilling, rather than restricting their intervention to reducing the performers' misery. I contend that, from the very beginning of musical studies and throughout life, the meaningfulness of the performers' narratives should be nurtured so that performers may view the efforts they invest in music-making as worthwhile, and may fully enjoy the process.

## **1.2 The complexity of a performer's emotional experience**

Music is known by some as 'the language of emotions'. While there are multiple reasons why people are drawn to music, as it appears to enhance all aspects of their well-being (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment, according to the PERMA model) (Croom, 2015; Seligman, 2011), emotions seem to play a major role in motivating individuals to engage in musical activities. Music moves people emotionally, and they report using music to change, match or release their emotions, to enjoy, fuel or comfort themselves, and to relieve stress (Baltazar & Saarikallio, 2016; Juslin, 2001; Juslin, 2011; Juslin, Harmat & Eerola, 2013; Juslin & Laukka, 2004; Saarikallio, 2011; Sloboda & O'Neill, 2001; Zillman & Gan, 1997).

Understanding why and how music induces emotions is a central topic in the psychology of music and a main subject of research in the psychological field (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999; Clynes, 1977; Cook, 1959; Juslin & Lindström, 2015; Langer, 1941; Meyer, 1956; Scherer, 2004) because emotional responses to music involve multiple and complex processes, even when individuals listen to music – an activity that might be considered as quite simple in comparison to composing or performing (see Clarke, 2011). For instance, the kind of emotions a listener experiences when he or she listens to a musical work depend on multiple factors such as the composition and its musical features (Goldstein, 1980; Panksepp, 1995; Sloboda, 1991), the expressivity of the performer (Juslin, 2001), the context (Coutinho & Scherer, 2016), the familiarity of the work, the listener's preferences (Pereira, Teixeira, Figueiredo, Xavier, Castro, & Brattico, 2011), the associations he or she makes with extra-musical domains (Davies, 1978), and, of course, their current emotional state and personal characteristics.

Performing includes listening (which comprises both inner listening to the music one is about to play and listening to the physical sound one produces), and performers' emotions are affected by the characteristics of the work they are playing. Besides this, there is a wealth of demands on performers that also impact on their emotional experience. For instance, performers need to cope skilfully with the high physical and mental demands of the work they perform and, at the same time, make their music

sound expressive (Altenmüller and McPherson, 2007; Juslin & Persson, 2002; Persson, 2001). However, humans have a limited capacity to hold in mind and consciously process different items simultaneously (Cowan, 2001; Miller, 1956), and this forces performers to manage their available attentional resources. Choices need to be made – consciously or unconsciously – regarding the aspects of the performance that most require their limited attention (e.g. technical, cognitive or emotional aspects), and these choices may be a source of stress for performers, because they mean giving up conscious control over other aspects of their music-making (Geeves, McIlwain, Sutton & Christensen, 2013; Wolverton & Salmon, 1991).

In addition to the above, the emotions that performers experience while playing music on their own can change dramatically when they come to perform before an audience. The presence of other people inevitably provokes new emotions that add to the complexity of the experience, and intense audience-related feelings, such as anxiety and fear, or exhilaration and transcendence, often appear (Woody & McPherson, 2010). I will now review current research on these experiences, starting with research on performance anxiety.

### **1.3 Music Performance Anxiety**

In everyday life, fear and anxiety are normal reactions to real or imagined dangers, and are not themselves pathological conditions. However, ‘When fear and anxiety are more recurrent and persistent than what is reasonable under the circumstances, and when they impede normal life, then a fear/anxiety disorder exists’ (LeDoux, 1998: 228). In the same way, experiencing a certain degree of stress during performances is normal and even healthy and beneficial for the outcome of a performance (Stephoe, 1983). However, a problem arises when the performer’s emotions become detrimental to the performance or to the performer’s personal functioning.

Researchers generally use the expression ‘music performance anxiety’ (MPA) to describe the ‘exaggerated and sometimes incapacitating fear of performing in public’ (Wilson, 1997: 229). Salmon defines it as: ‘the experience of persisting, distressful apprehension about and/or actual impairment of, performance skills in a public context,

to a degree unwarranted given the individual's aptitude, training, and level of preparation' (Salmon, 1990: 3).

Kenny gives a more complete definition of the phenomenon:

*Music performance anxiety is the experience of marked and persistent anxious apprehension related to musical performance that has arisen through specific anxiety-conditioning experiences and which is manifested through combinations of affective, cognitive, somatic and behavioural symptoms. It may occur in a range of performance settings, but is usually more severe in settings involving high ego investment and evaluative threat. It may be focal (i.e. focused only on music performance), or occur comorbidly with other anxiety disorders, in particular social phobia. It affects musicians across the lifespan and is at least partially independent of years of training, practice, and level of musical accomplishment. It may or may not impair the quality of the musical performance (Kenny, 2009: 433).*

While Kenny highlights the fact that MPA does not always impair the quality of the performance, the symptoms of MPA may drastically affect all aspects of the performer's functioning: psychological (affective and cognitive), physical and behavioural. Its psychological manifestations include performers' subjective feelings of anxiety, loss of concentration and negative thoughts (Lehmann, Sloboda, & Woody, 2007; Valentine, 2002). Sufferers get anxious about 'potential mishaps in performance that expose feared inadequacies before an audience and which evoke feelings of embarrassment and humiliation' (Nagel, 2010: 141). The subjective experience of anxiety is accompanied by physical manifestations – which include increased heart rate, palpitations, shortness of breath, hyperventilation, dry mouth, sweating, nausea, diarrhoea and dizziness (Valentine, 2002), which may in turn increase the performers' beliefs of inadequacy. Behavioural aspects of MPA include the external signs of anxiety, such as shaking or looking excessively stiff or pale. All aspects of MPA seem to reinforce one another, may distract the performer from the task at hand, and provoke a negative loop that leads to a deterioration in the performance quality and more anxiety (Valentine, 2002).

MPA can have a huge impact on a performer's career and sense of self (Nagel, 2010). Notwithstanding, it is a widespread phenomenon that affects performers of all ages and abilities (Fishbein, Middlestadt, Ottati, Strauss & Ellis, 1998). According to some studies,



between 15 and 25 per cent of musicians suffer from MPA (Steptoe, 2001; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987). However, its incidence may be even higher (Kenny, Davis & Oates, 2004). The high prevalence of debilitating fear among musicians, as well as its devastating long-term consequences, justify the interest of researchers on the topic.

### **1.3.1 Current theoretical approaches to performance anxiety**

Researchers suggest that MPA results from the interplay between the situation, the difficulty of the task and the performer's personality and ways of thinking (Wilson, 1997). Findings seem to confirm that certain situations increase a performer's anxiety. Situations in which performers feel highly exposed are associated with higher levels of performance anxiety. For example, performing as a soloist – a situation of high exposure – is linked to the highest incidence of performance anxiety (Cox & Kenardy, 1993; Hamann, 1982; Papageorgi et al., 2010). Moreover, performances that have a great impact on a performer's career seem to elicit more stress than performances that are not as important for the performer. At the same time, feeling ill-prepared and believing that the challenges of the situation surpass one's skills is likely to elicit anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

The above suggests that the same performer will experience less anxiety when playing a well-mastered piece in a group or at a friend's party, than when performing a difficult and underprepared piece before a jury in order to get a job. However, not every performer will experience such situations in the same way. Some performers experience high levels of anxiety in the most friendly of environments, while others barely experience anxiety during competitions. Personality seems partly to account for these differences.

The link between MPA and personality traits has been confirmed in several studies. MPA appears to correlate with

- trait anxiety among music students (Cox & Kenardy, 1993; Osborne & Kenny, 2008), professional orchestral musicians (Langendörfer, Hodapp, Kreutz & Bongard, 2006; Lehrer, Goldman & Strommen, 1990; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987) and chorus singers (Kenny et al., 2004);
- perfectionism and/or excessive need of control (Mor, Day, Flett & Hewitt, 1995; Patston & Osborne, 2016; Wilson & Roland, 2002); and
- neuroticism, introversion and proneness to social phobia (Craske & Craig, 1984; Steptoe, 1989; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987).

These findings suggest that genetic determinants (e.g. somatic arousal or emotionality and personality) play a role in MPA.

In addition, performers who suffer from MPA demonstrate a particular way of thinking – focusing their thoughts on the potential threats of performing (Kirchner, 2002; Wilson & Roland, 2002) – and fear is the appropriate response to such threats. What seems to go wrong with these performers is not their emotional response to what is viewed as a threat, but the sheer fact of making meaning of performance in such a way. Negative cognitions appear to be more detrimental to the performance quality than the physiological and behavioural components of MPA (Osborne & Kenny, 2008). For instance, it is not the activation of the sympathetic nervous system *per se* that causes MPA (as it occurs in anxious and non-anxious performers alike) but the way in which performers interpret such arousal as being either facilitative or detrimental to the performance (Brooks, 2014; Connolly & Williamon, 2004; Craske & Craig, 1984; Hanin, 2010; Steptoe, 1989; Steptoe 2001).

Maladaptive thoughts include negative self-talk, preoccupation with inadequacy, irrational beliefs, and fear of negative evaluation and humiliation (Kendrick, Craig, Lawson & Davidson, 1982; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987; Wilson & Roland, 2002). Catastrophising – a belief that minor errors may have catastrophic consequences – appears to have the most significant influence on MPA, as it leads to an exaggerated fear of losing control (Steptoe & Fidler, 1987). Maladaptive thoughts may

include the belief that one must be perfectly competent at musical performance in order to be a worthwhile person (Steptoe, 1989).

Independent of the performer's personality, situation and level of preparation, it is clear that this way of thinking about performance is in itself anxiety provoking. However, it is important to highlight that the cognition-emotion route is a two-way one. Emotion is shaped by cognition, but it also shapes cognition (Ashby, Valentin & Turken, 2002). For instance, much research suggests that negative emotion narrows an individual's scope of attention, cognition, and action, while positive emotion broadens it (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005) (also see Harmon-Jones, Gable & Price, 2013 for an alternative view on this topic), and that an individual's mood impacts on their self-efficacy beliefs (Kavanagh & Bower, 1985).

### **1.3.2 Treatments of MPA**

Several treatments have been used to fight MPA, among which are treatments that centre on enhancing cognitions (i.e. cognitive restructuring, positive self-talk, attention-focusing and self-instruction); relaxing the body (i.e. progressive muscle relaxation, bio-feedback and breathing), and changing behaviour (i.e. systematic desensitisation). Other treatments include hypnosis, the Alexander technique, the use of chemical or natural substances (i.e. beta-blockers), helping performers to develop their performance skills and increase self-efficacy beliefs, and to choose musical works that match their skills (Connolly & Williamon, 2004; Hamann and Sobaje, 1983; McPherson & McCormick, 2006). For a review of treatments, see Kenny, 2005; McGinnis & Milling, 2005; McGrath, 2012; Ortiz-Brugués, 2009.

The most common and successful treatments of MPA include a combination of cognitive and behavioural treatments, sometimes with the addition of medication (Braden, Osborne, & Wilson, 2015; Kendrick et al., 1982; Nagel, 2010; Nagel, Himle & Papsdorf, 1989). However, while several kinds of interventions appear to reduce performers' anxiety, a review of research suggests that the findings are inconclusive and that research on the topic has been fragmented, inconsistent or methodologically weak (Kenny, 2005; Ortiz-Brugués, 2009). Kenny (2005) claims that it is difficult under these

circumstances to reach any firm conclusions about the effectiveness of the various treatments of MPA she reviewed. Some programs do not seem to significantly reduce anxiety (Kageyama, 2007), while others seem to help performers build positive emotions towards music-making, acquire better preparation skills and higher self-efficacy beliefs, but do not give conclusive evidence that they reduce MPA (i.e. Clark & Williamon, 2011; Osborne, Greene & Immel, 2014).

Despite some encouraging findings, the literature suggests that performance anxiety is not always easy to treat. Nagel claims that different performers may need different kinds of treatments for anxiety, and suggests that psychodynamic therapies might work better in the case of long-term persisting anxiety, because the causes of such anxiety may not be directly linked to performance, but to unresolved trauma dating possibly from childhood (Nagel, 2010). A case study of a professional performer suffering from such persisting anxiety was treated with positive results using a short-term treatment based on psychodynamic theory (Kenny, Arthey & Abbass, 2014). The treatment was based on the assumption that MPA was a defence mechanism towards unconscious, unprocessed emotions from early childhood, in particular towards emotions related to early attachment ruptures. It was hypothesised that if these issues were explored, made conscious and resolved, the performer would be able to overcome his defences and free himself from the emotions of his past. The positive results of this study suggest that a broad perspective on MPA may be necessary to address and treat the roots of the phenomenon.

### **1.3.3 Critique of current approaches to MPA**

Most research on MPA is carried out within a cognitive paradigm (Nagel, 2010). This theoretical approach is based on the premise that our thoughts control our emotions and behaviour, and argues that a performer's cognitions are paramount in determining the quality of his/her performance experience. As discussed above, findings have confirmed the link between certain kinds of thoughts (i.e. focusing on possible mistakes, on the eventuality of losing control or on being inadequate) and MPA. Cognitive approaches have contributed greatly to the understanding of MPA, and have brought some hope for

anxious performers as they suggest that alleviating anxiety is somewhat within a performer's control.

However, I claim that the focus of current research on MPA tends to be too narrow, which may prevent researchers from identifying some factors that may underlie the phenomenon. First, I contend that current approaches have focused too narrowly on identifying and treating what is unhealthy in individuals' ways of thinking, while neglecting to pay attention to what might be missing and may perhaps be causing anxiety in their approach to performance (i.e. meaning) (Reker, Peacock, & Wong, 1987). I claim that researchers would benefit from broadening the perspective through which they study performance experiences, investigating not only the thoughts of performers who suffer from anxiety, but also the thoughts of those who fully enjoy performance. Comparing the ways of thinking in both groups of performers – specifically their narratives – may allow them to find out whether performers who enjoy performance have characteristic narratives about it or not, and whether or not such narratives contribute to increase their joy of performing and perhaps even protect them against anxiety. Such a broad focus of research may help researchers find additional ways to help performers overcome anxiety.

Second, I contend that current approaches tend to view MPA as an individual's problem, and that, due to this narrow perspective, the impact socio-cultural contexts may have on the phenomenon becomes invisible and therefore impossible to critically analyse and change. I suggest that MPA should be investigated within the socio-cultural milieus within which it originates, so as to identify the context-related factors that might be fostering it (i.e. the practices and discourses that are prevalent within a particular socio-cultural group).

When the focus of research is too narrow, researchers are threatened by a loss of perspective and the inability to capture the wholeness of the phenomenon. As Koffka puts it:

*Science, in guiding rational systems of knowledge, had to select such facts as would most readily submit to such systematization. This process of selection, in itself of the greatest significance, involves the neglecting or rejecting of a number of facts or aspects. As long as*

*scientists know what they are doing, such procedure is fraught with little danger. But in the triumph over its success science is apt to forget that it has not absorbed all aspects of reality, and to deny the existence of those which it has neglected. (Koffka, 2013: 8)*

## **1.4 Performance as a highly positive experience**

*'Nothing makes me happier ... I vibrate when I play in public ... I become another person, and it makes me so happy!'*  
*(Manuel, professional harpist cited in Guevara, 2007:15)*

Anecdotal accounts abound of musicians who love to perform. Around the turn of the millennium, researchers in the psychology of music followed the trend of general psychology and started giving increasing attention to optimal functioning and positive emotions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). They therefore began to explore the highs of performing, referred to variously as 'strong experiences', 'transcendence', 'flow' or 'peak experiences' (Ascenso, Williamon & Perkins, 2016; Bakker, 2005; Bernard, 2009; Chirico, Serino, Cipresso, Gaggioli & Riva, 2015; Fritz & Avsec, 2007; Gabrielsson, 2001; Guevara, 2007; Lamont, 2012; Marin & Bhattacharya, 2013; Privette, 1983; Sinnamon, Moran & Connell, 2012; Whaley, 2006; Whaley, Sloboda & Gabrielsson, 2009). Nonetheless, despite these recent studies, we know much less about positive performance experiences and the factors that may facilitate their occurrence than about MPA. This bias needs to be redressed, since understanding optimal functioning may provide educators and researchers with new tools to prevent or reduce anxiety, but also – and ideally – help performers enjoy their performance more fully.

Based on current theories of well-being (Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2005), it has been suggested that positive performance experiences result from the presence and balance of three main elements: positive emotions, engagement and meaning (Lamont, 2012). However, most of the studies on music performance have focused on investigating the link that may exist between positive performance experiences and engagement and, in particular, a kind of engagement known as 'flow state' (Lamont, 2012). Given the importance of the construct of flow in the study of positive performance experiences, I introduce the construct in my discussion, and argue that flow may be insufficient and perhaps even unfit for describing musicians' performance experiences. I then discuss the role that meaning plays in emotional processes, and contend that most positive

performance experiences may be linked to the kinds of meaning performers confer on performance.

### **1.4.1 Positive performance experiences and ‘flow’**

Flow is a core concept in the study of optimal performance experiences (optimal or best performance experiences are those experiences that are characterised by high levels of perceived positive emotions). The construct, which has been extensively employed in the context of sport (Jackson & Kimiecik, 2008; Jackson & Wrigley, 2004), is now prevalent in the musical field. Different aspects of music-making have been investigated through the construct of flow; for instance, music teaching and learning (Bakker, 2005; Custodero, 1998, 2002), composition (MacDonald, Byrne & Carlton, 2006) and practice and performance (Fullagar, Knight & Sovern, 2013; Kirchner, 2011; Kirchner, Bloom & Skutnick-Henley 2008; O’Neill, 1999; Sinnamon et al. 2012; Whaley, 2006; Wrigley & Emmerson, 2013).

The term flow was coined by Csikszentmihalyi in the 1960s to refer to the particular state of consciousness that people describe after being fully engaged and absorbed in an activity, and optimally aroused. The experience is characterised by a complete focus on what one is doing in the present moment, the merging of action and awareness, the loss of reflective self-consciousness, a sense of control over one’s actions, a sense of distortion of time, and the experience of the activity as intrinsically rewarding – the end goals becoming less important than the process itself (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

There are some conditions that appear to facilitate flow state, for instance, the match between challenges and skills (which prevent both boredom and anxiety), clear goals and immediate feedback. Entering flow requires that attention become completely absorbed in the present exchange, with no spare attention that could allow other stimuli (including self-consciousness) to enter awareness. Consciousness then becomes ordered in such a way that thoughts, feelings, wishes, and action are in concert (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997: 128). Csikszentmihalyi argues that flow has a motivating impact: once subjects have experienced flow in an activity, they search to repeat the

experience by persisting at and returning to the activity. Increased participation leads to increasing mastery and a positive spiral of engagement and improvement, and new opportunities to enter flow follow.

The model of flow emphasises interactions. Rather than focusing exclusively on the person, the person and his or her environment are viewed as forming a dynamic system, able to interact in an optimal way. This optimal functioning is facilitated by some conditions in the environment and some dispositions in the subject. Differences in the frequency with which individuals report flow are thought to be due to the degree to which they have an autotelic personality – i.e. the extent to which they are open to new challenges and ready to engage and persist in highly-challenging activities (Chirico et al., 2015; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Flow seems to characterise best performances in all kinds of activities (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). During flow, subjects seem to operate at full capacity, and this state is associated with healthy self-esteem, well-being and enjoyment. Some researchers even use the terms flow and ‘peak experience’ interchangeably (Privette, 1983), or view flow as ‘short-term peak experiences’ (Bakker, 2005).

### **1.4.2 Critical analysis of the construct of flow**

Despite the fact that flow is meant to shed light on optimal experiences and higher functioning, I have two reasons why I am sceptical about investigating optimal music performance experience through the lens of flow. First, there is some confusion about the meaning of the term in the literature, and while it is supposed to describe best emotional experiences, flow actually refers to a non-emotional state of consciousness. And second, I contend that the construct does not capture the whole picture of best performance experiences, and may even divert attention from the aspects that make the experience most distinctively human.



### **1.4.2.1 Is the construct of flow fit to explore emotional experiences?**

As mentioned above, despite the fact that optimal emotional experiences are often explored through the construct of flow, flow is a non-emotional experience, and it is only after flow that people may experience positive emotions. Csikszentmihalyi states that,

*When we are in flow, we are not happy, because to experience happiness we must focus on our inner states, and that would take away attention from the task at hand... Only after the task is completed do we have the leisure to look back at what has happened, and then we are flooded with gratitude for the excellence of that experience – then, in retrospect, we are happy (1997: 32).*

Peterson, Park & Seligman add that

*flow is non-emotional and arguably non-conscious. People may describe flow as enjoyable, but this is an after-the [-]fact summary judgment; “joy” is not immediately present during the activity itself... At least at any given point in time, flow and pleasure may even be incompatible (2005: 27).*

While much of the literature equates flow with enjoyment and highly positive emotions, and even Csikszentmihalyi refers to the ‘enjoyable flow state’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997: 32), he also states that ‘Flow is a source of psychic energy in that it focuses attention and motivates action. Like other forms of energy, it is neutral’ (1997: 140).

Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of flow appears to refer to a functioning mode that is non-emotional and non-conscious. Additionally, as I will discuss below, it may be linked to the functioning of the implicit system, may be more typical of animal than of human behaviour, and may share similarities with a primitive kind of consciousness called ‘core consciousness’. I briefly discuss this subject below.

### **1.4.2.2 Is flow associated with the ‘implicit system’?**

Research suggests that flow state is associated with characteristic changes at brain level that imply the deactivation of the brain areas viewed as the most advanced, and the activation of those viewed as the most primitive. Flow appears to be linked to the functioning of the ‘implicit system’ (Dietrich, 2004). What does this mean?

The brain seems to operate two distinct information-processing systems to acquire, memorise and represent knowledge. On one hand, there is the ‘explicit system’ – dependent on the prefrontal cortex and associated with the most sophisticated mental abilities and conscious awareness – which is rule-based and whose content can be expressed verbally (Dietrich, 2003, 2004). On the other hand, there is the ‘implicit system’ – linked to the basal ganglia – which is skill or experience-based, whose content is unconscious and not verbalisable, and which can only be expressed through task performance (Ashby & Casale, 2002; Squire, 1992).

The implicit system is particularly effective at handling multi-dimensional tasks because its capacity seems unlimited, while the explicit system would be unable to hold multiple elements of information in focal attention simultaneously due to its limited capacity (Cowan, 2001; Dietrich, 2004). Dietrich argues that ‘optimal performance involving a real-time sensory-motor integration task is associated with maximal implicitness of the task’s execution’, and claims that the flow state is linked to implicit functioning (Dietrich 2004: 757).

Animals strongly rely on the implicit system. Dietrich reflects on the lightning-fast escape manoeuvres of a squirrel, and states:

*Lacking an overall strategy or plan, the squirrel gets to safety entirely by relying on moment to moment adjustments. Such smooth feedback-driven sensory-motor integration can produce extremely complex movement patterns that can serve an overall and/or higher goal (safety), yet requires no more than the reaction to immediately preceding input (2004:755).*

From a neurocognitive perspective, flow state seems to be associated with the de-activation of the prefrontal cortex and with the activation of the basal ganglia (Dietrich, 2004). Dietrich claims that,

*Given that the explicit system is sub-served by prefrontal regions, it follows from this proposal that a flow experience must occur during a state of transient hypofrontality that can bring about the inhibition of the explicit system (2004: 757).*

To sum up, the flow state may refer to the implicit, unconscious and quasi-automatic way of functioning that we observe so often in animals. This so-called ‘primitive’ but

highly-efficient way of functioning appears to be perfectly adapted to the kind of sensorimotor skills music performance requires. But can music performance rely on the implicit system alone? And, is this the kind of functioning performers describe when they report on their ‘highly enjoyable’ performances?

### 1.4.2.3 Is flow associated with ‘core consciousness’?

The flow state – with its characteristic focus on the ‘here and now’, and the disruption of familiar references such as the sense of time and self-consciousness – seems to share some similarities with a primitive level of consciousness Damasio calls ‘core consciousness’. This term refers to the simplest kind of consciousness, one that is not exclusively human. Like flow, the scope of core consciousness is the ‘here and now’: ‘there is no elsewhere, there is no before, there is no after...’ (Damasio, 1999: 16), and as with flow, in this kind of consciousness the sense of self is only subtle, ‘half-guessed’.

However, during human development, ‘core consciousness’ comes to be enriched or broadened, and ‘extended consciousness’ arises. This higher kind of consciousness is ‘everything core consciousness is, only bigger and better’ (Damasio, 1999: 196), since it relies on reflection and language. Damasio explains that ‘extended consciousness’

*provides the organism with an elaborate sense of self – an identity and a person, you or me, no less – and places that person at a point in individual historical time, richly aware of the lived past and of the anticipated future, and keenly cognizant of the world beside it... In extended consciousness, both the past and the anticipated future are sensed along with the here and now in a sweeping vista as far-ranging as that of an epic novel (1999: 16-17).*

Extended consciousness results from increased mental abilities, which include the individuals’ capacity to contemplate their own past, present or future cognitions (Roberts, 2002). These capacities open the space to an extremely rich mental world, but one that can nonetheless capture part of the attentional resources that would otherwise be devoted to being fully engaged in the present. On the other hand, ‘creatures with limited memory...are neither burdened nor enriched by the memories of a personal past, let alone by memories of an anticipated future’ (Damasio, 1999: 217). This claim is in

line with the bulk of the research on animal behaviour, which suggests that animals have a very limited sense of past and future, and live rooted in the present moment (Roberts, 2002). While researchers differ regarding the extent to which animals may be self-aware, or possess 'extended-consciousness' (Damasio, 1999; LeDoux, 1998), animals seem to suffer less than people do from cognitive overload, and to be more available for totally immersing themselves in the 'here and now'.

If we relate flow to Damasio's theories of consciousness, we could say that, during flow, the functioning of extended consciousness appears to be temporarily suspended and individuals appear to recover the spontaneity of their core consciousness. During flow, people seem to free themselves from the cognitive burdens that appear together with extended consciousness because, as Damasio states, the higher level of consciousness has a price:

*It is not just the price of risk and danger and pain. It is the price of knowing risk, danger, and pain. Worse even: it is the price of knowing what pleasure is and knowing when it is missing or unattainable. The drama of human condition thus comes from consciousness because it concerns knowledge obtained in a bargain that none of us struck: the cost of a better existence is the loss of innocence about that very existence (1999: 316).*

If the price of extended consciousness is that we can no longer experience life directly, without the filters of higher order cognitions, can we really recover such lost 'innocence'? Can our minds dwell in the 'here and now' without the interferences of memory or anticipated future? Most important for this research, can performance be exclusively based on such a kind of consciousness, or is this the kind of consciousness that best performance requires?

Some argue that best performance may result from actions that are solely guided by an embodied sense of what feels right in a certain circumstance, which is in line with the view that it may be assumed by the implicit system or may rely on 'core consciousness'. For instance, Dreyfus (2002) claims that true experts do not need to be guided by higher order cognitive representations of potential action, but instead rely on an embodied autopilot attuned to that which feels right. This suggests that the functioning of experts and squirrels are quite similar. He adds that the more an individual is skilled, the less

they need mental representations for actions, and the more intuitive and embodied these actions are. Acting becomes automatic and non-conscious, which implies ‘mindlessness’ (as opposed to mindfulness), and is experienced as ‘a steady flow of skilful activity in response to one’s sense of the situation’ (Dreyfus, 2002: 8).

However, music performance seems to require that performers follow an overarching, declarative, cognitive roadmap (Chaffin & Imreh, 2002; Geeves, McIlwain, Sutton & Christensen, 2013; Lehmann, 1997; Williamon, Valentine & Valentine, 2002) and that the explicit system appears to be part of the performance process as well. For instance, some researchers claim that performers need performance ‘cues’ that function as ‘features of music that the musician thinks about during performance’ (Chaffin, Lemieux & Chen, 2004: 727). Such cues give musicians ‘conscious control of highly practiced motor sequences which would, otherwise, be entirely automatic’ (Chaffin & Crawford, 2000: 158). It appears that performance cannot be completely mindless. Even well-known methods designed to help musicians enter flow and perform at their best (i.e. Greene, 2002) assume that, for performing artists, it is critical to develop the ability to switch between the verbally dominant, analytical and judgemental ‘left brain hemisphere’ and the ‘right hemisphere’, which mainly works through pictures, feelings and intuition (Osborne, Greene & Immel, 2014).

The extent to which the construct of flow may be used to describe most positive music performance experiences needs to be further investigated. For instance, the findings of Sinnamon et al. (2012) showed that, while 95 per cent of the elite music students studied reported experiencing flow frequently, only 55 per cent reported experiencing a sense of control frequently, 65 per cent reported experiencing merging of action and awareness, and a much lower percentage of 26 per cent reported experiencing loss of self-consciousness. The researchers concluded:

*This is a troubling result for the interpretation of overall flow scores, considering the importance of each of these dimensions to the experience and occurrence of flow, and in particular for the merging of action and awareness dimension, which is described by Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) as “the most telling aspect of the flow experience” (Sinnamon et al., 2012: 15).*

In addition to the above, humans live in a linguistic world and continually use words to confer meaning on their reality (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Kahneman, 2005, 2011; McAdams, 2001). Yet, language appears to have no place in flow state. May flow and higher cognitions (i.e. meaning-making narratives) be viewed as incompatible? What relation can these two constructs have?

It appears that further research is necessary to answer the many questions raised around the construct of flow and its relation to optimal music performance experiences. Nevertheless, most studies in the psychology of performance study optimal performance experiences through a construct that appears to allude to a non-emotional way of functioning, and say nothing about experiences that are distinctively human. While flow seems to refer to the experience of being fully immersed in an activity (as animals and young children so often are), I am particularly interested in aspects of the experience that are not rendered by the construct, namely, the link between meaning and joyful performance experiences.

I suggest that performance experiences are different from, and much more complex than, being in flow, and these experiences require exploration using tools able to capture and render their richness. I hypothesise that the performers' self-statements may take us to the 'kitchen' of their performance experiences, and may allow us to infer the kinds of stories they tell themselves in order to confer meaning on their performances. Such stories would express the beliefs, values and goals that shape their performance experience, and which may likely impact, not only on the likelihood of performers being fully engaged in their performance, but also on the likelihood of their experiencing fear or joy, or lack of meaning or transcendence.

### **1.4.3 Positive experiences and meaning**

Inspired by the positive psychology movement (Seligman, 2002), researchers in the psychology of music seem to be increasingly widening the focus through which they explore positive performance experiences, looking not only at the role that full engagement plays in such experiences, but at the role of meaning as well (i.e. Ascenso et al., 2017; Lamont, 2012). Positive performance experiences appear to be meaningful.

For example, one study investigated performers' descriptions about the strongest experience they had had while making music, and showed that meaning was implicit in all their reports. The study concluded that 'strong experiences of music performance are dominated by the eudaimonic route to happiness, with the hedonic route playing an important role' (Lamont, 2012: 589).

Meaning, or meaningfulness (terms used interchangeably by most researchers (Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski, 2010), but differentiated by others) – i.e. 'meaning' referring to the *type* of significance, and 'meaningfulness' to the *amount* of significance that something holds for an individual (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003) – is viewed as contributing to psychological well-being (de Muijnck, 2013; Seligman, 2011; Steger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009). Some theorists state that finding meaning in one's life is an inherent human need (see Maslow, 1943, 1971; Rogers, 1959, 1961), and others even argue that the main concern of humans is to see meaning in their lives (Frankl, 1959). On the other hand, a lack of meaning can lead to symptoms of anxiety, depression, hopelessness, and physical decline (Reker et al., 1987).

But not all meanings lead individuals to experience the same level of joy or satisfaction (Emmons, 2003). For instance, the relation between meaning and satisfaction has been extensively investigated in the work field, and findings show that individuals doing the same work differ in the meaning they attribute to it, and that these meanings predict their job satisfaction. Some individuals view their work as a job (focusing primarily on financial gain); some view it as a career (focusing on self-esteem, power, prestige or social status) and others view it as a 'calling' (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin & Schwartz, 1997). A 'calling' orientation to work embraces three main components: an external summons or a 'caller' (i.e. a higher power, the needs of society, a family legacy, or any other force external to the individual); meaning/purpose (a person's approach to work aligns with her or his broader sense of purpose in life); and prosocial motivation (to help others or advance the greater good) (Duffy & Dik, 2013).

Research shows that these three different ways of making sense of work significantly predict job satisfaction and career commitment (Duffy, Dik & Steger, 2011; Duffy & Dik, 2013), and that individuals who see their work as a 'calling' – viewing it as meaningful, and as contributing to make the world a better place (Rosso et al., 2010) –

report the highest levels of life and work satisfaction (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Individuals with a calling orientation seem to interpret their own actions and experiences in terms of an ‘existentially meaningful life story’ (Crescioni & Baumeister, 2013: 3). As Maslow suggests, these individuals might have moved from self-actualisation (being mainly self-oriented) to a higher way of functioning, characterised by being ‘involved in a cause outside of their skin: in something outside of themselves, some calling or vocation’ (1971: 42). The high levels of satisfaction of these individuals seem to result from the meaningfulness – what Chalofsky & Krishna call ‘a deeper level of intrinsic motivation’ (2009: 191) – and self-transcendent nature of their view of work.

In line with these findings, best performance experiences appear to be linked to viewing performance as a meaningful, transcendent activity. For instance, a study investigating music students’ autobiographic narratives about their music-making identified two characteristic qualities of best performance experiences:

*The first quality is that the performer is functioning at his or her very best – at the height of his or her abilities. Second, these experiences are marked by the performer’s sense of being a part of something larger than oneself in some way – perhaps by being a part of a long-standing musical or cultural tradition, by being a part of a particular social group, or by being a part of larger forces of nature or of the universe (Bernard, 2009: 4).*

In this study, about 70 per cent of music students described their best experiences as ‘particular occasions when making music took them to another place, when music making experiences were deeply meaningful and profoundly moving, when what they experienced was beyond the ordinary’ (Bernard, 2009: 3). It appears that these best performances experiences were self-transcendent.

Another piece of research about strong performance experiences shows that performers who report the most positive emotions (which include a ‘sense of euphoria’) describe their performance in terms of meaningful, self-transcendent narratives. These performers emphasised the synergy achieved between themselves, other performers and the audience, the quality of the sound and the beauty of the music. In contrast to the self-transcendent focus of these accounts, performers who report the most negative



emotions consider their music making as a very personal and almost introverted activity (Lamont, 2012). Another piece of research found that making meaning of performance in terms of transcendence and contribution contributed to musicians' well-being (see Ascenso et al., 2016).

Consistent with these findings, a previous study, which explored the performance experience of three professional musicians who loved to perform (Guevara, 2007), found that these three performers cared deeply for their audience and performed *for* the audience (in contrast to performers who play *in front of* the audience). In addition, these performers were convinced that their performances contributed to other people's lives, and viewed themselves as channels between the 'source' of the music – something that lay beyond their conscious selves – and their audience. The findings of the study suggested that these performers had a 'calling' orientation towards performance, and that their meaningful, purposeful, self-transcendent narratives about performance were at the genesis of their performance-related joy.

To conclude, some research suggests that making meaning of work and of performance in terms of self-transcendence promotes the most rewarding experiences. The link between self-transcendence and joy in performance deserves to be further investigated. Moreover, if joy is related to self-transcendence, what may the impact of a lack of self-transcendence on the performers' performance experience be? The relationship between a performer's approach to performance (i.e. self-centred or self-transcendence) and the quality of his or her performance experience (i.e. highly enjoyable, moderately enjoyable or stressful) has not been investigated yet. This relationship may exist, and it may be the key to understanding and promoting highly-enjoyable performances, and perhaps to understanding and reducing anxiety too. This study aims to investigate these topics.

Prior to entering into the heart of the Exploratory Study, in the following chapter I consider the theoretical foundation on which it is based.



## **Chapter 2. Theoretical Foundation of the Research**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In order to understand, and eventually enhance, a performer's emotions during performance, we first need to explain the phenomenon we are exploring: emotions. A short overview of the subject will serve to highlight that any analysis of the performance experience will necessarily be an oversimplification of the phenomenon, as we will necessarily highlight some aspects and neglect most others, creating a distorted picture of what an emotional experience is. Emotions are complex and holistic, and are difficult to capture and describe through an analytic tool such as language.

Notwithstanding, the discussion of the findings and the design of an intervention need a theoretical foundation, which I present below. I start by defining emotion and introducing appraisal theories. I chose appraisal theories because they highlight the link that exists between emotion and meaning, a key idea on which there is agreement among theorists, and which is central to the analysis of my findings and the design of my intervention.

### **2.2 What is an emotion?**

What is an emotion? A very simple definition is that 'emotions are responses to events that are important to the individual' (Frijda, 1988: 351). Emotions are subjective experiences, the core of which is the experience of pleasure or pain. They are holistic responses that include both cognitive and bodily processes, and Scherer and Brosch define them as episodes of 'interrelated, synchronized changes in several organismic subsystems in response to the evaluation of an external or internal stimulus event as relevant to major concerns of the organism' (2009: 266). Emotions are important not only because they determine the quality of the subjective experience, but also because they involve some change in action readiness: a change in readiness to approach, to move away or to shift attention; a change in sheer excitement, which can be understood as being ready for action but not knowing what action; or in being stopped in one's

tracks, or by losing interest (Frijda, 1988). For example, Frijda defines joy in terms of both its subjective experience and its particular action tendency: ‘a sense of pleasure plus the urge toward exuberance and contact-seeking’ (Frijda, 1988: 351).

Some theorists make a distinction between the action tendencies of positive and negative emotions, and argue that positive emotions elicit vaguer and less specific action tendencies, and that they often lack autonomic reactivity (i.e. contentment) (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Levenson, Ekman, & Friesen, 1990). They argue, moreover, that their form and function are different from those of negative emotions: negative emotions narrow individuals’ momentary thought-action repertoires and call forth specific action tendencies (i.e. attack or flee), whereas many positive emotions broaden their thought-action repertoire and make them pursue a wider range of thoughts and actions than is typical (e.g., play, explore, savour, and integrate) (Fredrickson 2001; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998).

## **2.3 The ‘laws’ of emotion**

Despite emotions often being considered the most idiosyncratic of psychological phenomena, Frijda claims that emotions emerge, wax and wane according to rules in a strictly determined fashion, and states that simple and universal ‘laws’ operate behind them (1988: 349). From the list of laws he proposes, I wish to focus on the first two, because I view them as particularly relevant to the analysis of the findings of this research, and the design of the intervention. These are the laws of ‘situational meaning’ and ‘concern’. The first law points to the causal relationship that exists between individuals’ appraisals of reality and their emotions, and the second to the criteria according to which individuals appraise events.

The law of situational meaning states that:

*Input some event with its particular kind of meaning; out comes an emotion of a particular kind. That is the law of situational meaning. In goes loss, and out comes grief... It is meanings and the subject’s appraisals that count — that is, the relationship between events and the subject’s concerns, and not events as such (Frijda, 1988: 349).*

The law of concern stipulates:

*Emotions arise in response to events that are important to the individual's goals, motives, or concerns. Every emotion hides a concern, that is, a more or less enduring disposition to prefer particular states of the world. A concern is what gives a particular event its emotional meaning... Emotions arise from the interaction of situational meanings and concerns (1988: 351).*

It is noteworthy that these two laws suggest that, in order to understand the performance experience, we need to understand the meaning that performers confer on their performances, as well as the criteria according to which they make their evaluations – the ‘goals, motives, or concerns’ implicit in their reports.

Frijda's first law seems to summarise the core idea of what are commonly known as ‘appraisal theories’ of emotion. Appraisal theories argue that cognitive processes determine the relevance of events, and elicit and differentiate between emotions (Scherer, 2005). This means that it is not the reality per-se that elicits emotions, but the subject's appraisal of, or subjective evaluation of, this reality (Ortony, Clore & Collins, 1990). Hence, appraisal theories are central to understanding the process by which performers come to experience their performances in the way they do.

People live in and need to respond to environments that are continuously changing. In order to do so in an optimal way, they are equipped with monitoring systems that are very sensitive to novelty. When novelty is detected, the organism becomes emotional, or in an activated disposition, and attentional resources are directed towards the appraisal of the event. A first step of the emotional experience takes place when the significance of the situation is assessed (what Lazarus calls ‘primary appraisal’), and is followed by a second step, during which subjects evaluate their resources to cope with the situation (‘secondary appraisal’) (Lazarus, 1966). Contrary to automatically triggered responses, emotions provide time to re-evaluate the stimulus and one's resources, and select the most appropriate response (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003).

Leventhal & Scherer (1987) point to the fact that these evaluations are not always conscious, and suggest that appraisal can occur at three different levels: the sensorimotor, the schematic, and the conceptual level, and that these processes can interact: subcortical processes stimulating cortical processes and vice versa. Appraisal

theorists claim that people's minds are extremely subtle and complex, and allow for a huge range of interpretations of reality. They argue that this cognitive richness results in emotional experiences that are extremely diverse – an observation which is in sharp contrast with other theorists such as Ekman and Friesen (1971) and Tomkins (1982), who hold that humans are hardwired to feel and express a limited number of basic and universal emotions.

Appraisal theorists highlight the fluidity of emotional changes that accompany the subject's appraisals. The mind is continuously engaged in monitoring and assessing the environment, and new appraisals affect and change the emotions experienced. In turn, such emotions become part of the appraised situation, and this leads to further emotional changes (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). It is important to highlight that appraisal theorists view this process as taking place at different levels of awareness, and do not deny the role of automatic and unconscious appraisals (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Ortony, Clore & Collins, 1990). These theorists emphasize the causal relationship that exists between appraisals and emotions, and claim that this relationship seems to be dictated by 'laws'.

Frijda's second law, the law of concern, argues that individuals appraise their reality and respond emotionally to this appraisal according to criteria they view as centrally important – these criteria are often referred to as goals, values or needs. I review some of the literature that highlights the existing links between these three criteria and emotions below and, at the same time, point out the differences between terms that are often used indiscriminately (see Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003) but do not mean the same thing.

## **2.4 Emotion and goals**

Many theorists have linked emotions to goals. Ortony et al., claim that people differ in the way in which they assess events because they 'construe' their reality as desirable or undesirable in accordance to their differing goals (1990: 4). Others even restrict the term 'emotions' to reactions to goal-relevant events (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). Oatley, for instance, defined emotions as: 'a psychological state or process that

functions in the management of goals. It is positive when the goal is advanced, negative when the goal is impeded' (Oatley, 1999: 273). Goals are also implicit in other theories, such as in Lazarus' concept of 'primary appraisals'. Lazarus defined appraisal as 'the process of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for well-being' (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984: 31). By holding that subjects assessed their situation according to its impact on their well-being, he was assuming that well-being was their implicit goal (Lazarus, 1999). Ellsworth & Scherer reviewed the terminology that many theorists used to refer to the motivational dimension of emotions, and found that expressions such as 'motive consistency' (Roseman, 1984), 'importance and perceived obstacle' (Smith and Ellsworth, 1985), 'concern relevance and goal/need conduciveness' (Scherer, 1982) all assumed that people have intentions, that they strive towards something (the belief-desire theory may be included among those (Reisenzein, 2009)). These intentions, or goals, seem to underlie all emotional experiences.

Ellsworth and Scherer suggest that there are at least three questions involved in the appraisal of motivational relevance: '(1) Is the event pertinent at all? (2) If so, what are the motives or goals concerned? (3) Are the consequences of the event consistent or inconsistent with the respective motivational state or conducive or obstructive to reaching a goal or satisfying a need?' (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003: 578). They argue that a situation is assessed according to the way in which people answer these questions. However, most of these assessments may take place simultaneously and very quickly, below the threshold of consciousness. In familiar situations, people even tend to respond through scripts that elicit a stream of interrelated appraisals (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003).

Assessments are highly complex because individuals are seldom moved by a single goal. Rather, they have a set of simultaneous goals that they try to satisfy, and these goals are hierarchically ordered (Maslow, 1968; Murray, 1938). Ellsworth & Scherer argue that 'it would be impossible even for simple organisms to check the relevance of an event for all possible goals and needs. Consequently, one must assume that the goal and need significance evaluation is based on those goals and needs that are high in priority at the moment' (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003: 578). While the accessibility and priority of various goals may change during the unfolding of an emotional episode, due

to the dynamic relation that exists between emotions and cognitions, it seems that some of the central goals and needs have a stable position near the top of the hierarchy, and will almost always assume priority when threatened. Research that focuses on understanding emotional experience should then seek to discover the subjects' high priority goals.

## **2.5 Emotion and values**

Values are beliefs that are inextricably linked to emotion (in contrast to objective or cold ideas), that transcend specific actions and situations, establish desirable goals and serve as standards or criteria (Schwartz, 1992). Values and goals appear to be two faces of the same coin, with values pointing to the source of motivation and goals to its end. However, while people tend to set goals in accordance with their values, this is not always the case. People may strive for goals because they feel they 'have to', following others' criteria; thus, goals are not always an expression of personal values (Sheldon & Gunz, 2009). Notwithstanding, values and goals are often aligned and share many similarities. For example, like goals, values seem to be hierarchically ordered, and 'attitudes and behaviour are guided not by the priority given to a single value but by trade-offs among competing values that are implicated simultaneously in a behaviour or attitude' (Schwartz, 1996: 121). As multiple values are simultaneously at work, it is the relative importance of values that guides action. Like goals, values work as a system – taking actions in pursuit of one type of values may have consequences that are compatible or may be in conflict with the pursuit of other types of values. People and groups hold different value 'priorities' or 'hierarchies'. However, some values appear to be universal, and Schwartz suggests that these values are cognitive representations of universal requirements or needs (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987).

## **2.6 Emotion and needs**

People can choose their goal and, to a certain extent, they can choose their values too. However, some theorists suggest that well-being depends on the satisfaction of psychological requirements that are universal and genetically determined. The term



‘need’ points to its compulsory nature – when those needs are not satisfied, people cannot develop optimally and experience significant negative consequences (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Needs seem to underlie all appraisal processes and emotional experiences.

Maslow proposed the best-known theory of needs. He claimed that people have psychological needs that are instinctive and have to be satisfied, and argued that individuals act in order to satisfy these diverse needs. He stated that ‘any motivated behaviour ... must be understood to be a channel through which many basic needs may be simultaneously expressed or satisfied’ (Maslow, 1943: 2). Maslow claimed that humans’ different needs were hierarchically organised, and suggested that ‘the appearance of one need usually rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more pre-potent need ... no need or drive can be treated as if it were isolated or discrete; every drive is related to the state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of other drives’ (Maslow, 1943: 3). He stated that lower goals will monopolise consciousness as far as they are not satisfied, but after satisfying the needs of survival, security, affiliation and self-esteem, a person will strive for ‘higher’ needs such as self-actualization and self-transcendence. ‘Higher’ needs are so called because of the position that they occupy in the pyramid of needs – they come at a later stage of development after the satisfaction of ‘lower’ needs – and because the satisfaction of higher needs appears to lead to better subjective experiences than the satisfaction of lower needs.

Maslow argues that the highest pleasures, or happiness, comes from the satisfaction of higher needs, transcendence in particular, that he views as ‘the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness’ (1971: 279). At this highest level of psychological functioning,

*...the distinction between self and not-self has broken down (or has been transcended), there is less differentiation between the world and the person because he has incorporated into himself part of the world and defines himself thereby. He becomes an enlarged self, we could say “simple selfishness is transcended here and has to be defined at higher levels” (1971: 301).*

In agreement with Maslow, Csikszentmihalyi argues that self-transcendence corresponds to the highest stage of development:

*Each person's goals are to a large extent similar to those of everyone else. Being human we all want, first of all, to survive, to be comfortable, to be accepted, loved, and respected. After these goals are reasonably satisfied – or blocked beyond hope – we then turn our energy to develop our own unique potential, to achieve what the psychologist Abraham Maslow has called self-actualization. Then some people shift their priorities again, and envision the goal of transcendence. They attempt to move beyond the boundaries of their personal limitations by integrating individual goals with larger ones, such as the welfare of the family, the community, humanity, the planet, or the cosmos. It is these last two stages in the formation of the self that lead to complexity. Individual uniqueness, or self-actualization, represents the differentiation component; transcendence involves a higher level of integration. Both are necessary for the kind of self that leads to a complex and harmonious evolution. If the third millennium is to be an improvement over its predecessor, more of us will have to build selves around transcendent goals (1993: 219).*

It is interesting to point out that, according to Csikszentmihalyi, at a higher level of functioning self-transcendent goals do not substitute but rather integrate with or expand self-centred goals, and both kinds of goals coexist. Contrarily, at a lower stage of development, goals seem to be restricted to self-centeredness and to only respond to self-centred needs.

While Maslow's theory has been extremely influential in many different fields of activities, scientific evidence does not seem to give it full support (see Alderfer, 1969; Hall & Nougaim, 1968; Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). Findings are mixed at best, sometimes supporting, sometimes contradicting the theory. Maslow's categories of need appear to be overly vague and difficult to operationalise, they appear to overlap, and the specific order in which needs emerge (e.g. love and esteem) is particularly criticised (Heylighen, 1992). However, Maslow's theory of needs is important because it suggests that there are universal psychological requirements that are imposed on individuals for optimal functioning and we can hypothesise that, if these psychological needs exist, they should be the concerns to which people respond with the strongest emotions – positively when these needs are satisfied, and negatively when they are threatened or frustrated. Moreover, his theory suggests that while all needs have to be satisfied in order to experience psychological health, the best emotional experiences (those with the highest levels of positive emotions) are promoted by the satisfaction of 'higher', self-transcendent needs.

Self-determination theory (SDT) has taken over the concept of needs and argues that individuals have three universal and innate needs: competence, autonomy and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The need for competence concerns the sense of efficacy one has with respect to both internal and external environments, the need for autonomy refers to a sense of choice and volition in the regulation of behaviour, and the need for relatedness refers to feeling connected to and cared about by others (Deci & Ryan 2008). Contrary to Maslow's theory, SDT does not view needs as higher or lower, nor does it consider the satisfaction of certain needs as a precondition for the emergence of further needs. Rather, it argues that the three needs call for satisfaction all through life, that each one plays a role in optimal development, and that none can be thwarted or neglected without significant negative consequences. SDT brings the construct of needs into emotional theory, and makes a significant contribution, as it states that the quality of people's emotions depends not only on attaining or not attaining goals – as most theories suggest – but also on the extent to which these goals are in line with the individual's psychological needs.

According to SDT, 'a critical issue in the effects of goal pursuit and attainment concerns the degree to which people are able to satisfy their basic psychological needs as they pursue and attain their valued outcomes' (Deci & Ryan, 2000: 227). Kasser & Ryan (1993, 1996) relate goals that satisfy psychological needs to intrinsic aspirations, and show that pursuing and attaining these kinds of goals promotes greater well-being than pursuing and attaining goals that express extrinsic motivation. Several studies have confirmed that the attainment of intrinsic versus extrinsic goals is differentially associated with well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998).

Accordingly, SDT argues that 'autonomy' occupies a unique position in relation to the two other needs (relatedness and competence): 'Only when people's feelings of relatedness and competence result from behaviors that are autonomous – behaviors that emanate from the self – will the people display optimal engagement and psychological well-being' (Deci & Ryan, 2000: 243). Thus, the mere fact of attaining one's goals does not determine the quality of the resulting emotional experience – the extent to which these goals relate to a person's psychological needs, and are consequently intrinsic and meaningful, needs to be taken into account. SDT argues that the best experiences are

those in which the individuals' need for competence, autonomy and relatedness are simultaneously satisfied.

Emmons' findings (1991, 2003, 2005) shed additional light onto the factors that promote the best subjective experiences, because they show that this is not as much the fact of attaining meaningful goals, but the fact of striving for these goals (independently of the outcome of the process) that associates with well-being. In addition, they show that even when individuals pursue goals they view as meaningful, not all meaningful goals are equal in eliciting positive emotions and well-being. When studying the kinds of goals people set for themselves in order to make their lives meaningful, Emmons identified four major categories of goals: achievements/work, relationships/intimacy, religion/spirituality, and self-transcendence/generativity. This is how he explains the content of each goal category:

*Achievement/work includes being committed to one's work, believing in its worth, and liking challenge. Relationships/intimacy includes relating well to others, trusting others, and being altruistic and helpful. Religion/spirituality includes having a personal relationship with God, believing in an afterlife, and contributing to a faith community. Transcendence/generativity encompasses contributing to society, leaving a legacy, and transcending self-interests (2003: 108).*

Emmons's 'achievement' goals can be linked to the SDT need for 'competence', and the three other categories of goals, to the need for 'relatedness'. Notably, in human beings, the need to relate, or to transcend self, may include what Schnell calls 'vertical self-transcendence' (Schnell, 2011), or the need to relate with a higher power.

Emmons studied the link between strivings and subjective well-being among community and college students samples, and found that in both populations, the presence of intimacy strivings, generativity strivings, and spiritual strivings within a person's goal hierarchy predict greater subjective well-being (SWB) and, in particular, higher positive effect, and conversely, achievement strivings – which he relates to agency and power – tend to be associated with lower levels of SWB and, in particular, with higher levels of negative affect (Emmons 1991; 2003). Emmons claims that 'Intimacy, generativity, and spirituality are intrinsically rewarding domains of goal activity that render lives meaningful and purposeful, particularly compared to power

strivings or strivings for self-sufficiency' (2003: 113). These findings suggest that, despite the fact that the pursuit of achievement is essential for optimal functioning – because it satisfies our innate need for competence – an exclusive focus on achievement without a concern for relatedness may be detrimental for an individual's well-being and his or her subjective experience of life.

Emmons' findings are in line with SDT, which suggests that none of the pillars of intrinsic motivation should be missing for the best subjective experiences to take place, namely competence, autonomy and – the one that is arguably the most often disregarded in contemporary industrialised Western society – relatedness. These findings are also in line with Bakan (1966), who claim that humans are driven by both a need for agency (i.e. separate, assert, expand, master and create) and for communion (i.e. to contact, attach, connect, and unite), and that both are necessary for well-being. They may also suggest that Maslow's and Csikszentmihalyi's theories are right, namely that there are 'higher' kinds of goals that correspond to 'higher' needs and promote more positive kinds of experiences.

We should, however, keep in mind that, in Maslow and Csikszentmihalyi's views, striving for higher goals such as self-transcendence does not exclude, but rather embraces, the lower goals such as achievement. Consequently, individuals may choose to report the goals that are highest in their hierarchy of values or goals, but this does not mean that they are not concerned with other kinds of aspirations (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Schwartz, 1996). Regardless if we interpret the findings in terms of 'higher' or 'lower' needs, or just in term of needs, it is noticeable that the presence of self-transcendent strivings is common to these different theories, and it is widely held that self-transcendent pursuits promote more rewarding experiences than an exclusive focus on egocentric concerns (I use the term self-transcendence because it seems to embrace Emmons' categories of intimacy, generativity and spiritual strivings, as well as the SDT construct of relatedness).

To summarise, Frijda's claims that 'emotions arise from the interaction of situational meanings and concerns' (1988: 351). The two concepts are difficult to dissociate, as the meanings people confer on situations depend on what they value, need and strive for (Emmons, 2003). At the same time, individuals' goals can be more or less aligned with

their psychological needs, are thus experienced as more or less intrinsic and meaningful, and therefore promote different qualities of emotional experiences. It appears that striving exclusively to satisfy some kind of need (e.g. competence) while neglecting others (e.g. relatedness) may prevent the best subjective experiences.

In order to understand performance experiences, therefore, we need to identify the goals performers are striving for and determine whether those goals that are aligned with and encompass all humans' psychological needs (including self-transcendence) do promote more positive performance experiences than goals that are exclusively self-centred.

## **2.7 A biological perspective on emotion**

I include a brief discussion of biological perspectives on emotion, as these perspectives seem to explain why humans cannot function optimally when they are exclusively moved by self-centred concerns. Strikingly, these perspectives suggest that self-transcendent emotions (i.e. caring about others and seeking to contribute to their well-being) are a requirement for the perpetuation of life.

Biologists and other researchers studying living organisms aim to answer an important question: what are emotions for? Damasio's definition of emotions highlights the role that emotions play in animal life. He states that emotions are largely unlearned programs of automatic actions and cognitive strategies aimed at the management of life (Damasio, 1999; 2003). Emotions help organisms to respond to a mandate that is in their genome: to stay alive and manage that life as well as possible. Emotions seem to be mechanisms that extend the biological mechanisms that take care of homeostasis, assisting humans and animals with the management of their life, either directly for the self or for the group that individuals belong to (Damasio, 1999; 2003).

Life does not exist in isolation. All organisms are part of larger ecosystems with which they need to cooperate in order to remain alive. At all levels, life appears to require a careful negotiation between the needs of the organism and those of the larger systems to which it belongs. Emotions appear to assist individuals in striking the individual-group

balance, because they move individuals to care for their own concerns but also for the concerns of others. Damasio explains this observation in the following way:

*There is little question that the integrity of emotion and feeling is necessary for normal human social behaviour, by which I mean social behaviour that conforms to ethical rules and laws and can be described as just...one wonders how the world would have evolved with a population deprived of the ability to respond toward others with sympathy, attachment, embarrassment, and other social emotions that are known to be present in simple form in some nonhuman species...With the natural system of emotional navigation more or less disabled, there would not have been a ready possibility of fine-tuning the individual to the real world. Moreover, the possibility of constructing a fact-based social navigation system, independently of the missing natural system, appears unlikely. (2003: 155-157)*

It follows from the above that social life cannot be perpetuated in the absence of social or moral emotions that promote altruistic behaviours (Wilson & Wilson, 2007). Haidt defines moral emotions as emotions that are linked to the interests or welfare either of society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent (Haidt, 2003: 276). Such emotions give individuals the motivational force to do good and to avoid doing bad to others (Tangney, Stuewig & Mashek, 2007). Interestingly, even Darwin, known for his proposals on natural selection, which emphasise competition as the basis of the survival of the strongest, acknowledged that moral behaviour is ultimately useful for life (Darwin, 1871). As social beings, the preservation of life requires that humans live with others, and that they care for others.

In line with this claim, Maturana & Varela argue that social life would not be possible without emotions such as affection and love. They state that

*...biologically, without love...there is no social phenomenon...Love is a biological dynamic with deep roots. It is an emotion that defines in the organism a dynamic structural pattern, a stepping stone to interactions that may lead to the operational coherences of social life (1987: 246-247).*

Human life would end without emotions. Without fear, humans would not be able to protect themselves from danger and would not survive for long. But, without empathy and love, humankind would not survive at all – babies would not be fed when hungry, kept warm when cold, or taken care of when sick. Emotions appear to oppose one

another, just as values and needs appear to oppose one another too – some emotions promote egocentric behaviours and competitiveness (e.g. ambition, pride, jealousy), while others promote relatedness and cooperation (e.g. love, compassion, guilt). We may therefore hypothesise that all emotions are healthy *to a certain extent*, and that our main challenge may be to balance them appropriately. As Damasio nicely states it,

*Life being a high-wire act, most feelings are expressions of the struggle for balance, ideas of the exquisite adjustments and corrections without which, one mistake too many, the whole act collapses (2003: 7).*

Consequently, ecological concerns and balance appear to be unspoken high priorities of life – priorities according to which individuals, without realising it, may be continuously appraising their existence.

In summary, it appears from the above that humans are not merely self-centred beings. While psychologists view self-transcendent concerns as a requirement for optimal functioning, biologists go even further, suggesting that self-transcendent concerns are a requirement for the preservation of life. It should be kept in mind, however, that humans' need for self-transcendence goes beyond seeking to connect with and contribute to the lives of other fellow humans, and rather encompasses the search for other kinds of connection, such as connection with something larger than the self, such as the universe, or even spiritual agents.

While this discussion has focused on what may be viewed as the primary purpose of emotions in the ecology of life, it does not explain what the underlying mechanisms of emotional processes are. However, a basic knowledge of these mechanisms seems essential to understanding how emotions – in particular, performance-related emotions – originate. Neuroscience provides insight into this subject.

## **2.8 A neuroscientific perspective on emotion**

While psychologists can access emotions from the outside through observing a person's behaviour or his or her reports, neuroscientists provide a different perspective – they



observe emotions from within the body. Their findings provide evidence that, in humans and animals alike, there are specific areas in the brain that are in charge of emotional processes. Considering the similarities of these processes between humans and animals sheds light on the way in which emotions function at the most basic level. Emotions that are typically human are viewed as extending and enriching this basic emotional functioning, not replacing it.

The technological progress that has taken place in recent years has allowed neuroscientists to identify the specific areas of the brain that are in charge of emotional processes. These emotional areas have been genetically programmed to react automatically, and in a predetermined way, to certain stimuli called ‘emotional competent stimuli’ or ‘natural triggers’ (i.e. animals react fearfully the first time they see a predator) (see Damasio, 2003; LeDoux, 1998). When such kinds of stimuli are perceived or imagined, they are immediately recognised by the emotional areas of the brain as being threats or opportunities, and the body becomes ready for appropriate action: approach or avoidance behaviour. Approach and avoidance processes are ubiquitous across phyla, from unicellular organisms to human beings, and are essential for adaptation to the environment. Humans evaluate most, if not all, stimuli on a positive/negative dimension, and this evaluation instantaneously evokes approach or avoidance behavioural predispositions (Bargh, 1997; Elliot, 2006; Kahneman, 1999). These emotional responses are elicited automatically, without the intervention of cognitive structures or processes. Damasio compares these stimuli to the appropriate ‘keys’ that open pre-existent ‘locks’ of brain devices, or to a virus in the bloodstream that elicits a specific immune response. He states that ‘In the case of emotion the ‘antigen’ is presented through the sensory system and the ‘antibody’ is the emotional response’ (2003: 58).

Neuroscientists suggest that emotions are best viewed as the ‘end result of information processing occurring unconsciously’ (LeDoux, 1998: 37). This claim is based on the fact that cortical areas can be absent from emotional processes. For example, the amygdala (which is involved in processing emotions and learning fear) has direct connections with the sensory thalamus, and can therefore elicit fear through sub-cortical processes. This direct pathway is shorter and faster than cortical processes (because cortical processes go from the thalamus to the cortex and then to the amygdala), and

elicits fear automatically and unconsciously (Damasio, 2003; Davis, 1992; LeDoux, 1998). The rapidity of this process contributes to the survival of organisms. Emotional areas of the brain are indispensable to experiencing emotion and, when damaged, emotional reactions disappear. For instance, a lesion of the amygdala may prevent animals and humans alike from experiencing fear or anger in the presence of a real or imagined object, even when all other cognitive functions remain intact (Damasio 2003; LeDoux, 1998).

But, a priori, most stimuli are not ‘emotionally competent’ but emotionally ‘neutral’, which means that they do not elicit a genetically programmed emotional response. However, neutral and emotionally competent stimuli can become associated through conditioning, and the former may end up eliciting the same emotional responses as the latter (Davis, 1992; LeDoux, 1998). Such associations may be created particularly quickly, and below the subject’s awareness: a single pairing between the conditioned and unconditioned stimuli being enough to elicit long-lasting fear (LeDoux, 1998).

Damasio explains:

*As they develop and interact, organisms gain factual and emotional experience with different objects and situations in the environment and thus have an opportunity to associate many objects and situations which would have been emotionally neutral with the objects and situations that are naturally prescribed to cause emotions. A form of learning known as conditioning is one way of achieving this association...the face of a wonderful, unknown person that so resembles that of someone associated with some horrible event may cause you discomfort or irritation. You may never come to know why (Damasio, 1999: 57).*

In addition to this, individuals may learn to associate neutral stimuli with emotional value just by observing others, and without the need of a personal experience. And this appears to be particularly so in the case of fear and anxiety (Olsson, Nearing, & Phelps, 2007). As LeDoux suggests: ‘Humans learn many things by observing others in social situations and it has been proposed that anxiety, especially pathological anxiety, is sometimes or even often learned by social observation’ (LeDoux, 1998: 237).

Neuroscientists bring back the construct of conditioning (a construct that had almost completely disappeared due to its behaviourist connotations) to emotional research (see i.e. Damasio, 1999; LeDoux, 1998; Rolls, 2000). Notwithstanding, they do not propose

conditioning as a replacement for cognitive theories, but rather, they emphasise the fact that multiple levels of processes intervene in emotional experiences. In fact, emotional responses seem to result from the activation of different and partially independent areas of the body (i.e. the spinal cord (reflexes), subcortical and cortical areas) (Elliot, 2006). This reminds us that emotions are not all about cognitions, and suggests that our prevalent theories in performance research may suffer from an overly cognitive bias (Nagel, 2010).

Neuroscientists' findings have strong implications when it comes to performance research for two main reasons. Firstly, if pain and pleasure, threats and opportunities, and avoidance and approach, lie at the heart of emotions; if, moreover, objects and events that are originally neutral come to be invested with emotional value through association with stimuli that are automatically recognised as pertaining to the one or the other category, then we may hypothesise that the brain is continually monitoring the world in order to make sense of new situations and events in terms of 'where do they fit' within these opposing, pre-established emotional categories. This hypothesis has implications when it comes to interventions. For instance, fear of performance likely reveals an association between the activity and the threatening stimuli. Based on this hypothesis, interventions that aim at helping performers overcome performance anxiety should not merely aim at reducing negative emotions (i.e. anxiety), but at shifting the existent association between performance and threat into a new association between performance and opportunities. In other words, in order to be successful, intervention should aim at completely changing the meaning performers make of their performance.

Secondly, neuroscientists suggest that the real root of anxiety might reside in unconscious associations between performance and distressing events. This suggests that MPA research should be broad enough to investigate the origin of these associations. And, particularly importantly for this research, this suggests that a performers' socio-cultural environment plays a major role in shaping his or her performance experiences, as it provides the kinds of performance contexts in which dramatically different associations may be learned. Consequently, the impact of the performers' socio-cultural context should be included in MPA research.

In addition to the above, Damasio highlights another characteristic of emotion that is particularly relevant when it comes to research that includes interventions. He argues that emotions are mainly elicited by perceived images and ‘mental images’. This suggests that the creation of new emotional associations should be mediated by the creation of new mental images, which implies that not all kinds of cognitive restructuring would be equally effective when it comes to promoting positive emotions. Given the importance of these implications, I will investigate them further here.

Damasio states that

*Emotions occur in one of two types of circumstances. The first type of circumstances takes place when the organism processes certain objects or situations with one of its sensory devices... The second type of circumstance occurs when the mind of an organism conjures up from memory certain objects and situations and represents them as images in the thought process... (1999: 56).*

He argues that human and animal brains continuously generate ‘movie-like’ images that proceed from all sensory modalities, and ‘depict’ processes and entities of all kinds. These images, or neural representations that elicit emotion (Damasio, 2003), precede language, and this is why emotions are found in abundance in non-human creatures as well as in babies before they integrate language into their thinking process.

Damasio explains that

*Wordless storytelling is natural. The imagetic representation of sequences of brain events, which occurs in brains simpler than ours, is the stuff of which stories are made... Movies are the closest external representation of the prevailing storytelling that goes on in our minds... Telling stories precedes language, since it is, in fact, a condition for language, and it is based not just in the cerebral cortex but elsewhere in the brain and in the right hemisphere as well as the left. (2003: 188, 189)*

Other researchers agree that images are the primary elicitors of emotions. For instance, Frijda argues that it is the immediacy of sensory stimulations – of any kind of modality – that has the proper input format to trigger emotional processes, and adds that a vivid imagination, too, has the properties of ‘reality’ and is capable of eliciting or abating strong emotions. He claims that symbolic information has a weaker impact on emotions

than pictures or events that are actually perceived or imagined. He reminds readers that a photograph of a distressed child in Vietnam had more effect on people's emotions than reports about thousands killed, and that 'knowing' about the threat of nuclear war does not seem to move people as much as watching a film such as *The Day After*. Frijda states that 'knowing means less than seeing' (1988: 352), and argues that it is imagination rather than knowledge that elicits emotions. This is why 'one kind of cognition is not equivalent to another' (Frijda, 1988: 352).

Frijda argues that the effect of the present, of what is actually here to entice or repel – whether through the senses or through imagination – is powerful and engenders 'passion' in opposition to the weakness of 'reason', which he defines as 'the consideration of satisfactions and pains that are far away and only symbolically mediated' (1988:352). The images-emotions intrinsic association, in opposition to the lack of association between reasoning and emotions, appears to be manifest in the way in which people usually react to technical articles – they may find these articles interesting, but they are seldom moved by them. On the other hand, inspirational talks – think of Martin Luther King's talk 'I have a dream' – are mainly built on the ability of language to create mental images that trigger emotions and motivate individuals. According to this theory, reasoning, or symbolic knowledge, does not elicit the 'experience of pleasure or pain' that characterises emotions (Frijda, 1988: 351); it does not trigger an impulse to approach or avoid, a desire or urge. It is unconnected to the logistic support of the action-readiness mechanism that propels individuals for action.

These characteristics of emotional processes need to be taken into account when analysing findings, and particularly when designing interventions, because they suggest that certain kinds of cognitive restructuring may be overly-based on 'reason', and may thus be inappropriate to eliciting change. Without the factor that 'transforms symbolic knowledge into emotionally effective stimulation', researchers could be unwarily trying to replace emotionally-charged mental images with 'healthy' thoughts that may fall short of having the imagetic vividness required to elicit emotions.

## **2.9 The impact of socio-cultural groups on emotion**

While emotions are generally thought of as personal experiences, they are in fact strongly shaped, and in multiple ways, by the socio-cultural group to which a person belongs. The impact of culture on individuals' emotions is emphasised in the very definition of culture. Stets and Turner define it as:

*...systems of symbols that humans create and use to regulate their behaviors and interactions, with the key elements of culture including emotion ideologies (appropriate feelings and emotional responses in different situations), emotion stocks of knowledge (emotional experiences that build up over time and become available for use in interaction), emotion vocabularies, and feeling and display rules... These elements are invoked and used to guide social structure and individuals' cognitions (2008: 32, 33).*

An individuals' culture establishes the appropriate emotional responses to events (Damasio, 1999). It impacts on the kind of information individuals attend to, and on the way in which they interpret and evaluate such information. Every cultural group shares 'belief and value systems, language and other symbol systems' (Scherer, 2009: 268) that are used to select and organise socio-psychological processes. Members of a group appear to be socialised, or 'trained', to think, act and feel in particular ways (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006). Therefore, individuals from the same community are exposed to common information, symbols, models, emphases, values, norms, narratives, attitudes, influences, and learning, and this produces a unique cultural identity as well as a collective emotional orientation (D'Andrade, 1981; Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006). Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal state that 'When beliefs and reaction patterns are disseminated and widely shared, they constitute a major influence on the emotional functioning of society members' (2006: 376).

Accordingly, each group differs from other groups in the thoughts, goals, behaviours and outcomes they prescribe as valuable (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Schwartz, 1992, 2006) and in the value systems and priorities they hold. For example, some cultures particularly encourage individualism, self-enhancement or autonomy, while others rather praise collectivism, self-transcendence or embeddedness (Scherer & Brosch, 2009). Thus, socio-cultural groups establish the beliefs and criteria according to which individuals appraise events, and as such they shape their emotions. Yet, despite the

strong influence of culture on the way individuals think, act and feel, individuals are generally blind to its influence (Abelson, 1979).

Another way in which groups shape individuals' emotions is through 'emotional contagion'. This occurs because, when a person experiences an emotion, it is impossible to completely hide the expression of such emotion and, therefore, the emotion is caught through unconscious processes by the people who are around the individual (Damasio, 1999; Hatfield, Cacioppo & Rapson, 1994). People have a tendency to automatically and continuously mimic and synchronise – through facial expressions, voices, postures, movements and instrumental behaviour – with the people with whom they interact (Hatfield et al., 1994). The activation and/or feedback from such mimicry seems to affect individuals' own on-going emotional experiences, resulting in them 'catching' others' emotions. The mere perception of another's emotions increases the likelihood that others will mimic the same expression of emotion (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). In particular, fear appears to be particularly easy to spread because of its clear expressive manifestations and defined patterns of behaviour.

This kind of emotional contagion is found in animals and babies, and may possibly start from birth (Miller, Banks, & Ogawa, 1963). It appears to be enabled by the activation of 'mirror neurons' (Decety & Grèzes, 2006) – neurons that activate in similar areas of the brain (in the frontal and parietal cortices) whether one imagines one's own action, imagines another's action or observes another's action (see Decety & Jackson, 2004). It is argued that these mechanisms (which form part of the mechanisms that enable social emotions and empathy) contribute to the spreading of emotions within groups (Hatfield et al., 1994).

Emotional contagion comes in addition to other automatic and unconscious mechanisms through which people's emotions are shaped by others (i.e. through conditioning, such as when a father habitually lashes out at his son when upset, and the child comes to feel anxious (through generalisation) each time somebody becomes upset, and would do anything to avoid the situation) (Hatfield, et al., 1994). So, to summarise, it appears that whether directly (e.g. through conditioning and emotional contagion) or indirectly (e.g. through the establishment of desirable goals, beliefs and values), an individual's socio-culture group programs its members to feel alike.

Given the impact of groups on individuals' emotions (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Mesquita & Fridja, 1992; Scherer & Brosch, 2009), we may wonder whether the prevalence of performance anxiety among musicians does not result in part from some groups 'training' performers to associate performance with fear. I argue that performers' negative cognitions and emotions may be created and/or reinforced by the way in which music is taught, and by the hidden curriculum of musical institutions, in particular, those within the classical music milieu (see Green, 2002; Papageorgi et al., 2010; Woody & McPherson, 2010). This socio-cultural environment seems to promote particular values and beliefs (Cook, 2000; Jørgensen, 2000; Kingsbury, 1988; Small, 1998) that may generate anxiety (i.e. the belief in the 'talent account').

Moreover, it has been stated elsewhere that, from the beginning of their musical learning, children enter an anxiety-provoking environment, which increasingly frames its 'official discourse about music performance in terms of concepts of talent, achievement and success' (Sloboda, 1999: 455). From the youngest age, music performance and evaluation are associated in exams, competitions and even in music lessons (Persson, 1996), and it is likely that the extreme focus on evaluation and competition foster anxiety in an activity where there are 'so few winners and so many losers' (Sloboda, 1999:455). The teacher-student relationship appears to be characterised by a domineering attitude of teachers, which leaves little place for students' developing as independent, self-confident musicians (Kingsbury, 1988; Persson, 1996a, 1996b).

Furthermore, the very way in which the musical profession is chosen, and the real demands of the musical profession, may contribute to performance anxiety (Nagel, 2010). Nagel suggests that musicians differ from other performers who suffer from anxiety (e.g., speakers, test-takers, academics) in at least two ways. Firstly, musicians begin training for their career at a very young age and consequently they have a 'lifelong ego, financial and emotional investment in playing a musical instrument and performing publicly on it' (Nagel, 2010: 142). This investment causes them to identify closely with their music and performances in such a way that personal and musical self-



esteem become interwoven (Kingsbury, 1988). Secondly, performers confront a particularly difficult job market. Nagel suggests that economic recession and a

*lack of career opportunities exacerbate the complex psychological issues that are involved in feared (or actual) rejection, loss, and competition – all external realities in the highly competitive performance profession and the internal emotional reactions to the vicissitudes of performance discomfort, fears, and inhibitions’ and concludes that ‘performing musicians live in a world where psychological, societal, and economic irritants add to the complexity of performance anxiety (2010: 142).*

All of the above suggests that MPA is not just an individual problem, but that it is partly determined by the way in which social groups (i.e. musical institutions) train individuals to ‘think, act and feel’ about performance, and by the kind of music-making practices and contexts they establish and within which conditioning experiences take place. This should be taken into account when trying to understand an individual’s performance experience.

In summary, while a narrow focus on cognitions tends to view MPA as an individual’s problem, the prevalence of MPA and its characteristic thoughts and beliefs among performers suggests that the phenomenon is not just a personal matter. MPA is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon shaped by multiple interacting factors such as the performers’ personality and life story, the real demands of the profession, the beliefs, values and goals prevalent in his or her cultural group, and conditioning experiences. I contend that the impact of all these factors is likely to be manifested in the meaning performers confer on their performances, and suggest that this meaning may be accessed by investigating what performers say about performance. The performers’ narratives about performance – or the stories they tell themselves about it – may simultaneously bring us to the genesis of their performance experiences and become tools for changing and enhancing such experiences.

## **2.10 The impact of meaning-making narratives on emotion**

In order to give a broad perspective on the role of emotions in the management of life, I highlighted the commonalities of humans’ and animals’ emotional processes in section

2.6. Yet, in order to understand what makes human emotion unique, it is necessary to point at the differences between humans and animals.

Unlike animals, humans not only respond emotionally to the physical world in which they live, but to a subjective and symbolic inner world. This mental world may be only subtly linked to their physical reality; notwithstanding, it acts as an elicitor of emotional experiences. Cassirer nicely explains this point:

*Between the receptor system and the effector system, which are to be found in all animal species, we find in man a third link which we may describe as the symbolic system. This new acquisition transforms the whole of human life... No longer in a merely physical universe, man lives in a symbolic universe... Instead of dealing with the things themselves man is in a sense constantly conversing with himself. He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium... Even here man does not live in a world of hard facts, or according to his immediate needs and desires. He lives rather in the midst of imaginary emotions, in hopes and fears, in illusions and disillusion, in his fantasies and dreams. "What disturbs and alarms man" said Epictetus, "are not the things, but his opinions and fancies about the things". (1944: 42)*

One of the tools through which humans construct this symbolic world of meaning appears to be language. From early childhood, and as soon as they possess the rudiments of language, individuals start to ask 'why', which reveals their never-ending quest for meaning. In order to explain their reality to themselves, individuals have constant conversations with themselves; they tell stories to themselves that confer a sense of order and organisation to their reality (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Kahneman, 2005, 2010, 2011; Maturana & Varela, 1987). Rather than appraising their world as if it were an array of unconnected events and entities, their reality becomes coherent through their narratives. For instance, internalised narratives allow people to appraise their present, reconstruct their past and anticipate their future in ways that help them to preserve a consistent identity (McAdams, 2001). McAdams refers to people's largest narratives as 'life stories', and argues that these narratives help individuals to integrate the wide range of different roles and relationships that they have at any given time, and to give coherence to events that take place at different times, viewing them as a temporally-organised whole. He says about these narratives that

*Life stories are based on biographical facts, but they go considerably beyond the facts as people selectively appropriate aspects of their experience and imaginatively construe both past and future to construct stories that make sense to them and to their audiences, that vivify and integrate life and make it more or less meaningful. Life stories are psychosocial constructions, co-authored by the person himself or herself and the cultural context within which that person's life is embedded and given meaning (2001: 101).*

These imaginative accounts aim to integrate a person's goals, memories, current role, knowledge and beliefs, to protect self-identity, and to make meaning of reality. Such stories provide a large, coherent structure according to which individuals appraise their reality. Based on this theoretical perspective, individuals' appraisals (and resulting emotions) are shaped by these large and organised linguistic constructions.

But not all individuals' narratives are equally meaningful, because not all respond equally to their need to explain to themselves 'why' and 'what it is for' that they do what they do (Burner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Kahneman, 2005; Maturana, 1987; McAdams 2001). Individuals appear to obtain the highest levels of satisfaction when they interpret their own actions and experiences in terms of an 'existentially meaningful life story' (Crescioni & Baumeister, 2013: 3), a story that is self-transcendent (Rosso, 2010; Schnell, 2009, 2011). In summary, individuals not only need to make sense of reality in a coherent way, but they also need to confer meaning on situations in terms of a bigger picture (ideas extensively discussed by Rogers, 1961) and to make sure they do not spend their lives chasing after the wind (Wong, 2014).

Yet, individuals do not interpret their reality alone, but through narratives they create together with their socio-cultural group (McAdams, 2001). Their personal narratives cannot be random and cannot completely transcend the larger narratives in which they are rooted (Echeverria, 2001). These meta-narratives, also called 'master narratives' (Hammack, 2008) establish the hierarchy of goals and values that an individual's society views as desirable, and by doing so, they establish the criteria according to which individuals will appraise events. Accordingly, in order to understand an individual, we should understand the narratives of his or her community, because individuals originate within a certain kind of linguistic system. As the African construct

of 'Ubuntu' nicely states: 'I am because we are' – one cannot be human all by oneself, one cannot exist as a human in isolation.

The metaphors that are embedded in individuals' everyday language contribute to spreading the values and beliefs of the groups to which they belong (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors are tools by which individuals understand the world. Lakoff and Johnson argue that

*Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature '...' meaning that we often understand concepts in terms of other concepts and situations in terms of different domains of experience. As soon as one gets away from concrete physical experiences and starts talking about abstractions or emotions, 'metaphorical understanding is the norm' (1980: 205).*

Metaphors are mappings or sets of conceptual correspondences that highlight commonalities between different experiences. They define reality by establishing 'a coherent set of entailments that highlight some features of reality and hide others. The acceptance of a metaphor, which forces us to focus only on those aspects of our experience that it highlights, leads us to view the entailments of the metaphor as being true' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 157). By imposing these entailments on individuals as a matter of fact, metaphors can powerfully direct their appraisals and, as a consequence, shape their emotions and actions. For instance, when individuals say that they have 'lost' time, and that as a result they have not enough time to 'give' to their friends because they must 'invest' it fully into their work, perhaps without realising it, they are conceptualising time in terms of money. The 'time is money' metaphor imposes concepts on individuals that they seldom question: time, like money, is a valuable commodity and a limited resource. The transparency of the metaphor prevents them from seeing that they are only dealing with a metaphor – a conceptual tool that only highlights the similarities that may exist between very different things such as time and money – and leaves them unequipped to find alternative ways of looking at time. As a result, individuals end up taking for granted that time is actually like money: they feel accordingly and will act accordingly. But metaphors are so a much part of people's daily language that most of the time they don't notice them.

Therefore, the metaphors embedded in the metanarratives of social groups are one of the means through which culturally-shaped beliefs, goals and values are transmitted and meaning is created. Such metaphors promote ‘systematic appraisal biases’ that shape individuals’ emotions and determine ‘the relative frequency with which different types of emotion may occur in particular cultural settings as a reaction to structurally similar situations’ (Scherer & Brosch, 2009: 283).

In summary, individuals’ narratives and the metaphors they contain form part of the process through which they confer meaning on situations and events. As such, they may greatly impact on individuals’ well-being because not all meanings appear to be equally meaningful for all individuals (Schnell, 2009, 2011), and not all meanings lead them to experience the same levels of satisfaction (Rosso, 2010). Despite the impact that narrative seem to have on personal well-being, narratives are not just personal, but are co-authored between the individual and his or her socio-cultural group.

The perspective on narratives presented above is contrary to the view of language as being passive and preceded by reality. Based on the views of previous philosophers (i.e. Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Austin and John Searle), an increasing number of thinkers posit that individuals create their worlds through language, and that it is through language that they confer meaning to their lives (Echeverria, 2001). They state that language is an active tool that generates reality and, as such, it also shape emotion. The claim that language generates emotions may seem contradictory to Damasio’s claim that emotions are elicited primarily by mental images. However, what Damasio highlights is the fact that emotions do not require higher order processes such as language in order to be elicited, as the brain areas that are in charge of emotions may or may not be connected to the cortical areas that are in charge of ‘language systems’ (a language system is defined by Rolls as a ‘system performing syntactic operations on symbols’ (2000: 188)). However, once language appears, Damasio views it as a key component of emotional experiences and a tool for transforming such experiences (1999). The impact of language on emotions, and its power to create reality (Echeverria, 2001), may reside in its potential for creating meaning as well as multisensory mental images, to which individuals respond emotionally.

It follows from this discussion that, in order to understand the performance experience, we should access the meaning that performers confer on their performance. One way to do so is to investigate the kinds of stories they tell themselves about it. It is reasonable to hypothesise that highly-enjoyable performances may result from performance-related narratives that are in tune with the performers' psychological needs, which are self-transcendent and go 'beyond an egocentric mind-frame' (Palmer, 2006:144), and which are purposeful and inspiring (eliciting mental images that link performance to opportunities).

## **2.11 Bringing theories together**

A legend tells us about three blind men's first encounter with an elephant, and about the very differing descriptions they made of the same animal – each of them accurately describing the part of the animal that he encountered. The perspective of each blind man could either lead to dispute over truth about what an elephant is like, or alternatively, enlighten each blind man's perspective through the perspectives of the others. I argue that taking into account the contributions of different disciplines (i.e. psychology, neuroscience and biology) may provide researchers with a more holistic understanding of emotional experiences, and may help them to become more aware of the complexity of the phenomenon of MPA and to not mistakenly take the part they focus on as if it were the whole phenomenon.

Appraisal theories contribute to performance research as they show that emotions do not result from reality *per se*, but from the evaluations or interpretations individuals make of such reality, according to their concerns. Theories of needs suggest that there are universal psychological needs, and that these might occupy a high position in the hierarchy of concerns against which people appraise situations and events. These needs include striving for one's own fulfilment as well as striving to transcend self (self-transcendence). Interestingly, biological perspectives emphasise the fact that individuals cannot live in isolation and that consequently, they need to relate to and do things for others. Biologists and theorists of psychological needs appear to emphasise the same phenomenon, the necessity to strive for both self-centred and self-transcendent concerns, but they approach the subject from differing perspectives – biologists from

the wide perspective of the ecology of life, and theorists of needs from the perspective of the optimal psychological functioning of the individual.

The biological and neuroscientific perspectives also shed additional light into appraisal theories as they show that basic emotional processes are similar in human and non-human creatures, based on similar brain structures, and that humans and animals alike are biologically programmed to respond emotionally in predetermined ways when facing certain objects and events. Such emotional responses do not require the intervention of higher cognitions such as language. However, in human beings, emotions are enriched, modulated or initiated by language. Humans' emotions are unique in the sense that they respond to a reality created by the stories that individuals tell themselves in order to give coherence and meaning to their reality. Such interpretations of the world (which may have little connection with objective reality) may be more or less meaningful, and thus may result in more or less rewarding emotional experiences.

It appears from the above that highly enjoyable performance experiences may result from meaningful narratives about performance, that is, from narratives that associate performance with opportunities to satisfy the individuals' psychological needs. The most meaningful narratives are likely to be those that simultaneously respond to individuals' needs for self-actualisation and self-transcendence. Yet, narratives and emotions are strongly shaped by socio-cultural groups, so differences would be expected between groups in both the meaningfulness of their narratives and the quality of their emotions.

This chapter explains the theories that shape the theoretical framework of my research, and gives the reasons why my focus was intentionally broad. However, my main interest was to investigate the link between the meaning performers make of their performances and their performance experiences. Based on the theories discussed here, my hypothesis is that most enjoyable performance experiences would not result from self-centred narratives that focus exclusively on achievement, but rather from narratives that include self-transcendent concerns. Nonetheless, as many factors seem to impact on performance experiences (i.e. the performers' personality, the socio-cultural group to which they belong, whether they perform as soloists or in group, or are students or

professionals, etc.), some of those factors are included in this research in order to see how they and their associated narratives interact and make up a performance experience.

The next chapter goes into the heart of the research and presents the findings of the first survey of the study (the Exploratory study), the main goal of which was to explore performers' reports about their emotions during performance, their narratives about performance, and the link that might exist between both variables.



## **Chapter 3. The Exploratory Study: Analysing Reports of Performance Experiences**

*Looking for the factors that promote and hinder joy in performance*

A performance experience appears to be a complex phenomenon resulting from the interplay of multiple factors such as the performer's personality, life story, situation, level of preparation, general beliefs, values, goals, needs, and the way in which performers make sense of their performance. Many studies have investigated the factors that promote anxiety in performance, but little is known about the factors that may promote or hinder positive performance experiences.

### **3.1 Goals of the Exploratory Study**

The main goals of the Exploratory Study may be summarised as follows:

- to gather data on the emotional experience of performance from a large group of performers in all its variety and range, and on the factors to which performers attribute their highly enjoyable and non-enjoyable performances;
- to explore whether or not, as suggested by previous research, experiences of intense feelings of joy in performance spring from certain kinds of 'stories' that performers tell themselves about performance;
- to extract, from the performers' statements, the kinds of stories they tell themselves about their performances;
- to examine the way in which emotions and meanings in performance are related to demographic and musical variables – such as gender, age, status or musical genre;
- to draw conclusions from the data that would allow researchers, including myself, to design intervention programmes capable of assisting performers to reduce performance anxiety, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to draw more joy from their performances.

The design of this study is based on the theory that people make meaning of their experiences through the ‘stories they tell themselves’ about situations and events, and that these stories or narratives, rather than describing reality, create individuals’ subjective reality, and in this way shape their emotions (Bruner, 2000, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Kahneman, 2011; Maturana & Varela, 1987). Therefore, the relationship between the making of meaning and emotion is at the heart of the present study.

This study is also based on previous research into performance anxiety that showed the intimate relationship that exists between thoughts and performance experiences, by pointing in particular to the destructive impact of negative self-talk on the performers’ emotions (Craske & Craig, 1984; Kendric et al., 1982; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Steptoe, 1989; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987; Wilson, 2002). Hence, if negative self-talk could elicit and reinforce fear and anxiety, I hypothesised that other kinds of self-talk would promote different and more positive emotions as well.

Previous research investigated (through in-depth interviews) the narratives of three professional performers who loved to perform (Guevara, 2007). All three performers (who described their performance as being intensely joyful) had very similar narratives about performance: these were meaningful and inspiring, self-transcendent, and focused on ‘connectedness’ with the audience as well as with the ‘source’ of music (Guevara, 2007). This study suggests that the meaningfulness of these performers’ narratives somehow promoted the joy they reported in performance. However, this sample was small (and possibly not representative), and so a follow up study was necessary to investigate whether or not there was a link between the quality of narratives and the quality of performance experiences within a large sample population of performers.

Interviews appear to be the most appropriate tools to explore narratives, yet they are not suited to gathering information from large groups; thus, a questionnaire was designed to investigate the link between narratives and emotion. Although this tool does not allow the full exploration of the richness of a performer’s personal narratives exemplified in my earlier study (Guevara 2007), it does enable identification, through the performers’ answers, of the kinds of stories they had instantiated in regard to performance.

Contrary to most research on performance, which focuses on anxiety, the main goal of my study was to better understand ‘highly enjoyable’ performance experiences, and the factors that may promote them. While my main focus was to investigate the impact of narratives on performance experiences, other factors that could also impact on the performers’ emotions were included in the study, such as the musical genre of performance, gender, and the performer’s role (whether ensemble or solo, etc.).

The focus of the study was intentionally broad, and sought to understand the performance experience in context. For instance, emotions in performance were explored in the context of the emotions the performers reported in practice and daily life. When a performer’s performance-related emotions are studied in isolation from the emotions they report in other settings, it is difficult to know the extent to which these emotions are due to the setting, or to the performer’s temperament (psychological predispositions influenced by genetic factors (see McCrae & Costa, 1999; Weiss, Bates & Luciano, 2008)). Studying performance experiences in context would additionally allow researchers to understand whether or not the emotions a performer reported in performance were more or less positive than those he or she reported outside performance.

Moreover, the study investigated positive performance experiences in the context of less rewarding performances, so as to identify differences between these experiences, as well as differences in the factors that might be associated with, or predict, one or another kind of performance experience.

## **3.2 Method**

### **3.2.1 The questionnaire**

The questionnaire was administered using an online survey. The goal of the study was explained; simple instructions were given regarding completing the questionnaire; and the ethical procedures were outlined as approved by the University of Sheffield ethics committee: namely, questionnaires were anonymous, no data were personally identifiable, and participation was voluntary. Participants were given the option to leave

their email address if they were willing to be contacted for follow-up questions, and were given the investigator's contact details in case they wanted further information about the study. The survey was addressed to professional and amateur performers, as well as to students of all music genres and, to foster the participation of performers coming from different countries, it was distributed in English and translated into Spanish, French and Portuguese with the assistance of native speakers.

The questionnaire consisted of 36 questions and took around ten minutes to complete. Performers were asked to select, from a pre-established list of emotions, evaluations, and statements, the ones that best reflected their own experience. Most questions were multiple choice, and allowed either one or multiple answers (see questionnaire in Appendix 1). The questions investigated:

- the respondent's demographic and musical background (i.e., age, main instrument, years of playing, main musical genre). In order to investigate the musical genre to which performers belonged, performers had to choose one option from: classical, jazz, pop, folk, rock and metal and others.
- the emotions they reported:
  - the frequency with which they experienced a pre-established list of emotions – elation, joy, positive arousal, confidence, feeling unmotivated, worry, and fear – in three different settings: daily life, musical practice and music performance (performers had to report whether they felt each emotion rarely, sometimes or most of the time).
  - self-evaluation of their performance experiences during the previous year ('Think of your public performances during the last year. Were most of these performances stressful, emotionally neutral, moderately enjoyable or highly enjoyable experiences?');
- the respondents' cognitions:
  - a list of 23 statements expressing experiences and thoughts they might have had during their last highly enjoyable performance experience, of which they could select as many as applied to them (shown in Table 3.2);

and a list of 13 statements describing or explaining their most recent ‘non-enjoyable’ performance (shown in Table 3.18).

There were more statements related to highly enjoyable performances than to non-enjoyable performances because this study focused primarily on the former. The statements expressed different ways of making sense of performance, and emphasised different goals (i.e. there were statements that related joy to a sense of competence, to connectedness with other people, and/or to transcendence). Specifically, the statements were chosen to investigate whether highly joyful performance experiences were associated with self-transcendent and connectedness-oriented approaches to performance, as suggested by some theories (i.e. Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; Emmons, 2003; Maslow, 1971; Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2013; Wong, 2014), as well as by previous research on positive performance experiences (i.e. Ascenso et al., 2016; Bernard, 2009; Guevara, 2007; Lamont, 2012).

### **3.2.2 Participants**

Recruitment was via convenience sampling and snowballing: a link to the online survey was sent to performers I had met through my professional activities as a performer and music teacher, and to music institutions and professional unions, who were subsequently asked to send it to their acquaintances.

Six hundred and twenty-five performers completed the survey (identical responses from the same ID host were eliminated). A roughly even number of men (51%;  $N = 318$ ) and women (49%;  $N = 306$ ), from 36 countries, participated. Countries with greater involvement in my professional activities were more highly represented. Distribution of performers’ country of residence in descending order was: Spain (33%), United Kingdom (23%), France (12%), Argentina (7%), Brazil, (5%), and 31 other countries (20%). The distribution of performers’ instruments in descending order was: piano (25%), guitar (12%), voice (10%), flute (9%), violin (6%), percussion (4%), clarinet (4%), and 36 other instruments (29%).

The performers' ages ranged from 11 to 72 years ( $M = 33$ ;  $SD = 12.4$ ) (see Figure 3.1). Accordingly, they varied greatly in terms of musical experience – between 2 and 64 years ( $M = 20.5$ ;  $SD = 11.8$ ) – and in the range of number of performances they gave per year ( $M = 23.5$ ;  $SD = 31.8$ ). Almost half of the performers self-identified as professionals, making a living mainly from music (46%;  $N = 289$ ), while students and amateurs were equally distributed at about 27%. Forty-three per cent of performers ( $N = 266$ ) played mainly in ensembles, 30% ( $N = 186$ ) as soloists, and 26% ( $N = 165$ ) in large groups. Performers' genres were very unevenly distributed, with the majority of participants self-identifying as classical musicians (71%;  $N = 445$ ). The other genres represented were jazz (9%;  $N = 56$ ), pop (9%;  $N = 55$ ), folk (7%;  $N = 45$ ), and rock and metal (2%;  $N = 12$ ). This bias is likely owing to my own classical background and the convenience sampling method used.

As the group of classical performers was much larger than the other groups, and this would prevent me from running suitable statistic tests, all performers who did not self-identify as 'classical' were grouped as 'non-classical' for analysis purposes. In this new variable 'classical or non-classical', there were 436 classical performers (71%) and 177 non-classical performers (29%).

### **3.3 Results**

The findings are organised as follows:

In section 3.3.1 I present an analysis of the patterns of emotions experienced, comparing the three contexts of performance, practice and daily life, and the way these patterns are associated with performers' demographic and musical variables. I show how these variables relate to the reported quality of the performance experience during the previous year in section 3.3.2 and to the performance context performers reported to prefer in section 3.3.3. The level of enjoyment performers experience while practicing and performing may change over time, and the performers' reports of these changes are shown in section 3.3.4.

Section 3.3.5 focuses on the most recent ‘highly enjoyable’ performance. The experience is analysed in terms of the emotions reported, the preparation methods used and the statements chosen to describe and explain it. Then the associations between the statements chosen and the quality of their performance experiences in general are shown, and the performers’ narratives about performance (extracted from these statements), as well as their impact on performance experience, are discussed. Evidence is presented to show that the performers’ narratives are shaped by their socio-cultural groups (i.e. their music genre). To conclude the discussion on the findings relating to the ‘highly enjoyable’ performance, I show how this kind of experience impacts on the performers’ motivation to perform, and on their level of enjoyment of practice and performance. The chapter concludes by presenting the findings related to non-enjoyable performance experiences in section 3.3.6.

### **3.3.1 Performers’ emotional experiences: Emotions reported during music performance, practice and daily life.**

One of the aims of the study was to explore the frequency with which performers reported a set of emotions (namely elation, joy, positive arousal, confidence, lack of motivation, worry and fear) in performance, practice and daily life. Accordingly, the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate whether they felt each emotion ‘rarely’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘most of the time’ in each setting. The list of emotions was designed in order to include positive emotions, such as the ones described by performers in previous studies (i.e. elation, joy and confidence (Gabrielsson & Lindström Wik, 2003; Guevara, 2007; Lamont, 2012)); negative emotions, such as those reported in studies on MPA (i.e. worry and fear); and emotions that expressed a will or a lack of will to perform (i.e. feeling positively aroused or unmotivated).

**Table 3.1** *Frequency of emotions reported by performers in performance, practice and daily life*

	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time
<i>Emotions reported during performance</i>			
Elation	21.8%	48.0%	30.3%
Joy	10.8%	32.2%	57.0%
Positive arousal	11.3%	33.7%	52.0%
Confidence	13.7%	44.9%	41.3%
Lack of motivation	78.1%	19.9%	2.1%
Worry	24.0%	45.8%	30.2%
Fear	47.9%	35.7%	16.4%
<i>Emotions reported during practice</i>			
Elation	22.9%	55.4%	21.7%
Joy	8.3%	46.6%	45.1%
Positive arousal	10.6%	45.9%	43.5%
Confidence	7.3%	46.7%	46.0%
Lack of motivation	52.9%	42.6%	4.6%
Worry	51.1%	39.4%	9.5%
Fear	83.9%	13.4%	2.7%
<i>Emotions reported during daily life</i>			
Elation	22.6%	62.8%	14.5%
Joy	5.2%	54.2%	40.5%
Positive arousal	6.7%	61.6%	31.7%
Confidence	9.1%	52.0%	38.8%
Lack of motivation	43.9%	49.7%	6.4%
Worry	21.4%	61.9%	16.6%
Fear	54.9%	41.4%	3.7%

In order to compare the emotions the performers reported in performance, practice and daily life, a Friedman test was run. Friedman's ANOVA is a non-parametric test that compares several conditions when the same participants take part in each condition and the data violates the assumptions of the one-way repeated-measures ANOVA (see Field, 2009). In this case, the variables were measured at an ordinal level (not interval). Table 3.2 shows that all the emotions reported were significantly affected by the setting.



**Table 3.2** Comparison between emotions reported during performance, practice and daily life. Results of Friedman test: mean ranks, medians and interquartile ranges

		Context			Chi-square
		Performance	Practice	Daily life	
Elation	Mean rank	2.12	1.92	1.90	28.36**
	<i>Mdn</i>	2.0	2.0	2.0	
	<i>IQR</i>	1.0	0.0	0.0	
Joy	Mean rank	2.11	1.96	1.93	21.33**
	<i>Mdn</i>	3.0	2.0	2.0	
	<i>IQR</i>	1.0	1.0	1.0	
Positive arousal	Mean rank	2.11	1.99	1.90	26.54**
	<i>Mdn</i>	3.0	2.0	2.0	
	<i>IQR</i>	1.0	1.0	1.0	
Confidence	Mean rank	1.95	2.08	1.97	11.72*
	<i>Mdn</i>	2.0	2.0	2.0	
	<i>IQR</i>	1.0	1.0	1.0	
Lack of motivation	Mean rank	1.69	2.07	2.23	184.89**
	<i>Mdn</i>	1.0	1.0	2.0	
	<i>IQR</i>	0.0	1.0	1.0	
Worry	Mean rank	2.22	1.66	2.11	173.60**
	<i>Mdn</i>	2.0	1.0	2.0	
	<i>IQR</i>	1.0	1.0	0.0	
Fear	Mean rank	2.26	1.66	2.08	214.02**
	<i>Mdn</i>	2.0	1.0	1.0	
	<i>IQR</i>	1.0	0.0	1.0	

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\*. Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

The comparison of mean ranks reveals that most emotions, both positive and negative – elation, joy, positive arousal, worry and fear – were experienced significantly more often in performance than in the two other contexts. On the other hand, during practice, performers reported all the positive emotions (elation, joy, positive arousal and confidence) more frequently than in daily life, and all the negative emotions (feeling unmotivated, worried or fearful) less frequently than in daily life. These findings suggest that practice is an intrinsically rewarding activity, not only a means to performance. Moreover, it suggests that people may spend time with their instrument as

a way to increase their usual level of positive arousal, joy or elation, or to find refuge from the fears and anxieties of their daily life. This rewarding quality of the practice experience was already highlighted by previous research (see i.e. Croom, 2015; Pitts, 2005).

This comparison shows that the setting had an impact on the emotions reported. But, did the frequency with which performers reported each emotion in the three settings correlate? A positive correlation between the frequency with which performers reported a same emotion in performance, practice and daily life would suggest that their performance-related emotions were affected by their temperament (which would predispose them to experience positive and negative emotions more or less frequently (McCrae & Costa, 1999; Weiss, Bates & Luciano, 2008). In order to investigate this question, I ran a Spearman Correlation analysis (the non-parametric test corresponding to the Pearson rho, because variables were measured at an ordinal level).

**Table 3.3** *Spearman Correlations between the emotions reported in performance and the same emotions reported in practice and daily life*

Emotions reported in performance	Practice	Daily Life
Elation	.338**	.242**
Joy	.227**	.194**
Positive arousal	.370**	.191**
Confidence	.204**	.241**
Lack of motivation	.208**	.148**
Worry	.151**	.214**
Fear	.173**	.155**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3.3 shows that the frequency with which performers reported each emotion in performance correlated with the frequency with which they reported the same emotion in the two other settings. This suggests that performers' temperaments have an impact on their tendency to experience positive or negative emotions, or being positively aroused or unmotivated in performance. However, as shown by Table 3.3, these

correlations were either medium or low, which suggests that the performers' temperaments are not the main determinant of their performance experiences.

As discussed in Chapter 1, previous studies show that the quality of performance experiences is associated with background or musical variables such as the performers' gender, role (whether they perform as soloists or not) or status (whether they are students, professionals or amateurs). Consequently, crosstabs were run in order to investigate whether the frequency with which performers reported each emotion in performance, practice and daily life was associated with their background and musical variables. Only the associations that were statistically significant are presented below.

### 3.3.1.1 Performance: Associations between the emotions reported and demographic and musical variables.

A chi-square test was performed to examine the relation between the emotions performers reported in performance, and their gender. Table 3.4 shows that the relation between these variables was significant only with regard to the negative emotions such as worry and fear, with women being more likely than men to report worry and fear in performance. No association was found between gender and positive emotions.

**Table 3.4** *Cross tabulation of the frequency of negative emotions reported by men (N = 308) and women (N = 301) in music performance*

		Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Chi-square
Worry	Men	30.2%	47.4%	22.4%	22.99**
	Women	17.6%	44.2%	38.2%	
Fear	Men	58.1%	32.7%	9.2%	33.84**
	Women	37.5%	38.9%	23.6%	

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 3.5 shows the associations found between performance-related emotions and the performers' role, (namely, whether they perform mainly as soloists, in ensembles or

large groups). Soloists reported the highest levels of fear and worry. It was also amongst soloists that elation was reported, both the most often and the most rarely, which points to the contrasting ways in which performance may be experienced by soloists.

**Table 3.5** *Cross tabulation of the emotions reported by soloists (N = 179), ensemble (N = 257) and orchestra (N = 158) performers in public performance.*

		Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Chi-square
Fear	Soloists	38.5%	38.5%	22.9%	25.65**
	Ensemble	51.4%	29.6%	19.1%	
	Orchestra	53.8%	40.5%	5.7%	
Worry	Soloists	20.8%	41.5%	37.7%	11.20*
	Ensemble	26.3%	44.0%	29.7%	
	Orchestra	22.8%	54.3%	22.8%	
Elation	Soloists	27.3%	38.8%	33.9%	10.81*
	Ensemble	21.0%	50.4%	28.6%	
	Orchestra	16.1%	54.0%	29.8%	

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 3.6 shows that almost all performance-related emotions were significantly associated with a performer's status (i.e. he or she being a student, an amateur or a professional performer). Students reported the least rewarding performance experiences compared to their counterparts (amateurs and professional performers) Notably, the student group was the one that reported the lowest levels of positive arousal, confidence and joy, and the highest levels of fear, worry and lack of motivation.

**Table 3.6** Cross tabulation of the emotions reported by students ( $N = 165$ ), amateurs ( $N = 160$ ) and professional performers ( $N = 273$ ) in performance.

		Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Chi-square
Positive arousal	Student	17.6%	43.0%	39.4%	23.88**
	Amateur	14.2%	31.5%	54.3%	
	Professional	6.0%	36.4%	57.6%	
Confidence	Student	21.7%	50.0%	28.3%	23.34**
	Amateur	9.9%	48.4%	41.6%	
	Professional	11.3%	40.5%	48.2%	
Fear	Student	37.0%	40.0%	23.0%	13.87*
	Amateur	54.4%	33.8%	11.9%	
	Professional	50.9%	33.7%	15.4%	
Worry	Student	18.7%	42.2%	39.2%	13.81*
	Amateur	28.2%	50.9%	20.9%	
	Professional	24.7%	45.2%	30.1%	
Lack of motivation	Student	72.0%	24.4%	3.7%	13.34*
	Amateur	87.3%	12.0%		
	Professional	76.2%	21.8%	1.9%	
Joy	Student	14.9%	38.1%	47.0%	10.48*
	Amateur	9.8%	31.3%	58.9%	
	Professional	9.1%	29.0%	61.9%	

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 3.7 shows a significant relation between performance-related emotions and a performer's music genre. Non-classical performers reported a more positive experience than classical performers. Namely, non-classical performers reported more joy, positive arousal, elation and confidence, and less worry and fear than their counterparts did.

**Table 3.7** *Cross tabulation of the emotions reported by classical (N = 430) and non-classical performers (N = 177) in performance.*

		Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Chi-square
Joy	Non-classical	4.0%	25.4%	70.6%	22.83**
	Classical	14.0%	34.7%	51.4%	
Positive arousal	Non-classical	12.8%	25.6%	61.6%	13.20**
	Classical	10.7%	41.4%	47.9%	
Confidence	Non-classical	7.5%	44.5%	48.0%	9.94*
	Classical	15.9%	45.3%	38.8%	
Elation	Non-classical	14.4%	48.9%	36.8%	9.85*
	Classical	24.9%	47.7%	27.5%	
Worry	Non-classical	35.1%	46.0%	19.0%	23.10**
	Classical	19.3%	45.8%	34.9%	
Fear	Non-classical	61.0%	30.2%	8.7%	19.52**
	Classical	42.5%	37.7%	19.7%	

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

These findings are in line with previous studies that showed that women (Fishbein et al., 1998; Osborne & Franklin, 2002; Osborne & Kenny, 2008), soloists (Cox & Kenardy, 1993; Hamann, 1982) students (Steptoe & Fidler, 1987) and classical performers

(Creech et al., 2008) report higher levels of performance anxiety than their counterparts. Moreover, these results show that some groups also differ in terms of the frequency with which they report positive emotions. In particular, the difference in the frequency with which classical and non-classical performers reported joy in performance was striking.

### **3.3.1.2 Practice: Associations between the emotions reported and demographic and musical variables.**

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show that many performers reported practice as a very positive emotional experience. During practice they reported more joy, positive arousal, elation and confidence, and less worry and fear, than in their daily lives. But, do practice-related emotions differ according to the performers' musical or demographical background? The data showed that some practice-related variables were significantly associated with the performers' role and status. Chi-square analyses showed significant associations between performing mainly as a soloist and reporting high levels of elation ( $\chi^2 (4) = 20.910 p < .001$ ), joy ( $\chi^2 (4) = 18.324 p < .001$ ), positive arousal ( $\chi^2 (4) = 41.835 p < .001$ ) and confidence ( $\chi^2 (4) = 17.925 p < .001$ ) during practice. This suggests that many soloists enjoy their practice much more than their performances, which often appear marked with high levels of anxiety and fear, and not necessarily with high levels of positive emotions (see Table 3.5). On the other hand, performers who usually play in large groups reported lower levels of positive arousal during their practice compared to soloists and ensemble performers ( $\chi^2 (4) = 41.835 p < .001$ ), and students reported lower levels of positive arousal during their practice ( $\chi^2 (4) = 26.909 p < .001$ ) compared to professional and amateurs. Professional performers appeared to be more positively aroused ( $\chi^2 (4) = 26.91 p < .001$ ), more worried ( $\chi^2 (4) = 13.63 p < .05$ ) and tended to be more elated ( $\chi^2 (4) = 9.42 p = .051$ ) during practice compared to their counterparts (students and amateurs).

Musical genre was only significantly associated with elation during practice: non-classical performers reported feeling elated more frequently than classical performers ( $\chi^2 (2) = 8.94 p < .05$ ), and gender was only associated with worry, with women reporting higher levels of worry than men during practice ( $\chi^2 (2) = 6.09 p < .05$ ).

### **3.3.1.3 Daily life: Associations between the emotions reported and demographic and musical variables.**

A chi-square test was performed to examine the relation between the emotions that performers reported in daily life and gender. The relation between these variables was significant only concerning worry ( $\chi^2 (2) = 6.64 p < .05$ ) and fear ( $\chi^2 (2) = 10.65 p < .05$ ). Women were more likely than men to report worry and fear in their daily life, which is in line with previous studies (Lewinsohn, Gotlib, Lewinsohn, Seeley & Allen, 1998; McLean, Asnaani, Litz, & Hofmann, 2011). No association was found between gender and positive emotions.

The performer's role was not significantly associated with the emotions reported in daily life. However, a performer's status was associated with such emotions. When the reported emotions of professionals, students and amateurs were investigated, amateur performers reported lower levels of elation ( $\chi^2 (4) = 18.247 p < .001$ ) and of positive arousal ( $\chi^2 (4) = 19.449 p < .001$ ) in their daily life than their counterparts (professionals and students).

While further research may be needed to understand these associations, one explanation is that some people may engage with music as amateurs, looking for ways of enhancing the sub-optimal emotions they experience in their daily lives. In fact, previous studies have shown that amateur performers appear to view their musical involvement as a source of confirmation and confidence, a means of acquiring or demonstrating skills, and of creating social bonds (Pitts, 2005, 2007).

### **3.3.1.4 Summary**

In this section I have presented the frequency with which performers reported experiencing elation, joy, positive arousal, confidence, lack of motivation, worry and fear in three different settings: performance, practice and daily life. The statistically significant correlations found between the emotions reported in the three settings show that a performer's personal characteristics (their tendency to experience an emotion more or less frequently) impact on the emotions they report in performance. This



suggests that temperament may play a role in the quality of the performance experience. However, this role does not appear to be major.

When the emotions performers reported in the three settings were compared according to the gender of the informant, it appeared that women and men differed only when reporting negative emotions (worry and fear). As I discuss below, these gender differences may be due to confounding factors. All other findings reported above suggest that the emotions performers experience in performance and practice are associated with, and therefore possibly shaped by, their performance role – such as being a student or a professional, a soloist or an orchestra performer, and a classical or a non-classical musician. I will later present evidence suggesting that such emotions result from category-related narratives, rather than from categories *per se* (see section 3.3.5.8)

### **3.3.1.5 Investigating patterns in the emotions reported in the three settings.**

In order to investigate whether or not there are different patterns in the way individuals experience emotions in performance, practice and daily life, and eventually uncover these patterns, a Categorical Principal Component Analysis (CATPCA) was conducted on the 21 emotions performers reported in the three settings (seven emotions in each setting: performance, practice, and daily life). CATPCA is used when wanting to identify the underlying components of a set of categorical variables while maximising the amount of variance accounted for in those items. Three dimensions were retained, which were interpreted as being three different ‘emotional profiles’; only the dimensions with a consistency coefficient (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ ) higher than .60 were retained (viewed as acceptable in the case of exploratory research, Hair et al, 1998). The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for the three dimensions was high (.933). The first dimension accounted for 18% of the variance, the second for 13% and the third for 11%, representing a total variance of 44%.

**Table 3.8** *Component loadings from CATPCA on all the emotions reported by the performers*

	Dimension		
	Always great	Best in practice, worst in performance	Only great in performance
Elated in performance	<b>.50</b>	-.13	<b>.41</b>
Joyful in performance	<b>.54</b>	-.31	<b>.46</b>
Positively aroused in performance	<b>.51</b>	-.19	<b>.43</b>
Confident in performance	<b>.41</b>	<b>-.54</b>	.24
Unmotivated in performance	-.22	.37	.09
Worried in performance	<b>-.43</b>	<b>.62</b>	-.17
Fearful in performance	-.36	<b>.69</b>	-.11
Elated in practice	<b>.52</b>	<b>.49</b>	.10
Joyful in practice	<b>.59</b>	<b>.42</b>	.15
Positively aroused in practice	<b>.53</b>	.40	.19
Confident in practice	<b>.48</b>	.14	-.12
Unmotivated in practice	-.36	-.07	.25
Worried in practice	-.26	.22	<b>.47</b>
Fearful in practice	-.17	.18	<b>.52</b>
Elated in daily life	<b>.46</b>	<b>.44</b>	-.11
Joyful in daily life	<b>.55</b>	.36	-.14
Positively aroused in daily life	<b>.45</b>	<b>.41</b>	-.06
Confident in daily life	<b>.43</b>	-.07	-.33
Unmotivated in daily life	-.35	-.03	<b>.42</b>
Worried in daily life	-.29	.25	<b>.58</b>
Fearful in daily life	-.23	.27	<b>.64</b>

*Note.* Variable Principal Normalization. Values higher than .4 are in bold.

Table 3.8 shows that Emotional Profile 1 (EP1, ‘Always great’) is characterised by high levels of positive affect and low levels of negative affect in all three contexts.

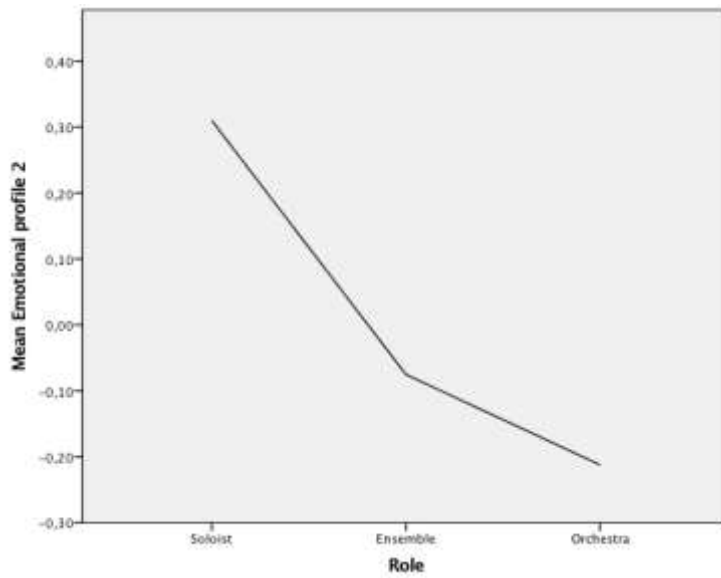
Performers who score high in this dimension may have a basic tendency toward positive

emotions (McCrae et al., 2000; Weiss et al., 2008); nonetheless, positive emotions tend to be higher during musical activities (practice and performance) than in daily life. Emotional Profile 2 (EP2, 'At best in practice and at worst in performance') is characterised by negative performance-related emotions that appear to be similar to those reported in MPA (i.e. Kenny, 2009; Valentine, 2002), but very positive emotions during practice. During practice, performers who score high in this profile are at their best: in this setting they report lower levels of negative emotions and higher levels of positive emotions compared to their daily life. Emotional Profile 3 (EP3: 'Only great in performance') portrays high levels of worry, fear, lack of motivation, and lack of confidence, together with an absence of positive emotions, in daily life; a slight decrease in negative emotions and a stronger increase in positive emotions in practice, and a drastic change of emotions in the performance context, namely high levels of all the positive emotions and an absence of all negative emotions.

### **3.3.1.6 Comparing the different groups with regard to emotional profiles**

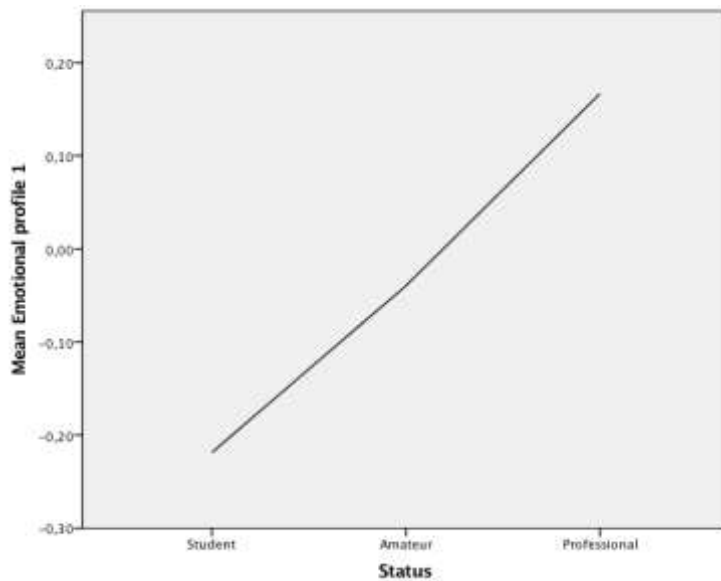
Having identified three emotional profiles underlying the responses of the respondents in my study, I wanted to know whether these differed according to the various demographic and background variables I had identified as of potential importance: gender (men and women), status (students, amateurs and professionals), role (soloists and non-soloists) and genre (classical and non-classical performers). To do this, I ran several one-way ANOVAs with the three emotional profiles as the dependent variables, and gender, status, role and musical genre as the independent variables.

The results show that women scored significantly higher than men in EP 2 ( $F(1) = 20.54, p < .001$ ), but not in the other dimensions. Classical performers scored significantly higher than their counterparts in EP 2 ( $F(2) = 19.42, p < .001$ ), and significantly lower in EP3, ( $F(2) = 6.60, p < .05$ ). Their differences in EP1 approached significance too,  $F(2) = 3.60, p = .058$ , with non-classical performers scoring higher than classical performers. Soloists, ensemble and orchestra performers differed only in EP2  $F(2) = 13.45 p < .001$  (see Figure.3.1).



*Figure 3.1* Differences between soloists, ensemble and orchestra players in EP2

Students, professionals and amateurs differed in the three emotional profiles (see Figure 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4): EP1,  $F(2) = 7.87 p < .001$ ; EP2,  $F(2) = 11.92 p < .001$  and EP3,  $F(2) = 3.78 p < .05$ .



*Figure 3.2* Differences between students, amateurs and professionals in EP1

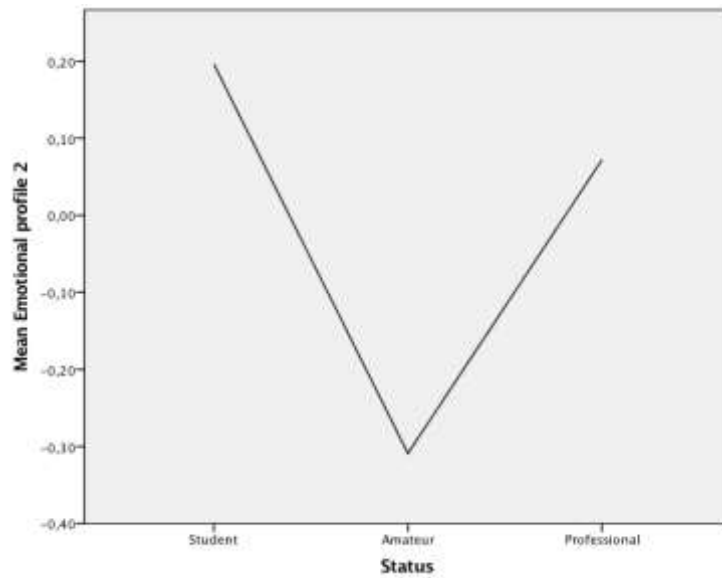


Figure 3.3 Differences between students, amateurs and professionals in EP2

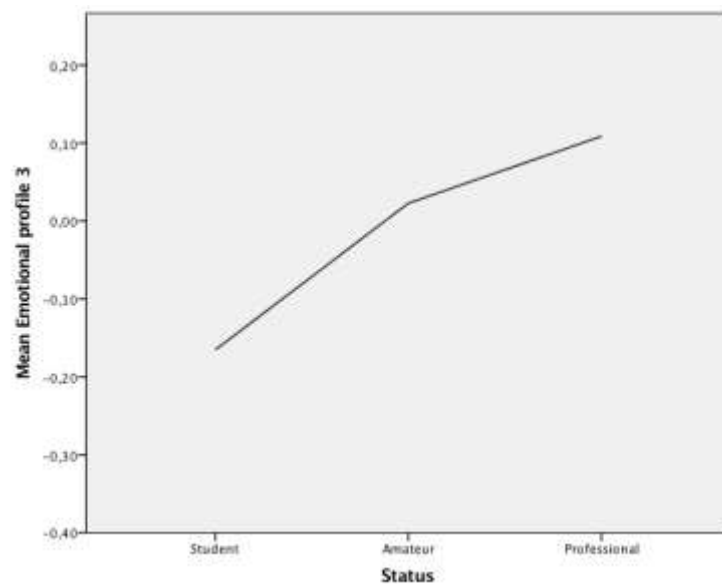


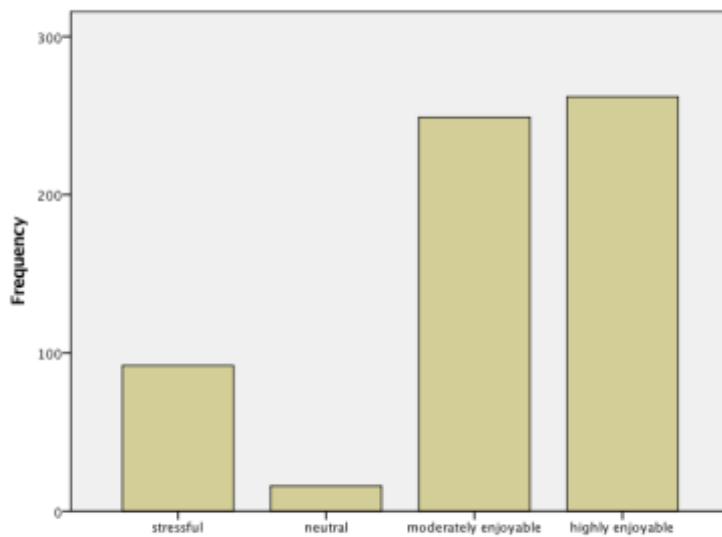
Figure 3.4 Differences between students, amateurs and professionals in EP3

These results suggest that each group had the tendency to approach their music-making – performance and practice – in a characteristic and different way.

### 3.3.2 The quality of the performance experience during the previous year

The performers' emotions during practice and daily life provide a broad context within which the performance experience can be explored. The focus of the present study was

the performance experience; therefore performers were also asked to give a general evaluation of the quality of their performance experiences during the previous year, in addition to reporting the frequency with which they felt a set of discrete emotions during performance (analysed above). Performers were asked to select from four different qualities of experience – namely ‘highly enjoyable’, ‘moderately enjoyable’, ‘neutral’ or ‘stressful’ – the one that corresponded most closely to their own experience (see Figure 3.5). The timeframe given – the previous year – was specific (see Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000), but long enough to be viewed as typical of their performance experiences in general.



*Figure 3.5* Assessment of the performance experience during the previous year

Forty-two per cent of performers ( $N = 262$ ) evaluated their performances as being highly enjoyable. Nevertheless, nearly as many (40%;  $N = 249$ ) assessed them as only moderately enjoyable. I interpreted this evaluation as referring to performances that elicit a certain amount of positive emotions, but still lack something that prevents performers from fully enjoying them. I speak about a deficiency in the experience, because enjoyment and anxiety appear not to be opposite poles of a single continuum and, as will be discussed below, performers may report their performances as highly enjoyable experiences even when these experiences included a certain amount of worry and fear. Interestingly, the percentage of performers who evaluated their performances as moderately enjoyable was the same amongst students, amateurs and professionals,

which means that this ‘something that is lacking’ is not necessarily found with training and experience. In addition to these moderately enjoyable experiences, almost one fifth of the performers seemed not to enjoy their performances, as they either assessed them as emotionally ‘neutral’ (3%;  $N = 16$ ), or ‘stressful’ (15%;  $N = 92$ ) (this percentage is similar to the 14 per cent of musicians who, in Fishbein et al.’s study (1998), indicated that stage fright was a severe problem for them).

### **3.3.2.1 Associations between the quality of the performance experience reported and the performers’ musical backgrounds**

The results of a one-way ANOVA showed that the assessment of the performance experience was not significantly different between performers of different ages or with differing amounts of years invested in music-making. These results were consistent with previous findings on performance anxiety (see i.e. Kenny, Fortune & Ackermann, 2011). Chi-squares were run in order to investigate the associations between the quality of the performance experience and other background variables such as gender, status, role, and musical genre. As expected, the results of most of these tests were in line with those of the chi-squares run between background variables and the emotions reported during performance (see section 3.3.1.1).

Table 3.9 shows the results of chi-squares investigating the association between gender and the performers’ assessment of their performance experiences. Men’s and women’s assessments were not significantly different. These results are surprising when we take into account the significant differences between genders when reporting on their feelings of worry and fear in performance, with 24 per cent of women ( $N = 70$ ) reporting feeling fearful most of the time in performance, compared to only 9 per cent of men ( $N = 28$ ) (see section 3.3.1.2).

**Table 3.9** Associations between the quality of the performance experience during the previous year and gender ( $N = 618$ )

	Quality of the performance experience during the previous year				Chi-square
	Stressful	Neutral	Moderately enjoyable	Highly enjoyable	
Men	11.8%	2.2%	39.9%	46.0%	6.47
Women	18.0%	3.0%	40.7%	38.4%	

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

I hypothesise that this inconsistency in the findings (men and women differing much more in their reports of negative emotions than in the way they categorise their performance experiences) might be due to men having more difficulty than women in reporting their feelings of fear (I discuss the theoretical basis of this hypothesis below: see the end of section 3.3.2.2).

Table 3.10 shows that soloists, ensemble and large-group players differed in the quality of the performance experiences they reported. Soloists reported their performance as stressful more than twice as often as orchestra players, and reported fewer highly enjoyable experiences than performers playing in ensembles or in larger groups.

**Table 3.10** Associations between the quality of the performance experience during the previous year and role ( $N = 617$ )

	Quality of the performance experience during the previous year				Chi-square
	Stressful	Neutral	Moderately enjoyable	Highly enjoyable	
Soloist	20%	2.70%	43.20%	34.10%	14.39*
Ensemble	15,1%	1,9%	37,0%	46,0%	
Large group	8,6%	3,7%	42,3%	45,4%	

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

For the following analyses, my data did not comply with the assumptions of chi-squares (and subsequent regression analysis) because the number of performers who evaluated their performances as emotionally neutral was too small (16 performers) and the expected value in each cell was in some cases less than five. Therefore, in order to further my analysis, I created a new variable in which I excluded the category ‘neutral’, and the data of the 16 performers who assessed their performances as neutral. Consequently, in the analysis below, the variable ‘Quality of the performance



experience during the previous year' only included three categories: 'stressful', 'moderately enjoyable' and 'highly enjoyable'.

**Table 3.11** Associations between the quality of the performance experience during the previous year, status and musical genre ( $N = 602$ )

		Stressful	Moderately enjoyable	Highly enjoyable	Chi-square
Status	Students	26.6%	41.8%	31.6%	25.93**
	Amateurs	8.9%	41.1%	50.0%	
	Professionals	12.6%	41.1%	46.3%	
Musical genre	Classical	17.20%	44.20%	38.70%	15.98**
	Non-classical	10.50%	33.10%	56.40%	

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* . Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

Notably, students evaluated their performances as stressful almost three times as often as amateurs and more than twice as often as professionals and, at the same time, assessed their performances as highly enjoyable much less frequently than their counterparts. However, when I looked more closely at the differences between students and professionals in regard to highly enjoyable performances, the chi-square shows that the difference between the two groups is not due, as might be expected, to a high frequency of highly enjoyable performances amongst professionals ( $N = 132$ , a number that is not significantly different from the expected count of  $N = 123$ ), but rather to the low number of students who assessed their experiences as highly enjoyable ( $N = 50$ , expected count  $N = 69$ ). Surprisingly, more than half of the participating professionals appeared not to fully enjoy their performances, and appraised them as either moderately enjoyable (41%;  $N = 117$ ) or as stressful (13%;  $N = 36$ ). It seems paradoxical that so many professional musicians (individuals who have chosen this profession) report suboptimal performance experiences. However, these results may be biased by the fact that, in this preliminary study, my category 'professionals' did not make a distinction between professional musicians who mainly perform and those who mainly teach. It is possible that the former experience more rewarding performances than the latter.

Table 3.11 also shows that classical and non-classical performers differed significantly in the way they assessed their performances, in particular the frequency with which they

reported highly enjoyable experiences (non-classical performers reporting highly enjoyable experiences much more frequently than classical performers).

### **3.3.2.2 Identifying variables that predict the frequency of ‘stressful’, ‘moderately enjoyable’ and ‘highly enjoyable’ performances**

The analysis so far shows that performers belonging to different categories (namely classical and non-classical; students, amateurs and professionals; soloists, ensemble and large-group players; and men and women) differ in the way they assess their performance experiences. While the differences found between categories were statistically significant, these could be either real or due to confounding variables. Therefore, a Multinomial Logistic Regression was run in order to control for confounding variables and investigate which were the variables that could independently predict the likelihood of experiencing a higher or lower frequency of stressful or highly enjoyable performance experiences. Within the regression, the dependent variable was the assessment of the performance experience during the previous year, and the demographic background independent variables were gender, status, role, age, number of public performances per year, and musical genre. Rather than looking at how these variables predicted highly enjoyable compared to stressful experiences, as the outcome variable measured values on the same dimension, I preferred to focus on how they predicted highly enjoyable or stressful experiences separately from, and in comparison to, moderately enjoyable experiences. In this way, a distinction could be made between the variables that would predict joy and those that would predict anxiety.

The regression showed that only two variables significantly predicted the quality of the performers’ experiences: role and musical genre. However, the performer’s role predicted only the likelihood of having stressful rather than moderately enjoyable experiences (see Table 3.12), while musical genre predicted only the likelihood of having highly enjoyable rather than moderately enjoyable experiences. The fact that stressful and highly enjoyable experiences were predicted by different variables suggests that positive and negative emotions are not opposite poles of a continuum of experience, but are rather parallel systems (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999; Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1999).

The regression analysis suggests that the association shown in Table 3.11 between status and the quality of the performance experience is due to confounding variables. For instance, the association found between being a student and a high frequency of stressful and a low frequency of highly enjoyable performance experiences might be influenced by the fact that many students were at the same time soloists (43%;  $N = 71$ ) and belonged to the classical music milieu (82% were classical and only 18% non-classical performers).

**Table 3.12** *Multinomial logistic regression with the quality of the performance experience during the previous year and gender, age, number of performances per year, status, role and musical genre ( $N = 603$ )*

<i>Stressful versus Moderately Enjoyable Performance Experiences</i>				
	B	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intercept	-.90 (0.66)			
Age	-.02 (0.01)	.98	.95	1.01
Number of Performances per Year	-.01 (0.01)	.99	.98	1.00
Men	-.05 ( 0.28)	.95	.55	1.65
Women	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Student	.27 ( 0.38)	1.31	.62	2.75
Amateur	-.52 ( 0.40)	.59	.27	1.29
Professional	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Soloist	.85 (0.40)*	2.33	1.07	5.07
Ensemble	.88 (0.40)*	2.40	1.11	5.20
Big Group	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Non-Classical	.06 (0.36)	1.07	.52	2.17
Classical	0 <sup>b</sup>			
<i>Highly Enjoyable versus Moderately Enjoyable Performance Experiences</i>				
Intercept	-.06 ( 0.40)			
Age	.00 ( 0.01)	1.00	.99	1.02
Number of Performances per Year	-.00 (0.00)	1.00	.99	1.01
Men	.13 (0.20)	1.13	.77	1.67
Women	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Student	-.39 (0.28)	0.68	.39	1.17
Amateur	-.30 (0.24)	0.74	.46	1.20
Professional	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Soloist	-.32 ( 0.25)	0.72	.44	1.19
Ensemble	-.02 ( 0.23)	0.98	.62	1.54
Big Group	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Non-Classical	.61 (0.23)*	1.83	1.16	2.89
Classical	0 <sup>b</sup>			

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Note: Pseudo R-Square = .09 (Cox and Snell), .11 (Nagelkerke). Model (16)  $\chi^2$  52.99  $p < .001$

The regression also showed that the performers' gender did not significantly predict the quality of the performance experience. However, when within the regression the dependent variable was the frequency with which performers reported worry and fear instead of the assessed quality of the performance experience, genre became a significant predictor. These findings might be explained by men finding it easier to categorise their performances as stressful than to report their feelings of worry and fear. Due to gender stereotyping, men can have more difficulty than women when reporting negative emotions (Kokotsaki & Davidson, 2003). Gender stereotype may bias the comparison of women and men's emotional experiences when these are accessed through their self-reports, as such self-reports may not reflect their actual emotional experiences (Robinson & Clore, 2002). This is something I explore in the next chapter, where I consider in more depth the way in which experiences and reports on experiences are not one and the same thing.

In summary, neither gender nor status, but only a performer's role, predicted the frequency of stressful performance experiences, and only musical genre predicted the frequency of highly enjoyable performance experience. However, the regression analysis investigating background variables only explained 8 per cent of the variation in performance experiences, which suggests that other factors beside the ones investigated here shape the quality of performance experiences.

### **3.3.3 Performers' preferences**

In order to gain a fuller understanding of performance experiences, the study investigated whether the respondents preferred to perform as soloists, in ensembles or large groups, and whether their preferences depended on their gender, age, status, role or musical genre.

More than half of the performers (55%;  $N = 343$ ) said they preferred performing in ensembles, whereas 23% ( $N = 140$ ) preferred large groups and 22% ( $N = 136$ ) preferred performing as soloists. When asked about the type of performance they preferred the least, 55% identified performing as a soloist, one third (34%;  $N = 199$ ) in large groups and only one in ten (11%;  $N = 66$ ) in ensembles.

The performers' preferences were found to be associated with their background variables. A strong association was found between preferences and role ( $\chi^2 (4) = 334.08$   $p < .001$ ), with most performers preferring the kind of formation in which they usually performed. For instance, 56% of soloists ( $N = 103$ ) preferred to perform as soloists rather than in ensembles or big groups, 84% ( $N = 222$ ) of ensemble performers preferred to perform in ensembles rather than in orchestras or as soloists, and 58% of large-group players ( $N = 96$ ) preferred to perform in orchestras rather than as soloists or in ensembles. This data suggests that most performers could choose their usual performance settings according to their preferences or, alternatively, that they came to feel comfortable with their usual settings and, therefore, came to prefer it.

The performers' preferences were also associated with their status ( $\chi^2 (4) = 32.82$   $p < .001$ ) and musical genre ( $\chi^2 (2) = 32.34$   $p < .001$ ): amateurs and non-classical performers showed a strong preference for performing with other co-performers rather than as soloists. While multiple factors may impact on a performers' preferences, it seems that the majority of performers enjoy performance the most when they perform with other musicians and, in particular, when they perform in ensembles.

### **3.3.4 Changes over time in the level of enjoyment of practice and performance**

Human experiences are always dynamic, and performers' music-making experiences are likely to change throughout their lives. The questionnaire investigated whether the quality of the performers' experience during practice and performance tended to improve or to deteriorate over time. Most performers reported both their performances and their practice as being increasingly enjoyable over time (67% for performance,  $N = 412$ ; and 59% for practice,  $N = 362$ ), and only 9% ( $N = 56$ ) reported a decrease in the enjoyment of performances, while 12% ( $N = 73$ ) reported a decrease in the enjoyment of practice. The other respondents reported no change in the quality of their experiences. These results should be interpreted with caution, because they may omit performers whose experience of music -making deteriorated over time to the point of giving up and who, therefore, would have not responded to this survey.

Interestingly, the assessments performers made of the quality of their performance experience during the previous year were strongly associated with the changes they reported in the quality of the performance experience ( $\chi^2 (4) = 113.80 p < .001$ ). Namely, a strong association was found between categorising performances as stressful and reporting decreasing levels of enjoyment of performances over time, and between categorising them as highly enjoyable and reporting increasing levels of enjoyment. The assessment of the performance experience during the previous year was also associated with changes in the experience of practice over time ( $\chi^2 (4) = 15.47 p < .005$ ). In particular, a significant association was found between stressful performance experiences and a decrease in the enjoyment of practice ( $\chi^2 (4) = 15.47 p < .005$ ). This suggests that the quality of performance experiences may have far-reaching consequences on the performers' global relationship with their music making.

### **3.3.5 The most recent highly enjoyable performance experience**

One of the aims of this study was to gather information on the emotions and thoughts that make up a performance experience that performers assess as being highly enjoyable. Accordingly, performers were asked to think about their most recent highly enjoyable performance experience and to select from a pre-established list of emotions the ones they had experienced during that performance (namely: elation, joy, positive arousal, confidence, lack of motivation, worry and fear). They were also requested to report on the frequency with which they had this kind of enjoyable experience, and on the methods they had used to prepare for it.

Nearly half of the performers (46%;  $N = 281$ ) brought to mind a highly enjoyable performance where they were playing in an ensemble, roughly one third (31%;  $N = 189$ ) as soloists and one fourth (23%;  $N = 145$ ) in orchestras or large groups. This type of performance roughly corresponded with the performers' role ( $\chi^2 (4) = 306.01, p < .001$ ) and with the kind of performance they had previously reported to prefer ( $\chi^2 (4) = 372.17, p < .001$ ).

### **3.3.5.1 Exploring the performers' emotions during the highly enjoyable performance**

As expected, positive emotions characterised the highly enjoyable experience, and few performers reported feeling unmotivated during the event (1.6%;  $N = 10$ ). The emotions reported the most frequently were joy (84%;  $N = 523$ ), positive arousal (77%;  $N = 481$ ), confidence (70%;  $N = 436$ ) and elation (55%;  $N = 342$ ). However, emotions such as worry (20%;  $N = 126$ ) and fear (8%;  $N = 53$ ) were also reported. It is not possible to know from the performers' answers whether they experienced these different emotions at different moments of the performance, or if they described a complex emotional experience in which the different emotions appeared to take place simultaneously. However, the data seems to suggest that, as long as positive emotions were present, feelings of worry or fear did not prevent performers from assessing their experience as being highly enjoyable.

### **3.3.5.2 How performers prepared for the highly enjoyable performance**

Performers are usually aware that a good performance requires them to be adequately aroused and focussed, and they often use strategies to help them be at their best or, at least, to reduce their level of anxiety (Kenny, 2005). How had performers prepared for a performance that turned out to be highly enjoyable? The methods performers used to prepare for this performance might provide insight on what the performers thought they needed to do in order to be at their best during a performance. Several preparation methods were presented to performers, and they were asked to select whether or not they had used each method before their last highly enjoyable performance. The methods investigated were drawn from previously-published research (see i.e. Kenny, 2005; McGinnis & Milling, 2005; McGrath, 2012; Ortiz-Brugués, 2009), and comprised visualisation, relaxation, 'pep' talks, chemical or natural products, prayer, and reminding themselves of the reasons that moved them to perform. Moreover, performers were asked whether the methods they employed to prepare for this specific performance were similar to or different from the methods they generally use to prepare for their performances.

The results showed that 48% of performers ( $N = 282$ ) had visualised the performance in advance, 45% ( $N = 260$ ) thought of the reasons that moved them to perform, 37% ( $N = 218$ ) used relaxation techniques, 33% ( $N = 191$ ) used ‘pep’ talk; 19% ( $N = 110$ ) prayed, and 13% ( $N = 79$ ) took chemical or natural products. For most performers (76%;  $N = 462$ ), these methods corresponded to their typical way of preparing for performance. Interestingly, besides visualisation, a great number of performers considered that thinking of the reasons that moved them to perform was important. Likely, they thought that reminding themselves about the purpose of performance might help them to feel optimally focused and aroused.

### **3.3.5.3 Exploring the frequency of highly enjoyable performances and how these impact on performers’ motivation and enjoyment of practice and performance**

How frequently did performers experience their performances as being highly enjoyable? When responding to this question, 53% per cent of performers ( $N = 324$ ) reported having this kind of highly enjoyable experience ‘sometimes’, 28% ( $N = 172$ ) ‘most of the time’, and 18% ( $N = 115$ ) ‘seldom’. As expected, there was a significant association between reporting this kind of experience ‘most of the time’ and evaluating performances over the previous year as ‘highly enjoyable’, and between reporting this kind of experience ‘seldom’ and evaluating the last year performances as ‘stressful’ ( $\chi^2(4) = 85.496, p < .001$ ).

Performers were asked whether having this kind of performance experience increased or decreased their motivation to perform in public: 93% of performers ( $N = 572$ ) responded affirmatively. On the other hand, a significant association was found between seldom having this kind of experience and reporting a decrease in both enjoyment of performance ( $\chi^2(4) = 46.878, p < .001$ ) and enjoyment of practice over time ( $\chi^2(4) = 13.453, p < .05$ ). In line with previous research, this suggests that the quality of the performance experience may impact on the overall relationship that performers establish with music (Lamont, 2012; O’Neill, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sloboda, 1991).



### 3.3.5.4 Exploring the performers' statements about their last highly enjoyable performance

In addition to investigating the specific emotions that made up the most recent highly enjoyable performance experience, the questionnaire investigated the ways in which performers described and explained that specific experience. Performers were presented with a set of questions that linked their enjoyable experience to different kinds of statements, and they were asked to select the statements that corresponded to their own experience. Table 3.13 presents the statements performers selected, from the most frequently to the least frequently selected.

**Table 3.13** *The statements that performers selected when asked about their last 'highly enjoyable' performance*

<i>Factors that made this performance to be experienced as Highly Enjoyable</i>	Percentage	N
You felt connected with the audience or co-performers	73%	457
You felt the audience thoroughly enjoyed your performance	66%	411
You felt proud of your performance	65%	406
You had a feeling of contributing	61%	379
You felt relaxed and focused	59%	367
You performed up to your standards	54%	338
You felt confident and powerful	50%	314
You felt that something great was just happening	43%	267
You performed better than expected	27%	170
<i>Indicate whether you have experienced any of the following feelings...</i>		
Feeling as if the music flowed freely from deep within you	59%	369
Feeling as if becoming a channel through which the music just flowed	49%	305
Feeling as if there was a special connection, almost tangible, between the audience and you	41%	259
Feeling as if this was a 'perfect' moment	35%	216
Feeling of transcendence	24%	152
Feeling as if the music came to you from 'elsewhere' (e.g. the composer, God, or any other external source)	23%	144
<i>You attributed your experience to...</i>		
A good preparation	75%	467
Feeling comfortable with the pieces, the audience or the situation	72%	449
Playing with co-performers you felt comfortable with	60%	377
Being in a good mood	48%	302
Feeling physically fit	39%	242
Your personality traits	34%	214
Something special that just happened	15%	97
Unknown reasons	15%	93

Table 3.13 shows that most performers (roughly three quarters) reported feelings of connection with the audience or co-performers during the highly enjoyable performance that they brought to mind. Moreover, many felt that the audience was enjoying the performance, and they had a sense of contributing to something. Feeling comfortable with co-performers also seemed to contribute strongly to the joy of the experience; when performers who performed as soloists were excluded from the data, 86 per cent of performers (377 out of 426) selected this variable as a factor that promoted the highly enjoyable experience. Notably, these factors, which I characterise as ‘self-transcendent’, appeared to contribute more to the performers’ joy than factors that centred on achievement: for instance, only 27 per cent of performers considered that the joy of the performance was due to their playing better than expected. These results suggest that joy in performance may not depend primarily on outstanding results, but rather on feeling in communion or connected with other people, and feeling as though one is making a contribution.

Moreover, many performers attributed the joy of this experience to a feeling of being co-agents or observers of the experience rather than sole agents. For instance, more than half of the performers reported that ‘the music flowed freely from deep within’; almost half felt as if they were ‘becoming a channel through which the music just flowed’; nearly one in four reported feelings of ‘transcendence’, and more than one in five that the music came from ‘elsewhere’. Interestingly, these statements did not link the joy of the experience to something the performer did, but to something that happened with ‘the music’. The performers’ statements suggest that performers confer on their performance a meaning that goes beyond a ‘well-done job’. Feeling connected with others and with the larger world appears to characterise the highly enjoyable performance that performers described.

### **3.3.5.5 Associations between the performers’ statements and their assessment of their performance experiences during the previous year**

This study was based on the theory that people make meaning of situations through narratives that confer a sense of coherence and organisation to their existence, and that are quite stable over time. Self-statements were taken as expressions of these stable

stories the performers tell themselves. Accordingly, it was hypothesised that the statements performers selected in order to describe or explain their last highly enjoyable performance expressed not just their thoughts about this specific performance, but their thoughts about performance in general. If this was true, given the impact that narratives seem to have on emotions, an association should be found between the statements that performers selected and the evaluation they gave of their performance experiences during the previous year – evaluations that I viewed as representative of their typical way of experiencing performances (i.e. an association between choosing statements that expressed self-transcendent goals in performance and assessing their performance experiences as joyful). In order to test this hypothesis, chi-square analyses were run between the performers' statements and their evaluations of their performance experiences.

The analysis showed that some statements (describing their last highly enjoyable performance), namely 'feeling of contributing' ( $\chi^2 (2) = 19.444 p < .001$ ), 'performing better than expected' ( $\chi^2 (2) = 13.626 p < .005$ ) and 'feeling of transcendence' ( $\chi^2 (2) = 10.495 p < .01$ ), were significantly associated with a high frequency of highly enjoyable performance experiences during the previous year. Other statements, namely 'feeling connected with the audience or co-performers' ( $\chi^2 (2) = 28.526 p < .001$ ) and 'feeling comfortable with the pieces, the audience or the situation' ( $\chi^2 (2) = 20.833 p < .001$ ), were only associated with a low frequency of stressful experiences. And still other statements appeared to be simultaneously associated with a high frequency of highly enjoyable and a low frequency of stressful experiences. This was the case with the statements 'the audience thoroughly enjoyed your performance' ( $\chi^2 (2) = 43.041 p < .001$ ), 'your personality traits' ( $\chi^2 (2) = 27.508 p < .001$ ), 'playing with co-performers you felt comfortable with' ( $\chi^2 (2) = 24.538 p < .001$ ), and 'a special connection with the audience' ( $\chi^2 (2) = 24.520 p < .001$ ). On the other hand, an association was found between not having an explanation for the enjoyable experience ('unknown reasons') and a high frequency of stressful performances ( $\chi^2 (2) = 8.193 p < .01$ ).

All these statistically significant results suggest that conferring positive meanings on performance appears to increase joy and reduce anxiety, while on the other hand, a lack of meaning seems to contribute to anxiety. Additionally, the associations seem to indicate that the performers' statements were not unique to this highly enjoyable

performance, but rather typical of their way of thinking about their performance, at least over the past year, and potentially longer.

### **3.3.5.6 Looking for underlying narratives**

As argued in Chapter 2, individuals appear to think about their lives through unifying and coherent narratives rather than through fragmented and isolated cognitions (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Kahneman, 2005, 2010, 2011; Maturana & Varela, 1987; McAdams, 2001). Therefore, I hypothesised that the different statements the performers chose to describe or explain their last highly enjoyable performance expressed an underlying, coherent narrative about performance, and that consequently, these statements should cluster together in a sensible way. In order to test this hypothesis, a Principal Component Analysis was run with the 23 statements that described or explained the highly enjoyable performance. As my goal was descriptive, I decided I could do the PCA despite the fact that all my variables were dichotomous (Jolliffe, 2002). I applied an orthogonal rotation (varimax). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis,  $KMO = .747$ , which is 'good' according to Field (2009), and all KMO for individual items were above .77, which is above the acceptable limit of .5 (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $\chi^2 (253) = 1745.775$   $p < .001$ ) indicated that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for a PCA.

An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Eight components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1, and in combination explained 54.80 per cent of the variance. However, the scree plot was slightly ambiguous and showed inflexions that would justify retaining two or five components. Given Kaiser's criterion, I opted to retain five components in the final analysis.

Table 3.14 shows how the statements clustered on the five components. Notably, each component appeared to express a different way of making meaning of performance, in other words, a different story or narrative about performance.

**Table 3.14** PCA with the performers' 23 statements

Performers' statements regarding their last highly enjoyable performance	Components				
	People oriented	Source oriented	Self oriented	Fitness focussed	Magical moment
You felt connected with the audience or co-performers	.711				
The audience thoroughly enjoyed your performance	.626				
Playing with co-performers you felt comfortable with	.620				
You felt a special connection with audience	.530				
You felt comfortable with the pieces, the public or the situation	.488				
You had a feeling of contributing					
You felt the music came to you from "elsewhere"		.677			
Feeling of transcendence		.675			
Your personality traits		.505			
You felt as becoming a channel through which the music just flowed		.480			
You felt the music flowed freely from deep within you		.404			
Unknown reasons					
You felt proud of your performance			.665		
You felt confident and powerful			.596		
It happened due to a. a good preparation			.536		
You performed up to your standards			.520		
Feeling physically fit				.771	
Being in a good mood				.745	
You felt relaxed and focused					
You felt as if this was a "perfect" moment					.636
You felt that something great was just happening					.630
You performed better than expected					.570
Something special that just happened					

Rotated Component Matrix. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; Extraction a Rotation converged in seven iterations.

Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The first component, which explained 15 per cent of the variance, was 'people-oriented': it associated the joy of the experience with the presence of other people, audience or co-performers, and to the connection the performer established with others. This self-transcendent narrative highlighted the shared experience of joy elicited by the performance.

Component 2 was ‘source-oriented’, and centred on something that lay beyond the performers’ sole agency and control. The ‘music’ was not viewed as something the performer did, but as something that appeared to have life in and of itself. Performers related the joy of the experience to this transcendent source of music, and to something they had somehow ‘received’ (i.e. their personality). Performers who scored high in this component seemed to believe in, value and trust this transcendent factor that appeared to be part of the highly enjoyable performance (this component explained 8 per cent of the variance).

The third component was ‘self-oriented’, and expressed a self-centred narrative in which positive emotions were attributed to one’s own achievement, to feeling confident and well prepared, and proud of performing up to one’s own standards. The self-oriented narrative explained 6 per cent of the variable. Component 4, ‘fitness focused’ centred on the performer’s well-being, and appeared to explain the experience as a consequence of being fit (it also explained 6 per cent of the variance), while component 5, ‘magical oriented’, centred on the perfect and exceptional character of the experience (and again explained 6 per cent of the variance).

### **3.3.5.7 Investigating the impact of narratives on the performers’ assessment of their performance experiences during the previous year.**

I hypothesised that the performers’ narratives were quite stable and that they would impact on the way performers assessed their performances during the previous year as being either highly enjoyable, moderately enjoyable or stressful experiences. I tested this hypothesis by running a Multinomial Logistic Regression with the five narratives as predictors, using the scores of each performer on each narrative from the PCA, and the performers’ assessment of their performances (during the previous year) as the dependent variable. I used the category ‘moderately enjoyable’ as a reference, against which the likelihood of reporting highly enjoyable or stressful performances was compared.

**Table 3.15** Multinomial logistic regression with the assessment of the performance experience during the previous year as the dependent variable and the five narratives identified through PCA as predictors

	B (SE)	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<i>Stressful versus moderately enjoyable performance experiences</i>				
Intercept	-1.142 (0.14)**			
People-oriented	-.466 (0.12)**	.63	.49	.80
Source-oriented	-.052 (0.32)	.95	.73	1.23
Self-oriented	-.026 (0.12)	.97	.77	1.23
Fitness-oriented	-.251 (0.13)	.78	.61	1.00
Magical moment	.171 (0.13)	1.19	.92	1.53
<i>Highly enjoyable versus moderately enjoyable performance experiences</i>				
Intercept	-.029 (0.09)			
People-oriented	.501(0.10)**	1.65	1.35	2.01
Source-oriented	.294 (0.09)*	1.34	1.12	1.61
Self-oriented	.297 (0.09)*	1.35	1.12	1.62
Fitness-oriented	-.06 (0.09)	.94	.79	1.13
Magical moment	.311(0.09)**	1.36	1.14	1.64

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.001 level.

Note: Pseudo R-Square = .15 (Cox and Snell), .17 (Nagelkerke). Model (10)  $\chi^2$  97.19  $p < .001$

The regression model significantly predicted the performers' assessment of their performance experiences ( $\chi^2$  (6) = 97.19  $p < .001$ ). Results showed that scoring high in the 'people-oriented', 'source-oriented', 'self-oriented' and 'magical moment' narratives predicted a higher frequency of highly enjoyable performance experiences than scoring low in these narratives (see Table 3.15). These findings suggest that joy in performance was linked to the extent to which performers had narratives that conferred meaning and purpose on their performances. On the other hand, scoring high in the 'fitness-focused' narrative predicted only a lower frequency of stressful performances. Notably, this narrative was the only one that did not highlight any purpose or goal in performance, and the only one to not predict joy in performance.

Nonetheless, the regression suggested that the people-oriented narrative was superior to the other narratives identified in this study, because it significantly predicted both the highest frequency of highly enjoyable and the lowest frequency of stressful performance experiences (see Table 3.15). It is noteworthy that positive self-oriented narratives were a weaker predictor of highly enjoyable performances (compared to people-oriented

narratives), and did not appear to reduce the frequency of stressful performance experiences.

These results are particularly relevant to understanding the performance experience (and in particular, MPA) and designing interventions, because they suggest that interventions that promote healthy people-oriented approaches to performance are likely to be more efficient in increasing joy and reducing anxiety than interventions that promote healthy but self-centred views on performance (i.e. a self-oriented or fitness-focused approach to performance).

### **3.3.5.8 Comparing the narratives of performers with different background variables**

Based on the premise that narratives are shaped by socio-cultural groups (see Chapter 2), I hypothesised that different categories of performers (i.e. students, amateurs and professionals, or classical and non-classical) would differ in their performance-related narratives. I was therefore interested in investigating whether the differences found between the performance experiences of students, amateurs and professionals, and classical and non-classical performers (see Table 3.11) could be mediated by differences in narratives.

People who share in an activity appear to share more than the activity itself; they are likely to be nourished by the same discourse about what they do. Moreover, while discourses tend to be invisible to the group, they communicate characteristic sets of beliefs and values that strongly impact on the ways in which people appraise situations and, consequently, on the ways in which those people feel about situations. I hypothesised that differences in performance experiences between groups could partly result from differences in discourses. For instance, the classical music milieu seems to have characteristic discourses about music that are quite different from those of other groups (Cook, 2000; Creech et al., 2008; Green, 2002; Kingsbury, 1998; Woody & McPherson, 2010). In order to investigate whether classical and non-classical performers differed in terms of the narratives identified in this study, a one-way ANOVA was run. The test showed a statistically significant difference between the groups in regard to the people-oriented ( $F(24,58) = 26.11$   $p < .001$ ) and self-oriented



narratives ( $F(6,60) = 6.69 p <.05$ ): classical performers were less people-oriented (non-classical  $M = .32 SD = .92$ ; classical  $M = -.12, SD .99$ ) and more self-oriented than their counterparts (non-classical  $M = -.16, SD = 1.01$ ; classical  $M = .07, SD = .98$ ).

Music institutions also appear to have characteristic narratives on music making (Jørgensen, 2000; Kingsbury, 1988; Persson, 1996a, 1996b; Sloboda, 1999), which suggests that students, amateurs and professionals might differ in terms of their performance-related narratives. An ANOVA showed statistically significant differences between the three groups in the people-oriented ( $F(19, 603) = 9.92 p <.001$ ), source-oriented ( $F(10, 612) = 5.12 p < 0.5$ ), fitness-focused ( $F(27, 595) = 13.69 p <.001$ ) and magical-moment narratives ( $F(10, 612) = 5.37 p <.05$ ). (see Figures 3.6 – 3.9).

Figures 3.6 and 3.7 show that students scored much lower than professional performers in the source-oriented and fitness-focused narratives. Notably, the groups did not differ in regard to the self-oriented narrative.

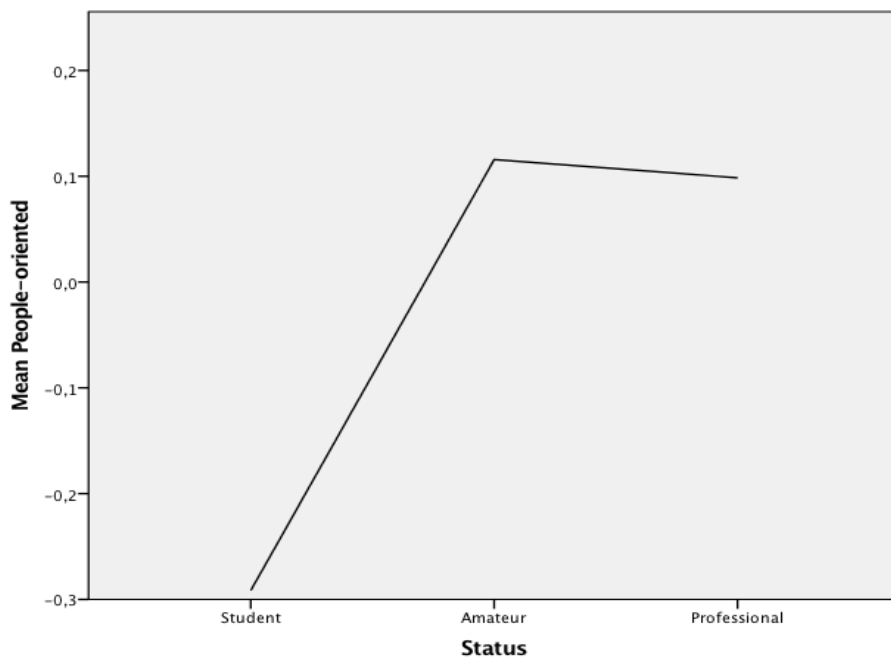
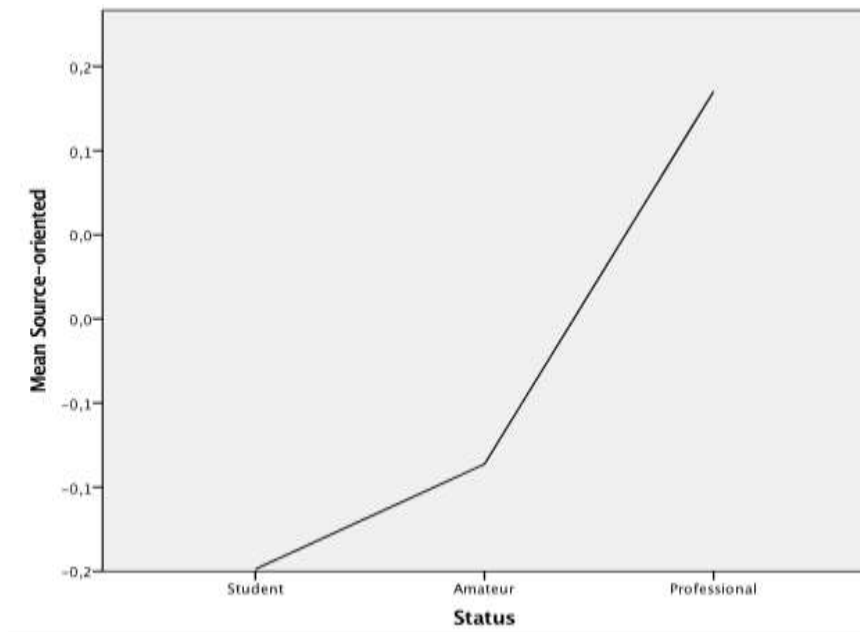
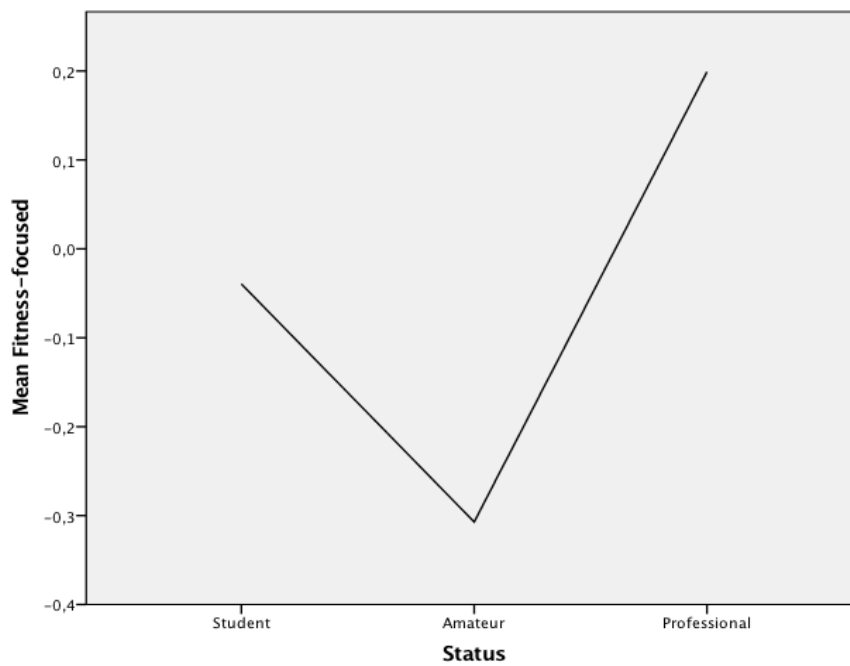


Figure 3.6 Students, amateurs and professional performers' scores in the people-oriented narrative



*Figure 3.7* Students, amateurs and professional performers' scores in the source-oriented narrative



*Figure 3.8* Students, amateurs and professional performers' scores in the fitness-focused narrative

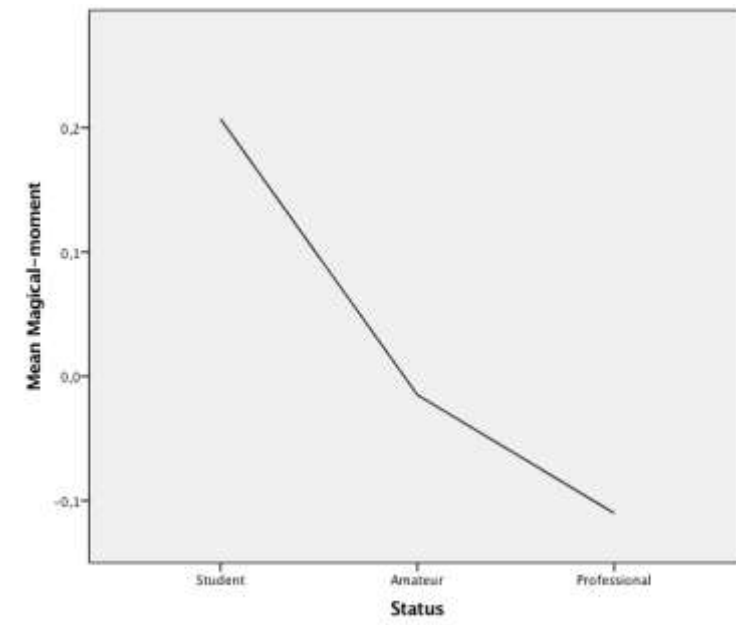


Figure 3.9 Students, amateurs and professional performers' scores in the magical-moment narrative

Musicians performing mainly as soloists, in ensembles or in big groups differed in terms of the people-oriented  $F(10, 56) = 5.76 p < .05$  and the source-oriented narratives  $F(15, 588) = 7.86 p < .001$ : soloists scored the lowest and ensemble players the highest in 'people-oriented', while soloists scored the highest and orchestra players the lowest in 'source-oriented'. However, I only view as relevant the differences found in source-oriented narratives, because the people-oriented narrative included statements that were not applicable to soloists (i.e. you felt connected with co-performers) and which would lower and bias the score of soloists on this variable.

In summary, the differences found between the narratives of the different groups (classical and non-classical; students, amateurs and professionals; and soloists, ensemble and orchestra performers) suggest that these differences may be in part responsible for the different qualities of the performance experiences they reported. For instance, the lower frequency of highly enjoyable performances reported by classical performers (compared to non-classical ones) could be due to their narratives being less self-transcendent.

After focusing separately on the impact of background variables and narratives on performance experiences, both types of variables were put together as predictors in the

regression, in order to investigate the impact each individual variable had on the performance experience.

**Table 3.16** *Multinomial logistic regression with the assessment of the performance experience during the previous year as the dependent variable, and the five narratives identified through PCA plus the performers' background variables as predictors.*

	B (SE)	Odds ratio	95% Confidence Interval for	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
<i>Stressful versus Moderately enjoyable performance experiences</i>				
Intercept	-1.44 (0.62)*			
People-oriented	-.41 (0.13)*	.67	.51	.87
Source-oriented	-.14 (0.14)	.87	.66	1.16
Self-oriented	-.14 (0.13)	.87	.67	1.13
Fitness-focused	-.24 (0.13)	.78	.60	1.02
Magical moment	.18 (0.14)	1.19	.91	1.57
Age	-.01 (0.15)	.99	.96	1.02
Students	.20 (0.37)	1.22	.58	2.54
Amateurs	-.53 (0.38)	.59	.28	1.24
Professionals	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Soloists	.89 (0.39)*	2.43	1.13	5.26
Performing in ensembles	1.00 (0.39)*	2.73	1.28	5.83
Performing in large-groups	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Non-classical	-.01 (0.34)	.99	.50	1.95
Classical	0 <sup>b</sup>			
<i>Highly Enjoyable versus Moderately enjoyable performance experiences</i>				
Intercept	-.11 (0.40)			
People-oriented	.39 (0.11)**	1.48	1.20	1.83
Source-oriented	.29 (0.10)*	1.34	1.10	1.63
Self-oriented	.29 (0.10)*	1.34	1.11	1.63
Fitness-focused	-.06 (0.10)	.94	.78	1.14
Magical Moment	.35 (0.10)**	1.42	1.17	1.73
Age	.01 (0.01)	1.01	.99	1.02
Students	-.32 (0.29)	.72	.41	1.28
Amateurs	-.18 (0.25)	.83	.51	1.35
Professionals	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Soloists	-.34 (0.26)	.71	.43	1.19
Performing in ensembles	-.02 (0.24)	.98	.61	1.56
Performing in large-groups	0 <sup>b</sup>			
Non-classical	.54 (0.23)*	1.72	1.09	2.71
Classical	0 <sup>b</sup>			

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.001 level.

Note: Pseudo R-Square = .20 (Cox and Snell), .22 (Nagelkerke). Model 22)  $\chi^2$  124.84  $p < .001$

Table 3.16 shows that two variables predicted the likelihood of having stressful rather than moderately enjoyable performance experiences. First, the people-oriented narrative lowered the likelihood of stressful experiences. Second, the role, namely performing as a soloist or in an ensemble rather than in a large group, increased the likelihood of stressful experiences. Moreover, five variables significantly increased the likelihood of having highly enjoyable rather than moderately enjoyable performance experiences, namely the people-oriented, source-oriented, self-oriented and magical-moment narratives, and musical genre (i.e. being a non-classical rather than a classical performer). These results suggest that narratives are strong predictors of performance

experiences, yet they are not the only ones. For instance, whether an individual performs as a soloist, in ensembles or large groups seems to make a difference to the performers' level of stress independently of their narratives (at least of the narratives investigated here). Multiple factors may contribute to these results, including differences in the levels of exposure or in frequency of performing. For example, soloists perform significantly less frequently than musicians playing in ensembles or large groups ( $F(2, 591) = 6.43$   $p < .05$ ; Soloists:  $M = 16.56$ ,  $SD = 27.48$ ; Ensemble performers:  $M = 25.67$ ,  $SD = 31.64$ ; Large group performers:  $M = 27.94$ ,  $SD = 35.63$ ). There may also be multiple reasons why musical genre predicts the quality of the performance experience over and above the other factors investigated.

The model of the regression explained 20 per cent of the variance in performance experiences, which suggests that there are factors that impact on the experience that were not included in this study. It is important to keep in mind that the study investigated only a limited number of background and musical variables, and a limited number of narratives. For instance, it is reasonable to hypothesise that there may be other kinds of narratives that were not explored in this study, but that may also shape the performance experience (i.e. the extent to which enjoyment is viewed as a goal of performance).

In conclusion, from all the variables initially included in this study (age, gender, status role and musical genre), only the fact of belonging to the non-classical music genre, and of scoring high in the people-oriented, source-oriented, self-oriented and magical-moment narratives, predicted a higher frequency of enjoyable performance experiences. On the other hand, only the people-oriented narrative and playing in a large group, rather than in ensembles or as a soloist, predicted a lower frequency of stressful experiences.

### **3.3.6 The most recent non-enjoyable performance**

The main goal of this study was to better understand highly enjoyable performance experiences. However, non-enjoyable performances were included in the study in order to compare both experiences in terms of emotions, narratives and background variables.

For this purpose, performers were asked to bring to mind their most recent non-enjoyable performance. In this case, 43% of performers ( $N = 247$ ) referred to a performance in which they were performing as soloists, 36% ( $N = 208$ ) in ensembles and 20% ( $N = 115$ ) in large groups or orchestras. These results were consistent with the fact that many performers (55 per cent) did not enjoy performing as soloists (they reported that this was the setting they preferred the least). Fortunately, most performers reported having this kind of experience seldom (80%;  $N = 458$ ), although 17% ( $N = 99$ ) reported having this experience often, and 3% ( $N = 20$ ) most of the time.

### **3.3.6.1 Emotions reported during the non-enjoyable performance**

The non-enjoyable experience was marked by high levels of worry and fear, and also by a lack of motivation and an absence of positive emotions. Less than 1% of performers ( $N = 5$ ) reported elation; 2% ( $N = 15$ ) joy; 3% ( $N = 21$ ) positive arousal and 4% ( $N = 27$ ) confidence. By contrast, as many as 62% ( $N = 389$ ) reported feeling worried; 37% ( $N = 232$ ) feeling fearful and 32% ( $N = 201$ ) unmotivated. The high levels of worry and fear reported were expected, because negative performance experiences are often related to performance anxiety. But surprisingly, almost one third of performers reported feeling unmotivated during that performance, which suggests that anxiety is not the only problem performers encounter in performance.

### **3.3.6.2 Quality of the last non-enjoyable performance**

Performers were asked to evaluate their last non-enjoyable performance as either anxiety-provoking, unpleasant or routine (in the context of non-enjoyable experiences, I interpreted 'routine' as being boring or without any particular interest). These categories were chosen in order to explore whether there were other negative emotions besides anxiety that could characterise the experience (i.e. frustration or feeling unmotivated). Surprisingly, less than half of the performers assessed that experience as anxiety-provoking (41%;  $N = 218$ ), while 39% ( $N = 206$ ) categorised it as unpleasant and as many as 21% ( $N = 110$ ) as routine.

Chi-squares were run in order to investigate whether the type of assessment the performers made of the experience was associated with their background variables. Table 3.17 shows the associations that were found to be statistically significant. For instance, the performance was evaluated as anxiety provoking by more women than men, more students than professionals, and more soloists than non-soloists. On the other hand, around a quarter of professional performers, and one third of performers playing in large groups evaluated their non-enjoyable performance as routine. These results suggest that performers who are both professional performers and who perform in big groups or orchestras may encounter motivation issues in performance.

**Table 3.17** Associations between performers' assessments of their last non-enjoyable performance as 'anxiety provoking', 'unpleasant' or 'routine' and their background and musical variables.

	Anxiety provoking	Unpleasant	Routine	chi- square
Men	29.7%	44.4%	25.9%	27.43**
Women	51.7%	32.7%	15.6%	
Performing as soloist	49.3%	35.7%	15.0%	20.73**
Performing in ensembles	33.7%	44.7%	21.6%	
Performing in large groups	36.4%	31.8%	31.8%	
Student	49.3%	37.7%	13.0%	10.75*
Amateur	40.3%	39.6%	20.1%	
Professional	36.1%	38.6%	25.3%	

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.001 level.

### 3.3.6.3 Exploring the performers' statements

Performers were presented with a set of statements that attributed the negative quality of their experience to different factors. They were asked to select the statements that best described or explained their experience. Table 3.18 presents the statements that performers selected, ordered from the most frequently to the least frequently selected.

**Table 3.18** *Statements that performers selected in order to describe and explain their last non-enjoyable performance*

		<i>N</i>
You felt your performance was not up to your standards	58.1%	363
You felt anxious and tense	51.0%	319
You felt unconnected with the audience or co-performers	40.5%	253
You felt that the fact of you being there playing was meaningless	29.8%	186
You felt your self-esteem was threatened	29.1%	182
You felt that anything terrible could happen	26.4%	165
You felt the audience was uninterested or judgmental	21.1%	132
<i>You think it happened due to...</i>		
Not feeling comfortable with or not liking the pieces, the public or the situation	41.1%	257
A lack of preparation	35.2%	218
Playing with co-performers you did not feel comfortable with	22.7%	142
Your personality traits	21.8%	136
Feeling physically unfit	17.8%	111
Unknown reasons	13.6%	85

The non-enjoyable performance was characterised by the performers' perception of not performing up to their standards. In line with the results discussed above, it is noteworthy that only around half of the performers selected the statement 'you felt anxious and tense'. Many performers appear to not have enjoyed this performance because of a lack of connection with audience or co-performers and because of finding the performance meaningless. This suggests that, just as meaning and connection appear to promote joy, so a lack of connection and meaning may be enough for a performance to be assessed as non-enjoyable. This also suggests that aiming to help performers to reduce anxiety is not enough, because even without anxiety performers may assess their performances as non-enjoyable experiences.

In order to investigate how the performers' statements associated with a consistent way of experiencing performance (how cognition and emotion associate), chi-squares analyses were run between each statement and the performers' evaluation of the performance experience during the previous year. This analysis showed that some statements were significantly associated with a high frequency of stressful experiences, which suggested that these statements expressed their usual way of thinking about performances, which in turn elicited anxiety. Some of the statements associated with



frequent stressful experiences showed ‘catastrophising’ and irrational beliefs (Steptoe, 1989): for example, ‘your self-esteem was threatened’ ( $\chi^2 (2) = 27.768, p < .001$ ), ‘you felt that anything terrible could happen’ ( $\chi^2 (2) = 32.380, p < .001$ ), or negative self-beliefs, i.e. ‘your personality traits’ ( $\chi^2 (2) = 18.199, p < .001$ ). A high frequency of stressful experiences was also associated with the statement: ‘you felt anxious and tense’ ( $\chi^2 (2) = 26.332, p < .001$ ). This result may be due to temperamental factors, (i.e. a predisposition towards greater anxiety), the consequence of irrational or unhealthy beliefs, or the interplay between temperament and unhelpful cognitions.

### **3.3.6.4 Looking for underlying narratives**

In order to see whether statements clustered together in a sensible way (i.e. expressing different ways of making meaning of performance) and thus whether underlying narratives could be inferred from these statements, a PCA was run with all of them (13). As my goal was descriptive, I decided I could do the PCA despite the fact that all my variables were dichotomous (Jolliffe, 2002). I applied an orthogonal rotation (varimax). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis,  $KMO = .652$ , and  $KMO$  for all individual items were above  $.74$ , which is above the acceptable limit of  $.5$  (Field, 2009). Bartlett’s test of sphericity ( $\chi^2 (78) = 718.497, p < .001$ ) indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for a PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Four components had eigenvalues over Kaiser’s criterion of 1 and, in combination, explained 53 per cent of the variance; however, the scree plot clearly showed an inflexion after the second component. Two components were retained in the final analysis (see Table 3.19).

**Table 3.19** *Principal component analysis with the performers' 13 statements about their last non-enjoyable performance*

<i>Performers' statements regarding their last Non-enjoyable performance</i>	<i>Component</i>	
	<i>Self-oriented negative narrative</i>	<i>Other-oriented negative narrative</i>
You felt anxious and tense	<b>.708</b>	-.047
Your performance was not up to your standards	<b>.645</b>	-.025
You felt that anything terrible could happen	<b>.541</b>	-.017
You felt that your self-esteem was threatened	<b>.534</b>	.276
This was due to your personality traits	<b>.493</b>	.053
This happened due to a lack of preparation	<b>.465</b>	.037
This happened because you felt physically unfit	.370	-.044
This happened because of unknown reasons	.253	-.216
You felt unconnected with the audience or co-performers	-.050	<b>.650</b>
You felt that the fact of you being there playing was meaningless	-.024	<b>.626</b>
You felt the audience was uninterested or judgmental	.194	<b>.571</b>
You did not feel comfortable with or did not like the pieces, the public or the situation	.119	<b>.516</b>
You played with co-performers you did not feel comfortable with	-.135	<b>.451</b>

*Note.* Totated Table Matrix. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations. Values higher than .4 are in bold

I interpreted the two components as being two kinds of narratives, one being negative and self-oriented (narrowly centred on the self), and the other being negative but other-oriented (extending beyond self).

Would these two types of narratives predict the overall assessment of the performance experiences that performers reported? In order to answer this question, a Multinomial Logistic Regression was run with the negative self-oriented and the negative other-oriented narratives as predictors and the assessment of the performance experience during the previous year as the dependent variable. The results showed that, while the 'negative, other-oriented' narrative did not predict the assessment of the performers' experience, the 'negative, self-oriented' narrative significantly predicted both a high frequency of stressful and a low frequency of highly enjoyable performances (see Table 3.20).

**Table 3.20** *Multinomial logistic regression with the assessment of the performance experience during the previous year as the dependent*

<i>Stressful versus Moderately enjoyable performances</i>				
	B	Odds ratio	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Intercept	-1.16 (0.14)**			
Negative, self-oriented	.57 (0.13)**	1.76	1.37	2.27
Negative, other-oriented	.05 (0.12)	1.05	0.82	1.34
<i>Highly Enjoyable versus Moderately enjoyable performances</i>				
Intercept	.03 (0.09)			
Negative, self-oriented	-.29 (0.09)*	0.75	0.62	0.90
Negative, other-oriented	.05 (0.09)	1.05	0.88	1.25

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.001 level.

b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

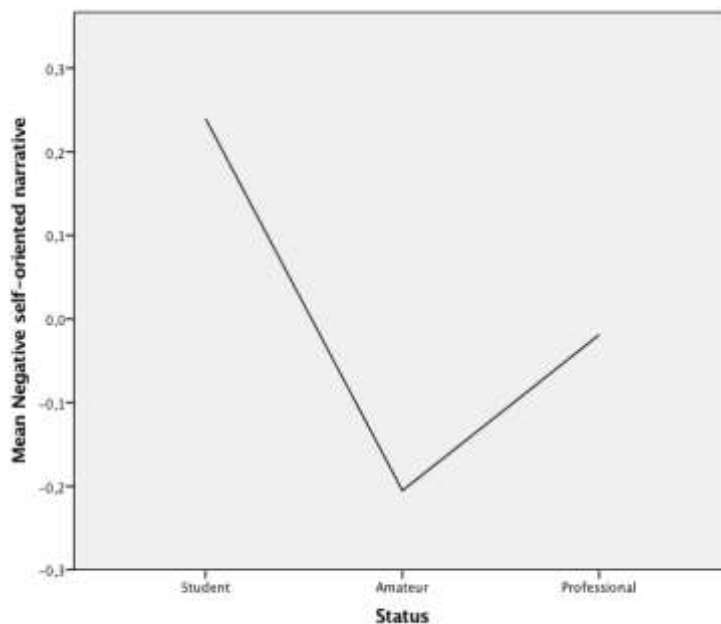
Note: Pseudo R-Square = .08 (Cox and Snell), .09 (Nagelkerke). Model (4)  $\chi^2$  47.80  $p < .001$

This analysis suggests that the impact of negative self-centred narratives is more detrimental to performance experiences than the impact of narratives that are negative but other-oriented. Moreover, I infer that a broad perspective on performance, one that integrates its social dimension, may add meaning to the experience and may prevent performers from being caught in a narrow, destructive ego-centred loop such as the one that leads to MPA. Even when a performance goes wrong, thinking in terms of interaction and connection, as opposed to self-centredness, may free performers from the self-esteem-threatening thoughts that would likely negatively impact on their upcoming performances.

Differences in negative self- and other-oriented narratives were investigated in regard to the performers' background variables (namely gender, status, role and musical genre) through one-way ANOVAs, with the two narratives as the dependent variables, and background variables as the independent variables. Analyses showed that men and women differed in the negative self-oriented narrative, with women scoring significantly higher than men on this variable (women:  $M = .14$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ; men:  $M = .14$ ,  $SD = .97$ ;  $\chi^2(1) = 12.00$ ,  $p = .001$ ). However, no differences were found between men and women regarding the orientation of positive narratives (i.e. being people- or

self-oriented). The differences in their negative narratives might be due to women's tendency to experience more anxiety than men, with anxiety leading to a narrowing of one's focus of attention (more self-oriented), thus becoming more self-centred (Fredrickson, 2005). But they might also result from women reporting their anxious experiences more easily than men; in other words, to the way in which they report emotions rather than to actual differences in their emotional experiences (Robinson & Clore, 2002).

Students, amateurs and professionals only differed in the negative self-oriented narrative, with students scoring significantly higher than their counterparts ( $\chi^2(2) = 16.75, p < .001$ ) (see Figure 3.10). No differences were found between the narratives of soloists and non-soloists. However, classical and non-classical performers significantly differed in both narratives; classical performers scored significantly higher in the negative self-oriented (classical:  $M = .11, SD = .99$ ; non-classical:  $M = -.29, SD = .93$ ;  $\chi^2(1) = 21.46, p < .001$ ) and lower in the negative other-oriented narrative (classical:  $M = -.9, SD = .99$ ; non-classical  $M = .22, SD = .98$ ;  $\chi^2(1) = 13.06, p < .001$ ) than non-classical performers.



*Figure 3.10* Differences in the means of the negative self-oriented narratives of students, amateurs and professional performers

In the next chapter, I summarise and further discuss the results of this survey.

## **Chapter 4. Summary and Discussion of the Results of the Exploratory Study**

### **4.1 The performers' emotions and background**

The Exploratory Study investigated highly enjoyable performance experiences, both in their own right and in comparison to performances that were assessed as being less rewarding. Specifically, it explored the frequency with which a large population of performers evaluated their performances as being either highly enjoyable, only moderately enjoyable, emotionally neutral, or stressful. Then it investigated how performers described a highly joyful and a non-enjoyable performance experience, and the factors associated with or predicting such experiences, looking in particular at the association of narratives with experiences of music performance.

The research provided data on the frequency of highly enjoyable and moderately enjoyable performances among a sample population of musicians. It showed that while many performers reported to fully enjoy their performances, performance was not an optimal experience for more than half of the respondents (42 per cent of performers assessed their performances as highly enjoyable; 40 per cent as moderately enjoyable; 15 per cent as stressful, and 3 per cent as emotionally neutral). The percentage of performers who evaluated their performance as stressful was roughly the same as the percentage of performers who, according to some studies (Steptoe & Fidler, 1987), suffer from MPA. However, other studies have found that the prevalence of MPA might be much higher among musicians (see i.e. Kenny, Davis & Oates, 2004).

After describing their last 'highly enjoyable' performance, performers were asked about the frequency with which they had these kinds of experiences. To this question, 28 per cent reported having it 'most of the time', 53 per cent said 'sometimes' and 18 per cent said 'seldom'. This latter figure corresponds to the percentage of performers who assessed their performances as 'stressful' and 'emotionally neutral' during the previous year.

Previous studies of MPA found that performance anxiety was linked to factors such as the performer's personality, gender, the situation (whether they performed as soloists or with other musicians), their status, and their musical genre (Cox & Kenardy, 1993; Creech et al., 2008; Hamann, 1982; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Wilson, 1997). This survey aimed to find out whether such factors effected the more positive performance experiences as well, and, most importantly, whether additional factors, in particular the way performers made meaning of performance (their narratives), had a role in the shaping of their experiences.

Some existing research on MPA also suggests that performance experiences are partly shaped by the performers' personality (Cox & Kenardy, 1993; Osborne & Kenny, 2008). The findings of the Exploratory Study similarly maintain that temperamental factors underlie negative as well as positive emotions in performance. In fact, the findings showed that the frequency with which performers reported an emotion (i.e. joy or anxiety) in performance, practice and daily life correlated. This cross-situational consistency suggests that the performers' emotions were partly determined by personal traits (McCrae & Costa, 1999). However, the correlations were low, which suggests that performance experience is not primarily determined by a performer's personal characteristics.

Previous research found higher levels of MPA among classical performers, soloists, students and women than among their counterparts (non-classical performers, group players, professionals and men (i.e. Abel & Larkin, 1990; Craske & Craig, 1984; Creech et al., 2008; Hamann, 1982; LeBlanc, Jin, Obert, & Siivola, 1997). This study also found an association between these variables and assessing performance as 'stressful' during the previous year. However, further analyses (regressions) suggested that some of these associations could be due to confounding variables. For instance, in this study, only the fact of performing mainly as a soloist increased the likelihood of performers assessing their performances as 'stressful'. Accordingly, the significant association found between 'stressful' performances and being a student could be due to the fact that students often perform as soloists.

Interestingly, while gender was not a significant predictor of the frequency of 'stressful' performances, it became significant when the outcome variable investigated was the

frequency at which performers reported worry and fear in performance. This suggests that when the emotions of men and women are investigated through self-reports, the results should be interpreted cautiously since self-reports might be biased due to gender stereotype (Robinson & Clore, 2002). It appears that certain types of questions (i.e. asking about levels of worry and fear) might elicit these stereotypes more strongly than other kinds of questions (i.e. how they categorise their performance experience).

With regard to positive performance experiences, only a performer's 'musical genre' appeared to predict their frequency: being a 'non-classical' performer increased the likelihood of performers assessing performances as 'highly enjoyable' experiences. These findings are striking, and later in this chapter (see section 4.6) I will argue that the differences found between classical and non-classical performers in regard to 'joy' might be due to each group having a characteristic way of thinking about performance that permeates its practices; in other words, I will argue that the differences found in performance experience are mediated by the narratives that are prevalent within the socio-cultural groups (in this case, their musical genre culture).

## **4.2 Understanding the performers' narratives**

In addition to investigating the association between background variables and performance-related emotions, the survey sought to provide a deeper understanding of how performers described and explained 'highly enjoyable' and 'non-enjoyable' performances. I was primarily interested in the highly enjoyable performance experiences because this kind of experience is intrinsically rewarding, may promote best functioning (Friedrickson, 2001) and, therefore, may positively impact on the performers' personal well-being. Moreover, this kind of performance experience is rarely investigated, whilst research on negative performance experiences abounds. Accordingly, several questions in the survey focused on investigating the last performance that performers experienced in such a way. The performers' reports showed that 'highly enjoyable' performance was characterised by positive emotions such as joy' (84%), 'positive arousal' (77%), 'confidence' (70%) and 'elation' (55%), but that negative emotions could be part of the experience as well (i.e. 20 per cent of performers reported worry and 8 per cent fear). Moreover, it was characterised by social

meaning – many performers attributed their joy to the presence of other people: to feeling connected with audience and co-performers (73%), to the audience enjoying their performance (66%), and to feelings of contribution (61%).

However, not all performers related their joy to the audience. Performers differed in the statements they chose to describe and explain their highly enjoyable performance, which suggests that they conferred different meanings on their performances. The study was based on the theory that individuals make meaning of situations through stories they tell themselves about their reality; these stories, or narratives, provide coherence and stability to their lives, and create a subjective version of reality to which they respond emotionally (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Kahneman, 2005, 2010; Maturana, 1987; McAdams, 2001). Therefore, I hypothesised the following:

- First: that the statements performers chose to explain or describe their last highly enjoyable performance would reflect their typical narratives about performance (that is, the stories they consistently tell themselves in order to make meaning of performance).
- Second: That the performers' consistent narratives would shape the emotions they usually feel in performance.
- Third: that joy in performance is not primarily dependent on positive self-centred narratives that celebrate achievement, but rather, on narratives that make meaning of performance in terms of self-transcendence (i.e. narratives that value the audience and cultivate the purpose of performing for the audience). The latter would promote better performance experiences (i.e. characterised by more joy or less anxiety) than narratives that are narrowly self-centred.

In order to investigate the habitual quality of the performers' performance experiences, they were asked to evaluate their performances during the previous year as being 'highly enjoyable', 'moderately enjoyable', emotionally 'neutral' or 'stressful'. This assessment was interpreted as indicative of their performance experiences in general up to that point.

The findings of this study were consistent with the three hypotheses mentioned above:



- First, the PCA showed that the performers' choice of statements was not random but coherent, and that statements clustered together in a logical way: each component identified reflected a particular way of making meaning of performance. In other words, the PCA confirmed that performers had coherent narratives about performance.
- Second, chi-squares found that the statements performers chose to describe and explain their last highly enjoyable performance were associated with the assessment they habitually made regarding the quality of their performance experiences (namely, 'highly enjoyable', 'moderately enjoyable' or 'stressful'). These associations showed that the way in which the performers thought about performance was stable, and had an impact on the emotions they usually felt in performance.
- Third, the multi nominal regression (MLR) investigating the impact of positive narratives on performance experiences showed that viewing performance as a 'people-oriented' activity predicted more 'highly joyful' and less 'stressful' performances than viewing it as an exclusively self-centred activity.
- Fourth, the MLR investigating the impact of negative narratives on performance experiences showed that the 'negative-self-oriented', but not the 'negative-people-oriented' narrative, predicted a higher frequency of stressful performances. This showed that 'people-oriented' narratives might promote more positive performance experiences than self-centred narratives.

These findings are consistent with both the theories of emotion, which state that emotions are not elicited by situations *per se* but by the meaning individuals confer on such situations (Frijda, 1988; Lazarus, 1966; Ortony et al., 1990; Scherer, 2005), and the theories that claim that individuals make meaning of their reality (they explain their reality to themselves) through coherent and consistent narratives, and that they respond emotionally to these narratives (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Kahneman, 2005, 2010; Maturana & Varela, 1987; McAdams, 2001).

The study showed that four out of the five narratives identified (namely: 'people-oriented', 'source-oriented', 'self-oriented' and 'magical-moment-oriented') predicted the likelihood of reporting highly enjoyable performances. In other words, the higher a

performer scored in any of these four narratives, the higher the likelihood that he or she would report performance as being highly enjoyable. These results suggested that the greater the meaning a performer conferred on performances – independent of that meaning being self-transcendent or not – the higher the odds were that he or she would enjoy performance. This finding may be explained by Fredrickson's findings, which suggest that the relation between positive meaning and positive emotions is reciprocal: positive meaning triggers positive emotions, and positive emotions (because they broaden thinking) increase the likelihood of finding positive meaning in subsequent events (Fredrickson, 2000; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

Interestingly, all the narratives that predict joy appear to express an underlying intention, an implicit reason that moves the performer to perform: the intention to connect and contribute, to transcend self, to prove one's competence or to have access to some magical moments. On the other hand, the 'fitness-focused' narrative – a narrative that, while positive (it appeared to take for granted that a performance should go well unless the performer did not feel fit), does not seem to add any meaning or purpose to performance – predicted only a lower frequency of stressful performances, but did not predict joy.

It appears that, in order to enjoy performance, performers must be moved by approach motives (Elliot, 2006) or even by a sense of purpose (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009), and that they must find meaning in such activity. This is congruous with findings that show that meaning is key to well-being and is associated with life satisfaction and happiness, and, by contrast, a lack of meaning seems to lead people to feel depressed and disengaged (i.e. De Muijnck, 2013; Frankl, 1959; Reker, Edward, Peacock & Wong, 1987; Seligman, 2011; Steger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009; Wong, 1998). However, while meaning seems to be crucial to enjoy performance, the performers surveyed conferred different meanings on their last highly enjoyable performance. They attributed the joy of their experience to the attainment of a variety of goals, which suggests that they have different beliefs about what performance is for, different reasons to perform and different priorities, all of which were manifested in the criteria they used for assessing the performance as being highly enjoyable. These different meanings were expressed in the five narratives identified through PCA. As mentioned above, all these narratives appeared to be healthy, as all predicted a better quality of performance experience

(increasing joy or reducing anxiety), yet not all appeared to do so to the same extent. In the next section, I will discuss these narrative-related findings in more depth, link these findings to previous studies and theories of emotion, and seek to explain the reason why four of the narratives identified may elicit joy in performance, yet not to the same degree.

### **4.3 Understanding performers' narratives as an expression of hierarchies of values, goals and needs**

The performers' narratives arguably express the meanings they attribute to performance. This includes their beliefs about what performance is for, as well as the standards or criteria against which they appraise their performance – that is, the needs, values and goals that occupy the highest hierarchical positions when they think about performance (see Emmons, 1986; Ortony et al., 1990; Schwartz, 2006). For instance, some performers appear to value and seek connectedness in performance, while others prioritise personal achievement. It is, however, important to keep in mind that simultaneous and competing needs, values and goals may be at work during performance. Hence, while scoring high in a particular narrative may provide information about a performers' main motives and reasons to perform – these motives result from the negotiation of simultaneous values and goals – this does not mean that other needs, values and goals are absent from the performer's concerns, but that, rather, these do not act as the main motivators for the activity (Schwartz, 1996).

Schwartz views values that focus on self-transcendence (combining benevolence and universalism) and values that focus on self-enhancement (combining power and achievement) as difficult to conciliate (Schwartz, 1996). Nonetheless, it appears that the highest level of well-being results from the simultaneous pursuit of both self-transcendence and self-enhancement. Self-transcendence (the breaking down of the distinction between self and non-self, and the integration between individual goals with larger ones) may be viewed as a higher way of functioning, since it encompasses self-centred concerns such as 'self-actualisation' or achievement (Maslow, 1971). Some state that individuals who strive for self-transcendence (and not only for self-centred concerns), are more likely to experience high levels of well-being (Csikszentmihalyi,

1993; Emmons, 2003; Maslow, 1971; Rosso, 2010; Wong, 2014), and, as I will discuss below, the findings of this research are consistent with this statement.

### **4.3.1 A positive self-oriented narrative and increased joy**

Performers who scored high in the positive self-oriented narrative appeared to make sense of performance primarily in terms of competence and achievement. This narrative predicted a high frequency of joyful performance experiences, likely because it promotes a positive view of one's competence, celebrates self-actualisation and satisfies a basic psychological need (Maslow, 1971; Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2013). Focusing the performers' attention on their good preparation and competence, this narrative may nourish the performers' self-efficacy beliefs, that is, their conviction that they can perform successfully (Bandura, 1977). Positive self-efficacy beliefs are particularly helpful for performers, as they are a strong predictor of achievement (a source of joy) and help performers cultivate resilience, a quality that is indispensable to face the difficulties and stressors that are intrinsic to the musical path (Bandura, 1977; McPherson & McCormick, 2006; Ritchie & Willamon, 2012). The positive self-oriented narrative may increase the performers' awareness of, and appreciation for, their own skills, which may help them perceive the skills they possess as matching the skills that performance requires. Perception of such a match facilitates a state of full engagement during performance, which has been associated with joy (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Moreover, the positive self-oriented narrative may cultivate the performers' trust in their good preparation, which may allow them to perform up to their standards and feel confident, powerful and proud of their performance. Without this trust, it may be difficult for such performers to enjoy performance (see Clark, Lisboa & Willamon, 2014).

Despite all this, 'self-oriented' performers seemed more vulnerable to anxiety than 'people-oriented' performers, perhaps because they do not rely on the social support of the audience, which may act as a buffer against anxiety. On the other hand, (as I will now go on to discuss), the 'people-oriented' narrative seems to help performers cope with the challenges of performance and avoid, reduce or even halt the negative loop of anxiety.

### **4.3.2 A positive people-oriented narrative: increased joy and reduced anxiety**

Based on the previous research reviewed above, the link between a positive self-oriented narrative and joy was expected. However, as there is some evidence that self-transcendent strivings might promote more positive emotions than self-centred strivings, the study also investigated this issue. The findings were consistent with such evidence. In fact, it was the ‘people-oriented’ narrative that predicted the highest frequency of ‘highly enjoyable’ performances, and the only narrative that simultaneously predicted a lower frequency of ‘stressful’ performances.

Performers with a ‘people-oriented’ narrative appeared to perceive performance in terms of connection and contribution. They attributed their feelings of joy to the connection they established with the audience and co-performers, and to the fact that the audience thoroughly enjoyed their music. This indicated that they valued highly such connection, as well as the opportunity they had to provide something good for their audience (bringing their audience joy). This narrative appears to be both inspiring, as it provides performers with a valuable cause or mission to strive for in performance, and protective, freeing performers from much of the anxiety elicited by ego-centred concerns, such as those that are typical of performance anxiety.

The superiority of the ‘people-oriented’ narrative in facilitating optimal performance experiences might be understood in the light of the theories of emotions discussed in Chapter 2. The ‘people-oriented’ narrative is likely to be superior to the ‘self-oriented’ narrative because it does not necessarily exclude the concerns of the self but might encompass these concerns, and may simultaneously satisfy the individual’s need for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Ryan, et al., 2013; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). Its superiority is consistent with studies on well-being that show that making meaning of situations in ways that go beyond achievement, and that include self-transcendent concerns, expresses a higher way of functioning and promotes the highest level of well-being and satisfaction (Crescioni & Baumeister, 2013; Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; Emmons, 2003; Maslow, 1971; Rosso et al., 2010; Wong, 2014). It is also consistent with the biological perspective, which holds that life requires that the needs of the individual and the needs of the larger group be

simultaneously considered. If emotions are mechanisms that help individuals to respond to the requirements of life as best as possible, most positive emotions are likely to result from an approach to life (and to performance) that takes into account and cares for self and others (Damasio, 2003). The ‘people-oriented’ narrative appears to satisfy humans’ need for connection and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Fromm, 1956; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and their search for meaning and contribution to the greater good (Frankl, 1959; Seligman, 2011).

Previous studies also highlighted the link between a ‘people-oriented’ approach to performance and ‘strong’ performance experiences. For instance, a study that investigated performers’ free reports about their ‘strong’ experiences in performance found that these reports referred often to connection and communion (Lamont, 2012). In this study, as much as 34 per cent of performers related such experiences to interaction with co-performers, 54 per cent to the interactions with audiences, and 69 per cent to feelings of community and communication. In Lamont’s study, few reports of ‘strong’ experiences concerned entirely solitary performances, which suggested that these kinds of experiences were more typically shared with others. Performers’ reports suggested that sharing music with others (co-performers or audience) enabled them to feel part of something bigger and transcend self, construct a social identity, and experience a sense of connectedness with others, all of which adds social meaning to the performance and satisfies the performer’s need for self-transcendence (see i.e. Faulkner & Davidson, 2004; Ford & Davidson, 2003; Gabrielsson & Lindström Wik, 2003; Lamont, 2012; Moore, Burland & Davidson, 2003; Parker, 2010; Sawyer, 2006). These findings are also consistent with previous research that found that performance is not merely about achievement, but about affiliation, sharing, connection with the larger community and contribution (Bailey & Davidson, 2005).

### **4.3.3 The relationship between performance as a means to broadly transcend self and joy**

In this study, three out of four of the narratives that predicted joy in performance ('people-oriented', 'source-oriented', and 'magical-moment') made sense of performance as a means to connect with the wider world, highlighted the transcendent quality of the experience, and conceived self within a larger, more meaningful context. These narratives added meaning to performance, and appeared to be inspiring.

The 'source-oriented' narrative emphasised the transcendent origin of the experience. Performers who scored high in this narrative did not view themselves as the real source of music, but felt the music was 'coming from elsewhere' and perceived themselves as channels through which the music just flowed. They attributed part of the experience to their personality (something that one receives), and viewed themselves as co-creators (together with the source of music) rather than as sole agents in performance.

The 'magical moment' narrative, in which performers believe that performance might bring about 'magical moments' (that is, 'perfect' moments in which the performer performs better than expected, and 'something great' may just happen), also prompted a higher frequency of joyful performance experiences. This narrative highlights 'feelings of transcendence', and was in fact the only narrative in which 'transcendence' was explicitly mentioned.

The link found between performance and transcendence is not surprising, as performance is often described in terms of transcendence (i.e. Ascenso et al., 2016; Bernard, 2009; Guevara, 2007; Lamont, 2012). Moreover, conceiving of performance in terms of 'magic moments' seems to be associated with 'strong' performance experiences. In Lamont's research, as much as 37 per cent of performers described their 'strong' experience in terms of 'magic moments', while 26 per cent reported them as 'Unique, fantastic, incredible, unforgettable experience' (2012: 581). The findings of this study suggest that narratives that nourish the expectation for these 'magical-moments' might increase the performers' joy of performing.

While the biological discipline can provide an enlightening perspective on the reason why ‘people-oriented’ narratives might promote more joy in performance than narratives that are exclusively self-centred, they cannot explain the link between the ‘source-oriented’ or ‘magical-moments’ narratives and performance-related joy. Unlike animals, humans are not only subject to the mandates of biology, but also to mandates that seem to go beyond the preservation of the species. Humans strive for achievement and relationship, but they also appear to seek to transcend self through other means, such as spirituality (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Emmons, 2005; Hill & Pargament, 2003; Piedmont, 2007; Schnell, 2011; Wong, 1998).

Spirituality encompasses a search for meaning, unity, connectedness, transcendence and for the highest human potential (Pargament, 1997). It embraces the notion of finding sacredness in the ordinary events of daily life and feeling interconnected with everything. Spirituality is strongly linked to transcendence, and some use both terms interchangeably (see Palmer, 2006). Emmons, Cheung & Tehnari point to this link and state that

*Strivings that are oriented above and beyond the self, that reflect an integration of the individual with larger and more complex units, or that reflect deepening or maintaining a relationship with a higher power, show a desire to transcend the self. Strivings are coded as spiritual if they reflect concern for an integration of the person with larger and more complex units: with humanity, nature, with the cosmos (1998: 409).*

According to this conception of spirituality, the ‘people-oriented’, ‘source-oriented’ and ‘magical moment’ narratives might be viewed as expressing self-transcendent or spiritual strivings, as all three make sense of performance in terms of connection with the external world. The ‘people-oriented’ narrative in particular appears to value connection with other people, the ‘source-oriented’ narrative emphasises connection with ‘the music’, and the ‘magical moment’ narrative points to a broad sense of transcendence or connection.

It has been argued that the presence of spiritual strivings within a person’s goal hierarchy predicts greater subjective well-being and, in particular, higher positive effects than merely achievement strivings (Emmons, 1991, 2003). This might be due to



spiritual strivings reducing overall conflict within a person's goal system and promoting a greater degree of integration (Emmons et al., 1998). Greater well-being might also result from the specific pattern of appraisals that characterise spiritual strivings (greater value, instrumentality and intrinsicness, and less conflict, effort, and difficulty) (Emmons et al., 1998). In addition, spirituality might have some ability to buffer stress. For instance, an individual's well-being might be determined by his or her ability to utilise spiritual appraisal of stressors, spiritual coping and spiritual connections to potentially mediate or moderate the detrimental influence of stress on well-being (Bell, Rajendran & Theiler, 2012; Gall, Charbonneau, Clarke, Grant, Joseph, & Shouldice, 2005). Thus, based on all the above, it could be expected that the three narratives that expressed spiritual beliefs and strivings would predict both a higher frequency of 'highly enjoyable' performances and a lower frequency of 'stressful' performances. However, in this study these narratives predicted joy, but only the 'people-oriented' narrative appeared to protect performers from anxiety too.

The superiority of the 'people-oriented' over the other narratives (be they self-oriented or self-transcendent) in promoting best performance experiences may be due to the fact that a performance is defined by the presence of an audience. Therefore it makes sense that a narrative that conceives of performance as a means to connect with the audience, cultivates appreciation for such an audience, and values the purpose of performing for it, might be the most pertinent, healthy and inspiring in the performance context. Conceiving performance as providing opportunities for connection, and conceiving of oneself as a 'giver' (which implies that one has something to give, and the desire to give it), might in fact facilitate optimal performance experiences (Ascenso et al., 2016; Guevara, 2007).

In summary, it seems that not all positive narratives are equal in predicting joy or anxiety in performance. While the 'people-oriented', 'source-oriented', 'self-oriented' and 'magic-oriented' narratives were found to be helpful and to promote joy in performance, the 'people-oriented' narrative was found to be superior to the other narratives, as it was the stronger predictor of frequent highly enjoyable performances, and the only narrative that predicted, in addition, a lower frequency of stressful performances. It seems from these results that, in order to enjoy performance, performers should find meaning in the activity. However, making meaning of

performance in terms of the ‘people-oriented’ narrative – which includes the belief that performance is a means to connect and contribute, and valuing and seeking such connection and contribution – is the most adaptive in the performance context, and promotes the best quality of performance experiences (a higher increase of joy and a simultaneous reduction of anxiety). However, it is important to keep in mind that the narratives identified in this study are not mutually exclusive.

#### **4.4 Narratives that make meaning of performance in terms of opportunities**

A broad perspective on the performers’ meaning-making narratives about performance may allow researchers to go beyond the identification of the performers’ healthy or unhealthy cognition. Such a perspective may show researchers the extent to which the focus of the performers’ narrative enables them to see the opportunities that a performance opens up.

I argue that the kinds of stories performers tell themselves determine the opportunities that they may see in performance. For instance, if a narrative makes sense of performance exclusively in terms of evaluation, the performer will only view performance as an opportunity for achievement, but not for connectedness. Therefore, performers’ narratives might determine the kinds of goals they might pursue, because such goals should be in coherence with their narratives. Moreover, as narratives appear to focus the performers’ attention and filter the aspects of reality that become accessible to them, these narratives might determine not only the kinds of opportunities that performers might view in performance, but even whether they would view performance as a source of opportunities at all, or as threatening events. Narratives might either emphasise the threatening aspects of performance or the different opportunities that it opens up (see section 2.7) and by so doing, they play a role in the way in which individuals categorise events as being either threats or opportunities. I argue that this categorisation has a huge impact on performers’ emotions, because once an event is categorised in such a way, it will automatically elicit the correspondent emotional responses (Bargh, 1997; Damasio, 2003; Elliot, 2006). This means that, at the most basic level, emotions might be determined by the category in which events are assigned:

either to the category of opportunities (eliciting expansive emotions such as joy), or to the category of threats (eliciting anxiety).

Narratives that lead to anxiety in performance seem to centre on threats to the ego, and may include ‘worry about not being able to perform perfectly, fears of making a mistake, fear of being negatively evaluated by others, over-estimations of the likelihood and consequences of a negative evaluation of the music performance, and negative self-evaluation in relation to one’s own high standards for performance quality’ (Kenny, 2011; Kenny & Osborne, 2006; Osborne & Franklin, 2002; Osborne, Greene & Immel, 2014). On the other hand, I suggest that the joy-provoking narratives identified in this study emphasise different kinds of opportunities that performance might open up. I argue that the ‘people-oriented’, ‘source-oriented’ and ‘magical-moment oriented’ narratives centre the performers’ attention on the self-transcendent opportunities of performance. Striving for these self-transcendent goals may be intrinsically rewarding, as this meets the performers’ needs for relatedness and belonging. On the other hand, the ‘self-oriented’ narrative may satisfy the performers’ need for competence.

I will now provide some examples of narratives that, while expressing different ways of making meaning of performance, may guide the performers’ attention towards opportunities as opposed to narratives that may emphasise threats.

Positive people-oriented narratives may include these kinds of reasoning:

*‘People have the need for artistic and connection experiences. Through performance, I have the opportunity to respond to these needs. I can contribute and feel a sense of connection that allows me to experience an extended way of being ‘I’.*

On the other hand, narratives that include the audience, but focus on threats, may be quite different:

*‘The audience is critical and hostile. People are on the watch for errors and imperfections. ‘They’ come to inspect what ‘I’ do wrong.’*

The 'source-oriented' narrative may focus the performers' attention on an extraordinary source that lies outside of themselves, and on which the performer may rely. Performers may tell themselves something like the following:

*'I am not the one who 'makes' the music but am only a mediator within the musical experience. I work hard to become a good channel through which the music can flow and express itself. Music is something bigger than I am. Performance is an opportunity to connect with the source of music and to feel inspired.'*

This narrative may be radically different from narratives that make sense of performance in a way that deprives performers from such connection with a non-self source, such as:

*'I perform all by myself and the outcome of the experience depends entirely on me',*

or from narratives that focus the performers' attention on something that does not originate from the self but that is negative:

*'I don't have the 'talent' to be a performer and people can easily see it.'*

A positive 'self-oriented' narrative may direct the performers' attention to something else:

*'I have worked hard and I trust in my preparation. I appreciate my strengths and what I am able to do. Performance is an opportunity to share all that I am and what I have acquired with those who come to listen to me.'*

On the other hand, narratives that are self-oriented and negative, may highlight the threats of performance in another way:

*'I have worked hard but I am still not good enough. Performance can expose my weaknesses and inadequacies, and I can be evaluated as unworthy (by the audience or by myself) of being a performer (or just not being good enough as a human being).'*

Focusing on the opportunities that a performance might open up is likely to promote performance-related joy. However, I argue that performers might focus on such

opportunities only if the narratives through which they make meaning of their performance allow them to see that such opportunities exist, and only if their narratives confer value on such opportunities. I suggest that performers who view performance as sources of opportunities are moved by an approach-motivation to perform that is likely to increase their joy of performing (Elliot, 2006; Kahneman, 1999), in contrast to those performers who view performance as a source of threats, who may be moved by avoidance-motivation, and who, as a result, may experience anxiety or simply a lack of joy in performance (not viewing performance as a source of opportunities, performers may lack meaningful reasons to perform, and may not find any motive that would fuel their approach-motivation to perform).

In addition, I argue that when the performers' narratives have a focus wide enough to embrace self, others and the bigger world (i.e. any source of inspiration), more performance-related opportunities may become visible to them, which may increase the likelihood of them finding personal meaning among these opportunities. Helping performers to keep in mind the big picture (and to view the self in relation to such a big picture) might elicit positive emotions in performance. In turn, such positive emotion might facilitate the keeping of such a broad perspective in mind, or even broaden their perspective, enabling them to find further meaning and joy in performance (Fredrickson, 2001). On the other hand, narratives that narrowly focus on self (even when positive) might reduce the range of meanings that performers would be able to confer on performance, and reduce the likelihood of them viewing performance as a personally meaningful activity. If the self-oriented narrative happens to be negative, it would focus on threats and would likely elicit anxiety, which in turn might accentuate the narrowing of the performer's focus of attention and further reduce the meaning they find in the activity (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

In summary, it seems that narratives that emphasise the opportunities that a performance opens up to meet the performers' psychological needs may help them to enjoy performance. Perhaps best performance experiences result from narratives that are broad enough to simultaneously meet the performers' need for autonomy, competence and relatedness, as suggested by theories previously discussed (i.e. SDT) and associated empirical research. In fact, a case study about three professional performers who loved to perform (carried out using in-depth interviews) showed that the narratives through

which these performers made sense of performance were all embracing, integrative, meaningful and inspiring (Guevara, 2007). These performers appeared to simultaneously strive for achievement, connectedness and transcendence. They were convinced that they had somehow received a mission to accomplish, that they were responsible for working hard on the talent they had received, and that they owed themselves to their audience. Their narratives seem to express what some research in the work field name a ‘calling’ orientation (Dik and Duffy, 2009).

#### **4.5 Performers’ narratives as an expression of their ‘calling’**

Dik and Duffy define a calling as:

*a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role (in this case work) in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation (2009: 427).*

Interestingly, individuals who view their work as a ‘calling’, rather than just a means to financial gain or prestige, experience it as purposeful and meaningful, and report the highest levels of life and work satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2011; Rosso et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997).

I view the ‘calling-orientation’ to work to be a narrative that promotes the most positive experiences since it helps individuals to view their activity within the broadest context, which in turn helps them be more aware of the meaningfulness of their work. The ‘calling’ narrative seems to simultaneously satisfy the individuals’ different psychological needs, such as the need for meaning, achievement, relatedness and transcendence, and seems to help individuals to experience joy (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2008; Frankl, 1959; Maslow, 1971). In the same way, a calling orientation to performance might help performers experience their performances as fully joyful and worthwhile. Up to now, I have mainly focused on connectedness as causing joy. However, joy is an expansive emotion that may facilitate connectedness as well as best performance (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Frijda, 1988). Therefore, when performers do not perform primarily to show their

own competence, but to share a meaningful experience with their audience, a spiral of reinforcing positive emotions and connectedness may be fostered – the experience of communion elicits feelings of confidence and joy, and these feelings facilitate in turn further connectedness.

In summary, it seems that in order to fully enjoy performance, both self-enhancement and self-transcendence should be pursued. For instance, performers should not be so preoccupied with achievement that they neglect the social and transcendent aspects of the performance, nor so bewildered by the external factors that may intervene in a performance (e.g. relying too much on inspiration) that they neglect their preparation. A narrative that embraces, balances and integrates the performers' different values and needs is likely to promote highly rewarding performance experiences.

The findings of this study show that, compared to the other narratives identified in this study, the people-oriented narrative promotes the best performance experiences; however, it also showed that this kind of narrative is not commonplace within the classical music milieu and, in particular, within music institutions. The prevalence of self-centred narratives this study found among classical music students shows that narratives are not just a personal matter. The performers' cultural milieu seems to shape their view of what a performance is for and of what they should strive for. Given the impact that the performers' social environment seems to have on their narratives and resulting emotions, I will discuss this subject in greater depth.

#### **4.6 The performers' narratives as expressing their group's influence**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the narratives that shape emotions are co-authored by the individuals and the social groups to which they belong (Bruner, 2000, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Hammack, 2008; McAdams, 2001). Accordingly, the performers' narratives should be viewed as being shaped by the hierarchy of goals and values their group prescribes. While most research on emotion in performance centres on the individual and disregards the impact of culture on emotion, some studies are starting to pay attention to the influence that socio-cultural factors have on individuals' musical

identities, and to the claim that ‘we become ourselves through others’ (MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2012; Vygotsky, 1931).

For instance, music genre is recognised as a ‘cultural system’ that reproduces particular ideologies, which in turn affect musicians’ attitudes, practices and priorities (Kingsbury, 1988). In Creech et al.’s (2008) study on differences and commonalities between classical and non-classical musicians, it appeared that the former emphasised the drive to excel musically and technically, while the latter emphasised memorising, improvising and making music for fun. The practices within both environments (classical and non-classical) differ hugely, and these differences may be observed from the very start of musical learning. While popular performers acquire their skills outside any formal context, classical musicians learn in formal settings; while the former mainly learn the songs they want to learn, the latter learn exercises and pieces assigned by teachers; while the former usually ‘practice’ with peers, the latter practice alone (Green, 2002; Woody & McPherson, 2010). And from the very start of their musical learning, popular musicians enjoy the process significantly more than classical musicians do (Green, 2002).

Green points to some differences in the attitudes and values of performers from both cultures. She suggests that, contrary to classical music students, non-classical musicians view their music learning as highly enjoyable and voluntary; while they respect technical proficiency, they primarily value the ability to play with ‘feel’; they particularly value empathetic relationships involving cooperation, reliability, commitment, tolerance and shared tastes, along with a shared passion for music, and, most importantly, in addition to the above, Green found that the popular musicians’ activities raised their self-esteem and the esteem that they considered their peers had for them (2002). The cultural system within which these individuals make music appears to be very different from that of classical musicians, characterised as it is by a teacher-centred approach, competition and the minimal autonomy that is conferred on music students (Jørgensen, 2000; Kingsbury, 1988; Persson, 1996; Roberts, 1991).

The findings of this study suggest that the classical music milieu, rather than encouraging self-transcendent narratives about performance, particularly encourages self-centredness (Scherer & Brosch, 2009). In fact, it is amongst classical music



students that self-centredness was found to be at its highest. This suggests that music institutions may be so preoccupied with increasing the performers' competence and preparing them for passing exams and winning competitions that essential aspects related to music and performance (i.e. connectedness and contribution) may be being neglected. The lack of meaningful, self-transcendent reasons to perform appears to partly explain why classical performers report less joy than non-classical performers, and why performance-related joy is at its lowest amongst classical students.

Classical and non-classical performers appear to think about performance through different metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For instance, the findings of the Exploratory Study suggest that the classical music milieu implicitly leads performers to conceptualise performance primarily as a way to measure value or competence (this is suggested by the high focus on achievement found in this study), while the non-classical milieu encourages conceiving performance through metaphors of connection. The very way in which music students are introduced to performance may reinforce an association between performance and evaluation. For instance, in most western music institutions, the first performances take place in the form of exams, competitions, or other kinds of auditions whose main *raison d'être* is to assess whether an individual's performance is or is not 'good enough', according to some predetermined and often unrealistic standard or criteria (i.e. perfection). These early associations may be easily generalised, with novice performers quickly ending up viewing any kind of performance as a means to evaluate whether their performance is, or even worse, whether *'they'*, are 'good enough'. Such a metaphor about performance may create anxiety, and deprive music students of the joy that comes from sharing and connecting. Reflecting on the link found in this study between joy and 'people-orientedness', I wonder whether narratives that are exclusively self-centred (not including any metaphor of connection) might be responsible for the fact that so many performers in this study assessed their performances as only 'moderately enjoyable'. Is the lack of self-transcendent meaning the 'something that is lacking' in the experience of these performers?

In addition, the study showed that classical and non-classical performers differed in terms of their emotional profiles, that is, the emotional pattern shown by the emotions reported in three different settings: performance, practice and daily life. Classical

performers scored significantly higher than their counterparts in Emotional Profile 2 (EP2) – the emotional profile in which enjoyment occurs only during practice and not in performance. Perhaps, through its emphasis on achievement and its neglect of the connection dimension of performance, the classical music milieu may be unintentionally promoting an approach to music-making that has been called ‘holicipation’ (Killick, 2006).

The term ‘holicipation’ was used to describe the rewarding experience of individuals who spend a considerable amount of time making music on their own without the need of, or interest in, performing for others (Killick, 2006). These performers (‘holicipators’) make music ‘just for themselves’. Based on an extensive review of scientific and non-scientific literature, Killick suggests that holicipation is one of the least discussed and most widespread forms of musical activities, and argues that ‘certain kinds of social and cultural environment promote holicipation more than others’ (Killick, 2006: 291). He states that holicipation may be particularly prevalent within the classical music tradition. This raises the question: is the classical music tradition fostering holicipation and, as a consequence, producing performers who enjoy practicing but who do not view performance as a meaningful activity? In the case of my study, are performers who score high in EP2 ‘holicipators’?

When performance experiences were explored in isolation from the performers’ experience during practice, and in isolation from their musical genre, performers who scored high in EP2 appeared to feel the characteristic emotions of MPA (high levels of anxiety and absence of positive emotions during performances). Such performance experiences possibly resulted from the interplay of factors that researchers have previously identified as promoting MPA. However, when the performers’ negative emotions during performance were considered in the context of the positive emotions they reported during practice, and in the context of the musical genre to which they belonged, it became evident that the emotions they reported in the two settings were shaped by socio-cultural factors. The fact that classical performers scored higher than their counterparts in EP2, as well as in self-orientedness, suggests that the concerns highlighted by the classical music milieu might be so focused on the means to achieving musical excellence, namely practice, that the joys of sharing and reaching out that performance affords are overshadowed and become irrelevant. In this case, anxiety

could possibly result from feeling compelled to do something they have not come to view as meaningful and purposeful, namely, to perform for others.

Studying performers' performance-related emotions within the context of their emotional experiences in other settings may broaden our understanding of MPA, as these findings suggest that some performers might just not view performance as the ultimate goal of their involvement with music; they might not have meaningful reasons to share their music with others, and they might feel uncomfortable or anxious when they need to do so. Moreover, studying MPA within the context of the performers' socio-cultural milieu shows that this is not just a personal problem, and that the narratives and practices of certain music milieu (i.e. the classical music institutions) may have an on-going, detrimental impact on the performers' performance experiences. If such pervasive determinants of anxiety exist, they should also be considered, investigated and, ideally, changed.

In summary, the results of this Exploratory Study show that many classical performers make sense of their performances exclusively in terms of self-centred concerns. It seems that this narrow way of viewing performance might prevent them from experiencing much of the joy that results from connection and contribution. I hypothesise that an intervention could help performers to develop healthier, more self-transcendent, meaningful and inspiring narratives about performance that would allow them to enjoy their performances more fully. The next chapter describes the design of such an intervention, but first I will discuss some methodological considerations and the contributions of this research.

## **4.7 Methodological considerations**

In order to make sense of the findings of this study, it is useful to reflect on the nature of the data. The present study is based exclusively on self-report, which means that we only have access to the performers' retrospective accounts of their performance experiences. These self-reports may be biased and may not accurately portray emotional experiences at the moment they took place. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind

the differences that might exist between what performers say about a past performance and their actual experience during the performance.

#### **4.7.1 Lived versus remembered experience**

Experiences and memories of experiences are two different things, and Kahneman makes a useful distinction between what he calls the ‘lived’ and the ‘remembered’ experience. Kahneman realised that these two experiences could differ greatly when comparing the amount of pain people reported during a colonoscopy (subjects were asked to quantify their pain every sixty seconds while they were undergoing the procedure) to the same subjects’ retrospective reports of this experience. Some individuals went to the extent of reporting as ‘preferred’ experiences where they had actually experienced the most suffering (Redelmeier & Kahneman, 1996). Kahneman replicated his research in other areas, with a particular interest in pleasure and pain, interest and boredom, joy and sorrow, and satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and always found that there were systematic inconsistencies between people’s experiences and their accounts of such experiences (Kahneman, 1999).

These findings led Kahneman to propose the existence of two different ‘selves’ – the ‘experiencing self’, which simply lives its life in the present, on a moment-to-moment basis, and the ‘remembering self’, which meaningfully reconstructs these moments. He states that the ‘experiencing self’ psychological present may last up to three seconds, suggesting that people experience some 20,000 moments in a waking day. Hence, the ‘experiencing self’ has barely the time to exist while, on the other hand, the ‘remembering self’ does not keep track of every lived moment (Kahneman & Riis, 2005).

It seems that the ‘remembering self’ has a complete or nearly complete neglect of the duration of experiences and appears to work on a Peak-End rule (only retaining the most salient moments of an experience and the way in which such an experience ends). The relevance that the ‘remembering self’ confers on these specific moments appears to be the first element of distortion in the memory of the whole experience. According to Kahneman, this Peak-End rule explains why, when a negative event occurs at the very

end of an experience, the negative quality of its ending affects the remembrance of the whole experience. No matter how long the positive experience that preceded the event lasted, these good moments which actually formed part of the subject's 'lived' experience seem to just disappear from his or her memory (Kahneman, Fredrickson, Schreiber & Redelmeier, 1993).

Another factor of distortion is that memory is highly subjective. Memory does not preserve experiences as they really happen, but reconstructs experiences according to the distinctive criteria used by the person to evaluate events. Kahneman & Riis argue:

*When we are asked 'how good was the vacation?', it is not an 'experiencing self' that answers, but a 'remembering and evaluating self', the self that keeps score and maintains records. Unlike the 'experiencing self', the 'remembering self' is relatively stable and permanent. Memories are what we get to keep from our experience, and the only perspective that we can adopt as we think about our lives is therefore that of the 'remembering self' (2005: 285).*

Kahneman's research presents evidence that questions the validity of memory-based reports, as he found that memories of experiences were not entirely reliable, and that certain cognitive distortions occurred in a systematic way. Kahneman (2000) suggests that memory-based reports are retrospective global assessments that tell us more about the outcomes of experiences that people valued over time than about the pleasure and pain they actually experienced in the past. He claims that the 'remembering self' works as a storyteller, and suggests that these are the stories people tell themselves about their experiences that preserve such experiences into their long-term memory (Kahneman, 2010).

In agreement with Kahneman, other theorists claim that self-reports of experiences are frequently biased. For instance, some argue that people's memories are often altered, distorted, or fabricated in order to preserve personal coherence and integrate self-beliefs, self-images and goals (Conway, 2005; McAdams, 2001). Others have found that an individual's memory of his/her own emotions are partially reconstructed on the basis of current feelings about, and appraisals of, past events (Levine & Safer, 2002). Still others state that additionally, self-report of emotional experiences may be biased by the difficulty of becoming aware of and explaining one's emotional experiences. For

instance, repressive mechanisms may be at work in biasing self-reports. Steptoe points to this risk in relation to performance anxiety research: ‘people may not be accurate or truthful in their subjective ratings of anxiety. The under-reporting of subjective distress is thought to be part of the ‘repressive’ style of coping with stress, and some people may not even acknowledge their fears privately to themselves’ (1989:4).

Another possible bias of self-reports of emotional experiences is that people are seldom aware of the causes of their own emotions. Asking subjects ‘why’ they felt a particular emotion could be asking for information that they cannot consciously access (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). As Frijda argues: ‘One knows, generally, that one has an emotion: one does not always know why, and what exactly makes one have it; and if one does know, it is a construction, a hypothesis, like those one makes about the emotion of someone else’ (Frijda, 1986: 464).

In summary, individuals’ self-reports may be viewed as unreliable tools to accessing their actual emotional experiences (to accessing the experience of the ‘experiencing self’). For instance, when a performer reports ‘joy’ in his or her last performance, it is impossible to know exactly when and to what extent he or she actually experienced such emotion.

#### **4.7.2 A study focused on the ‘story-telling’ self**

While experiences and retrospective reports on experiences appear to differ, this does not mean that the two should be viewed as completely divorced. For example, I have no reason to think that performers would report ‘joy’ in performance if their actual experience was primarily characterised by a lack of joy. In fact, most studies show that the intensity of emotion that individuals report when they refer to a past experience is highly correlated with the intensity they initially reported ( $r = .5$  or higher) (Levine & Safer, 2002). Kahneman’s findings only mean that self-reports are unable to render the quality of the performance experience totally accurately.

Notably, my study is not about actual experiences, but about the ‘storyteller’ self. Its aim is to investigate the performers’ narratives about their performances, that is, their

way of assessing, explaining and describing their performance experience. I view the performers' self-reports (or narratives) as all-important, not just because they shed some light on their actual experiences, but primarily because they appear to express the consistent meaning the performers confer on their performance. And if emotions are as dependent on meaning as research suggests – appearing even to be dictated by 'laws' (see Frijda, 1988) – I hypothesise that knowing the meaning performers attribute to performance (their narratives about it) might allow me to infer the habitual quality of their performance experiences.

### **4.7.3 Where does flow fit within the findings of this study?**

While this study investigated all kinds of performance experiences, its main focus was to gather data on, and better understand, performances that are assessed as 'highly enjoyable'. As discussed in Chapter 1, optimal experiences are often studied through the construct of flow. While there is some confusion about the meanings that have been conferred upon the construct, flow refers mainly to an altered state of consciousness in which individuals are optimally aroused and fully engaged in an activity that they experience as intrinsically rewarding, an activity in which the process itself is more important than its end-goals (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). When pondering on the findings of the Exploratory Study, I wondered to what extent the construct of flow corresponds to the experience performers described when they referred to their last 'highly enjoyable' performance.

First, the construct of flow primarily emphasises the process itself, as opposed to its end-goals. In contrast, my findings showed that performers related their joy to the performance enabling them to establish connection with the audience, to contribute, to feel competent. It appeared that the performance was 'highly enjoyable' *because* it was a means to an end that they highly valued, *because* it was meaningful. Like the 'strong' performance experiences studied by Lamont (2012), the 'highly enjoyable' performances described in this study appeared to be mainly characterised by a eudaimonic route to happiness: meaning and purpose are inextricably linked to the experience. Therefore, given the importance performers confer on the outcomes of performance (what the performance could afford), I cannot deduce from these findings

that they viewed these ends as less important than the process itself, and therefore I prefer not to use the term ‘flow’ to describe their experience. A second reason why I prefer not to use the term ‘flow’ to describe the performers’ ‘highly enjoyable’ experiences is because the degree of absorption that flow implies appears to be incompatible with the simultaneous experience of positive emotions, and performers described the highly enjoyable performance in terms of such emotions. And thirdly, because the type of mental state to which flow refers might be incompatible with the multiple kinds of cognitive processes that a musical performance requires (see Chapter 1).

Therefore flow may be incompatible with the positive emotions performers described and with the cognitive challenges of a performance, and may be unfit to render the meaningfulness of the experience the performers reported; however, it may shed light on one of the aspects of the ‘highly enjoyable’ performance that performers described: the ease of a process that appeared to take place without the performer’s effortful control (see Chapter 1). In fact, half of the participants described their ‘highly enjoyable’ performance as an instance during which they felt themselves to be ‘channels through which the music just flowed’, and an even higher percentage reported feeling the music as ‘flowing freely from deep within’. The ease with which music appeared to flow suggests that the performers were not preoccupied by whether or not they would be able to perform up to their standards (the outcomes of the performance), but that their attentional capacities were fully available for the activity itself (the process). I think that it is only this aspect of the performance experience that may be rendered by the construct of flow. This is why it is in this restrictive sense that I will use the term flow in the rest of this discussion.

In summary, meaning, positive emotions and flow (i.e. effortless engagement) are the three integral components of the ‘highly enjoyable’ performance experience investigated here, as they were an integral part too of the ‘strong’ performance experiences studied by Lamont (Lamont, 2012; Seligman, 2002). However, I argue further that meaning plays a particular role in the performance experience, as it is not just part of the experience, but precedes the experience and impacts on the likelihood of performers experiencing positive or negative emotions in performance and, possibly, on the likelihood of them accessing the flow state. I base my argument on the findings of



this study, showing that performers' narratives predict the likelihood of experiencing joy or anxiety in performance. If the meaning performers make of performance impacts in such a way on the quality of their experience, it is reasonable to hypothesise that it might also impact on the likelihood of them accessing a flow state.

While it has been stated that the flow state cannot be taught or made to happen, it can be facilitated (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999), and I argue that narratives might either foster or prevent its occurrence. For instance, flow seems to require that individuals perceive the challenges of a situation as matching their own skills. I contend that this perception of match results from the kind of narratives individuals have about performance and its challenges, and from the narratives they have about their skills. I suggest that narratives that help performers perceive their performance as an activity within their reach increase the likelihood of them experiencing flow.

I suggest that the joy-promoting narratives identified in this study facilitate flow because they increased the performers' perception of match between challenges and skills, building trust in their resources to cope with the challenges of performance. For example, the self-transcendent narratives identified here make sense of performance as a collaborative work between the performer and something external to the conscious self (i.e. the audience, the music, the source or something magical). These narratives promote the belief that performers are not entirely on their own whilst on stage, but that they could count on external support, guidance or inspiration to rise to the challenges of performance. I suggest that even the self-oriented narrative, which cultivates trust in one's own good preparation, may help performers rely on the work that has already been done, on the processes that have already become automatic. Such *preparedness* may become something external to the conscious self on which the performer can rely. I argue that narratives that cultivate such trust might increase the likelihood of performers experiencing flow.

Additionally, the narratives identified in this study make sense of performance in terms of opportunities rather than threats, and in terms of meaningfulness, and I suggest that these factors may facilitate flow too. I would argue that, even if skills and challenges were perceived as matching, performers would not enter flow if they appraised performance as a threat, or as a meaningless activity. Accordingly, I contend that

meaning-making narratives might be viewed as antecedents of flow, and that they might facilitate its occurrence when they help performers to: first, appraise the performance as a meaningful event, an opportunity to obtain something valuable (rather than a threat), and second, build confidence in their resources for coping (Lazarus, 1991). The joy-provoking narratives identified in this study did both, and I suggest that this may contribute to performers experiencing their ‘highly enjoyable’ performance as an occasion on which the music ‘just flowed’. I argue that the hypothesis that narratives might be viewed as antecedents of flow deserves further investigation.

But I would like to conclude this discussion by pointing out that what we know about flow is based on individuals’ retrospective self-reports, which likely suffer from the characteristic biases and distortions of memory processes. However, and most importantly, what we know about flow is in itself a narrative, an account of the storyteller self about a past experience that by its very nature cannot be consciously accessed or reported while it takes place. Flow is perhaps a narrative that people create retrospectively in order to explain to themselves the amazing exploits of their ‘implicit system’ when trained and trusted, when the ‘explicit system’ restricts its intervention to the minimum required by the activity at hand. Investigating flow through the lens of narratives might bring some clarity onto a construct that, at present, contributes little to the understanding of the ‘highly enjoyable’ performances investigated in this research.

## **4.8 Conclusion and contribution of the research**

This large-scale survey sheds light on how performers view their performance experiences. It shows that performances are often described as moments of high intensity in the performers’ lives, that practice is often viewed as a reassuring and intrinsically valuable activity, and that some people appear to engage with music in order to enhance the emotions they experience in their daily life.

The type of relationship that exists between the performers’ narratives and the emotions they report was investigated. The findings are in line with previous research conducted on performance anxiety, which claim that the quality of the negative performance experience is linked to the performers’ cognitions or self-statements. However, this

study suggests that the link between language (narratives) and subjective experience goes beyond the context of performance anxiety and applies to all kinds of performance experiences, including those that are ‘highly enjoyable’.

Going beyond the investigation of isolated performance-related statements or cognitions, the study looked for the coherent and stable narratives that the performers’ statements express. I have interpreted the performers’ statements as pieces of a puzzle that only assume full meaning when they are put together and reveal a bigger picture. The PCAs, run with the totality of the performers’ statements, identified different and coherent sets of values and beliefs that I interpreted as being the different kinds of stories performers tell themselves about their performances. Exploring self-reports about performance through the construct of narratives may allow researchers to see the big picture, and find out how the performance experience fits within the context of a performer’s life; to understand how the meaning a performer confers on performance (meaning that is shaped by the beliefs, values and goals of his or her socio-cultural groups) impacts on his or her perception and description of the experience, and on the performance being able, or not able, to satisfy his or her psychological needs.

One of the significant differences of this study is that it brings ‘joy’ into music performance research – a field that mostly focuses on anxiety. It shows that the variables that significantly predict joy and anxiety are different, which supports theories that suggest that positive and negative emotions are not opposite poles of a single dimension, but are rather parallel systems (Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1999). The study makes clear that the absence of anxiety does not guarantee joy. It suggests that meaning is essential to joy. Performances assessed as ‘highly enjoyable’ are also highly meaningful: they are viewed as a means to connect, achieve, transcend self, contribute, and gain access to magical moments. Performers attribute their best performance experiences to the attainment of these meaningful pursuits, and not necessarily to the technical quality of their performances.

The importance of meaning in affording best performance experiences is highlighted by the fact that nearly half of the performers who participated in the study consciously think of the reasons that move them to perform as an extra-musical method to prepare themselves and be perfectly focused and aroused during performance. On the other

hand, nearly one third of performers attributed their last ‘non-enjoyable’ performance experience to a lack of meaning. The findings suggest that without meaning, there is no joy.

Valuing one’s skills and competence elicits joy in performance. However, narratives that focus the performers’ attention on connecting with the audience and co-performers (people-oriented narratives) promote more joy in performance than narratives that exclude others. Additionally, such narratives seem to reduce anxiety. People-oriented performers seem to have in mind a wider picture of what a performance is for. For them, the goal of performance seems to go beyond the fact of playing their works masterfully; the goal is to move others. They value the presence of other people and seek to connect with them. When this connection takes place, they seem to experience a warm, transcendent and joyful sense of belonging and feel fulfilled, reassured and empowered by this connection.

Joy increases with the belief that one is not the sole agent in performance: besides the performer, there is ‘the music’, which appears to act as an autonomous agent. Some performers seem to trust in ‘the music’, to feel open and connected with it, and to relinquish part of their control to this trusted agent. I suggest that this kind of narrative, which cultivates trust in something that lies outside the performer’s conscious self, is likely to facilitate a kind of experience that is sometimes called a state of ‘flow’.

The participating performers’ narratives are associated with the socio-cultural group to which they belong. For instance, performers belonging to the classical milieu appear to be less people-oriented than performers belonging to non-classical milieus; students also appear to be less people-oriented than amateurs and professionals. At the same time, classical performers and students both report fewer rewarding performance experiences than their counterparts. This suggests that the narratives of their group somehow shape their performance experiences.

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that narratives are powerful tools that shape individuals’ emotions. Accordingly, I hypothesise that helping performers to cultivate more meaningful, inspiring narratives about performance (that is, narratives that satisfy their psychological needs, promoting a healthy view of self and a self-

transcendent approach to performance) would increase the performers' joy of performing.

But narratives may be long-term constructions, deeply rooted in the performers' non-conscious assumptions about their music-making. To what extent are they changeable? And even if they are, would a change in narrative result in more joyful performance experiences? The following chapter describes the study designed to investigate both questions.



## **Chapter 5. The Intervention Project**

The intervention project was based on the findings of the Exploratory Study (see chapters 3 and 4). Its aim was to investigate whether a web-based, short-term intervention could increase the meaningfulness of the performers' narratives about performance, and whether such increases in meaningfulness would result in more rewarding performance experiences. The study included an intervention, plus pre- and post-intervention questionnaires.

### **5.1 Aim and theoretical foundation of the intervention**

The goal of the intervention was to enhance musicians' music-making experiences, in particular, their experience of public performance. Based on the results of the Exploratory Study and previous research (Guevara, 2007), I hypothesised that helping performers to cultivate performance-related narratives that were more aligned with their psychological needs (more personally meaningful, self-transcendent and, in particular, more people-oriented) would allow them to enjoy their performances more fully.

The intervention was founded on the theory that individuals' emotions result from the way they appraise and give meaning to situations, rather than from reality *per se*. These appraisals, or interpretations of reality, need to be coherent, and people seek to provide unifying explanations of their experiences, to make sense of the multiple situations they face in life in coherence with their past experiences, identity, expectations, values and beliefs. In order to do so, they tell stories to themselves. Ideally, these stories should be sensible and meaningful for the person, in tune with his or her core values, beliefs and psychological needs; yet, these stories are most of the time the fruit of automatic and non-conscious processes, assimilated from the environment, and are seldom consciously and critically analysed (see 2.7 and 2.8).

The stories people tell themselves act as mental models that guide their focus of attention (Echeverria, 1994). As there is a mismatch between the huge amount of information that people need to handle at any given moment and their limited attentional capacity, narratives have an important role in filtering the information

individuals will attend to, because people tend to perceive the aspects of reality that align with their views of reality and to become blind to those that do not. As narratives provide explanations of what is happening and determine the aspects of reality that individuals access, they impact on emotions.

Abundant research in the field of music performance has found that performance anxiety correlates with negative, unrealistic cognitions or self-talk (i.e. ‘I must be perfect in order to be worthy’). I suggest that such cognitions or self-talk are the visible part of the iceberg of a performer’s narratives; that is, their way of explaining to themselves what a performance is about. For instance, the self-talk ‘I must be perfect in order to be worthy’ reveals not only that a performer has unrealistic standards, but also that he or she views performance as a means of personal evaluation.

There are narratives that may be *per se* anxiety-provoking. For instance, a narrative that focuses the performers’ attention on what they lack, and sets unattainable standards (assuming, for instance, that anything less than perfection is worthless), will most likely elicit avoidance behaviour in performers or, when this avoidance is not possible, will lead to performance anxiety. Negative core beliefs and assumptions regarding self and others may underlie the performers’ narratives, resulting in their categorising performance as a threatening event. Once categorised in such a way, performers will respond to this threat by following rigid rules and enacting safety-seeking behaviours, which in turn generate further anxiety (Kenny, 2011; Osborne & Franklin, 2002).

On the other hand, as the Exploratory Study and previous research have shown (see chapters 3 and 4, and Guevara, 2007), narratives that focus on the opportunities that a performance opens up, and in particular narratives that are self-transcendent – i.e. narratives that cultivate appreciation for the performance potentiality to connect and contribute – appear to elicit performance-related joy. Notably, positive people-oriented narratives about performance appear to lead to more rewarding performance experiences than narratives that are positive but exclusively self-centred, the former promoting higher levels of joy than the latter, and simultaneously protecting performers against anxiety.



Performance-related narratives are not isolated from, but rather intertwined with, other narratives the performers may have about musical and non-musical subjects. Hence, I hypothesised that, in order to bring about long-term changes in performance experiences, interventions should help performers become more aware, critically analyse and eventually change not only specific narratives about performance, but also narratives that would have a more indirect (but powerful) impact on the quality of the experience. For instance, it has been found that having a ‘fixed mind-set’, that is, believing that our talent or intelligence is fixed and genetically determined, has a destructive impact on individuals’ emotions, motivation and behaviour that significantly reduces the ambitiousness of the goals they set for themselves as well as their achievements (Dweck, 2012; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). In like manner, a narrative that makes sense of music-making as an activity that is reserved for a chosen few (Kingsbury, 1988) may create existential doubts about belonging or not belonging to this privileged group. Such a narrative is likely to impact on the performers’ motivation, resilience and performance-related joy and anxiety.

My intervention was designed mainly around the construct of narratives for several reasons. First, I hypothesised that the mere fact of thinking about emotions as being dependent on the stories one tells oneself (something that is within one’s means to change) is empowering. Second, I hypothesised that reflection on narratives would motivate performers to think deeply about the reasons why performance (and music-making) might be viewed as a meaningful and worthwhile activity (which would focus their attention on the opportunities that performance may open up). Lastly, I hypothesised that this introspective work might lead performers to integrate and attune the meaning they confer on performance with their personal values, core beliefs and psychological needs, which might help them experience performance as being more personally meaningful, and thus more fulfilling.

The goal of my intervention was to help performers increase the joy they experience in performance, and its focus was deliberately broad. Within this, it had a number of aims, listed below:

- To make performers more aware of the impact their narratives have on their emotions. This was based on the premise that becoming more aware (or

mindful) of the contents of one's thoughts helps individuals to disengage from automatic thinking patterns (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

- To help performers identify their own narratives (about music-making, performance, and other subjects that are more distantly related to performance) and to find out whether these helped them to appreciate their skills, achievements and all that they had and were (i.e. the privilege of making music, or the uniqueness of their personality), or if their narratives lead them to focus on what they lacked and on their insufficiencies.
- To show performers that performance has no meaning intrinsically linked to it, but that the meaning of performance is the one that individuals confer upon it. Consequently, performance could be perceived in very different ways; for instance, as a means for evaluation or, alternatively, as a means to connect, to transcend self and contribute.
- To show performers that narratives are in part culturally determined (i.e. their narratives are partly shaped by the musical institution they attended) and that, therefore, their narratives could or could not be aligned with their values and psychological needs (participants were introduced to basic notions about well-being and their need for autonomy, competence, relatedness, meaning and self-transcendence).
- To help performers reflect on the goals they pursued when performing, and to think whether such goals were meaningful for them or not.
- To show performers that they can revise their narratives, and to encourage them to replace narratives that they find unhealthy or meaningless with narratives that they view as meaningful and inspiring, and which are aligned with their values, core beliefs and psychological needs.

Based on the findings of the Exploratory Study and prior research (Guevara, 2007), I thought these would be the first and most important steps in eliciting long-term changes in the performers' performance experiences. But I also thought that performers should be helped to overcome automatic behavioural patterns that could interfere with their ability to approach performance through their new narratives. Hence, the intervention included a brief introduction to methods that could help them break the automaticity of their habits (i.e. relaxation and visualisation techniques, as well as methods to improve practice).

In summary, my intervention did not apply the usual cognitive restructuring techniques that ‘identify and challenge negative, self-defeating, task-irrelevant thought patterns and replaces them with more adaptive and realistic views’ in order to reduce anxiety (Osborne, Green & Immel, 2014: 4; see also Kenny & Ackermann, 2011). Rather, the intervention aimed to empower and inspire performers to view performance as a source of opportunity rather than threat. Rather than expecting performers to embrace a one-size-fits-all healthy narrative, my goal was to teach performers about the impact their automatic narratives had on their emotions; to show them how to become more aware of their own narratives; to convince them that they had the power to create more meaningful narratives about performance (narratives that would evoke new mental images that would in turn elicit new emotional responses); and to encourage them to consciously choose the narratives they wanted to live by.

During the intervention, the performers were invited to broaden the perspective they had on performance so that they could become more aware of all the opportunities that performance might open up for them (i.e. the opportunity to show what they are able to do, the opportunity to contribute, to connect, to experience magic moments of transcendence, etc.). I hypothesised that if their narratives become more personally meaningful (i.e. if their narratives emphasised connection and contribution rather than focusing exclusively on achievement, and if they were more in tune with their preferences, core beliefs and values), performers would experience more joy in performance. The intervention was based on these assumptions (see Appendix II for a detailed description of the intervention).

## **5.2 Method**

### **5.2.1 How the intervention was administered**

The intervention was administered on-line, as there was evidence that the web may be an efficient medium to deliver interventions (Botella et al., 2010). It consisted of a series of twenty-four short pre-registered videos that were embedded in a virtual school platform. The total duration of the videos was 3 hours and 12 minutes. Each video was a lesson in which I progressively introduced new topics, introspective homework and

practical exercises. New videos were uploaded weekly, and participants could watch them on-line at a time that was convenient for them. The videos remained available to participants for four months. The lessons were delivered in Spanish (my first language). In addition to the videos, there was a discussion forum for participants, which enabled interaction among participants and with myself.

There were two identical sessions of the course that took place at an interval of six weeks. The first session started on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and the second on the 11<sup>th</sup> May. The reason why I administered the course in two consecutive sessions was that I wanted to have a waitlist control group against which I could compare the post-intervention results of the participants from the first session.

I expected that, after the intervention, statistically significant changes would be found in the performers' emotions due to them adopting a more self-transcendent perspective on performance. However, as emotions could change due to factors unrelated to the intervention, I decided to include a control to minimise these factors. At first I thought about designing two different interventions: one intervention that would aim at enhancing only the performers' self-centred narratives about performance (i.e. increasing their self-efficacy beliefs), and another that would additionally promote self-transcendent perspectives on performance. In that case, I would be able to compare the two groups' post-intervention scores and see whether the group exposed to self-transcendent narratives would report more positive emotions than its counterpart. However, I decided that it would be extremely difficult for me to design an intervention that would totally exclude notions of self-transcendence.

As an alternative, I chose a waitlist control group. That is, I would randomly divide the participants into two groups: one group to take part in the first session of the intervention and the other to take part in the second session starting six weeks later (the term 'session' in this context means a complete run-through of the intervention – the course). At the end of the first session (and before the start of the second one), both groups – the group that had already undergone the intervention and the group that would still undergo it (the waitlist control group) – would be measured a second time (this would be the second time because all participants had already completed the pre-intervention questionnaire (Pre-Q) prior to registering for the course). The scores of the

two groups (Intervention and Control group) would be compared to their own scores at the Pre-Q. If significant changes were found in the intervention group and not in the control group, such changes would be interpreted as being caused by the intervention. Increases in positive emotions would be attributed to increases in narratives only when increases were found in both variables.

Each session of the intervention was designed to last for four weeks, but in the first session several participants reported having difficulty reconciling their busy schedule with the demands of the course. Consequently, I decided to put the videos on-line at a slower pace, which brought the length of the intervention from the planned four weeks up to five weeks.

### **5.2.2 Participants**

The intervention was open to any Spanish-speaking performer willing to improve the quality of her performance experience (music students, professionals or amateur belonging to any musical genre). Recruitment was made by convenience sampling and snowballing: a link to the home page of the project was sent to performers I had met through my professional activities as a performer and music teacher, and to music institutions and professional unions, who were subsequently asked to send it to their acquaintances.

### **5.2.3 The project home page**

A home page created for the project briefly introduced participants to the study. It explained to the participants how the intervention would be delivered, and its goals: a course aimed at improving performers' performance experiences would be delivered online; it was part of a research project measuring the impact of the intervention on the participants' attitudes and emotions. For this reason, participants were required to complete pre-and post-intervention questionnaires (they were given simple instructions regarding how to complete the questionnaires). Two introductory videos were integrated into the website. The first was an invitation to participate in the project and explained the purposes of the intervention, while the second explained practical issues related to the intervention.

In order to participate in the project, performers had to register in a virtual school. However, the course was free, and no money was given to or received from participants. The ethical procedures were outlined as approved by the University of Sheffield ethics committee, i.e. participants were free to quit the course at any time without giving any explanation; my details were provided in case of any additional questions or concerns, and the contact details of two professors from my university were provided in case of complaint. Participants were informed that they would be identified through their email address for the whole project, and consequently they were asked to use the same address for the duration of the study. Nonetheless, they could provide their usual email address or create a special one for the project in order to preserve anonymity.

#### **5.2.4 The questionnaires of the intervention project**

In order to investigate the impact of the intervention on the participants' narratives and emotions, participants were asked to respond to pre- and post-intervention questionnaires. In all, four questionnaires were administered using an on-line survey website (see Figure 5.1, which shows the timeline of the whole project):

- A pre-intervention questionnaire was administered to all participants at the time they registered for the project.
- A second questionnaire was administered to all participants between the two sessions of the intervention: this was a post-intervention questionnaire for those who had participated in Session 1, and a waitlist control questionnaire to participants who would participate in Session 2 (the link to both questionnaires was sent to participants by e-mail on 4 May 2015).
- A third questionnaire was administered only to those performers who participated in Session 2 (the link to this post-intervention questionnaire was sent by email to these participants on 15 June 2015).
- A follow-up questionnaire was administered to all participants (the cohorts of both sessions) three months after the end of their respective intervention.

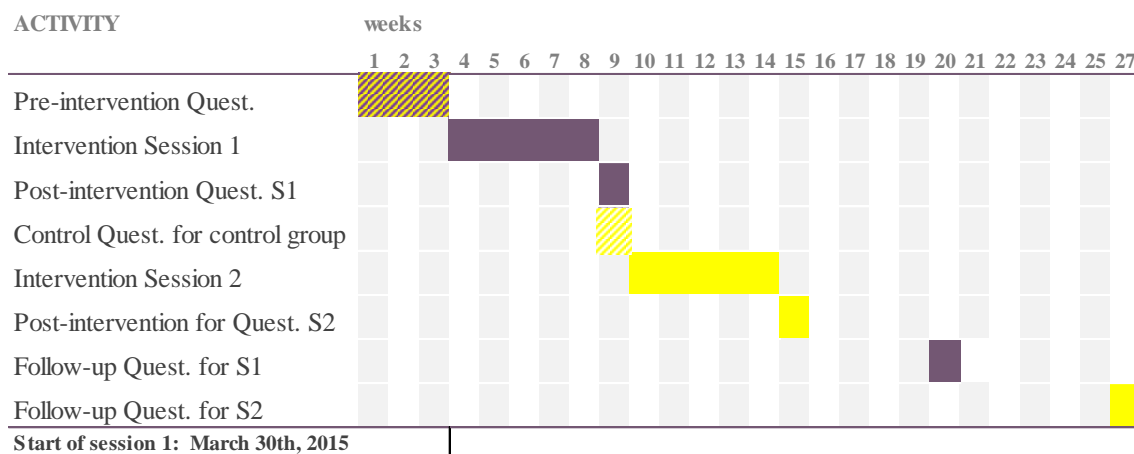


Figure 5.1 Intervention project timeline and release of questionnaires

### 5.2.4.1 Description of the questionnaires of the intervention project

#### The pre-intervention questionnaire (Pre-Q)

The pre-intervention questionnaire, embedded in the home page of the project, had to be completed by all participants at the time of their registration for the project. It consisted of 51 questions and took around 15 minutes to complete (see Appendix III). The first eight questions investigated the respondent's demographic and musical background (i.e., age, main instrument, number of years of musical practice, main genre). Most of the remaining questions investigated the following themes:

- The performance experience: Performers were asked to think about their performance experiences during the previous year and to report on the extent to which they felt joyful, self-confident, willing to perform, inspired, connected to the audience, anxious and immersed in their music-making while performing; the extent to which they assessed the quality of their playing in performance as being better or worse when compared to the quality of their playing during practice; and the extent to which they viewed their performances as being valuable for the audience. Additionally, they were asked to think about a recent performance experience that they viewed as typical of their performance experiences in general (preferably their last performance) and to report

on the percentage of time in which they experienced positive, negative and neutral emotions during that performance

- The extra-musical methods used to prepare for performance: performers were asked about the extent to which they used the following extra-musical methods to prepare for their performances: visualisation, relaxation, focusing on their strengths and good preparation, focusing on the value of music, on the privilege of being a performer and on the benefits their performances may bring to their audience. It also investigated the performers' intake of chemical or natural products.
- The visualisation of an upcoming performance: the questionnaire investigated the extent to which the participants thought they would feel joyful, self-confident, willing to perform, inspired, connected to the audience, absorbed and anxious, when they visualised themselves on the day of an upcoming performance.
- The experience of practice: performers were asked to think about their practice sessions during the prior seven days and to report on the extent to which they were immersed and enjoyed their practice, and how they assessed the efficiency of their study methods. Additionally, they were asked to think about a recent practice session that they viewed as typical of their practice in general (preferably their last session) and to report on the percentage of time in which they experienced positive, negative and neutral emotions during that practice session.
- Daily life experience: participants were asked to think about their daily life during the prior seven days and to report on the extent to which they enjoyed it. Additionally, they were asked to think about a recent day that they viewed as typical of their daily activities (preferably the previous day) and to report on the percentage of time in which they experienced positive, negative and neutral emotions during that day.
- Goals and beliefs: Performers were asked about the extent to which they had inspiring goals as performers, were confident they would attain these goals, and the extent to which they believed that the talent they had received at birth determined their possibilities for success.



The questions were presented in the form of 9-point Likert-type items, in which 1 meant a complete absence of the variable and 9 its full presence. For instance, choosing 1 in Enjoyment or Anxiety meant ‘Not enjoyed at all’, or ‘Not anxious at all’, and choosing 9 meant ‘Fully enjoyed’ or ‘Extremely anxious’. I considered scores between 1 to 3 to be low, between 4 and 6 to be moderate and between 7 to 9 to be high.

### **The post-intervention (Post-Q) (cohorts of the first session) and the control-questionnaire (Control-Q)**

Between Session 1 and Session 2, a post-intervention questionnaire was administered to the cohorts of the first session, and a Waitlist Control questionnaire (Control-Q) to cohorts of the second session.

The Post-Q was almost identical to the pre-intervention Questionnaire (Pre-Q), except that the Post-Q did not inquire about background variables (as this information had already been gathered by the Pre-Q), and it contained some questions related to the intervention. For instance, as the course was self-administered and each participant could choose his or her own pace (participants knew that the material would be available on-line for four months), the Post-Q investigated whether, by the time they completed this questionnaire, the participants felt they had had enough time to follow the course, as well as the extent with which they had watched the videos, completed the exercises, read and participated in the discussion forum. In those cases in which participants felt they had not had enough time to participate in the course, they were asked whether they would be willing to take the course once again in the future. Moreover, participants were required to evaluate the extent to which they thought the intervention had helped them as performers, teachers, and in other aspects of life, and the extent to which they thought these kinds of interventions should be included in musical education curricula (see Appendix IV).

The Control-Q was administered only to the cohorts of the second session prior to their intervention. Most of the questions of this questionnaire were identical to the question of the Post-Q, except that the Control-Q did not include intervention-related questions (see Appendix V). This would allow me to compare the scores of participants who had undergone the intervention to those who had not yet done so. If scores increased in the

Intervention group (between their Pre-Q and Post-Q) and not in the Control group, I would interpret these increases as resulting from the intervention.

### **The post-intervention questionnaire (Post-Q) (cohorts of the second session)**

The Post-Q administered to the cohorts of Session 2 after the end of their intervention was the same Post-Q that had been previously administered to the cohorts of Session 1.

### **The follow-up questionnaire**

The follow-up questionnaire, sent to all participants three months after the end of their respective sessions, was identical to the Post-Q (see Appendix VI) except that it did not inquire about the performers' perception of having or not having had enough time to follow the course. It was assumed that by the time performers completed the follow-up questionnaire, time was no longer an issue.

## **5.2.5 How the performance experience was measured**

As the intervention was not primarily designed to treat anxiety but to enhance joy in performance, no validated questionnaire for performance anxiety was included in the project. Instead, in order to investigate positive performance experiences, I adapted the Fordyce Index of Happiness (Fordyce, 1977, 1987). This index consists of two self-reporting items measuring well-being: a happiness/unhappiness scale, and a question asking for the time spent in happy, unhappy and neutral moods. A percentage question added a quantitative measure to compliment the scale, asking: 'On average, what percent of your time do you feel Happy? What percent of your time do you feel Unhappy? What percent of your time do you feel neutral (neither happy nor unhappy)? Write down your best estimate, as well as you can. Make sure the figures add-up to equal 100%.' (This is one of the questionnaires used in the 'Authentic Happiness' website (by Martin Seligman) to measure current happiness.)

As my study focused on performance experiences and not on general happiness, I investigated variables that would provide information about the quality of a performance experience. Therefore, I investigated self-reported levels of enjoyment, anxiety, absorption, self-confidence, perceived standard of performance when compared

to practice, willingness to perform, inspiration, connection with the audience, and a sense of contributing. I chose these variables in order to investigate the link between emotions and a self-transcendent approach to performance (namely inspiration, connection with the audience and a feeling of contribution). Most of these variables were the same as in the Exploratory Study, however, some of the variables were changed. For instance, I replaced 'positive arousal' by 'absorption' because the latter provides more information about the quality of the experience than the former: the idea of absorption, or engagement, captures information about the focus of the performers' attention during performance, and best performance experiences require that individuals be fully absorbed or engaged in their activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Moreover, as the focus of my intervention was primarily about positive performance experiences, I substituted the variables 'worry' and 'fear' (which I had used in the Exploratory Study) with a single term: 'anxiety'. In addition to this, I substituted the term 'transcendence' for the term 'inspiration', because the latter is more specific than the former, emphasising the origin of the experience.

Inspiration is defined as '[a] breathing in or infusion of some idea, purpose, etc. into the mind; the suggestion, awakening, or creation of some feeling or impulse, especially of an exalted kind' (Simpson & Weiner, 1989: 1036, as cited in Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Inspiration emanates from sources that are external to the conscious self: it may come from above (supernatural sources), from within (intrapsychic sources) or from without (environmental sources) (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). I argue that it captures much of the meaning of the source-oriented and magical-oriented narratives identified in the Exploratory Study. Inspiration, like transcendence, implies an altered perception of one's personal boundaries and a shift in a feeling of self-separateness; an expansion of boundaries, distinct from the normal subject-object dichotomisation. Moments of inspiration are described as moments of connection, openness, clarity and energy (Hart, 1998), and there is a consensus among ordinary people about the meaning of the term inspiration (see Hart, 1998).

Therefore, in this study, the self-transcendent nature of the performers' approach to performance (centring beyond self, as opposed to self-centredness) was investigated through variables that either emphasised the genesis of the self-transcendent experience (i.e. inspiration in performance; focusing on the value of music and on the privilege of

being a performer as methods to prepare for their performance), and variables that emphasised the outcome of the experience (i.e. connection with and contribution to the audience, and deliberately focusing ‘on the value for the audience’ as a way to prepare for performance).

In addition, instead of using the same scale as in the Exploratory Study (in which each emotion was reported as being experienced ‘rarely’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘most of the time’), I chose a 9-point scale in order to have a more fine-graded measurement instrument able to detect smaller changes in the performers’ experience between pre- and post-intervention questionnaires (all the variables were measured before and after the intervention). I considered the 9-point scale to be precise enough for my research.

The Fordyce Index of Happiness was also adapted to investigate the percentage of time that performers reported having positive, negative or neutral emotions during their performances, practice and daily life. For instance, performers were asked to bring to mind a recent performance that they considered to be quite typical of the way they generally felt when they perform, and preferably to bring to mind their last performance (if they considered it to be typical) and report on the percentage of time they had experienced positive, negative and neutral emotions during the performance. In order to investigate positive emotions, I asked what percentage of time they had ‘enjoyed’ during the performance, and to investigate negative emotions I asked what percentage of time they had had a ‘tough/rough time’ (in Spanish, *pasarlo mal*) during the performance. I used this term because I was interested in investigating the percentage of time for which performers experienced any negative emotion (i.e. frustration) and not only anxiety.

The next chapter presents the results of the pre-intervention questionnaire.

# Chapter 6. The Intervention Project: the Pre-intervention Questionnaire

## 6.1 Method

A pre-intervention questionnaire (Pre-Q) was administered to all participants upon their registering for the project. This questionnaire had two main goals. First, to provide a baseline: by measuring the performers' emotions and narratives before the intervention, I could use these results as a reference against which to compare their individual scores on the subsequent post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires. Such a comparison would allow me to draw conclusions about the usefulness of the course in enhancing the performers' narratives and music-making emotions. Second, I could use the results to verify the extent to which the findings replicated the findings of the previous study (the Exploratory Study).

### 6.1.1 Participants

Three hundred and forty-one performers completed the Pre-Q. They comprised 170 men (50%) and 171 women (50%) aged 18 (the minimum age to participate in the project) to 68 ( $M = 33.81$   $SD = 12.54$ ). The respondents were Spanish-speaking, and lived in 24 different countries. Spain was the country most vastly represented (137 participants, 40%), due to the fact that my professional activities have been focussed in Spain during the past few years, and I used a convenience sampling and snowballing method of recruitment (see section 5.2.2). Other countries highly represented were Mexico ( $N = 36$ ; 11%), Uruguay ( $N = 35$ ; 10%), Argentina ( $N = 29$ ; 8%) and Colombia ( $N = 27$ ; 8%).

The question 'Which is your main musical genre?', was multiple-choice and allowed for one or more answers (classical, jazz, folk, pop and other). Almost three quarters of performers ( $N = 243$ , 71%) reported playing 'classical' music (this preponderance was certainly due to my own classical background and the convenience sampling and snowballing); 87 (25%) reported playing one or more genres such as pop, rock, jazz, flamenco, tango, etc. (which, for the purposes of this study, I labelled 'non-classical' musical genres) and 11 (3%) reported playing both classical as well as non-classical musical genres.

One hundred and forty-five participants (42%) performed mostly as soloists, 139 (41%) in small ensembles and 57 (17%) in large groups. One hundred and thirty-eight were students (40%), 96 professional musicians dedicated mainly to teaching activities (28%), 67 professional musicians dedicated mainly to performance (20%) and 40 amateur performers (12%). Accordingly, they differed considerably in the number of years of musical training they had ( $M = 16.60$ ,  $SD = 11.84$ ) and in the number of performances they gave per year ( $M = 17.68$ ,  $SD = 32.12$ )

## **6.1.2 Data analysis**

I used SPSS and non-parametric tests to analyse my data because most of the questions were measured at an ordinal level, and many of the variables were not normally distributed.

## **6.2 Results**

### **6.2.1 The performance experience**

The first part of this study investigated the performance experience. Performers were asked to respond to a number of questions: to think about their performance experiences during the previous year and to report on the extent to which they had experienced enjoyment, absorption, anxiety, willingness to perform, self-confidence, inspiration and connection with the audience; evaluate the quality of their performances (compared to the quality of their playing when they practised); and report on the extent to which they believed their performances brought something valuable to the audience.

Table 6.1 shows the medians and interquartile ranges for the performance-related variables. Notably, the highest scores were found in ‘anxiety’ and ‘willingness to perform’, and the lowest in ‘quality of the performance compared to practice’.

**Table 6.1** *Performers' self-reports during performance*

Performance Experience	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>
Enjoyment	6	3
Anxiety	7	3
Absorption	6	3
Self-confidence	5	3
Quality of performance	4	3
Willingness to perform	7	3
Inspiration	6	3
Connection with the audience	5	4
Contributing with something valuable	6	3

Note: 1 = not at all; 9 = very much

After reporting on their performance experiences during the previous year, performers were asked to think about a specific, recent performance experience that they viewed as typical of their performance experiences in general (preferably their last performance), and to report the percentage of time they experienced as ‘enjoyable’, as a ‘rough time’ or as ‘neither enjoyable nor rough’ during that performance. This question would require performers to bring to mind a more detailed picture of their performance experiences. In this question, performers were asked to ensure that the three figures reported (proportion of time spent in positive, negative and neutral emotions) would equal 100%. However, some of the answers did not comply with this requirement (i.e. 60% + 80% + 30%), and these answers were excluded from the data. This reduced the number of valid responses from 341 to 302.

Table 6.2 shows the performers’ answers to this question regarding performance experiences. The means and the medians are both presented because two of the variables (‘rough time’ and neutral emotions) did not present a normal distribution. Notably, performers reported enjoying around half of the time they spent performing, which suggested that there was substantial room for improvement in their performance experience.

**Table 6.2.** *Performers’ self-reports on the proportion of time they spent in positive, negative and neutral emotional states during their last performance (N = 302)*

	Mean	SD	Median	IQR
Enjoyment	46.87	27.09	50.00	50.00
Rough time	30.29	23.96	25.00	30.00
Neutral	22.53	17.62	20.00	20.00

## **6.2.2 Correlations between emotions, self-transcendent experiences and quality of the performance**

The Exploratory Study suggested that highly enjoyable performance experiences were characterised by positive emotions and feelings of self-transcendence. The main focus of that research was to investigate the link between meaning and emotion, and the main focus of my intervention was to help performers view their performances as more personally meaningful (because I hypothesised that this would increase their joy of performing). The questionnaires of this project also investigated the link between positive emotions, self-transcendent variables and absorption, because I hypothesised that increasing the self-transcendence of the performers' narratives (and consequently reducing their ego-centred concerns) would lead them to feel more absorbed in their performance as well. In order to explore these relationships I ran a Spearman rho correlation between all the performance-related variables.

Consistent with the findings of the Exploratory Study (see Chapter 3, section 3.3.5.6), the analysis found significant positive correlations between self-transcendent variables and positive emotions (namely, inspiration, connection with the audience, a sense of contribution, enjoyment and self-confidence). It also showed that all these variables correlate with absorption. Moreover, negative correlations were found between self-transcendent variables, absorption and anxiety (see Table 6.3). One could speculate from this that increasing the self-transcendence of the performers' narratives might result in performers experiencing more joy and more absorption, and less anxiety, during their performances. Notably, self-transcendent variables, engagement and positive emotions correlated with the assessment that performers made of the objective quality of their performance (in comparison to practice). These results suggest that an increase in the self-transcendent orientation of narratives may additionally impact on the performers' actual achievements.

It is noteworthy that negative but low correlations were found between enjoyment and anxiety, which is consistent with the view that joy and anxiety are not opposite poles of a single continuum, but rather separate systems that can coexist (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999). It is also noteworthy that willingness to perform does not correlate with anxiety, which suggests that one may be willing to perform in spite of anxiety, or not be willing to perform in spite of not experiencing anxiety.



**Table 6.3** Spearman's rho correlations between performance-related emotions, self-transcendence variables and quality of the performance (N = 341)

	Enjoyment	Absorption	Anxiety	Quality of performance	Willingness to perform	Self confidence	Inspiration	Connection	Contribution
Enjoyment	1.000	.729**	-.289**	.647**	.456**	.707**	.740**	.706**	.680**
Absorption	.729**	1.000	-.273**	.619**	.386**	.640**	.713**	.675**	.612**
Anxiety	-.289**	-.273**	1.000	-.297**	-.080	-.376**	-.264**	-.215**	-.173**
Quality of performance	.647**	.619**	-.297**	1.000	.384**	.648**	.653**	.590**	.603**
Willingness to perform	.456**	.386**	-.080	.384**	1.000	.472**	.476**	.446**	.424**
Self confidence	.707**	.640**	-.376**	.648**	.472**	1.000	.720**	.657**	.617**
Inspiration	.740**	.713**	-.264	.653**	.476**	.720**	1.000	.766**	.727**
Connection	.706**	.675**	-.215**	.590**	.446**	.657**	.766**	1.000	.765**
Contribution	.680**	.612**	-.173**	.603**	.424**	.617**	.727**	.765**	1.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 6.2.3 Visualisations of an upcoming performance

In addition to investigating the performers' reports of their past performance experiences, I was interested in exploring how performers visualised their upcoming performances. As my study was relatively brief in duration (four months), I assumed that many performers wouldn't have the opportunity to perform between the end of the intervention and the follow-up questionnaire, and that consequently I wouldn't be able to know whether their performance experiences had changed subsequent to the intervention. Nonetheless, even if I couldn't get reports of actual performance experiences, I could always gather data on the quality of the experience they would describe when visualising an upcoming performance. Comparing visualisation scores before and after the intervention (i.e. how much joy they imagined they would feel) would allow me to identify eventual changes in the variables investigated. I hypothesised that changes in visualisations would also indicate that changes took place in the performers' approach to performance, and that these changes would possibly become manifest in their actual upcoming performance experiences as well (while acknowledging that this is something that would require further empirical evidence). Consequently, I asked performers to visualise the day of an upcoming performance and to report on how they thought they would feel when facing the performance.

Table 6.4 shows the medians and interquartile ranges of the performers' values on the five variables investigated when they were asked to visualise an upcoming performance, and asked to report on a past performance.

**Table 6.4** *Visualisation of an upcoming performance and reports of past performances. Medians and interquartile ranges (N = 341)*

	Visualisation of upcoming performance		Report of past performances	
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>
Enjoyment	6.0	3.0	6.0	3.0
Self-confidence	6.0	3.0	5.0	3.0
Inspiration	6.0	3.5	6.0	3.0
Connection with the audience	6.0	3.0	5.0	4.0
Value for the audience	6.0	4.0	6.0	3.0

Visualised and remembered variables were compared through Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Tests. Interestingly, the findings indicate that performers reported more rewarding experiences when they visualised an upcoming performance than when they thought about a past performance. Namely, when visualising an upcoming performance, they reported higher levels of enjoyment ( $Z = -2.92, p < .005$ ), self-confidence ( $Z = -4.32, p < .001$ ), inspiration ( $Z = -3.46, p < .005$ ), connection with the audience ( $Z = -4.54, p < .001$ ) and a higher sense of contribution ( $Z = -4.65, p < .001$ ) than when they reported on a past performance. Despite these differences, the visualised and remembered variables correlated, as shown in Table 6.5. These correlations suggest that an increase in a visualised variable after the intervention could possibly mean that this variable would increase in an actual performance too.

**Table 6.5** Spearman's rho correlations between the performers' reports on the same variables when visualising an upcoming performance and when referring to past performances

		Past Performances				
		Enjoyment	Self-confidence	Inspiration	Connection	Contribution
Visualisation of an upcoming performance	Enjoyment	.645**	.619**	.593**	.550**	.538**
	Self-confidence	.563**	.684**	.607**	.529**	.517**
	Inspiration	.542**	.568**	.667**	.603**	.573**
	Connection	.534**	.559**	.603**	.668**	.624**
	Contribution	.470**	.504**	.538**	.536**	.648**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 6.2.4 Extra-musical methods used to prepare performance

The Exploratory Study showed that performance experiences were linked to the way performers thought about performance. In particular, it showed that approaches to performance that included self-transcendent concerns (i.e. people-oriented) appeared to promote more positive performance experiences than approaches that were exclusively self-centred. As the performers' thinking about performance is likely to be reflected in the methods they choose to prepare for their performances, I wanted to investigate the extent to which performers used methods that expressed self-transcendent concerns, and find out whether these methods correlated with positive performance experiences.

Performers were asked about the extent with which they used different methods to help them perform at their best. Methods investigated were: visualisation, relaxation, and consciously directing attention to one's strengths and good preparation, to the privilege of being a performer, to the benefits for the audience, and to the value of music. These last three variables were interpreted as expressing a self-transcendent orientation towards performance. The extent to which performers took chemical or natural products was also investigated. A 9-point scale was used to measure the frequency of each method. Point 1 of the scale referred to a method they used never or almost never, point 9 to a method they used always or almost always, and point 5 to a method they used around half of the time. Table 6.6 shows that focusing on the value of music and on one's strengths and good preparation were the methods

that performers reported using the most frequently. On the other hand, most performers reported to take chemical or natural products rarely or never.

**Table 6.6** *Extra-musical methods used to prepare for performance. Medians and interquartile ranges (N = 341)*

Method	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>
Visualisation	5	5
Chemical or natural product intake	1	2
Focusing on strengths and good preparation	6	3
Focusing on the value of music	6	4
Focusing on the privilege of being a performer	5	6
Focusing on the benefits for the audience	5	5
Relaxation methods	5	5

### **6.2.5 Correlations between extra-musical methods used to prepare performance and the quality of the performance experience.**

This study was based on the hypothesis that focusing one’s attention on the self-transcendent opportunities that a performance opens up would promote the most positive performance experiences. Accordingly, the link between the frequency with which performers used each preparation method and the quality of their performance experience was investigated through Spearman’s rho correlations. Table 6.7 shows the results of this analysis.

**Table 6.7** *Spearman’s rho correlations between the quality of the performance experience and extra-musical preparation methods (N = 341)*

<i>Preparation Methods</i>	<i>Quality of the performance experience</i>								
	<i>Enjoyment</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Absorption</i>	<i>Self-confidence</i>	<i>Willingness to perform</i>	<i>Quality of the performance</i>	<i>Inspiration</i>	<i>Connection with the audience</i>	<i>Contributing</i>
Visualisation	.210**	-0.002751	.241**	.218**	.222**	.167**	.292**	.235**	.216**
Relaxation methods	.211**	-0.071911	.249**	.203**	.116*	.111*	.271**	.186**	.255**
Focusing on strengths and good preparation	.382**	-.186**	.414**	.438**	.286**	.382**	.462**	.412**	.390**
Focusing on the value of music	.253**	-0.015185	.272**	.280**	.215**	.294**	.405**	.331**	.332**
Focusing on the privilege of being a performer	.395**	-.146**	.303**	.410**	.313**	.398**	.427**	.429**	.389**
Focusing on the benefits for the audience	.425**	-.164**	.399**	.461**	.384**	.452**	.526**	.534**	.557**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Preparation methods that focused the performers' attention on their strengths and good preparation, on the value of music, on the privilege of being a performer and on the benefits for the audience showed higher correlations with performance-related variables than relaxation and visualisation methods (see Table 6.7). This suggests that methods that help performers preserve or increase the meaning they confer on performance may be more helpful to enhance the performance experience than methods that do not specifically aim at increasing meaning. In addition to these, focusing on one's strengths and good preparation, on the privilege of being a performer and on the benefits for the audience negatively correlated with anxiety.

While all the preparation methods seemed to contribute to enhancing performance experiences, focusing on the benefits for the audience was the preparation method that correlated most highly with enjoyment, connection with the audience, inspiration, willingness to perform, and most remarkably, with the perceived quality of the performance (compared to practice) too. These results were consistent with the other findings of this research, and suggest that helping performers to cultivate a self-transcendent, people-oriented focus while they prepare for their performances might improve both the quality of their performance experience and perhaps, the quality of their actual performance as well.

## 6.2.6 The practice experience

In order to investigate the extent to which the quality of the performance experience was linked to the way performers practised, I included some practice-related questions in the questionnaire. Performers were asked to give a general evaluation of their level of enjoyment and absorption during practice, to evaluate the efficiency of their study methods (always on a 9-point scale) and to report the amount of time they devoted to their practice each week.

Table 6.8 suggests that performers view their practice as being more enjoyable than efficient.

**Table 6.8** *The performers' self-reported experience of practice. Medians and interquartile ranges (N = 341)*

	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>
Enjoyment	7	2
Efficiency of study methods	6	3
Absorption	7	3

Performers practiced a median of 8 hours per week ( $IQR = 12$ ). As expected, there were important variations in the amount of time performers invested in practicing, as some of the respondents were professionals while others were students or amateurs.

The ratio between positive, negative and neutral emotions was also investigated during practice. As in all the other analyses of this kind, the data of respondents whose three scores did not equal 100 per cent were excluded from the analysis. Table 6.9 shows that performers reported enjoying most of the time they spent practicing, and that they reported more time as being non-emotional than as being 'rough'.

**Table 6.9** *Percentage of practice time reported as being enjoyable, rough and emotionally neutral (N = 233)*

Quality of the experience	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>
Enjoyment	62.74	23.40	70	30
Rough time	14.66	15.77	10	15
Neutral	22.34	18.32	20	20

### **6.2.7 Correlations between practice and performance-related variables**

Practice may be viewed as a key step to prepare for performance. Accordingly, it was reasonable to hypothesise that positive performance experiences would positively correlate with good quality practice. Table 6.10 shows the results of the Spearman's rho correlations between the quality of performance experiences and practice-related variables (enjoyment of practice, absorption during practice, efficiency of practice and hours of practice).

**Table 6.10** Spearman's rho correlations between performance and practice variables ( $N = 339$ )

		Practice			
		Efficiency	Enjoyment	Absorption	Hours of weekly practice
Performance	Enjoyment	.168**	.147**	.092	-.117*
	Absorption	.207**	.192**	.213**	-.060
	Anxiety	.017	.115*	.055	.054
	Quality of performance	.127*	.140**	.087	-.155**
	Willingness to perform	.206**	.233**	.137*	-.009
	Self-confidence	.175**	.147**	.121*	-.131*
	Inspiration	.227**	.164**	.137*	-.054
	Connection with audience	.226**	.204**	.167**	-.090
	Contribution	.195**	.179**	.143**	-.119*

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Some significant correlations were found between the practice and performance experiences. However, all these correlations were low. Comparing the results of Table 6.7 and Table 6.10, it appears that the quality of the performance experience was much more related to the extra-musical methods performers used to prepare for their performances (which might be interpreted as an expression of their narratives about performance) than to their instrumental practice.

The unexpected small, but significant, negative correlations found between hours of practice and enjoyment of performance, self-confidence in performance, quality of the performance compared to practice and contributing with something valuable when performing, suggest that some performers might increase the time they spend practicing as a way to remediate a non-rewarding experience of performance. An alternative explanation would be that these performers spend more time practicing because they simply enjoy their practice, but no correlation was found between these two variables. The findings presented in Table 6.10 suggest that mere practice (even if efficient) is not enough to prepare a performer for performances in a way that results in a positive performance experience (in fact, the table shows that there is a significant negative correlation between hours of weekly practice and performance enjoyment).

## 6.2.8 Correlations and comparisons between emotional experiences during performance, practice and daily life.

The Exploratory Study found significant but low to moderate correlations between the frequency with which performers experienced the same emotion in three different settings: performance, practice and daily life. These findings suggested that temperamental factors could underlie their experiences, but that the impact of such factors was not huge (see Lykken, & Tellegen, 1996; Weiss, Bates & Luciano, 2008). In this second study, I looked at the correlations between the amount of positive, negative and neutral emotions the performers reported in these three settings.

**Table 6.11** *Spearman's rho correlations between the frequency of positive, negative and neutral emotions in performance, practice and daily life (N = 302)*

		Practice			Daily life		
		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Performance	Positive	.160*	-.104	-.141*	.192**	-.089	-.135
	Negative	-.133	.236**	.008	-.092	.150*	-.065
	Neutral	-.205**	.012	.364**	-.172*	-.104	.384**

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6.11 shows that the proportion of time performers reported as being enjoyable, 'rough' or neutral, significantly correlated in the three settings (performance, practice and daily life). Once again, all these correlations were small or medium, the highest correlation being found in regard to neutral emotional experiences. These results were consistent with the results of the Exploratory Study.

The Exploratory Study also compared the emotions performers reported in performance, practice and daily life (namely, whether they experienced elation, joy, confidence, positive arousal, lack of motivation, worry and fear, seldom, often or most of the time). The findings showed that practice was reported as being more enjoyable and less stressful than performance and daily life. In order to replicate and further study this subject, in this second study I compared the percentage of time the respondents assessed as being positive, negative and neutral in the three contexts. Results of Friedman tests (a non-parametric test of differences among repeated measures) showed that there was a statistically significant



difference between the three settings in the proportion of time experienced in terms of positive emotions ( $\chi^2(2) = 51.78, p < .001$ ) and in terms of negative emotions ( $\chi^2(2) = 85.53, p < .001$ ). Table 6.12 shows the medians and means of the percentage of time the performers reported as being enjoyable, ‘rough’ or neutral in the three contexts.

**Table 6.12** Percentage of time the performers reported as positive, negative and neutral in performance, practice and daily life

	Positive				Negative				Neutral			
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Performance	47.50	50	45.49	26.66	25	30	31.60	24.24	20	20	22.60	17.41
Practice	70.00	30	62.76	22.05	10	15	14.43	14.15	20	20	22.65	18.32
Daily life	60.00	30	59.50	20.79	10	15	17.39	13.98	20	20	23.10	16.66

In line with the results of the Exploratory Study, the findings of this second study showed that performers reported more enjoyment and less of a ‘rough’ time during practice than in performance.

### 6.2.9 Importance of musical activities

Musical activities appeared to be very important for the respondents (see Figure 1). To the question: ‘How much impact does your musical activity have on your personal happiness?’, almost half of the respondent ( $N = 161; 47\%$ ) chose the highest score (9 on a 9-point scale), and only 17 respondents chose 5 or less (3%) ( $Mdn = 8, IQR = 2$ ). These reports suggest that the quality of the music-making experience may not just be important *per se*, but for the impact that it may have on the performers’ personal happiness as well.

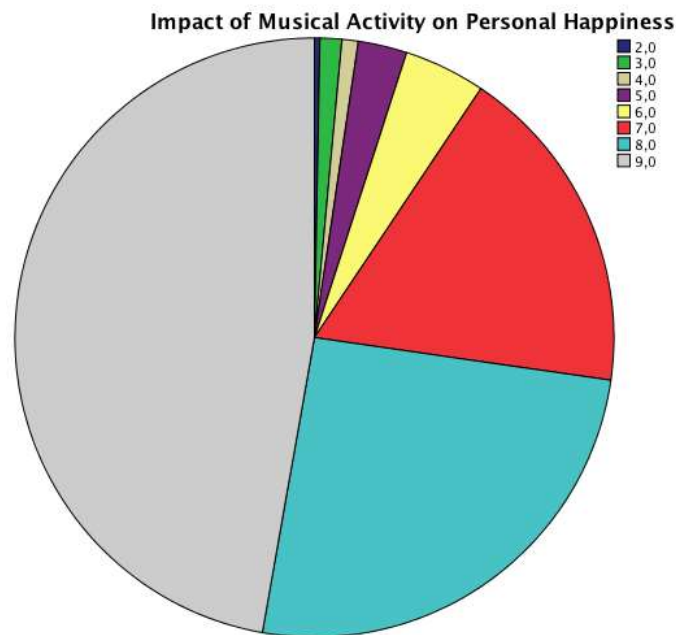


Figure 6.1 Performers' evaluation of the impact of their musical activities on their personal happiness

### 6.2.10 Goals and Beliefs

Performers were asked to think about the goals they had set for themselves as performers for the following year, and to indicate the extent to which they found these goals exciting, as well as how much confidence they had in attaining such goals. Moreover, the extent to which they believed in the 'talent account' (that is, the belief that inherited talent sets the limits of what an individual can achieve as a musician) was investigated.

Respondents appeared to view their goals as quite exciting ( $Mdn = 8$ ,  $IQR = 2$ ), and they were relatively confident in attaining such goals ( $Mdn = 7$ ,  $IQR = 3$ ). However, there were more variations between respondents in regard to the latter variable. Performers appeared to moderately believe in the talent account, but in this regard, the variation among respondents was even higher ( $Mdn = 5$ ,  $IQR = 3.3$ ).

I hypothesised that the performers' perception of the impact of their musical activities on their personal happiness could correlate with the level of joy that they reported while making music, as well as with the extent to which they viewed their goals as performers as being exciting and attainable. I ran a Spearman's rho correlation between these variables in order to investigate this topic.

**Table 6.13** Spearman's rho correlations between the enjoyment of performance, practice and daily life, and the impact of musical activities on personal happiness and goals

	Impact of musical activity on personal happiness (N = 341)	Exciting goals (N = 292)	Confidence in attaining goals (N = 295)
Enjoyment of performance	.198**	.086	.287**
Enjoyment of practice	.280**	.335**	.185**
Enjoyment of daily life	.145**	.091	.195**

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6.13 shows that confidence in attaining their goals correlated with enjoyment in the three settings. This suggests that high self-efficacy beliefs (which predict achievement (see Bandura, 1977)) may promote joy; or, alternatively, that joy may promote a psychological state that elicits self-efficacy beliefs (Kavanagh & Bower, 1985); or, most likely, that both, joy and self-confidence interact and are mutually reinforcing (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). The highest correlations between confidence and enjoyment were found in the performance setting, which is not surprising given the high levels of confidence that performance requires. The impact of musical activities on personal happiness that performers reported also correlated with enjoyment in the three settings; however, it is noteworthy that its highest correlation was found with enjoyment of practice, and that the extent to which performers viewed their goals as being exciting also (and only) correlated with enjoyment of practice.

These results suggested that musicians who enjoyed their practice the most (and not those who enjoyed performance the most) were the ones who had the most exciting goals as musicians, and the ones who viewed their music-making as being the most important for their personal happiness. This builds on the results of the Exploratory Study (see Chapter 3, sections 3.3.1.1. and 3.3.1.6), which showed that practice was *per se* a highly rewarding activity for many performers who did not necessarily enjoy performing. In fact, enjoyment of practice appeared to contribute to a more purposeful and exciting life.

### **6.2.11 Looking for underlying patterns in the participants' experiences of performance and practice, their preparation methods and goals**

The Exploratory Study identified different emotional profiles among performers, and showed that some respondents primarily enjoyed performance, while others primarily enjoyed practice (these emotional profiles were identified through a PCA run with all the emotions the participating performers reported in performance, practice and daily life). In this study, I wanted to identify underlying patterns in the performers' responses when all the variables relating to performance, practice, preparation methods and goals were included. In order to see whether coherent types of profile emerged from the data, I ran a PCA with all these variables. After eliminating the variables that did not contribute to the model (i.e. hours of practice, relaxation methods, visualisation), the final analysis was run with eighteen variables. An orthogonal rotation (varimax) was applied. The Kaise-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis. The KMO was .897 (this approached .9, which is considered to be marvellous (Field 2009)), and all individual variables were higher than .5. Bartlett's test of sphericity  $\chi^2 (153) = 2552.245$   $p < .001$ , indicated that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA.

An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Four components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1, and in combination explained 63.98% of the variance. However, according to the scree plot, I only retained two components, which explained 51% of the variance. Each component clearly expressed a different attitude towards performance and practice (see Table 6.14). Component 1 had a performance-oriented focus: performers who scored high in this component seemed to feel joyful, inspired, self-confident, absorbed in performances, connected with the audience, and experienced a sense of contributing. The quality of their performance was high compared to practice. These performers seemed to prepare for performance by simultaneously focusing on the benefits for the audience, their own strengths and good preparation, and the privilege they had of being a performer. They seemed to make meaning of performance in such a way that their needs for competence, self-transcendence, contribution and meaning were simultaneously satisfied.

In contrast, those in Component 2 centred on practice, and did not include any performance-related variables. In Component 2, practice did not appear to be a means to performance, but

was a fully rewarding, self-contained activity. Individuals who scored high in this variable seemed to highly appreciate the value of music and the time they spent making music on their own. They appeared to have exciting music-making goals and to be confident that they would attain these goals. Their relationship with music seemed to be very important for their personal happiness.

**Table 6.14** *Principal component analysis with eighteen variables including performance and practice experiences, preparation methods and goals (N = 341)*

	Component	
	Performance-oriented	Practice-oriented
Inspiration	.851	
Enjoyment of performance	.830	
Self confidence	.820	
Absorption	.812	
Connection with the audience	.810	
Quality of performance compared to study	.783	
Contributing with something valuable	.774	
Focusing on the benefits for the audience	.587	
A willingness to perform	.505	
Anxiety	-.473	
Focusing on strengths and good preparation	.464	
Focusing on the privilege of being a performer	.451	
Exciting goals		.672
Enjoyment of practice		.629
Impact of musical activities on personal happiness		.577
Confidence in attaining goals		.577
Efficiency of study methods		.536
Focusing on the value of music		.510

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

### 6.3 Discussion.

The results of this study were consistent with the results of the Exploratory Study. To begin with, they showed (see Table 6.1) that performance was only moderately enjoyable for the majority of respondents (*Mdn* = 6). On average, performers evaluated roughly half of their performance time as being enjoyable, one quarter of that time as being rough and the other quarter as being emotionally neutral. As with the Exploratory Study, when the performers' reports on performance, practice and daily life were compared, the performance setting was

the one in which performers reported the least joy and the most rough times. Despite these reports, performers appeared to be quite willing to perform. These results suggest that there is a need to help performers to enhance their performance experiences. And, given the great impact that musical activities seem to have on the performers' personal happiness (as indicated by the performers' self-reports in this questionnaire), any success in this endeavour may have a positive impact on their personal happiness.

In this study, the performance-related variables in which performers scored the highest were 'willingness to perform' and 'anxiety' (in both variables the *Mdn* was = 7, *IQR* = 3). Interestingly, these two variables were not significantly correlated (as shown in Table 6.3), which means that one may be willing to perform despite suffering from anxiety or not be willing to perform in spite of not being anxious. However, willingness to perform was significantly correlated with positive emotions such as enjoyment, absorption, self-confidence, connection with the audience and having a feeling of contributing. These results suggest that performers are more willing to perform when their performances elicit positive and rewarding experiences, even if these come along with a dose of anxiety.

One of the goals of this study was to find out whether the findings of the Exploratory Study, which suggested that self-transcendent narratives promoted joyful performance experiences, would be replicated. The self-transcendent variables investigated in this study were: 'connection with the audience', 'contributing with something valuable' and 'inspiration'. Results showed that these three variables were highly correlated; at the same time, these self-transcendent variables correlated positively with enjoyment, absorption, self-confidence, willingness to perform and quality of the performance, and negatively with anxiety. The correlations found between connection, inspiration and positive affect were consistent with previous research (see Hart, 1998; Trash & Elliot, 2003). Moreover, these results were consistent with the results of the Exploratory Study.

From this, it is possible to speculate, once again, that increasing the self-transcendence of the performers' narratives about performance (i.e. increasing inspiration and an audience-oriented focus), might result in more rewarding performance experiences. Most remarkably, the perceived quality of the performance showed a negative but small correlation with anxiety, and a strong positive correlation with enjoyment, absorption, self-confidence, connection with the audience, contribution and inspiration. These results led me to speculate that helping

performers increase self-transcendence and positive performance-related emotions might have a greater impact on improving the quality of their performance than helping them to reduce their anxiety.

The proportion of positive, negative and neutral emotions that performers reported showed significant but low correlations in the three settings (performance, practice and daily life). These findings were consistent with the findings of the Exploratory Study, which showed that the frequency with which performers reported elation, joy, self-confidence, positive arousal, lack of motivation, worry and fear in performance showed significant but low correlations with the frequency with which they reported the same emotions during practice and daily life. These low correlations suggested that the performance experience was affected by the performers' temperament or basic tendencies (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996; McCrae & Costa, 1997, 2000; Weiss, Bates & Luciano, 2008), but that other factors intervened in the quality of their performance experiences besides personality (I refer to personality as synonymous with temperament, as proposed by McCrae & Costa, 2000). Likely, some of these factors would be more modifiable and would have a greater impact on performance experiences than personality factors. The goal of this study (the Pre-intervention questionnaire and the Exploratory Study) was to identify these factors in order to design an intervention that could help performers enhance their performance experiences.

The link between performance experiences and practice-related variables was investigated because I hypothesised that the quality of the performance experience was at least partly dependent on the quality of practice (i.e. having efficient study methods would lead to a better quality of performance experiences than having inefficient study methods). However, the results showed that, while some correlations were found between performance and practice variables, these correlations were very low. Having efficient study methods, or being absorbed during practice, is likely to be associated with the quality of their playing being enhanced; yet, it does not guarantee a rewarding performance experience. In fact, no correlations were found between absorption in practice or efficiency of study methods and performance anxiety, and only a very low correlation between efficiency of study methods and joy in performance.

The extra-musical methods investigated (namely: visualisation, relaxation techniques and, particularly, deliberately bringing one's focus of attention to one's good preparation and

strengths, the value of music, the privilege of being a performer and on the benefits for the audience) appeared to have a higher impact on the performers' performance experiences than the quality of their practice. In fact, all the extra-musical methods investigated correlated with positive performance experiences. In particular, 'Focusing on the benefit for the audience' was the preparation method that showed the highest correlations with enjoyment in performance, connection with the audience, inspiration, quality of the performance and willingness to perform. (Surprisingly, while visualisation and relaxation are methods generally used to overcome anxiety (Kenny, 2005), in this study these methods correlated only with enjoyment of performance, but not with anxiety). These results were in line with those of the Exploratory Study, and suggested that joy in performance might be increased through methods that help performers remain focused on the meaning and purpose they have in performance.

Additionally, three of the methods investigated showed a significant negative correlation with anxiety. These were: focusing on 'one's strengths and good preparation', on the 'benefits for the audience' and on 'the privilege of being a performer'. Although it is not possible to infer causation from correlations, I suggest that the fact of focusing on one's strengths and good preparation might help performers increase their self-efficacy beliefs, which is likely to result in a reduction of anxiety, an emotion that is elicited by self-doubt. In turn, increased self-efficacy beliefs may initiate an upward spiral of achievement and increased confidence in one's skills, which may further reduce anxiety (Bandura, 1977; McCormick & McPherson, 2003; McPherson & McCormick, 2006). However, and most importantly for the hypothesis of this study, the findings were consistent with those of the previous study (the Exploratory Study), and suggested that the likelihood of accessing optimal performance experiences (more joy and less anxiety) increased when performers pondered on the benefits their performances might bring to the audience, and when they considered the privilege of being a performer. These preparation methods appeared to help performers to remain aware of the higher meaning of performance and, as such, to preserve their joy.

Interestingly, the PCA run on the variables related to performance, practice, preparation methods and goals showed two different axes in the performers' music-making focuses: one clearly centred on performance, and the other on practice. Performers who scored high in the 'performance-oriented' component seemed to have very rewarding performance experiences. They reported high levels of positive emotions as well as high levels of self-transcendence in



performance (inspiration, connection with the audience, sense of contribution). The methods they used to prepare for performance appeared to help them preserve a positive and meaningful narrative about performance: they viewed performance as a privilege, they appreciated their strengths and good preparation, and they valued the benefits that a performance could bring to the audience.

Performers who scored high in the ‘practice-oriented’ component appeared to view their practice as highly enjoyable, efficient and important for their personal happiness. They also seemed to be goal-oriented, as they reported having exciting goals as performers and to be confident in attaining these goals. I could not discern from this data whether their exciting goals referred to playing for other people or for themselves, yet the fact that this component did not include any performance-related variables suggested that their goals centred on making music for themselves. These performers are likely to be ‘holicipators’ (Guevara 2014; Killick, 2006), who view the time they spend practicing as a self-contained, rewarding experience.

Practice-oriented performers appeared to have a perspective on their music-making that excluded others. They seemed unable to contemplate the opportunities of sharing and contributing that music-making might open up. Therefore, I hypothesise that these performers could be helped to widen the focus of their narratives by exposing them to narratives that make meaning of performance in terms of self-transcendence. Adding a people-oriented dimension to their music-making would possibly add purpose, meaning and joy to their performances. At the same time, I hypothesised that such a broadening of narratives would not have any detrimental impact on the joy they experience while making music for themselves.

I expected that the intervention would enhance the meaningfulness and self-transcendent orientation of the performers’ music-making narratives, as well as the joy they draw from their performances. The actual impact of the intervention on these variables would be measured by comparing the performers’ scores from this pre-intervention questionnaire with the two questionnaires they would complete after the intervention: the post-intervention and the follow-up questionnaires.

The next chapter presents the findings of these comparisons.



## **Chapter 7. The Impact of the Intervention on the Performers' Narratives and Emotions**

The goal of the intervention was to help performers cultivate narratives that aligned with their values, core beliefs and psychological needs. While values and beliefs may vary between individuals, psychological needs seem to be universal, and these include self-enhancement as well as self-transcendence. Accordingly, my intervention aimed at helping performers broaden their perspective on performance, to view it as an opportunity to go beyond self, to connect and contribute. I hypothesised that this way of perceiving performance would be more meaningful and inspiring to performers, and would allow them to enjoy their performances more fully.

I expected that, after the intervention, statistically significant changes would be found in the performers' emotions due to them adopting a more self-transcendent perspective on performance. However, as emotions could change due to factors unrelated to the intervention, I decided to include a waitlist control to minimise these factors (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.1). In order to create the waitlist control group, participants were randomly assigned to the first or second session of the intervention, using a list generated by a website (random.org). One week after the end of the first session of the intervention (and before the start of the second session), a second questionnaire was sent to all participants: this was a post-intervention questionnaire (Post-Q) for the participants who had completed the first session of the intervention, and a second pre-intervention, or waitlist control questionnaire (Control-Q), for those assigned to the second session. I refer to the cohorts of the second session as the waitlist control group for this section of the analysis because, after completing the Control-Q, these subjects would participate in the intervention too.

This chapter is organised into four parts, corresponding to four main analyses. First, the sample is divided into two groups (waitlist control and intervention) and the data from both groups at the second questionnaire (Control-Q and Post-Q) are compared to their own responses at the Pre-Q through Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests. This part of the analysis investigated whether some changes occurred only in the intervention group and not in the waitlist control group. Second, the post-intervention data of the whole population sample (i.e. including the group that had previously acted as a waitlist control) is compared to their own

data at the Pre-Q. This analysis investigated the impact of the intervention on all participants. Third, the whole population’s data from the follow-up questionnaire (Follow-up Q), which was administered to all participants three months after the end of their respective sessions of the intervention, is compared to their own responses to the Pre-Q. This analysis investigated whether the impact of the intervention was sustained in the longer term. Lastly, the whole population’s data from the three questionnaires (Pre-Q, Post-Q and Follow-up Q) is compared through Friedman tests. This analysis investigated how the variables changed over time, for instance whether variables that had increased between the Pre-Q and the Post-Q tended to decrease, increase or remain stable in the long term (see Figure 7.1 to have an overall view of the whole intervention project).

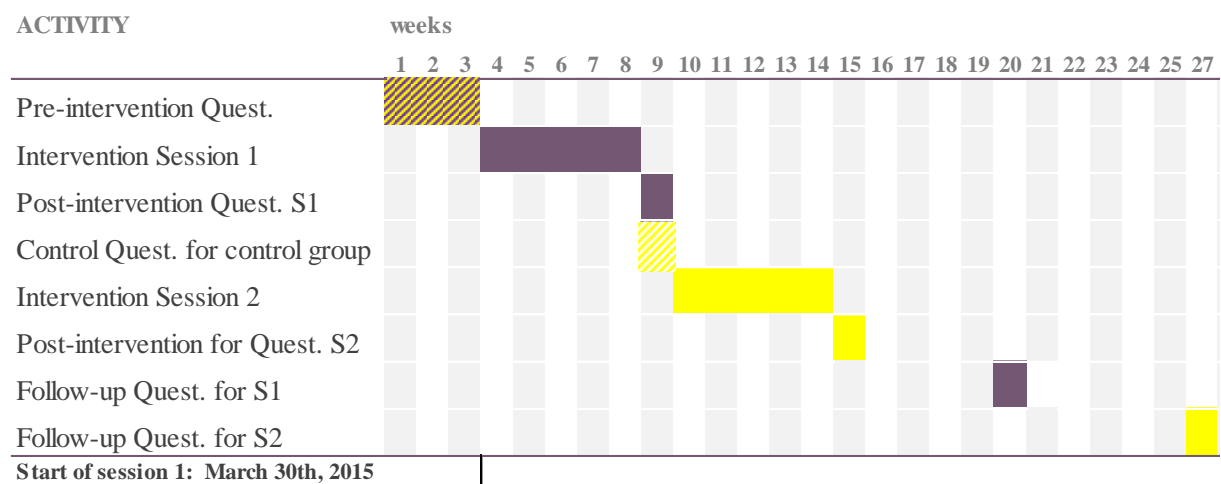


Figure 7.1 Timeline showing delivery of the two sessions of the intervention project and the release of the questionnaires.

## 7.1 First analysis: Investigating changes in the perceived experiences of the intervention and the waitlist control group.

### 7.1.1 Method

#### 7.1.1.1 Participants

While 341 performers completed the Pre-Q, 239 registered at the virtual school. One hundred and fifteen performers were assigned to the first session, and 124 to the second session.

#### **7.1.1.1.1 The intervention group.**

Twenty-five participants in the first session of the intervention completed the Post-Q. The response rate was 22 per cent. This appears quite high when we take into account that the completion rate of MOOCs is on average below 10 per cent (Khalil & Ebner, 2014). (I will show below that 31 per cent of participants completed at least one questionnaire after the intervention.)

Fourteen of the respondents were men (56%) and eleven were women (44%). Twenty-three participants (92%) were classical, and two (8%) were non-classical musicians (one played tango and the other, flamenco). Fourteen were professional musicians (56%), among which twelve were primarily teachers (48% of the population) and two were professional performers (8% of the population); ten were students (40%), and one was an amateur performer (4%). Twelve played mostly as soloists (48%), eleven in small groups (44%) and two in large groups (8%). The average age of participants was 37.8 years ( $SD = 12.9$ ), and they had an average of 22.2 years of musical practice ( $SD = 12.0$ ).

#### **7.1.1.1.2 The waitlist control group**

Twenty-three participants assigned to the second session completed the Control-Q prior to their intervention (this was the second pre-intervention questionnaire for these performers). Thirteen were men (56 %) and ten were women (43%). Seventeen participants (74%) were classical musicians, while six (24%) played other musical genres such as jazz, folk, tango or pop. Twelve (52%) were professional musicians, among which seven were primarily teachers (30% of the whole population) and five were professional performers (22% of the whole population); eight were students (35%), and three were amateur performers (13%). Ten performed mostly as soloists (43%), eight in small ensembles (35%) and five in large groups (22%). The average age of participants was 34.3 years ( $SD = 12.9$ ), and they had an average of 18.9 years of musical practice ( $SD = 10.6$ ).

As expected, no statistically significant differences were found between the waitlist control and the intervention group in any of their background variables.

### **7.1.1.2 Analysis of the data**

In order to compare the responses of the intervention and the waitlist control groups, all participants had to complete a questionnaire between the two sessions of the intervention. This was a Post-Q to participants who had already followed the first session of the course, and a waitlist Control-Q to those who had been assigned to the second session and thus had not participated in the course yet.

As my data was ordinal and not normally distributed, I could have run Man-Whitney U tests to compare the responses of both groups (Post-Q and Control Q). However, the two groups were relatively small ( $N = 25$  and  $N = 23$ ) and, despite them not being statistically significantly different, they were not perfectly alike. For instance, the intervention group had a higher percentage of classical performers than the waitlist control group (92% versus 74%), and a higher percentage of teachers (48% versus 30%). Therefore, I preferred to use Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests in order to measure intra-group changes, that is, the changes of each group from the Pre-Q to the second questionnaire. However, in one instance, both groups showed significant increases from the Pre-Q to the second questionnaire so, in this case, I additionally ran Man-Whitney U tests (a between-group comparison) to discover whether the increases were statistically significantly different or not.

#### **7.1.1.2.1 The questionnaires: similarities and differences in the content of the post-intervention and the waitlist control questionnaire.**

The second questionnaires administered to the intervention and the waitlist control groups (the Post-Q and Control-Q respectively) were identical, except that the Post-Q included questions related to the intervention that were obviously excluded from the Control-Q. For instance, the Post-Q asked performers to evaluate the extent to which they thought the intervention had helped them as performers, teachers and in other aspects of life; to report on whether they had had enough time to follow the course; and to report on their level of involvement in the course (i.e. videos watched, exercises done, participation in the discussion forum). These questions were included because, despite the course having been designed to be completed within four to five weeks, it was self-administered and participants could choose their own pace (participants knew that the material would remain on-line for four months). Therefore, I could not know whether, by the time participants completed the Post-Q

(six weeks after the start of the intervention), they would have followed the entire program or not.

Answers were presented on a 9-point Likert-type scale, on which '1' meant 'none or almost none' and '9' 'all or almost all'. For instance, to the question 'To what extent have you watched the videos', '1' meant that the participant had watched 'none or almost none of the videos', while '9' that they had watched 'all or almost all' of them.

## **7.1.2 Results**

### **7.1.2.1 Results of the post-intervention questionnaire – Session 1**

(Only participants who underwent the first session of the intervention).

I first present the responses of the intervention group in variables that related to the intervention (i.e. the extent to which they had done the exercises proposed, and their evaluation of the usefulness of the course). Then, I compare the answers of the intervention and the control groups that relate to all the questions they shared in common.

#### **7.1.2.1.1 Participants' level of involvement and their evaluation of the usefulness of the intervention**

Many of the performers who participated in the first session of the intervention reported not having had enough time to follow the course (see Table 7.1). However, their answers to other questions indicated that most appeared to have watched all the videos, done many of the exercises proposed and participated in the discussion forum to some extent.

**Table 7.1** *Level of involvement with the course. Intervention group (first session). Medians and interquartile ranges at Post-Q (N 25)*

	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>
Time disposed to follow the course	5	3
Videos watched	9	1.8
Exercises done	7	2.8
Participation in the discussion forum	3.5	4.8
Reading of the discussion forum	6.5	5.5

Results are from a 9-point scale, 1 = none; 9 = all/ a lot

Table 7.2 shows the participants' assessment of the usefulness of the course. Performers considered that the course had helped them to enjoy performance and practice more fully, and they also found it useful in other aspects of life. While the lowest value was found in the variable 'usefulness of the course for teaching activities', this result should be interpreted cautiously, because possibly not all participants taught (i.e. students or amateurs), and I did not think to make this answer optional. When I only selected from the data those participants who declared to mainly teach ( $N = 12$ ), the *Mdn* for this answer went up to 9 ( $IQR = 2.8$ ), which suggests that teachers viewed the intervention as very helpful for their teaching activities. Interestingly, all performers considered that this kind of course should be included in their musical training, and all were willing to take the course again if they had the opportunity to do so in the future.

**Table 7.2** *Participants' evaluation of the usefulness of the course (first session). Medians and interquartile ranges at Post-Q ( $N = 25$ )*

	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>
Useful to enjoy performance	8.5	1.0
Useful to enjoy practice	8.0	2.8
Useful as a teacher	7.5	3.0
Useful in other aspects of life	8.0	2.0
Usefulness of this kind of courses within the music education curriculum	9.0	0.0

Results are from a 9-point scale, 1 = none; 9 = all/ a lot

#### **7.1.2.1.2 The performance experience**

Twenty-one performers from the intervention group and seventeen from the control group had performed at least once during the three weeks that preceded the second questionnaire. In order to analyse only the reports of performers who had performed during this period, I filtered out from the data those participants who had not performed.



**Table 7.3** The performance experience of the intervention group. Medians and interquartile ranges at Pre-Q and Post-Q, and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests (first session) (N = 21)

Performance experience	Pre-Q		Post-Q		Z
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR	
Enjoyment of performance	6.0	3.5	7.0	1.0	-3.44**b
Absorption	6.0	2.5	7.0	2.0	-2.82*b
Anxiety	7.0	3.0	5.0	3.8	-2.26*a
Quality of the performance compared to practice	4.0	3.0	5.5	2.8	-3.32**b
Willingness to perform	7.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	-.98b
Self-confidence	5.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	-2.88*b
Inspiration	6.0	2.5	7.0	2.5	-2.51*b
Connection with the audience	5.0	2.5	7.0	3.0	-2.26*b
Sense of contribution	5.0	3.0	7.0	3.0	-3.06**b

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 7.3 shows that the intervention group scored significantly higher at Post-Q than at Pre-Q in almost all the variables: enjoyment, absorption, self-confidence, standard of the performance compared to practice, inspiration, connection with the audience and a sense of contributing. This group also reported significantly lower levels of anxiety. In fact, 'willingness to perform' was the only variable in which the intervention group showed no significant changes between questionnaires, perhaps due to the fact that participants already scored high in this variable before the intervention. On the other hand, Wilcoxon tests showed no changes between questionnaires in the waitlist control group.

The questionnaires investigated, additionally, the ratio of positive, negative and neutral emotions the performers reported during their last performance(s). Answers were excluded from the data when the sum of the percentages did not total 100 per cent. This brought down the number of valid cases from 21 to 19 in the intervention group.

When the Post-Q responses of the intervention group were compared to their own responses at Pre-Q, it appeared that the ratio of time they assessed as enjoyable in performance increased, and the ratio of time they assessed as rough decreased (the percentage of time assessed as enjoyable went from *Mdn* = 50 (*IQR* = 50) at the Pre-Q to *Mdn* = 80 (*IQR* = 25) at the Post-Q ( $Z = -2.46, p < .05$ ); the percentage of time assessed as rough went from *Mdn* = 20 (*IQR* = 35) at the Pre-Q to *Mdn* = 10 (*IQR* = 15) at the Post-Q ( $Z = -2.54, p < .05$ ).

No differences were found in the emotions reported by the waitlist control group between the Pre-Q and the Control-Q.

### **7.1.2.1.3 Preparation methods**

The study investigated the frequency with which respondents used different extra-musical methods to prepare their performance. The results of Wilcoxon Rank Tests showed that the intervention group had significantly increased the frequency with which they used three of the methods proposed during the intervention. These were: focusing on the benefits that one's performance may bring the audience; focusing on the privilege of being a performer and focusing on the value of music (see Table 7.4). Notably, these three variables expressed a self-transcendent orientation to performance. Interestingly, the values of two of these variables (namely 'focusing on the benefits for the audience' and 'focusing on the privilege of being a performer') were particularly low before the intervention. No changes were found in the frequency with which participants used visualisation and relaxation methods between the Pre- and the Post-Q.

**Table 7.4** *Preparation methods of the intervention group. Medians and interquartile ranges at Pre-Q and the Post-Q, and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests (N = 21).*

	Pre-Q		Post-Q		Z
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	
Focusing on the value of music	5.0	6.0	7.0	5.0	-2.12*b
Focusing on the privilege of being a performer	3.0	5.0	7.0	5.0	-3.12*b
Focusing on the benefits for the audience	2.0	4.0	6.0	5.0	-3.76**b

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

The Wilcoxon tests showed no changes in the way in which the waitlist control group prepared for performance between the two questionnaires.

### **7.1.2.1.4 Visualisations of an upcoming performance**

Performers were asked to visualise the day of an upcoming performance and to report on how they thought they would feel at that moment. The intervention group scored significantly higher at Post-Q than at Pre-Q in all visualisation-related variables (see Table 7.5).

**Table 7.5** Intervention group's visualisations of an upcoming performance. Medians and interquartile ranges at Pre-Q and Post-Q, and results of Wilcoxon Ranks Test (N =25)

	Pre-Q		Post-Q		Z
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR	
Visualisation of enjoyment	6.0	3.5	8.0	2.0	-3.80**b
Visualisation of self-confidence	6.0	3.5	8.0	2.5	-3.29**b
Visualisation of inspiration	6.0	3.5	8.0	3.0	-3.13*b
Visualisation of connection with the audience	5.0	4.5	8.0	3.0	-3.42**b
Visualisation of value for the audience	6.0	5.0	7.0	2.0	-3.40**b

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level

\*\* . Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

Surprisingly, the waitlist control group also reported increased enjoyment, self-confidence and inspiration at the Control-Q compared to their own responses at Pre-Q (see Table 7.6).

**Table 7.6** Control group's visualisations of an upcoming performance. Medians and interquartile ranges at Pre-Q and Control-Q, and results of Wilcoxon Ranks Test (N = 23)

	Pre-Q		Control-Q		Z
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR	
Visualisation of enjoyment	6.0	3.0	7.0	3.0	-2.09*b
Visualisation of self-confidence	5.0	3.0	6.0	2.0	-2.05*b
Visualisation of inspiration	5.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	-2.29*b
Visualisation of connection with the audience	5.0	2.0	6.0	3.0	-0.31b
Visualisation of value for the audience	6.0	4.0	5.0	3.0	-1.11b

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

These unexpected results may be due to the fact that all participants, even those from the waitlist control group, had previously registered for a course entitled 'Enjoy performance and perform at your best', they had completed a questionnaire that included several questions about enjoyment, inspiration and self-transcendence, and had watched two introductory videos that highlighted the performance potential to be a highly rewarding experience. All this may have reinforced the performers' association between performance, inspiration and joy; it may have had a priming effect on the performers' view of performance (Bargh, 2006).

However, the control group showed smaller changes in all the variables when compared to the intervention group, and no changes in the variables in which the intervention group had changed the most: connection with the audience and value for the audience.

As both the intervention and the control groups had significantly changed between the two questionnaires, a Man-Whitney U test was run to look for significant differences between the two groups' responses to their second questionnaire. The test showed that the intervention

group scored significantly higher than the control group in all the visualisation variables: visualisation of enjoyment,  $Z = -2.47, p < .05$ ; self-confidence,  $Z = -2.62, p < .05$ ; inspiration  $Z = -2.92, p < .005$ ; connection  $Z = -3.23, p < .001$ ; and value for the audience,  $Z = -2.40, p < .05$ .

#### **7.1.2.1.5 Practice**

In order to investigate whether the intervention had had an impact on the way the performers practiced, Wilcoxon Rank tests were run to compare the responses of all practice-related variables at Post-Q and Control-Q with the responses at Pre-Q. The tests showed a significant increase in the perception of efficiency of practice in the intervention group ( $Z = -3.04, p < .005$ ). No other changes were found in the intervention group. The control group showed no change in any of the practice-related variables between the two questionnaires.

#### **7.1.2.1.6 Other variables**

The intervention group showed a decrease in their belief in the talent account after the intervention ( $Z = -2.53, p < .05$ ), while the control group showed no change at this variable. No other significant changes were found in the intervention or in the control group in variables related to goals, beliefs or emotions in daily life.

### **7.1.3 Discussion of the results**

The significant changes that were only found in the intervention group (and not in the waitlist control group) between the two questionnaires suggest that the changes were due to the intervention.

Despite the fact that, by the time they completed their Post-Q, many performers of the intervention group reported not having had enough time to follow the course, their reports suggest that the intervention had a positive impact on their perceived performance experience. For instance, performers reported feeling more joyful, self-confident and absorbed, less anxious, and performing better after the intervention than before. Notably, they appeared to view their performances as more self-transcendent experiences, as shown by their reporting of

higher levels of inspiration, of connection with the audience, and of contributing something of value. Moreover, after the intervention, performers appeared to have changed their preparation methods as those became more positive and self-transcendent; they reported more positive visualisations of upcoming performances and more efficient methods of practicing.

Notably, these changes occurred after a short, on-line intervention. This shows that the web may be an efficient and cheap medium to make helpful interventions available to performers who would never receive such help otherwise.

The goal of the analysis presented up to this point was to find out whether the performance experience of performers who participated in the intervention had significantly improved and, ultimately, if these improvements were due to the intervention or to confounding factors. To do this, the same intervention was delivered twice, at a five-week interval and, between both sessions, identical questions were sent to both the intervention and the waitlist control group. The results of each group were compared to those from the Pre-Q. The significant changes found in the intervention group showed that these changes likely resulted from the intervention. A second stage of analysis was therefore still required to compare the pre- and post-intervention responses of the whole population, to assess the impact of the intervention on all the performers.

## **7.2 Second analysis: Comparison between pre- and post-intervention responses of the whole population**

### **7.2.1 Method**

The focus of this second analysis was to investigate the impact the intervention had on the whole population of performers, regardless of whether they participated in the first or the second session (the two sessions of the intervention were identical – the same pre-registered videos were put on-line at the same pace, and the same exercises were proposed). As participants in the two sessions completed the same Post-Q one week after the end of their respective interventions, I combined the results of both groups and compared this data with the data gathered from the Pre-Q for each participant.

Before comparing the pre- and post-intervention responses of the whole population, I briefly present the participants of the second session of the intervention.

### **7.2.1.1 Participants**

Altogether, fifty-seven performers completed the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires. Twenty-five participated in the first session (see their demographic characteristics in section 7.1) and thirty-two in the second session. Participants of the second session included the twenty-three performers who had initially been assigned to the second session, and who had acted as a control group prior to their intervention (see their demographic characteristics in section 7.1), as well as performers who were too late to register for the first session of the intervention, and performers who had been initially assigned to the first session but, due to personal reasons, had asked to follow the second session instead.

## **7.2.2 Results**

### **7.2.2.1 Comparing performance-related data from the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires**

Twenty-six of the performers who participated in session 2 performed at least once during the three weeks that preceded their Post-Q, while twenty-one of the performers who participated in session 1 performed at least once. This resulted in a total of 47 post-intervention reports on performance experiences. In order to compare pre- and post-intervention reports on performance experiences, Wilcoxon Rank tests were run after selecting only the data of the 47 performers who had performed between the two questionnaires.

The tests showed that, after the intervention, performers reported significantly higher levels of enjoyment, absorption, self-confidence, quality of the performance compared to practice, inspiration, connection with the audience and feelings of contributing something valuable than before the intervention. They also reported significantly lower levels of anxiety (see Table 7.7). The only variable that showed no change was ‘Willingness to perform’.

**Table 7.7** *The performance experience. Comparison between pre- and post-intervention responses. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests (N = 47)*

<b>Performance experience</b>	Pre-Q		Post-Q		<i>Z</i>
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	
Enjoyment of performance	6.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	-4.60**b
Absorption	6.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	-4.08**b
Self-confidence	5.0	4.0	7.0	2.0	-4.74**b
Anxiety	7.0	3.0	5.0	3.0	-4.49**a
Willingness to perform	7.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	-71 b
Quality of performance compared to practice	4.0	2.0	5.0	3.0	-4.72**b
Inspiration	5.0	3.0	6.0	3.0	-3.43**b
Connection with the audience	5.0	3.0	6.5	3.0	-3.66**b
Contributing with something valuable	5.0	3.0	7.0	3.0	-4.25**b

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

a. Based on positive ranks. b. Based on negative ranks.

Furthermore, following the intervention, the group reported a significant increase in the percentage of time that they assessed as being enjoyable during performance, and a decrease in the percentage of time that they assessed as rough relative to their pre-intervention values (enjoyment:  $Z = -3.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ; rough time:  $Z = -3.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ). No differences were found in neutral emotional states.

### **7.2.2.2 Comparing the performers' preparation methods from the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires**

After the intervention, participants increased the frequency with which they used all the preparation methods proposed during the intervention. They even took less natural or chemical products (see Table 7.8). Notably, as expected, the highest increases were found in the three preparation methods that had a self-transcendent focus (focusing on the privilege of being a performer, the benefits for the audience and the value of music).

**Table 7.8** Preparation methods. Comparison between pre- and post-intervention responses. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests ( $N = 47$ )

	Pre-Q		Post-Q		Z
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR	
Visualisation	5.0	6.0	6.0	3.0	-2.97*b
Chemical or natural product	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	-2.19*a
Focusing on strengths and good preparation	6.0	5.0	7.0	2.0	-2.88*b
Focusing on the value of music	5.0	5.0	7.0	4.0	-3.83**b
Focusing on the privilege of being a performer	3.0	4.0	6.0	6.0	-4.84**b
Focusing on the benefits for the audience	3.0	4.0	6.0	5.0	-4.13**b
Relaxation methods	5.0	3.3	5.5	4.0	-3.02*b

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

a Based on positive ranks. b Based on negative ranks.

### 7.2.2.3 Comparing the performers' visualisation of an upcoming performance from the pre- and the post-intervention questionnaires

While only forty-seven participants had performed within the three weeks that preceded the post-intervention questionnaire, all ( $N = 57$ ) could visualise an upcoming performance. Table 7.9 shows that performers visualised performance experiences that were more positive after the intervention than before.

**Table 7.9** Visualisation of an upcoming performance. Comparison between pre- and post-intervention responses. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests ( $N = 57$ )

	Pre-Q		Post-Q		Z
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR	
Visualisation of enjoyment	6.0	3.5	7.0	1.0	-5.41**a
Visualisation of self-confidence	5.0	3.5	7.0	2.0	-5.57**a
Visualisation of inspiration	6.0	3.0	8.0	2.5	-5.36**a
Visualisation of connection with the audience	5.0	3.5	7.0	2.0	-5.21**a
Visualisation of value for the audience	6.0	4.0	7.0	2.5	-4.94**a

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

a Based on negative ranks.

### 7.2.2.4 Comparing the experience of practice at the pre-intervention and the post-intervention questionnaires

Practice may be a privileged time to cultivate an artistic and self-transcendent approach to music-making, and to prepare to perform at one's best. Hence, I included a video on practice in the intervention. My goal was not only to increase the quality of practice as a means to



improve the performance experience, but also to improve the quality of practice to enhance the experience of practice for its own sake.

A comparison between the pre- and post-intervention responses showed that after the intervention, the performers assessed their study methods as being more efficient, reported increased absorption during practice, and reported more of their practice time as being enjoyable and less as emotionally neutral compared to before the intervention (see Table 7.10).

**Table 7.10** Practice. Comparison between pre- and post-intervention responses. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests (N = 57)

	Pre-Q		Post-Q		Z
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR	
Efficiency of study methods (N=57)	6.0	2.0	7.0	2.0	3.76**a
Enjoyment of practice (N = 57)	7.0	3.0	8.0	2.0	-2.21*a
Absorption during practice (N = 57)	7.0	3.0	8.0	1.5	-2.83*a
Percentage of time enjoyed (N = 46)	65.0	39.0	80.0	30.0	-3.16*a
Percentage of rough time (N = 46)	10.0	20.0	10.0	15.0	-.98b
Percentage of time emotionally neutral (N = 46)	20.0	20.0	10.0	20.0	-3.02*b

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

a. Based on positive ranks. b. Based on negative ranks.

The participants tended to assess their daily life as being more enjoyable after the intervention than before. However, the increase only approached statistical significance ( $p = .07$ ).

Nonetheless, when it came to the ratio between positive, negative and neutral emotions reported in their daily life, an increase was found in the percentage of time that they assessed as enjoyable ( $Z = -2.44, p < .05$ ) following the intervention. Moreover, they reported increased confidence in attaining their goals ( $Z = -3.74, p < .001$ ) and a decreased belief in the talent account ( $Z = -3.15, p < .05$ ).

### 7.2.3 Discussion

Comparisons between responses at Pre-Q and Post-Q suggest that the intervention had a positive impact on the performers' experience of performance, practice, and even on daily life. Their performance experience seemed to become more rewarding and meaningful, as they reported more positive and fewer negative emotions during performance, a better quality

of performance, as well as more inspiration, connection with the audience, and an increased belief that their performance had value to the audience.

After the intervention, the performers appeared to have more tools to prepare for their performances, as shown by the increase in the values of all the preparation methods proposed in the intervention. Notably, performers appeared to ponder more on the meaning of performance, as they particularly increased their focus on the benefits their performance might bring for the audience, on the privilege of being a performer and on the value of music. It is likely that this change in the way performers thought about performance (see the link between cognition and emotion discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2) impacted on the way they visualised their upcoming performances (they visualised themselves as having more joyful and self-transcendent performances), and on their perception of performance itself (according to the performers' self-reports, their performances became more positive and rewarding).

Performers reported their practice as being more efficient and more enjoyable, which would likely result in a better quality of music-making (McPherson & Zimmerman, 2002). Moreover, given the amount of time the performers spend practicing, even small increases in the percentage of time they viewed as efficient and that they enjoyed might mean many hours of enhanced experience. The tools provided by the intervention seemed to help performers feel more in control, believe less in the talent account, and increase the confidence they had in attaining their goals (self-efficacy beliefs).

Most importantly, significant increases were found after the intervention in the percentage of time the performers assessed as enjoyable in their daily lives. This might be due to performers being more aware of their own functioning, and transferring what they learnt during the intervention to other areas of life, or, alternatively, to perceiving that an important aspect of their life – their music-making activities – had been enhanced.

In conclusion, the intervention seemed to be highly successful in enhancing performers' experiences in the very short term. However, would these changes last over time? Some theorists suggest that changes in individuals' levels of well-being are temporary, that individuals tend to return to their baseline level of well-being (Lykken and Tellegen, 1996). In order to investigate whether changes were long-lasting or not, a follow-up questionnaire was included in the study. This questionnaire was administered to all participants three months

after the end of their respective session of the intervention. The following section analyses the results of this questionnaire.

## **7.3 Third analysis. The follow-up questionnaire.**

### **7.3.1 Method**

In this section, I present the results of the Follow-up Q, comparing them to those of the Pre-Q through Wilcoxon tests. Significant changes between the two would indicate that the impact of the intervention was still at work three months after the end of the intervention.

Subsequently, I present the data of the three questionnaires (Pre-Q, Post-Q and Follow-up Q) and compare them through Friedman tests. The goal of this analysis was to investigate how the variables changed over time, for instance, to find out whether the values of a variable that had significantly increased between the Pre-Q and Post-Q had continued to increase or showed a decrease between the Post-Q and the Follow-up Q. An increase between the Post-Q and the Follow-up Q would suggest that the intervention had initiated long-term changes, while a decrease in those values might suggest that individuals tend to come back to their initial set point of emotional experiences, and that additional interventions might be needed in order to sustain the changes that had initially been found after the intervention.

#### **7.3.1.1 Participants**

In all, sixty participants completed the follow-up questionnaire. Twenty-six were men (43%) and thirty-four were women (57%). They were between 18 and 63 years old ( $M = 36.4$ ,  $SD = 12.8$ ). Therefore, they differed in the number of years they had been practicing their instrument (from 3 to 45 years,  $M = 18.7$ ,  $SD = 11.4$ ). The median of performances given every year was 5.5 ( $IQR = 8.5$ ), with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 300 (I show the median because this variable was not normally distributed). Forty-eight played classical music (80%), three played jazz (5%), one played various styles, and the other eight played different kinds of non-classical musical genres such as tango, pop and rock. More than half of the participants were students (52%,  $N = 31$ ); twenty-four (40%) were professional musicians, of whom twenty-one dedicated themselves mainly to teaching activities (35% of the population), and three to performance (5% of the population); five were amateur performers (8%). Half of

the participants generally performed as soloists (50%,  $N = 30$ ), twenty-four in ensembles (40%) and six in large groups (10%). Fifteen participants played the piano (25%), twelve played the guitar (20%), ten played the violin (17%) and the other participants either sang or played other instruments such as the violoncello, oboe or flute.

## 7.3.2 Results

### 7.3.2.1 Comparing the performance experience responses in the pre-intervention and follow-up questionnaires

Fifty-five participants had performed at least once during the three months that followed the intervention. In order to compare their responses at the Follow-up Q to their responses at the Pre-Q, Wilcoxon Rank tests were run on all the performance-related variables. The tests showed that three months after the intervention, the performers' reported much more rewarding performance experiences than prior to the intervention.

**Table 7.11** *Long-term changes in the performance experience. Comparison between pre-intervention and follow-up responses. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests ( $N = 55$ )*

	Pre-Q		Follow-up Q		Z
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR	
Enjoyment of performance	6.0	4.0	7.0	2.0	-3.77**b
Absorption	6.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	-2.80*b
Anxiety	7.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	-4.34**b
Quality of the performance compared to practice	4.0	2.0	5.5	3.0	-4.31**a
Willingness to perform	7.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	-1.36b
Self-confidence	5.0	3.0	7.0	3.0	-4.11**b
Inspiration	5.0	4.0	7.0	2.2	-4.45**b
Connection with the audience	5.0	4.0	7.0	3.0	-4.31**b
Sense of contribution	5.0	4.0	7.0	3.0	-4.04**b

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

a Based on positive ranks. b Based on negative ranks.

Table 7.11 shows that, three months after the intervention, performers reported significantly higher levels of enjoyment, absorption, self-confidence, inspiration, connection with the audience and contribution, when compared to their experience before the intervention. They also reported significantly lower levels of anxiety and a better quality of the performance

compared to practice. Willingness to perform was the only variable that showed no change, likely because even before the intervention, performers reported being very willing to perform.

The percentage of positive, negative and neutral emotions in performance was compared between the two questionnaires. Wilcoxon tests showed a statistically significant increase in positive emotions (enjoyable time) ( $Z = -4.12, p < .001$ ) and a decrease in the time performers perceived as rough ( $Z = -4.72, p < .001$ ).

### 7.3.2.2 Comparing the performers' preparation methods in the pre-intervention and follow-up questionnaires

Wilcoxon Rank tests compared the frequency with which performers used different preparation methods before and after the intervention. Table 7.12 shows that performers had significantly increased the frequency with which they used all the preparation methods proposed during the intervention. The highest increases occurred in the frequency with which they used preparation methods that had a self-transcendent focus (i.e. focusing on the benefits for the audience and on the privilege of being a performer). Notably, the variable 'Focusing on the benefits for the audience' rose from an *Mdn* of 3.5 at the Pre-Q to an *Mdn* of 7 at the Follow-up Q.

**Table 7.12** Long-term changes in preparation methods. Comparison between pre-intervention and follow-up responses. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests ( $N = 55$ )

	Pre-Q		Follow-up Q		Z
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	
Visualisation	5.0	6.0	6.0	4.2	-2.74*b
Chemical or natural product	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	-.71a
Focusing on strengths and good preparation	6.0	5.0	7.0	4.0	-3.28**b
Focusing on the value of music	5.0	5.3	7.0	2.5	-3.66**b
Focusing on the privilege of being a performer	4.0	6.0	7.0	5.2	-4.47**b
Focusing on the benefits for the audience	3.5	4.3	7.0	5.0	-4.94**b
Relaxation methods	4.0	4.0	6.5	5.2	-3.50**b

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

a. Based on positive ranks. b. Based on negative ranks.

### 7.3.2.3 Comparing the performers' visualisation of an upcoming performance as reported in the pre-intervention and follow-up questionnaires

When performers were asked to visualise an upcoming performance, they reported significantly more rewarding experiences at the Follow-up Q compared to the Pre-Q. The Wilcoxon tests showed high increases in all the visualisation-related variables: enjoyment, self-confidence, inspiration, connection with the audience and value to the audience (see Table 7.13).

**Table 7.13** Visualization of an upcoming performance. Comparison between pre-intervention and follow-up responses. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests ( $N = 55$ )

	Pre-Q		Follow-up Q		Z
	Mdn	IQR	Mdn	IQR	
Visualization of enjoyment	6.0	3.0	7.0	3.0	-5.12**b
Visualization of self-confidence	5.0	4.0	7.0	2.0	-5.01**b
Visualization of inspiration	6.0	4.3	7.0	2.0	-4.82**b
Visualization of connection with the audience	5.0	4.0	7.0	2.0	-4.66**b
Visualization of value for the audience	6.0	4.0	7.0	2.0	-4.65**b

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

b. Based on negative ranks.

### 7.3.2.4 Comparing the performers' experience of practice as reported in the pre-intervention and follow-up questionnaires

In the Follow-up Q, participants assessed their practice as being more efficient and enjoyable, and also reported an increased percentage of practice time as being enjoyable (see Table 7.14) compared to the Pre-Q. They also tended to assess less time as being 'rough' or emotionally neutral ( $p = .07$ ). However, the increase in absorption found between Pre-Q and Post Q was no longer significant at the Follow-up Q.

**Table 7.14** *The practice experience. Comparison between pre-intervention and follow-up responses. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests*

	Pre-Q		Follow-up Q		Z
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	
<b>The practice experience (N = 62)</b>					
Efficiency of practice	6.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	-3.47**b
Enjoyment of practice	7.0	3.0	7.0	1.0	-2.25*b
Absorption during practice	7.0	2.5	7.0	2.0	-.82b
<b>Percentage of time (N = 57)</b>					
Enjoyed	65	45	80	30	-2.67*b
Rough'	10	18	10	12.5	-1.79a
Neutral	20	20	10	20	-1.81a

a. Based on positive ranks. b. Based on negative ranks.

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.001 level.

### 7.3.2.5 Comparing the daily life experience responses in the pre-intervention and follow-up questionnaires

A comparison of the data between Pre-Q and Follow-up Q showed significant increases in the percentage of time performers assessed as enjoyable, and significant decreases in the percentage of time assessed as 'rough' during their daily lives (see Table 7.15). The increase in the variable 'enjoyment of daily life' only approached significance ( $p = .07$ ).

**Table 7.15** *Daily life experience: Comparison between pre-intervention and follow-up responses. Median, interquartile range and results of Wilcoxon Ranks Tests.*

	Pre-Q		Follow-up Q		Z
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	
<b>Daily life experience (N = 62)</b>					
Enjoyment	7.0	2.0	7.0	1.0	-1.80b
<b>Percentage of time (N =56)</b>					
Enjoyed	60	30	70	20	-2.78*b
Rough'	10	10	10	15	-2.75*a
Neutral	20	20	20	20	-1.40a

\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

a. Based on positive ranks. b. Based on negative ranks.

## **7.4 Fourth analysis: Comparing the performers' reports at the pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires**

### **7.4.1 Method**

In order to investigate how the performance-related emotions changed over time, the performers' responses at the three questionnaires were compared through Friedman tests. These tests were also used to find out whether the increases in self-transcendent variables showed a tendency to fade over time.

#### **7.4.1.1 Participants**

All the participants in the study completed the Pre-Q. Seventy-five performers completed at least one post-intervention questionnaire, either the Post-Q or the Follow-up Q. This represents 31 per cent of the 231 performers who registered to the virtual school (14 completed only the Post-Q, and 16 completed only the Follow-up Q). Forty-five participants completed all three questionnaires (19 per cent of those registered to the virtual school).

Among the forty-five participants who completed the three questionnaires, there were twenty-two men (49%) and twenty-three women (51%) ranging in age from 18 to 63 ( $M = 37.80$ ,  $SD = 13.40$ ). They had an average of 18.53 years of musical practice ( $SD = 11.92$ ). Twenty lived in Spain, eleven in Uruguay, four in Mexico, three in Argentina and two in Switzerland. The other five participants came from Belgium, Brazil, Ecuador, Germany and Italy. The vast majority of participants ( $N = 37$ ; 82%) were classical performers. Almost half were students ( $N = 22$ ; 49%), eighteen were professional musicians (40%), among which sixteen were dedicated primarily to teaching activities (36% of the whole population) and two primarily to performance (4% of the whole population), and five were amateurs (11%). Fifteen played the piano (33%), eight the guitar (18%), six the violin (13%), four were singers (9%) and the other performers played instruments such as the cello, trumpet, oboe, etc. Twenty-one performed usually as soloists (47%), eighteen in small groups (40%) and six in large ensembles (13%).

The background variables of this group were quite similar to those of the group that only completed the Pre-Q, except that in this group the percentage of performers belonging to the



classical milieu was slightly higher (82% versus 71%), and there were slightly more students (49% versus 40%). Moreover, performers who completed the three questionnaires tended to evaluate the impact of their musical activities on their personal happiness as higher than performers who only completed one or two questionnaires (their *Mdn* was 9, *IQR* = 2 compared to 8, *IQR* = 2 for the whole population of performers).

## 7.4.2 Results

### 7.4.2.1 Comparing the performance experience at the pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires

From the forty-five performers who completed the three questionnaires, thirty-four had performed at least once between Pre-Q and Post-Q, and at least once between Post-Q and Follow-up Q. Table 7.16 shows the results of the Friedman tests comparing these performers' reports on their performances at the three questionnaires.

**Table 7.16** *The performance experience. Comparing responses to the pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Friedman tests (N = 34)*

Performance Experience	Pre-Q		Post-Q			Follow-up Q			Chi-square	
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>M</i>			<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Mdn</i>		<i>IQR</i>
			<i>Ranks</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>					
Enjoyment	6.0	3.5	1.5	7.0	2.0	2.2	7.0	2.0	2.3	15.03**
Absorption	5.0	3.0	1.6	7.0	2.0	2.1	7.0	2.0	2.3	10.80*
Anxiety	7.0	3.0	2.7	5.0	3.0	1.7	4.0	3.0	1.6	25.65**
Quality of the performance	4.0	2.0	1.6	5.0	3.0	2.3	6.0	3.0	2.1	11.95*
Self-confidence	5.0	3.5	1.4	7.0	2.5	2.3	7.0	2.0	2.3	21.73**
Inspiration	5.0	2.5	1.6	6.0	2.5	2.0	7.0	2.0	2.4	14.44**
Connection with the audience	5.0	3.0	1.5	6.0	2.0	2.1	7.0	3.0	2.3	14.22**
Sense of contribution	5.0	3.5	1.5	7.0	2.5	2.2	7.0	3.0	2.4	19.61**

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\*. Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 7.16 shows that the performers' responses in enjoyment, absorption and self-confidence had increased between Pre-Q and Post-Q, and that they remained as high three months later (at Follow-up Q). Notably, the variable 'quality of the performance' (compared to practice) was at its highest, and 'anxiety' at its lowest, at Follow-up Q. This enhanced performance experience appeared to be in step with a long-term change in the performers' way of thinking

about performance. Their narratives about performance seemed to become more meaningful. For instance, performers reported higher inspiration, enhanced connection with the audience and a greater sense of contribution at Follow-up Q compared to Pre-Q. Notably, inspiration and connection with the audience were at their highest at Follow-up Q. Willingness to perform was the only variable that did not change after the intervention. This might be due to the fact that, from the start, performers were quite motivated to perform, which may explain why they had both registered for the intervention and completed all the questionnaires.

A Friedman test compared the percentage of time that performers reported to enjoy, to experience as 'rough' or as emotionally neutral during performance in the three questionnaires. Answers were excluded from the data when the addition of percentages did not total 100 per cent in any of the questionnaires. This reduced the number of valid responses from 45 to 11.

The test showed that the percentage of time that these performers evaluated as enjoyable differed significantly between the questionnaires  $\chi^2(2) = 12.20, p = .002$ . The percentage of time enjoyed increased from an *Mdn* of 40% (*IQR* = 50) at Pre-Q, to an *Mdn* of 80% (*IQR* = 25) at Post-Q, and remained as high as 80% at Follow-up Q (*IQR* = 35).

The percentage of time that performers assessed as being 'rough' was significantly different between the questionnaires ( $\chi^2(2) = 10.15, p = .006$ ) as well. Notably, the percentage of time assessed as 'rough' continued to decrease between Post-Q and Follow-up Q (the *Mdn* being respectively 20% (*IQR* = 35), 10% (*IQR* = 15) and 6% (*IQR* = 20)). No statistically significant difference was found between the three questionnaires in the percentage of time assessed as emotionally neutral.

#### **7.4.2.2 Comparing the methods used to prepare for performance in the pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires**

The three questionnaires investigated the frequency with which participants used several methods to prepare for their performances, namely: visualisation, focusing on one's strengths and good preparation, focusing on the value of music, on the privilege of being a performer and on the benefits the performance could bring to their audience. Moreover, performers were asked about their intake of chemical or natural substances. After the intervention (see Table

7.17), performers increased the frequency with which they used all the preparation methods proposed during the intervention. Notably, at the time of Follow-up Q, they appeared to use some of the preparation methods more frequently than at Post-Q. In particular, high increases were found in methods that expressed a self-transcendent focus, i.e. 'focusing on the privilege of being a performer' and 'focusing on the benefits that the performance might bring to the audience'. It is noteworthy that these variables were particularly low at the Pre-Q ( $Mdn = 3$ ).

**Table 7.17** *Methods used to prepare performance. Comparing responses to the pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Friedman tests ( $N = 34$ )*

Preparation Method	Questionnaires									Chi-square
	Pre-Q			Post-Q			Follow-up			
	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Rank</i>	
<i>n</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>s</i>		
Visualisation	5.0	6.0	1.6	6.0	2.5	2.1	6.0	4.0	2.2	7.79*
Focusing on one's strengths and preparation	6.0	5.0	1.6	7.0	3.5	2.2	7.0	4.0	2.3	13.03**
Focusing on the value of music	5.0	5.0	1.5	7.0	4.0	2.2	7.0	3.5	2.3	16.65**
Focusing on the privilege of performing	3.0	6.0	1.5	6.0	7.0	2.1	8.0	4.5	2.4	18.71**
Focusing on the benefits for the audience	3.0	4.5	1.4	6.0	5.5	2.1	7.0	5.0	2.5	28.59**
Relaxation methods	4.0	4.0	1.7	6.0	5.0	1.9	7.0	5.0	2.4	9.72*

\*.Chi-square is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\*. Chi-square is significant at the 0.01 level.

### 7.4.2.3 Comparing the visualisation of an upcoming performance in the pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires

While not all performers could report on their actual performance experiences, because not all had performed between the Pre-Q and the Post-Q, and between the Post-Q and the Follow-up Q, all respondents ( $N = 45$ ) could visualise an upcoming performance and report on how they believed they would feel at that time. Changes in the performers' approaches to performance were expected to impact on the way they visualised an upcoming performance. In fact, performers appeared to visualise more rewarding performances at Post-Q and Follow-up Q than at Pre-Q.

Table 7.18 shows that all the visualisation-related variables were significantly higher after the intervention than before, and that these changes lasted for at least three months after the end of the intervention. It appeared, though, that visualisation of inspiration and enjoyment tended to decrease between Post-Q and Follow-up Q. However, a comparison between these values through Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests showed that these decreases were not statistically significant.

**Table 7.18** Visualisation of upcoming performances. Comparing responses to the pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires. Medians, interquartile ranges and results of Friedman tests (*N* 45)

Visualisations	Pre-Q			Post-Q			Follow-up Q			Chi-square
	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Rank</i>	
Enjoyment	5.0	4.0	1.4	7.0	1.0	2.3	7.0	3.0	2.3	30.56**
Self-confidence	5.0	4.0	1.3	7.0	2.0	2.4	7.0	2.0	2.3	46.03**
Inspiration	5.0	4.0	1.4	8.0	3.0	2.4	7.0	3.0	2.2	34.20**
Connection with audience	5.0	4.0	1.4	7.0	2.0	2.3	7.0	2.0	2.2	31.34**
Value for the audience	5.0	4.0	1.5	7.0	2.5	2.4	7.0	2.0	2.2	30.33**

\*\* . Chi-square is significant at the 0.001 level.

#### 7.4.2.4 Comparing the practice experience reports in the pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires

Friedman tests showed that reports on efficiency of practice were significantly different between the questionnaires ( $\chi^2 = 8.34, p < .05$ ). The *Mdn* were respectively 6 (*IQR* = 2.5), 7 (*IQR* = 2) and 7 (*IQR* = 2). This shows that the increased efficiency reported at the post-intervention questionnaire lasted for at least three months.

While a statistically significant increase in enjoyment of practice was found between Pre-Q and Post-Q, and between Pre-Q and Follow-up Q, the increase only approached significance when the three questionnaires were compared through Friedman tests (the *Mdn* was 7 (*IQR* = 2.5) at Pre-Q, and 8 (*IQR* = 2) at both Post-Q and Follow-up Q ( $\chi^2 = 4.92, p = .08$ )). This may be due to the fact that the size of the population that completed the three questionnaires was smaller (*N* = 45) than the size of the population that completed only two questionnaires (*N* = 57 for Post-Q, and *N* = 62 for Follow-up Q). Moreover, the population that completed the

three questionnaires was not identical to the one that completed only Post-Q and the one that completed only Follow-up Q.

These factors might also explain why the increase in the percentage of time reported as enjoyable during practice was statistically significant when questionnaires were compared two by two, but not so when the comparison included the three questionnaires (in this case, there were only thirty-six valid responses after filtering out responses that, when added together, did not total 100 per cent).

#### **7.4.2.5 Comparing other variables in the pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires**

Friedman tests compared the data of the three questionnaires regarding the percentage of time performers assessed as enjoyable, rough or neither enjoyable nor rough in their daily life. While Wilcoxon tests, comparing the questionnaires two by two, had found statistically significant increases between the Pre-Q and the Post-Q values, and between the Pre-Q and the Follow-up Q values, increases were not statistically significant when the three questionnaires were compared through Friedman's tests. As for the other variables discussed above, this may be due to the smaller size of the sample population that completed all three questionnaires and to the smaller number of valid responses (there were only 38 valid responses to this question compared to 50 when Pre-Q and Post-Q were compared, and 56 when Pre-Q and Follow-up Q were compared).

The Friedman test showed that the level of confidence in attaining goals was significantly different between the questionnaires ( $\chi^2 = 17.33, p = .001$ ). The increased level of confidence found at Post-Q was still as high three months later (Pre-Q: *Mdn* = 7 (*IQR* = 3); Post-Q and Follow-up Q: *Mdn* = 8 (*IQR* = 2)).

### **7.4.3 Discussion**

The main goal of the intervention was to help performers enhance their performance experience by cultivating a more meaningful, self-transcendent, inspiring narrative about performance. The results of this study suggest that this was an attainable goal. Three months after the intervention, performers seemed to care more for the audience, feel more connected

with it, and appreciate the value of music and the privilege of being a performer more than they did before the intervention. The values of these variables, rather than going back to their initial levels, showed an increase over time.

A more self-transcendent approach to performance was associated with much more rewarding experiences when performers visualised upcoming performances and with performance experiences in which they reported more inspiration, joy, self-confidence, reduced anxiety and a better quality of performance.

The intervention appeared to empower performers: not only did they feel more self-confident in performance, but they also viewed their practice methods as more efficient and felt more confidence in attaining their goals. Moreover, it seems that the intervention might have indirectly increased the amount of joy that the performers experienced in their daily lives. However, more conclusive results might require further research, for instance, conducting the intervention with a larger population of performers and for a longer period of time.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the results of the research in more depth, considering its implications as well as its limitations.

## **Chapter 8: Summary and Concluding Discussion**

In conducting my research, I aimed to redress the current bias of psychological research on performance, which mainly focuses on anxiety, and to instead investigate performance experiences that performers assess as being ‘highly enjoyable’. These experiences were not studied in isolation, but together with, and in comparison to, performances assessed as ‘moderately enjoyable’ or ‘stressful’, in order to single out the factors that might contribute to, enhance or undermine performance experiences. In particular, I aimed to extend a previous qualitative study that suggested that joy in performance resulted from having meaningful and self-transcendent narratives about performance (Guevara, 2007). Its ultimate goal was to get a broad understanding of the performance experience so as to design an intervention capable of increasing performance-related joy.

In this chapter, I summarise and discuss the main findings of two novel empirical studies. The first is an on-line Exploratory Study, which investigated the performance experience of 625 performers drawn from 36 countries. The second is an Intervention Project that aimed to enhance performance experiences (make them more joyful and fulfilling) through a short, on-line learning course. I discuss the implications of the research, as well as its contributions and limitations.

### **8.1 The Exploratory Study**

The first empirical study explored the performance experience of a sample of performers who reported different types of performance experiences, and sought to identify the factors that could be associated with, or that could predict, the quality of the experiences they reported. It investigated, moreover, the performers’ emotions and cognitions during their most recent ‘highly enjoyable’ and ‘non-enjoyable’ performance in order to establish the criteria according to which performers assessed their performances. I hypothesised that such criteria would reveal the kinds of narratives performers have about performance (that is, the meaning they consistently make of their performances), and that these narratives would be associated with the assessments they made of their performance experiences in general.

Performance-related emotions were investigated relative to the emotions performers reported in other contexts (namely in practice and daily life). Inferential statistics showed that performance was the setting in which performers reported the highest frequency of both positive as well as negative emotions (elation, joy, positive arousal, worry and fear), and that during practice, performers reported a higher frequency of positive emotions and a lower frequency of negative emotions compared to daily life. This suggests that performance is characterised by the intensity of the emotions it elicits, while practice is a pleasant and relaxing activity and not merely a means to performance (these findings are not consistent with studies that found that few performers actually enjoy practicing (i.e. Woody, 2004)).

Correlation analyses showed that the frequency with which performers reported an emotion in performance correlated with the frequency with which they reported the same emotion in practice and daily life, which suggests that performance-related emotions are partly shaped by the performers' temperament (their basic tendency to feel positive or negative emotions more or less frequently) (McCrae & Costa, 1999; McCrae et al., 2000; Weiss, Bates & Luciano, 2008). However, these correlations were low, which indicated that temperament was not the main determinant of the performance experience. These findings are consistent with previous research that underscored the impact of constitutional factors on performance experiences (Cox & Kenardy, 1993; Chirico et al., 2015; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987; Steptoe, 1989; Wilson, 1997).

Not all performers experience performance and practice in the same way, and a Categorical Principal Component Analysis (CATPCA) conducted on the twenty-one emotions performers reported in the three settings identified three different emotional profiles: the first one was characterised by high levels of positive affect and low levels of negative affect in all three contexts; the second, by negative emotions in performance but very positive emotions during practice; the third, by high levels of negative emotions and a lack of positive emotions in daily life and, by contrast, high levels of all the positive emotions and an absence of all negative emotions in performance. One-way ANOVAs showed that these three emotional profiles were linked to some of the performers' background variables. For instance, women, classical performers and soloists scored significantly higher than their counterparts in the profile 'At best in practice and at worst in performance', and the scores of professionals, students and amateurs were significantly different in the three emotional profiles as well. These results suggest that each group had the tendency to experience their music-making –



performance and practice – in a characteristic and different way, which could indicate that emotions were shaped by the category to which a performer belonged. As I will discuss below, further analyses showed that these groups also differed in the way they thought about performance, and that these differences in thoughts were partly responsible for their differences in performance experiences.

Forty-two per cent of performers assessed their performances as ‘highly enjoyable’ experiences, yet performance appeared to not be an optimal experience for more than half of the respondents. What factors could impact on the different qualities of performance experiences that they reported? Chi-squares showed that a performer’s gender, musical genre, main activity and status associated with the assessment they made of their performance experiences in general, which is consistent with previous research (Abel & Larkin, 1990; Cox & Kenardy, 1993; Creech et al., 2008; Hamann, 1982; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987). However, further analyses (regressions) suggested that, within this population, some of these associations were due to confounding variables, and that only the performers’ main activity and musical genre predicted the quality of their performance experience (the fact of being a soloist increased the likelihood of assessing performances as stressful and the fact of being a non-classical performer increased the likelihood of assessing performances as highly enjoyable experiences). These findings point to the need to take into account confounding variables when investigating the impact of background variables on performance experiences; for instance, in this study, the high prevalence of MPA found among students appeared to be due to the fact that many of these students performed mainly as soloists.

Moreover, the study suggested that caution is needed when comparing the self-reports of men and woman about their negative performance experiences because such self-reports might be biased due to gender stereotypes (Robinson & Clore, 2002). In fact, differences in negative emotions between groups were or were not statistically significant depending on the terms through which the experience was investigated (men and women differed much less in the frequency with which they assessed their performance experiences as ‘stressful’ than in the frequency with which they reported experiencing ‘worry’ or ‘fear’ in performance). The difference between women and men’s reports on negative experiences appears to be due to their differences in openly disclosing their negative feelings (see, i.e. Kokotsaki & Davidson, 2003).

The performers' statements about their last 'highly enjoyable' performance were explored, and notably, most performers (73%) attributed their 'highly enjoyable' performance to feeling connected with the audience or co-performers, to the enjoyment of the audience (66%) and to a sense of contribution (61%). On the other hand, many performers attributed their 'non-enjoyable' performance experience to a lack of connection with the audience and co-performers (40%), and to a lack of meaning (30%). These findings suggest that connection and meaning (and the lack of those) strongly impact on the quality of emotional experiences. A PCA on the performers' statements showed that performers had coherent narratives about performance that differ in the beliefs, values or goals they highlight. Five narratives were identified: The 'people-oriented' narrative (the component that explained the highest percentage of the variance) emphasised connection with the audience and contribution; the 'source-oriented' narrative highlighted the transcendent origin of the experience; the 'self-oriented' narrative underscored achievement and a good preparation; the 'fitness-focused' narrative attributed the experience to being physically and psychological fit; and the 'magical-moment' narrative accentuated the perfect and transcendent moments the performance could afford.

Further regression analyses on these narratives showed that they significantly predicted the assessments performers made of their performance experiences during the previous year: scoring high in the 'people-oriented', 'source-oriented', 'self-oriented' and 'magic-oriented' narratives predicted a higher frequency of 'highly enjoyable' performances than scoring low in these same narratives; scoring high in the 'fitness-focused' narrative predicted a lower frequency of 'stressful' performances than scoring low in this narrative; and scoring high in the 'people-oriented' narrative predicted both a higher frequency of 'highly enjoyable' performances and a lower frequency of 'stressful' performances than scoring low in this variable.

These results led me to draw three important conclusions: first, that the performers' statements about their highly enjoyable performance expressed not only the meaning they made of that particular performance, but the meaning that they consistently made of performance in general (this is the reason why these statements could predict the long-term quality of their performance experiences); second, that all the narratives identified were helpful, as they predicted either increased joy or reduced anxiety; and third, that not all narratives were equal in predicting the quality of performance experiences, as it appeared that

the people-oriented narrative promoted the most rewarding experiences, simultaneously increasing joy and reducing anxiety.

I interpreted these findings based on theories that hold that people respond emotionally to the stories they tell themselves about reality rather than to reality itself (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Kahneman, 2005, 2010; McAdams, 2001). Narratives that were meaningful and purposeful (i.e. De Muijnck, 2013; Frankl, 1959; Seligman, 2011; Steger, Oishi & Kashdan, 2009; Wong, 1998), which viewed performance as a means to attaining valuable goals (goals that are connected to the performers' psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Ryan et al., 2013; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998)), and which focused the performers' attention on the opportunities that performance might open up, appeared to foster an 'approach' motivation to performance (Elliot, 2006), and appeared to elicit performance-related joy. In particular, narratives that celebrated the social meaning of performance – valuing connectedness and contribution – appeared to be most helpful in the performance context.

While it could be expected that scoring high in a narrative that expresses self-efficacy beliefs (the 'self-oriented' narrative) would promote more joy in performance than scoring low in this narrative (Bandura, 1977; Craske & Craig, 1984; McCormick & McPherson, 2003; Ritchie & Williamon, 2012), it is notable that scoring high in narratives that highlight the social meaning of performance, that emphasise transcendence and celebrate the magical quality of the experience, also promoted more joy than scoring low in these same narratives. These findings have important implications when it comes to interventions, as most of the interventions that include cognitive restructuring focus on helping performers cultivate healthy and realistic beliefs about performance and self (i.e. self-efficacy beliefs) (i.e. Kenny & Ackermann, 2011; Osborne, Green & Immel, 2014). However, these findings suggest that enhancing self-efficacy beliefs is but one of the means through which the performance experience might be improved. Interventions aiming at developing a positive people-oriented, source-oriented and magical-moment-oriented approach to performance might be as useful, or even more useful, to performers (as suggested by the findings on the people-oriented narrative) than interventions that do not focus on self-transcendent concerns.

Performance-related emotions and narratives were associated with the performers' musical and demographic variables. This analysis suggested that each group has its characteristic

narratives about performance (i.e. more or less self-transcendent), and that these narratives shape their performance-related emotions. These findings point to socio-cultural factors as determinants of performance experiences. For instance, classical performers reported less joy in performance than non-classical performers, and their performance-related narratives were more self-centred and less self-transcendent than the narratives of their counterparts. Hence, it appears that the differences in joy reported by classical and non-classical performers may in part be due to their different ways of making sense of performance, with the classical environment encouraging a more self-centred orientation to performance compared to non-classical performers (Creech et al., 2008; Green, 2002; Kingsbury, 1988). These findings are particularly relevant when it comes to MPA research, as they point to the need to investigate not only how individuals think about performance, but how their socio-cultural group ‘trains’ them to think about it (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Mesquita & Fridja, 1992; Scherer & Brosch, 2009). MPA should be investigated taking into consideration the social context within which it originates, and socio-cultural factors should be included in current models of MPA. Treatments of MPA should acknowledge the impact of socio-cultural factors on MPA, and factors that might promote anxiety should be identified and, ideally, changed.

Consistent with the above, the emotional profiles identified in this study suggest that the classical milieu might inadvertently emphasise the value of practice (as a means to competence and achievement) while neglecting to promote appreciation for the joys associated with performance (Killick, 2006). This may have a detrimental impact on the performers’ performance experiences. Given the relevance of these subjects, I will discuss them in more depth at the end of this chapter.

## **8.2 The Intervention Project**

The second study was based on the findings of the Exploratory Study and previous research, and consisted of a five-week on-line intervention designed to enhance the performers’ music-making experiences and, in particular, to increase their joy of performing. The impact of the intervention was measured using a waitlist control group, and pre-intervention, post-intervention and follow-up questionnaires.

In contrast with interventions that aim to help performers acquire a more realistic appraisal of the performance situation, this intervention aimed to help performers develop wider, more self-transcendent, inspiring and personally meaningful narratives about performance. To do this, performers were helped to become more aware of their core values, beliefs and psychological needs, and of the many opportunities a performance might open up to satisfy these needs. I hypothesised that such awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003) would be the first step in a process that would be followed by a change of focus, more meaningful narratives, an approach rather than an avoidance motivation and, as a result, more fulfilling performance experiences. Given the key role that images appear to play in emotional processes (Damasio, 1991, 2003; Frijda, 1988), the intervention exposed performers to narratives that could elicit emotion-provoking mental images (I hypothesised that narratives would be inspiring to the extent that they would elicit such images), and to pictures that were specifically designed for the intervention (i.e. performance as a gift the performer gives to the audience) (see some of these pictures in Appendix II).

Rather than imposing predetermined narratives on performers, the intervention aimed to empower performers by showing them that they could become more aware of their own narratives through introspection (as narratives often operate at a non-conscious level), and that they could choose the narratives they wanted to live by. Performers were encouraged to work on narratives that were aligned with their psychological needs and values and that they viewed as personally meaningful, and to define their ‘mission’ as performers.

### **8.2.1 The impact of the intervention on the performers’ narratives and emotions.**

A statistical comparison of the pre- and post-intervention responses showed that both narratives and performance-related emotions had significantly changed after the intervention. Narratives became more meaningful: performers developed a greater awareness of, and appreciation for, their contribution to the audience, the value of music, their strengths and good preparation, and the privilege of being a performer. They appeared to think more about performance in terms of opportunities. These changes in the focus of their narratives seemed to allow performers to experience more positive emotions during performance, in particular, more joy and self-confidence, and less anxiety.

While the main goal of the intervention was not to reduce anxiety, it is noteworthy that anxiety was significantly reduced after the intervention. As previously suggested, looking at the big picture and adding a self-transcendent dimension to the performance might have reduced the performers' ego-centred concerns. Within a more purposeful perspective, such concerns might have lost their primacy. Also, anxiety might have been reduced by the fact that performers felt more connected (with others, and with something beyond self, which made them feel more inspired), which might have increased their trust in their coping resources and their perception of match between the challenges of the performance and their own skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). In agreement with previous studies, the findings of this research suggest that connecting to others emotionally could be an alternative way to combat performance anxiety (see Lamont, 2012).

In addition to enhancing the performance experience by increasing joy and reducing anxiety, the intervention appeared to improve the perceived quality of the performance. This finding may be particularly relevant given that an improved quality of performance may have a self-reinforcing, confidence-enhancing effect on future performances, and may obviate the need for further interventions (Kenny, 2005).

A change in narrative appeared to give performers access to new qualities of performance experiences. For instance, an increase in the performers' people-oriented focus seemed to facilitate the experience of connectedness in performance; an increase in their belief that they could give something of value to the audience appeared to facilitate the actual experience of contributing during performance, and so on. Therefore, I argue that the performers' new narratives determined the kind of experiences that became readily accessible to them, thus acting as tools to shape experiences (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; Kahneman, 2005, 2010; Maturana, 1987; McAdams, 2001).

### **8.3 Contributions of the research.**

#### *The study brings joy and self-transcendence into performance research*

The study redresses a current bias of performance research, which mainly focuses on negative performance experiences (i.e. MPA), and provides data on the emotions and cognitions that characterise performances assessed as being 'highly enjoyable'. Highly enjoyable

performances deserve to be investigated in their own right as they are intrinsically rewarding, may promote best functioning, and may positively impact on the performers' well-being (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Kahneman, 2011; Waugh, & Fredrickson, 2006). The study shows that this kind of performance is frequent among musicians, and that it is primarily self-transcendent rather than self-centred.

The construct of flow falls short of rendering the meaning that performers make of these experiences, as performers' descriptions appear to go beyond engagement to refer to an experience that is highly meaningful and characterised by spiritual connection. The findings suggest that the meaningfulness of end goals matter, and that the mere fact of striving for goals such as connection and contribution increases performance-related joy (see Duffy & Dik, 2013; Emmons, 2003; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). In addition to the above, flow does not provide information on the aspects of the experience that are the most distinctively human (i.e. the role that meaning-making narratives play in these highly positive experiences) (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Cassirer, 1944; Damasio, 1999, 2003; Echeverria, 2001; McAdams, 2001).

This is the first intervention in which the goal was to increase performers' joy in performing, and the comparison between the performers' responses to the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires shows that this is an attainable goal. This indicates that interventions can facilitate more fulfilling performance experiences – performances during which performers feel more joyful, confident, inspired, connected, and have a greater sense that they contribute something of value. This increases the ambitiousness of research goals in the field of the psychology of music performance, showing that interventions can go beyond the reduction of anxiety to increase a performer's joy, inspiration and feelings of connection in performance.

This is the first study to show that making meaning of performance as a means to connect and contribute (scoring high for a people-oriented narrative about performance) predicts better performance experiences (i.e. more joy and less anxiety) than having a positive but self-oriented approach to performance (scoring high for a positive self-oriented narrative). These findings are consistent with Emmons's findings (1991, 2003), and suggest that, if performers were to be assisted to enjoy their performances more fully, interventions should help them to cultivate a more self-transcendent approach to performance (i.e. perceiving performance as a

means to connect and contribute) rather than focusing exclusively on enhancing their perception of competence and self-efficacy beliefs.

*The study broadens the focus through which performance experiences are generally investigated.*

While research on music performance generally investigates negative and positive performance experiences separately, this study included and compared different kinds of performance experiences. This approach enabled me to investigate how different factors impact on the likelihood of performers experiencing positive or negative emotions in performance. It was this broad focus that enabled me to find out that a people-oriented narrative about performance increases the likelihood of performers assessing their performances as being ‘highly enjoyable’ while simultaneously reducing the likelihood of them assessing their performances as being ‘stressful’.

This is the first study to explore performance-related emotions in relation to the emotions that performers report in daily life and during practice. This broad focus allowed me to carry out four types of analyses that led to four significant findings. First, a comparison between settings through Friedman tests allowed me to see that performance was the setting in which performers reported the most intense emotions (both positive and negative), and that practice was the setting in which positive emotions were increased and negative emotions reduced in comparison to daily life, suggesting that practice may be experienced either as a refuge against the worries and fears of daily life or as a means of enhancing the emotions of daily life (Pitts, 2005). Second, a Spearman correlation between the emotions reported in the three settings allowed me to see that the emotions reported showed a certain degree of cross-situational consistency, suggesting that the performers’ emotions were shaped by an underlying tendency to experience positive and negative emotions more or less frequently (McCrae & Costa, 1999; Weiss, Bates & Luciano, 2008). Third, a categorical PCA identified different emotional patterns in the emotions that performers reported in the three settings. Of particular interest was an emotional profile in which performance-related emotions were similar to those that characterise MPA while, by contrast, the emotions reported during practice were highly positive, suggesting that the goal of these performers’ music-making was not performance, but the private enjoyment of practising (Killick, 2006). Fourth, one-way ANOVAs showed that the emotional profiles of performers belonging to different groups



were different, which suggested that the emotional profiles were shaped by the category to which a performer belonged.

This is the first quantitative study that sought to infer the performers' narratives about performance from their choice of statements (through PCA). I suggest that the identification of narratives enabled a more holistic understanding of the meaning performers make of their performance, and is more suitable to exploring the functioning of the human mind compared to exploring the experience through fragmented statements (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; McAdams, 2001).

It is the first study that explored the link between performance-related emotions (both, positive and negative), performance-related narratives and socio-cultural environments. The findings suggest that emotions in performance are socio-culturally shaped, in part through the narratives that are prevalent within a performer's groups. In other words, it points to the fact that different categories of performers (i.e. students, amateurs and professionals; classical and non-classical; soloists, ensemble players and large group performers) might differ in the emotions they report in performance not only because their activities differ, but also because their activities are embedded in socio-cultural environments that hold different values, beliefs and priorities. The different concerns highlighted by socio-cultural environments shape the way performers think about performance (their narratives), and these, in turn, shape their emotional experiences (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 2010; Mesquita & Fridja, 1992; Scherer & Brosch, 2009).

*The study brings the construct of inspiration into performance research*

The main goal of this research was to investigate highly joyful performance experiences and to enhance performance-related joy – because joy is both an intrinsically rewarding experience and a facilitator of best functioning (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998; Kahneman, 2011; Saroglou, Buxant & Tilquin, 2008; Waugh, & Fredrickson, 2006). I based my research on the hypothesis that increasing the meaningfulness of the performers' narratives (i.e. rendering these narratives more self-transcendent and inspiring) would result in an increase in their joy of performing. In fact, the intervention was successful in helping performers to enhance both the quality of their narratives (these became broader and more self-transcendent) and the joy they experienced in performance. However, joy was but one of the components of the

performance experience that increased significantly after the intervention. As previously discussed, increasing the meaning and inspiring nature of the performers' narratives appeared to enhance their performance experiences in multiple ways. For instance, the performers' levels of inspiration appeared to be much higher after the intervention than before.

While, at the start of my intervention, I viewed inspiration (in particular, the inspiring nature of narratives) as a means to increase performance-related joy, I wonder now whether inspiration is not in itself a worthwhile variable through which to investigate performance experiences, and I wonder even whether looking at the performance experience through the lens of inspiration does not give a deeper, richer picture of the experience than looking at it through joy. Because, despite the fact that inspiration and positive affect (PA) are both highly correlated appetitive motivational states, they differ in that inspiration involves more transcendence and is more cognitively complex than PA. Inspiration implies higher human longings and the transcendence of one's previous conscious concerns; and when transcendence increases, personal responsibility is thought to decrease (Clare, Ortony & Foss, 1987; Thrash and Elliot, 2004). Therefore, the degree of inspiration that performers report can shed light on their levels of transcendence and feelings of personal responsibility, while their reports on joy cannot.

Given that inspiration is very much associated with artistic activities (Thrash and Elliot, 2003), investigating the experience in terms of inspiration may likely reveal aspects of the experience that are intrinsically linked to artistic experiences but that may remain invisible when only looking at the experience through the lens of positive emotions. These characteristics of inspiration may point to this variable as particularly fit to investigate best performance experiences, as well as being a new angle through which to study MPA. The simultaneous increase in inspiration and decrease in anxiety found in this research following the intervention suggests that helping performers to feel more inspired during performance (i.e. by cultivating more inspiring narratives about it) might be an effective way to reduce their anxiety.

When I ponder on my best experiences as a performer, I do not think that I could accurately describe them by saying that I felt joyful or that I was in flow. My experience was something else, and something more. Perhaps the best way to describe it would be to say that I felt inspired. Because when I say that I felt inspired, those who listen to me understand that the

moment was special to me, that I felt engaged in something meaningful and was moved by something superior to me, that I was not preoccupied by competence or evaluation, but rather that I relinquished control and surrendered to an experience that was lofty, transcendent and optimal. While the ease of the experience and optimal function could be equally rendered by the construct of flow, the construct does not render either the meaningfulness of my experience or the connectedness that I felt. Neither does joy. Since the construct of inspiration has received little attention in psychological research, I suggest that investigating artistic experiences in terms of inspiration could be particularly enlightening because of its association with such activities and with well-being (Thrash, Elliot, Maruskin & Cassidy, 2010).

*The study brings the construct of narratives into music performance research*

This study introduces the concept of narratives into music performance research as a useful tool to explore and enhance performance-related emotions. I argue that the construct gives a broader perspective on performance experience, and may facilitate change. Because, once performers conceive emotions as dependent on thoughts, and conceive thoughts in terms of narratives (the stories they tell themselves about their reality), they can more easily distance themselves from their thoughts and view them as changeable. Thinking in this way may free performers from unhealthy assumptions such as viewing anxiety as being mainly dependent on their personality, or as viewing their thoughts as being linked to their identity, which implies that they can do little to enhance their emotions.

In addition, the construct may help performers assume responsibility for the stories they tell themselves about their lives, and therefore to choose the narratives they view as personally meaningful. The introspective work that working on one's narratives implies can help them to find out the deep reasons that attract them to making and sharing music, and to align their goals with their core values, bringing meaningfulness into their activity. Such alignment of goals and values seems to facilitate goal attainment (as individuals put more effort into attaining these goals) and to promote greater well-being (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). It is noteworthy that the changes in the performers' narratives and emotions occurred quite quickly after the intervention. The speed of these changes (and the increase in positive emotions reported) may indicate that performers were not responding to something that was totally new for them, but rather, that the intervention helped them to connect or reconnect with their intrinsic motivation to make and share music, rendering their functioning more self-

concordant (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Tuning goals and values might result in enhanced performance experiences that are long-lasting, as suggested by the findings of the research.

The findings of the intervention appear to be consistent with theorists who claim that language creates reality (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; McAdams, 2001). It does so by focusing individuals' attentions on some of the aspects of reality (i.e. connection, contribution) at the time that it diverts their attention from other aspects (i.e. evaluation). As performers' performance-related narratives are consistent over time, these narratives will influence the aspects of reality that will become readily available for them prior to performance and during performance too, in this way shaping the emotional quality of their performance experience. This is perhaps the reason why, after the intervention, performers focused more on their strengths and good preparation prior to performance and reported feeling more confident in performance; they thought more about the benefits their performances might bring to the audience than prior to the intervention, and reported more connection with the audience during performance. The kinds of narratives performers cultivate appear to determine the types of experiences they can access.

While the link between narratives and emotion seems to be strong, this does not mean that any kind of narrative is able to affect an individual's emotions to the same extent. Narratives can be healthy but not inspiring, may touch reason but not emotion (Frijda, 1988). Accordingly, the intervention was based on the hypothesis that narratives should be able to elicit new mental images if they were to change the performers' emotions (Damasio, 2003) (during the intervention, performers were encouraged to make meaning of their performances through metaphorical and poetic narratives). I speculate that the increase in positive emotions found after the intervention was partly due to the new mental images (associating performance with meaningful opportunities) elicited by the performers' new narratives.

The scope of narratives may affect the quality of emotional experiences too. For instance, if a narrative about performance is healthy but its scope is narrow, it may only enable performers to see performance-related opportunities for goal achievement, but not for self-transcendence. The intervention's goal of broadening the performers' perspective on performance might have contributed to making both their narratives and their performance experiences more self-transcendent. The broadened focus of their narratives might have allowed the performers to become aware of a larger number of opportunities that a performance may open up, and to

view performance within the context of the big picture. Becoming more aware of how a performance could benefit others might have rendered their performances more meaningful, and therefore more joyful.

Narratives and meaning are indissociable because narratives are tools to create meaning. Interestingly, the findings showed that the higher the positive meaning performers conferred on their performances, the higher the likelihood they would experience joy. As narratives are not mutually exclusive, I speculate that when the performers' scores are high in all the narratives investigated, their performances are likely to become fully fulfilling experiences, as they may simultaneously satisfy their psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness) (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

The findings of the research appear to be consistent with a previous study that investigated the performance-related narratives of three professional performers who loved to perform through in-depth interviews, and which suggested that the quality of their performances (highly enjoyable and transcendent) resulted from the meaningfulness of their narratives (Guevara, 2007). In fact, these performers' narratives seemed to express a 'calling' orientation to performance; that is, these performers viewed their music-making as a valuable gift that they had received in order to enhance other people's lives, and they felt a responsibility to give their best to cultivate this gift (Dik and Duffy, 2009; Duffy et al., 2011; Rosso et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Such narratives about performance appear to be inspiring, and allow performers to fully enjoy their performances.

#### *The study brings socio-cultural factors into music performance research*

The very low scores found at the pre-intervention questionnaire in variables that express appreciation for the privilege of being a performer and the belief that one is giving something of value to the audience suggest that these types of narratives are not prevalent within some socio-cultural environments. These findings lead me to speculate that some environments (i.e. music institutions) may be promoting an obsessive search for achievement that results in performers conceiving of performance exclusively as a means of evaluation (Persson, 1996; Sloboda, 1999). When extrinsic goals are encouraged at the expense of implicit ones, and when a performer's attention starts to be completely absorbed by a search for mastery and proficiency, other meaningful reasons that might have attracted him or her to making music in the first place may progressively fade away (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 1999). When this

happens, performers may end up achieving high standards of playing, yet be lacking in meaningful reasons to perform. I speculate that without a meaningful purpose to go on stage, it may be hard to feel joyful and, even more so, fulfilled.

It is noteworthy that the discussion forum included in the intervention acted as a space for open and deep communication between members, and reproduced many of the interactions I regularly observe during my face-to-face workshops. For example, an individual expressing his or her own doubts and fears publicly, and others confessing that this was exactly how they felt, and expressing their surprise and joy at realising they were not alone in going through these kinds of experiences. Moreover, I received several emails from participants in which they shared with me (a person they had never met) their personal stories and struggles. I was particularly touched by one long email from a participant who concluded by thanking me for giving him the opportunity to say things that he could never express before.

When pondering on the performers' comments during this web-based intervention, it became evident that many performers feel very lonely when it comes to the problems associated with their music-making. Reflecting on my own experiences as a student and teacher in conservatoires, I maintain that a conservatoire is not an environment that encourages musicians to openly express their worries and concerns. Milieus that encourage competition and infallibility may not make room for the expression of humans' intrinsic feelings of vulnerability, making performers believe that they are alone in their doubts and struggles, alone with their 'disabilities'. Within the performers' world, instead of viewing fear and self-doubt as inherent characteristics of the human nature, with which all individuals should make peace, many view these as evidence that they are not fit to perform. These kinds of narratives are difficult to change when they are kept secret. However, when the opportunity of sincere and deep communication is created, performers may suddenly realise that they have no real 'disability'; simply, they partake in the vulnerable condition of human beings.

I maintain that the obsessive search for mastery, the competitive attitude and the loneliness that characterises the music-making of many classical music students, hinders genuine communication within music institutions (see Kingsburg, 1988). This absence of open communication may be responsible for students developing unhealthy narratives (such as the one mentioned above), narratives that, when not discussed, may be perpetuated into mature age, even if the individual becomes a professional performer. This may partly explain why so

many professional performers suffer from performance anxiety or assess their performances as only moderately enjoyable. But, in addition to not providing opportunities for challenging unhealthy narratives, the practices and the hidden curricula of music institutions may be promoting such narratives.

Narratives are co-created between individuals and the groups to which they belong (Bruner, 2004, 2009; Echeverria, 2001; McAdams, 2001), and each group has its characteristic set of values and beliefs (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Schwartz, 1992, 2006; Stets & Turner, 2008) that are embedded in the metaphors they use (Lakoff, 1980), and that are implicit in their practices. Classical and non-classical milieus might be seen as different cultural environments that hold different hierarchies of values and beliefs (Creech et al., 2008; Green, 2002; Kingsbury, 1988; Papageorgi et al., 2010). In this study, the narratives of classical performers were found to be more self-centred and less people-oriented than the narratives of their counterparts. This seemed to result in classical performers reporting lower levels of joy and all positive emotions, and higher levels of anxiety and fear, than non-classical performers (in performance). In addition to the above, when the emotional profiles of both groups were compared, it seemed that the classical music milieu might be implicitly promoting practice and solitary involvement with music as the main goal of music-making, cultivating little appreciation for the joys and meaning of sharing music with others (Killick, 2006).

The low scores of music students in the people- and source-oriented narratives suggest that social meaning and the recognition of a transcendent, meta-empirical dimension of performance (Pargament & Park, 1995) are absent from the official discourses and from the implicit practices of some music institutions (Palmer, 2006). The narratives that these institutions appear to promote (centered in achievement) strip much of its meaningfulness from music-making. When musicians lose sight of the role they play in society, and are unaware of their contribution to a better world, their performances are likely to become less fulfilling. When their narratives exclude all elements of spiritual relationships (i.e. searching for meaning, unity, and connectedness (Emmons, 1998)), when they do not view any association between their performances and ‘the pattern which connects’ (Small, 1998) or with whatever metaphor that may inspire them and help them view their music-making within the big picture, their performances are likely to become less worthwhile.

In these cases, suboptimal performance experiences (i.e. increased anxiety and/or decreased joy) may not necessarily result from the interplay of the situation, the difficulty of the task and the performer's personality (Wilson, 1997), from the performers' maladaptive thoughts (Kendrick, Craig, Lawson & Davidson, 1982; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987; Wilson, 2002), or from unresolved trauma dating possibly from early childhood (Kenny, Arthey & Abbass, 2014; Nagel, 2010), but from a lack of existential meaning in the music-making discourses promoted by their socio-cultural environments (Crescioni & Baumeister, 2013; Reker, Peacock & Wong, 1987; Rogers, 1961; Wong, 2014).

Meaningfulness is something that appears to be lacking in many performers' conceptions of performance, and this lack might have detrimental consequences in their performance experience.

*The study suggests that the internet can be a useful tool to enhance performers' music-making experiences*

This research shows that the internet can be a practical, cheap and efficient means to conduct interventions (see Botella et al., 2010). It can, in addition, make these interventions available to performers who might not otherwise have the opportunity to receive them (i.e. being geographically isolated or not having the financial resources to pay for expensive in-home courses).

## **8.4 Limitations of the research**

This research has highlighted the impact of narratives on emotions. Its findings suggest that helping performers to make sense of their performance through more personally meaningful and inspiring narratives enhances their performance experiences. However, it is important to keep in mind the limitations of the research, among which I highlight the following points from a methodological and theoretical perspective.

From a methodological perspective, the enhanced performance experiences reported by performers after the intervention might not exclusively result from a change in their narratives. In fact, while the main focus of the intervention was to make performers more aware of their own narratives, of the impact these might have on their performance experience and on the power they have to enhance their narratives and, therefore, to enhance their



performance-related emotions, the intervention did not deal exclusively with narratives. For instance, the intervention included relaxation exercises, mental rehearsals, and encouraged performers to design an action plan through which they could gradually go out of their comfort zone and perform in increasingly challenging settings.

Previous studies on MPA have suggested that the most effective treatments for anxiety resulted from interventions that dealt with the phenomenon from a multiplicity of perspectives (i.e. cognitive and behavioural) (Kendrick, Craig, Lawson & Davidson, 1982; Kenny, 2005; Nagel, Himle & Papsdorf, 1989; Nagel, 2010). My intervention could be viewed as falling within this category, and it could be claimed that all the perspectives considered during the intervention contributed to some extent to the increase of positive emotions and the decrease of anxiety found following the intervention. Nonetheless, given the link that exists between cognition and emotion, and the fact that the performers' appraisals and interpretations of their performances have significantly changed after the intervention (i.e. their narratives becoming more meaningful and purposeful), it is reasonable to deduce that these changes had an impact on their performance experiences, and played a role in the enhanced performance experience they reported.

Another limitation is that I treated 'non-classical' performers as a homogeneous group, when it is evident that they are not (I divided the population into 'classical' and 'non-classical' performers for analysis purposes). While my main interest here was to investigate differences between classical and other types of performers, this research did not take into account the specificities of each of the musical genres that were represented in the study.

Furthermore, it is impossible to affirm from this study that the changes found in the performers' narratives and emotions at the second post-intervention questionnaire (Follow-up Q) would be perpetuated in the longer term (i.e. one year later). Some researchers state that, in time, individuals tend to go back to their initial state of well-being (Weiss et al., 2008), which suggests that, after a period of time, the performers might return to the emotional state that they reported at the pre-intervention questionnaire. However, the fact that some of the performance-related variables investigated (i.e. inspiration and connection with the audience) showed the highest values three months after the end of the intervention, and that anxiety was at its lowest value, might also indicate that the intervention elicited permanent changes in the

way performers perceived their performances. Longer studies seem necessary to confirm whether the improvement in performance experiences was long-lasting or not.

Lastly, as discussed in Chapter 4, this research was based on retrospective self-reports, which are not the best tools for investigating actual performance experiences. However, as previously argued, this research focused on investigating the performers' 'story-teller' self. The actual quality of their performance experiences was only indirectly inferred from their narratives (Kahneman, 2010, 2011).

From a theoretical perspective, the intervention was based on the theory that individuals have some basic psychological needs, and that viewing an activity as a means to simultaneously satisfy these different needs (i.e. autonomy, competence and relatedness) would promote the most positive and fulfilling experiences (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Therefore, it was hypothesised that narratives that embrace social and spiritual meaning would promote more positive performance experiences than narratives that were exclusively self-centred. While this may be the case for many performers, not all individuals are alike, and each performer's personal characteristics (including their motives or needs, schemas or beliefs, and traits or skills) should be taken into account when designing interventions (Emmons, 1998). For instance, individuals' temperamental differences may have an impact on their hierarchy of values, motives and personal inclinations (i.e. the extent to which they view self-enhancement or self-transcendence as a priority goal, are motivated by eudaimonic or hedonic reasons, or have spiritual inclinations). Hence, constitutional factors may have a say in what performers strive for, and in the meanings they confer on situations. It is therefore possible that some performers might experience high levels of joy in performance while having exclusively self-centred narratives (for instance, performance satisfying only their need for competence, while their relatedness needs are satisfied through other means). In such cases, it would be unnecessary to submit these performers to interventions that aim to revise the whole value system through which they make sense of performance; it would possibly be enough to help them enhance the quality of their self-centred narratives (making them more positive) to increase their joy of performing. In summary, the promotion of self-transcendent narratives may not be the best path for all performers.

On top of that, the intervention was based on the assumption that individuals could become more aware of their own narratives, challenge them and assume the responsibility to be

proactive in the design of personally meaningful narratives about performance. However, this approach is strongly dependent on introspection and self-observation skills. It should not be taken for granted that these skills are within all individuals' reach. For instance, these skills might correlate with age and may not be fit for young performers. Moreover, it should not be taken for granted that all individuals are willing to do this kind of exercise.

Lastly, the kinds of narratives identified in this study are the product of the particular questions that I asked. However, it is likely that other kinds of narratives, which have not been investigated in this study, impact on performers' performance experiences as well.

## **8.5 Implications for music education**

The differences found in this study between the performance-related emotions and the narratives of classical and non-classical performers suggest that both (emotions and narratives) are culturally shaped. This further suggests that classical western music institutions may share some responsibility in the high prevalence of MPA found in this and previous studies among classical music students in particular. Such institutions may also be partly responsible for the minimal levels of joy (and other positive emotions) these students report (Green, 2002; Jørgensen, 2000; Kingsbury, 1988; Persson, 1996a, b; Sloboda, 1999; Woody & McPherson, 2010). Consequently, it appears that musical institutions should also be involved when it comes to reversing this situation and enhancing performers' performance experiences.

Given the link found in this study between performance-related emotions and narratives, it seems necessary that classical music institutions ponder on the kinds of values and beliefs they are implicitly promoting through their practices, and on the impact those may have on the performers' emotions. They should be prompt to revise practices and discourses if these are seen to be detrimental to performers' well-being. But, most important, they should be ready to work on their 'mission' (i.e. what is it they exist for, and which are the most meaningful goals they should pursue in order to contribute to society), and ideally adopt and promote discourses about music-making that are more personally and socially meaningful to performers.

The findings suggest that joy results from making meaning of performances as opportunities to satisfy basic psychological needs, which embrace both self-enhancement and self-transcendence. Accordingly, I suggest that careful consideration should be given to the settings in which young students are expected to perform; such settings should contribute to create healthy associations between performance and opportunities (i.e. achievement, connection and contribution) rather than associations between performance and threats (i.e. the threat of being evaluated as ‘not good enough’ to belong to such an institution or the small group of ‘talented ones’). I suggest that a people-oriented approach to performance should be promoted from the very start of musical studies, and that if evaluative performances should be kept at all within the music curricula, these should by no means be the only kind of performances in which young people would participate. Students should assimilate the message that there are aspects of performance that are more valuable than evaluation (i.e. the joy of sharing and connecting).

Classical music institutions could benefit from reflecting on the practices of non-classical musicians, as these appear to enable performers to enjoy their performances more fully. Many non-classical performers likely differ from classical performers in the way they approach their music-making from the very start of their musical learning: they learn music and play in informal situations, they play with others, learn from peers and establish strong social relationships with peers; they have autonomy over their musical learning and play for fun (Creech et al., 2008; Green, 2002; Woody & McPherson, 2010). The fact of performing as part of a group from the earliest stages of music-making appears to be motivating, enjoyable, and a source of self-esteem and support in coping with the demands of performance (Moore, Burland & Davidson, 2003; Papageorgi et al., 2010). Non-classical performers’ practices seem to express an underlying narrative about music-making that is quite different from the narratives expressed in the practices of classical performers. Their practices seem to create early associations between performance, social meaning and joy. In line with Papageorgi et al. (2010), I suggest that classical music institutions should promote cross-genre collaboration between classical and non-classical performers as this might possibly benefit both groups, and in particular, would allow classical performers to be exposed to more meaningful narratives about performance and more enjoyable ways of getting involved with music.

However, it would be difficult for classical students to change their approach to music-making if practices in the classroom remained the same, because teachers’ comments during

music lessons tend to be product-oriented rather than person-oriented (Persson, 1996). If the goal of teachers were to help students cultivate people-oriented approaches to performance, they should reconsider the kind of feedback they provide to their students. For instance, the teacher could tell the student about their own level of enjoyment while listening to the student's interpretation of a work; about the extent to which they as the listener felt emotionally connected, moved or inspired. If teachers highlighted the fact that the music their students make has an impact on their emotions, students could be more inclined to view music as something that has the potential to move other people's emotions. In this way, associations between performance and opportunities for connection and contribution could be reinforced, and this is likely to result in students experiencing increased joy and reduced anxiety in performance.

But corrective feedback is part and parcel of the teaching process, and teachers are expected to do so. However, they should give such feedback while keeping in mind that the students' music-making activities should help them to feel competent, a basic psychological need. Deprived of feelings of competence, people may not enjoy or persevere in what they do. (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It can be hard to go on stage when a performer does not feel competent. Therefore, teachers would face the challenge of simultaneously rectifying what students do wrong while building their students' self-efficacy beliefs, as those are vital for them to perform confidently (Bandura, 1977; McCormick & McPherson, 2003; Ritchie & Williamon, 2012).

Besides relatedness and competence, humans' psychological needs include autonomy. Considerable research has shown that when individuals feel they can make choices (as opposed to when they feel controlled from the outside), they are more autonomously motivated and experience their activity as more rewarding (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This kind of motivation promotes persistence, more effective performance and psychological health (Deci & Ryan, 2007). My intervention therefore sought to empower performers by giving them the autonomy (and responsibility) to design their own narratives about performance. While I cannot infer causality from my findings, I speculate that such autonomy might have helped them to choose the narratives they viewed as personally meaningful, and which promoted the enhanced emotional experiences and enhanced performance they subsequently reported.

Based on considerable research showing the impact of social contexts on motivation, psychological health and performance outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000), I maintain that, if performance experiences are to be enhanced, the performers' need for autonomy should be more acknowledged and respected. I suggest that students should be given more autonomy, not only in the choice of their narratives but in the whole processes that their music-making embraces. I suggest that empowering performers may result in them feeling more motivated and joyful when they make and share music. For instance, performers should have a say when it comes to choosing the pieces they are to play; a say in the ideas and feelings they want to express in a musical work (within the limits imposed by the author and style); a say when it comes to fingering and techniques. I argue that giving performers a voice in their music-making may allow them to view music as a means of self-expression rather than as an activity that is mainly controlled from the outside, i.e. by the teacher (Jørgensen, 2000; Persson, 1996a).

The findings suggest that, if MPA is to be reduced and performance-related joy increased, music institutions should become more aware of the link that exists between the performers' emotions and the institution's practices and discourses, because these have a major impact on individuals' psychological health, well-being and performance outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Contexts that: condition students to associate performance and evaluation from the very start of their music learning (through exams and competitions); obsessively encourage achievement while neglecting relatedness; do not encourage autonomy but rather control behaviour (Jørgensen, 2000; Kingsbury, 1994; Persson, 1996a); focus on performance outcomes while disregarding the performers' experience (Persson, 1996); encourage narratives impregnated by the 'talent account' (holding that a minority of individuals are fit to make music, and maintaining that music-making requires something that is genetically determined, and as a consequence, is unchangeable), which reflects a fixed rather than a growth mindset (Yeager & Dweck, 2012) might not be the best context to enable young musicians to flourish.

Without a critical analysis of such practices and discourses, the mechanisms that appear to promote anxiety could be indefinitely perpetuated. However, I see a fundamental obstacle to this critical self-analysis process. From my informal conversations with individuals in charge of conservatories in some European countries (i.e. France and Spain), it is not evident that the musicians' well-being is a main concern to these music institutions. Enjoyment appears to be

absent from the discourses of many music institutions (Pitts, 2005). And when the mere concepts of well-being, joy or fulfilment are absent from the mission that music institutions set for themselves, it is difficult to expect that they will work on replacing their current practices with ones that would reflect a more meaningful and self-transcendent view of performance.

I argue that the ‘why’ of music education should be addressed as a main priority, as this ‘why’ would give direction to all the processes involved in teaching and learning music. This ‘why’ would also be used as a criterion against which to evaluate the success of their practices. For instance, if the main goal of music institutions were to provide society with a sufficient number of performers performing at the highest levels of proficiency, it could be said that they have been successful in doing so. If their main goal were to provide society with a sufficient number of performers performing at the highest levels of proficiency *and* who fully enjoy performance, we may wonder if they have succeeded. If their purpose was to increase all music students’ sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness through their involvement in an artistic and self-expressive activity such as music-making, and to provide contexts that facilitate associations between music-making and joy-eliciting opportunities, I maintain that music institutions as a whole have failed dismally, and that something needs to change.

The findings of this study showed, moreover, that individual differences exist when it comes to the goals people pursue when engaging in music-making, and I argue that these differences should be taken into account when designing the musical curriculum. For instance, the emotional profiles identified in this study suggest that performance might not be all individuals’ end goal. Some performers appear to draw much joy from their solitary music-making experiences, and may see no point in performing for others. While I argue that exposing these performers to meaningful narratives about performance might be beneficial, as they might become aware of opportunities performance might open up (opportunities to which they might have previously been blinded), and eventually develop the love to perform, I wonder whether music institutions should not acknowledge the fact that different motives and goals might be equally valid when it comes to learn a musical instrument. If the purpose of music institutions was to promote individuals’ well-being through musical activities, why not give individuals the right to choose whether they want to learn music just for themselves, or if they want to share it with others? Forcing individuals to perform might impose on them

an unnecessary amount of pressure that may elicit anxiety, reduce well-being and bring about no benefit whatsoever.

Performers who participated in the intervention unanimously thought that these kinds of interventions should be included within the curricula of music institutions. Ideally, that music students should be helped to develop a healthy and meaningful approach to performance throughout the entire process of their music-making. However, as many challenges are intrinsic to the musical path (i.e. to keep a long-term motivation, to deal with competition, negative evaluation and self-doubt, etc.), I recommend that music institutions provide performers with the support they need (and are asking for) to render their music-making process as enjoyable and rewarding as possible. Creating a discipline that would remind performers of the value of what they do, help them to remain physically and mentally healthy, motivated and inspired, and provide them with a safe space for self-observation and self-expression, could greatly contribute to both avoiding or dismantling destructive narratives and behaviours from the moment they begin, and nourish narratives that are meaningful and that preserve the performers' purpose to perform.

## **8.6 Openings for future research**

The findings of this study suggest that there is a link between the meaningfulness of the performers' music-making narratives and the joy they report in performance, and in particular, between people-orientedness and most positive performance experiences. The findings also showed that narratives and performance experiences could be enhanced through an intervention. However, this was exploratory research, and many questions have arisen from it that require further investigation.

I propose that the present research be extended in order to investigate the link between narratives and emotions in specific populations of performers. Researchers could also explore the link between different kinds of narratives (the ones identified here as well as other narratives) and performance-related joy and anxiety at different stages of development. For instance, they could investigate whether a positive people-oriented narrative is superior to a positive self-oriented narrative at all stages of development, or whether there are stages during which the satisfaction of self-oriented concerns assumes priority over the satisfaction of self-



transcendent concerns (i.e. the stage of life during which children are confronted with the crisis that Erikson calls ‘inferiority versus industry’ (Erikson, 1950)).

Given that beliefs, values and goals are socio-culturally shaped, the narratives that are prevalent among different socio-cultural groups should be investigated as well. Identifying such narratives, together with the concerns that assume priority at any given developmental stage, may equip researchers to help performers more efficiently. For instance, what are the characteristic narratives of young musicians who strive to enter the classical professional world? Would people-oriented narratives still be the factor that predicts the highest joy and the lowest anxiety within this population? Or would the predicting factors be found elsewhere? What is unhealthy, what is missing, and what is inspiring and worth reinforcing in the narratives of these performers, and consequently, which kinds of interventions would be the most helpful to increase their joy of performing?

These questions could be applied to other populations of musicians. For example, to performers coming from different musical genres (i.e. jazz, pop, folk, rock), because in this study they were treated as a homogeneous group (the ‘non-classical’ group of performers) for ease of analysis. However, the narratives and practices prevalent within each group may differ, and may require different kinds of interventions.

Research should additionally investigate how to help performers who are already people-oriented to enjoy their performances more fully. Which factors might enhance the quality of the performance experience for these performers? Would interventions emphasising their other psychological needs (i.e. autonomy and competence) be more efficient than those emphasising relatedness (such as the one in this study), or would interventions that underscore other aspects of relatedness (i.e. a ‘source-oriented’ approach to performance) be more helpful?

The research should be extended to investigate the impact of the intervention on performers who suffer from MPA. Would it be sufficient to increase the self-transcendent nature of these performers’ performance-related narratives in order to reduce their anxiety, or should their self-efficacy beliefs be strengthened first? Might interventions such as the one described in this thesis help performers reduce their anxiety even if their anxiety results from conditioning experiences that took place very early in their lives, and are thus beyond their conscious

access? Might repressive mechanisms prevent performers from becoming aware (and therefore from reviewing) some of the meanings they confer on performance (Kenny, Arthey & Abbas, 2014; Nagel, 2010)? In that case, how helpful would these interventions be? Research should also investigate whether interventions such as the one described in this study, or other kinds of interventions, could help performers who score high in emotional profile 2, (those who experience practice as a self-contained and rewarding activity and who do not enjoy performance) to develop the love of performing.

Research should also investigate the impact of interventions over a longer period of time (i.e. one year later) because, after the intervention, the performers' narratives are likely to continue being shaped by the socio-cultural groups to which they belong, which may make it difficult for performers to preserve their new narratives over time. If, in addition to this, individuals tend to come back to a certain set point of well-being, long-term changes may be difficult without additional support and periodic interventions (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade, 2005). Further follow-up questionnaires could investigate these questions.

In addition to the above, the findings of the Intervention Project showed that interventions could be successful not only in reducing the performers' levels of anxiety, but also in increasing their performance-related joy. This opens a line of research (consistent with the positive psychology movement) that is more ambitious than research that merely aims at reducing misery. It is likely that factors that were not investigated in this research might contribute to increase joy in music-making, and I suggest that these factors should be identified and used as a basis for future interventions.

For instance, this research and intervention emphasised a eudaimonic route to enhanced performance experiences (as it was based on the hypothesis that the level of enjoyment of performance was determined by the extent to which the performers' narratives were meaningful), but it is possible that interventions based on more hedonic routes could promote joy in performance as well (i.e. making performers more aware of and focusing their attention on the sensual pleasures associated with playing a musical instrument). The impact that interventions based on different assumptions (i.e. eudaimonic or hedonic) might have on promoting highly enjoyable performances could be investigated and compared. Perhaps, both routes would be found to be complementary for enhancing the performance experience. Or

perhaps, as Seligman (2002) proposes, it is the simultaneous high score in pleasantness, engagement and meaning that ensures the highest satisfaction.

This intervention was useful to enhance performance-related experiences. But, could these kinds of interventions be used to enhance performers' general level of well-being as well? The findings suggested that, after the intervention, the participants tended to report more joy in their daily lives than before the intervention. Was it the enhanced quality of the performance experience that caused this increase in joy? Was it the increased inspiring nature of their narratives about performance that was transferred to their narratives about daily life? Can interventions have such a broad impact on performers' emotions? Longer interventions and larger populations may be needed to explore these important subjects.

The findings suggested that the construct of inspiration might be particularly helpful to understand and enhance performance experiences, as it may reveal aspects of the experience that are intrinsically linked to artistic experiences, and which may not be revealed when the experience is only viewed through the lens of positive emotions. The performance experience is starting to be investigated through variables that are thought to constitute well-being (i.e. positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning and accomplishment (PERMA) (Croom, 2015; Lamont, 2012; Seligman, 2011). However, to my knowledge it has not been studied through the lens of inspiration yet. I believe that this angle of research could be key to better understand both highly rewarding experiences as well as MPA.

I suggest that performance experiences should be investigated through the lens of theories related to psychological needs (i.e. self-determination theory), the alignment of values and goals (self-concordance) and spirituality because enjoying performance might not result from applying quick-fix techniques, but from becoming aware of one's psychological needs and core values, and making meaning of one's activity in a way that satisfies and expresses these core values and needs. When individuals make sure that none of their psychological needs are neglected, and that what they strive for is in tune with what they need and value, they are likely to perceive their activities as meaningful, and to feel joyful in whatever they do. Their joy may be a sign that they are functioning optimally, satisfying both their self-centred and self-transcendent concerns, and are attuned with their psychological needs and the requirements of the ecology of life.

I view the construct of narratives as crucial to giving individuals the power to harmonise their different concerns and bring meaning into their lives, but I hypothesise that it is the quality and strength of the mental images evoked by narratives that can radically change emotional responses, and elicit an approach motivation towards the opportunities associated with performance rather than avoidance resulting from its threats. I believe that all means to strengthen these associations should be investigated (i.e. how to prime or condition these associations throughout the performers' daily life (see i.e. Bargh, 1997, 2006) or through the use of virtual reality). I maintain that the mental associations created should be inspiring rather than merely healthy.

## **8.7 Concluding comments**

When I take the findings of this research within the big picture of a performer's life, and when I consider the challenges that music-making brings about, it appears to me that, in order to preserve joy in the whole process, it is vital to help musicians enhance and protect their music-making narratives. Because, even if it were within our means to radically change the philosophy and practices of music institutions; even if we could radically change the narratives (beliefs, values and goals) of all the other socio-cultural groups to which a performer belongs (parents, friends, audiences and the larger society), performers will still continue to face challenges associated with the process of learning and making music. There will still be difficulties and frustrations that will challenge their psychological health: the high investments in energy, time and financial resources that learning music requires; the failures that necessarily occur during the process and the feelings of shame and self-doubt that often go along with these failures (because in spite of the high investments, a performer will not always perform at their best, neither will they win all competitions or obtain all jobs); the stress generated by a difficult job market and difficult professional conditions; the tiredness and questioning that form part of any long-term enterprise. Therefore it is important that all stakeholders in music education contribute to minimise these hardships and give performers the tools to handle these difficulties to the best of their abilities.

However, even if optimal conditions were provided, the performers' path will continue to require huge amounts of effort, and they will view such effort as worthwhile only if they view what they get in return as valuable enough. And only if they view it as sufficiently valuable

will they preserve their motivation no matter what; but most importantly, they will preserve joy and fulfillment in the process. And I want to emphasise the difference between motivation and joy, because performers may persevere in performance even when performance is not, or ceases to be, a rewarding activity (as is evident from the findings). In particular, this may be the case for advanced music students (especially those who are viewed as ‘talented’) and professional performers who have invested a substantial part of their lives in their instrument (investment that generally starts in early childhood), and who, from a very young age, may feel that they have no other choice when it comes to professional activities. In fact, it is a reality that the almost exclusive investment required by a musical instrument hardly leaves individuals with enough time to simultaneously pursue other interests and cultivate other skills. When, in addition to this, individuals have difficulty dissociating their personal and musical identities, and when they are strongly encouraged to continue their investment in music-making by those who have also invested in the enterprise (i.e. parents and teachers), individuals might feel that they have no other option than to make music and perform, no matter how they might feel about it (see Kingsburg, 1988).

I suggest that in all cases, but in the abovementioned cases in particular, helping performers to preserve their joy would require more than helping them handle the difficulties that are intrinsic to making music. I suggest that this requires another kind of help: help to keep alive the whys of what they do; help to cultivate the inspiring nature of their narratives. I contend that in order to help performers view all their efforts as worthwhile and find fulfillment in their performances, they should be assisted in making a daily routine of reminding themselves of the magic of music, of the privilege they have to partake in a musical experience that transcends self, and of the opportunities that performance opens up in terms of connection and contribution. For instance, performers could be reminded that they contribute when they allow others to temporarily disconnect from a daily existence that is seldom deprived from worries and fears and which is not always rewarding; when they provide an artistic space within which individuals may explore other possibilities of being, become more aware of the intensity and variety of their own emotional palette, and remember how it feels to feel inspired and to experience transcendence; or when they give others the opportunity to feel more joyful, more alive and more connected.

When the *why* of performance is kept in focus, and when its value is continuously emphasised through inspiring narratives, the *hows* associated with the musical path are likely to fall into

their relative positions, be experienced as means to valuable ends, and as a result, be perceived as less overwhelming, more manageable and worthwhile. Within the big picture, Nietzsche's words might take full significance when it comes to performance: 'He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how' (as cited in Frankl, 1959:76).

I would add to his words that when these whys are self-transcendent, and in the case of performance, when they are people-oriented, the intrinsic challenges of mastering a musical instrument and performing likely become more bearable, but most importantly, become more meaningful; and the activity of making and sharing music likely becomes more fulfilling.

## **8.8 Comments from a first person's perspective**

Arriving at the end of this thesis, I cannot help but reflect on all that this long-term project has meant to me. Studying the factors that promote joy in performance has been an incredible process of self-analysis and personal growth, and I am deeply thankful to all the people who helped me keep involved in this research.

Investigating how performers who enjoy performance think about performance made me look more closely at my own performance experiences, and made me ponder about the factors that made my experiences so painful. While at the start of this research I thought that my problems were caused by anxiety (and I certainly experienced all the typical symptoms of performance anxiety), I think today that anxiety was merely a manifestation of a deeper malaise – a symptom of the meaninglessness of the narratives through which I made meaning of performance at that time. My research made me realise that different kinds of stories could be told about performance, and that performers who love to perform (and who generously reported on how they felt and thought about performance) taught me that such stories could be profoundly meaningful and inspiring. By bringing these stories into the research field, it is my intention to invite researchers to pursue this study so that, perhaps, they could be better equipped, not just to help performers perform with less anxiety, but also to help them preserve high levels of inspiration while they make music. Because I am convinced that performers need such inspiration to keep alive their joy through this long, difficult, yet privileged path of making and sharing music.

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# Appendix I. The Exploratory Questionnaire

(As published on Internet. English version).

## Survey addressed to Music Performers

This survey is part of a research I am conducting on public performance-related emotions. My aim is to better understand how performers feel about this important aspect of their professional life. Please be assured that confidentiality is highly protected for this survey, in accordance with the University of Sheffield's "*Ethics Policy on Research involving human data or tissue*". All data collected from this survey will be kept and accessed only by me and my supervisor for this research and will never be made available to other parties or made public. This questionnaire should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

I am confident your participation will contribute to this important field of research!

Elsa Perdomo Guevara  
elsaguevara@accorder.org

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

### Details of Musical Background

3. Main instrument: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Years of playing: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Number of public performances a year: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Other musical activities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Main genre: Classical  Jazz  Pop  Folk

8. Playing mostly:  
solo performances  small ensemble performances  orchestra or large group performances

9. How do you prepare for a concert? Indicate how frequently you use the following methods to prepare yourself for a public performance

	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time
a. I visualize my performance in advance			
b. I take some chemical or natural product			
c. I use positive "pep" talk			
d. I use relaxation methods			
e. I think of the reasons why I want to perform			

f. Other methods I use to prepare: \_\_\_\_\_

10. What is your primary aim when giving a public performance? Indicate the importance you assign to the following goals:

	Not so important	Relatively important	Very important
I aim to achieve my own standards			
I aim to perform up to the audience's expectations			
I aim to fully express my emotions and musical ideas			
I aim to achieve audience's enjoyment of the performance			
I aim to feel connected with the audience			
I aim to feel connected with the other musicians			

### Feelings during a public performance

11. Indicate how regularly you feel the following emotions while performing in front of an audience

	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time
Elated			
Joyful			
Aroused			
Calm			
Worried			
Fearful			

12. Indicate how regularly you feel the following emotions when not performing (in daily life)

	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time
Elated			
Joyful			
Aroused			
Calm			
Worried			
Fearful			

13. Indicate the type of concerts that you enjoy the most. (please choose only one answer)

Solo concert  Ensemble  Orchestra / large group

14. Indicate the type of concerts that you enjoy the most. (please choose only one answer)

Informal concert for friends  Concert in important concert hall

15. What factors may influence

a. the joy you experience while you perform in public \_\_\_\_\_

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b. the anxiety you experience while you perform in public \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Positive peak experiences during concert performance**

16. Think of your best experience while performing in public.

a. Can you describe the context of the experience? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

b. Can you describe your feelings and thoughts? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

	Yes	No
c. Has this experience increased your motivation to perform in public?		
d. Do you aim to re-experience this same emotion when you perform in public?		
e. Do you do anything in particular in order to foster this experience?		

f. Could you describe what you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

17. Have you ever experienced one of the following positive experiences while performing in public?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	I experience this as very positive (yes / no)
a. I feel as if there is a special connection, almost tangible, between the audience and me				
b. I feel as becoming a channel through which the music just flows				
c. I feel as if the music comes to me from “elsewhere”				
d. I feel as if the music flows freely from deep within me				

18. May I contact you again in case of needing more information? Yes  No

In which case, please provide your e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for your time!

Elsa

## **Appendix II. Description of the intervention**

The aim of this intervention is to provide performers with basic knowledge about their own psychological functioning so that they can learn how to regulate their emotional state. The course highlights the role of narratives in emotion. It is based on the theory that individuals' emotions result from the way in which they appraise and give meaning to situations through their narratives. These narratives, or stories, people tell themselves are most of the time the fruit of automatic and non-conscious processes, and are often assimilated from the environment. Some of these narratives may foster performance-related anxiety, while others may elicit positive emotions that facilitate an optimal mental state during performance. The findings of the Exploratory Study, as well as of my previous research, showed that most enjoyable performance experiences are primarily self-transcendent and result from self-transcendent narratives about performance.

My intervention aimed to make performers more aware of the impact of their narratives on their emotions; show performers that narratives are in part culturally determined; help performers identify their own narratives about music-making, performance and other subjects that are more distantly related to performance but that nonetheless can shape their performance experiences; show performers that they can revise their narratives; and encourage performers to replace their unhealthy or meaningless narratives with narratives they find meaningful and inspiring. Performers were invited to work on performance-related narratives that aligned with their psychological needs, values and core beliefs.

While the intervention centred on narratives, I thought that performers would need help to change the automatism of their thoughts and behaviours related to performance. Therefore, in addition to deep, introspective work on narratives, the intervention introduced tools that could facilitate the change process (i.e. basic relaxation techniques, mental rehearsal, methods to improve practice and the design of a progressive action plan).

Two Spanish-language introductory videos were integrated into the website of the project. The first was an invitation to participate in the project, and the second was about practical issues.

### **Invitation to participate in the research project (3:10)**

The first video invited performers to participate in the project: ‘Perform at your best and enjoy performance’. It briefly explained the goal of the project: it was a free on-line course designed to enhance the performance experience of musicians; it was designed for any kind of musician, be they professional, amateurs or music students, classical or non-classical; it comprised a series of short videos what would be uploaded on a weekly basis during the duration of the course (four weeks); the videos would be accompanied by practical exercises and a discussion forum. I introduced myself, and explained that the course was part of my PhD research at the University of Sheffield. I directed all those that would be interested in the project to my webpage if they wanted further information.

I then explained the reason why I had designed this course: because music students are required to perform from the very start of their learning path – they are asked to play for exams, auditions or competitions – but they are not taught how to do so; that there are some attitudes and strategies that help performers to give their best and to enjoy their performances fully, but there are also ways of doing things that lead them to insecurity and fear, and it is important that they learn about both. I explained that knowing how to perform for an audience requires a different set of skills from knowing how to play a musical instrument; that not being adequately prepared, many performers feel uncomfortable on stage.

The goals of the course were presented: to teach performers to identify the mental state in which they can perform at their best, and how to access this mental state during their study; to give them basic knowledge about emotional functioning so they learn how to regulate their emotional state and reduce anxiety when necessary; to help them feel happier and more fulfilled about their performance.

I explained that through this course, I would share findings from the field of music performance research with the participants; help them to become more aware of the way they think and act; and invite them to critically analyse their functioning in order to decide what habits they want to preserve and which ones they want to change. I would also show performers the strategies that appear to foster best performances and experiences. I concluded the video by asking performers to invite their musician friends to join the project.

## **Practical issues (5:52)**



This video explained the way in which the course would be administered and what the participants were expected to do in order to get the most out of it. I explained that I would put a series of short videos (around 8 minutes each) online each week for four weeks that would centre on specific topics. Participants could watch these videos at the time and place that suited them, and as many times as they wished during the duration of the course.

I emphasised that it was not merely by watching the videos, but by putting what they learned into practice, that participants would change the way they think, act and feel. Each video would then propose one or several exercises that participants were expected to do. I also emphasised the importance of actively participating in the discussion forum, as it was the only way to interact with the participants, to ask questions, share experiences and encourage one another. The three pillars of the course were outlined, namely watching the videos, doing the practical exercises and participating in the discussion forum. Moreover, I asked participants to adopt an open-minded attitude and to be engaged in the process of their own growth.

## **The intervention**

### **1. Understanding emotional processes (11:18)**

The video explains that emotions do not result from reality *per se*, but from the interpretative process that takes place within the individual's mind. Based on appraisal theories, performers learn that the kind of meaning they confer on events (most of the time automatically and unconsciously) shapes their emotions.

As homework, performers are required to bring to their minds all the emotions they experience during performances and to write them down. They should seek to identify the stories they tell themselves about performance and write them down. Afterwards, they should read what they have written and become conscious of the impact their narratives have on the emotions they experience.



*Introspective work*



*Connecting with one's inner world*

## **2. The ingredients of emotion (9:01)**

This lesson explains the difference between a thought and an emotion. An emotion includes the mind as well as the body. Emotions cannot exist without one or the other ingredient: the mind that confers meaning to the situation and the body that prepares the individual for action. Performers are required to imagine a situation that frightens them, and are then asked to gradually relax their muscles. They become aware that when one of the ingredients is lacking, in this case the body that deactivates, the emotion vanishes. They become conscious that they may regulate their emotional responses by deactivating the body. An easy relaxation exercise based on breathing is proposed. Performers are invited to become more connected to their emotions during their daily life, and to become more aware of the level of activation of their own body. They are asked to integrate the exercise proposed, or any other relaxing exercise, into their daily routine.



*The ingredients of motion*



*The stories we tell ourselves.*

### **3. The impact of narratives on the reality we perceive (12:12)**

This lesson explains a way in which narratives shape emotions: they determine the aspects of reality individuals perceive. We receive unlimited information from our environment, but our capacity for attention is small (an amusing video highlighting our poor capacity of observation is shown). To deal with this situation, the mind processes unconsciously most of the information that it receives, and only filters into consciousness a limited part of reality. Our narratives influence this selection, and we tend to perceive only the aspects of reality that are consistent with our narratives (and become blind to those aspects of reality that do not). This mechanism, in turn, reinforces our narratives. This is the reason why prejudice is so hard to break.

Performers are invited to become more aware of the richness of their environment (and of all the information they do not attend to) and of the limited part of reality that they usually perceive. They are shown that perceived reality is different from objective reality, and this explains why different individuals may have dramatically different perceptions of the same reality.

### **4. The origin of narratives (7.45)**

This lesson briefly discusses the origin of narratives (genetic predispositions, past experiences, assimilation of other people's narratives). It highlights the automaticity and unconsciousness of the process through which narratives are created, and emphasises the social influences on personal narratives. Performers are invited to become more aware of the kinds of narratives that are

prevalent within their socio-cultural groups, because these narratives are likely to shape their own emotions.

## **5. From random processes to personal choice (3:38)**

Performers are invited to reflect on the fact that their personal narratives about performance and music making are, most of the time, the result of random processes and not of personal choice. Given the impact that narratives have on emotion, they are encouraged to become more aware of their automatic narratives, and to find out whether these are helping them to attain their goals or preventing them from doing so.



*The power of non-conscious narratives*



*Becoming aware of one's own narratives*

## **6. Healthy and destructive fear (6:34)**

In this video, the beneficial role of fear is discussed. Fear is indispensable as it alerts us to threats and prepares us for action. Mentally anticipating threatening situations may also help individuals to take preventive actions in order to face those situations more efficiently. However, individuals may let their imaginations run wild, and may start telling themselves all kinds of stories about what may eventually go wrong. They may end up dwelling exclusively on what is threatening about situations, and feel that they will never be fully prepared to face these threats. Focusing on threats may lead to fear and anxiety.

In the case of performers, they may develop catastrophic performance-related stories in which they overrate the importance of a performance, underrate their training and preparation, and view themselves as inadequate and insufficient. Fear is the normal response to these imagined threatening situations. However, individuals are seldom aware of the mental processes that are responsible for their emotions, and mistakenly take their stories for their reality.

In conclusion, fear as an emotion is a healthy response of the organism to a real or imagined situation. What is unhealthy in this process is telling oneself scary kinds of stories about situations, because no matter how safe reality may be, these stories will inevitably elicit fear.

## 7. The ‘talent’ narrative (8:25)

This lesson focuses on one of the narratives that is prevalent within the musical environment: the talent account. This narrative posits that, in order to become musicians, individuals need a special gift or talent that is given to just a few. Performers are sensitised to the idea that this is just one of the possible narratives about music-making. They are presented with an alternative view that states that humans are intrinsically musical, that music is embedded in the way they communicate with one another, and that they are genetically equipped with the different abilities that music-making requires (abilities that can be developed with instruction and practice). Performers are encouraged to reflect on the impact these two different narratives, or ways of thinking about music-making, may have on their performance-related emotions.



The talent narrative



Human beings as intrinsically musical

## **8. Narratives that promote anxiety (7:35)**

In this lesson, I suggest that the talent narrative may be responsible for performance-related anxiety as it opens the possibility of not *being* enough, which is very different from not *doing* well enough. Performers may believe that they do not belong to the group of the chosen ones, and may feel like impostors pretending to be what they were not ‘anointed’ to be. Thinking of music-making in terms of being or not being fit for it may generate self-doubt and eventually anxiety. I present the findings of Carol Dweck, which show that people’s beliefs about the nature of their abilities have a great impact on their emotions, actions and results. People either believe that their intelligence and talents are mostly genetically determined and rather fixed (as in the talent account) or, alternatively that their abilities are changeable and grow through good instruction, effort and practice. These different narratives lead to different attitudes, and result in different outcomes. Those who believe in genetically determined fixed abilities (‘you have what you have’, as in the talent account) are preoccupied about how much they have and are anxious about accepting challenges that may expose their limits. They may experience criticism as a personal attack, and failure as the evidence that they have reached their ceiling. On the other hand, those who view abilities as being changeable embrace challenges and failure as learning opportunities, they are more perseverant and resilient and, as a result, are more successful than those who have the fixed mindset.

## **9. Changing metaphors: From the rigid computer to the plastic device (7:40)**

Not long ago, people attributed an individual’s special intelligence or talent to his or her extraordinary brain. It was assumed that some individuals came into the world with a predetermined brain that allowed them to perform at an extraordinary level. However, in the last two decades, advances in technology have allowed scientists to look at the brain and to see that the brain is shaped through individuals’ learning and training. There is no one-way cause-effect, but a two-way interaction between actions and the structure and functions of the brain. This recent knowledge has led to a change in scientific narratives and metaphors – from the rigid computer to the plastic device. The brain is now viewed as modifiable, and people are viewed as actors in the shaping of their own brain. Changing thoughts, narratives and actions literally shape the brain, which means that we can consciously design these changes in order to shape our brains in a way that helps us attain our goals. Performers are invited to visualise the transformation that takes place in their brain

while they consciously change their narratives. They are also reminded about the mechanisms that may transform narratives in self-fulfilled prophecies.

## **10. The narratives of performers who enjoy performance (7:00)**

Some kinds of narratives appear to promote performance anxiety. In the same way, other kinds of narratives seem to foster joy in performance. Performers who enjoy performing seem to have developed a healthy, powerful narrative about performance that keeps them focused on their goal and that cultivates trust in their ability to attain it. Such a narrative gives them a clear vision of what they are looking for and why they are looking for it, and appears to keep performers under its spell.

In this video I suggest that such narratives help performers manage the natural stress of a performance in a constructive way, access a state of full engagement known as flow, and keep them motivated and willing to perform for an audience. I suggest that one of the characteristics of such narratives is that they give performers a healthy perspective on themselves and on their own worth. While a tendency to focus only on one's weaknesses and insufficiencies may lead a performer to feel unworthy to perform for others, appreciating one's achievements, progresses and strengths may help them to feel self-confident and capable of giving something of value to the audience.

Another characteristic of such narratives is that they give performers a goal-oriented direction, a sense of 'mission' to accomplish. And such narratives emphasise the giving and sharing process, the connection that takes place between performers and audiences. Performers do not perform *in front of* an audience but *for* an audience. Such narratives are expressed in poetic language, and are inspiring all by themselves. They are aligned with the performers' values, core beliefs and goals, and consequently they are experienced as being meaningful and intrinsically motivating.

This video ends up with a short story showing the impact of different kinds of narratives about a same reality. It is about three bricklayers working together on the same project and doing exactly the same job. When asked by a visitor what is he doing, the first man answered 'I am earning my life', the second 'I am building a wall', while the third said 'I am building a cathedral for my God'. These men possibly feel very different emotions in regard to their job, and possibly they are unaware of the impact of their narratives on the emotions they feel. But what happens when one becomes conscious of the link that exists between narratives and emotions?

## **11. Taking control of one's own narratives (7:51)**

This video provides a summary of what has been learned up to then: narratives shape emotions by determining the aspects of reality we do and do not perceive. We were not born with our actual narratives. Most often, we have unconsciously assimilated them from our environment, or they result from quick and automatic appraisals of past situations that have never been reconsidered or critically evaluated. As there are narratives that promote performance anxiety and narratives that foster joy, it is important to become aware of our own narratives and of the impact they have on our performance experiences. This is the first step that allows us to shift from being victims of an automatic way of thinking to deliberately choose our own one.

The second step is the choice of the kind of narratives we want to cultivate. One of the characteristics of healthy narratives is that they help us focus our attention on, and value, what we actually have and do well as performers. This is important, because throughout the learning process, performers are generally trained to focus solely on what they lack, on what is not good enough. While full awareness of our weaknesses is essential to good work and improvement, full appreciation of our strengths, and of what we have already achieved, is essential to going on stage. Performers are invited to take a fresh perspective of their trajectory as musicians, and to become aware of and value how much they had improved throughout time. Thanks to discipline and hard work, they manage to do at present what might have seemed to them unattainable goals in the past.

As homework, performers are invited to design balanced narratives about who they are as performers – narratives that simultaneously help them to practice efficiently and to feel confident when sharing their music with others. They are encouraged to list all the skills they did not have in the past but have at present. The length of their list would be indicative of where they tend to focus their attention rather than of the quantity of skills they actually have. Performers are asked to work on narratives that build their appreciation and confidence.

## **12. Why to be a performer (5:50)**

Performers who love to perform are very aware of the 'why' that moves them to perform. They have a sense of mission. However, we may be so busy practicing that we may lose sight of the *raison d'être* of all this practice. One of Einstein's claims nicely express what may happen with performers: 'Perfection of means and confusion of ends seems to be our problem'. Performers are



invited to find out the reasons that move them to perform, and assume the responsibility for motivating and inspiring themselves. To do so, they should do some introspection and connect with their personal values and core beliefs. In addition to this, they should become aware of the psychological needs that are universal and essential for psychological health: the needs to feel autonomous, competent and connected with others.

The fact of working on their own narrative helps performers realise that they are the ones to decide whether or not to perform and why to perform, satisfying in this way their need for autonomy. A narrative that focuses the performers' attention on what they have and on their achievements helps them to appreciate their competence. But in addition to this, performers need to respond to their need for relatedness by seeking to connect with the audience and contribute something of value. As homework, performers were encouraged to write their mission as performers. This mission should take into account the three psychological needs discussed.



*Where does my music-making fit in my life? Becoming seduced by our own narrative*

### **13. To preserve the sense of mission (7:26)**

A sense of mission will help performers to remain centred on the reasons why they want to perform. It focuses their attention, and protects them from distracting thoughts that may lead to performance anxiety. Our mission reminds us of the value of what we do. We need to actively work on designing and protecting our sense of mission, as several factors might threaten it. One is the routine of long hours of practice, which may lead us to put the automatic pilot on and erode the sense of mission. Another threat is common to all specialists; a too-narrow focus on what we do (working on details) may lead to a lack of perspective. Performers are encouraged to play with different focuses of

attention in order to work in the details without losing perspective. Another threat are the narratives that might be prevalent in our social group, because they influence us on an on-going basis. Performers were asked to continue working on rendering their mission more inspiring.

## **14. To preserve inspiration (10:18)**

Performers are invited to use poetic language to embellish their mission as performers. To do so, they could read poetry about music, its power and magic, or talk with people who are passionate about music, and they should pay attention to the aspects of music that these people highlight. Performers are encouraged to view themselves as enablers of the magic process, because the magic of music is beyond our comprehension. Performers are also encouraged to cultivate more poetic narratives about themselves and to become more appreciative of their uniqueness. They are shown that their greatest contribution as performers is to express the ideas and feelings that the musical works elicits in their inner world. They are invited to ponder on the complexities and wonders of the human brain, and to develop a sense of awe for the way they are made, and of gratefulness for the body and mind they have somehow received.



*Performance as a present to the audience*



*The magic of music*

## **15. The mental state of best functioning (13:29)**

Performers are invited to bring to mind an occasion during which they felt particularly at ease, absorbed and happy while playing in public or while doing something else. The idea is to revive the situation and to record it so that they will be able to evoke this mental state whenever they decide to do so. Best functioning is associated with flow state, a mental state in which individuals function at

their best. This state occurs when individuals are optimally aroused, and not when they feel too calm. Arousal is necessary to give of one's best, and the bodily manifestations of arousal before a performance should be interpreted as beneficial to the quality of the performance. The best way to be optimally aroused in performance is to learn to be optimally aroused during practice and in daily life. Performers should observe how aroused they are, and see whether their level of arousal is higher or lower compared to their state of optimal arousal. They are encouraged to organise activities so that these are ideally challenging to keep their attention fully focused.

## **16. Study methods that promote flow (7:49)**

Practice is a time during which automatisms are created. Performers are asked to visualise the alertness of mind that performance requires, and to strive to practice in this same state of alertness. They cannot force the mind to be present where it is not challenged. They need to seduce the mind through study methods that capture it. They should reconsider their narratives about practice. If they conceive of practice as repetitive work, the mind won't be present. By contrast, if they conceive it as a research process during which they should find the most effective and artistic ways to solve technical problems and express their own musical ideas, to explore the possibilities of the instrument and the body, the mind will be challenged and will be present. They will be practicing in a perfect level of arousal that is closer to play than to work. They must remind themselves that they are involved in an artistic process that needs to be done with intelligence, but also with sensitivity. During this process, they should explore the ideas, images and emotions that a musical work elicits in them so they will be able to communicate those to the audience. Their greatest contribution will be to express their personal vision of the work, and this requires that they connect with their inner world. There are methods of study that numb the senses, mind and emotions. Which kind of relationship are they creating with their instrument? Performance anxiety often results from not being well prepared because of bad study habits. But it is possible to change these habits. They can train their mind to be fully absorbed in performance by being fully absorbed while they practice.



*When body and mind disconnect*



*Practicing with the audience in mind*

## **17. Exercise to do before a practice session (5:37)**

The video is an exercise designed to prepare performers to be fully present during practice. The goal is to connect mind and body, and to relax the body in such a way that it feels fully present and expressive to engage in music-making.

## **18. How to organise a practice session (6:33)**

During practice, performers are responsible for keeping their mind seduced. They should be creative, and bring variety into their practice to help keep their mind absorbed in the process. For example, performers are encouraged to take their attention span into consideration when they plan their practice sessions. They are invited to take short breaks while practicing, in order to provide their mind with the rest it needs in order to function optimally. The importance of recording and video-taping themselves is highlighted. Performers are reminded that they should continually work on getting closer to their musical goals, while appreciating their progresses and what they like about their music-making. By so doing, they will remain conscious that what they do is valuable and worthy of being shared with others. Performers are encouraged to take some of their practice time to simply enjoy playing their instrument, to imagine someone they love and then seek to connect with this person through their music, putting aside all evaluative concerns.

## **19. Integrate music-making into social life (7:30)**

Due to the practices of many musical institutions, performers might have created mental associations between performance and evaluation. When, in addition to this, they have assimilated the belief that musical talent is the privilege of a few, they might have ended up viewing performance as a threat of being evaluated as not good enough. However, music and performance have always formed part of social events, and performers are encouraged to incorporate their music-making into their lives; for instance, to share with at least one person each piece of music they learn, or to play for people who come over for dinner. The goal is to reinforce the association between making music and the joy of sharing. They should remind themselves that performing, as with any other activity, requires practicing. Individuals learn by doing, and from reflecting on both what they have done well and on what needs to be improved.

Performing is a learning process, and as such, it should be carried out in a clever, regular and progressive way. Performers learn how to perform by training, that is, by performing. As this training is not provided in conservatories, performers need to organise it by themselves. The goal is to go out of their comfort zone, and enter the expansion zone without going into the panic zone. The performer is the only one able to situate him or herself in this process. They are invited to write an action plan in which they establish their different goals in an organised and progressive way. They should accept that problems are part of life and of performance, and be prepared to handle them at their best, because this is part of the learning process. Performers are encouraged to know and accept the learning curve, to decide to perform despite fear and to cultivate resilience.

## **20. Preparing for a competition (11:53)**

The video recapitulates the most important ideas of the course, and tackles the subject of competitions. What can performers do to be at their best when preparing a competition? They should make sure they put all their learning into practice, and pay attention to their narratives about their next competition. Do their narratives make them feel anxious? Are their narratives telling them that they have neglected any aspect of their preparation? If this is the case, they should take into consideration their fears, and work on the aspects that are drawing their attention. Fear can be a good ally to help them prepare thoroughly for a performance. However, when there are no more

reasonable causes for anxious narratives, performers should just reassure their fear: its message has been listened to and considered, and fear can be invited to relax.

Performers are invited to make some time every day to cultivate inspiring narratives; focus their thoughts on the things that are within their control; practice in a mental state of full absorption; and have a clear goal to connect with the audience. They are invited to choose the narratives, images and mental movies that will help them to feel confident and inspired when playing before a jury, and to plan their pre-performance routine carefully. They have the autonomy to choose how to play and how to think about it.

## **21. Mental rehearsal (5:34)**

In order to reduce feelings of anxiety linked to the unknown aspects of a performance situation, performers may resort to mental rehearsal. In order to feel at their best at an upcoming performance, they may visualise in advance the day of their performance, creating in their mind the ideal movie of that performance. Instead of leaving their mind to wander, they must assume the role of the director of their own film, making it as real as possible. Performers are invited to visualise the space of the performance, visualise their pre-concert routine, their arrival on stage, their instrumental gestures and sound, and their ideal mental and emotional state. They are encouraged to include relaxation exercises when they realise that their level of arousal is too high.

## **22. Exercise. Guided visualisation (6:49)**

This video is a guided visualisation during which performers are led to relax and to visualise and fully experience their ideal performance. Performers are invited to rehearse this mental exercise so that they may feel at home on the day of their actual performance, and may be comfortable managing an excess of arousal.

## **23. Cultivate trust (6:55)**

The goal of this video is to inspire performers. It emphasises the importance of putting into practice the content of the course, and to choose to trust in their work. They are reminded that their narratives about the course would determine whether or not they would diligently put into practice what they have learned.

Performers are encouraged to believe that they can attain more than they think they can. Once again, they are encouraged to revise narratives that may be limiting their goals. They are encouraged to dare to have dreams, to be creative, and to set for themselves goals that they find inspiring, and not to necessarily pursue goals that have been imposed on them by others. They are encouraged to improve all areas of their life, and to commit to take a step further out of their comfort zone each day, in the direction of their dreams. They are reminded that even the most challenging projects are built one step at a time, and that they should appreciate and congratulate themselves for every small victory over their self-doubts and fears, for each step they take outside their comfort zone. They should accept failure as part of the learning process, and not abandon their dreams. They should adopt an attitude that will allow them to preserve joy and inspiration throughout their long-term music-making project. They should choose to trust in the process.

## **24. Recipe to enjoy performing (9:45)**

This video is a review of the ideas presented throughout the course. In order to change how performers feel about performance, they need to change how they think about it – in other words, they need to change their mental habits. This requires training, training and training.

Performers should start by answering the most important questions: what is it that they play a musical instrument for, and why do they perform? The answer to these questions will determine all their subsequent actions. Performers should connect with their inner world of values, core beliefs, and intrinsic motivations, and define their mission as performers in such a way that this mission is aligned with their mission as human beings. They should let their narratives captivate them and become a source of inspiration. After establishing in their minds the why of what they do, they are ready to consider the how.

The rest of the video summarises the most important ideas of the course. Performers are encouraged to enjoy and keep involved in the process of aligning their goals with their values and psychological needs, and ensure that their lives are meaningful.





## Appendix III. The Pre-Intervention Questionnaire (Pre-Q)

(English translation of the questionnaire)

### General information

- **A 1: Age**
- **A 2: Sex**
- **A 3: Country of residence**
- **A 4: Email address (for identification purposes)**

### Musical Experience

- **A 5: Main instrument**
- **A 6: How many years have you been practicing your instrument for? (if you are a singer, consider your voice as your instrument)**
- **A 7: Main musical genre: Classic, Jazz, Pop, Folk, other**
- **A 8: Role. You usually perform:**
  - as a soloist,
  - as a member of a small group,
  - as a member of an orchestra or a big group.
- **A 9: Status. Please read the following options and choose the one that corresponds the most to your situation:**
  - You are a professional musician and you earn your living from performing,
  - You are a professional musician and you earn your living mostly from teaching,
  - You are an amateur performer,
  - You are a music student.

### Performance Experience

**A 10: Think about your performances during the last twelve months.**

- **A 10 a:** Approximately how many times have you performed during that period?
- **A 10 b:** In general, to what extent have you enjoyed performing? Here is a list going from:
  - 1 = you have not enjoyed it at all, to
  - 9 = you have enjoyed it fully.

Choose the point on the scale that best describes your experience. Point 5 describes an experience that you moderately enjoyed.

- **A 10 c:** To what extent have you felt absorbed in your performances? (with your attention focused on what you were doing)

- 1 = not focused at all, to
- 9 = totally absorbed.
  
- A 10 d: To what extent have you felt anxious during those performances?
  - 1 = no anxious at all, to
  - 9 = extremely anxious.
  
- A 10 e: Continue thinking about your performances during the last twelve months. Consider the quality of your music-making when performing for an audience. Have you played the pieces better, worse or similar to how you used to play them at home? Point 5 represents a similar quality.
  - 1 = much worse, to
  - 9 = much better.
  
- A 10 f: To what extent have you felt willing to perform? (just for the sake of the experience)
  - 1 = not willing at all, to
  - 9 = extremely willing.
  
- A 10 g: To what extent have you felt self-confident?
  - 1 = not self-confident at all, to
  - 9 = extremely self-confident.
  
- A 10 h: To what extent have you felt inspired during your performances?
  - 1 = not inspired at all, to
  - 9 = extremely inspired.
  
- A 10 i: To what extent have you felt connected with the audience? (that is, that you have experienced an intense emotional communication with the people who listened to you)
  - 1 = not connected at all, to
  - 9 = extremely connected.
  
- A 10 j: To what extent have you felt that your performances brought something valuable to your audience? (that, somehow, they contributed to the richness of the lives of those who listened to you). You felt that...
  - 1 = they did not bring anything valuable, to
  - 9 = they brought something extremely valuable.
  
- **A 11: Think about a performance that you consider to be representative of your performances in general. In other words, a performance in which you felt as you most commonly feel while you perform. During this performance:**
  - A 11 a: For what percentage of the time did you enjoy performing?
  
  - A 11 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a rough time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and
  
  - A 11 c: For what percentage of that time did you feel neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?

- **A 12: If you had to choose the emotion that best describes the way you felt during your performances, this emotion would be: ...**

**A 13: Here are some methods that some performers use in order to prepare their performances. Indicate to what extent you use each of these methods.**

1 = corresponds to a method that you use never or almost never,  
5 = to a method that you use approximately half of the time, and  
9 = to a method that you use always or almost always.

A 13 a: You visualise your ideal performance beforehand

A 13 b: You take a chemical or natural product

A 13 c: You deliberately focus your attention on your strengths, qualities and good preparation

A 13 d: You deliberately think about the value of the music you will perform

A 13 e: You remind yourself about the privilege you have of being a performer

A 13 f: You deliberately think about the way in which your music will improve the lives of those in your audience

A 13 g: You use a relaxation technique

A 13 h: You use other methods. Which ones?

**A 14: Project yourself mentally into the near future and imagine that you will give a public performance today. Answer the following questions without thinking about them a lot, just as spontaneously as possible.**

A 14 a: How happy do you think you will feel during this performance?

A 14 b: How self-confident do you think you will feel during this performance?

A 14 c: How inspired do you think you will feel during this performance?

A 14 d: How connected to the audience do you think you will feel?

A 14 e: How valuable do you think your performance will be for the audience?

## **Emotional experiences related to your musical practice**

**A 15: Think about the time you devote to your instrumental practice (I do not refer to the time you spend rehearsing with other musicians, but rather to the time you spend working on your own)**

A 15 a: Approximately how many hours have you devoted to the practice of your main instrument during the last seven days?

A 15 b: In your opinion, how efficient were your practice methods? (how much do you think the quality of your playing progressed in relation to the time you invested practicing)

- 1 = extremely inefficient, to
- 9 = extremely efficient.
  
- A 15 c: To what extent have you enjoyed your practice?
  - 1 = not at all, to
  - 9 = fully enjoyed.
  
- A 15 d: To what extent have you felt absorbed in your practice? (with your attention fully focused on what you were doing)
  - 1 = not focused at all, to
  - 9 = extremely focused.
  
- **A 16: Think a little more about your practice-related emotions during the last seven days. In general:**
  - A 16 a: For what percentage of the time that you spent practicing did you enjoy your practice?
  
  - A 16 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a hard time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? And
  
  - A 16 c: For what percentage of that time did you felt neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
  
- **A 17: If you had to choose the emotion that would best describe the way you felt during your practice, this emotion would be: ...**

### **Emotional experiences during your daily life**

- **A 18: Think about your non-musical activities during the last seven days. In general, to what extent have you enjoyed your non-musical activities?**
  - 1 = not at all, to
  - 9 = fully.
  
- **A 19: Think a little more about your non-musical activities during the last seven days. In general:**
  - A 19 a: For what percentage of the time did you enjoy what you were doing?
  
  - A 19 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a rough time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and
  
  - A 19 c: For what percentage of that time did you feel neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
  
- **A 20: If you had to choose the emotion that best describes the way you felt during your daily life, this emotion would be: ...**

- **A 21: How much impact do you think your musical activities have on your personal happiness?**
  - 1 = none at all,
  - 9 = a lot.

### Goals and points of view

- **A 22: Think about your goals as a performer for the next year (if you have no goal, go directly to question 23)**
  - A 22 a: To what extent do these goals inspire you?
    - 1 = not at all,
    - 9 = they fully inspire me.
  
  - A 22 b: How confident are you that you will attain your goals?
    - 1 = not confident at all,
    - 9 = fully confident.
- **A 23: To what extent do you think that the talent a person receives at birth determines their chances of success?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully determines.
  
- **A 24: What are your expectations from this course?**



## Appendix IV. The Post-Intervention Questionnaire (Post-Q)

(English translation of the questionnaire)

### General information

- **B 1: Date**
- **B 2: Email address (for identification purposes)**

### Performance experience

- **B 3: Think about your performances during the last three weeks.**
  - B 3 a: Approximately how many times have you performed during that period?
  - B 3 b: In general, to what extent have you enjoyed performing? Here is a list going from:
    - 1 = you have not enjoyed it at all, to
    - 9 = you have enjoyed it fully.
  - Choose the point on the scale that best describes your experience. Point 5 describes an experience that you moderately enjoyed.
  - B 3 c: To what extent have you felt absorbed in your performances? (with your attention focused on what you were doing)
    - 1 = not focused at all, to
    - 9 = totally absorbed.
  - B 3 d: To what extent have you felt anxious during those performances?
    - 1 = no anxious at all, to
    - 9 = extremely anxious.
  - B 3 e: Continue thinking about your performances during the last three weeks. Consider the quality of your music-making when performing for an audience. Have you played the pieces better, worse or similar to how you used to play them at home? Point 5 represents a similar quality.
    - 1 = much worse, to
    - 9 = much better.
  - B 3 f: To what extent have you felt willing to perform? (just for the sake of the experience)
    - 1 = not willing at all, to
    - 9 = extremely willing.
  - B 3 g: To what extent have you felt self-confident?
    - 1 = not self-confident at all, to
    - 9 = extremely self-confident.

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- B 3 h: To what extent have you felt inspired during your performances?
  - 1 = not inspired at all, to
  - 9 = extremely inspired.
- B 3 i: To what extent have you felt connected with the audience? (that is, that you have experienced an intense emotional communication with the people who listened to you)
  - 1 = not connected at all, to
  - 9 = extremely connected.
- B 3 j: To what extent have you felt that your performances brought something valuable to your audience? (that, somehow, they contributed to the richness of the lives of those who listened to you). You felt that...
  - 1 = they did not bring anything valuable, to
  - 9 = they brought something extremely valuable.
- **B 4: Think about a performance that you consider to be representative of your performances in general. In other words, a performance in which you felt as you most commonly feel while you perform. During this performance:**
  - B 4 a: For what percentage of the time did you enjoy performing?
  - B 4 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a rough time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and
  - B 4 c: For what percentage of that time did you feel neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
- **B 5: If you had to choose the emotion that would best describe the way you felt during your performances, this emotion would be: ...**

**B 6: Here are some methods that some performers use in order to prepare their performances. Indicate to what extent you use each of these methods.**

1 = corresponds to a method that you use never or almost never,  
5= to a method that you use approximately half of the time, and  
9= to a method that you use always or almost always.

B 6 a: You visualise your ideal performance beforehand

B 6 b: You take a chemical or natural product

B 6 c: You deliberately focus your attention on your strengths, qualities and good preparation

B 6 d: You deliberately think about the value of the music you will perform

B 6 e: You remind yourself about the privilege you have of being a performer

B 6 f: You deliberately think about the way in which your music will improve the lives of those in your audience



B 6 g: You use a relaxation technique

B 6 h: You use other methods. Which ones?

**B 7: Project yourself mentally into the near future and imagine that you will give a public performance today. Answer the following questions without thinking about them a lot, just as spontaneously as possible.**

B 7 a: How happy do you think you will feel during this performance?

B 7 b: How self-confident do you think you will feel during this performance?

B 7 c: How inspired do you think you will feel during this performance?

B 7 d: How connected to the audience do you think you will feel?

B 7 e: How valuable do you think your performance will be for the audience?

## **Emotional experiences related to your musical practice**

**B 8: Think about the time you devote to your instrumental practice (I do not refer to the time you spend rehearsing with other musicians, but rather to the time you spend working on your own**

B 8 a: Approximately how many hours have you devoted to the practice of your main instrument during the last seven days?

B 8 b: In your opinion, how efficient were your practice methods? (how much do you think the quality of your playing progressed in relation to the time you invested practicing)

- 1 = extremely inefficient, to
- 9 = extremely efficient.

• B 8 c: To what extent have you enjoyed your practice?

- 1 = not at all, to
- 9 = fully enjoyed.

• B 8 d: To what extent have you felt absorbed in your practice? (with your attention fully focused on what you were doing)

- 1 = not focused at all, to
- 9 = extremely focused.

• **B 9: Think a little more about your practice-related emotions during the last seven days. In general:**

• B 9 a: For what percentage of the time that you spent practicing did you enjoy your practice?

• B 9 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a hard time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and

- B 9 c: For what percentage of that time did you felt neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
- **B 10: If you had to choose the emotion that would best describes the way you felt during your practice, this emotion would be: ...**

### **Emotional experiences during your daily life**

- **B 11: Think about your non-musical activities during the last seven days. In general, to what extent have you enjoyed your non-musical activities?**
  - 1 = not at all, to
  - 9 = fully.
- **B 12: Think a little more about your non-musical activities during the last seven days. In general:**
  - B 12 a: For what percentage of the time did you enjoy what you were doing?
  - B 12 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a rough time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and
  - B 12 c: For what percentage of that time did you feel neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
- **B 13: If you had to choose the emotion that best describes the way you felt during your daily life, this emotion would be: ...**

### **Goals and points of view**

- **B 14: Think about your goals as a performer for the next year (if you have no goal, go directly to question 23)**
  - B 14 a: To what extent do these goals inspire you?
    - 1 = not at all,
    - 9 = they fully inspire me.
  - B 14 b: How confident are you that you will attain your goals?
    - 1 = not confident at all,
    - 9 = fully confident.
- **B 15: To what extent do you think that the talent a person receives at birth determines their chances of success?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully determines.
- **B 16: To what extent has this course given you the tools to enjoy performance?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully.
- **B 17: To what extent has this course given you the tools to enjoy practice?**

- 1 = not at all,
- 9 = fully.
  
- **B 18: To what extent have you watched the videos?**
  - 1 = none or almost none,
  - 9 = all of them.
  
- **B 19: To what extent have you done the exercises proposed?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = all of them.
  
- **B 20: To what extent have you participated in the discussion forum?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully.
  
- **B 21: To what extent have you had enough time to follow the course?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully.
  
- **B 22: In the case you think you have not had enough time to follow the course, to what extent would you be willing to take the course again in the future?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully.
  
- **B 23: To what extent have you read the discussions in the forum?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully
  
- **B 24: To what extent has the course helped you in other aspects of your life?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully.
  
- **B 25: To what extent has the course helped you as a teacher?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully.
  
- **B 26: To what extent do you think this kind of course should be included in musical training?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully.



## Appendix V. The Control Questionnaire (Control-Q)

(English translation of the questionnaire)

### General information

- **Q 1: Date**
- **Q 2: Email address (for identification purposes)**

### Performance experience

- **Q 3: Think about your performances during the last three weeks.**
  - Q 3 a: Approximately how many times have you performed during that period?
  - Q 3 b: In general, to what extent have you enjoyed performing? Here is a list going from:
    - 1 = you have not enjoyed it at all, to
    - 9 = you have enjoyed it fully.
  - Choose the point on the scale that best describes your experience. Point 5 describes an experience that you moderately enjoyed.
  - Q 3 c: To what extent have you felt absorbed in your performances? (with your attention focused on what you were doing)
    - 1 = not focused at all, to
    - 9 = totally absorbed.
  - Q 3 d: To what extent have you felt anxious during those performances?
    - 1 = no anxious at all, to
    - 9 = extremely anxious.
  - Q 3 e: Continue thinking about your performances during the last three weeks. Consider the quality of your music-making when performing for an audience. Have you played the pieces better, worse or similar to how you used to play them at home? Point 5 represents a similar quality.
    - 1 = much worse, to
    - 9 = much better.
  - Q 3 f: To what extent have you felt willing to perform? (just for the sake of the experience)
    - 1 = not willing at all, to
    - 9 = extremely willing.
  - Q 3 g: To what extent have you felt self-confident?
    - 1 = not self-confident at all, to
    - 9 = extremely self-confident.

- Q 3 h: To what extent have you felt inspired during your performances?
  - 1 = not inspired at all, to
  - 9 = extremely inspired.
- Q 3 i: To what extent have you felt connected with the audience? (that is, that you have experienced an intense emotional communication with the people who listened to you)
  - 1 = not connected at all, to
  - 9 = extremely connected.
- Q 3 j: To what extent have you felt that your performances brought something valuable to your audience? (that, somehow, they contributed to the richness of the lives of those who listened to you). You felt that...
  - 1 = they did not bring anything valuable, to
  - 9 = they brought something extremely valuable.
- **Q 4: Think about a performance that you consider to be representative of your performances in general. In other words, a performance in which you felt as you most commonly feel while you perform. During this performance:**
  - Q 4 a: For what percentage of the time did you enjoy performing?
  - Q 4 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a rough time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and
  - Q 4 c: For what percentage of that time did you feel neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
- **Q 5: If you had to choose the emotion that would best describes the way you felt during your performances, this emotion would be: ...**
- **Q 6: Here are some methods that some performers use in order to prepare their performances. Indicate to what extent you use each of these methods.**
  - 1 = corresponds to a method that you use never or almost never,
  - 5 = to a method that you use approximately half of the time, and
  - 9 = to a method that you use always or almost always.

Q 6 a: You visualise your ideal performance beforehand

Q 6 b: You take a chemical or natural product

Q 6 c: You deliberately focus your attention on your strengths, qualities and good preparation

Q 6 d: You deliberately think about the value of the music you will perform

Q 6 e: You remind yourself about the privilege you have of being a performer

Q 6 f: You deliberately think about the way in which your music will improve the lives of those in your audience

Q 6 g: You use a relaxation technique

Q 6 h: You use other methods. Which ones?

**Q 7: Project yourself mentally into the near future and imagine that you will give a public performance today. Answer the following questions without thinking about them a lot, just as spontaneously as possible.**

Q 7 a: How happy do you think you will feel during this performance?

Q 7 b: How self-confident do you think you will feel during this performance?

Q 7 c: How inspired do you think you will feel during this performance?

Q 7 d: How connected to the audience do you think you will feel?

Q 7 e: How valuable do you think your performance will be for the audience?

## **Emotional experiences related to your musical practice**

**Q 8: Think about the time you devote to your instrumental practice (I do not refer to the time you spend rehearsing with other musicians, but rather to the time you spend working on your own)**

Q 8 a: Approximately how many hours have you devoted to the practice of your main instrument during the last seven days?

Q 8 b: To your opinion, how efficient were your practice methods? (how much do you think the quality of your playing progressed in relation to the time you invested practicing)

- 1 = extremely inefficient, to
- 9 = extremely efficient.

• Q 8 c: To what extent have you enjoyed your practice?

- 1 = not at all, to
- 9 = fully enjoyed.

• Q 8 d: To what extent have you felt absorbed in your practice? (with your attention fully focused on what you were doing)

- 1 = not focused at all, to
- 9 = extremely focused.

• **Q 9: Think a little more about your practice-related emotions during the last seven days. In general:**

• Q 9 a: For what percentage of the time that you spent practicing did you enjoy your practice?

• Q 9 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a hard time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and

- Q 9 c: For what percentage of that time did you felt neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
- **Q 10: If you had to choose the emotion that would best describes the way you felt during your practice, this emotion would be: ...**

### **Emotional experiences during your daily life**

- **Q 11: Think about your non-musical activities during the last seven days. In general, to what extent have you enjoyed your non-musical activities?**
  - 1 = not at all, to
  - 9 = fully.
- **Q 12: Think a little more about your non-musical activities during the last seven days. In general:**
  - Q 12 a: For what percentage of the time did you enjoy what you were doing?
  - Q 12 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a rough time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and
  - Q 12 c: For what percentage of that time did you feel neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
- **Q 13: If you had to choose the emotion that would best describes the way you felt during your daily life, this emotion would be: ...**

### **Goals and points of view**

- **Q 14: Think about your goals as a performer for the next year (if you have no goal, go directly to question 23)**
  - Q 14 a: To what extent do these goals inspire you?
    - 1 = not at all,
    - 9 = they fully inspire me.
  - Q 14 b: How confident are you that you will attain your goals?
    - 1 = not confident at all,
    - 9 = fully confident.
- **Q 15: To what extent do you think that the talent a person receives at birth determines their chances of success?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully determines.



## Appendix VI. The Follow-up Questionnaire (Follow-up Q)

(English translation of the questionnaire)

### General information

- **F 1: Date**
- **F 2: Email address (for identification purposes)**

### Performance experience

- **F 3: Think about your performances during the last three months.**
  - F 3 a: Approximately how many times have you performed during that period?
  - F 3 b: In general, to what extent have you enjoyed performing? Here is a list going from:
    - 1 = you have not enjoyed it at all, to
    - 9 = you have enjoyed it fully.
  - Choose the point on the scale that best describes your experience. Point 5 describes an experience that you moderately enjoyed.
  - F 3 c: To what extent have you felt absorbed in your performances? (with your attention focused on what you were doing)
    - 1 = not focused at all, to
    - 9 = totally absorbed.
  - F 3 d: To what extent have you felt anxious during those performances?
    - 1 = no anxious at all, to
    - 9 = extremely anxious.
  - F 3 e: Continue thinking about your performances during the last three months. Consider the quality of your music-making when performing for an audience. Have you played the pieces better, worse or similar to how you used to play them at home? Point 5 represents a similar quality.
    - 1 = much worse, to
    - 9 = much better.
  - F 3 f: To what extent have you felt willing to perform? (just for the sake of the experience)
    - 1 = not willing at all, to
    - 9 = extremely willing.
  - F 3 g: To what extent have you felt self-confident?
    - 1 = not self-confident at all, to
    - 9 = extremely self-confident.
  - F 3 h: To what extent have you felt inspired during your performances?

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- 1 = not inspired at all, to
- 9 = extremely inspired.
  
- F 3 i: To what extent have you felt connected with the audience? (that is, that you have experienced an intense emotional communication with the people who listened to you)
  - 1 = not connected at all, to
  - 9 = extremely connected.
  
- F 3 j: To what extent have you felt that your performances brought something valuable to your audience? (that, somehow, they contributed to the richness of the lives of those who listened to you). You felt that...
  - 1 = they did not bring anything valuable, to
  - 9 = they brought something extremely valuable.
  
- **F 4: Think about a performance that you consider to be representative of your performances in general. In other words, a performance in which you felt as you most commonly feel while you perform. During this performance:**
  - F 4 a: For what percentage of the time did you enjoy performing?
  
  - F 4 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a rough time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and
  
  - F 4 c: For what percentage of that time did you feel neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
  
- **F 5: If you had to choose the emotion that would best describe the way you felt during your performances, this emotion would be: ...**
  
- **F 6: Here are some methods that some performers use in order to prepare their performances. Indicate to what extent you use each of these methods.**
  - 1 = corresponds to a method that you use never or almost never,
  - 5= to a method that you use approximately half of the time, and
  - 9= to a method that you use always or almost always.
  
  - F 6 a: You visualise your ideal performance beforehand
  
  - F 6 b: You take a chemical or natural product
  
  - F 6 c: You deliberately focus your attention on your strengths, qualities and good preparation
  
  - F 6 d: You deliberately think about the value of the music you will perform
  
  - F 6 e: You remind yourself about the privilege you have of being a performer

- F 6 f: You deliberately think about the way in which your music will improve the lives of those in your audience
- F 6 g: You use a relaxation technique
- F 6 h: You use other methods. Which ones?
- **F 7: Project yourself mentally into the near future and imagine that you will give a public performance today. Answer the following questions without thinking about them a lot, just as spontaneously as possible.**
  - F 7 a: How happy do you think you will feel during this performance?
  - F 7 b: How self-confident do you think you will feel during this performance?
  - F 7 c: How inspired do you think you will feel during this performance?
  - F 7 d: How connected to the audience do you think you will feel?
  - F 7 e: How valuable do you think your performance will be for the audience?

## **Emotional experiences related to your musical practice**

- **F 8: Think about the time you devote to your instrumental practice (I do not refer to the time you spend rehearsing with other musicians, but rather to the time you spend working on your own)**
  - F 8 a: Approximately how many hours have you devoted to the practice of your main instrument during the last seven days?
  - F 8 b: In your opinion, how efficient were your practice methods? (how much do you think the quality of your playing progressed in relation to the time you invested practicing)
    - 1 = extremely inefficient, to
    - 9 = extremely efficient.
  - F 8 c: To what extent have you enjoyed your practice?
    - 1 = not at all, to
    - 9 = fully enjoyed.
  - F 8 d: To what extent have you felt absorbed in your practice? (with your attention fully focused on what you were doing)
    - 1 = not focused at all, to

- 9 = extremely focused.
- **F 9: Think a little more about your practice-related emotions during the last three months. In general:**
  - F 9 a: For what percentage of the time that you spent practicing did you enjoy your practice?
  - F 9 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a hard time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and
  - F 9 c: For what percentage of that time did you feel neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
- **F 10: If you had to choose the emotion that would best describes the way you felt during your practice, this emotion would be: ...**

### **Emotional experiences during your daily life**

- **F 11: Think about your non-musical activities during the last three months. In general, to what extent have you enjoyed your non-musical activities?**
  - 1 = not at all, to
  - 9 = fully.
- **F 12: Think a little more about your non-musical activities during the last three months. In general:**
  - F 12 a: For what percentage of the time did you enjoy what you were doing?
  - F 12 b: For what percentage of the time did you have a rough time (feeling anxious or frustrated)? and
  - F 12 c: For what percentage of that time did you feel neutral (neither enjoying nor having a hard time)?
- **F 13: If you had to choose the emotion that best describes the way you felt during your daily life, this emotion would be: ...**

### **Goals and points of view**

- **F 14: Think about your goals as a performer for the next year (if you have no goal, go directly to question 23)**
  - F 14 a: To what extent do these goals inspire you?
    - 1 = not at all,
    - 9 = they fully inspire me.
  - F 14 b: How confident are you that you will attain your goals?
    - 1 = not confident at all,
    - 9 = fully confident.

- **F 15: To what extent do you think that the talent a person receives at birth determines their chances of success?**
  - 1 = not at all,
  - 9 = fully determines.
  
- **F 16: Which ideas from the course have helped you the most?**
  
- **F 17: Do you have any suggestions for improving the course?**