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Music Majors and Meditation Practice: A Phenomenological Study

Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine undergraduate and graduate music majors’ perceived experiences while learning and practicing a meditation technique. Guiding research questions included: 1) How did meditation practice alter participants’ thoughts related to music performance? 2) How did meditation practice influence participants’ perceived Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) symptoms? 3) What aspects of meditation practice did participants find most/least helpful in perceived reduction of negative MPA symptoms? 4) How did meditation practice influence post performance self-evaluation? 5) What influence does meditation practice have on participants during performance preparation? Six music majors were selected as participants and data was collected through interviews, a focus group, a post-performance group discussion, participant journals, and an open-ended survey. Three themes emerged regarding participants’ perceived experiences while learning and practicing a meditation technique: 1) shifting attitudes about performance, 2) personalizing the meditation practice, and 3) experiencing increased awareness. Participants observed changes regarding how they approached music performance and music performance preparation that influenced their perceived MPA symptoms.