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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

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PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN SOLO PIANO PLAYING

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

JOANN MARIE KIRCHNER

Norman, Oklahoma

2002

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PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN SOLO PIANO PLAYING

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY

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ABSTRACT

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN SOLO PIANO PLAYING

By: Joann Marie Kirchner

Major Professors: Dr. Sara Beach
Dr. Jane Magrath

The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of performance anxiety in solo piano playing from the perspective of the participants. Research questions focusing on the following three categories were addressed: 1) What does the experience of performance anxiety feel like to a solo pianist? 2) What are the ways in which performance anxiety manifests itself? and 3) How should performers deal with performance anxiety?

A qualitative methodology was employed in this study. Six pianists on the faculties of southwestern colleges and universities were selectively chosen for participation. A survey questionnaire and an individual interview were used to collect data in the late spring and summer of 2001. The researcher analyzed the transcripts of the interviews and codes were developed accordingly.

The three categories of research questions were utilized for the interpretation of the findings. The symptoms of performance anxiety manifested themselves through a combination of thought processes, feelings and

physiological responses, activated by the perception of a threat by the performer. Negative thoughts and feelings dominated the experience of musical performance anxiety and undermined the self-confidence level of the performer. The identity of the performer was impacted both by how the individual viewed himself or herself, as well as the result of his or her perception of how others viewed them. While the participants all had their individual ways of dealing with their experience of performance anxiety, none of the techniques worked one hundred percent of the time. The coping mechanisms employed did make a difference in the intensity of the anxiety experience.

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN SOLO PIANO PLAYING

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Eighty percent of all people experience anxiety when they become the center of attention (Plaut, 1990). Performance anxiety is not limited solely to musicians; public speakers, athletes, teachers, politicians, actors, and dancers all have had the experience of having a group of people focus their attention upon them. Mild anxiety does not interfere with a performance. In fact, many people believe they need a small amount of anxiety to facilitate their performance. Many musicians, however, have the experience of not being able to perform up to their expected capacity as a result of an increased anxiety level. While many believe it is important, and even necessary, to experience some performance anxiety to play their best, anxiety should not take over and debilitate the performer. When the anxiety prevents an individual from performing their best, the performer is affected and the musical experience for others also may be affected.

Some individuals appear to have a high threshold for enduring anxiety, and for them, the level of anxiety may not affect the quality of the performance. The effects of performance anxiety may be noted when a discrepancy exists between what has occurred in practice and what occurs in the actual performance.

Rather than eliminate performance anxiety, the goal should be to discover ways to channel the feelings that often accompany performance anxiety. The desire is that those feelings will work for, and not against, a given performance. The anxiety would not draw attention from the task at hand and thus the debilitating aspects may be reduced.

Background

We live in an age that is filled with anxiety. The ordinary stresses of daily life leave few people unaffected.

> Every alert citizen of our society realizes, on the basis of his own experience as well as his observation of his fellow-men, that anxiety is a pervasive and profound phenomenon in the 20th century. From 1945 and the birth of the atom bomb, anxiety shifted from a covert to an overt problem. The alert citizens were then aware not only of the more obvious anxiety-creating situations such as uncontrolled atomic warfare, radical political and economic upheaval, but also the less obvious, deeper, and more personal sources of anxiety in themselves . . . Hence to endeavor to 'prove' the pervasiveness of anxiety in our day is as unnecessary as the proverbial carrying of coals to Newcastle (May, 1977, p. 4).

The prevalence of anxiety attests to the fact that it is an issue that needs to be addressed in our society today.

This phenomenon of anxiety as a societal issue for study did not emerge until the mid 1900's. One reason for this suppression was the tendency in our culture to ignore irrational experiences. Anxiety is always partially irrational (May, 1977). A group of philosophers known as Existentialists begun by the German philosopher F.W.J. Schelling "sought to overcome the traditional dichotomy between mind and body and the tendency to suppress the irrational aspects of experience" (May, 1977, p. 35). This represents the first emergence of anxiety as a problem to be addressed.

Many seemingly harmless situations have the potential to create anxiety due to the complex ways in which an individual may interpret those situations, for example as being either threatening or nonthreatening. When the situation is perceived as threatening, the individual is confronted with feelings of helplessness and uncertainty. Anxiety had as its original purpose the protection of cavemen from wild beasts (May, 1977). The primary response to anxiety is one of "fight or flight." Anxiety today still protects us from dangers, but rarely are these dangers life threatening.

> Anxiety is the apprehension cued off by a threat to some value that the individual holds essential to his existence as a personality . . . Its special characteristics . . . are the feelings of uncertainty and helplessness in the face of danger. The nature of anxiety can be understood when we ask

what is threatened in the experience which produces anxiety (May, 1977, p. 205).

Anxiety, then, is an effect rather than a cause.

While the dangers in playing the piano are rarely, if ever, life-threatening dangers, it is possible for a musician to view the experience as a threatening one. According to Nideffer (1978), three factors create a threatening situation. The first centers on the value an individual places in the opinion of the audience. The more highly the opinion of the audience is valued, the more likely that anxiety will be created. The second factor centers on the hierarchy in which a given performance is placed. If the outcome of the performance determines the acceptance into the school of choice, making an orchestra audition, or placing in a competition, the stakes are higher. The results of the quality of the performance may have an effect on one's entire life. Lastly, the more that music is the focus of an individual's life, the greater the threat potential (Niedeffer, 1978). When an individual centers his or her life on music, making it the total focus of his or her life, a strong potential exists for the experience to be viewed as a threat.

Lehrer views the following as possible threats to a performing musician: slips; muscle weakness or tension; inability to master some of the technical problems presented in the program; inattentiveness in the audience; ridicule by critics and/or colleagues; the possibility of developing a bad public reputation or of losing the affection of friends and supporters who

> once were attracted to one partly because of one's performance talents; not understanding a piece of music sufficiently for one's own standards; unreliability of an instrument; strangeness of a new instrument or concert hall; and problems in living, financial, and travel arrangements associated with a concert tour (Lehrer, 1978, p. 143).

Each of these factors can contribute to an increase in anxiety levels within an individual.

This threat can occur on several different levels. It may be a threat to our physical existence, our psychological existence, or to any value that we identify as part of our existence (May, 1977). These occasions of anxiety will vary with different individuals, as well as vary within the same individual at different times. This normal anxiety in life cannot be avoided unless one becomes apathetic, or dull to one's sensibilities and imagination (May, 1977). While anxiety cannot be avoided, it can, however, be reduced, and even tolerated.

While the experience of anxiety may feel like fear, a distinction exists between the two experiences. Fear has a specific object as its focus. "In fear we are aware of ourselves as well as in our object, and we can orient ourselves spatially with reference to the thing feared" (May, 1977, p. 61). The object of our fear occupies a particular space. As a result, you can move away from the object. However, in the experience of anxiety, you do not experience "the threat as coming from a particular place" (May, 1977, p. 61). There is no specific object

that we can look toward, and so we do not know where to flee. The experience of anxiety is a "vague and unspecific apprehension" (May, 1977, p. 60). The threat is much less clearly defined and does not relate to a real and present danger; the experience of anxiety is ambiguous.

Problem Statement

Performance anxiety has been used interchangeably throughout the years with "stage fright" and is now referred to as musical performance anxiety. Musical performance anxiety has been defined "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 musical aptitude, training and level of preparation" (Salmon, 1990, p. 3). While some degree of performance anxiety is usually considered normal, an excessive amount may detract from the quality of the performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the experience of performance anxiety in solo piano playing. This was investigated through the experiences of six performing pianists who have dealt with performance anxiety in their mature professional lives and who have also helped their own students deal with performance anxiety issues. They have offered a perspective that can help other

professionals who both teach and perform. The following questions were addressed in this study:

- What does the experience of performance anxiety feel like to a solo pianist?
- What are the ways in which performance anxiety manifests itself?
- How should performers deal with performance anxiety?

Need for the Study

While the phenomenon of anxiety is a universal experience, for some it is considered an occupational hazard in their professions. All those who place themselves in front of a group face this occupational hazard. A solo pianist is faced with the task of preparing a body of music, which is generally memorized and played before one or more persons considered to be an audience. This experience, often, is solitary with the pianist seated at a piano on a stage in front of an audience in a recital, a competition, or a jury performance. To perform under these circumstances requires a great deal of focused concentration. The least interruption is capable of disrupting the thought processes of an individual.

This particular study surrounding performance anxiety served to describe the experience from the participants' point of view. The researcher attempted to get inside the phenomenon of performance anxiety and looked for common elements to emerge.

Hutterer (1980) suggests that the attitude surrounding performance anxiety sets up a "Pandora's Box" orientation. By not addressing the problem of performance anxiety, the thinking is that it will simply go away. On the other hand, in addressing the problem of performance anxiety, the thinking is that the problem will become worse. This "musicians nemesis" (Nagel, 1990, p. 37) can not be avoided. Unless musicians learn to deal effectively with the phenomena of performance anxiety, the anxiety will create disastrous effects in their performances.

If the phenomenon of performance anxiety can be examined closely from the perspective of the participants of the study, perhaps individuals will come to a greater knowledge of the experience and even plan coping strategies to encounter performance anxiety. Generally speaking, this topic of performance anxiety is not addressed in any course included in a music curriculum either in an undergraduate or graduate program. Rather, it is left up to the applied teacher to speak on the topic, and often the topic is simply not addressed. I hope this study will help to illuminate the experience of performance anxiety and prevent it from becoming a devastating experience for the performer. An analysis of this phenomenon will provide a valuable contribution to both students and teachers.

Procedures

This study involved six piano teachers who served on the piano faculties of several south central colleges and universities in the United States. Faculty chosen were those who taught regular college loads and continued to perform solo piano recitals. They were chosen in response to several questions on a consent-to-participate form. The researcher looked for those individuals reporting the greatest level of anxiety, as well as those who have performed at least eight solo recitals in their professional careers. These recitals may have included a repeat performance of the same program. Through an interview, the researcher attempted to discover a detailed look into performance anxiety, through a discussion of the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that accompany performance anxiety.

Assumptions

This study assumed that the participants were able to interpret and label their feelings correctly and that the participants were able to articulate and express themselves adequately in the interview session.

Limitations

The generalizability of the study was limited to the sample population interviewed. The measurement of anxiety was limited to self-report measures. The discussion of performance anxiety in the interview session was limited by

how well the participants were "in touch" with their feelings, as well as by what they were willing to share with the researcher.

Organization of the Study

Chapter two contains a review of relevant literature with a focus on topics such as the nature of anxiety, the three-system conceptualization of anxiety, and studies involving the prevalence of performance anxiety. Chapter three presents the methodology to address the research questions. Chapter four addresses the qualitative analyses of the research questions through the findings and interpretations. Finally, chapter five offers the discussion, implications, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Musical performance anxiety refers to a specific type of anxiety. To understand the nature of musical performance anxiety, it is important to first understand general anxiety. The literature review will begin by looking at a generalized overview of anxiety, discussing some of the ways in which anxiety can manifest itself in an individual. The components that constitute anxiety, including musical performance anxiety, will then be discussed. Research studies also will be reviewed in the hopes of establishing that musical performance anxiety does indeed affect performing musicians.

The Physical Nature of Anxiety

Anxiety is created in response to the survival instinct. The body responds differently in a state of anxiety compared to when in a state of calm. When the body perceives a threat, it "gears up" for survival. This perception of a threat occurs in the cerebrum of the central nervous system. The central nervous system in turn sends signals down the spinal cord to the peripheral nervous system. The peripheral nervous system is divided into the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system.

This perceived threat activates the sympathetic nervous system, which not only increases alertness, but it creates unfamiliar changes in the body. The parasympathetic nervous system, on the other hand, is responsible for calming us down. These two nervous systems "work in opposition to each other" (May, 1977, p. 72). The sympathetic nervous system is stronger than the parasympathetic nervous system and is capable of overriding the parasympathetic nervous system.

This increased alertness makes an individual much more sensitive to the sights and sounds of his or her environment. Frequently, an individual will notice something in his or her surroundings, which was overlooked earlier. This has been known to happen with performers who report hearing subtleties for the first time which were previously unnoticed in the music.

When anxiety is present, it is often difficult to control one's attention. An individual only has a certain amount of attention to devote to something in a given period of time. When something other than the task at hand captures his or her attention, the attention focused on the task at hand decreases. "The amount of information that one can effectively deal with diminishes" (Salmon, 1992, p. 57). This enhanced mental alertness has the propensity to create racing thoughts and/or images. The focus of attention is changed and the individual begins to concentrate on self-preservation, rather than on the task at hand (Mastroianni, 1996). Anxiety diverts the attention away from the present moment.

One such possible intrusion for a performing musician could occur when a mistake is made during a performance. Once the mistake occurs, the musician's attention is diverted either to the mistake or on ways to avoid possible future errors. The attention is no longer focused on the actual music making taking place.

Another bodily change that occurs in a state of anxiety occurs in the blood supply flow. The blood supply is greatly reduced to the peripheral muscles. The blood supply increases to the larger muscles, which would be needed in dealing with a physical threat. It is these smaller peripheral muscles, however, that are so necessary in playing the piano. As a result of less blood circulating, the hands and feet become cold.

While the perceived danger in playing the piano is not a physical danger, the response of the sympathetic nervous system is the same as when faced with physical danger. When a performer perceives something as a threat, "the amount of anxiety is comparable to the amount of anxiety generated by a problem that actually exists" (LeBlanc, 1994, p. 65). The challenge is to work alongside the intensity of the anxiety experience.

Spielberger (1966) delineates two different types of anxiety. He describes anxiety as either fluctuating over time, state anxiety, or as a personality trait that remains somewhat stable, trait anxiety. State anxiety is the response that occurs as

a result of what is happening at a particular moment. Trait anxiety is an individual's tendency to become anxious in a stressful situation.

Three-System Conceptualization of Anxiety

With performance anxiety viewed as an occupational hazard for performing musicians, it is important that we acknowledge the many ways in which this anxiety manifests itself in our playing. Most contemporary theories of anxiety look to a three-system conceptualization: physiological, behavioral, and cognitive. The manifestations of these three components will vary from one individual to another. While there are times when an individual experiences only one of these components, at other times the same individual may experience all three manifestations simultaneously. Response synchrony refers to a situation in which there occurs an increase or a decrease in all the components at the same time. For example, an individual may report an increase in physiological arousal, an increase in self-reported anxiety, and behavior disruptions all at the same time. Response synchrony generally happens in a state of intense anxiety. Response desynchrony, on the other hand, occurs when there is an increase in only one of the components, while the others remain relatively stable. An individual may have an increase in self-reported anxiety, but not in physiological arousal or behavior disruptions. Response desynchrony happens in a less intense anxious state.

The physiological component exhibits itself in obvious changes within the body. These changes are a result of the activation of the sympathetic nervous system and may include a rapid heartbeat, dry mouth, excessive sweating, shaky hands and/or knees, shortness of breath, or dizziness. Depending on the individual, one, or several of the above mentioned manifestations, may be exhibited. According to Ely (1991), these components are "the easiest to isolate, measure or observe" (p. 36).

The behavioral expression refers to the observable aspects of performance skills (Salmon, 1992). Included in this category is a decrease in performance quality which may include memory slips or errors in performance. Other manifestations may include avoidance of either situations which are anxiety producing or situations which a person interprets as being dangerous.

The cognitive factor clouds thinking, preventing the performer from thinking clearly and focusing attention on the task at hand. Tartalone (1992) identifies these cognitive aspects of anxiety as "self-related preoccupations involving worry, feelings of helplessness, expectations of negative consequences, catastrophizing, and fear of loss of regard by others" (p. 27). Nagel, Himle, and Papsdorf (1981), in their research with students at the Performance Anxiety Program, University of Michigan Laboratory for Applied Psychology, found that the self-statements and internal dialogues that a person engages in all contribute to high levels of anxiety. "Much of our ordinary thinking is conducted in internal

monologue or silent soliloquy, usually accompanied by an internal cinematograph-show of visual imagery" (Ryle, 1949, p. 27). This internal monologue has a direct bearing on how an individual interprets an event. These monologues, when composed of negative statements, have the potential to undermine one's concept of self (Nagle, 1990). When these inner thoughts threaten our self-worth or self-esteem, they carry the potential to create anxiety (Nagel, Himle, & Papsdorf, 1981). As the self-confidence weakens, the individual opens himself or herself up to experience a greater sense of vulnerability (Beck, 1985). It is not so much the anxiety that causes problems in a performance but rather what the individual says about the anxiety that creates the problem.

Ely (1991) proposed another component of performance anxiety. In addition to the physiological, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions, Ely included psychological reactions. These psychological reactions may include a fear of failure, an irritability, or a sense of apprehension toward an approaching event.

Musical Performance Anxiety

Musical performance anxiety is comprised of a mixture of the above mentioned physiological, behavioral, and cognitive variables. The effects of musical performance anxiety may not only impair the quality of a performance but

also impair the enjoyment of performing (Harris, 1986). It often prevents the musician from a successful performance.

In spite of thorough and meticulous preparation, Salmon (1992) states that many people have uncertainties about their performance and find themselves in psychological distress. Salmon suggests that this anticipatory anxiety is a common occurrence and is reported to increase in the days leading up to a performance (Salmon, 1992). According to Salmon and Meyer (1992), this intensity peaks prior to the performance for experienced performers more often than during the actual performance.

Barrell, Medeiros, Barrell, and Price (1985) describe five common elements present in performance anxiety. The first element surrounds the significance the performer places on the audience and the evaluation by the audience of the performance. The audience is viewed as a judge, and the interpretation of the audience will have an impact on the relationship the performer may wish to have with individual members of the audience. Second, the performer focuses on the possibility of failure at the task at hand. As a result of this possibility, the performer attempts to avoid failure and feels the need to do well. The performer is certain that the other person, or the audience, has expectations, and it is important to live up to those expectations. Third, the performer has feelings of uncertainty. Due to the many variables present in a musical performance, there are no guarantees regarding the musical outcome. The

performer, while desiring to perform well, is not at all certain whether that will happen. Lastly, the performer focuses on his or her own self. He or she becomes preoccupied with his or her own behavior and appearance.

Lehrer (1984) believes that the experience of performance anxiety involves four categories of symptoms. Two of these categories overlap with some of the elements presented by Barrell et al. (1985): the fear of disapproval from others and concern over one's performing abilities. The two remaining categories include distraction and memory problems, as well as anxiety and a fear of fear.

Anxiety grows out of three irrational beliefs according to Ellis (1979): 1) A dire need to succeed in those things one deems important, and to win the approval of those viewed as significant; 2) Perceiving unkind or unfair treatment by anyone as being horrible; and 3) The belief that life shouldn't be too difficult and one should always get what one really wants. Ellis maintains that one or more of these beliefs leave a person in ego anxiety, or experiencing a threat to their worth as a person.

Stebbins (1981) looks to six specific conditions that, when present, increase the anxiety level within an individual triggering stage fright. The six conditions are: 1) importance of the event; 2) time proximity before the event; 3) audience effects; 4) control over event; 5) difficulty of event; and 6) level of fear of freezing one has prior to performing. The individual places a value on the activity, which attaches importance to it. The closer at hand the activity is, the

more the individual feels threatened. The audience is considered to be in a position to evaluate the efforts of the performer. The performer needs to believe that the audience views the activity as being within the performer's control. The undertaking needs to be sufficiently difficult and provide a challenge to the individual when under pressure. The performer is concerned that they will simply freeze up and be unable to engage in the activity as expected by the audience. Ferenczi (1950) believes that "those who experience stage fright have fallen into a state of self-observation . . . lose sight of the purpose of the performance" (p. 421). The performer is so engrossed in his or her own self that he or she fails to see beyond him or herself.

Performance improves and is often facilitated by a certain amount of anxiety, or arousal. Once an optimal level is reached, further increases only lead to an impaired performance. When the arousal is either too high or too low, the result is a deteriorated performance. This process is referred to as the Yerkes-Dodson Law, named after the two psychologists who developed the principle. "Much of the anxiety reported by performers at all levels of experience can be traced to difficulty in learning to "normalize" feelings and sensations associated with states of arousal related to our responses to tasks that we perceive as challenging and stressful" (Salmon, 1992, p. 73). The experience of solo piano playing is indeed a challenging undertaking and depending on the number of variables present, can be quite stressful.

Prevalence of Musical Performance Anxiety

There is mounting evidence to suggest that musical performance anxiety does indeed affect performing musicians. Research studies point to the prevalence of musical performance anxiety. Estimates of performance anxiety among musicians range from 25% to 50% (Fishbein and Middlestadt, 1988; Steptoe and Fidler, 1987). These figures suggest the severity of the problem. The research involving musical performance anxiety that will be reviewed will include: a) studies that examined performance anxiety through the use of questionnaires; b) studies that assessed performance anxiety through either questionnaires and self-report measures, or self-report measures solely; c) studies that focused on the psychological and physiological aspects of performance anxiety; and d) studies that looked at interventions for performance anxiety. Excluded from this review of research studies are studies surrounding the use of beta-adrenegic blocking drugs. These studies are omitted, as they are not directly related to the purpose of this particular study.

Questionnaire/Interview Studies

The following studies are all limited by self-report measures through the use of either a questionnaire, or survey, or an interview. No behavioral or physiological assessments were made.

A national survey of 2,212 professional orchestra members of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM), which represents 48 orchestras within the United States, indicated performance anxiety as being a frequently experienced medical problem (Fishbein & Middlestadt, 1988). Stage fright was referred to as the "most frequently mentioned severe problem among ICSOM musicians" (Fishbein, 1988, p. 6). Of the professional musicians responding to the survey, 24% mentioned stage fright as a problem, with 16% describing it as a severe problem. Nineteen percent of women mentioned stage fright as being a severe problem, with 14% of men indicating the same.

This study used as its population professional musicians throughout the United States. The participants were members of diverse performing ensembles, ranging from a ballet orchestra to a large symphonic orchestra. The majority of the studies falling under the category of self-report measures have focused exclusively on students, rather than professional musicians. While this study included pianists, they were included along with percussionists, timpanists, and harpists, accounting for only 6% of the sample population.

Fishbein and Middlestadt (1988) were not exclusively addressing the issue of performance anxiety in their survey. The survey was intended to ascertain the prevalence of a variety of medical problems. Musculoskeletal problems were targeted, as well as non-musculoskeletal problems. Of the non-musculoskeletal

problems, stage fright was the most prevalent problem. Seventy-six percent of the performing musicians reported at least one medical problem as being severe in how it affected performance. The size and scope of this study suggests the need for continued work in the field of music medicine.

Bartel and Thompson (1994) studied the membership of the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians. Nineteen major professional orchestras in Canada were represented. A questionnaire created by the researchers was distributed to a delegate in each orchestra to obtain volunteer participants. Ninety-six percent of these professional musicians reported experiencing stress related to performing. This study also included professional musicians performing in small, medium, and large orchestras in Canada, with no pianists included in the population. Questionnaires were returned from only 204 respondents, representing only 20% of the population. While the study included some variation by gender of stress symptoms, there was no overall reporting of stress as differentiated by gender.

In examining 32 music students at the University of Newcastle's Faculty and Conservatorium of Music, Cox and Kenardy (1993), addressed the presence of situational factors involved in musical performance anxiety. The students received the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, Trait Scale (Spielberger et al., 1983), the Performance Anxiety Questionnaire (Cox & Kenardy, 1993), and the Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory (Turner et al., 1989).

All 32 students reported experiencing anxiety while performing. Of the 32 participants, 84% claimed that anxiety was detrimental to their performance. Anxiety as only occasionally detrimental to their performance was reported by 6.2%. While anxiety was present in the following individuals, 9.4% believed anxiety was not detrimental to their performance.

Cox and Kenardy (1993) assessed the experience of anxiety under three different settings: practice, ensemble, and solo performances. The music students experienced the greatest amount of anxiety during a solo performance, as compared to the least amount in a practice session. The levels of anxiety reported were significantly different for each setting. These findings suggest that the music student may be anxious about performing, as well as the presence of an audience. While 19 females and 13 males participated in the study, the results did not indicate female or male responses.

D'Onofrio (1981) provided a descriptive inquiry into the problem of solo performance as related by three classical guitar majors in a university setting. The case studies attempted to uncover the causes of their performance anxiety, as well as the coping mechanisms they employed to cope with the problem. D'Onofrio conducted three interviews with each participant, scheduled within thirty days of a major solo performance. While each of the three guitarists reported experiencing performance anxiety, D'Onofrio was not clear about how she arrived at interviewing these particular guitarists. Rather, they were chosen based on the

fact that they resembled closely the prototype of a solo musician. The other interesting fact regarding this particular study was that out of the three interviews conducted with each individual, performance anxiety was only addressed within the context of the last interview.

Kemenade, Son, and Heesch (1995) poled professional musicians in Dutch Symphonic Orchestras. The musicians received a 124-item questionnaire, which addressed items surrounding demographics, performance anxiety, and overall psychological health. Of the 155 musicians that responded to the survey, 91, or 58.7% "knew performance anxiety from their own experience" (p. 557). However, the intensity of the anxiety differed. A slight intensity was experienced by 31.8%, with another 31.8% experiencing only a moderate intensity. A very distinct intensity was reported by 27.3%, and 9.1% referred to experiencing a strong intensity. No difference in the prevalence of performance anxiety between gender was apparent.

No one particular situation elicited performance anxiety. Performing at an audition was mentioned often, with factors such as level of difficulty of the performance, poor physical conditions, and being in a poor general psychological state viewed as contributing to the presence of performance anxiety. There were also some variations in terms of the timing of the performance anxiety. Ninety-one percent reported that the anxiety occurred during the onset of the performance, with 82% placing the anxiety just before the actual performance.

Experiencing anxiety throughout the entire performance was recorded by 32% of the respondents. Reporting anxiety in the months, weeks, days, and hours were reported by 5%, 10%, 21%, and 45% respectively.

Kemenade et al. (1995) focused their study on professionals as compared to non-professionals. While limited by self-report measures, one of the strong points of this particular study was the delineation of the intensity and occurrence of performance anxiety. None of the other studies reviewed here addressed the differing intensity of anxiety. Only one other study, Steptoe (1983), addressed the timing of performance anxiety.

Kubzansky and Stewart (1999) studied the effect of anxiety on performance using 56 students enrolled in a university music school who were eligible to participate in auditions for the University Symphony Orchestra. Trait anxiety was measured several months prior to the audition by administering the Performance Inventory (adapted from the Performance Anxiety Inventory, Nagel, Himle, & Papsdorf, 1981). The State Emotion Questionnaire (Kubzansky & Stewart, 1999) measured state anxiety immediately following the audition. Perceived anxiety was also measured directly following the audition by two evaluators perceptions. While self-reported levels of anxiety did not differ between men and women, women were, however, perceived to be more anxious than men. In addition, those perceived as being more anxious received poorer

evaluations. This suggests that there may be a relationship between the quality of a performance and the way an individual feels towards the performance.

The data were not conclusive as to why women were perceived as being more anxious than men. This was beyond the scope of this study, but certainly presents us with the possibility for further research. A strength of this particular study was that performance anxiety was measured by both self-report measures as well as the perceptions of the evaluators.

Oliver (1997) surveyed horn players at the 26th Annual International Horn Symposium at the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. The 90 respondents included high school students, college students, college or university teachers, and part-time and full-time orchestral performers. One hundred percent of the respondents related experiencing performance anxiety. Nineteen percent reported that they always experienced performance anxiety, 38% indicated that they often experienced performance anxiety, and 43% replied that they only sometimes experienced performance anxiety. The experience was indicated in varying degrees. Of those 100% experiencing performance anxiety, 12% indicated that it always prevented them from giving their best performance, 38% replied that it often prevented them from giving their best performance, and 48% reported that it sometimes prevented them from giving their best performance. Two percent indicated that while they, at times, experienced performance anxiety, it never prevented them from giving their best performance.

While this study was limited by self-report measures and also limited by a population which focused exclusively on hornists, it did, however, include a diverse spectrum of hornists including those at the high school, college, semi-professional, and professional levels. While Oliver (1997) presented a breakdown of percentages of those affected by performance anxiety, it would have been helpful to have a further breakdown focusing on the various levels of the respondents. For example, in reporting that 12% of the respondents indicated that performance anxiety always prevented them from giving their best performance, it would have been interesting to learn how many of that 12% were students versus professionals or amateurs.

One hundred and fifty-four musicians, including both professionals and students alike, were surveyed in a self-report questionnaire developed by Salmon, Shook, Lombart, and Berenson (1995) to assess performance stress, impairments, and injuries. Of the most commonly reported performance impairments, performance anxiety received the highest percentage, with 70% responding that they had suffered from performance anxiety in their work. Seventy-eight percent of keyboard performers reported the same. In addition to giving a breakdown of impairments and injuries, the study also reported on the specific anxiety symptoms experienced by the respondents, as well as the interventions utilized. With respect to anxiety symptoms, tension received the highest ranking, with 44.1% reporting

that they experienced tension during solo performances. The percentage was even higher for keyboard players: 52.4%.

Steptoe (1983) examined the relationship between tension and the quality of musical performance. Two groups participated in the study: 20 young professional singers of classical music and 18 second or third year full-time voice students. Each participant took part in an interview as well as completed the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1970). All but two of the participants reported being nervous before a performance.

The timing of performance anxiety was also addressed in this study. The majority of the respondents reported that their anxiety peaked just prior to the performance. Fourteen participants related that their nervousness peaked one hour before a performance, with eight of the participants specifying that their anxiety peaked one to six hours prior to a performance. Identifying exactly when anxiety peaked for the participants was a strong point in this study. These findings could be especially helpful in discussing what to do in the time prior to a performance. Additionally, Steptoe (1983) reported individually the relationship between tension and performance quality in professional singers and students, rather than collapsing the two groups, presenting us with a separate pattern for each group. Gender was not addressed in this study.

Steptoe and Fidler (1987) utilized a questionnaire study involving three groups of musicians: 65 experienced professional orchestra members; 41 music

students; and 40 players in an amateur orchestra. Musical performance anxiety was measured along with neuroticism, everyday fears, self-statements, and behavioral coping strategies. Performance anxiety was measured using the State scale from the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1970). A 16 item Fear Survey adapted from a questionnaire described by Hallam and Hafner (1978) was used to assess fears. Participants also completed the Eysenck Personality Inventory (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1964) to determine the relationship between performance anxiety and neuroticism. Performance anxiety was reported highest among the students and lowest in the professional group. In each of the three groups, performance anxiety was positively correlated with neuroticism and fear, as were catastrophizing self-statements, which left the individual feeling helpless and out of control. In reporting their findings, Steptoe and Fidler (1987) presented each group separately, rather than reporting the findings for the combined group. There was no information concerning either gender or instrument played.

In a questionnaire distributed to students and faculty members, Wesner, Noyes, and Davis (1990) assessed experiences with and attitudes about performance anxiety. Distress brought on by anxiety was the most common response, with 21.3% claiming they suffered from a marked distress and another 39.9% claiming a moderate distress. Anxiety, which produced a marked impairment, was reported by 16.5%, with another 29.6% indicating that they had experienced a moderate impairment. Nine percent admitted that they often

avoided performing because of their experience of anxiety and 12.8% responded that they had actually interrupted a performance due to anxiety.

Psychological and Physiological Studies

Studies addressed in this section include self-report measures of anxiety as well as behavioral and physiological measures. Abel and Larkin (1990) assessed physiological responses of heart rate and blood pressure and self-report measures of state-anxiety and confidence in 22 undergraduate music students. All of the subjects participated in a baseline-laboratory session and a jury session between one and six weeks after the baseline-laboratory session. An increase of heart rate, blood pressure, and self-reported anxiety from the baseline session to the jury was experienced by all of the students.

Brotons (1994) worked with 64 undergraduate and graduate music students at the University of Oregon. The participants were measured in a studio practice situation and a second time in either an open or a double-blind jury condition. Heart rate was monitored and the participants were administered a modified version of the State scale of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1980). This inventory was used to measure the pre-jury and post-jury perceived anxiety of the participants.

Both heart rate and the results of the STAI showed that the participants viewed juries to be more stressful than a studio practice situation. There was a

significantly greater increase in heart rate and STAI scores from the practice to the jury situation. In addition to the physiological and psychological assessments, Brotons (1994) also included pre-jury and post-jury interviews in the hopes of measuring the cognitive manifestations. The pre-jury interview questions consisted of three questions in which the participant was asked to simply circle the number that described how they felt. While the post-interview questions called for a verbal response, each of the questions simply required either a yes or no answer. More information could have been gathered from the participants through the inclusion of open-ended questions in both interviews.

Craske and Craig (1984) investigated 40 piano students at the University of British Columbia. Based on self-reports of anxiety, the students were assigned to a "relatively anxious," or to a "nonanxious group." The participants completed a screening questionnaire, The Report of Confidence as a Performer Scale (Appel, 1974), as well as five self-report scales during each performance session. Behavioral and physiological measures were also recorded.

Each of the subjects performed a three to five minute composition from memory on two separate occasions. The first time the pianists performed alone for practice purposes, as well as to allow themselves to become acclimated to the procedures being used by the researchers. The following week the participants performed the same composition before an audience of five people whom the participants believed were evaluating their performance. While there were no

noticeable differences between the groups during the practice sessions, the relatively anxious group presented a poorer quality performance than the nonanxious group in front of an audience. Heart rate greatly increased between both groups when performing before an audience.

One of the strengths of this particular study was that Craske and Craig (1984) assessed performance anxiety in terms of the three-systems model of anxiety. Performance anxiety was measured using behavioral, physiological, and verbal assessments. The study tapped into each of these three areas that possibly manifests itself in performance anxiety. In addition, Craske and Craig (1984) contrasted the differences under two different performing situations: a performance in which the subject performed alone and then before an audience.

Hamann (1982) worked with 90 college music majors at the University of North Carolina. Each participant performed a musical composition of his or her choosing under two different performing conditions. The first condition was a reduced anxiety performance condition in which the participants performed in a room with only a tape recorder. The second condition was an enhanced anxiety condition before a live audience, consisting of peers and an instructor. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1970), as well as the State-Trait Personality Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1979) were administered to the participants. These inventories were used to measure state and trait anxiety, curiosity, and anger under both performance conditions. Additional information

was also collected through the use of a questionnaire. The results of this study indicated that anxiety increased when performing in front of a live audience as compared to a practice room environment. Of the 90 participants, all but one exhibited an increase in anxiety when performing in front of a live audience. Hamann also concluded that those participants with greater years of formal training presented a better performance under enhanced anxiety states.

Hamann and Sobaje (1983) worked with 60 music students at the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley in an attempt to replicate earlier studies by Hamann (1982). The study followed the same procedure as did Hamann (1982). Participants exhibited significantly higher state anxiety under the jury condition as compared with the non-jury condition. Additionally, those participants with greater years of formal training performed better than participants with less formal training.

The findings of the two previous studies suggest that the presence of anxiety does not always detract from the performance. Future studies may look to address ways in which anxiety may actually facilitate performance, as well as determine the point at which anxiety becomes debilitating. These studies may lend support to the notion that performers with less years of formal training need more guidance and education when it comes to performance anxiety. Gender was not a consideration in either of these two studies.

LeBlanc, Jin, Obert, and Siivola (1997) worked with 16 male and 11 female volunteer participants of a high school band. The study involved performing solos under three different conditions: 1) alone in a practice room; 2) in a practice room with one researcher present; and 3) in a room with a researcher present, a peer group consisting of 9-16 members, and a tape recording being made. Immediately following each performance, the participants filled out a Personal Performance Anxiety Report (LeBlanc et al., 1997). Heart rate was recorded during each performance. Following the third performance, participants took part in a brief exit interview. During this interview, participants were asked to rate which performance had been the most stressful for them, followed by the second stressful performance. The self-reported anxiety increased with each performance. Only 7% reported that playing alone in a practice room was the most stressful. Thirty percent referred to playing in a practice room with one researcher present as being the most stressful, with 63% defining the most stressful performance condition as playing for the researchers and the peer group. Heart rate was stable during the first two performances, but rose considerably during the third performance. Females reported fairly similar anxiety as did males in the Personal Performance Anxiety Report until the third performance condition when females reported considerably greater anxiety. While the presence of an audience was associated with greater performance anxiety as in several other studies reviewed, this study was the only study involving high school students

exclusively. These findings address the importance of educating performers at an early age regarding performance anxiety.

Ryan (1998) studied 26 twelve-year-old piano students. Heart rates were monitored during a piano lesson and again during a recital performance. The state portion of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (Coopersmith, 1987), and the Children's Performance Anxiety Questionnaire were administered. Interviews were also conducted with 22 children with 17 of them reporting feelings of anxiety when playing in recitals. The results indicated a dramatic increase in heart rate from the piano lesson (92.4 beats/min.) to the recital (121.2 beats/min.).

One of the features of this study was the inclusion of both a piano lesson and a recital performance to measure physiological changes. In addition, the use of interviews in addressing the cognitions of the participants was also a strong feature. Of the studies reviewed, this was the only study addressing musical performance anxiety in children.

Tartalone (1992) studied the patterns of physiological arousal and self-reported anxiety in 39 music majors preparing for brass jury performances at Michigan State University. Physiological arousal was obtained by measuring blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration rates. Self-reported anxiety was measured using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1983). The

researcher made assessments four weeks before the jury, again at a dress rehearsal, and finally at the actual jury performance.

Results of the study pointed to elevated levels of blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration rate at the dress rehearsal and again during the jury performance. Self-reported anxiety also increased significantly at the dress rehearsal and again at the jury. One of the strengths of this study was that anxiety and arousal were assessed using jury situations. The jury provided a stressful situation due to the graded evaluation by the brass faculty.

Intervention Studies

Fogle (1982), in citing his work with a case study involving six sessions of individualized counseling, illustrated how the physiological factor could be approached indirectly through cognitive, attentional, and motivational interventions. This focus included shifting the performer's attention from disastrous expectations and negative self-statements toward task-relevant cues. The result was a reduction in pre-performance nervousness.

McCoy (1999) investigated factors related to the development and management of musical performance anxiety in 30 college music students. The researcher used self-report inventories, as well as personal interviews, to assess the relationship of musical performance anxiety to self-esteem and general anxiety. Of the 30 participants, 21 mentioned thorough preparation and practice

as a coping mechanism employed. Thirteen of the music students focused on deep breathing and relaxation techniques.

Nagle, Himle, and Papsdorf (1981) evaluated the effectiveness of treating musical performance anxiety through the use of combining progressive muscle relaxation, cognitive therapy, and temperature biofeedback training. Their subjects were 20 undergraduate music students who complained of debilitating anxiety when playing an instrument in public. The subjects were divided into a treatment group and a wait-list control group. The treatment group met once a week for a six-week program in group therapy and once a week for individual biofeedback temperature regulation training to assist them in relaxation techniques. Performance anxiety was significantly lowered at the end of the six weeks for the treatment group, suggesting that performance anxiety can be lowered through a cognitive-behavioural approach treatment.

Stanton (1994) administered two hypnotherapeutic sessions to a group of 40 music students. These sessions combined hypnotic breathing induction, imagery in the form of symbols, and verbal suggestions linking the symbols to the achievement of increased mental control, confidence, and calmness designed to reduce performance anxiety. After the conclusion of the second session, a second Performance Anxiety Inventory was administered and again six months later. Upon the third administration of the Performance Anxiety Inventory, the subjects also reported on their level of performance anxiety over the previous six months.

Most of the students felt that the two sessions afforded them a way to reduce their level of performance anxiety. Stanton attributed this reduction in performance anxiety to an increase in the confidence level of the music students.

Wolfe (1990) surveyed 193 performing musicians and asked them to describe strategies utilized in coping with performance anxiety. Of the 193 musicians, 162 reported engaging in at least one strategy, comprising a total of 478 strategies overall. These strategies were identified as either problem-focused or emotion-focused. Sixty-three percent of the strategies were emotion-focused and 37% were problem-focused. The most frequently reported subcategories were deep breathing and relaxation (74) and thorough preparation and practice (116). Wolfe (1990) discovered that performers who used more emotion-focused coping mechanisms reported greater self-confidence and less anxiety than individuals who employed problem-focused mechanisms, or a balance of the two. While thorough preparation is indeed important, Wolfe (1990) concluded that learning to keep one's emotions under control is more crucial to a successful performance.

Conclusion

Considerable evidence supports the presence of a high level of performance anxiety among performing musicians. It has even been reported that children as young as twelve-years-old experience performance anxiety (Ryan, 1998). These findings confirm the notion that this is indeed an area which needs

to continue to be addressed in further research studies. Through understanding the experience of performance anxiety, musicians and educators alike can obtain greater insights into the phenomenon. An analysis of this phenomenon will provide a valuable contribution to all those involved with a musical education. It is the hope of this researcher that in obtaining an insider's perspective of performance anxiety, the musician will come to view the experience as simply one of the many components that face a performing musician.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Rationale

This study examined the experience of performance anxiety in solo piano playing from the perspective of six performing pianists who hold full-time university teaching positions. The goal was not to eliminate performance anxiety, but rather to simply enter into what the occurrence of performance anxiety is like for a solo pianist and to interpret that experience "in terms of the meanings people bring"(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2) to the experience.

Qualitative research, a process that delves into a human problem, was used since this research methodology deals with the meanings and perspectives that individuals attach to specific phenomena. This process attempts to make sense out of those meanings and perspectives. According to Creswell (1998): "The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants . . ." (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). What will emerge will be the multi-dimensions of the phenomena under investigation. A qualitative study on performance anxiety might investigate the intricacies surrounding the phenomenon, such as the feelings, thought processes, and the emotions of the participants in connection with the incident.

Most of the previous studies focusing on performance anxiety have been quantitative ones (Abel & Larkin, 1990; Brotons, 1994; Cox & Kenardy, 1993; Craske & Craig, 1984; Fishbein & Middlestadt, 1988; Hamann, 1982; Henderson, 1985; Kemenade et al., 1995; Kubzansky & Stewart, 1999; LeBlanc et al., 1997; Lehrer et al., 1990; Rack, 1995; Ryan, 1998; Sinden, 1999; Steptoe, 1983; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987; Tartalone, 1992; Wesner et al., 1990; Wolfe, 1989). Of the above mentioned studies, only two studies focused exclusively on pianists (Craske & Craig, 1984; Ryan, 1998). Four additional studies included pianists as part of their sampling (Broton, 1994; Fishbein & Middlestadt, 1988; Wesner et al., 1990; Wolfe, 1989). The remaining studies either did not include pianists in their study (Kemenade et al., 1995; Kubzansky & Stewart, 1999; Steptoe, 1983; Tartalone, 1992) or did not specify the breakdown of instrumentalists (Abel & Larkin, 1990; Cox & Kenardy, 1993; Hamann, 1982; Henderson, 1985; Lehrer et al., 1990; Rack, 1995; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987). There appears to be a paucity of studies dealing specifically with pianists.

In addition, only four of the studies employed the use of interviews (Brotons, 1994; LeBlanc et al., 1997; Ryan, 1998; Steptoe, 1983). The interview allowed the researcher to tap into the feelings, thought processes, and emotions of the participants and was helpful in obtaining an insider's perspective of the phenomenon of performance anxiety.

Researcher's Background

The researcher's background and knowledge about the subject of this study serve an important function in qualitative research. It is necessary therefore that I offer the following personal background information.

I began piano study at the age of ten and was afforded many opportunities to perform in various recital programs, festivals, and competitions. At the age of 17, I performed my first solo piano recital. In reflecting on my performances as a child, I recall feeling a normal amount of anxiety as I performed. As I moved to performances of entire programs, the nervousness seemed to increase, but was always manageable.

I entered an undergraduate degree program in piano performance at a small college focused on the performing arts. These days were an intense time of countless hours of practicing and performing opportunities abounded. Following completion of my bachelor's degree, I became involved in church related ministries. During the next ten years, the opportunities to perform outside of a church related function were infrequent. My responsibilities did not allow time to practice and for close to three years I did not play the piano at all. It was at this point that I was asked to take on some additional responsibility and teach in the music department at the college affiliated with my church. As a result, I began to prepare to audition for a master's program in piano pedagogy. Accepted into the program, I completed my M.M. while teaching. While my love of playing the

piano had not diminished during those ten years, the nervousness in performing in front of a group of people increased significantly. There were times when I remember being simply terrified to walk out on stage. The culmination of the master's program was a solo recital, which I was fully prepared for. I had played five run-throughs of the program at various locations and the required preview recital before the piano faculty was nearly flawless. The actual recital was far from flawless. There were several instances where my mind went totally blank and I can even recall moments of not being sure where I was physically. I remember thinking at the time that I would not be able to finish the program and even recall telling my teacher during intermission that I could not go back out on the stage and complete the program. I did, however, return to the stage and managed to finish, but not without a great deal of discomfort.

Knowing that I had gone into that performance situation feeling secure about the music left me rather frustrated over the experience. I searched for answers as to how I could have approached the program differently and whether there was anything I could have told myself during the actual performance that would have changed my reaction. The need to confront the issues of performance anxiety prompted me to take a closer look at the many facets of the phenomenon in an attempt to make the experience less dreaded by those engaged in performing.

Data Sources

The two primary data sources for this study were a survey questionnaire and an individual in-depth interview. The survey questionnaire was used to collect personal information, performing experience, and information regarding the teaching and learning experiences of the participants (see Appendix D for the Survey Questionnaire).

The individual in-depth interview served as the principal means of data collection, which allowed the participants to reflect on their experience of performance anxiety and permitted the researcher to gather more direct information. The interview questions were designed by the researcher and consisted of open-ended questions focusing on the cognitive, behavioral, and physiological aspects of performance anxiety (See Appendix E). The interviews, which were audiotaped, took place in the faculty member's office or a classroom and lasted approximately one to one and a half hours. The semi-structured interview allowed for follow-up questions to clarify or extend a response. At the end of the interview, the participants were given an opportunity to provide any additional comments that they would like to make.

Procedure

Prior to beginning the actual data collection, the researcher piloted the interview to insure that the questions being asked were clearly presented and to

allow the researcher to become comfortable in interacting with the interviewees. The researcher interviewed two doctoral candidates, one a Ph.D. candidate in Music Education with an emphasis in Piano Pedagogy, and a D.M.A. candidate in Piano Performance, both enrolled at the University of Oklahoma. The interviewees affirmed that the questions were clearly presented. This process aided the researcher in being more confident for the actual data collection.

The researcher sent a letter to 147 piano faculty members serving at colleges and universities in the states of Arkansas, Kansas, and Oklahoma (see Appendix A). The recipient pool was comprised of those who taught applied piano in colleges and universities, and listed as applied piano (37A) in The Directory of Music Facilities in Colleges and Universities, US and Canada, 2001-2002, published by The College Music Society. The first mailing took place on May 15, 2001, with a follow-up letter (see Appendix C) mailed on June 1, 2001.

Included with the letter was a consent to participate form (see Appendix B) and a self-addressed stamped envelope was also included for the faculty member to return the consent to participate form. Three questions were asked of the faculty member in the consent form to ascertain whether the individual believed they suffered from performance anxiety, whether they had performed a minimum of eight solo piano recitals, and whether they worked with their students in dealing with performance anxiety. This form served as an initial screening for the interview pool.

Upon receiving the consent to participate form from 60 respondents, or 41% of those targeted, the researcher chose six faculty members to be interviewed based upon several criteria. The researcher looked for individuals who self-reported the greatest degree of performance anxiety and who had performed at least eight solo piano recitals during their college teaching careers to insure a level of performing experience. The piano recitals could include repeat performances of the same program.

After selecting the participants, the researcher contacted the faculty member to determine a time to conduct the interview. The researcher explained the process to the interviewees and informed them that they would be receiving a short survey questionnaire in the mail to be completed and returned to the researcher at the interview. The interview was scheduled at a mutually convenient time for both parties. These interviews were tape recorded and the participants were promised confidentiality on the part of the researcher.

Prior to beginning the actual interview questions, the researcher attempted to make the interviewee comfortable through social conversation. The participants were also reminded of the confidentiality of the interview at this point.

Participants

The participants for this research project were six piano faculty members serving at south central colleges and universities in the United States. Each of the participants acknowledged that he or she experienced performance anxiety in his or her professional careers and had performed a minimum of eight solo piano recitals. These recitals may have been repeat performances of the same program. The number eight was chosen by the researcher to insure that the performer has had sufficient performing experience in his or her professional career.

Profile of the Participants

Each of the participants was assigned a pseudonym for purposes of this study.

Mary

Mary is a full-time lecturer at a large university in Arkansas, a position she has held for the past four years. At the age of 33, Mary has been playing the piano in public since she was five-years-old. She holds a D.M.A., a M.M., and a B.M. in Piano Performance and an M.M. in Accompanying and Chamber Music.

Mary reported that as a child she encountered no fears in her playing. She attributed the onset of performance anxiety as something that "slowly crept in" to her playing and was not addressed by her teachers during high school (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/9/01). Mary began to worry that those problems would become

a part of her playing and as a result her stress began to mount surrounding performing.

Mary performs throughout the year as a collaborative artist and a soloist. Mary admits that performance anxiety pervades both venues. At times, however, playing solo is easier for Mary because "you're the only one that's really responsible for your own playing" (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/9/01). Mary feels a greater sense of control over what happens in the music as a soloist. Still, due to the fact that the music is memorized, there is always a constant concern about whether or not the memory will fail. In spite of the fact that in collaborative performances memory is not an issue since the music is in front of the performer, Mary admits that her focus often shifts from her own playing to that of her partner(s). When the other performer(s) gets nervous, their nervousness becomes contagious and infects Mary. She enters into a heightened consciousness of mistakes made by her partner(s). Mary also states that there have been times when even the page-turner has been a source of anxiety, depending on his or her level of comfort with the music. If the page-turner is the least bit apprehensive, and turns the pages too soon or too late, or begins to breathe too fast, this too has an effect on Mary.

While the performance anxiety is still present, Mary allows herself plenty of time to learn the program and be fully prepared and sets up several run-throughs of her performance. This approach does not necessarily prevent Mary

from feeling nervous or from having memory slips, but it does assist Mary to "feel psychologically a little more settled" (Individual interview, p. 5, 7/9/01) going into a performance. Mary relates that having people in the audience who strongly support her allows her to feel safer. On the other hand, if Mary knows her students or a stronger pianist are in the audience, her performance anxiety increases. She feels her students are the most critical of her playing and that they take it personally if she does not perform well.

Mary responds that:

> It [performance anxiety] can happen at anytime, anywhere, even in a piece that I have played many, many, many, many, many times and all of a sudden it [performance anxiety] will creep in. And sometimes I am amazed if I am doing two recitals in one week, the same program. You would think you would be more nervous in a spot that you might have had a problem with in the first performance. Sometimes I am amazed at how much easier it is to get through that spot. So, for me, I never know, I never know [when the performance anxiety will manifest itself] (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/9/01).

Unpredictability is present in her playing threatening Mary's sense of security and confidence.

Anne

Anne is a professor at a small liberal arts college in Kansas where she has served on the faculty for close to thirty years. Playing the piano since the age of four, Anne holds a Ph.D. in Music Education and a M.M. and B.M. in Piano Performance.

In reflecting on her experience of performing in public, Anne recounts that as a child she was fearless and performed without anxiety. Recalling her first solo recital at the age of 14, Anne remembers excitement and confidence in approaching that recital. There were no negative feelings or thoughts associated with the performance. In spite of a memory slip in the Beethoven sonata on her first solo program, Anne was able to continue and finish the piece. Her confidence did not wane and she was "able to think on my feet" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/6/01). Anne remembers feeling proud for being able to continue on in spite of the memory difficulties. Now that Anne is an adult, her excitement and confidence have turned to self-doubt and in the words of Anne, "I am now terrified to walk [out] on stage" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/9/01). Anne could not pinpoint specifically when that change occurred.

Anne proved to be articulate in our interview and was able to capture her experience well. It was obvious that Anne had come to know herself in relationship to her performance anxiety. She had tried many different techniques to combat her performance anxiety ranging from reading material addressing the

topic to taking mood-enhancing drugs. Anne described those instances of taking mood-enhancing drugs as successful performances: "I walked out there and it [performance anxiety] was gone. I had a great time. I had fun at my own performance" (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/9/01). While Anne admits to relying on mood enhancing drugs on only three different occasions, she acknowledges that during this past year she has seriously considered taking them again.

For Anne, those moments of performance anxiety are not limited solely to solo performances. "When I'm out there on stage with somebody else it's [performance anxiety] significantly lessened, but there's still some level of performance anxiety even there" (Individual interview, p. 4, 7/9/01). When performing as a collaborative artist, Anne blames herself for mistakes made by the instrumentalist. She places upon herself the responsibility and feels that when mistakes do occur, she should be capable of helping the individual.

The anxiety for Anne begins the morning of a performance and increases significantly all day:

> It's [performance anxiety] really bad walking out there, sitting down. It's [performance anxiety] really bad when I just play the first note and then I can control it a little bit by trying to concentrate completely on the music and block out everything else . . . I can get into the music far enough that I lose my anxiety for a time, but I can't ever sustain that even through a movement or a solid work. So the times when it's worse is

> during the day when I'm not playing the piano or when I'm just sort of sitting there. The other times when it's bad is when it really goes well in the beginning. If everything goes well the first three to four pages in the piece, then the demons get huge and completely uncontrollable. In other words, it [performance anxiety] comes back . . . five to ten minutes into the performance. They [the demons] hit pretty hard and then the minute the piece is done and I'm walking off stage and I'm backstage, they're [the demons] huge again and I'm walking back on and then I can kind of get control and then about five to ten minutes they're [the demons] back again. It goes in waves (Individual interview, p. 6, 7/6/01).

In spite of the discomfort that performance anxiety presents, Anne will continue to perform for others, stating: "It's [performing] better than anything on this earth. I can't think of anything that I like to do more, yet there is nothing that terrifies me more" (Individual interview, p. 18, 7/9/01).

Even knowing that there are supportive people in the audience does not diminish the performance anxiety for Anne:

> Even if I have friends and supporters and that's all that's in the audience, my performance anxiety finds a ghost of some critic past to put in my face during a performance. The whole thing of having supporting people in the audience doesn't help me one bit, not even thinking about them. I have tried to focus on someone who made me feel safe and

someone who made me feel happy and even that doesn't help. It can be an entire room of my friends and my mind will bring back a ghost of someone who isn't even there to criticize me. I never hear verbal criticism from my ghosts. I hear, I see facial criticisms . . . by how their face changes in my mind. So . . . [even] when it's a benefit concert and I've got all those people there who want to be there, I will still manage to have some shadow image of a ghost in the background (Individual interview, p. 16, 7/6/01).

Boniface

Boniface is on the faculty of a university in Kansas where he teaches applied piano and serves as the staff accompanist. Playing the piano for the past 20 years, Boniface has been teaching for seven years and holds a D.M.A. and a M.M. in Piano Performance, as well as a B.S. in Music Education.

Performance anxiety has not always been a part of Boniface's life. He views the experience as being one that "as the stakes increased, as the education increased, the anxiety increased. As the level of repertoire increased, as the sheer number of performances increased, all of those things expediently increased performance anxiety" (Individual interview, p. 4, 6/26/01). For Boniface, the anxiety level increased with experience.

The problem with performance anxiety, in the words of Boniface, is "that it [performance anxiety] inhibits the communication process . . . because I can't

effectively communicate at the piano if I am terrorized and worried and nervous" (Individual interview, p. 10, 6/26/01). Boniface seeks to communicate effectively as his top priority when performing. Believing that anxiety will always be a part of each performance, as "there is too much about the nature of performing that lends itself to [performance anxiety]" (Individual interview, p. 9, 6/26/01), Boniface continues to seek out techniques to minimize the intensity of such encounters.

Boniface believes that solo performing is filled with less anxiety for him personally because "I create my own space, and there is a certain amount of control over the environment" (Individual interview, p. 2, 6/26/01). In a collaborative performance, whether dealing with one other person, or two or more individuals, the attempt to create the "emotional oneness" (Individual interview, p. 3, 6/26/01) increases the anxiety. Boniface acknowledges that there is a direct relationship between the amount of anxiety and the length of time that he works with an individual(s) with whom he is performing.

Boniface states that his performance anxiety is the most intense prior to performing. Usually, for Boniface, his anxiety begins about 30-45 minutes prior to a performance. This anxiety sustains itself and " . . . at the moment I am sitting at the keyboard, about ready to perform, usually that very first piece, or the start of a group of pieces, is always the hardest because the thought processes are trying to get in gear" (Individual interview, p. 1, 6/26/01). As Boniface explains:

> Each little thought in and of itself is probably not that big, but as you start piling them on top of the other they become a huge weight and so you're concurrently playing what's going on and thinking these thoughts and so you're playing a very delicate balancing act that is liable to fail because of all the stuff going on and you know that and you can feel that happening and it's like a cascade, it rolls down and then it begins to continue to roll and you find yourself falling and you cannot stop it (Individual interview, p. 7, 6/26/01).

Prior to a performance Boniface needs a "lot of quiet time to settle and to focus. If I'm not allowed that time, if I don't have time to kind of enter into a spiritual realm I'm sort of destroyed" (Individual interview, p. 1, 6/26/01). This quiet time is an essential component for a successful performance.

Boniface was able to converse freely and elaborate on those factors that contribute to greater performance anxiety. In spite of times when he feels like giving up, Boniface continues to perform an average of three to five different recital programs each semester, the majority as a collaborative artist.

Dotty

Dotty serves as an associate professor at a Christian university in Oklahoma, a position she has held for the last twelve years. Dotty has a D.M.A., a M.M., and a B.M. in Piano Performance. Although Dotty has been playing the

piano since she was ten years old, she did not perform her first solo recital until the age of 20, as an undergraduate music major.

Dotty began to become serious about playing the piano during high school. She does not recall any anxiety when performing as a child, but she remembers a few problems while playing in a competition in college. Dotty pointed to her days of working on a master's degree, however, as a time when she began to display traumatic bouts of performance anxiety: "I began to really doubt myself and my confidence just failed" (Individual interview, p. 1, 6/29/01). From that point on, Dotty alludes to distractions, which detracted from focused practice time, and because she had added responsibilities of adulthood and parenthood, and no longer had the luxury of practice time she struggled in performing. These distractions resulted in " . . . my mind becoming so fragmented that that quality of practice sort of left me . . . suddenly I had these doubts and I didn't feel prepared and I felt very apprehensive and it went back to the quality of the practice and my mind not always being involved" (Individual interview, p. 4, 6/29/01). This lack of confidence continued to haunt Dotty as she began a doctoral program, and plagues her to this day.

The majority of Dotty's performances each year are as an accompanist or as a duo partner. She also performs regularly with a faculty piano quartet at her university and admits that even with the music in front of her, she experiences

anxiety: " . . . even then you have got to have all these things in your fingers and I just really felt like I was on egg shells" (Individual interview, p. 3, 6/29/01).

For Dotty, the size of the audience is inconsequential. Her reaction would be the same "if it's [the size of the audience] three people or 103" (Individual interview, p. 9, 6/29/01). Dotty states that it is harder for her to play for people who know her as opposed to strangers:

> I think you feel a debt to your family and friends and close colleagues because they know you and you want to put your best foot forward. I think it's a lot of pressure to play for colleagues and peers. I find it harder to play here at [names the university where she teaches] in front of colleagues and peers and friends than to go off somewhere and play where I am kind of unknown. I don't have the same kind of anxiety, it's lessened (Individual interview, p. 10, 6/29/01).

In further describing her relationship with the audience, Dotty mentions that she "thinks of them [the audience] as this body of people who suddenly I can become self-conscious [in front of] . . . You're trying to do a really good job and the audience makes you so aware of all that. It seems like it's magnified, all those things" (Individual interview, p. 10, 6/29/01).

Richard

Richard is an assistant professor at a university in Arkansas where he has been on the faculty for the last two years. His degrees include a B.M., M.M., and D.M. in Piano Performance. Richard performed his first solo piano recital at the age of 17, and has been teaching for the past 11 years.

Richard had not spent a great deal of time reflecting on his incidents with performance anxiety and found it difficult at times to articulate both his experiences, and his associated feelings. Although performance anxiety became more pronounced with age, he recalls that as a child he was not affected by performance anxiety. Richard attributes the increase in performance anxiety to the higher personal expectations that he placed on himself as he matured musically. Richard attended a small undergraduate school with a sense of community spirit within the music program. As a graduate student at a large university, Richard found the atmosphere to be quite competitive. He believes this was the beginning of his performance anxiety: "I think that's where it started, where I started feeling it the most, but that's also where I learned the most, also where I learned how to listen better and I learned how to be more critical of myself" (Individual interview, p. 6, 7/12/01). In placing higher expectations on himself, coupled with listening more critically to his playing, Richard was able to hear more of the things that were missing in his music. This critical listening became a contributing factor to an increase in performance anxiety. With higher expectations, he began to hear

not just nuances that were missing in his playing but also what was possible in the music.

During the course of a year, Richard presents approximately 40 performances, including solo, accompanying, and chamber performances. Most of his performance anxiety is associated with solo playing. "I think most of the anxiety that I have is related to just not being in the right frame of mind, not being focused, or able to concentrate" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/12/01). Richard is much more comfortable in chamber and accompanying performances and attributes his comfort level to the fact that the music is in front of him. Richard describes himself as not having a soloist personality but yet enjoying collaborative performances.

Richard finds it much harder to play for a critical audience, but "loves playing for friends and I love playing for students because they look up to you" (Individual interview, p. 9, 7/12/01). The size of the audience does not matter to Richard. The important thing is his frame of mind during a performance. "If I have gotten into a focused frame of mind, there are times when I can actually feed off of the energy of the people in the audience" (Individual interview, p. 9, 7/12/01). This energy becomes a positive force and enhances the presentation.

Susanne

Susanne is a professor at a university in Arkansas. She has been playing the piano for the past 30 years and holds a B.M., M.M. and D.M.A. in Piano Performance.

Susanne remembers that as a child she did not feel the need to prove herself through her playing, and therefore did not have performance anxiety, but rather, it was something that gradually became a part of her playing. The need not to prove herself has changed for Susanne and she now feels as though her performances reflect her worth as a person. In addition to feeling the need to prove herself through her performances, Susanne attributes the onset of performance anxiety to an increase in age along with added responsibilities, distracting her from her focus on the music. Susanne's performance anxiety has progressed to such a point that there are times when she has to completely stop playing and start a section again.

Describing herself as being very conscious of the audience while performing, Susanne explains that: "If the audience is concentrating, you can feel that they really want to hear you, but when you are playing something quiet and slow, and the audience starts to cough and even talk, it is very distracting" (Individual interview, p. 4, 7/16/01). This distraction serves to place the focus onto the audience, increasing the amount of performance anxiety for Susanne.

While Susanne continues to wrestle with her experience of performance anxiety, she has learned some techniques to help her deal with it more effectively and lessen the debilitating aspects of it. Moreover, in her teaching, Susanne attempts to provide resources for her students so as to help them deal with obstacles in their own playing. She strives to provide her students with positive performing opportunities.

Data Analysis

The phenomenological data analysis incorporated "the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings" (Creswell, 1998, p. 52). Out of this came a composite description of the experience of performance anxiety for the participants of this particular study.

The research questions of this study were used as a guide in analyzing the transcripts. The researcher first transcribed the audiotapes verbatim for each participant interviewed, and the transcripts were reviewed by the researcher for accuracy. A pseudonym was assigned to each participant. There were no identifying characteristics included on an individual transcript. The researcher then read the transcripts several times in their entirety to gain an overall sense of each interview before breaking it down into smaller units.

To begin the coding process, the researcher randomly chose two individual interviews. The three research questions that guided the data collection were used as the major categories in developing the codes. Sub-categories emerged under each category. The categories and sub-categories, along with a brief definition and several examples, may be found in the following table.

Table 1

Categories, Subcategories and Definitions/Examples

SUBCATEGORY	DEFINITION/EXAMPLES
1. *The mental aspects of performance anxiety.*	
Intellectual/Reasoning Difficulties	Thought processes/cognitions creating potential hazards for performer
1) Thoughts directly related to music being performed	Cognitive processes involving the music which create challenges for the performer, such as: Memory slip Fighting to find the next idea Lose flow through each section

Categories, Subcategories and Definitions/Examples continued

SUBCATEGORY	DEFINITION/EXAMPLES
1. *Mental aspects of performance anxiety continued*	
2) Thoughts not involving the performance	Cognitive processes unrelated to the music which detract the performer from the music, such as: Lack of focus Racing mind Distracting thoughts
3) Thoughts questioning performance ability	Cognitive processes in which the performer begins to question their ability, such as: Not trust myself
Expectations	Levels of attainment placed on individual by self or others
1) Expectations from self	Self-generated expectations of performer, such as: Desire to please others Fear of not communicating
2) Expectations from others	Expectations perceived as coming from others, such as: Pressure from others Opinion is being formed See faces of critics past

Categories, Subcategories and Definitions/Examples continued

SUBCATEGORY	DEFINITION/EXAMPLES
1. *Mental aspects of performance anxiety continued.*	
Negative Feelings	A mental state created by the following feelings or emotions
1) Apprehension	Those feelings which create a sense of alarm within, such as: Fear Nervousness Tension
2) Poor Self-Esteem	The perception an individual has of themselves, such as: Devastated Failure Self-confidence issues
3) Despondency	Feelings which provide a sense of despair, such as: Depressive feeling Being hopeless

Categories, Subcategories and Definitions/Examples continued

SUBCATEGORY	DEFINITION/EXAMPLES
2. *Physiological manifestations of performance anxiety continued.*	
Skin	Manifestations which affect the tissue covering the body
1) Cold	Manifestations which result in a relatively low temperature compared with a normal body temperature, such as: Cold hands
2) Hot	Manifestations which create an abnormal bodily warmth, such as: Flushed Hot flashes Sweating
Muscle Reactions	Manifestations which affect the control of the muscles
1) Shaking	Manifestations which create a trembling or vibration, such as: Shaky feet Shaky hands Shaky legs

Categories, Subcategories and Definitions/Examples continued

SUBCATEGORY	DEFINITION/EXAMPLES
2. *Physiological manifestations of performance anxiety continued.*	
2) Tension	Manifestations which create a strain or tightness, such as: Arms Back Shoulder
Cardiovascular	Manifestations which affect the heart, such as: Increased heart beat
Gastrointestinal	Manifestations which affect the stomach and intestines, such as: Butterflies in stomach
Respiratory	Manifestations which affect the breathing process, such as: Holding breath Inability to breathe Shortness of breath

Categories, Subcategories and Definitions/Examples

SUBCATEGORY	DEFINITION/EXAMPLES
3. Ways to combat performance anxiety.	
Music Related	Strategies to combat performance anxiety that focus attention on the music
1) Behavioral Strategies Prior to Performing	Behavioral strategies centering on the music which a performer engages in prior to a performance, such as: Performance run-throughs Tape performances Warm-up routine
2) Mental Strategies Prior to Performing	Mental strategies centering on the music which a performer engages in prior to a performance, such as: Establish ways to keep focus Memory stations Mental practice
3) Mental Strategies While Performing	Mental strategies the performer engages in to create a positive experience, such as: Avoid inner dialogue Create own space Mental endurance

Categories, Subcategories and Definitions/Examples

SUBCATEGORY	DEFINITION/EXAMPLES
3. Ways to combat performance anxiety continued.	
Audience related	These strategies focus on the performer in relation to the audience, such as Distance from the audience

Taking one research question at a time, the researcher read through two transcripts randomly chosen and looked for key words or phrases to emerge in response to a specific question. The researcher followed this same procedure with each transcript, taking one research question at a time and locating the words or phrases, and notating them. All data in each transcript was designated a certain code.

After the researcher analyzed the two transcripts and identified the open codes, the researcher compared those transcripts against the other transcripts. The researcher looked for concepts that were similar and grouped those concepts into the same category. These categories provided a composite depiction of the experience of the participants.

Once the categories were identified, the researcher looked for possible over-arching categories. This process is known as axial coding "because coding occurs at the axis of a category" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123) and involves

looking at the categories to see their relationship to one another. These categories were then analyzed to determine the variables present each time. This determination was approached by asking several questions. The first question dealt with what happened to each individual. This included verbatim examples taken from the transcripts. The second question centered on how the phenomenon of performance anxiety was experienced by a particular individual. The researcher continued to sort through the categories until a point of saturation was reached with no new information emerging from the data.

Having established both the categories and variables present, the researcher attempted to construct a logical narrative description of performance anxiety as portrayed by the participants.

Code Reliability

In qualitative research the researcher explores a certain phenomenon in order to extract detailed meanings. During the process of interpreting the data and analyzing the codes, the researcher constantly discussed her codes with her major advisor. The researcher also used a second coder, showing the codes to the second coder and explaining the meaning of the codes by giving examples from the transcripts. Then a transcript was given to the second coder to show how the data were analyzed using the codes developed by the researcher. Following this introduction, the coder was given two individual interview transcripts whereby the

trained coder then used the researcher's codes to label the individual transcripts. This categorization was compared to the researcher's categorization and discrepancies between the researcher and the trained coder were discussed until the agreement reached was over 90%. This checking of the codes provided a reliability for the codes developed by the researcher as well as for the coding process.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In listening to professionals talk about their experience of musical performance anxiety, the researcher believed that the essence of the experience could be captured. Interview data were transcribed and analyzed by identifying emerging categories, counting, making contrasts and comparisons, identifying sub-categories, and building a logical sequence of events. After analyzing and coding the transcripts of the interviews, the researcher searched for the meanings of the data and ways to interpret and present the findings of the study.

The findings of this study are presented under the following three categories: I) The mental aspects of performance anxiety; II) The physiological manifestations of performance anxiety; and III) Coping with performance anxiety.

The Mental Aspects of Performance Anxiety

For the participants of this particular study, performance anxiety was often manifested through cognitive processes, which created potential hazards for the performers, distracting them from their task at hand. These thought processes were not the result of an interaction with another individual. The consequence of each thought left the pianists with an inability to control their thinking while engaged in performing. As a result, their senses of perspective were obscured.

Intellectual/Reasoning Difficulties

The participants experienced thoughts, or cognitions, that served as a distraction from focusing on the music, creating potential problems in their performances, leaving the performers unable to think clearly. The thoughts could be one of three types: thoughts directly related to the music being performed and the challenges of continuing; thoughts not involving the performance; and thoughts questioning their own performance ability. Each of the thoughts captured the attention of the performers causing them to lose their focus.

Thoughts directly related to the music being performed

Despite the fact that these thoughts focused on the music, each of the thoughts created a conflict within the performers as they attempted to communicate the musical score. At times, these thoughts disoriented the performers creating an uncertainty of where they were in the music. Most of the participants referred to having memory slips, which prevented the performer from establishing continuity within the score. Mary, for example, reported instances in which "I draw a blank where the next chord is. I just have no idea. I have to make up things and sometimes I just sort of have to repeat a little bit until I think of the next thing" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/9/01). This left Mary feeling disconnected to the music and confused as to what was suppose to occur next.

Other performers described a similar feeling of disorientation while performing. Despite meticulous preparation and a security surrounding the music, Boniface described that he:

> felt like I was fighting every moment to find the next idea . . . I was trying to focus and I felt like I was going through the motions, but the focusing was not really happening. It really wasn't evident until I made the first strike towards the keys and then as that happened the terror of just the first chord propelled itself through about 10 or 15 measures and maybe even longer. Only until the end of the piece would I think I was able to relax and it was a situation where bit by bit as I went through I was fighting to find some release and I finally found it, but it still didn't feel the way it would normally feel. There was a sort of disembodied feel and that's very uncomfortable (Individual interview, p. 5, 6/26/01).

The focus was interrupted. While continuing to play the right notes and even the right rhythms, Boniface referred to feeling "disengaged mentally" because of the consistent struggle to keep going in the music (Individual interview, p. 5, 6/26/01).

Thoughts not involving the performance which distracted the performer

In addition to distracting thoughts related to the music, the participants also experienced distracting thoughts unrelated to the music. These thoughts were quite varied and individual, including images of physically walking off the stage in the middle of a performance and visualizing potential problems that may arise.

A common distraction was worry, including worry about what other people were thinking or worry about unrelated details such as who would hand out the programs, or the performer's attire for the concert. Susanne, for example, stated that "all of a sudden I'm worried about little details and even if everything has been handled, things start coming to my mind and I have a hard time with the focusing process" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/16/01). Richard was also concerned over details, stating:

> If I'm not focused then I start to think about little things that I should be allowing muscle memory or something to take care of and I start thinking about that, rather than the bigger picture of listening to the kind of sound that I'm making, or the kind of character that I want to portray in my particular playing. I'll start thinking of little things unrelated to the music (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/12/01).

All of these worries prevented the performers from maintaining their focus, and diverted their attention from the musical score.

> In turning her thoughts to the audience, Susanne shared that she: becomes hyper-aware of what the audience is doing. I become hyper-aware of the sounds I hear in the audience, any you know, grunts, you know, weird seat adjustments, and I take all of those [sounds] to mean some sort of judgment [is being] passed upon me at that moment . . . So I become hyper-aware and really, really anxious about what everybody else

> is doing as opposed to what I am suppose to be doing . . . I become hyper-conscious of my surroundings, which usually tends to increase my performance anxiety (Individual interview, p. 13, 7/16/01).

The sounds heard in the audience became magnified for Susanne and captured her attention.

Thoughts questioning performance ability

The third type of thought processes which distracted many of the participants were thoughts of self-doubt. These thoughts forced the pianists to question what they were doing and whether they had the ability to perform publicly. Their confidence waned as a result of such uncertainty. For example, Mary described her experience with questioning herself:

> I lose where I really am . . . I really start second guessing everything. I start second guessing what key I should be in and I start second guessing rhythms . . . I just begin to second-guess everything, so then when I'm focusing on this passage that's coming up that is a difficult passage, by the time you get there you really are having problems. I think it compounds itself. It causes me to second guess, not trust myself on any of it (Individual interview, p. 5, 7/9/01).

The second guessing which Mary reported left her with a lack of confidence. It is possible that this lack of confidence was conveyed to the audience.

Dotty also entertained strong feelings of self-doubt in her performances. At times, she even began to question whether she should have chosen another career path: "I should be selling shoes or something! How did I ever get into this [giving recitals] anyway? I have no business doing this [giving a recital]. Maybe I should just teach theory and stand up in front of a chalkboard and draw little notes" (Individual interview, p. 2, 6/29/01). These feelings of self-doubt were pervasive, permeating not just her performances, but even forcing her to question her vocational decisions.

Expectations from self and others

In addition to intellectual and reasoning difficulties, the participants also experienced conceptual distortions. These distortions resulted from projections, or expectations, placed on the performer either from themselves or from other individuals. Each of the expectations focused on the level of attainment that would be achieved by the performer in their playing.

The performers all had expectations for themselves. These were self-generated and were not the result of an expectation placed on the performers by another individual. Rather, these expectations were prompted by how the performers viewed themselves through the eyes of the audience.

Susanne referred to having "a fear of not communicating properly," as well as a "fear of looking awkward at the keyboard" (Individual interview, p. 6,

7/16/01). Susanne was concerned that she would be unable to convey the mood of the musical composition and destroy the interpretation. The expectation Susanne placed on herself was whether she would be able to succeed in communicating the music to the audience.

Richard spoke of the internal pressure he placed on himself to look good in front of others and his "desire to please people" (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/12/01). It was important for Richard to give his best performance, not simply for his personal satisfaction, but also for those in attendance.

The performers also felt that others had expectations they must meet. These feelings grew out of the performers' perception of an expectation from others such as a teacher, colleague, or pupil. Underlying each expectation was the fear of a negative evaluation by another.

Anne described her experience as a "fight between herself and her personal ghosts" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/6/01). These personal ghosts served as critics that judged, or critiqued, both the interpretive and musical decisions Anne employed in her playing. Anne said:

> I see a face of a person who has criticized my work before and I see their face and I see their disdain, their judgment . . . [I hear them say things like] That's not very good and How did she learn to interpret that? I see that face as I play, you know, I see their reactions change to the different things that I'm not completely convinced about in my own performances,

> things that I'm not, or even the stuff that I'm completely convinced about that is a bit more non-traditional. I still see those faces, those shadow ghosts while I'm playing that judge me harshly (Individual interview, p. 3, 7/6/01).

These "personal ghosts" served to set the standard against which Anne measured her playing.

Mary allowed her mind to focus on the members of the audience. She stated, "I know that they're [the audience] forming some sort of opinion, whether or not they are going to express it" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/9/01). This opinion carried a great deal of weight for Mary and preoccupied her during a performance.

Negative feelings

A third aspect of performance anxiety for these participants were negative feelings encountered during a performance. These negative feelings produced a sense of turmoil for the participants and included feelings of apprehension, creating a sense of alarm; feelings of poor self-esteem about their performance; and feelings of despondency or a sense of despair.

Apprehension

The majority of the negative feelings reported were feelings of apprehension, producing an unsettled and uneasy state of mind, which left the

individual anticipating some sort of danger. For the performer there was an uncertainty and uneasiness about what was to take place next.

Most of the pianists acknowledged that fear pervaded their playing. Many of the participants associated the fear with the music itself. Boniface, for example, related his fear as he was about to play a particular passage, which he viewed as "fiendishly difficult" (Individual interview, p. 3, 6/26/01) saying:

> I can think of several places in pieces that I have done where I have worked out all the details and everything is working fine, but that level of comfort is threatened at the time of the performance for whatever reason because performances are so in the moment and at a specific point in time and things change so fast from moment to moment that there have been times where I was prepared, where I was ready, but all of a sudden it's [the difficult passage] coming up and literally the fear approaching the moment . . . if the fear is not controlled approaching the moment, it can cause failure, or almost failure. It doesn't always necessarily destroy the performance completely, but it definitely keeps me from being free (Individual interview, p. 3, 6/26/01).

Despite solid preparation, Boniface continued to feel uncertainty in his performances, which left him in a state of fear.

The greatest fear for many of the pianists involved the fear of forgetting the music and incurring a memory slip. In expressing her biggest fear, Dotty, for example, reported that:

> You want the music to be there and feel successful that you're able to play the music as it's [the music] intended and play it [the music] to the best of your ability. We've got egos and you want to show that you can do this [play the music] and that you can do it well and so I think it's those two things. You want to be able to do it well and show your ability. And certainly the composers, these masters, their music shouldn't be played any way but the best and that is the key and I think the fear would be forgetting, or some mishap, maybe sometimes, you know you can get a finger in a wrong place and let it throw you and that's not necessarily forgetting, it's just getting mixed up, but it can throw [you]. You just hope those kinds of things don't happen (Individual interview, p. 7, 6/29/01).

Mary experienced a similar feeling when she shared: "It is always a constant fear that I might have a memory slip and that I won't be able to get back, even though I am playing pieces I know. I always worry about what if something happens and I can't get back. It's always there!" (Individual interview, p. 4, 7/9/01). Anything can happen in the moment of a performance and so for many of the participants this fear of forgetting the music was very real.

Anne, on the other hand, expressed her fear regarding non-musical matters. Most of her fears involved what she was wearing and whether it would be accepted and approved by the audience. This fear was not, however, confined to the time of the actual performance. Rather, Anne's fear crept in hours prior to her scheduled performance.

Most of the individuals addressed their nervousness in their performances. For example, Mary related that: "My nervousness takes over and my focus shifts to the nervousness and what it is causing my body to do, or not to do as opposed to being able to focus on the music itself. It takes over" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/9/01). Rather than concentrating on the music, the nervousness becomes the focal point.

The experience of being out of control was also expressed by most of the participants. Mary, for example, viewed this lack of control as being very extensive: " . . . the more you think you're losing control and therefore the more you do lose control. Out of control! It's almost like I'm in a dense fog and can't see through. I can't find my way" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/9/01). The result was a spiral effect. Boniface compared his experience to having "a sense of flying and not in the good sense of flying. You sort of feel like you're skating over the keyboard and you're not really grounded" (Individual interview, p. 1, 6/26/01). This lack of control left the performers feeling vulnerable and gave rise to an increase in performance anxiety.

Poor self-esteem

Each of the feelings of poor self-esteem reflected a negative opinion the participants had of themselves. These feelings included feelings of failure, self-consciousness, and feeling stupid.

Several of the participants reported feeling like they were a failure. Richard, for example, explained that for him, the experience was one of "falling on my face . . . a fear of not necessarily making a mistake, but of failure" (Individual interview, p. 6, 7/12/01). Richard did not feel as though he was able to accomplish what he set out to do in his playing, thus leaving him with the impression that he had failed. Anne also experienced a sense of failure in her playing and responded:

> I'm mad that I let it [the anxiety] get to me . . . basically I feel [like a] failure, not for the performance, or not for the interpretation, or not for the enjoyment I may or may not have given the audience, but I feel failure in the battle with myself and so anger and failure is how I feel at the end of every performance. I always feel that when I bow I am apologizing. I am so sorry that I have failed in this fight and I lost and you [the audience] had to put up with it (Individual interview, p. 11-12, 7/6/01).

Anne sensed that she had somehow let the audience down.

Boniface shared that some of his feelings reflected who he was as a person:

> There's self-esteem issues because when you do things like that [lose your place in the music] it automatically affects you. You automatically feel bad and the reason I say that is because that affects everything else after that point because your self-confidence is shaken and so anything that shakes your confidence you're ready to sort of give up (Individual interview, p. 6, 6/26/01).

For Boniface, what transpired during the course of the actual performance was viewed as a reflection of himself.

For Dotty, feelings of self-consciousness emerged when:

> I start thinking about the audience and then I get real self-conscious and it's not a [pause] it's a funny kind of self-consciousness, I think it's like: Oh no, I have failed or I ruined the music, or I shouldn't even being doing this and all those kind of lack of confidence kind of feelings. I should just quit, give up. Those kinds of things come to mind (Individual interview, p. 2, 6/29/01).

These feelings forced Dotty to question whether she had done justice to the music and whether she had a right to be performing.

Despondency

Feelings of despondency left the participants with a sense of despair and discouragement. Pessimism invaded their performances and caused the performers to feel disheartened. Hopelessness seemed to prevail.

For example, Susanne reported experiencing "a certain kind of loss, a sort of depressive kind of feeling and while it may only last an instant, it's enough to shake you and to keep you from going on with your thought patterns" (Individual interview, p. 8, 7/16/01). These feelings left Susanne wanting to give up. The challenge for Susanne was to get beyond these feelings and reclaim both the spirit and the character of the music.

In spite of a strong faith and a willingness to take matters to the Lord, Dotty maintained that she got "real down and real depressed" (Individual interview, p.2, 6/2/01). Not only did Dotty feel as though she was not worthy of performing, she doubted her own ability to do so. As a result, Dotty did not feel like performing again.

Richard described a feeling of "being hopeless" during his performances (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/12/01). His hopelessness stemmed from an inability to control what was taking place during a performance. This feeling of lack of control fed into terror for Richard and as those feelings escalated, Richard began to feel hopeless.

The Physiological Manifestations of Performance Anxiety

In addition to the mental aspects of performance anxiety, the participants also reported physiological manifestations. These manifestations consisted of somatic reactions, which were the result of the performer's response to what they

were feeling at a particular time. These reactions diverted the attention of the performers from the music to their physical feelings.

Skin

The most often mentioned physiological symptoms of performance anxiety were feelings of cold and feelings of hot. The performers each experienced different combinations of these physiological symptoms, which hindered their coordination.

Cold

Many of the participants reported experiencing cold fingers and hands while they were performing. This cold sensation prohibited the pianists from navigating properly at the keyboard.

Boniface, for example, described some of his performance anxiety by sharing that he has: " . . . an unnatural fear, which is part of what anxiety is all about. The unnatural fear grips you . . . it [the unnatural fear] makes my hands cold, especially the tips of my fingers, which is somewhat detrimental to a pianist" (Individual interview, p. 1, 6/26/01). Boniface attributed the fear to a relatively low body temperature, resulting in a sensation, which was foreign to his practice sessions. Mary stated that when her fingers became cold and clammy she missed notes and that led to her feeling a greater insecurity, giving rise to an increase in

performance anxiety. Due to the coldness experienced, it became more difficult for the hands and fingers to function.

Hot

In addition to the cold sensation experienced by many of the performers, there was also an abnormal increase in bodily warmth. The manifestations reported here included being flushed, sweating, hot flashes, and perspiration.

Several of the pianists experienced sweating. The greatest physiological response was exhibited in sweating for Susanne:

> I profusely sweat . . . I sort of feel once the anxiety starts to well up and it's sort of a heart and an emotional thing, it's an emotional edge and then the chemistry in my body changes and because of that chemical change taking place within my body I start to sweat and to the degree that I sweat I cause more problems for myself because I'm sweating all over the keys. That would be for me the biggest thing, much more noticeable than anything else (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/16/01).

As a result of sweating over the keys, the keys became quite slippery. Dotty also reported getting the keys wet when she stated: "I guess I have a real adrenalin rush and I get very hot, very hot and perspire all over, really warm and I get really flushed and sticky and the keys get really wet. I always feel that [way]" (Individual interview, p. 2, 6/29/01). These sensations could come and go for Dotty during a performance.

Muscle reactions

Another physiological manifestation of performance anxiety exhibited by the members of this study centered on the control of their muscles and included shaking and experiencing tension in various body parts.

Shaking

The anxiety within the individuals produced bodily movements, which they had no control over. These physiological manifestations included an involuntary shaking or trembling of various body parts, especially the hands and legs.

Several pianists reported difficulty with shaking hands. One of the manifestations that was apparent for Mary was noted in her shaky hands as "they [her hands] kind of gliss over the top of the keys" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/9/01), creating a foreign feel of the keys for Mary. Susanne also spoke of shaky hands when she related:

> I'm usually excited. There's always a certain amount of excitement and I think that's important when you're dealing with performance anxiety. For me, I love to perform, however, I'm still sort of held back by this nervousness. The nervousness especially includes my hands shaking and no matter what I do I am not able to make them stop shaking (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/16/01).

Shaky feet and legs were also noted by several of the participants. Anne, for example, had the experience of her right leg shaking so uncontrollably that "I could hardly use the pedal" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/6/01). Her shaking was not limited to her legs, but rather there were times when her "whole body feels shaky" (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/6/01). These instances only increased the performance anxiety that Anne already felt. For Richard, instances of a shaky foot and leg were confined to times of using the pedal: "When I pedal, my foot and leg will shake. The worst part is that I am not able to control the shaking and there are times when it affects the pedaling in a piece" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/12/01).

Tension

In addition to involuntary shaking or trembling, the participants also reported experiencing tension. The arms, back, and shoulders were specifically mentioned as areas filled with tension by several of the pianists. This tension created discomfort within the individuals. Dotty, for example, experienced tension in her shoulders and back while playing. At times, this physical tension persisted throughout an entire program. In describing her tension, Dotty explained the experience as:

> I have this physical tension bothering me through the whole thing. I can not get comfortable . . . I keep doing this on the bench [wiggling] and I can't get comfortable and the whole time I am tight cause I am trying to

> control what I can't control, you know, you let the control happen, you can't force [it] and I was forcing. I was just so tense and it was just anxiety (Individual interview, p. 7, 6/29/01).

For Dotty, her tension settled in her back and bothered her for several days before subsiding. The tension for Richard settled in his arms: " My arms get tense. I start feeling the tension and suddenly it gets harder and harder to move my arms and hands around the keyboard" (Individual interview, p. 3, 7/12/01). There were times when Richard wondered if he would be able to play the next measure with his arms getting heavier and heavier.

Other Physiological Manifestations

Other physiological manifestations that affected the playing of the participants of this study focused on the cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and respiratory systems. These manifestations were not visible and could not be detected by the members of the audience.

Many of the participants reported an acceleration in their heart rate. For Susanne, this increased heart rate occurred during actual performances:

> Usually, my heart just suddenly beats very fast . . . and then I will miss notes and sometimes I just have no idea where I am [in the music]. I have to make up things and sometimes I just sort of have to repeat a little bit

until I think of the next thing to go on [to] (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/16/01).

This elevation in her heart beat caused Susanne to lose her place in the music.

Anne, on the other hand, related that the rise in her heart rate permeated the entire day of a performance beginning in the morning:

> I'm well practiced, and I know I know my music and yet the day of a performance I can feel the anxiety begin in the morning. It's like my body is physically out of control. I start to get dry mouth. I get agitated . . . my heart beat's up. I can't breathe really . . . I feel all of it out of my control (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/6/01).

A thorough knowledge of the music, and feeling well prepared did not diminish the experience of performance anxiety for Anne.

Most of the pianists related abdominal discomfort, such as an upset or nervous stomach, or "butterflies." Boniface, for example, discussed his nervousness in anticipation of a performance: "I get really nervous. This nervousness may include not just being jittery, but also butterflies in the stomach" (Individual interview, p. 1, 6/26/01). These "butterflies" left Boniface feeling somewhat unsettled in approaching the performance. The anxiety seemed to settle in the stomach for Anne as well: "I get that feeling in my stomach like: Ugh! I feel bad in my stomach . . . I try to grab on to something in the music and save it. I try not to concentrate on that feeling because if I do then I would have to stop

[playing] because that would be a distraction" (Individual interview, p. 8, 7/9/01). This resulted in an uncomfortableness both physically as well as with the music.

The performance anxiety also affected the breathing processes of the individuals. The participants reported an inability to maintain proper breathing function and included such difficulties as an inability to breathe, having shortness of breath, rapid breathing, and holding their breath.

In addition to times of feeling a shortness of breath while performing, Mary related that there were times when: "I catch myself holding my breath . . . and so much so that I have to physically tell myself to take a breath. A lot of times when I do that it gets better" (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/9/01). Mary had to consciously focus on her breathing process during her performance in order to keep it functioning. Anne also experienced moments of shortness of breath and times when: "I can't breathe. It is almost as if I am suffocating" (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/6/01). There is a sense for Anne that her survival was threatened in her inability to breathe.

Combating Performance Anxiety

Each of the pianists in this study had his or her own unique techniques that he or she used to help him or her deal with performance anxiety. While none of the techniques worked one hundred percent of the time, the participants each had a

particular strategy they employed to help make the experience more manageable and less threatening.

Music Related Strategies

The participants utilized strategies, which were directly related to the music in order to help them, or their students, alleviate, or reduce, their musical performance anxiety. There were three types of techniques: behavioral strategies engaged in prior to performing; mental strategies engaged in prior to performing; and mental strategies while performing.

Behavioral strategies prior to performing

These behavioral strategies focused on activities which the performer engaged in prior to the actual performance in an attempt to reduce his or her musical performance anxiety and included playing the program many times before the actual performance, taping the performance, and playing with the music rack up.

Most of the pianists participated in performance run-throughs in the weeks leading up to a scheduled performance. For the performers, this opportunity allowed them to become more comfortable with the program they were presenting, as well as to identify any weak spots. Mary, for example, referred to having:

> distraction run-throughs where I invite people to come and listen. It's like a run-through, but they [the invited people] intentionally cough, or they get up and leave, or two people talk all the way through and it can be fun, but I

> also ask whoever is coming to take it [the run-thru] very seriously. So in a way, I'm practicing intentionally having problems and anticipating those kinds of problems (Individual interview, p. 6, 7/9/01).

These rehearsal performances helped Mary maintain her focus and allowed her to feel more confident in approaching the actual performance.

For Susanne, the more performances she engaged in:

> . . . everything [performance anxiety] is still there, but it is to a little lesser degree. If I go for a long period of time, a couple of months, without having a public performance, I have problems, real problems. The demons are huge and they're terrifying, while they're a little shorter and not so bad when I keep playing all the time . . . frequency of performances helps (Individual interview, p. 4, 7/16/01).

These preview performances afforded Susanne a sense of security and her "demons" became more manageable as a result.

One technique employed by Boniface was that of taping his practice sessions. This technique included both videotaping and audiotaping. Taping the sessions and viewing them helped Boniface to see those places where his body was getting tense and also identify potential sources of anxiety.

In an attempt to play with greater security, Richard responded that:

> I use to play with the rack up because I felt so much more secure even though I was playing it from memory. I think that's part of my anxiety

> when you walk out all by yourself there's no help, you know, there's no help and so I use to play for awhile, I use to play solo performances with the rack up because that's not so offensive to people as having the music sitting there, so I did that for awhile and that worked some, a little (Individual interview, p. 5, 7/12/01).

The music rack acted as a security for Richard, providing him with a certain amount of comfort.

Several of the performers spoke of writing out the music without reference to the score, both for themselves, as well as in working with their own students. In addressing this procedure, Dotty remarked: "Having them write it really solidified the keys and helped them get over kind of little bridges in the music" (Individual interview, p. 11, 6/29/01). This process allowed the students to understand the intricacies of the piece.

Anne reported that she learned to lessen her performance anxiety by playing the music of composers about whom she felt completely confident. In so doing, there was a comfort level established in her performances. One way that Anne increased her level of confidence was to:

> play a piece five or six times, not just five or six times in a row, but rather play in a performance and then put it away. Six months, ten months, a year and a half later, you bring it back, you play it on a different recital program, and then you put it away again. In other words, you basically

> relearn it, perform it again and put it away. Another year and a half, two years go by and you learn it again, with the learning getting significantly shorter . . . It's constant, like wine aging on a shelf. Those pieces, then I just have performance anxiety throughout the day and I may have little blips of it in the performance, but not enough to shake me and I give really good performances of those works (Individual interview, p. 6, 7/6/01).

This repetition increased Anne's confidence level and lessened her performance anxiety.

Most of these pianists employed relaxation techniques. These techniques ranged from simple breathing exercises to imagery exercises, in an attempt to slow the heart rate down. Dotty, for example, allowed her imagination to present her with a picture of herself "riding down an escalator" (Individual interview, p. 7, 6/29/01). This technique allowed Dotty to slow down her heart rate, as well as diverted her attention from her nerves to something completely different. Mary, on the other hand, had taken yoga courses as an undergraduate, and she applied some of what she learned in those classes to help with her anxiety. Mary also performed arm and neck stretches to help her feel relaxed backstage before walking out onto the stage. In addition to getting a massage on the day of a performance, Richard also managed to control his performance anxiety by resorting to doing: " . . . isometric things where I'll tighten up and then relax, or isolation things where I'll keep everything relaxed and just tighten up one group

of muscles and then relax . . . It helps me get rid of some of the physical tremors (Individual interview, p. 3, 7/12/01).

These exercises helped Richard remain calm.

One of the pianists admitted that she had one really successful performance when a friend had given her a prescription drug. Anne described that successful performance by saying that when she "walked out there [on stage] it [performance anxiety] was gone. I had a great time. I had fun at my own performance" (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/6/01). There were several other performances when Anne also relied on the use of medication. While she admitted that she was:

> . . . concerned about taking a mood enhancing drug because I knew that I'd need split second control over things that happen on stage and I didn't want to be out of control . . . I'm not one to ever want to be out of control anyway . . . It actually only suppressed all of those crazy physical symptoms that I told you about from the beginning of the day. So that my heart wasn't racing and my hands weren't [shaking], my body wasn't shaking and I could breathe. I was still completely alert and I could do it [give the performance] (Individual interview, p. 2, 7/6/01).

Anne stated that she was considering taking medication once again to assist her in dealing with her nerves.

Mental strategies prior to performing

Along with behavioral strategies employed, the performers also espoused mental techniques prior to performing. The performers accomplished each of these actions during practice periods in preparation for a performance including establishing memory stations in the music, employing different practice techniques, creating ways to keep focused, and prayer.

All of the participants spoke of the need to keep focused in their playing. If they were able to keep their attention fixed on the music, they were less likely to suffer from anxiety. Susanne observed in working with her own students who suffered from debilitating performance anxiety that:

> . . . it's from a lack of confidence in their memory and it's from when we work on their practicing from not really focusing on their practice and when they sit down and really play from memory they are not really able to focus as they should because they have not trained that focus (Individual interview, p. 1, 7/16/01).

Susanne believed that this focus needed to be built into the practice sessions in order for her students to have a successful performance.

Mary articulated that one way for her to establish focus in her playing was to sing the melody under her breath, but "not so much that you can't hear yourself playing" (Individual interview, p. 6, 7/9/01). Singing the melody allowed Mary to maintain her focus on the passage and not anticipate the music, particularly if a

difficult passage was approaching. Mary has also worked with her students using this technique.

Another technique utilized by most of the participants was the selection of designated measures throughout the music that they could conceivably jump to, if needed. Anne, for example, referred to having anchors, or guideposts, every eight to sixteen measures, coinciding with the phrase structure of a composition:

> I know what the first half of a bar looks like at every one of those memory stations. So, if I have a total blank, where all of a sudden I've lost myself in the music, I have no thread, I don't even know the page. No clue, it's a complete blank. I just jump to the next memory station. It usually takes a split second because I have to remember where I was and which one [memory station] I just passed and then after that I just make a complete jump. It's not something that comes naturally, but it's practiced in (Individual interview, p. 12, 7/6/01).

Knowing that she had a spot in the music enabled Anne to jump to those phrases, providing her with greater security. She was confident that she would be able to continue if she ran into difficulty. Dotty worked with her students in locating starting places, providing the students a place to jump to if they got lost. She referred to this technique as being a lifesaver for many of her students, especially for those who were fearful of playing in public:

> It gives them a kind of security to know that if they have a lapse here, they can jump, if they know these places cold. In a Bach Fugue, I may have them learn at least six entrances where they can start, where the fugue and the subject starts again, even in whatever key it might be in. Then when they come to their lesson I'll say: 'Okay, start on your third start and they'll start on their third start.' I think it just secures their memory and it gives them a sense of peace about it (Individual interview, p. 11, 6/29/01).

Most of the participants mentioned greater preparation as a strategy. For example, Boniface viewed lack of preparation as being one of the contributing factors to an increase in performance anxiety. Boniface related that for him, "the anxiety level gets worse, or builds up worse when you don't have as much time to prepare and that causes anxiety" (Individual interview, p. 4, 6/26/01). Taking time for greater preparation, which varied according to the type of program, helped keep his anxiety level down. For Susanne, the preparation came in:

> . . . learning about the music as thoroughly as humanly possible, knowing it so well and I don't just mean the notes, I mean understanding the composer, the time period, the life, and where it was written, when it was written and why it was written on top of the notes and your interpretation and the entire world around the piece and you and this moment (Individual interview, p. 16, 7/16/01).

Establishing this overview of the music and placing it within the context of a historical period, assisted Susanne in coming to understand the music on a deeper level which allowed Susanne to feel as though she could anticipate what was coming next in the music. Mary also stated that "there are always usually in pieces places that repeat or that are very similar to one another" (Individual interview, p. 5, 7/9/01). She found it especially helpful to mentally compare those spots and identify the similarities and differences in the music.

Several of the participants employed visualization. In addition to visualizing playing a piece from start to finish, Boniface worked with his students, as well as himself, to visualize an entire performance. This process included walking on and off the stage as well as sitting down at the piano and playing through the entire program. While acknowledging that this mental exercise was challenging, Boniface pointed to the fact that this process helped him identify weak memory spots.

Many of the participants referred to prayer as an activity to help reduce their performance anxiety before a performance. Mary, for example, believed in the power of prayer and prayed before each performance:

> It gives me something calming to focus on instead of worrying about what is about to happen. There was a point in my life where I was convinced that nothing in the world would help me overcome performance anxiety until I figured the only thing bigger than that [performance

anxiety] had to be God, and that nothing else could help me . . . and that had sort of a calming effect (Individual interview, p. 5, 7/9/01).

Dotty also alluded to a strong faith when she shared: " . . . and I like to take it to the Lord" (Individual interview, p. 2, 6/29/01). She further explained that it is through this prayer that the Lord allowed her to feel worthy and capable of sharing her music with others.

Mental strategies while performing

The participants also availed themselves of the use of mental strategies while performing. Each of these techniques focused on a mental activity which helped the performer create a positive performing experience and reduce their performance anxiety and included remaining calm, possessing mental endurance, and avoiding inner dialogue.

Several of the pianists spoke of the need for their thoughts to be positive ones when dealing with performance anxiety. Boniface, for example, referred to his positive thoughts as "moments of confidence" (Individual interview, p. 8, 6/26/01). In his practice sessions Boniface attempted to program in positive thoughts so that he was able to readily recall those positive thoughts when needed in a performance. Richard also mentioned trying to control his thoughts:

> I try and use my thoughts to combat my anxiety. By focusing on what I want to do, concentrating on trying to have a good performance, instead of being so distracted by what's going on out there [in the audience], I

just try and make myself almost unaware that there is anybody out there (Individual interview, p. 4, 7/12/01).

Richard attempted to control his thought processes and not allow distractions to enter in.

Dotty spoke of her need to possess mental endurance, especially as she approached the last piece:

> . . . you might get this 'Oh, I'm almost done,' and you get this little over confident feeling and your focus begins to kind of disintegrate. That's real dangerous . . . I think that could be a dangerous moment: the last piece, the last movement because you are mentally tired at that point . . . and if you're not really staying in there it can leave you and I think that may also be true at the end of the first half before the intermission if you have a long program and you've got a break and you get to the end of that first half and it might happen then, but I certainly would guard against that last piece (Individual interview, p. 3, 6/29/01).

Dotty maintained the need to keep her guard up through the entire performance and not begin to think that things were going well and there was no need to worry.

The mental process that Mary engaged in centered on avoiding inner dialogue while performing, especially when she felt distracted and somewhat flustered. This included going against her basic instinct to:

> . . . start talking to myself: 'How could this happen?' 'What are people

thinking?' I would try to avoid that and concentrate even more on what was still going on. Keeping focused on exactly what I'm playing. Focus, that's the thing I really strive for (Individual interview, p. 3 , 7/9/01).

Mary needed to clear her mind and focus on the moment.

Audience Related Strategies

The performers also practiced strategies involving the audience in an attempt to combat their performance anxiety.

Many of the pianists explained that one of the ways for them to control their performance anxiety was related to those in attendance. For Anne, her performance anxiety was "never as big and scary, it's more controllable" when she knew that the audience was there for enjoyment, as opposed to an evaluative situation (Individual interview, p. 8, 7/6/01). Whether or not that was the intention of those present, what mattered for Anne was how she interpreted the situation. The audience also factored a great deal into the degree of performance anxiety for Mary. She was uncomfortable when people sat in the first couple of rows and preferred to rope them off so that no one was able to sit in them. Mary shared that she did not like anyone in her field of vision. While realizing that that is not always something she had control over, the audience could prove to be very

distracting for Mary. Boniface admitted that his physical relationship to the audience also affected his performance anxiety:

> When I am close, that is [when] the stage or performance venue is less than ten feet between the piano and the audience, my performance anxiety at that point is heightened because I feel overcome by the audience and it's very hard to enter in [to the performance]. If I'm in a setting which is larger, and the lights are such that I really can't see them [the audience] it's much easier for me to bring the audience to me, than for me to be sort of thrust into the audience (Individual interview, p. 1, 6/26/01).

Creating this physical space allowed Boniface to have some physic distance between himself and the audience as well:

> I can bring them [the audience] as close as I want and I'd rather go get them sort of mentally and with the music and call them into my circle rather than have me into this pre-determined circle and that changes the way I feel instantly on stage, my whole level of comfort is affected by that [distance] . . .and that affects my level of anxiety (Individual interview, p. 8, 6/26/01).

For Boniface, there was a need to control the performance setting.

Richard shared that he had:

> . . . resorted lately in solo recitals to doing verbal program notes because I also find that that puts me at a really good [pause] it helps me make that

> extra connection with the audience. And it feels a little more intimate. It's a way to establish some rapport and I find that that just helps me, it makes me feel good (Individual interview, p. 4, 7/12/01).

Speaking about the music allowed Richard to establish communication with the audience and helped him not be so conscious while playing.

Summary

The common thread that emerged from all of the participants surrounded the element of focus. Musical performance anxiety appeared to increase when the individual's focus was deflected from the task at hand, leaving the performer unable to think clearly. This deflection occurred both mentally, through thought processes, as well as physiologically, in somatic reactions. Whether these distractions existed in the mind of the performers, or were the result of a bodily response, the outcome was the same. The individual began to place his or her attention on the distraction and lost focus on the music. As a result, the performer was threatened by insecurity, which seemed to undermine his or her confidence level, creating feelings of failure, self-consciousness, and feeling stupid. For the majority of the participants as long as they were immersed in the music, without extraneous thoughts or reactions, their performance anxiety was significantly less.

All of the participants utilized techniques prior to performing to help them reduce their musical performance anxiety. For each of the pianists, these

strategies consisted of ways to acquire greater familiarity with the music, which went beyond the scope of practicing. Several of the pianists also used specific strategies while performing. These were all mental activities employed by the individual.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

An individual needs an understanding of how he or she responds to the various stimuli encountered while performing. This understanding will assist an individual when encountering obstacles and distractions in playing.

One goal of a performing musician is to effectively communicate the intricacies of the score to those listening. This communication process requires a heightened sense of concentration from the performer. There are times both for novices as well as seasoned performers when this communication process is interrupted. According to Caldwell (1990), it is only when musicians clear away distractions that they are able to make a connection with the audience and communicate the music effectively. Without their inner experience in order, distractions experienced by the pianists will surface during the performance. The performance may suffer because this inner struggle can set up an incongruence in the movements, breathing, and sounds of the performers, which even if very slight, the audience can detect (Caldwell, 1990). This struggle can cause performers to lose their focus and place their attention on the existing struggle. Music educators and performing musicians must confront performance anxiety.

Through this study, the researcher delved into some of the mystery surrounding the phenomenon of musical performance anxiety, considered to be the "musicians nemesis" (Nagel, 1990, p. 37). As a result, individuals hopefully will come to a deeper self-understanding of their performance anxiety and experience a lesser degree of discomfort and vulnerability.

Description of Musical Performance Anxiety

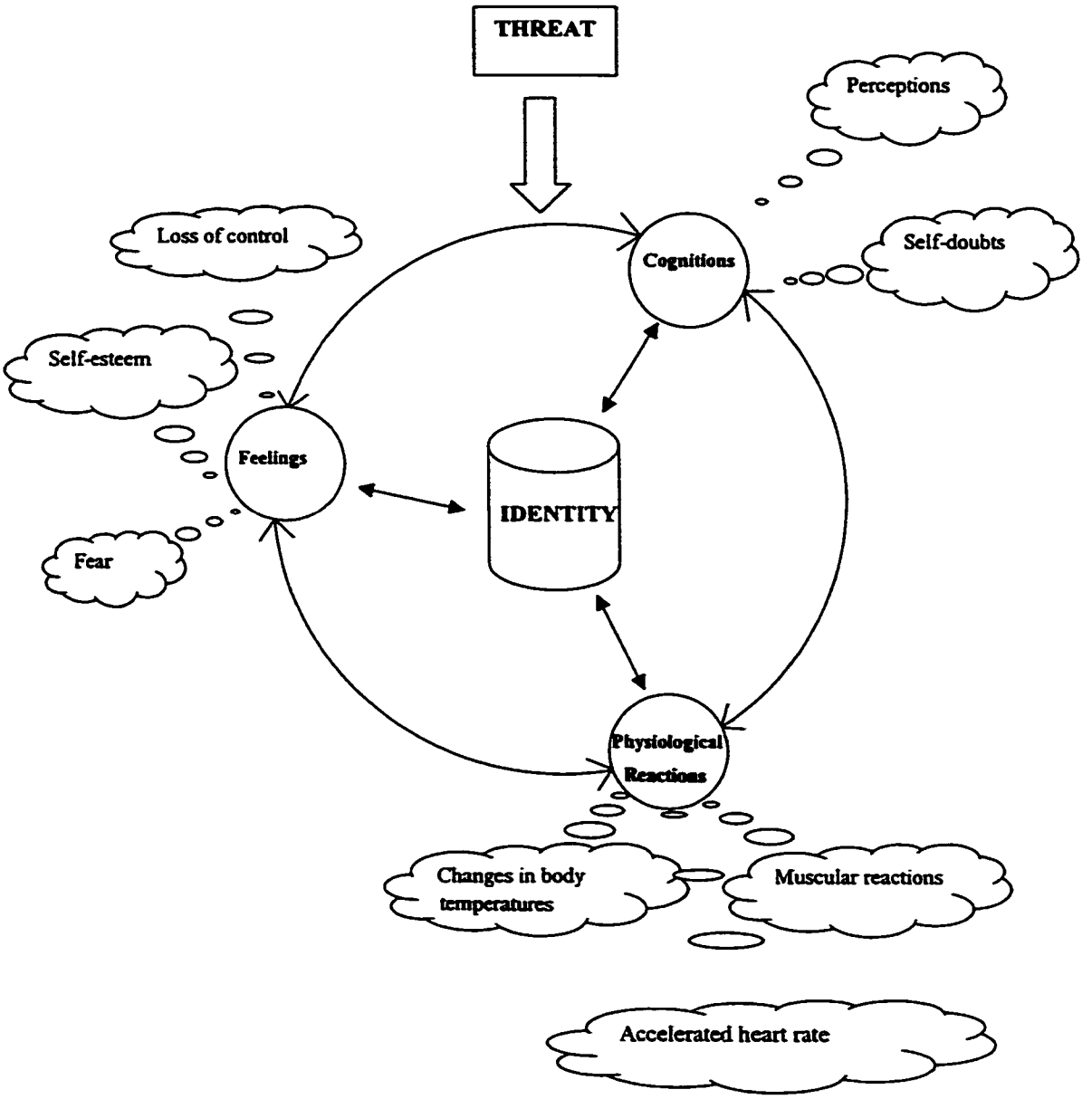
Each of the six participants of this particular study reported experiencing multiple symptoms of performance anxiety. Symptoms were not limited to one particular area, but rather manifested themselves through a combination of thought processes, feelings, and physiological responses. Each of these manifestations produced within the participants feelings of vulnerability, creating an uncertainty in their performing ability.

For the six participants of this study, performance anxiety was a process, which once set in motion, was difficult to break. The perception of a threat by an individual activated one of three responses: a mental, physiological, or emotional response. Not only was there no pattern that emerged as to which response system was awakened first, but also there did not appear to be a hierarchy within the order of responses. The participants all related experiencing manifestations in each of the three areas.

Figure 1 shows the overview of musical performance anxiety.

Figure 1

An Overview of Musical Performance Anxiety



The three response systems all impacted the identity of the pianist. The feelings, cognitions, and physiological manifestations experienced carried the potential to erode the identity of the pianist, causing the performer to think less of himself or herself. This identity affected the individual as a musician, performer, and pianist, as well as his or her identity as a person. These thoughts and feelings always centered around how the performer viewed him/herself as coming across to the audience, as well as their perception of how others viewed them.

Rather than performing to a standard set by her own personal priorities, Dotty explained that her performances focus on a level, which will be acceptable to those listening. Instead of striving for her own ideals, she is compelled to perform for someone else's standards. She reported that it is always about "somebody else's level of how that should go, or how well interpreted that is, or how flawless that went, or how . . . " (Individual interview, p. 9, 6/29/01). For Boniface, the feelings of being lost and terrorized that surfaced were considered a reflection of who he was and affected how he felt about himself as a performer. These perceptions were not always rooted in reality. The thoughts and feelings were a creation that sprang out of the performer's inner world.

The pianists felt that who they were as musicians, performers, and pianists was changed in the performance situation. They often felt as though their capability as a performing musician was in question. Their identity appeared to be challenged as a result. While the feelings, cognitions, and physiological responses

affected the identity of the pianist, in turn, their self-identity influenced each of these three areas, creating what appeared to be at times, an increase in the intensity of the responses for the performers. A reciprocal relationship was established between the two areas.

For these pianists, their experience of performance anxiety was not limited solely to their time on stage, but often began to appear in the hours leading up to a performance. The effects of the performance anxiety not only detracted from the quality of the performance for the participants, but also diminished their enjoyment in giving the performance. In each performance performers worried that they would encounter performance anxiety and wondered how they would cope if they did.

In this study, the performers reported a wide range of coping strategies, ranging from a minimum of eight strategies employed to a maximum of fourteen. This is in keeping with researchers that support combining a variety of treatment techniques to achieve best results (Craske and Craig, 1984; Fishbein and Middlestadt, 1988; Fogle, 1982). Possibly, for this particular group of pianists, the number of coping mechanisms employed did make a difference in their intensity of the anxiety experience. The performers were not limited to simply one or two techniques and as a result gave themselves more available options, which assisted them in managing their performance anxiety.

Feelings and Thoughts Associated with Performance Anxiety

In this study, negative thoughts and feelings dominated the experience of performance anxiety. The participants appeared not to have control over these thoughts and feelings, suggesting an element of unpredictability factored into each performance. According to Beck (1985), anxious thinking is characterized by its involuntary nature. In addition, there seemed to be a proportionately greater number of negative thoughts and feelings over positive ones, which only served to increase the intensity of the performance anxiety for the pianists.

Self-doubt and self-esteem

Thoughts of self-doubt absorbed the participants of this study, creating within them feelings of inadequacy. According to Nagle (1990), negative self-statements, which often lead to self-doubt, carry the potential to undermine the confidence of the performer. This study supported the relationship between the self-doubts and the self-confidence level of the performer. As the self-doubts increased, the confidence level of the performer decreased, resulting in a loss of security in the music, and at times, forcing the pianist to question his or her performing ability. Craske and Craig (1984) postulate that the amount of anxiety an individual experiences relates directly to their belief in self and how they assess their capability in stressful situations. Nagle (1990) emphasizes that not only is

one's sense of confidence shaken in the midst of doubts, but the many hours of preparation culminating in the performance are enfeebled as well.

Beck (1985) points to a reciprocal relationship between individuals' self-confidence and their inner sense of vulnerability. As their degree of confidence weakened for the performers, their vulnerability appeared to increase, leaving individuals open to greater self-doubts. As the participants struggled to rid their self-doubts, their performance anxiety only increased, which perpetuated further self-doubts.

The pianists in this particular study tended to equate their performances with their self-worth and identity. Their self-esteem seemed rooted in how well they performed, as well as in their perception of how the audience responded to their performance. The performers interpreted any encountered difficulty in a performance as receiving a negative evaluation by the audience. This negative evaluation was translated to mean the performer was a failure not only as a musician but as a person as well. Such an inability to discriminate between their performance and their person may lie in a lack of value of their personhood. Nagle, Himle, and Papsdorf (1981) suggest that inner thoughts that pose a threat to our self-esteem, heighten the potential for anxiety. For the pianists in this study, their self-esteem issues resulted not only from their negative thoughts and feelings, but also from their perception of the audience.

Expectations of others

The performers all believed they had expectations surrounding their playing which they needed to meet. Since none of these expectations were actually ever communicated to the performers, these expectations were self-generated perceptions about what other people were thinking about them. The expectations were not necessarily the reality of the situation and could very well have been nonexistent. Because their perceptions became their reality during their performances, the performers could not distinguish the reality from their own interpretation of what was taking place while performing.

Most of the pianists agreed that an element of fear was present in their experience of performance anxiety. Accompanying each expectation was a fear of being negatively evaluated and judged by others. The participants inherently feared disapproval from others. Nagle (1990) believed anxiety related to being judged negatively increases in persons in evaluative situations, such as performing in public. The performers appeared concerned over their public image and feared others would lose respect for them. This fear of disapproval has been described as one of the components comprising performance anxiety in the research of both Barrell, Medeiros, Barrell, and Price (1985) and Lehrer (1984). In addition, Ellis (1979) concluded that individuals bring on anxiety when they seek to win the approval of those individuals considered to be significant.

Barrell et al. (1985) discovered that the presence of significant others existed as an element in performance anxiety. The audience develops significance in that they are most likely to judge the performer, and the result of their evaluation threatens the performers' connection to the audience (Barrell et al., 1985). For most of the pianists, the audience was not present to simply enjoy the performance, but rather to serve as judges, critiquing their playing. The positive or negative value assigned by those in attendance appeared to determine the worth of their playing.

It was apparent that the participants placed too great an importance on other individuals, particularly the audience. By having the audience take on such a magnitude, the identity of the performer was challenged. Rather than placing the value of the performance on something intrinsic, the performer connected the worth of the performance to an extrinsic value: the value placed on the performance by the audience. May (1977) describes fear as a response to a perceived threat and in the case of the pianists in this study, the threat appeared to be to their identity both as musicians and persons.

Helplessness

The participants felt defenseless or helpless and as a result experienced a loss of control over their performance. A similar sense of helplessness also characterized the experience of anxiety in the research of Aaron, 1986; May,

1977; and Steptoe and Fidler, 1987. For the pianists in this study, their helplessness centered on aspects of the music making and included feelings of powerlessness over what was occurring during the performance. The performers could not trust the music they had rehearsed during their practice sessions, creating a foreign feel to the music for the pianist. This escalated their sense of not being in control. Anxiety increases our awareness and in doing so can cause an exaggeration in the sensations.

Physiological Manifestations of Performance Anxiety

All of the participants reported physiological manifestations of performance anxiety. When the body perceives a threat, the sympathetic nervous system is activated, resulting in obvious changes in the body. While the experience of performance anxiety is largely a psychological state, the physical coping mechanisms employed are the same as those aroused when facing a physical threat (D'Onofrio, 1981). These changes have the effects of hindering the coordination so necessary in playing the piano. Since pianists generally do not experience the activation of the sympathetic nervous system in their practice sessions, these unfamiliar sensations in their body during an actual performance caused them additional stress.

Each of the physiological responses appeared to increase the negative thoughts and feelings of the participants, escalating the entire experience. Since

these physiological manifestations are the easiest expressions of performance anxiety to observe by another individual, the bodily expressions of their anxiety tended to embarrass the performer. While it appeared that the negative thoughts and feelings stimulated the sympathetic nervous system into motion, it was in fact this activation of the sympathetic nervous system which served to increase the negative thoughts and feelings of the pianists. "We are psychosomatic beings and many of the physiological rampages would not-and could not-occur could we but control the psychological elements involved-in other words, the *thinking* involved" (Martin, 1964, p. 100). The thoughts and feelings increased the physiological responses, which only served to compound the negative thoughts and feelings.

Body temperatures

Similar to other studies (D'Onofrio, 1981; McCoy, 1999; Salmon, Shook, Lombart and Berenson, 1995; Wesner, Noyes, and Davis, 1990), the majority of the participants experienced abnormal increases in bodily warmth and cold. The six pianists in this study reported hot and cold sensations as occurring solely in formal recital programs. However, the guitarists interviewed by D'Onofrio (1981), exhibited these symptoms in both formal recital programs, as well as informal performing venues, such as performing at church functions or informal

studio classes. One reason for such discrepancy may be the result of lack of exposure for the guitar students to formal performing opportunities.

Salmon, Shook, Lombart, and Berenson (1995) noted a similar divergence in their study. Of the 154 musicians surveyed, only 22 cited sweating as an anxiety symptom. Many of the pianists in this particular study related experiencing sweating during a performance. All six of the participating pianists in the present study participated in solo performing, often with several scheduled performances throughout the course of a year. Very few of the musicians in the Salmon et al. (1995) study were full-time soloists and over half did not engage in performing at all.

Muscular reactions

The participants' discomfort manifested itself in shaking and tension. The best performances seem to occur when a moderate amount of tension is present. When the emotional arousal becomes too high or too low, the performance quality is less satisfactory (Steptoe, 1983). It appeared as though the emotional arousal increased for the pianists to such a level that the quality of their performance deteriorated. As a result of the tension, the pianists claimed that they did not perform up to the standard they felt capable of reaching. Wesner, Noyes, and Davis (1990), in addressing performance stress factors, reported tension during

solo performances as being the most prevalent symptom of performance anxiety for the participants of their study.

While the pianists of this particular study searched for ways to eradicate the tension present in their playing, perhaps they should simply seek to modify the tension present. Steptoe (1983), in working with classical singers, assessed performance quality by presenting the participants with a series of cards and having the participants rank the cards according to the quality of their performance in each scenario presented. For the singers, when the amount of tension was either too little, or too great, the result was that the quality of their singing declined. However, when the tension present was somewhere in the middle, the best performance occurred. Therefore, it is possible to present a quality performance when there is a moderate amount of tension present.

Accelerated heart rate

A number of studies (Abel and Larkin, 1990; Craske and Craig, 1984; Ryan, 1998; Salmon, Shook, Lombart, and Berenson, 1995; and Tartalone, 1992) concluded that individuals experiencing performance anxiety exhibit an increased heart rate, and most of the participants of the present study reported an accelerated heart rate during performance.

Interestingly, only one of the present participants reported experiencing an increase in heart rate prior to the actual performance. This differs from the

findings of Abel and Larkin (1990), Craske and Craig (1984), Ryan (1998), and Tartalone (1992), each of whom recorded that individuals did experience an increase in heart rate prior to the performance. Such discrepancy may have arisen because these studies measured heart rate through a monitor, whereas the pianists in the present study were limited by self-report measures. It is possible that the participants were simply not aware of any such increases in heart rate outside of the performance situation, but did in fact experience an increase. This would be more in keeping with the above quoted research findings. However, it is possible that the six pianists interviewed for this particular study did not experience any performance anxiety until they were in the actual performing situation.

Utilization of Coping Strategies

All of the performers in this study used coping strategies, consisting of a combination of from eight to fourteen individual strategies, in an effort to reduce their musical performance anxiety. Performers employed these techniques both prior to, as well as during the performance. With a greater number of techniques available to an individual pianist, the performer did not have to depend solely on one specific strategy. The performers had other options to avail themselves of when and if one specific strategy was not successful in minimizing their level of anxiety. The pianists had no one particular coping strategy that worked consistently to decrease their musical performance anxiety. Rather than

eradicating the experience of performance anxiety, the use of coping strategies by the performers allowed the pianists to make their experience more manageable and less threatening. It seems probable that without so many available options to draw from, the pianists would have ceased performing as a result of their intense encounter with performance anxiety.

Relaxation techniques

All but one of the participants in this study engaged in relaxation techniques prior to performing. This supports the findings of other research utilizing relaxation techniques (McCoy, 1999; Salmon, Shook, Lombart, and Berenson, 1995; Steptoe, 1989).

While only one of the pianists in this study acknowledged any formal training in relaxation techniques, the remainder of the participants simply devised their own personal strategies of attempting to relax their bodies prior to performing. Studies evaluating the effectiveness of muscle relaxation (Nagle, Himle, and Papsdorf, 1989), and imagery (Stanton, 1994) included a systematic approach to such anxiety reduction techniques. The musicians were actually instructed in how to go about relaxing their muscles, as well as guided in how best to use imagery. In both of the studies, as a result of the exposure to the training sessions, there appeared a significant decrease in debilitating stage fright. Perhaps one of the reasons that the relaxation techniques were not as effective for the

participants of this particular study as they could have been was due to the lack of any type of formal training for the pianists.

Thorough preparation

Five of the six pianists used meticulous preparation, including clearly focused practice routines, as a technique to deal with musical performance anxiety. The majority of the five individuals employed multiple strategies under this category.

McCoy (1999) reported that the majority of the music students surveyed mentioned preparation and practice as a coping strategy. In a study by Bartel and Thompson (1994), the respondents considered music preparation as one of the most effective strategies in dealing with the inherent stress of performing. Unlike the present study, the two previously mentioned studies did not outline the actual steps taken in undertaking greater preparation. The participants of the current study elaborated on the specific strategies of preparation they engaged in prior to performing. Of the 154 musicians polled by Salmon, Shook, Lombart, and Berenson (1995), there was no reference made to preparation. One possible reason for the exclusion of preparation in the study by Salmon et al. (1995) could be that while participants did focus on preparation, preparation was not included in the list of interventions to choose from in their self-report questionnaire.

Focus

The majority of the participants mentioned trying to direct the focus of their attention as a way of dealing with performance anxiety. For the pianists, attempting to block out any distractions during a performance, and concentrate completely on the music, assisted them in not allowing the feelings of performance anxiety to take control over their performance.

Kendrick, Craig, Lawson, and Davidson (1982), in their study on the efficiency of attention training and behavior rehearsal, found that replacing negative and task-irrelevant thoughts during piano performance with positive, task-oriented thoughts were effective in reducing musical performance anxiety. Several of the pianists in the present study mentioned attempting to keep their thoughts positive, which seemed to increase their confidence level.

While multiple coping strategies were also employed in the studies by Bartel and Thompson (1994) and McCoy (1999), focusing on the music, to the exclusion of other extraneous factors, was indicated. Eighty-three percent used this strategy in Bartel and Thompson (1984), but only 30% found it to be an effective coping strategy. Such a low percentage perhaps points to the fact that concentrating on the music without combining such a strategy with another strategy is ineffective. The participants in this particular study also referred to trying to eliminate distracting thoughts during a performance.

Implications

As music educators, it is important to provide students with successful performing opportunities. Establishing such experiences for students at an early age will allow them to grow in their self-confidence as a performer. Since the pianists in this particular study all struggled with issues surrounding their self-confidence in their performances, providing positive experiences in the early stages could foster greater self-confidence in later years.

Several of the participants reported that although they struggled with performance anxiety, the issue was never addressed by any of their teachers. As a result, their encounters with performance anxiety increased and only became magnified. Students need to be assisted with this problem when and if it does occur. It is no longer acceptable to think that if we do not talk about it, the problem will go away. The analysis of the problem will help, not hinder, the musician in reckoning with the phenomenon. It would be valuable to devote time in the applied lesson to this topic, and the subject of performance anxiety should also be included as part of a curriculum for performance majors in music schools.

Performing musicians suffering from performance anxiety should take advantage of workshops geared towards stress reduction and relaxation techniques, including muscle relaxation training and imagery exercises. With the exception of one of the participants, none of the other five pianists ever received any formal training, or education, regarding such techniques. Such training might

facilitate a performer in better handling the inherent stress in performing. Moreover, learning how to relax the various parts of the body while performing should be an integral component of applied lessons, even at an early age. An ability to take such command will not only assist the pianist in dealing with physiological responses while performing, but could also prevent permanent physical damage to the playing apparatus.

Since a great deal of the attention of the performers in this particular study was directed towards the members of the audience, music educators should help the music student focus on the intrinsic value of playing the piano, rather than on any extrinsic gratification. Such a focus would assist the individual in relying less on the approval of others, which would also have an effect on their self-esteem.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are made for further research.

While the present study elicited coping mechanisms employed by the pianists, studies addressing the effectiveness of different relaxation techniques and treatment modalities could provide better insights into reducing musical performance anxiety. Studies which examine the specific components of anxiety: physiological, behavioral, or cognitive, and whether a certain type of individual is prone to one of these manifestations over another would be helpful. Since only

one of the performers acknowledged an accelerated heart rate prior to the actual performance, future studies might continue to explore whether an increase in heart rate precedes the actual performance and the degree of anticipatory anxiety. The results of such a study may help in indicating specific strategies for targeting performance anxiety prior to a performance.

The population examined in this particular study focused on professional musicians who served on the piano faculties of colleges and universities. Since none of the participants were full-time performers, further research studies might look to a comparison study comprised of professional musicians and various levels of student musicians, including those at an elementary level. Such a comparison study might afford an insight into the developmental aspect of performance anxiety, including the way in which performance anxiety relates to age, as well as perhaps determining the onset of performance anxiety. Further research may also seek to elicit coping strategies from full-time performing musicians who have learned to deal with performance anxiety effectively.

The present study was limited to musical performance anxiety without addressing more generalized anxiety. Therefore, future research may also include an assessment of state and trait anxiety to determine whether individuals suffering from musical performance anxiety may also be prone to either state or trait anxiety. Such a study might look to see whether individuals high in state anxiety are more likely to suffer from performance anxiety over individuals reporting high

trait anxiety. This assessment would serve to enlighten any relationship that exists between musical performance anxiety and more generalized anxiety.

Since only a small number of participants were used in this study in order to obtain greater in-depth information, further studies need to include a larger population in the hope of gathering more generalizable information.

Finally, ways to implement the topic of performance anxiety into the educational curriculum should be the focus of future research. None of the pianists related that this issue was ever addressed in their educational process. In discussing the topic more openly, perhaps the experience of performance anxiety will become a facilitating, rather than a debilitating experience for performing musicians. This implementation should not be limited to curriculum within a degree program, but also included as part of the applied lesson as well.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding into the experience of performance anxiety by examining the cognitions, feelings, physiological manifestations, and ways of combating performance anxiety as experienced by six professional pianists.

The symptoms of performance anxiety manifested themselves through a combination of thought processes, feelings, and physiological responses, activated by the perception of a threat by an individual. Under the three research questions,

the outcomes of this study are as follows: 1) Negative thoughts and feelings, over which the individual had no control, dominated the experience. These thoughts and feelings impacted the identity of the pianist. 2) Not only did the negative thoughts and feelings increase the physiological reactions, but the physiological reactions also served to increase the negative thoughts and feelings. 3) The pianists employed no one particular coping strategy to reduce their musical performance anxiety, but rather utilized multiple coping mechanisms.

The experience of performance anxiety not only left the individuals feeling vulnerable, but also impacted the identity of the performers. As a result, they began to question their identity both as a musician as well as a person.

In spite of all the negative thoughts and feelings experienced by the pianists, their love and passion for music, and sharing that gift of music with others, propelled them to continue to perform and seek ways to effectively minimize their musical performance anxiety.

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APPENDIX A

FACULTY LETTER

May 15, 2001

Joann Marie Kirchner
3104 West Rock Creek Road #207
Norman, OK 73072

Dear Faculty Member:

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Oklahoma. As part of my dissertation, I will be researching the nature of performance anxiety associated with solo piano playing and what that experience of performance anxiety feels like to a performing musician.

In order to obtain an insider's perspective of the phenomenon of performance anxiety, I will be conducting interviews in an attempt to tap into the feelings, thought processes, and emotions of people dealing with performance anxiety. If you experience performance anxiety in your professional career, please consider participating in this research project and returning the enclosed consent to participate form.

The researcher will attempt to arrive at a representative sample population and if you are chosen to participate you will be called. You will then be asked to complete a short survey questionnaire, which will take no more than twenty minutes of your time, as well as participate in one interview session, which will last approximately one to one and a half hours. These interviews will be audio-taped in order to obtain accurate data. The interview will be scheduled at your college or university at a mutually convenient time for both parties.

Your participation in this research project is a voluntary one. You may withdraw from the study at any point. All of the information obtained in our interviews together will be kept in a locked file cabinet, and will remain confidential within the limits of the law. The only people having access to any identifying information will be the researcher and the two co-chairs. A pseudonym will be given for you so that real names will not be disclosed.

If you are willing to participate, please enclose the completed consent to participate form in the self-addressed stamped envelope by June 8, 2001. If you have any questions about this project, please contact me at: (405) 292-9066, or my faculty advisors, Dr. Sara Beach at (405) 325-3590 or Dr. Jane Magrath at (405) 325-4681. If you have any questions as a research participant, please feel free to contact the Office of Research Administration at (405) 325-4757.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Joann Marie Kirchner
Doctoral Candidate, Music Education

APPENDIX B

FACULTY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESEARCH BEING CONDUCTED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA – NORMAN CAMPUS

I agree to take part in this research project involving solo piano playing. I have read the cover letter and realize what I will be asked to do, and understand that I am free to stop at any time during the study. I give my permission to be audio-taped, and understand that the information disclosed will remain confidential.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

_____

Email address: _____

Phone number where I can be reached: _____

Best time to contact me: _____

Best method of contact: Phone _____ E-mail _____

1) Please rate the degree to which you suffer from performance anxiety on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least amount of performance anxiety and 5 being the greatest amount of performance anxiety.

   1 2 3 4 5

2) Please circle the number of solo piano recitals you have performed over the course of your career. This may include a repeat performance of the same program.

   Less than 2 3-7 8 or more

3) Do you work with your students in helping them deal with performance anxiety?

   Yes _____ No _____

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Joann Marie Kirchner
3104 West Rock Creek Road #207
Norman, OK 73072

Dear Faculty Member:

A few weeks ago, you were asked to respond to a survey questionnaire concerning performance anxiety. I realize that the request was sent towards the end of the school year, and that the deadline may have been difficult to reach. Therefore, if you have not had an opportunity to respond to the survey questionnaire, please take the time to do so now. Your response is significant to the study.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate. Please feel free to contact me via phone at: 405-292-9066, or via email at: jkirchner@ou.edu., if you have any questions or comments.

Respectfully,

Joann Marie Kirchner
Doctoral Candidate, Music Education

APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Personal Information

1) What age were you when you performed in your first solo recital? _____

2) Education (Major, Year, Institution)

Bachelor's degree_____

Master's degree_____

Doctorate_____

Performance Experience

3) In the course of a year, how many performances do you give? _____

4) How many of those performances are as a soloist? _____

5) How many of those performances are chamber or orchestral? _____

6) How many of those performances are as an accompanist? _____

Teaching and Learning

7) In your position here at this particular college or university, what level(s) of student piano majors do you teach?

Undergraduate _____ Masters _____ Doctoral _____

8) How many years have you been teaching? _____

9) What professional development activity have you engaged in in your professional career? _____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PERFORMING FACULTY PIANISTS

PROSPECTIVE PERFORMANCE ANXIETY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PERFORMING FACULTY PIANISTS

1) Tell me about your performance anxiety.

   Possible probes depending upon the answer:

   - To what extent do you experience performance anxiety in your performances?
   - What does the experience of performance anxiety feel like?
   - What are your thoughts when you experience performance anxiety?
   - What are some of the physical manifestations of performance anxiety for you personally?
   - Does the degree/intensity of performance anxiety differ with different performances for you? For example, a solo performance versus a chamber performance, or a performance with an orchestra.
   - Is there a specific time within a given performance when you most often experience performance anxiety? If yes, when is that specific time?
   - What are some of the factors that contribute to an increase in performance anxiety for you?

2) How did performance anxiety evolve in your life?

   Possible probe:

   - What do you think is the cause of performance anxiety?

3) Think back to your last performance when you had performance anxiety. Talk me through the performance. Talk with me about what you were thinking and feeling from the time you were backstage.

Possible probes:

- What were your thoughts and feelings in the weeks...days...night before...the day of the performance?
- Did you have any fears, and if so, what was your biggest fear?

4) I am going to give you some situations and I would like you to talk with me about what that experience might be like for you.

- Imagine that you are half-way through the first piece. You have a memory slip in a difficult passage. How do you handle yourself at that point? What are your thoughts and feelings?
- You have finished your first piece, which went quite well. You are now into the second piece, and instead of playing the end of the Exposition, you accidentally jump to the ending of the Recapitulation. What are your thoughts?
- You have just returned to the stage from intermission. You begin the next piece, and suddenly your mind flashes to a difficult technical passage that is coming up. You wonder if you will be able to pull it off. Describe that experience for me.

5) Talk about the influence of the audience when you are performing.

6) In reflecting on your performances, especially those times in which performance anxiety was present, do you ever think of something that may have prevented such anxiety? What would you have liked to have done differently, if anything?

7) Describe some of the techniques that you use in working with some of your students that experience performance anxiety?

8) Throughout your teaching career, has there been one technique that you personally have found helpful in assisting students with their own performance anxiety? Please describe what that is.