



FACULTY OF
**VCA &
MCM**

Online Music Performance Skills Training Research Proposal

Anneliese Gill (MMus, PGradDipPsych)

Principal Supervisor: Dr Margaret Osborne
Co-supervisor: Professor Gary McPherson

The Faculty of Victorian College of the Arts and the
Melbourne Conservatorium of Music

The University of Melbourne

There are a number of skills identified through sports and performance psychology that can enhance performance or the ability of the performer to play their best under pressure. This course has been developed as a performance resource for students, teachers and music educators to enable the development of core performance skills to become a standard part of musical training, embedded into lessons and practice. The ultimate goal of the online program is not only to enhance performance but to take care of the well-being of the performer. Building these skills into musical training early on will help prepare young musicians to deal with the unique challenges and pressures that they will inevitably face as they progress with their musical studies.

Performance Skills Training Program

The program is a multi-faceted, broad performance skills training program designed to:

- be accessed online by schools, teachers and individuals;
- be sequential and systematic - skills are built in small steps and then combined to be used in conjunction with one another;
- present information in brief training modules that can be easily absorbed and implemented by students and teachers;
- develop self-awareness and self-assessment skills;
- use practical evidence-based strategies that can be easily incorporated into lessons and practice; and,
- offer teaching aids and resource materials (such as worksheets, manuals, audio recordings of key strategies, and performance practice aids) to facilitate skill development.

Target Skills

The target skills are developed using a combination of cognitive and behavioural strategies combined with performance skills techniques adapted from sports and performance psychology.

Participants will be instructed in the following areas:

Nerves or Performance Anxiety - why we experience nerves, the different ways they manifest, how they impact performances, reframing nerves and key strategies for regulating nerves (e.g. progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing exercises;

Pre-Performance Routines - the importance of developing a routine that helps the performer focus and switch into the right mindset. This involves developing a consistent set of thoughts and behaviours that the performer would execute right before their performance to switch them into an optimal mental and physical state;

Confidence – including internal and external sources of confidence, evaluating and rephrasing self-talk, cognitive restructuring techniques, becoming your own coach, and building confidence in all situations;

Stage Presence - making a confident appearance onstage, why first impressions are so important, and being aware of how our body language not only communicates with and influences others perceptions but also governs our own thoughts and feelings about ourselves. Acquiring or refining stage presence skills can increase confidence, courage, assertiveness, focus, and the ability to manage nerves and pressure.

Preparation - how to be more productive in practice, why practice alone is not enough, practicing to perform vs. practicing to learn and improve, what it takes to be ‘well prepared’, testing preparation:

Focus - what to think about when you perform, how to quiet unhelpful mental chatter, and how to focus through and past distractions; and,

Imagery - how this under-used skill can be used to improve preparation and technique, build confidence, and reduce anxiety

Program Overview

Confidence

Across all performance domains the most common finding is that confidence leads to success. When it comes to giving a musical performance a student’s belief in their ability to perform is critical to the outcome of the performance. This performance confidence is the strongest predictor of performance achievement regardless of a student’s ability, skill level, experience and time spent practicing. This relationship has been observed subjectively through self-ratings of performance and objectively through externally assessed performances. If students are going to reach their potential and play up to their ability when performing, then it is crucial to develop performance confidence. This program targets the factors that have been scientifically validated to influence performance confidence.

Fundamental to the program is the understanding that learning music and performing music are two entirely different processes that require very different skills. Students spend the vast majority of their time practicing to ‘learn and improve’. It’s just as critical that they ‘practice to perform’. Research shows that the key factor in building performance confidence is past performing experience, in particular ‘mastery experiences’ where the student has had positive outcomes or successful performing experiences. Typically, however, opportunities to perform are limited particularly in the more exacting performance situations such as exams and auditions. So ensuring that students have enough performance ‘mastery experiences’ to become confident performers requires extensive ‘performance practice’ in conjunction with the development of core performance

skills to make sure that the performer is experiencing success.

Program Elements

The program has a strong emphasis on ‘practicing to perform’ (simulation) and self-evaluation (of perceived and recorded performances), aiming to increase the number of mastery experiences and build confidence. Weekly class and home performance requirements ensure that students become more familiar with performing whilst developing the necessary coping skills. These also provide opportunities for teachers to observe how their students perform ‘under pressure’.

The program aims to develop confidence, psychological performance skills and performance preparation across six key areas: Confidence, Focus, Performance Simulation, Imagery, Pre-performance routines, MPA and arousal management. Each *topic* consists of a 3-5 sequential modules that need to be completed in the specified sequence. Modules are suitable for individual and group tuition.

The proposed program topics and modules are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Program Topics and Modules

Topic	Module	Description
Course Introduction	Module 1	Great performers Self-recording, self-evaluation and model recordings
MPA	Module 1	Understanding MPA
	Module 2	Developing an automatic relaxation response and breathing self-awareness
Focus	Module 1	Goal setting
	Module 2	Focussed attention in practice and performance
	Module 3	Dealing with Mistakes
Tuning-In	Module 1	Pre-performance routine key step: ‘hearing’ before playing.
	Module 2	Understanding and developing pre-performance routines
	Module 3	Mastering pre-performance routines under simulated performance conditions
Simulation	Module 1	Practising to perform and simulating performance elements.
	Module 2	Performance Routine: Entrance-to-Start simulation
Virtual Reality	Module 1	Introduction to Imagery
	Module 2	Keys to creating a successful visualisation

Topic	Module	Description
	Module 3	Using imagery to build confidence
	Module 4	Creating a <i>virtual reality</i> ideal performance
Confidence	Module 1	Stage Presentation: key elements and importance of first impressions
	Module 2	Body Language and Power Posing
	Module 3	Distinguishing between external/internal sources of confidence Evaluating self-talk
	Module 4	Rephrasing self-talk
	Module 5	Irrational beliefs and detrimental thought patterns Learning and rehearsing positive self-statements for performance scenarios

The proposed schedule of topics and modules is outlined in Table 2. Each week introduces one to two new modules building on previous skills and knowledge. The performance skills developed throughout the course are designed to complement standard musical training and are built step-by-step with weekly performance activities incorporated into classes and home practice.

Table 2. Weekly Course Outline

Week	Topic	Module	Sub-Topic	Video Length
Week 1	Course Introduction	Module 1	Course Introduction Self-Evaluation	6 min
	Focus	Module 1	Goal Setting (SMART)	7 min
Week 2	MPA	Module 1	MPA Tension	10 min
Week 3	MPA	Module 2	Breathing	7 min
Week 4	Confidence	Module 1	Self-talk	5 min
	Confidence	Module 2	Rephrasing Self-Talk	5 min
Week 5	Focus	Module 2	Focussed Attention	6 min
Week 6	Tuning-In	Module 1	Pre-Performance Routine	6 min
Week 7	Tuning-In	Module 2	Pre-Performance Routine	17 min
Week 8	Simulation	Module 1	Performance Variables/ Situation	5 min
	Focus	Module 2	Dealing with Mistakes	8 min
Week 9	Simulation	Module 2	Entrance-to-Start	7 min

Week	Topic	Module	Sub-Topic	Video Length
	Confidence	Module 3	Stage Presence	8 min
Week 10	Tuning-In	Module 3	Pre-Performance Routine	5 min
	MPA	Module 3	Breath Awareness	3 min
Week 11	Confidence	Module 4	Self-Coach Manual	10 min
Week 12	Confidence	Module 5	Power Pose	7 min
	Virtual Reality	Module 1	Imagery	9 min
Week 13	Virtual Reality	Module 2	Visualisation	5 min
	Virtual Reality	Module 3	Visualisation	5 min
Week 14	Virtual Reality	Module 4	Visualisation	10 min

*MPA – Music Performance Anxiety

The program is designed to be completed over two school terms which typically cover 18-20 weeks of the school year. This should allow ample time for program completion which may be interrupted by unscheduled breaks such as illness, absence, school excursions etc.

Module Structure

Each module includes a:

- **Preparation Guide:**
The preparation guide lists the activities that need to be completed *prior* to the lesson.
- **Video:**
Most modules include a brief video to watch online. The video introduces the new skill or strategy, why it is important, and how to implement it. Students watch the video at home as part of their weekly practice in preparation for discussion and follow-up in their next class. Teachers can choose to view the video or read the script via the web link provided.
- **Resource list:**
The resource list informs participants about the equipment and resources (e.g. worksheets to be printed) needed to support the learning of that particular module in class and in practice.
- **List of Activities:**
Each module includes activities and worksheets designed to help students practise, develop, refine and strengthen key performance skills. These can be completed in class and/or in home practice as indicated. Completing the set worksheets will enable participants to;
 - get the most out of each module; and,
 - keep track of their efforts so that they can see the progress that they are making.
- **Teacher Lesson Plan:**
The lesson plan outlines discussion points, activities for implementing and developing the skills or techniques introduced and the goals/aims for class

performances.

- List of Goals for home practice:

Each module outlines the goals for home practice. These include:

- watching the video and completing the set activities in preparation for their next lesson;
- recording and evaluating a home performance; and,
- continued refinement and development of specific performance skills.

A progressive Practice Goals Planner allows teachers and students to plan, schedule and keep track of these activities in their practice sessions.

Equipment

Many of the activities require participants to self-record performances. Teachers and participants will need access to an iPad, iPhone or some form of audiovisual recording equipment in class and home practice.

Teachers and students will also need access to a computer or iPad to view the online videos.

Student Involvement

The program for students is designed to be embedded into their normal musical training. Students will be required to watch weekly online tutorials (10-20 mins per week) at home and then complete specific activities that are incorporated into their music lessons and home practice. Most of the class activities will take 10 -15 minutes per week to complete. After the completion of each module students will also be required to complete a brief evaluation form indicating whether the module has helped them to learn productive coping strategies, improve their performance preparation and help them feel more positive about performing. Students will also provide feedback on the content and delivery of the course (Appendix A).

Teacher Involvement

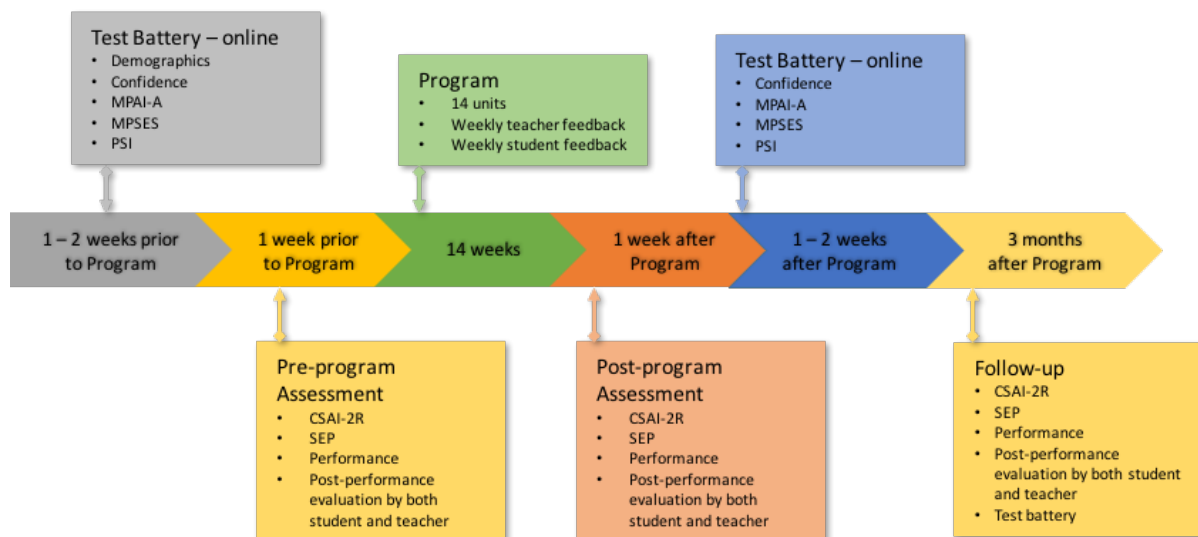
Teachers will be required to oversee the delivery of the program, guide the development of skills during music classes and set weekly goals for home practice. This will involve:

- Completing 20-30 minutes of lesson preparation per week including watching (or reading the script of) the weekly tutorials (10-20min), studying the weekly lesson plan outlining goals and activities and completing other preparatory tasks as indicated (preparing recordings, printing set worksheets etc.);
- Implementing the set activities during lessons; and,
- Completing a weekly feedback form documenting program delivery and providing feedback on various aspects of the course (ease of delivery, relevance of activities, student engagement etc.) which will be used to improve the content and delivery of the online course (Appendix B).

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to the delivery of the online performance skills training program participants will complete an online test battery consisting of 4 questionnaires as part of a group questionnaire session. They will also give a short (3-5min) solo performance on a separate occasion in front of a small audience completing two brief questionnaires immediately prior (15 minutes) to this performance. Following each performance students and teachers will complete a post-performance evaluation (Appendix C). The same data collection procedure will be followed post-program and at follow-up. Teachers and students will also be required to submit program feedback online after the completion of each module.

Data Collection Timeline



Course Delivery

The course will be delivered online. Each week of the program will require a separate login passcode. Participants will be provided with each week's passcode once the feedback forms have been submitted (online) from the previous week.

Appendix A

Student Feedback Form

Student's Name: _____ Email: _____

Please indicate which activities you completed for this week of the program

Watched module video and fully completed worksheet	☐
Watched module video and partially completed worksheet	☐
Watched module video but did not complete any activity from the worksheet	☐
Did not watch module video but completed worksheet	☐
Did not watch module video but partially completed worksheet	☐
Did not watch module video and did not complete any activity from the worksheet	☐
I completed a home performance practice	☐
I completed a performance review	☐

Please indicate (by circling the appropriate number) how much you agree with the following statements following completion of this week modules.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
I feel more positive about performing solo to an audience	1	2	3	4	5
I feel my performing experiences will improve	1	2	3	4	5
I learnt at least one productive coping strategy from this module that I can use in my next performance	1	2	3	4	5
I developed knowledge about... (module specific)	1	2	3	4	5
I became more aware of...(module specific)					
This module (<i>name specific module</i>) was easy to understand	1	2	3	4	5
The strategies introduced in this module were easy to apply in my practice	1	2	3	4	5

What did you like / not like about the content and delivery of the module?

I liked...

I did not like...

Any other comments?

Appendix B

Teacher Feedback Form

Please indicate the discussion points and activities completed in class

Set Smart Goals

☐

Activities.....(module specific)

☐

Discussion of...(module specific)

☐

Performance

With evaluation

☐

Without evaluation

☐

How relevant or useful was this module?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not relevant										Very Relevant

What did you like / not like about the content and delivery of the module?

I liked...

I did not like...

Any other comments?

Appendix C

Performance Evaluation: Student Self-Assessment

NB The Teacher Performance Evaluation form is exactly the same but omits Part 2.

Please complete this questionnaire immediately following your solo performance without discussion with your teacher.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Please indicate how you felt you played in the performance you just gave for each of the musical components listed below by circling the appropriate number below each statement.

1. Note accuracy (and accuracy of intonation if relevant to your instrument).

Needs Attention				Satisfactory				Excellent		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. Tone quality (overall control, warmth, clarity and consistency).

Needs Attention				Satisfactory				Excellent		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. Musical Interpretation (musicianship and presentation of all musical ideas such as phrasing, tempo, style and dynamics).

Needs Attention				Satisfactory				Excellent		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. Rhythmic accuracy (steadiness of beat and accuracy of the printed rhythms).

Needs Attention				Satisfactory				Excellent		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. Technique and Articulation (precision of marked articulations and appropriate interpretations of markings).

Needs Attention				Satisfactory				Excellent		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Part 2

Please indicate how pleased you were with your achievement in this performance by circling the appropriate number below

- If you felt really pleased with this performance, then select a number towards the upper end of the scale.*
- If you felt that this performance was just ok, then select a number in the mid-range of the scale.*
- If you felt displeased with this performance, then select a number towards the lower end of the scale.*

A rating of 7+ indicates that you felt pleased enough with this performance for it to be heard in public in front of an audience.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Unhappy with this performance				OK			Extremely pleased			