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Research Project

'In what ways can student string musicians deepen their emotional connection to their music through the use of physical release exercises and a selection of Stanislavski's emotional recall acting techniques?'

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Abstract

This research explored in what ways student string musicians can deepen their emotional connection to their music through using physical release exercises and a selection of Stanislavski's emotional recall acting techniques. There is limited research regarding techniques musicians can use to build an emotional connection to their music and even less related specifically to trainee string musicians. Moreover, there was a lack of literature exploring how Stanislavski's techniques for actors could be adapted to suit musicians. This research took place in a conservatoire setting with three string players, who took part in four workshops over four weeks, using a range of techniques to establish and deepen emotional connection. Data was collected from pre and post-questionnaires and post-interviews. This research showed the importance of self-awareness in the process of emotionally connecting with the music and how public performances could affect this connection. By relaxing and using their imagination and memories, participants could dig into their emotional connection and use these techniques in a wider perspective. Although some obstacles were identified, students and music teachers could gain in learning more about physical release exercises and Stanislavski's emotional recall acting techniques. Ultimately, it appeared that they could all benefit from developing a better communication with each other in the matter of emotions.

Literature review

Introduction:

The role of expressiveness in music has always intrigued musicologists and music theorists. Indeed, it could be argued that musicians share a particular connection with the emotions, and expressiveness is an essential aspect of musical meaning (Hatten and Robinson, 2012). One theory defines musical expressiveness as 'appearance emotionalism' (Hatten and Robinson, 2012, p.74). Indeed, emotions expressed by music are only experienced as 'resembling' human expression of emotions (Hatten and Robinson, 2012, p.74). Thus, the composer, the performer or even the audience would receive a semblance of emotion without feeling the actual emotion itself. (Hatten and Robinson, 2012). On the contrary, another theory asserts that musical expressiveness corresponds to 'a persona in the music' (Hatten and Robinson, 2012, p.77). This statement supports the idea that musical expressiveness can be defined as 'the genuine expression of genuine emotion in an imagined persona' (character) (Hatten and Robinson, 2012, p.74). Whatever music performers play, they would engage in an 'act of impersonation' that gives meaning to the music (Hatten and Robinson, 2012, p.77). Thus, they would literally connect with the persona's emotions and express emotions of characters musically described in a score.

By referring to both theories of expressiveness, the application of emotional connection to the music can be described as followed: the musician's ability to musically embody the 'persona' and to communicate its emotions to the audience. For the purpose of this research, musicians are considered as emotionally connected when they are connected with emotions that are conveyed by the music. On the contrary, they are considered as emotionally *disconnected* when they do not have access to these emotions.

As they connect, musicians engage in a process of 'internalizing the feeling for music or music learning' (Cantwell, Holbrook, and St George, 2014, p. 272). It gives a sense of meaning to their practice and encourages them to stay committed to a long and fruitful learning journey. Moreover, it is the musician's role to be able to introduce the audience to a

'living experience', by delivering an expressive performance (Fletcher, 1959, p.39). Being the spokesperson of a composer, good musicians make sure that the emotional content can be transmitted to the audience. Then, it can be argued that in order to play with expressiveness, performers have to connect to the music at first.

This literature review will explore research concerning how musicians are trained to emotionally connect, the challenges of emotional connection during performance, techniques developed by Konstantin Stanislavski to help actors emotionally connect and the impact of physical release and relaxation on emotional connection.

Musician Training in relation to Emotional Connection

The concept of emotional connection requires musicians to reflect on the emotions of the music. This notion of reflection refers to emotional intelligence which is described as follows: 'the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions' (Mayer and Salovey, 1990, p.189). Thus, by using emotional intelligence in connection to the music, three different stages can be defined: the awareness of the emotional content of the music played (persona), the appropriation of this information and the ability to express emotions in the performance. This section focuses on the first two stages.

Researchers have already worked on different strategies to help students to develop their emotional connection to the music. These methods can be divided in three categories: 'aural modelling, giving concrete verbal/written instructions, giving verbal instruction using imagery and metaphor' (Johnson, 2007, p.70). Whatever is the level, teachers can encourage emotional connection to the music by giving 'verbal instruction; using emotions as a means of organizing and scaling deviations in tempo, pitch, articulation, and dynamics; explicit planning, listening to models' (Durairaj, Magann and Rosenthal, 2009, p.38). However, one method seems to be particularly efficient: the use of imaginary/metaphors in order to reproduce and remember the physical sensations and energy used to produce an 'expressive performance' (Durairaj, Magann and Rosenthal, 2009, p.47). Grooms Johnson (2007) confirms that using imagery in the research of emotional connection has a significant impact on the performance

and engagement of the students' creativity. However, her research is limited to advanced/competent pianists. Thus, there is a gap in this research, as we do not know how the use imagery could help string instrumentalists to deepen their emotional connection with the music they play. According to Brenner and Strand (2013, p.94), developing creativity which implies a 'personal decision-making through the use of imagination' is also really important as it helps musicians to connect with their emotions. However, little research has been carried out regarding adults/young adults and this constitutes a gap.

It appears that pedagogical tools already exist to support learners in their research of an expressive performance. However, these tools are not prioritised in training. Indeed, though further research is required, music training easily puts aside the importance of emotional connection to the music. There are two different aspects to this problem. First, arguably, performers tend to re-produce the appearance of this emotion without having felt or truthfully connected to it. This is different from a performer remembering a genuine, truthful emotional experience and connecting to that through training. Secondly, according to Fletcher (1959), music education has suffered from two different tendencies: teaching music in a very intellectual way (separating music theory and music practice) and teaching music by focusing on the technique/ 'gymnastic'. Therefore, these two tendencies would marginalise the expressive part of music and students can feel emotionally disconnected from what they play. This is particularly true for string instrumentalists. Indeed, the specificities of string instruments can constitute an extra challenge: one of the main difficulties of string instruments is to play with good posture and appropriate movement and energy (Jacobs, 1970). Arguably this results in a learning process which focuses on intellectual and physical aspects, rather than emotional connection. However, further research would be needed in order to know how the current teaching model fosters the balance between the technical and emotional aspects of practicing and performing.

Musician Performance in relation to Emotional Connection

According to Brenner and Strand (2013, p.85), expressive technical skills constitute the 'physical flexibility and connection to the instrument' and are a crucial point in building an emotional connection to the music in front of an audience. Thus, in case of a successful emotional connection during a performance, musicians 'make connections with their body/instrument' (Brenner and Strand, 2013, p.85).

In the case of an unsuccessful emotional connection, the musician's state of mind can be at the core of the problem. Playing publicly can represent a challenge for musicians, especially those affected by musician performance anxiety (Sieger, 2017). In this case, nervousness is enhanced by the musician focusing on the audience: the emotional connection to the music is neglected (Sieger, 2017). Expressive technical skills seem to be affected by this negative emotional response. Thus, it seems that the specificities of public performance have not being considered during the 'emotional connection' training: negative feelings (fear, apprehensions) have not been approached during the process. It seems that how best to use a positive state of mind to support emotional connection has not been explored yet. This constitutes a gap in research literature.

Stanislavski Emotional Recall Technique

For Stanislavski, the sense of truth is the key so that the actors and the audience believe in the performance (Stanislavski, 2017). In order to achieve this 'truth', actors are encouraged to master the emotional recall technique (Stanislavski, 2017, p.220). Used in combination with the dramatic situation of the play/exercise (also called given circumstances), actors build an emotional connection to their character and invite the audience to believe in the performance.

Stanislavski's definition of **emotion memory** or **emotional recall** is as follows:

> 'The actor's personal memories which arise spontaneously as he explores the dramatic situation, or which are consciously evoked to strengthen the natural reactions' (Stanislavski, 2017, p.714).

According to this definition, actors tap into their personal emotional library as they use the technique. It means recalling their own experience or 'second-hand' experiences as gained from museums, books, galleries, film, television, professional experiences, rehearsals (Merlin, 2014, p.155). Actors use their sense memory in order to establish this recall. By processing this way, they can 'deeply connect to their stored emotions' (Westbrook, 2008). Thus, this search for deep connection to a character starts by reconnecting to their own selves. Moreover, emotional recall manifests itself in a context of given circumstances/dramatic situation, involving the use of imagination (Merlin, 2014, p.155). By defining objectives and wants, actors can tap into their memory to connect the imaginary situation with the feelings they have already experienced. Thus, actors are trained to use imagination and memories so that emotions emerge from imaginary circumstances (Gillett, 2014, p.131). This second aspect of the technique reinforces the process of emotionally connecting with a character

Although there is a wealth of research into techniques actors can use to emotionally connect, there is little research into how these techniques can be adapted for musicians. It could be argued that these techniques would help musicians to tap into their imagination and memories in order to emotionally connect with the music they play.

The impact of physical release work on emotional connection

For strings instrumentalists, having to deal with technical problems (their posture, playing on tune, producing a beautiful sound) can create a distance between them and the music they play. Thus, music students need to find a way to improve their expressive skill by developing the 'physical flexibility between the body and the instrument in relation to musical structure, emotions and sensations' (Brenner and Strand, 2013, p.94). The influence of physical relaxation on the performance has already been demonstrated. According to music teachers, 'physical freedom" [is] central to all musical expression' (Brenner and Strand, 2013, p.93-94). Activities such as meditation or other mindfulness practice help musicians to manage their emotions and to be more present as they play (Cockey, 2008). However, it seems that research

about physical release exercises and how they could help musicians to deepen their emotional connection with the music they play is very limited.

Conclusion

Musicians have developed different methods in order to build an emotional connection with the music they played: using emotions as a means of organizing and scaling deviations in tempo, pitch, articulation, and dynamics; technical expressive skills, creativity. However, the research on this matter seems limited, as there is no evidence that using imagery would benefit string instrumentalists specifically. Moreover, it seems that there is a lack of knowledge on how musicians can balance the technical and expressive aspects of their practice during their training session. In a performance context, it is unknown whether developing their physical freedom and their imagination, adult string musicians could manage negative feelings and sustain their emotional connection with the music they play. Although Stanislavski's emotional acting techniques have demonstrated their efficiency in the matter of building emotional connection for actors, no research has been conducted to find out the relevance of this method whilst applied by music students. Plus, research demonstrates that physical release exercises help musicians to improve their performance, but we do not know what the impacts of this work on emotional connection might be. As a result, this research will explore the following question: in what ways can adult string musicians deepen their emotional connection to their music through the use of physical release exercises and a selection of Stanislavski's emotional recall acting techniques?

Methodology and Ethics Approval

Professional context and learning environment

The research took place in a UK Conservatoire, Higher Education, with the support of the Strings Department and the BMus Department. Students participated to this research on the basis of non-probability sampling: purposive sampling (string musicians in Bachelor) and volunteer sampling (people willing to take part in the research). The number of participants was a small cohort of three people.

Professional goas aimed at addressing current problems

As highlighted in the literature review, string instrumentalists in a Bachelors programme can struggle to build an emotional connection with the music played in order to deliver an expressive performance. As they were still working on developing their technique and solving difficulties specific to the instrument, they 'forgot' to take in consideration the emotional content of the music, separating the technique from expressivity. That situation could prevent musicians emotionally connecting with their music. By using some physical release exercises and a selection of Stanislavski's emotional recall techniques, music students explored a new way to get access to their emotions and this training might help them to approach musicality from another perspective.

By participating to this research, it was anticipated that participants would discover other approaches to explore their emotional connection to the music. Ultimately, they would feel more confident and creative during their practice and as they perform in front of an audience. It was anticipated that the outcomes of this research would build a range of new teaching and learning practices for music tutors, which can be used to improve their knowledge of expressivity in music. The researcher would benefit from this project by developing a better knowledge of emotional connection in general.

Brief overview of the intervention itself

Four workshops of 1 hour and 30 minutes. Two were centred on the training aspect of the emotional connection to the music, and the final two on the performing aspect. Participants were invited to bring one or two pieces they would like to work on

The workshops focussed on the development of physical and emotional awareness of the participants. Each lesson began with a group exercise to build trust and confidence. And enable participants to connect with their own body. Then visualization and emotional recall exercises were used to support the participant to connect with their physical sensations and explore their emotions. Finally, music instruments were included in the process of "connection". (See Appendix IX for lesson plans)

Evaluation tools

Due to the small number of participants, the research was influenced by case study methodology, with the three participants comprising the case.

Sharan Merriam defined a case as 'a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries and it can be a person, a program, a group, a specific policy and so on' (Yazan, 2015, p.148). These principles of case study were relevant due to the research aim of exploring participants' individual experiences, personal reactions, emotional connections and to gathering rich, deep data in order to do that. Thus, the evaluation was designed to emphasize each participant's journey. Data gathering happened at the beginning (questionnaire) and at the end of the intervention (questionnaire + interviews). Based on the nature of the research question (exploring emotions, small cohort), a mixed methods approach was taken, with qualitative methods prioritised.

1) Questionnaires

The same questionnaires were given to the students at the beginning and at the end on the intervention. Thus, participants' evolution was assessed by comparing both questionnaires. They were composed of closed questions using Likert scale responses (gathering quantitative data) and open questions to explore more deeply participants' views on, and experience to date, of developing emotional connection to their music (gathering qualitative data) (See Appendix V). Questionnaires were kept anonymous.

2) Interviews

In order to assess the impact of the intervention on the participant's playing, students were invited to an interview at the end of the intervention. The researcher informed the students that they were free to decline or to withdraw at any moment. Semi-structured questions were asked, providing qualitative information: these questions allowed to dig deeper into the themes emerging from the questionnaires and were based on the actual activities of the intervention. These interviews were also an opportunity to explore anything that was striking / surprising with the participants. In order to collect the data, the discussion was recorded. All data collected remained confidential and identities were anonymised in any documentation produced for submission (See Appendix VI).

In addition, researcher's observations were used in order to give more in-depth understanding to the participant's comments.

Analysis

Questionnaires were analysed first. The same questions were asked at the beginning and at the end of the intervention. Therefore, the researcher directly compared the baseline and end measurement with the quantitative data: this data were analysed by using descriptive statistic techniques. The researcher analyzed the responses to the open questionnaire using thematic

analysis - and compared the results with themes which emerged from the *pre-intervention* questionnaires (Clarke & Braun, 2013). This same technique of resource coding and developing themes was used for analysing data from the interviews: the researcher transcribed the aural information from the recording in order to analyse data from each participant. By using these methods, the researcher could dig into the participant's subjectivity and perception. As this research explored personal connections between the participants and their music, these methods helped the researcher to discover how each learning journey was impacted by this intervention.

Pitfalls / Bias/ Risks in methodology

- Participant bias. As the research took place with a small group, explored issues of emotional connection and prioritised an atmosphere of trust, it could be imagined that participants may become biased in providing answers they think the researcher wants to hear. This risk is reduced for the questionnaire process, as identity are kept anonymous. However, before participants fulfil the questionnaires, the researcher will remind them that there is no "good" or "bad" answer.

- Researcher bias. In collecting data, a set of semi-open questions were designed for the questionnaires and the interviews in order to avoid "leading" questions. In analysing data, the researcher could also show bias. In order to mitigate this pitfall, the researcher always tried to remain alert to bias and reflect on the process and findings as neutrally as possible. The researcher was aware that all research outcomes were valid and useful to inform future work, and made a conscious effort to look for data which contradicted expected outcomes, as well as confirmed them.

Ethical considerations

Using emotional connection exercises with students not familiar with this way of working involved some ethical issues. Despite the focus on positive emotions, some exercises could trigger unexpected, negative emotions for participants. This pitfall was mitigated by focussing on positive emotions, informing participants of the content of the lesson at beginning and reiterating that participants can decide to withdraw at any point. Moreover, oral consent was regularly asked, and trust/respect was prioritised during the workshops. Participants were ensured support services in place, aware of and signposted to RCS support and counselling services, should they need them (See Appendix II and VII).

Project Evaluation

Results and Discussion

Three violinists/students participated in fours workshops as part of this research on emotional connection: Lea, Daisy and Meghan. Before the intervention, it appeared that each participant had their own gaps to fulfil in terms of improving their emotional connection to the music they play. Their learning journeys are described below. As this research was influenced by aspects of case study methodology, the Results section focuses on each participant's personal reaction: their perception, their feelings and personal connection to the music they play. This data come from two questionnaires (pre-intervention and post intervention) and post intervention interviews and mostly represent qualitative data. They were analysed using thematic analysis. In the Discussion of Results, these findings were compared to the literature review in order to understand how well this study responded to the research question.

Participants' names were changed for reasons of anonymity.

I/ Results

The following tables were part of the questionnaires the participants answered to, before and after the intervention. They reflect the participants' evolution from the beginning to the end of the process.

Table 1, survey **before** the workshop:

Questions:	Lea	Daisy	Meghan
Currently, how successfully do you think you are able to make an emotional connection to your music, on a scale of 1-5 with: 1- I really struggle to make an emotional connection to the music I play; 5- I find it really easy to make an emotional connection to the music I play.	**3**	**2**	**3.5**
Currently, to what extent do you feel you have techniques to build an emotional connection to your music, on a scale of 1-5 with: 1- I have no techniques at all to use; 5- I have a wide variety of techniques to use.	**2**	**1**	**2.5**

Table 2, survey **<u>after</u>** the workshops:

Questions:	Lea	Daisy	Meghan
Currently, how successfully do you think you are able to make an emotional connection to your music, on a scale of 1-5 with: 1- I really struggle to make an emotional connection to the music I play; 5- I find it really easy to make an emotional connection to the music I play.	**4**	**4**	**4.5**
Currently, to what extent do you feel you have techniques to build an emotional connection to your music, on a scale of 1-5 with: 1- I have no techniques at all to use; 5- I have a wide variety of techniques to use.	**4**	**4**	**4**

As we can see in this chart, each participant seemed to have improved their emotional connection with the music they play as they have developed new techniques to establish this connection. The results are explored below in relation to themes emerging from analysis of data. Common themes emerged from this analysis, but some discrepancies could be witnessed.

Participant 1: Lea

Lea only participated in two workshops. The theme *the impact of audience on emotional connection* did not emerge as she did not properly explore this issue during the intervention.

Connection to Self, relaxation and the power of the mind

Pre-intervention, Lea recognized the importance of emotional connection and 'meaning' with regards to her music. She could express the story of the music 'much better if [she is] emotionally connected'. There was evidence that she already had some techniques in order to build this connection, 'listening to the piece a lot', thinking about 'what it made [her] feel'…

Post-intervention, there was a realisation that music could resonate with her own life. '[She] can find meaning in the music, like finding story, something [she] can relate to'. Based on the teacher's observations, this notion of usefulness of connection to self was clearly illustrated by Lea's response to the visualisation exercise with the ball, the breathing work and activities done without the violin. As she relaxed her muscles and closed her eyes to really connect with her physical sensations, it appeared that she was ready to establish an emotional connection with her music.

Moreover, Lea referred to the importance of finding a 'peace of mind'. 'If I am not in the right state of mind, then I won't be able to perform well. I didn't realize that before'. This is confirmed by the teacher's observations as the visualization exercises seemed to help the student to feel more relaxed.

In relation to the imagination of the mind, Lea found various Stanislavski exercises effective (for example: connecting with objects without seeing). By focusing on what was positive and on what she wanted to express through the music, she realized how it 'really affected [her] music and how [she] performs'.

Talking about feelings and emotions…building deeper connections with teachers

Pre-intervention, developing a good communication seemed important for Lea. She argued that, 'as performing music is really related to emotions and the human way of expression', students should be encouraged to build 'deeper connections with [their] teachers'.

Post-intervention, she confirmed her position on the importance of communication with the music teachers during this learning process, 'sometimes insight on what made our teacher understand the music better would be much appreciated.' Thus, she asked her teacher if her final recital could be 'a little bit more personal' and represent 'little bit more the journey [she] had as a musician and a third-culture kid' (she grew up in a culture different from the one in which her parents grew up).

Obstacles / Challenges to using these techniques

Post-intervention, Lea found these workshops definitely helpful. She wanted to practice more some of the techniques in order to improve her performances. 'There was no bad impact, just good impact.'

However, she admitted that she faced some challenges that emerged from some exercises. When she was asked to switch from connected to disconnected in relation to her physical sensations, the instructions were difficult for her to follow. It was 'too hard' to connect to herself as external stimuli invaded her mind (the music from the speakers)". Even if the method itself was really relaxing, she also perceived that 'lack of time and energy' or an unavailable mindset could prevent her from practicing these techniques. She felt that she 'couldn't do anything more after the session.'

Participant 2: Daisy

The impact of audience on emotional connection

Pre-intervention, Daisy said that her level of openness to emotional connection during a public performance depended on her relationship to the audience. She 'gained such trust to [her] teacher that [she] felt free to share her musical expression with her'. However, she felt 'extremely uncomfortable' whilst playing in front of her peers.

Post-intervention, she perceived a development in her ability to build an emotional connection to the music in front of an audience. She still felt 'not super comfortable', but she noticed a change in a 'good direction'. By building an emotional connection with her music, Daisy noticed that she enjoyed more the present moment as she plays for herself or in front of others. 'It just makes me happy to play. (…) I think more about what shapes I want to show, what images I have in my head'.

Connection to Self, relaxation and the power of the mind

Pre-intervention, Daisy had no proper technique to establish and keep an emotional connection to the music she plays (as shown on **Table 1**).

Post-intervention, it appeared that Daisy improved her confidence in the process of building emotional connection. She discovered how 'to have [her] own space and not to worry about what other people may think at that moment', during a performance. According to Daisy, some relaxation exercises helped her to be 'in the moment with the violin' (for example, the ball exercise). 'That helped me, may be not to connect with the music itself but it helped me to be able then to connect because I was not so stressed about all of the outside world'. According to her, building an emotional connection to the music simplified her playing, 'It's easier to play when you are not focusing that much on the technical side'.

Imagination and Memory

Post-intervention Daisy said that some Stanislavski exercises helped her to reconnect with herself (for example, the exercise of remembering happy memories). She could connect with some 'nice melodies' or passages from her concerto (Mendelssohn). According to Daisy, it was really helpful to use imagination and memories to emotionally connect to the music she played, 'we forget that we still need to imagine things, as when we are kids. Until this year I never thought about it again.' She saw herself using more her imagination in her music practice in relation to building more emotional connection with the music. She had already begun by 'imagining things' as she tried 'to make phrases.'

Talking about feelings and emotions…building deeper connections with teachers

Pre-intervention, Daisy admitted that she struggled sometimes to understand what her teacher's instructions on building emotional connection. 'Oh, you need to have more emotions here', 'be quieter' or 'shape this phrase like this' did not help her to find the emotional connection she was looking for.

Post-intervention, she was more willing to challenge clarification from her teacher. 'I talked with her about when she told me that this piece should be played as if I was holding a baby and I said: 'Yes, but I have never held a baby' and she said 'Oh did I say that? Okay, it makes sense that you didn't get that because you never had a baby'.

Obstacles / Challenges to using these techniques

Post-intervention, Daisy said that she definitely saw herself using these techniques in the future and already had. However, she would like to adapt some exercises and make them more relevant to her practice. She could 'change those methods a little bit' (for example, the exercise where she imagined herself embodying different ages).

Daisy mentioned also the difficulty to keep on doing with this practice in her everyday practice routine by 'lack of time' or because of 'forgetting the meaning' of these exercises.

Participant 3: Meghan

The impact of audience on emotional connection

Pre-intervention, Meghan always tried to tell 'a story' that revealed the emotional content of the music and how it made her feel. However, external circumstances could influence her emotional connection to the music. When she played for people she cared, she felt like it could be 'sometimes harder' than playing in front of strangers, she 'should change something in [her] performance' based on external reactions.

Post-intervention, Meghan asserted that it was much easier for her to focus on her emotional connection to the music. '[She] could focus on what [she] really wanted to say' instead of "miscellaneous things, very little things that could easily distract [her].'

Connection to Self, relaxation and the power of the mind

Pre-intervention, Meghan already had some techniques that allowed her to emotionally connect with the music she played: 'breathing exercises', 'relaxation exercises' … Plus, it appeared that she had a good communication with her teacher. When needed, it helped her to reconnect with her 'feelings', to retrieve the emotional bond with the music she played.

Post-intervention, Meghan said emotional connection to her music could be established with her being at peace in a context of performing. She found techniques that help to feel even 'calmer' (for example, 'safe space' exercise, 'imagining a roof [she can] feel safe under') than when she used exercises she already knew. In this state of relaxation, she felt 'a deeper connection with [her] inner self', it was much easier for her to 'focus on what [she] really [feels] when [she plays]'.

Imagination and Memory

Pre-intervention, Meghan already tapped into her imagination in order to establish a connection with the music she played. She used to 'hear the beginning of a performance, before playing' in front of the audience.

Post-intervention, Meghan discovered new ways to tap into her imagination, by exploring her senses. She said that the safe space exercise helped her to 'imagine her performance', adding the 'imaginary sound' and 'visualizing the moves and how [she] would feel on stage'. After doing these exercises, she commented that they helped her to 'improve [her] creativity' and her ability to see the big picture of a piece, 'I could see the whole performance from the beginning to the end as a whole piece of events'.

Obstacles and Challenges to using these techniques

Post-intervention, Meghan indicated a desire to explore Stanislavski and relaxation techniques further in order to improve her emotional connection. However, she admitted that 'time' or 'forgetting these exercises' might be an obstacle to this.

Moreover, challenges inherent to the method occurred. First, the process of staying focussed on her emotional connection to the music was difficult. It was hard for her to 'think about the story she wanted to tell rather than focusing on her technique (for example, double stops)'. Second, disconnecting and reconnecting to herself as she was walking with the music being turned on/paused seemed particularly difficult. Over time, Meghan 'felt better at that', but she still needed 'to practice it' or 'adapt it'.

II/ Discussion of Results

Before the workshops, participants had different levels of expertise in creating an emotional connection with the music they played. Whereas Lea and Meghan had already some techniques that help them in this matter, Daisy admitted that she had no proper technique to face this challenge (see **Table 1**). It could also explain the significant changes that are observed

from Table 1 to Table 2: Daisy's progression was the most significant one. In the following section, we discussed the results by comparing the learning journeys with each other and in relation to the initial research question: in what ways can student string musicians deepen their emotional connection to their music through the use of physical release exercises and a selection of Stanislavski's emotional recall acting techniques?

Relaxation, Imagination, Concentration

According to Sieger (2017, p.4), anxiety could prevent musicians from emotionally connecting to their music. This statement was confirmed by this study, as both Daisy and Meghan struggled to stay focussed on their emotional connection in a stressful situation. It was demonstrated that physical release exercises helped musicians to manage their emotions and to be more present as they play (Cockey, 2008). Furthermore, 'physical freedom' appeared to be at the centre of 'all musical expression' (Brenner and Strand, 2013, p.93-94). This was confirmed by the results of this study, as physical release exercises appeared to help deepen the emotional connection to the music. For Lea, this intervention allowed her to find 'the right state of mind'. Meghan spoke of restoring a 'peace of mind' thanks to these exercises, and Daisy learned how to be 'in the moment' with her music. Thus, this stage helped them to open their mind and body to the emotional connection they are looking for.

By using Stanislavski's emotional recall technique, actors were trained to use imagination and memories so that emotions emerge from imaginary circumstances (Gillett, 2014, p.131). It appeared that this particular technique helped the participants deepen their emotional connection to their music. Daisy succeeded in emotionally connecting to the music by tapping into her imagination and happy memories. She focused on relevant images that was triggered by Stanislavski's emotional recall technique. As Lea was only present for part of the intervention, she did not explore more techniques based on memories. Nevertheless, using her imagination helped her to deepen her emotional connection to the music. For Meghan, using her imagination and sensory memory helped her to fully immerse in her performance. By integrating Stanislavski's technique and being fully aware of her physical sensations, it appeared that she was able to experience a deeper emotional connection to her music.

Unexpectedly, these techniques helped the participants to improve their concentration and maintain the emotional connection they wanted to keep. For Daisy and Meghan, these activities helped them to be more focussed on the present moment and the story they wanted to tell with their music. Both struggled to find consistency when playing in front of an audience. But they seemed to find a way to feel more relaxed thanks to these techniques. They could focus more on their emotional connection and care less about external stimuli. According to Lea, this intervention helped her to focus specifically on herself. It could be argued that this connection is necessary to keep consistency with the emotional bond she had with her music. Thus, by extension, she could also have developed her concentration in relation with her emotional connection to the music she played.

Positive impacts from a broader perspective

Based on the participants' evidence, various impacts could be identified. Some are common to several participants; others seem specific to each person.

According to S. Fletcher (1959, p.38), focussing on technique was at the expense of developing expression in some situations. However, this research revealed that by developing expression, technique could also be benefitted. Daisy said that it was easier for her to play whilst focusing on her emotional connection rather than the technical side. By emotionally connecting with her music, Meghan found ways to see the big picture of the piece, without limiting her perspective to technical problems.

As unexpected results, participants seemed to have gained in confidence at the end of the intervention. Meghan and Daisy challenged themselves by deepening their emotional connection in front of an audience. In search for meaning and relevance, Lea and Daisy had the confidence to express their point of view as they spoke to their teacher about emotional connection.

Moreover, it appeared that these activities created a positive emotional response for Daisy: she found more enjoyment in playing.

According to Johnson (2007, p.70), using imaginary engages student's creativity. More than that, it seemed that it helped Meghan to develop her creativity.

Obstacles and Challenges to using these techniques

Some obstacles occurred during the practice. Some seemed to be specific to one participant, and others appeared to be shared by their peers.

All participants found some exercises difficult. For Meghan, keeping the emotional connection even if the passage was technically difficult was a real challenge. According to S. Fletcher (1959, p.38), music teaching had suffered from being approached in a very technical and intellectual way, putting the search for emotions away. Thus, it could be argued that Meghan's particular difficulty would be link to an allegiance to this teaching system, as she had been taught with a focus on technique.

All participants were willing to keep on going with the practice, exploring these activities by themselves. However, they agreed that time or forgetting the meaning of these activities could be an obstacle. For Lea, this practice took a lot of energy and she needed to be in the right state of mind in order to incorporate them in her practice. This fatigue was something that Stanislavski recognised himself as being an obstacle. (Westbrook, 2008).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

By using physical release exercises and a selection of Stanislavski's emotional recall techniques, participants discovered new ways to deepen their emotional connection to the music they play. They learnt how to open themselves to the connection by relaxing and tuning their mind to positive feelings. It seems that they were better at keeping the emotional connection and dealing with anxiety during a public performance. They could use their imagination and sensory memory in order to connect with their emotions and be better at conveying the story they want to tell. This intervention also had positive results on each participant such as developing one's creativity, giving more enjoyment.

As a result, most of the participants were able to ask for a better communication with their teachers in order to face the challenges of building an emotional connection to their music. Having an open conversation with the teacher about emotional connection would really help them to feel more comfortable with this subject. However, it seemed that some of these techniques were sometimes limited as they needed to be adapted to individual musician's practice. It was also time consuming and it asked a lot of energy. The mind set constituted another possible obstacle.

Recommendations

As these techniques demonstrated their efficiency in a small cohort of string instrumentalist students, it would be interesting to extend the research to a wider cohort (for example: to musicians from different backgrounds). Musicians could be encouraged to introduce these techniques in their practice as an extra tool they can use if they need it. These techniques would be used in due measure as they are quite demanding in terms of time and energy. Moreover, music teachers could benefit from engaging in conversations with their students. Indeed, learners need their teachers' support to explore their emotional connection to the music. Moreover, it would be recommended that music teachers as well as students were trained to use these techniques. Ultimately, building a dialogue with drama teachers in order

to facilitate this learning would be a very interesting option for future professional development.

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Appendix I

Questionnaires

Questionnaires will be delivered at the beginning and at the end of the intervention. They will be introduced with the following text:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey/questionnaire. As part of a research project associated with masters-level study at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, I am seeking responses to explore in what ways string musicians can deepen their emotional connection to their music through the use of physical relaxation exercises and a selection Stanislavski's emotional recall acting technique. The answers you give here may be referenced in a written submission as part of a master-level module. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. All data will be stored on a password protected device in an encrypted document. These data will be deleted upon completion of the module. All questions are voluntary. You may answer as many or as few questions as you like. If you complete and submit the questionnaire, it will be assumed that you consent to its use as described above. If you have any questions about this survey you may contact Fanny Guiffo at fguiffo@rcs.ac.uk.

We take your privacy very seriously. Please find a copy of our Privacy Notice at: www.rcs.ac.uk/policy/privacy

Content :

1) What does emotional connection mean to you as a player in relation to your music?

2) In what way do you think making an emotional connection to your music, as a player, could be important?

3) Currently, how successfully do you think you are able to make an emotional connection to your music, on a scale of 1-5 with:

1 – I really struggle to make an emotional connection to the music I play

5 – I find it very easy to make an emotional connection to the music I play

Please circle the number which best represents how you feel about this.

1 2 3 4 5

4) Currently, to what extent do you feel you have techniques to build an emotional connection to your music, as a player, on a scale of 1-5 with:

1 – I have no techniques at all to use

5 – I have a wide variety of techniques to use

Please circle the number which best represents how you feel about this

1 2 3 4 5

5) Can you say briefly what these techniques are?

6) What other benefits do you think might result from being able to deepen your emotional connection to your music, as a player?

7) How do you feel when a teacher asks you to be more expressive?

Thank you for taking part to this survey.

Appendix II

Interview

Thank you for taking the time to take part in the interview today. The purpose of this interview is to explore the impact of the physical release exercises and emotional recall techniques on your music practice. Your responses will be used as part of my research project. I will do everything I can to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. If I quote this interview in my written submission, I will replace your name with a pseudonym. I will only use this interview materials for my project. If I want to make any other use of this material, I will seek your consent before doing so. The digital files from the recording of the interview transcript documents will be stored securely and will be password protected and encrypted. Notes will be stored securely. Once I have successfully completed the module, I will delete all data gathered in relation to this research.

In the interview that follows, you should feel free to say whatever you like. You are also free to decline to answer any question and you do not need a reason to do so.

Before we start, do I have your consent to conduct this interview under the terms I described above?

You are free to withdraw consent at any time.

Do I have your consent to conduct and record this interview?

Content:

- What was your experience of this project like?
- Which, of all the activities and methods, were most effective in helping you to emotionally connect to your music?
- Can you say why you found these activities most helpful? What impact did they make on you?

- Which, of all the activities and methods, were least effective in helping you to make an emotional connection to your music?

- Can you say why these activities were not effective for you?

- What was most challenging during the project?

- Do you see yourself using any of these activities and methods yourself in the future?

- What would be the biggest obstacles to using these activities and methods?

- Is there any remark you would like to add? Unexpected results/impacts?

Thank you for taking part

Appendix III

Workshop plan

Research question:

In what ways can student string musicians deepen their emotional connection to their music through the use of physical release exercises and a selection of Stanislavski's emotional recall acting techniques?

Additional oral explanations for participants (at the beginning of each lesson):

"*In this project, we will explore a range of introductory acting exercises, including relaxation, visualisation and emotion memory activities. These techniques may very well be a new way of working for you. The emphasis throughout will be to establish an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect so that people feel confident to try new activities. However, should you wish not to take part or to withdraw from an exercise at any time, that is perfectly acceptable, and no reason needs to be given. The aim is a positive experience for all participants and personal health and wellbeing is a priority. Should anything be triggered and you want to discuss further you can be signposted to various counselling services in RCS, speak to me afterward or feel free to contact my supervisor (email on the consent form).*

Be aware that this intervention is a research and that there is no guarantee that you will gain anything from this experience. I thank you for giving your time to participate in this research. I am aware that your time is limited and you can withdraw from the intervention if you want to."

LESSON 1:
"Experiencing the connection between emotions and physical sensations"

« What is emotional recall or emotion memory? »

Emotion memory: 'The actor's personal memories which arise spontaneously as he explores the dramatic situation, or which are consciously evoked to strengthen the natural reactions.' (Stanislavski, p.714, An Actor's work). Technique used **to access to the truth in performance**. A "library".

❖ **Warm-up/Preparation exercise:**

- What's in the box exercise. (5min**)**
- Group cohesion/ body warm-up (10 min)

Everyone takes the space in the room and walks. The teacher proposes different styles of walking and invites students to embody their character.

First walk: natural walk. Pay attention to your breath, your weight shift, the sound of your steps, the tempo, your heart beating, the look you have on the world. Is it open? Focus on the physical sensations. You can stop walking, take a moment just to focus on your physical sensations.

Second walk: "8 years old" walk. Same process.

Third walk: "teenager" walk. Same process.

Fourth walk: "50 years old" walk. Same process.

Fifth walk: "Granny" walk. Same process.

⇨ You can "choose your age" and exchange looks with people, communicate with them visually. It is really important to **keep the connection with your chosen character.**

Feedback: What was challenging? What were the physical changes based on the character you embodied? Did it affect your mood? The tempo? Could you keep the bond to your character as you connect with another person? First experience of interdependence between emotions and physical sensation.

❖ **Emotional recall**

[IMPORTANT NOTE] Before beginning the exercise, the facilitator invites the participants to imagine that "the dark corner" is the place where all negative feelings belong. "Let's stay few seconds in the dark corner. Then you enter into the light: it's the place you will stay in during the four sessions. Possibly, you might feel like you are attracted by the dark corner when you do some exercise. In that case, open your eyes, observe what's happening around you, give me your feedback."]

15min: Breath/listening/relaxation exercise. Everyone feels confident enough with the group to isolate themselves. The group sits in circle, closing their eyes.

⇨ Listening to the silence. Connect the breath to different part of your body.
⇨ Imaginary: you are 10 years old, sitting in the sofa with your brother and sister, or may be you are alone, and you are listening to the radio or watching the opening of a cartoon/pop song and you know the music by heart. You let the song immerge you. It fills your ear, your lungs, your entire body. After few seconds, you let the music go and you open your eyes.

Talk (assessment). What did you notice? What were the physical changes? Before/after the visualisation: did this experience affect your mood?

This is the experience of emotional recall. Explanations.

- **Application of Emotional recall with musical support**

Transformation exercise (20-25min)

- ⇨ As for the warm-up exercise, students walk in their natural way and pay attention to their physical sensations.
- ⇨ As they walk, four pieces of music are heard (stereo system). At first, participants listen to the music as they walk, witnessing the physical changes: they walk faster/slower, they feel more relaxed or tensed, etc... Then the participants accentuate the physical effects of the music on their body: the music should literary *make them move*. They embody a character.
- ⇨ Walking without the music. Students try to restore the physical sensations of the different characters. They try to recall the music they heard and the effect on their body.

Feedback: What was challenging? Did they experience a change of mood or specific changes in their body? What were the different emotions experienced? Compare both experiences: with and without the music.

- **Application of Emotional recall with instruments**. (20min or more)

Two different groups: one is watching the other. Then they swap.

Instruments are placed in the space (a safe spot!). Participants walk connecting again with one of the characters. When they listen to the signal, they go to their instrument, take it, observe it, put it down and then walk again. It is really important **that they stay connected to their character (physical) sensations**. The difficulty is increased little by little, as listen to the signal and stop to take the instrument:

1) Just taking and observing the instrument.
2) Playing one or two notes
3) Improvising a phrase
4) Playing the beginning of their piece

Peer-assessment: Remarks, questions, from both groups. Which impact had the walk on their playing? Did they succeed to keep the connection with the “character” as they played? My feedback.

Conclusion: What was the most challenging? Dis this experience change their vision of emotions? In which ways? Can they perceive how they can apply the emotional recall technique to their music practice or not yet? Have they any request for the next lessons in relation with the development of their expressivity?

Lesson 2:

"Touch, Sound and Sight"

Warm-up exercise: "The blinded-names". (15minutes)

One participant (A) is sitting on a chair, blindfolded. The other participants (B) are lined up behind A.

1rst Round: B participants approach one by one and put their hand on A's shoulders as they say their name at the same time. A memorizes the name and the "touch" associated to the name.

2nd Round: B participants approach in a different order. One by one, they put their hand on A's shoulder, with the same "touch" quality. "A" has to recognize the person.

Feedback: "What was challenging? What did you notice?"

Exercise 1 (20 min):

1) Emotion Memory: Touch

- Sit in a circle, blindfolded (participants can bring their own blindfold, forewarned that they might be wearing them for some time, so the fabric should be comfortable.)

A series of objects is placed on the floor, one in front of each participant. On the word of the facilitator, pick up your OBJECT, feeling its texture and shape. Don't worry too much about identifying the OBJECT, just note what sensations you experience and what thoughts, memories, images, come flooding into your head. (pebble, silk scarf, fruit=> pineapple, feather, lego, lavender cushion…).

=>The facilitator then asks the participants (may be just two or three) to respond to their OBJECT *without identifying it*. This is important, so that when the objects are passed around the circle, you each have a "virgin" experience. At regular intervals, the facilitator asks you to pass your OBJECT on to the next person in the circle. Each time, two or three people are asked to share their responses, images, memories.

2) Emotion Memory: Sound

Participants are blindfolded. Four or five pieces of music or soundscapes are played to the group, you simply lie on the floor and let each sound or music piece influence you imaginatively and emotionally.

3) Emotion Memory: Sight

A series of pictures are placed in the centre of the circle and the participants are invited to respond.

Feedback: Talk about your experience. Which sense did you relate the most with? The less?

Exercise 2 (20 min): Recalling the physical sensations with the instrument.

In pairs. A participants are the ones exploring the emotional recall. Participants B are the Markers.

B participants choose and point out one of the three different senses that have been explored in the previous exercise.

“Touch”=> hands

“Sound”=> ears

“Sight”=> eyes.

1) Based on what B participants point out, “A” participants pick a moment from the previous exercise (based on the sense which is emphasized). “A” close their eyes and recall the sensations. Once they have experienced the recalling, “A” give a signal and B can choose another sense.

2) Same process, but this time, A pick their instruments: as they experience the recall, they keep the connection to the physical sensation and play some sounds/melody/a part from their score.

Feedback

Exercise 3 (20-30 min):

Exploring the emotional intention of a piece of music.

Each participant proposes a music they want to play. We discuss about the emotional content of the music: is the music itself intending to delight / stir / excite / celebrate? “I want you to…” Keep the objective clear. We explore ways to pursue the intention of the music, based on the exercises that have been done during the lesson.

Feedback from the participants, from the facilitator.

Lesson 3:

Building the connection for a performance

Goals: learn how to create the connection with the external environment. Then, how to reverse this connection and look "inside" of us. How to apply this process before a performance.

Warm-up exercise:

1) The magic object- the magic circle. (10min)

Everyone in circle. The facilitator gives an object to the participant next to her. The participant takes the object as it is and can transform it and give it to someone else.

⇨ You can change the size, the weight, the shape.
⇨ An object you don't want
⇨ An object you would like to keep
⇨ An object that is dear to you and you wish to offer with all your heart.

3) "The rolling ball." (15 min)

Participants stand in a circle, eyes closed. The facilitator leads the visualisation: an imaginary ball rolls from the feet to the top of the head. **Breath**.

1) "Focus on your feet. A ball rolls on the plant of your feet and lead your body weight (shift forward, shift backward, shift from side to side). The ball rolls=>

⇨ To the knees

⇨ To the hips

⇨ To the spine

⇨ To the shoulders

⇨ To the neck

⇨ To the head

⇨ To the ceiling.

At each stage, the facilitator asks the participants to question their physical sensations. (Do they feel tensions? Relaxed? How is their breath?)

2) Open your eyes and walk as you keep the connection with the sensations you stimulated during the visualization. If you struggle bringing back the sensations, stop and redo the exercise.

Feedback: Do you feel a difference in your body after the exercise? How would you describe your state of mind, right now? How do you feel?

3) Challenge: participants walk. A selection of music is played. When the music disappears, they stop walking and "reconnect" to themselves.

   Feedback: Was is challenging? In which ways?

Exercise 1: Visualisation=> Losing your senses and getting them back. (30 min)

Participants are asked to walk in the space. Try not to look at each other. The facilitator leads the visualisation.

1) "You walk in a city (Description of the city. Questions leading participants to develop a vivid picture of the city, focusing on the 5 senses.) You pass in front of an ice cream shop. It's all white and pink. You remember the taste of the vanilla"

2) One by one, the senses disappear: "The smell disappear. The taste of the ice cream is no longer in your mouth. The huge buildings melt in front of you. The ice cream shop is no longer there. The muscles in your legs weight more and more. And so are your eyelids. They are so heavy now that you relieve the tension in your eyelids by closing your eyes and you stop walking. Your heavy muscles lead you to the ground where you can sit or lie on the ground.

3) "You pay attention to the noise in the room. To my voice. To the sound of your breath. As you connect with your breath, you pay attention to the noise within yourself, like your heart beating. Your attention is led on any noise that come from inside of you. Is your stomach silence?

⇨ Pay attention to your physical sensations. How are your muscles now? Which part of your body seems the more relaxed? Which part seems to host some tensions? May be you can connect the breath with the tense part of your body? Observe how it affects your muscle.

⇨ Now you connect your breath to your heart. Observe the connection between both rhythm (your heart beating and your breath). When you feel ready, you open your eyes.

Observe the first thing that your eyes catch like if you opened your eyes for the first time. Take your time. You can stay on the floor, or you can stand up. You observe one thing at a time, like if it was the first time. You can walk. Now you pay attention to the people around you, like if it was the first time. You can share an eye contact, a smile as you walk. You can also linger the contact by stopping, before walking again.

Feedback: pair-up. Talk about your experience. Share with the group

1) "What was that like? What is the difference between the beginning of the exercise and the end? Did it make you look at things differently? In which ways?

2) " There were three main parts in this exercise. What was the most challenging? What felt comfortable for you? Share with your partner."

Exercise 2 "The sacred space" Visualization + music performance. (45 min)

- **All together. The music instrument is near the participant.**

1) " First, you take the time to connect to your breath and to observe your body, from your feet to your head. [Pause]. You let the breath immerse your feet, your knees, your belly, your chest, your arms, your neck and your head. You let the breath create a space inside of you. You know this space. You have been there before, may be it was a long time ago or very recently. May be your age has changed. May be you are a child now. May be it's a forest, with tall trees, and foamy stones. May be it's a playroom, with this soft rug you like so much. It's your place. A place you belong. A place that can heal any wound. How does it look like? Are you alone in this place? If there are people who are they? What is the main colour you see around you? How is the ground? Are you walking as you explore? Are you sitting and just observing the world that surrounds you? Is there a specific smell? Which noise? Is it silent?

⇨ Is there enough room for music in this space? Or Is there a way to create enough room for music in this space?"

2) "When you are ready, you open your eyes. Observe your environment as if it was an extension of the world you were. Take your time. You know, this room, you have been there before, but it's like if you saw it from the first time. Your instrument is in front of you. Does it look different to you? Can you listen to the music coming from your mind? When you are ready, you take your instrument. You take the time to observe it, the details in the wood, the contact of your fingers on the strings. And the music you heard comes back to your mind and ask you to play when you are ready…"

Feedback.

Lesson 4:

"Overview of the session"

- Warm-up (10-15min):
  Participants are in circle. Different musical pieces are played (stereo). One participant (the leader) improvises movements, the others copy. The leader-role passes from participant to participant.

- **1rst Exercise**: "Music and Sacred space" Visualization. (25min)

Participants shape a circle. The facilitator leads the visualization.

1) Relaxation. Breath, posture. Finding the "sacred space".

2) They visualize the music they play. This music finds its way in the body, in the mind, in the heart. And when they feel ready to play (not properly with the instruments, but in their minds), they make one step forward. Relax.

⇨ Same thing: this time, participants are scattered in the space. They walk and then choose when they stop to build the connection, make one step, and then walk again.

⇨ The visualization changes: Participants imagine different spaces/circumstances.

Eg: they explore a castle/the top of a mountain/ a beach/ a cheerful room with a fireplace. They visualize the music has if it comes from the place itself.

Feedback: "What is your perception of the "Sacred space" compare to last time? Did you find it easily? What changes did you observe during the process of exploring different space? What about your perception of the music?".

- **2nd Exercise: Simulation of a performance. (35min)**

  One participant "on stage" (the others watch).

  Discussion about how the participant would like to connect to the specific music piece. The researcher and the participant agree on a strategy, a recalling process.

The participant stands backstage. When he/she is ready, the participant advances on stage and stands in the silence, facing the audience. IMPORTANT: during the whole process, participant hold on the connection to the music (even during the walk). The participant leaves the stage when he/she decides.

⇨ Same thing but with the instrument: the participant plays the piece when he/she faces the audience.

Feedback: What was challenging? What was different between both stages (without then with the instrument).