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Intra-individual Change and Variability in Intentional Self-Regulation: A Concert Cellist Optimizing Performance

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Background

One way researchers have begun to make significant improvements to the professional practice of classical music performers is through personalized rehearsing strategies that support the development of a sense of self as an agentic, proactive learner. The focus of this type of investigation is on improving the various self-regulated learning strategies associated with the behaviours, cognition and affect musicians employ when practising and performing music.

One approach focuses on helping students make use of various tools that can enhance their learning. The current research expands this literature by embracing the idea that *researchers should be part of the research process* as active participants who generate data, especially when researchers are “members” of the social world they study, and therefore have insider knowledge. Thus, this case study is focused on the first author, a professional cellist who is also a researcher in the educational psychology of music, as the only participant.

Aims

The study investigated the intra-individual change and variability in intentional self-regulation through the researcher’s learning of the complete works of Beethoven and Mendelssohn for cello and piano, as she optimized her performances across 9 profiled concerts in 5 countries and a commercial CD recording over a period of 100 weeks.

Method

This approach was a quasi-experimental, interrupted time series design that examined within-person change and variability by testing whether and how intervention affects (independent variable effects: questionnaires, diaries) the repeated measures of the dependent variable (the learning of the music), in trajectories of time (pre-, during-, post-rehearsals) and in different stages (concerts, recordings). Anonymous feedback from the audiences and

interviews with a musician expert who followed the concerts and the CD recording was also collected.

Three instruments were used: 1) An extended version of the classic continuum *Pre-action/Action/Post-action model* of self-regulation; 2) An adaptation of the *Emotion and Motivation Self-Regulation questionnaire* (EMSR-Q); and 3) *Structured diaries* including open-ended questions.

For the data analysis, traditional psychometric measurements were applied at the moment of submitting this abstract to test the internal consistency of the time series data as well as the correlations between variables.

Results

Preliminary examination of the data revealed that continuous engagement in self-monitoring and self-observation of behaviour lead to an increase in the cellist's *metacognitive ability* to apply complex rehearsal strategies and develop her *learning identity* – factors that could have helped in her performance optimisation development across the study. Since the research was ongoing at the time of the abstract submission, further details will be provided to delegates as part of the conference presentation, as well as through an article submitted to the special section of Performance Science in the open-access journal of Frontiers of Psychology.

Conclusions

The presentation will assert that the combination of an innovative research intervention and application of self-regulated learning strategies such as those incorporated for this study are able to contribute to the improvement of learning and performance practices among professional musicians and music students who are studying within higher education institutions.

Keywords

Intra-individual; learning identity; metacognition; quasi-experiment; self-regulation

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