


Mental Preparation for Piano Performance Using Principles of Aikido



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Abstract

Although much has been written about Music Performance Anxiety (MPA), very few of its many definitions and treatments can be holistically applied. Indeed, there is only limited reference to MPA in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [DMS-IV TR (text revision)].[1] Broadly speaking, "MPA is considered a product of the interaction between fearful thought, autonomic arousal, and behavioral responses to a perceived threat,"[2] a "debilitating stress that has probably been around for as long as there have been musicians."[3] For these reasons, this thesis looks for answers in ancient wisdom, the Shinto[4] and Zen bases of the Japanese martial art of Aikido, which directly translates to "The Way of Harmony," for an innovative step-by-step approach to literally take the mental and physical violence out of MPA. Aikido is the refinement of a centuries-old quest to effectively deal with perceived internal and external threats - fear, anxiety, and ego - in an effort to reach a Zen state of awareness through its practice in everyday life. This holistic approach to the unification of mind and body through training is a way of disconnecting the threat of MPA to achieve optimal musical performance.

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