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## Improvisational therapy alleviates MPA symptoms in college wind musicians

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*Improvisational therapy alleviates MPA symptoms in college wind musicians*

Music, Psychology

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Researchers have recognized musical performance anxiety (MPA) as a prominent disorder among musicians and have explored ways to cope with the resulting symptoms (Kirchner, 2004/2005). Methods such as pharmacotherapy, hypnotherapy, and cognitive behavioral therapy have been tested to treat individual symptoms of MPA, each with some measure of success. Music therapy is one of the most effective forms of therapy for stress, depression, and psychological disorders, all of which are affiliated with MPA (Martinez, 2009). However, music therapy as a treatment for MPA has been largely overlooked. This study will test if improvisational music therapy will reduce MPA symptoms (including state anxiety and trait anxiety symptoms) and improve self-esteem in music majors who play wind instruments. A secondary purpose of this study is to compare these data with those from a previous study involving pianists (Kim, 2005). Participants will freely improvise music (i.e., aside from their performance literature) for 15 minutes per day for six weeks, and will participate in a weekly group improvisation session; they will also keep journals so that they can track their own progress regarding anxiety symptoms. Anxiety levels will be measured through Likert-type scales about self-reported symptoms. Results may inform musicians and music teachers as to the benefits of these methods as a form of self-therapy for performing artists. Reducing anxiety through improvisational music therapy may provide for more rewarding experiences for performers and audiences, and may prove to be beneficial for musicians' careers.