

# Final Research Report

*by* YUK LUN WONG

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A Project entitled

*To what extent practice can alleviate stage fright in making a desirable  
performance outcome.*

Submitted by

*Wong Yuk Lun*

Supervised by

*Dr. Paulina Wong Wai Ying*

submitted to the Education University of Hong Kong

for the degree of Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Music)

*in May 2017*

**Declaration**

I, *WONG YUK LUN* , declare this research report represents my own work under the supervision of *Dr. Paulina Wong Wai Ying*, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Sign\_\_\_\_\_

*WONG YUK LUN*

*9<sup>th</sup> May 2017*



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**Abstract**

To every performing musician, stage fright has been part of their journey. Every performer undoubtedly wants to have the best on stage in front of the audience.

However, stage fright struggles them a lot and even frightens them quitting it. We have an old saying “Practice makes perfect”. It is workable but controversial.

Commonly, performers experience stage fright every time. However, virtuoso players have never experienced it strongly. Rather than, it is an enjoyment. This research paper examines different influencing factors behind stage fright.

### Literature Review

Practice is important to all kinds of career because it makes a person to be skillful of the related techniques. In music, we need to practice to help us be more confident in performance unless you are a composer. Same for other aspects in music, you still need to practice for mastering the techniques especially when you are in the preliminary learning stage. For different kinds of musicians, they have their own goals such as well – organized and meaningful works from a composer, a piece played musically with zero errors from a musician, a continuous creative output from multi – media worker. As a performer, distinct performance is the final output and target (Ericsson, 1997). We need to familiarize the new piece with score thoroughly by spending much time in analyzing the score. The higher standard it takes, the more effort and concentration they should be taken. To utilize the power the practice, we need to think of different strategies and manipulate them in our practice every time (McPherson, 2005). By doing a series of steps, well – performed musicians is no longer a dream. However, practice does not only focus on the outcome, but also the process of awareness of how do a musician learn from improvement during the practice section. Progress of improvement is more important to young learners because they still have time to build up appropriate practice habit and attitude. Undoubtedly, there are many strategies recorded in previous related researches and



they have to choose suitable ones for themselves. Full attention and enjoyment with imaging, monitoring and motoring skills are important. Improvement from weak drills must be the centered meaningful of practice, which improve the performance in time as well. (Lehamnn & Davidson, 2002)

From reading different literatures related to music performance, the belief of practice is very consolidated. It seems that practice has a magical power for all musicians. For most of people, they believe “practice makes perfect”. However, if there is one barrier inserted between practice and performance, whether practice can still be powerful enough for us to rely on for a good performance will become a critical question. In my experience of performance, stage fright is one of uneasy obstacles and it must be same for most of instrumentalists. This may be one of the reason forcing them to quit learning instrument. Although stage fright is common for all musicians, the severity is what it should be concerned. According to so many psychological research, stage fright symptoms are numerous, in which will be discussed further in later section. A musician with a certain number of symptoms can only be diagnosed with stage fright. It is assumed that a person with stage fright should be able to aware of their situation and to take the initiative to seek for solutions. The further assumption is that practice can eliminate stage fright and go straight to a

good performance because stage fright is affecting the performance with no doubts. The hypothesis should be a person with no stage fright, which means they have very few stage fright symptoms, supposedly have adopted various strategies to make their practice effective based on the principle of “practice makes perfect”. If the stage fright still exists to a self – disciplined person, there is a bigger question to what makes stage fright more serious than the way that practice can never resolve.

When talking about the symptoms of stage fright, there are measurable with unmeasurable. All of them can generally be classified into the following four types including physiological, emotional, behavioral and cognitive. Practice in here can have two direction of interpretation. One is to “practice for better musical skills” while another is “practice for alleviating symptoms”. It is still unknown whether both or either one is the main purpose of practice for stage fright patient. In physiological aspect, increased heart rate, sweating, shortness of breath, clammy hands, dry mouth, headache, diarrhea, nausea and dizziness are the symptoms. Emotional symptoms are more unmeasurable, including fear of failure, irritability, panic / exaggerated thoughts and apprehension (Robson and Gillies, 1987). More abstracted symptoms come to cognitive aspect, including lack of concentration, memory lapses when recapturing the score, personality styles and self – confidence, stresses and coping patterns,

internal motivation and development of self – identity. These symptoms will be re-organized and paraphrased into my research. The last aspect is behavioral because mind affects body reaction on stage or before stage, such as change of sleeping habits, knees and hands trembling, arms and neck stiffness, lip moistening and shoulder lifting (Dews and Williams). Among all the symptoms, it is important to adopt the ordinal measurement scales with a score sheet to judge whether the person does have stage fright. This will be clearly stated in the main part of research. Other than above symptoms, there are still external factors determining the result of my hypothesis such as pressure from family and peers, childhood experience in performance – related or non – performance – related matters etc (Ely, 1991). This area is also the extended part of the research.

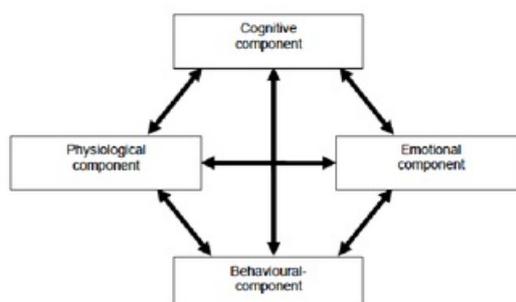
Reviewing the last important part of literature, practice strategies stated in Susan Hallam’s research (2001) is helpful. Although the goal of her research is different from this one, it provides a framework to generalize the performance practice strategies into three areas of task – oriented, organizational and mental. For task – oriented strategies, it focuses on how a person critically identifies the difficult sections in a piece in order to find out a specific way to solve the difficulties immediately. Short section is repeated for a meaningful purpose and the effectiveness

is foreseeable. It also requires a person to use wisely the comments from textbook and teachers. In organizational strategies, it emphasizes on the discipline of a person.

Discipline includes regularity of practice, systematic materials for practice and self – awareness of the order and clarity of practice goals each time. The final strategies is more technical one means that how to process the music into mind whether for memory or not, such as thinking of the contour of melody or chant the melody or rhythm in practice.

### Stage Fright Model

It is important to support the validity and coherence of an academic research with a persuasive model. In this research, a model by Lehmann, Sloboda and Woody (2007) would be adopted. This model may provide symptoms and reason of stage fright in making an undesirable performance to performer. Possible solutions may also be carried out based on this model. However, this model may not be that perfect to explain all the factors and phenomenon so that there is a necessary to find out in further and limitations to the entire research. This model has been divided into four components which are emotional, cognitive, physiological and behavioral (A figure is attached below). It is clear that there are arrows crossing among the components. This implies that all components are interrelated and affecting each other. Neither of components can stand alone to influence the entire stage fright process. Each component carries the same degree of importance. If solutions have to be taken, all the components should be concerned.



### Methodology

In this research, I have mixed approach to collect the data, which are quantitative and qualitative.

In the quantitative part, I have prepared 50 sets of questionnaires, which is a very small sample size, based on the three domains stated in the literature review, which are “belief of practice”, “stage fright symptoms” and “practice strategies”. My target audience is all music students from the music department in EdUHK, in order to make my research more validated in the music area. Before officially distributing the questionnaires to the audiences, I have a pilot study with my colleague that I asked her to give some feedbacks to my preliminary questionnaire design. After that, there is a lot of problems including absence of translation of difficult terms of symptoms, unclear presentation of statements and improper request of demographic information. I must have to do the revision and the final version came after one week of review. Subsequently, I printed the copies in a plastic bag and threw all the questions on the online Survey Monkey so that my audience can choose alternatives to return their answers. I opened a WhatsApp group to 20 plus audiences and attached the Survey Monkey hyperlink. For the remaining audiences, I prepared around 25 sets to be completed in the Orchestra. After that, the collection rate was below average and I had to take the remedial measures that ask individuals one – by – one by looking up the

Wenger Room and luckily I met a mass class with lecturer permission that made me capable of collecting all the remaining questionnaires. Finally, I had 50 sets of completed questionnaires.

The next stage of research is interview, which is qualitative. Before that, I have to summarize all the information from the questionnaires by calculating the percentages of respondents in different options. Based on the statistical results, I drew out some significant figures that probably help my interview design (A copy is attached below). In general, I would like to know more elaborated information from audience's personal experience, such as significant stage fright symptoms, the actual practice of practice etc. According to the will of respondents, around twenty people are available for the interview and finally I sorted out 2 males and 3 females. The interview was prepared individually in small discussion room in library. The researcher would notice that interviewee is available for recording. The interview section lasted 20 – 30 minutes. The researcher had prepared some guided questions and conducted them in a semi – structure format based on the interaction with interviewee.

**Demographics Summary**

## Age and Gender

Below 18	18 – 21	Above 21	Male	Female
4	24	22	17	33

## Programme Year(s) from CCA department

BEd (Final)	BEd (Non – final)	CCA (Final)	CCA (Non – final)	BME (Final)	BME (Non – final)
14	28	2	1	4	1

## Major instruments

Keyboard	Brass	Woodwinds	Strings	Percussions
20	3	3	4	2
Chinese Strings	Plucked Strings	Chinese Percussions	Chinese Woodwinds	
8	5	3	2	

## Level of Attainment

Grade 8 or below	ATCL / Dip ABRSM	LTCL or above
31	13	6

## Frequency of public performance within 5 years in EdUHK

0 times	1 – 2 times	3 – 4 times	5 times or above
0	5	8	37

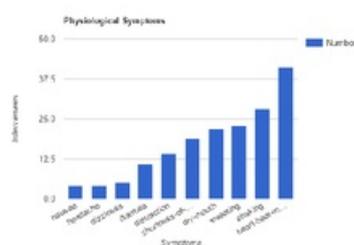
## Duration of Study of major instruments

10 years or below	11 – 18 years	19 years or above
11	29	10

### **Data Analysis**

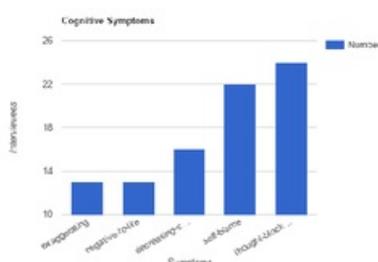
This section mainly focuses on the result of stage fright symptoms distribution of the interviewees. Starting with physiological symptoms, this component is the biggest among because it takes places of ten symptoms in total. These symptoms were extracted from the journal by Robson and Gillies in 1987. None of the interviewees are likely to have all symptoms but it is clear that two of symptoms are above the average. They are shaking and heart – beat increase. About 40 out of 50 interviewees are having heart – beat increase when they have performance. These two symptoms are also put inside the interview part later on. The remaining symptoms are not as significant as those two. They are all below the average of interviewees. The main reason is that those symptoms with exceptionally low rates could stop a person showing up the performance, such as nausea, dizziness, headache etc. These are quite serious medical illness. It is actually very rare to appear on most performers unless they get sick on the day of performance. If a performer loves performance and does adequate preparation, these symptoms are impossible at normal situation. Those symptoms with high rates are the most common among performers because they are not symptoms of sickness. Rather than, they are related to other factors which are going to be mentioned in discussion.

	Y	N
作嘔 (nausea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腹瀉 (diarrhea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
流汗 (sweating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭痛 (headache)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭暈 (dizziness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
自責 (self-blame)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
口乾 (dry mouth)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
驚慌 (panic feeling)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
害怕失敗 (fear of failure)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心煩氣躁 (distraction)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
呼吸氣促 (shortness of breath)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心跳加速 (heart beat increase)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
手震腳震 (shaking)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
無限放大 (exaggerating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
睡眠習慣改變 (change of sleeping habit)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
感覺到人生灰暗 (negative to life)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
專注力下降 (decreasing concentration)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腦一片空白 (thought blockage)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
僵硬 (如頸、手臂、頭等等) (body stiffness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Cognitive component is the second largest part because it can also draw the symptoms back to emotional components. There are total of five symptoms extracted from the same journal. These must not be able to summarize all symptoms for stage fright phenomenon. An additional supplementary would be provided. Although none of the symptoms are above the average, it is also important to look at the symptom in the highest rate. Most people have thought blockage on stage, in other terms it is called memory loss because most performers must experience in playing music from memory. This is a common requirement for most of the contemporary instrumental competition although it is not an official requirement in renowned music examination. Memory loss is vulnerable to other components especially emotional and physiological components.

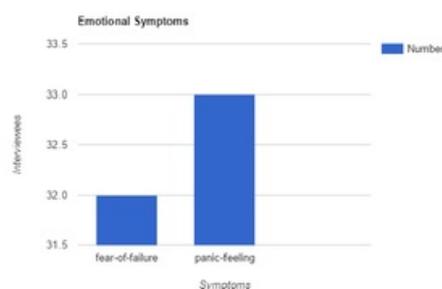
	Y	N
作嘔 (nausea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腹瀉 (diarrhea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
流汗 (sweating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭暈 (headache)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭暈 (dizziness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
自責 (self-blame)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
口乾 (dry mouth)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
驚慌 (panic feeling)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
害怕失敗 (fear of failure)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心煩氣躁 (distraction)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
呼吸氣短 (shortness of breath)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心跳加速 (heart beat increase)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
手腳顫抖 (shaking)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
無限放大 (exaggerating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
睡眠習慣改變 (change of sleeping habit)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
感覺對人生灰暗 (negative to life)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
專注力下降 (decreasing concentration)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腦一片空白 (thought blockage)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
僵硬 (如胸、手臂、頸等等) (body stiffness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Emotional component is also very essential to determine the physical status of performer on stage because it is the core of performance anxiety. In the field of psychology, anxiety is much discussed on the basis of emotional reaction which determines bodily actions. Although there are just two symptoms mentioned, these bring out the main idea of stage fright – fear with panic. Fear is a monster to an individual in any case. No matter how hard you are, nobody wants to live with fear. However, human is born in this world experiencing new things and challenges every day. Fear is surrounding us all the time. To tackle stage fright, fear is the starting point. It is also the core part of interview. Fear of failure and panic feelings are significantly high and evenly distributed among the interviewees. It shows that most performers are vulnerable to fear. It also tells that fear of failure and panic feeling is very likely to appear at the same time at some moments of performance. However, they have some differences in nature. Fear of failure covers a greater spectrum of performance time (Ely, 1991). Performers can have this kind of prediction before going on stage. It may

be because of performer's inadequate preparation or exaggerating the means of performance to performers. Fear of failure may appear post-performance because of worrying the results. The panic feeling mainly covers the time of on-stage performance. It can also be explained as a general meaning of fear in stage fright situation.

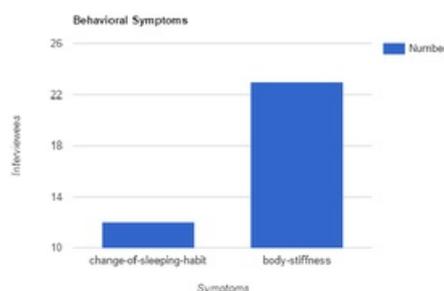
	Y	N
作嘔 (nausea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腹瀉 (diarrhea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
流汗 (sweating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭痛 (headache)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭暈 (dizziness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
自責 (self-blame)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
口乾 (dry mouth)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
驚慌 (panic feeling)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
害怕失敗 (fear of failure)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心煩氣燥 (distraction)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
呼吸氣促 (shortness of breath)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心跳加速 (heart beat increase)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
手震腳震 (shaking)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
無限放大 (exaggerating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
睡眠習慣改變 (change of sleeping habit)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
感覺到人生灰暗 (negative to life)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
專注力下降 (decreasing concentration)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腦一片空白 (thought blockage)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
僵硬 (如同、手臂、頸等等) (body stiffness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Behavioral component is not significant because it is quite similar to the physiological component. It is concerned more about the patterns of negative behaviors when connecting with stage fright. It is upset that the questionnaire covers just two of them because it is difficult to draw up some common behavioral patterns of most performers with limited time of observation. There are two of them worth to be mentioned. The first one is change of sleeping habits. Sleeping is important to

restore our memory and physical status. However, some people may have a sudden change of sleeping habits when stage fright interferes, either suddenly increases or drops. This is very dangerous to the quality of performance. From the interviewees' response, sleeping seems not a problem to them. Rather than, they experience body – stiffness far more than the change of sleeping habit. Body – stiffness can be explained by the adapted reaction of body to the stage fright that performer have not yet found a comfortable solution to combat. It becomes natural and automatic when performer is used to stage fright. Body shaking would actually become the same if it is formalized in the practice routines to the performer.

	Y	N
作嘔 (nausea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腹瀉 (diarrhea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
流汗 (sweating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭痛 (headache)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭暈 (dizziness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
自責 (self-blame)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
口乾 (dry mouth)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
驚慌 (panic feeling)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
害怕失敗 (fear of failure)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心猿氣燥 (distraction)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
呼吸氣促 (shortness of breath)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心跳加速 (heart beat increase)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
手震腳震 (shaking)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
無限放大 (exaggerating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
睡眠習慣改變 (change of sleeping habit)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
感覺到人生灰暗 (negative to life)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
專注力下降 (decreasing concentration)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腦一片空白 (thought blockage)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
僵硬 (如胸、手臂、頸等等) (body stiffness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



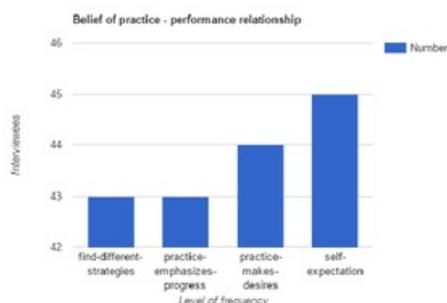
As mentioned in the very beginning in literature review, there are three parts in this research. One of the parts is the belief of practice – performance relationship. There must a strong belief to push the performer to practice before discussing on the

effectiveness of practice. Practice is still the fundamental basis of improving the performance outcome. The only difference is what performer should think about practicing the music meaningfully. There are nine options in my questionnaire. I summarize them into four options as shown in the following bar graph. Most of interviewees actually have a strong belief of practice. They believe that effective practice can make them perform desirably. They would focus on the improvement process during the practice instead of just looking at the performance outcome because the progress of improvement could also give the performer some insights to make him/her better in performance. Furthermore, they took the initiative to find out different strategies to help them overcome stage fright, such as comments from teachers, online videos, reference books etc. Finally, they expect themselves for some targets of performance. They are eager to do their best in performance.

**Part 1: Belief of practice – performance relationship**

Choose your level of agreement to the following statement. Blacken the circle for the answer (1 – Totally disagree, 2 – Strongly disagree, 3 – Slightly disagree, 4 – Slightly agree, 5 – Strongly agree, 6 – Totally Agree)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Try-out of different strategies can help process music more effectively.	<input type="radio"/>					
2. Effective practice makes desirable performance.	<input type="radio"/>					
3. Concentration and effort are both important to a distinct performance.	<input type="radio"/>					
4. From preliminary stage of learning instruments to mastering techniques, practice plays a very important role.	<input type="radio"/>					
5. I always expect myself to have a good performance.	<input type="radio"/>					
6. I take the initiative to find different strategies to help myself overcome the difficulties of pursuing a desirable performance.	<input type="radio"/>					
7. Practice is a progress of improvement rather than the outcome (performance).	<input type="radio"/>					
8. The progress of improvement should be focusing on the basic and weak skills.	<input type="radio"/>					
9. Practice is to image, monitor and fully control an individual with 100 % attention.	<input type="radio"/>					

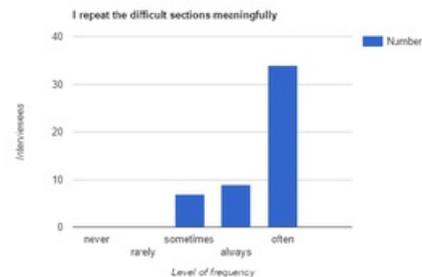


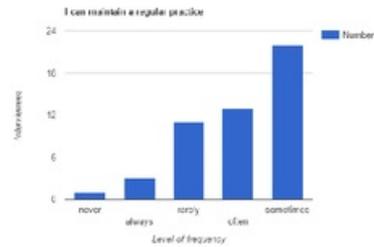
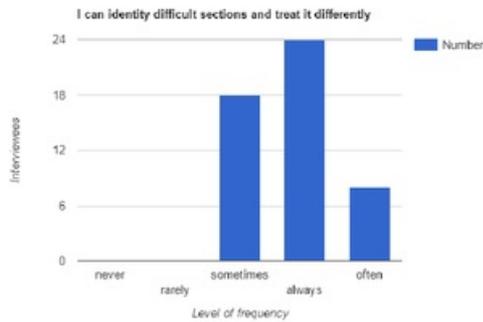
When the belief of practice is strong, it is about time to take actions. From the graph below, it is concluded that most interviewees know how to identify the difficult sections from the pieces because difficult sections are always determinative to the stage fright severity. They can mostly treat it differently and repeat it meaningfully in the practice. However, not all of them could maintain the practice regularly. A little of them have never practiced regularly before. For the three kinds of mental rehearsals – photographic memory, chanting the melody and remembering the contour of melody, the rate is on average. Interviewees normally would use them to help them enhance cognitive memory.

**Part 3: Performance practice strategies**

Choose your level of frequency to the following statement. Blacken the circle for the answer. (1 – Never, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 4 – Very Often, 5 – Always)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I can identify difficult passages and treat it differently from easy sections.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I can critically understand my weak skills and carry out a corresponding solution from teacher's comments.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I can make use of the materials from other textbooks and teachers to help myself practice effectively.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I will repeat some difficult sections meaningfully	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I set a small target to myself in every practice with 100 % attention.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I will give myself remarks on careless mistakes in details.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I can maintain a regular practice for myself.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I expect that every practice should be with both deep and broad musical sense and judgement.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I make every practice as systematic as possible, especially before real performance.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I take a photograph of the scores in my mind to help myself play from memory.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I will pay attention to the contour of the melody in helping myself playing from memory.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I chant out the melody or rhythm in practice.	<input type="radio"/>				

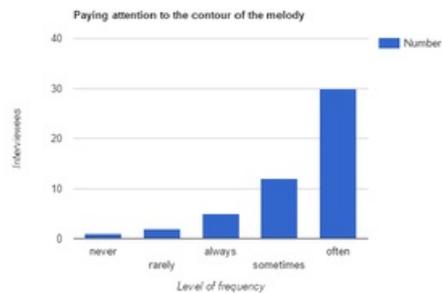
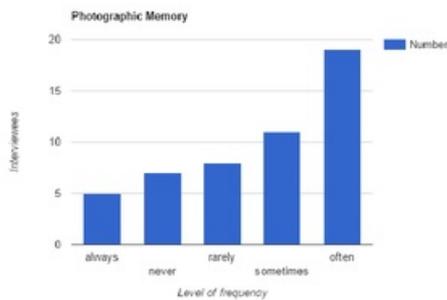
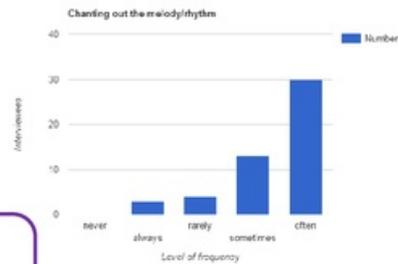




**Part 3: Performance practice strategies**

Choose your level of frequency to the following statement. Blacken the circle for the answer. (1 – Never, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 4 – Very Often, 5 – Always)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I can identify difficult passages and treat it differently from easy sections.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I can critically understand my weak skills and carry out a corresponding solution from teacher's comments.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I can make use of the materials from other textbooks and teachers to help myself practice effectively.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I will repeat some difficult sections in order to make a meaningful progress.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I set a small target to myself in every practice with 100% attention.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I will give myself remarks on careless mistakes in details.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I can maintain a regular practice for myself.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I expect that every practice should be with both deep and broad musical sense and judgement.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I make every practice as systematic as possible, especially before real performance.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I take a photograph of the scores in my mind to help myself play from memory.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I will pay attention to the contour of the melody in helping myself playing from memory.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I chase out the melody or rhythm in practice.	<input type="radio"/>				



### Discussion

This part is mainly based on the interviews. There are five interviewees. They are represented as (Interviewee no. 1, Interviewee no. 2 ..... ) for some critical points mentioned in the interview that help much in the discussion. To start the discussion, it is important to mention that the stage fright is still being used throughout the discussion.

Starting from emotional components, all interviewees stated that the fear and panic feeling are uncontrollable to them. However, the out of control situation does not sustain throughout the performance. Interviewee no. 1 has mentioned that his fear would go away after doing enough warm – up exercises and passing through the difficult point(s). Most of the interviewees said that it went away after completing the performance. Still, the technical issues and physical status on the performance day are both still the determinative factors to emotional reactions. Three of the interviewees had mentioned that different performance settings would be different to their emotional symptoms. Interview no. 2 had specially mentioned his emotional symptoms went very differently when playing solo piano performance and group jazz performance. He said he was rather enjoyable in group performance because there was a lot more fun with his friends. No matter what kinds of performance, the

importance of preparation had been covered by most interviewees. Interviewee no. 4 had mentioned that she felt less guilty when preparation was done adequately. It was proved that fear is partly from the guiltiness of oneself. Audience size is another factor. More people certainly would stress up the performer's emotion. Whether it is an absolute factor is still a question. Interviewee no. 3 had specially mentioned about her experiences in performance that helps much her alleviate the stage fright. She mentioned that more successful experience should be accumulated to offset the negative thoughts towards performance in future.

Cognitive component goes deeper into the mindset of performers other than the cognitive capacity. Most of the interviewees were quite sensitive to the mistakes but mistakes gave them stress instead of motivation. Interviewee no. 3 had mentioned that creating a meaningful memory construction did help her memorize the piece effectively that she could pick up correctly in case of thought blockage. Although memory stability is concerned to all interviewees, the realization of desirable outcomes is a big issue to every performer. Many interviewees had mentioned that there were some customized rules in performance including the expectations from teachers and audiences that made them uncomfortable. It is ideal to come back on a realistic desk to expect and realize the self – needs of performance. It is believed that

every performing musician would like to do their best in performance. It is, however, a hardship to find out why you would like to do your best. Interviewee no. 2 had mentioned a lot of why and how much “you” love performance. If performance is taken as an assignment, it must be stressful to anybody. It is important to have a strong belief of performance and the passion of engaging to the music “you” love.

In the physiological and behavioral components, they are very subjective to the cognitive and emotional components. All interviewees had common symptoms such as heart beat increase, sweating and cold, and body shaking. These are as inevitable as emotional fear. However, they are inconsistent because most of the symptoms disappear after the performance. Special mentions came from interviewee no. 5. She was an Erhu player and she said she could memorize the piece after few times of practice. Her shaking problems could be offset by regular practice on the fright because she totally relied on the muscle memory. This always happened to me when I was still joining many competitions in secondary school. Although you felt frightened, your fingers and brain had memorized the positions on piano based on the number of times you practice. Since physiological symptoms directly relate to errors and errors relates to music quality such as timbre, tone color etc., most performers are aware of them. Interviewee no. 5 had specially mentioned about the benefits of sleeping habits

that help much the memory.

As mentioned before, these components cannot fully cover the factors of stage fright. Four of the interviewees mentioned that academic studies affected their regularity of practicing. Most of the interviewees were the BEd students from CCA department. Their major field of study was not professional performance. Rather than, they were trained to be a teacher and they had to take care of other non – music courses. Three interviewees questioned about the effectiveness of doing conscious practices of stage fright. They said no matter how they tried not to be nervous, the symptoms came out automatically. They also questioned about whether mastering techniques was the main purpose of performance although the quality of performance is still important. It is, however, more important to share your music and thoughts through interaction with audiences. Interviewee no. 5 had mentioned that engaging to music was not effective in pieces like Etudes which is one of the music genres for most performers to practice techniques. There is a room for discussion because some pieces were composed musically while some pieces are composed on the technical showcase. It is hard to discuss without any scores for reference.

### New Literature Findings

Although it is necessary to find out some ways to combat stage fright, does anybody think of whether it is a problem to try so hard to combat for the performance. Performance is an enjoyable journey in nature. Stage fright can never appear on the virtuoso performers such as Lang Lang, Yuja Wang etc. as they do not take it as an assignment. Movement is most natural and effective when it is carried out with minimum effort (Connor, 1987). Performance requires natural movement of body, as natural as you walk. There was an interview with renowned pianist Horowitz who said that he had never thought about stage fright because he loved performance. The flow of his emotions and body movement were controlled by the willpower. In the contemporary society, most of the performers may be forced to learn instruments and performance may not be their cup of tea because of their parents' will to their children. According to Kenny (2006), most of children were not vulnerable to stage fright although they may not be willing to learn it. The stage fright would become more intense when they grow up because of the innate temperament and increasing cognitive capacity. A lot of self – reflection process may be carried after receiving the comments from others. These reflective thoughts would construct the perception to their experiences across the adolescence. Throughout the process that performers find out the answers of their problems of stage fright, they may realize the customized

interpretation to stage fright from the society, where most people are negative about it and took traditional practice routines as the first place to eliminate it as quick as possible. However, Jackson (2007) told us that acceptance of stress is important. This is one of the important parts of Cognitive – Behavioral Therapy. It cures starting from the cognitive thoughts. It is told that every performer must experience fear and fear is absolutely normal to everyone. Performer should not exaggerate the stress too much. Smilde (2009) has mentioned that it is important to think about what drives oneself to be a musician.

Besides from rational thinking of stage fright, it would be also possible to discuss stage fright more clinically. A special mention by Lehmann (2007) that cognitive component takes the lead of the vicious cycle of stage fright. It would be curious for the researcher to look further stage fright in the clinical perspective. In the emotional component, stage fright can be possible explained by dissociation which means out of control. When the feeling of shame and fear appear, the limbic system in our brain will link it up with the environmental condition quickly. This experience will not be compensated by the former success (Green and Gallway, 1988). In cognitive component, the performer is actually fail to retrieve and process information at the moment when he/she is experiencing the memory loss. This is called cortical

inhibition. Clients are more aware of the things unnoticed and overestimating the fear visible to others. In physiological component, most of symptoms can be explained by highly increased activation of the central nerve system (Maar, 2009). Stronger inner sensations pass through the body where it declines reaction power, coordination, creativity, problem-solving and decision – making ability of client during stage fright.

### Limitations

The research carries imperfect results that many aspects are not yet covered with the limited resources. For example, music genres is one of the things should be covered because different kinds of music bring different sensations or tensions to the performers. Popular music requires less technical perfectness and more improvisations while classical pieces have more constraints on the performance. Another thing is the ignorance of performance practice. Different kinds of instruments have its unique performance practice such as vocalist and pianist. Pianist does not need to face to all of audience while vocalist does. Facing to all audience is definitely a great stress.



### **Conclusion**

There are still many rooms for discussion on stage fright, where technical accuracy should no longer be the focus. This research may demonstrate some common features of stage fright from the in-depth interview. Traditional practice routines seem not workable to cure stage fright. It is significant that there are many external factors making practice vulnerable to stage fright. There is a key to exploring the will of performance with natural effort.

### **Future Research Direction**

It is questionable that stage fright can be tackled by sorts of solutions, where “stage performance should be driven by the willpower”. There are two main new directions to cure stage fright which are “boom the willpower” and “remove the barriers”. It can be either clinically wise to inspect the relationship of components or explore the identity of being performing musicians under social norms and cultural influence. The most important thing is examining the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring.

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## Appendix 1 – Survey Question Sample

### **Introduction of research**

The research aims at finding out the relationship between three components which are belief of practice, practice strategies and stage fright from the perspective of a performing musician. Every participant need to fill in a questionnaire and take part in an optional interview. These results will help researcher draw a conclusion to the hypothesis of “Performance free from stage fright is determined to the belief and strategies of practice.”

### **研究簡介**

此研究旨在了解器樂演奏者對於練習的信念，練習的技巧以至解決怯場問題三者之間的關係。參加研究者需要填寫一份問卷，而且有機會被接受後續的訪談。過程將會被錄音，參加者可在問卷結尾部分表達接受訪問的意願。蒐集的數據將會協助研究員對「練習、怯場和演奏」三者作出具批判性的結論。

### **Declaration**

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact Wong Yuk Lun at telephone number                      or their supervisor Dr. Paulina Wong Wai Ying at telephone number                      .

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at                      or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

### **聲明**

如閣下想獲得更多有關這項研究的資料，請與黃煜麟聯絡，電話                      或聯絡她/他們的導師黃慧英博士，電話                      。

如閣下對這項研究的操守有任何意見，可隨時與香港教育大學人類實驗對象操守委員會聯絡(電郵:                      ; 地址:香港教育大院研究與發展事務處)。

謝謝閣下有興趣參與這項研究。

**THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**  
**Department of Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA)**

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**The relationship between stage fright and the performance practice strategies for  
preparing a performance**

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby consent to participate in the captioned research supervised by Dr. Paulina Wong Wai Ying and conducted by Wong Yuk Lun .

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, i.e., my personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the **attached** information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

Name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

The questionnaire will be divided into three parts. Answer all the questions according to the instructions in each section.

**Part 1: Belief of practice – performance relationship**

Choose your level of agreement to the following statement. Blacken the circle for the answer. (1 – Totally disagree, 2 – Strongly disagree, 3 – Slightly disagree, 4 – Slightly agree, 5 – Strongly agree, 6 – Totally Agree)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Try-out of different strategies can help process music more effectively.	<input type="radio"/>					
2. Effective practice makes desirable performance.	<input type="radio"/>					
3. Concentration and effort are both important to a distinct performance.	<input type="radio"/>					
4. From preliminary stage of learning instruments to mastering techniques, practice plays a very important role.	<input type="radio"/>					
5. I always expect myself to have a good performance.	<input type="radio"/>					
6. I take the initiative to find different strategies to help myself overcome the difficulties of pursuing a desirable performance.	<input type="radio"/>					
7. Practice is a progress of improvement rather than the outcome (performance).	<input type="radio"/>					
8. The progress of improvement should be focusing on the basic and weak skills.	<input type="radio"/>					
9. Practice is to image, monitor and fully control an individual with 100 % attention.	<input type="radio"/>					

**Part 2: Stage fright symptoms\***

Choose whether you have the following stage fright symptoms. If you are an anxiety – proms patient, here means whether the following symptoms **appear more frequently** to you before real performance. Blacken the circle for the answer.

(Y – Yes, N – No)

\*以下徵狀會以中文顯示

	Y	N
作嘔 (nausea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腹瀉 (diarrhea)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
流汗 (sweating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭痛 (headache)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
頭暈 (dizziness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
自責 (self-blame)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
口乾 (dry mouth)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
驚慌 (panic feeling)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
害怕失敗 (fear of failure)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心煩氣燥 (distraction)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
呼吸氣促 (shortness of breath)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
心跳加速 (heart beat increase)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
手震腳震 (shaking)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
無限放大 (exaggerating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
睡眠習慣改變 (change of sleeping habit)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
感覺到人生灰暗 (negative to life)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
專注力下降 (decreasing concentration)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
腦一片空白 (thought blockage)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
僵硬 (如肩、手臂、頸等等) (body stiffness)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other symptoms out of the list above, please specify here:

如有其他徵狀，請填寫在以下橫線上：

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**Part 3: Performance practice strategies**

Choose your level of frequency to the following statement. Blacken the circle for the answer. (1 – Never, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Sometimes, 4 – Very Often, 5 – Always)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I can identify difficult passages and treat it differently from easy sections.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I can critically understand my weak skills and carry out a corresponding solution from teacher's comments.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I can make use of the materials from other textbooks and teachers to help myself practice effectively.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I will repeat some difficult sections meaningfully	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I set a small target to myself in every practice with 100 % attention.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I will give myself remarks on careless mistakes in details.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I can maintain a regular practice for myself.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I expect that every practice should be with both deep and broad musical sense and judgement.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I make every practice as systematic as possible, especially before real performance.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I take a photograph of the scores in my mind to help myself play from memory.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I will pay attention to the contour of the melody in helping myself playing from memory.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I chant out the melody or rhythm in practice.	<input type="radio"/>				

**Part 4 – Demographic Information\***

Age	<input type="checkbox"/> Below 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 – 21 <input type="checkbox"/> Above 21
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Programme Year(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> BEd <input type="checkbox"/> CAC <input type="checkbox"/> BME <input type="checkbox"/> Final <input type="checkbox"/> Non – final
Major Instruments#  Second Instrument(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Keyboard <input type="checkbox"/> Brass <input type="checkbox"/> Percussion <input type="checkbox"/> Woodwinds <input type="checkbox"/> Strings <input type="checkbox"/> 拉弦 <input type="checkbox"/> 彈撥 <input type="checkbox"/> 吹管 <input type="checkbox"/> 敲擊 Duration of Study: _____ years Name of instrument: _____ _____ (optional if any)
Exam level	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade 8 or below <input type="checkbox"/> ATCL / DipABRSM <input type="checkbox"/> LTCL or above
Do you have public performance before ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2 times <input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 4 times <input type="checkbox"/> 5 times or above Specify the details (optional): _____

\* *Tick the appropriate*

# 中國樂器以中文名稱顯示

\*\*\*\*\*

Please note your willingness for further interview with us by leaving your phone no.!

請在以下選項表達參與後續訪問的意願！

我  願意 /  不願意參與後續訪問。

如你願意參與訪問，請留下你的電話號碼 \_\_\_\_\_。

~End~

**Appendix 2 – Statistics (Questionnaire) Percentages****Part 1 : Belief of practice – performance relationships**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2 %	4 %	8 %	44 %	32 %	10 %
2	0 %	6 %	6 %	22 %	40 %	26 %
3	2 %	2 %	4 %	30 %	38 %	24 %
4	2 %	0 %	10 %	34 %	36 %	18 %
5	2 %	2 %	6 %	32 %	32 %	26 %
6	2 %	0 %	12 %	52 %	30 %	4 %
7	2 %	4 %	8 %	34 %	40 %	12 %
8	0 %	6 %	8 %	36 %	38 %	12 %
9	2 %	2 %	14 %	34 %	42 %	6 %

**Part 2 : Stage Fright Symptoms**

Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
8 %	92 %	22 %	78 %	46 %	54 %	8 %	92 %
nausea		diarrhea		sweating		headache	
Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
10 %	90 %	44 %	56 %	44 %	56 %	66 %	34 %
dizziness		self – blame		dry mouth		panic feeling	
Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
64 %	36 %	28 %	72 %	38 %	62 %	82 %	18 %
fear of failure		distraction		shortness of breath		heart – beat increase	
Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
56 %	44 %	26 %	74 %	24 %	76 %	26 %	74 %
shaking		exaggerating		change of sleeping habit		negative to life	
Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
32 %	68 %	48 %	52 %	46 %	54 %		
decreasing concentration		thought blockage		body stiffness			

其他：臉紅、手汗、肚痛

**Part 3 : Performance practice strategies**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1</b>	0 %	0 %	36 %	48 %	16 %
<b>2</b>	0 %	4 %	32 %	48 %	16 %
<b>3</b>	2 %	8 %	30 %	54 %	6 %
<b>4</b>	0 %	0 %	14 %	68 %	18 %
<b>5</b>	2 %	6 %	32 %	46 %	14 %
<b>6</b>	2 %	12 %	26 %	46 %	14 %
<b>7</b>	2 %	22 %	44 %	26 %	6 %
<b>8</b>	2 %	2 %	28 %	62 %	6 %
<b>9</b>	0 %	6 %	24 %	62 %	8 %
<b>10</b>	14 %	16 %	22 %	38 %	10 %
<b>11</b>	2 %	4 %	24 %	60 %	10 %
<b>12</b>	0 %	8 %	26 %	60 %	6 %

**Appendix 3 – Interview Questions**

1. In – depth inquiry to 4 highest ranking symptoms

(fear of failure – 64%, Panic feeling – 66%, shaking – 56 %, heart beat increase – 82%)

2. double checking of their scoring to their practice strategies by Scale 1 – 10 by

showing them appendix of part 3 in the questionnaire ?

[4] I will repeat some difficult sections in order to make a meaningful progress –

86%

[7] I can maintain a regular practice for myself – 32 %

[10-12] Photographic mental rehearsal, contour of melody, chanting – 48/70/66 %

Follow-up question: do you think how possible these strategies can help alleviate your stage fright symptoms? Why

Follow-up question: how do you explain such action discrepancies?

(when you strongly agree to “Practice makes Perfect”)

Follow-up question: In what circumstances?

3. Although you agree to most beliefs of “practice makes perfect”, it is not as strong as researcher expect. Does expectation exert pressure to your symptoms? What are your expected performance outcomes?

4. Do you think stage fright is affecting your effective performance outcome?

Explain briefly. At the same time, do you agree that “perfectionism” means the fully achieved expected outcome instead of technical perfection? Also, do you think, in order to perform with stage fright – free, practice (that mentioned in the appendix) is the initial starting point?

5. How often do you use the following strategies? (Scale 1 – 10)

- a. Finding trustful partners for the virtual audience
- b. mock performance
- c. mindful practice to negative thoughts in leisure time
- d. Treating performance like lesson or vice versa
- e. others: \_\_\_\_\_

### Interview Transcripts

Interview 1 : Male (7 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 5)

Researcher : Based on our findings from questionnaire, I would like you to describe in details to the following symptoms based on your personal experience, which are fear of failure, panic feeling, shaking and heart beat fluctuates, you may say it in any order.

Interviewee : Fear of failure is always there. I worry most about the pitch accuracy rather than loss of memory. For examples some technical issues like high pitches, big leaps, wrong pitches etc.

Researcher : Can you talk more about panic feeling to performance ?

Interviewee : Normally shaking bow, which is a kind of panic phenomenon to strings player, while playing will affect the timbre and tone color of music. When the panic feeling starts, it cannot stop.

Researcher : Can you specify the time that these panic feeling occurs (i.e. on-stage or off-stage) ?

Interviewee : There is no a clear – cut time to these feeling. Sometimes the mistakes occurs during the performance will trigger while sometimes the panic feeling relieves after the warm-up exercises are done. It depends much on the difficulty of the pieces and physical

status on the day of performance. The most stressful situation may be the beginning of the piece is very difficult that unable me to warm up.

Researcher : Do you agree that technical problems mainly affect your panic feeling ?

Interviewee : Sure, performing art requires high technical quality as well as the comments from audience that stresses the continuing quality of performance.

Researcher : Do you think these of your expectations will stress your fear of failure ?

Interviewee : Fear of failure is not a big problem to me. Rather than, I do care much about how audience feels especially I hate making so many mistakes in front of the audience.

Researcher : Can you talk a bit more about heart beat increase?

Interviewee : It mainly occurs before on – stage performance. It will disappear when my performance goes smoothly on stage.

Researcher : Do you think how the above-mentioned practice strategies can help you alleviate the stage fright symptoms?

Interviewee : Repeated practice in difficult sections will make me more confident

on stage. Regular practice maintains physical strength such as fingers flexibility etc. that makes me control well on stage.

Photographic memory is not my cup of tea. I memorize the piece relying on the melody and regular practice. The capture of the score does not help me anything.

Researcher : Can you talk more about how to maintain your practice ?

Interviewee : Ideally 3 – 4 hours is reasonable for a day while 8 – 9 is not suitable to our body.

Researcher : How do you explain that you do not give yourself full score to your practice strategies in general ?

Interviewee : Realistically, performing art is not the major in my study. I have to take care of minor courses, pedagogy courses etc. Especially at times when assignments come to deadline, it is impossible to ensure regular practice or 3 – 4 hours of practice. Also when I have to practice my ensemble piece, I will distribute less time to my individual piece.

Researcher : What is your expected performance outcome(s) ? Does expectation exert pressure to you ?

Interviewee : Expectation certainly will increase pressure on stage. It depends on

what you expect, if a person expects for technical perfectness every time on stage and this may not truly help the performance. I would think that if your expected outcomes have been customized in your practice and your performance will be more natural and less anxious.

Researcher : Do you mean that what you aim at practice will guarantee your performance ?

Interviewee : If I am fully aware of my quality of practice that I improve myself step – by – step to realize my expected outcome, I feel less guilty to myself even though my performance is not as good as I want. In short, I still aim at a certain standard of practicing.

Researcher : Do you think that stage fright is currently affecting your expected performance outcome ?

Interviewee : I believe that stage fright is affecting to many people. Unlike sports activities, performing art requires high level of accuracy. Any stage fright symptoms happening on stage will immediately affect your accuracy performance. Although you can master the basic requirement of the pieces, it is impossible to let you fully involve into the enjoyment of performance under stage fright situation.

Researcher : As you agree to “practice makes perfect”, what does “perfect” mean to you ? Is it a kind of realization to your expected performance outcome ?

Interviewee : I agree to your point. Perfection is an infinite progression to a performing musician. It is ideal that if I can accomplish my expected outcome.

Interview 2 : Male (9 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 6)

Researcher : Based on our findings from questionnaire, I would like you to describe in details to the following symptoms based on your personal experience, which are fear of failure, panic feeling, shaking and heart beat fluctuates, you may say it in any order.

Interviewee : I have a lot of public performance experience. I would like to divide it into two domains: individual and band. Two kinds of performance practice both make me nervous before stage. However, each of it is different to myself. Normally, I worry about memory loss and heart beat increase before stage. However, the panic feeling differs from individual and band performance on stage. While I am doing my individual performance, my heart beat keeps moving rapidly on stage

and my memory gets loss very quickly and I even have unclear forward sight unless I rely on my muscle memory. I know that this is an inevitable failure and always out of control on stage. It feels better when I am playing music in a band setting. I enjoy pretty much after I get a short panic feeling. It drives me to a more successful performance.

Researcher : I agree that you have more severe panic to your individual performance. How about when you finish the individual performance? Is that feel better?

Interviewee : When I finish my individual performance, I have a strong depression feeling and vice versa for band performance. After the group performance, I feel so successful and enjoyable.

Researcher : Do you think how the above mentioned practice strategies help alleviate your stage fright symptoms ? Can you explain why ?

Interviewee : Actually band performance does not bring me much stage fright. I have basically used all the strategies as stated but stage fright still cannot be rootly eliminated. You are still able to get a memory loss even though you pay 100% effort to skill up the memory and technical problems. I wonder whether such an inevitable fault is a sign of

inconfidence. The fear cannot be explained with any reason and , to myself, tackled with feasible solutions.

Researcher : Do you really think that stage fright is an inevitable obstacle to you ?

Interviewee : I do think we need some practice with certain amounts of audience around us that train us not to be so nervous playing in front of the audience. I have heard of some suggestions saying that you open the door in the practice room so that people walking aside can hear your music. I have never tried this because I am afraid of this but it may be my forthcoming solution to my fright.

Researcher : Do you think you can absorb the experience and mental rehearsal that used in band performance into individual performance ?

Interviewee : No

Researcher : Let's talk about maintaining regular practice.

Interviewee : Maintaining regular practice require a continuing habit. You cannot suddenly play 8 – 9 on the day before the performance. Practice is somehow related to sleeping. Somethings you have played before sleeping can be kept after you wake up. Sleeping cannot help you memorize if you practice too much. Sleeping helps much anyway. Habituality is important that built from regular practice.

Researcher : Let's talk more about the mental rehearsal strategies.

Interviewee : I would prefer playing from memory but I do not prefer photographic memory. Rather than, I would memorize the melody and note down the chord. I would hum the melody in my heart during performance and I even whisper the melody if available.

Researcher : Does your expected performance outcome exert pressure to your symptoms ? What are your expectations to yourself ?

Interviewee : It depends on whether the expectation will give myself too much pressure though I would think that suitable pressure is needed for better performance. The pressure on band performance will turn into excitement and better memory. Little pressure is a motivation to a desirable outcome. When I am doing my individual performance, I pay much attention to technical details such as dynamics, pitches etc. that does not help relieve pressure. I would not be so excited even I try so best to play all notes correctly.

Researcher : Is it about the nature of expectation ? (i.e. individual performance requires higher accuracy ?)

Interviewee : Accuracy are important either in individual or band performance. It is more important that how many of public performance experience

accumulated, especially in front of the audience. In band performance, I feel not so stressful if my friends are accompanying with me while on the stage.

Researcher : Do you think that you apply different practice strategies to individual and band performance?

Interviewee : Quite similar, band performance requires much musicianship and collaboration skills as well as individual ability while individual requires a lot of technical skills

Researcher : Do you think that your mindset to individual and band performance are quite different from each other ? Or would you see band performance as a kind of enjoyment instead of a mission ?

Interviewee : Exactly, I feel pressure on individual performance because I just take it as an assignment but for band performance it is really an enjoyment to me. I feel that I would like to share my music in band performance.

Researcher : What a perfect performance means to you, as you agree to the statement "Practice makes Perfect" ? Do you think that perfection here means technically perfection ?

Interviewee : I believe that every musician are able to demonstrate their own style and uniqueness on the stage, which is always expected by audience



and different from listening to CDs recording. It is perfect to myself if

I can share my music and message with audience successfully.

Technical errors are rather minor to me because music should not be confined to accuracy only. Technical perfection to me is customized agreement made by the former musicians but I would think we should have our own thoughts to music and share it to audience. Furthermore, adequate practice does not mean to guarantee a desirable performance because they are not always positively related.

Researcher : As you just mention “confidence” is also one of the factor making you nervous on stage, how would you explain this ?

Interviewee : This is a kind of external factor which does not really relate to how you practice you music. However, practice more can strengthen your confidence though practice covers a lot of aspects that we have discussed before. (Special mention: brand of piano, types of audience, number of audience)

Researcher : Does stage fright still struggle you right now ?

Interviewee : Although I have very few individual performance right now, I would be frightening again if I am asked to perform individually again.



Interview 3 : Female (8 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 6)

Researcher : Based on our findings from questionnaire, I would like you to describe in details to the following symptoms based on your personal experience, which are fear of failure, panic feeling, shaking and heart beat fluctuates, you may say it in any order.

Interviewee : Assume that 10 persons queening for the performance, I would be more frightened if I am number 8 when the calling number comes nearer to me. My hand feels cold and sweating. The body will uncontrollably shake although I deem that is calm to me. I think this is a bodily reaction. For some pieces stipulated in competition that are well known to most audience or my teacher is among the audience, I would expect judgment from teacher and I would care how they think of performance. This gives much pressure to me. When I am practicing in the practice room, I would do conscious practice to the estimated frightening thoughts ad pressures but it does not help at all. Once I start playing on stage, it feels a little bit better. In the middle part of performance, the body shakes less. Furthermore, if the audience does not focus on me, I would not be so frightened, such as piano accompaniment (my major instrument

is piano). Individual performance is more frightening to me than group performance (such as playing Chinese drums in the EdUHK Chinese Orchestra).

Researcher : How possible the specific mentioned practice strategies can help you alleviate your stage fright symptoms ?

Interviewee : If some sections are unachievable right now, it is even impossible on stage. I would rather worry for some achievable targets in practice that are failed on stage.

Researcher : Do you think repeated practice to difficult section can resolve your stage fright problems ?

Interviewee : Repeated practice can only bring a half of effect. Some difficult sections cannot be tackled with repetition, such as teacher teaches me to use different rhythmic patterns to practice a C – major scale. In other words, to tackle a problem, I am taught to seek for different domains that help me overcome the learning target. Repetition on the same thing does not work anyway. Repetition with meaningful aim does work.

Researcher : However, does this kind of strategies help much to your stage fright ?

Interviewee : If difficult sections are all resolved, my stage fright will be better.

Researcher : How about maintaining regular practice ?

Interviewee : Initially I agree, but afterwards I find it not much helpful to my stage fright. Memory loss are at sudden on stage even though I prepare very well.

Researcher : Have you asked your teachers or yourself why this happens to you ?

Interviewee : Yes, I would like to say that I only rely on physical memory and I do not remember the piece meaningfully therefore I do not know why I get lost. I do admit that consolidated and meaningful memory can help when your body does not coordinate well under stage fright.

Researcher : Is it related to photographic memory skills that you use ? Or physical memory makes you feel playing like automatic or by probability ?

Interviewee : Not quite, physical memory still requires me to understand the piece but not thoroughly. It largely concerns the probability of success on the stage.

Researcher : How do you explain for your difficulties facing in maintaining regular practices when you give yourself 5 marks in this category ?

Interviewee : I live in the residential hall but I still face a full booking in the

wenger room. It would be better if I come back home more because the piano in my room can always remind me to have regular practice. I come back home at Saturday but I always feel tired and then I leave home on Sunday. Academic works are always prior to my practice. If I have very short time to prepare my performance, I have to find shortcuts anyway.

Researcher : As I find that many people expect for perfection in the performance, what do you expect to your performance ?

Interviewee : Certainly I would try as perfect as I can, for example prevention of wrong notes, musically playing with well – controlled dynamics and pedaling. I think that every musician should understand their role in every performance. If I am an accompanist, I will try my best to interact with my partner. If I am a player in the ensemble, I would understand my part well and do the best I can. I think these adherences are the meaning of perfection to me. To me, I do not want to bring any trouble to others because of my faults and lack of preparation.

Researcher : Do you think what you mention is a responsibility being a musician and this may bring you stress ?

Interviewee : Yes, being a performing musician is always responsible to show their best of the audience, I would say this is a commitment to myself.

Researcher : Do you think that stage fright is now struggling you so much ?

Interviewee : Now feels better actually, and teachers help me a lot. Frankly, there are less recitals now so I do not worry much about stage fright. My teacher encourages me to gain successful experience from different competitions. I claim that it is important to absorb successful experience.

Researcher : How about unsuccessful experience ? Does it also help ?

Interviewee : From successful experience, I would appreciate myself for tiny accomplishment when I give myself a small target every time such as manner, no wrong notes etc.

Researcher : Do you think failure can motivate you to do better next time ?

Interviewee : There is no a clear cut to me whether failure is absolutely negative to me. More importantly, I need someone reminds me always that failure can still give me some insight although I would still recall failure when I am having stage fright However, I would prefer to accumulate more successful experience to overcome failures. In

short, the number of success should more than the number of

Researcher : failures.

Interviewee : As you agree to “Practice makes perfect”, what “perfect” means to you ?

I am still struggling how to be perfect according to what the scores tell me. However, I would like to say that communication skills through music is more important because this is the truth of performing art. Scores are just reference for your technical preparation. The struggling mindset still roots in my mind right now. I would hope that this mindset can be eliminated latterly.

Researcher : Do you think stage – fright – free can be achieved by doing 12 items of practice strategies that listed out on the appendix or these are your starting point to improve your stage fright ?

Interviewee : I do not agree that these strategies can fully resolve my stage fright. Psychological factors still occupy a key position.

**Interview 4 : Female (9 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 7)**

Researcher : Let’s talk about the fear of failure on stage.

Interviewee : Before going onto the stage, my body shakes because I know so many

people will watching at me. When I am performing on stage, my body also shakes uncontrollably no matter how I tell myself not to afraid.

My heart rate also increases.

Researcher : How about post – performance ?

Interviewee : It is better and calmer after performance, still there is some little fear.

Researcher : Is there any difference between you play percussion in Chinese orchestra and solo performance ?

Interviewee : Yes, less anxious in group performance. I am still anxious in ensemble performance because my fault will affect others. But, in the group ensemble, the audience will not only focus on me so I am more relaxed.

Researcher : Do you think how possible these strategies can help you alleviate stage fright ?

Interviewee : I thinking maintaining the practice is important. Better preparation should calm me more in the performance. I think that the fear comes from how bad my preparation (practice) is. In other words, if I prepare well and I still make the fault, I will blame less to myself.

Researcher : Let's talk about repeating difficult section meaningfully. What do you think ?



Interviewee : This also works. Every time of practice should show a little improvement of the difficult sections. I have tried it successful and it does help alleviate my stage fright.

Researcher : How about the mental strategies that mentioned in items 10 to 12 ?

Interviewee : Remembering the melody does help. I think the chanting out the melody also works. Because when you sing out the melody, your brain is memorizing it. I will also sing in my heart on the stage performance. How can you explain that you cannot maintain well your regular

Researcher : practice ?

It is difficult for me right now. It is quite difficult to arrange one or two

Interviewee : day practice for a week.

Researcher : Most people believe “practice makes perfect”. Does this stress on your performance outcome? What do you expect to yourself in performance?

Interviewee : The first thing is to avoid any technical errors. Also, focusing on what you hear. For example I would look carefully to the conductor in the Chinese Orchestra. I would also remind or help other members if I go smoothly. These don't give me any pressure because I think it is a “must – do”.

Researcher : Do you think stage fright is still struggling you?

Interviewee : Stage fright does not affect me much right now. For example if I want to focus on my performance or stay focus to the conductor's gesture, stage fright would not scare me away from these. Normally, in my controllable arena, I can mostly do it easily. However, stage fright brings me mistakes. In my opinion, it is half – and – half situation.

Researcher : What does “perfect” mean to you ?

Interviewee : It must be based on the ground of the formal requirements of the performance. What you think does not necessarily match with the formalized standard, it is just a proof of your ability. I think the expected outcome from the perspectives of audience would still give me pressure.

Researcher : To eliminate the stage fright, in what extent the above listed strategies can help you?

Interviewee : I agree that these strategies are likely my starting point. I think I should maintain more regular practice and understand more my weakness with corresponding solutions. I have also thought of that before. By doing these, I believe my stage fright will be improved.

Researcher : Tell me more about the additional strategies that just mentioned.

Interviewee : These will be done after the previous list of strategies have been finished.

Interview 5 : Female (10 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 8)

Researcher : Let's talk more your stage fright symptom.

Interviewee : My heart beat doesn't increase. However, my hand and leg shake very seriously. As I am an erhu player, the performance will be greatly if my hand shakes heavily. My concern of stage fright is my desirable performance outcome will be ruined by the anxious reactions. I am not worrying about the consequences of my performance failure. I do not frightened anymore after performance.

Researcher : How do the above strategies can help you alleviate the stage fright?

Interviewee : I believe that maintaining the practice more and more can help my muscle memory that I can play it automatically on the stage even though I am having stage fright. If my practice is not prepared enough, these symptoms will become the obstacles. Sufficient practice can prevent any side effects from the stage fright symptoms. I would also try to engage myself to the appropriate emotion of the pieces performed.

Researcher : It seems you give very low score to the mental strategies mentioned.

Why?

Interviewee : Through repeated practice, I would memorize the piece automatically.

I don't need to remember it deliberately. My finger can have its own muscle memory. Although I may memorize the melody successfully, my finger's memory can help me finish the performance even though I can't remember the melody anymore. The memorizing process is easy and I have never rushed to memorize any piece except the etudes. I have never spent very much time on memorizing the piece.

Researcher : As we mentioned that so many people agree to "practice makes perfect", it is believed that perfectionism may affect ones expected outcomes. What is your expected performance outcomes then ?

Interviewee : My expected outcome is the standard equivalent to my usual practice at least. However, it always 20 % off. So I would prepare 120% so that I can achieve 100% standard. This will not give me any pressure. I pursue a better practice instead of better performance. Although I think performance cannot make me enjoy the music, technical skill is totally required for a professional music. I hate performance but I love music though because I don't like being watched by so many people. I enjoy

music but I don't like to show off to others.

Researcher : Is stage fright still struggling you now ?

Interviewee : Every time shaking struggles me but the affect is decreasingly undoubtedly. It depends on how much I care about the performance. If it is important to me, I would do more psychological preparation.

Researcher : To achieve stage fright free, do you think you can do more by referencing the strategies on the list ?

Interviewee : Practice is still more important. Training of performance such as mock performance to others is also helpful to me. I will find anyone to be my virtual audience. If someone who have not listened to my music before, I would feel more nervous because I only have one chance to perform in front of him. Only maintaining the practice is important for me and others are subsidiaries.