

Music Performance Anxiety

Lilian M. Peters, Music therapist (MA), Instrumental Pedagogy (BA, MA), Pianist
HMT München, ArtEZ University of the Arts Enschede
Lilian.Peters@gmx.de



BACKGROUND

Music performance anxiety (MPA)... is a widespread problem among professional musicians within different age groups and levels of expertise. It can create a **debilitating state affecting performance** and putting a musician's **career and health at risk** if untreated. Furthermore it contributes to the manifestation of serious health issues showing in **high rates of depression, burn outs and substance abuse** in this population. In **particular classical musicians and students studying classical music** are affected. Until today there is no consensus about the best treatment method and existing research shows a range of limitations. More research is needed to find an effective treatment to prevent and treat MPA.

Improvisation... increases **musical awareness, self-confidence** and the **motivation to keep playing** in musicians. Musicians can profit from clinical improvisation like any other client population. During improvisation a **decrease of cognitive control and self-monitoring** can be observed in the frontal brain (DLPFC). This leads to a state of **reduced worry of failure and self-monitoring**, both important features of Flow.

Flow... is a concept describing a **state that allows to perform without effort**, in which the **task masks ones level of skill**. It is commonly **experienced while improvising, incompatible with debilitating MPA** and a sign of a **performance enhancing state**.

OBJECTIVE

Investigating the effect of Improvisational Music Therapy (IMT) on MPA and Flow in classical piano university students.

METHODS

Classical piano students (BA, MA) at the HMT in Munich were recruited for participation:

- **A quasi-experimental research** (quantitative design, N=2)
- **Pre- and post- assessment design**
- **IMT intervention condition** (8 session of IMT next to study-as-usual)
- **Control condition** (study-as-usual)
- **Assessment:** Internal performances
- **Measures:** Kenny Music Performance Anxiety Inventory (revised) and Flow Short-scale

RESULTS

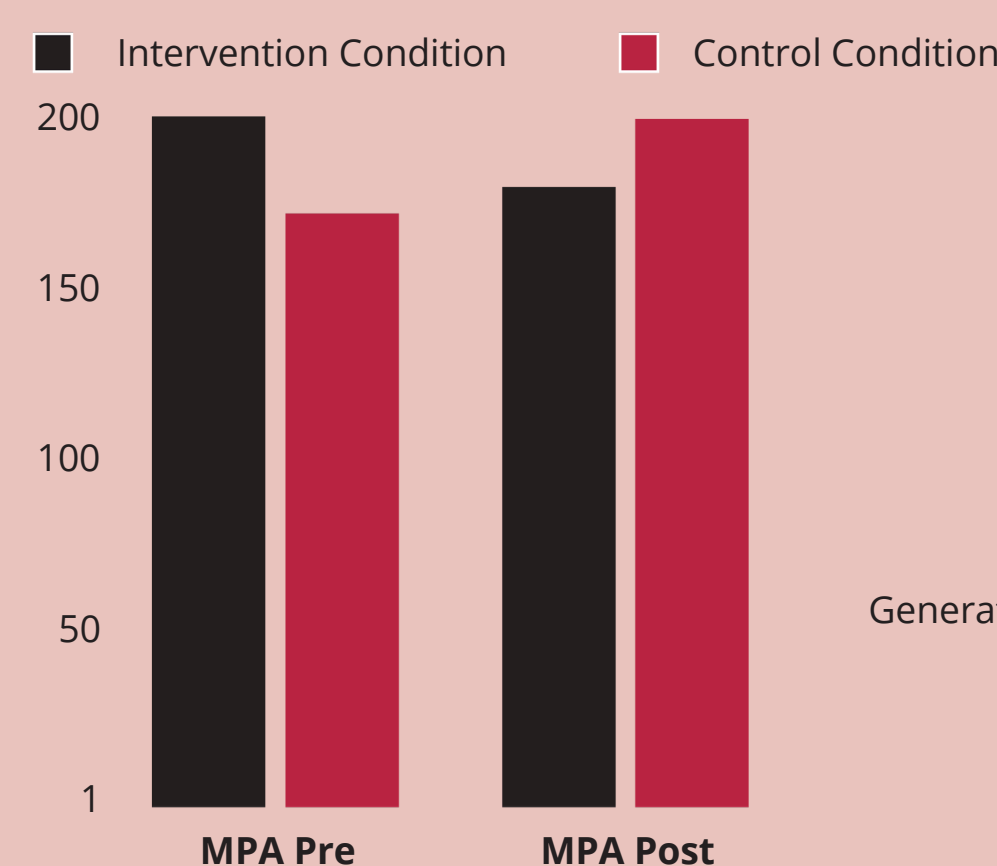
Intervention condition

- **Reduction of MPA** based on reduction of anxiety related cognitive and somatic symptoms
- **Improvement in self-esteem, being in control, and perception as performer**
- **Gain of musical confidence and self-expressive skills**
- **Motivation to play and engage in general practice**

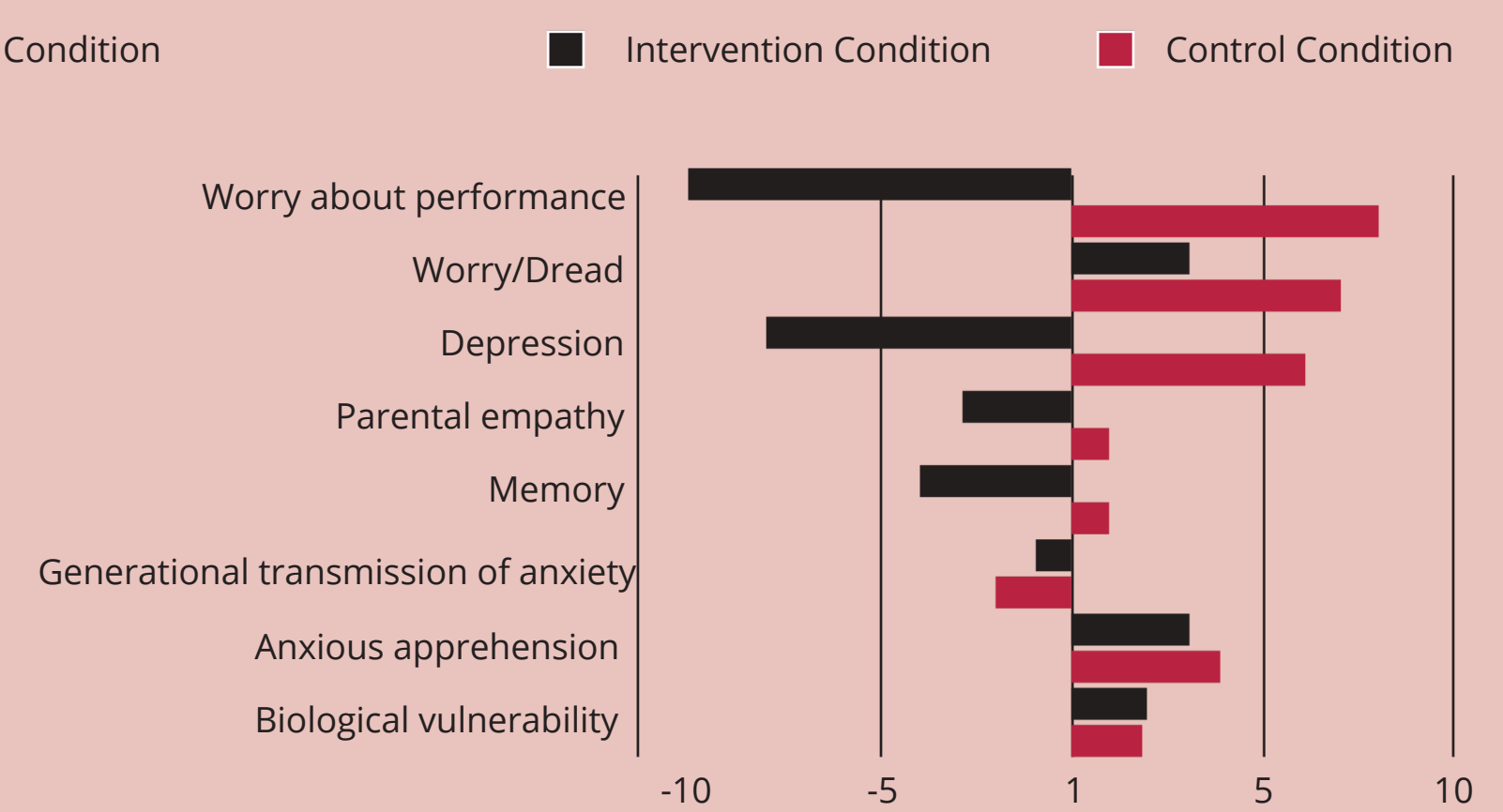
Control condition

- **Increase of MPA, decline of mood and self-esteem**

No visible effect on Flow in both groups



MPA scores pre- and post-test in IC and CC



Difference of factors of MPA in IC and CC from pre- to post-test

IMPROVISING ... it helped me to overcome the crisis I was in with the piano.

MS, participant

CONCLUSION

Improvisational Music Therapy...

- **Auspicious tool** in the treatment of classical piano students dealing with MPA
- **More research** into the working mechanisms of IMT on MPA and Flow needed
- **IMT might support a reduction of MPA by strengthening musician's self-esteem, confidence, and creativity and by reducing anxiety and debilitating cognitive symptoms**

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