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In Search of Perfection – The Need for Self-Compassion in Music Performance Education: A Concept Analysis

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Abstract

In the search for perfection, musicians can often be extremely harsh on themselves. When teaching, there is a genuine possibility that this self-treatment can be transferred to students. By using self-compassion as a personal resource, musicians can foster a healthier relationship with themselves without relinquishing their search for perfection. Self-compassion entails self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. This article reflects on the concept of self-compassion within the performing arts world by describing model, contrary, related, and borderline cases. Concept analysis was employed to illustrate how performing musicians could draw on the concept of self-compassion. Preliminary findings show that self-compassion could be a valuable tool for performing musicians to assist them in alleviating

performance anxiety and general feelings of self-doubt. I argue that by applying the concept of self-compassion in their practicing routine, performing musicians can improve their general psychological health – giving them a different approach to performing. Treating oneself with more self-compassion can also lead to more compassionate teaching practices. Self-compassion can greatly help performers lessen the pressure that they place on themselves to achieve unattainable perfection.

Introduction

Musicians are often extremely harsh on themselves, searching for perfection, leaving no stone unturned or note unevaluated. The perfect phrase, articulation, tone, or intonation is always just beyond reach. Positive psychology is interested in discovering how a healthy-functioning human acts (Sheldon & King, 2001). This concept analysis investigates how a healthy-functioning performer might act and model in the classroom. By cultivating self-compassion, musicians can foster a healthier relationship with themselves without relinquishing their search for perfection. However, self-compassion does not mean that mistakes are acceptable. On the contrary, self-compassion fosters a more beneficial and positive response to failure and making mistakes, seeing them as a part of the journey of growing as a musician (Kageyama, 2016). When practicing self-compassion, a person needs to have a non-judgmental understanding of their own pain – seeing their experience as part of the general human condition (Neff, 2003a). Applying these fundamental aspects of self-compassion to how we practice and prepare for performances could offer a more constructive approach, leading to a healthier relationship with oneself, with music, and within the performing space. This concept analysis aims to understand what the use of self-compassion might entail within the music performance education context. Self-compassion as a concept has been thoroughly researched within the field of positive psychology (Baer et al., 2012; Booker & Perlin, 2021; Kotera & Ting, 2021; Shapira & Mongrain, 2010; Welp & Brown, 2014; Yip & Tong, 2021).

Compassion

A clearer understanding of the nature of compassion is needed to better understand the concept of self-compassion and how this can be applied to the practice room and stage. Strauss et al. (2016) identified the following five components of compassion from Buddhist and Western psychological perspectives: "recognition of suffering; understanding its universality; feeling sympathy, empathy, or concern for those who are suffering (which we describe as emotional resonance); tolerating the distress associated with the witnessing of suffering; and motivation to act or acting to alleviate the suffering" (p. 25). A compassionate person thus offers others patience, kindness, and non-judgmental understanding, accepting that all humans are flawed and that it is part of the human condition to make mistakes (Neff,

2003b).

Self-compassion

Self-compassion is linked to this understanding of compassion. For a person to be self-compassionate, they would be open to and understanding of their faults and mistakes – connecting and accepting their suffering and pain and not disconnecting from the experience. This would have the positive result of healing themselves with kindness. This non-judgmental understanding helps people to see their own faults and shortcomings as part of the human experience (Neff, 2003a). Research has indicated that self-compassion is separate from other self-concepts and is associated with psychological health (Barnard & Curry, 2011). Self-esteem is undoubtedly one of the most widely known self-concepts. Self-esteem, however, differs from self-compassion, as self-esteem relies on evaluating one's actions and achievements and then living up to specific standards and positive self-evaluations (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Neff, 2003a; Neff et al., 2007). Self-criticism is closely correlated with negative psychological aspects. Some of these aspects include rumination and neurotic perfectionism. These can lead to a fight-or-flight response, releasing cortisol and adrenaline into the bloodstream and increasing blood pressure, leading to even more severe performance anxiety (Botha, 2021; Clark et al., 2014; Johnson, 2016; López et al., 2015). Promoting self-compassion could effectively counter chronic self-criticism (Neff et al., 2007).

Therapies for Increasing Self-Compassion

Although self-compassion is not a new concept, therapies designed especially for raising self-compassion are not currently available (Barnard & Curry, 2011). However, elements of established therapies can aid in raising self-compassion. For example, the following treatments have shown evidence of raising self-compassion: compassionate mind training, the compassionate image, gestalt two-chair, mindfulness-based stress reduction and meditation, dialectical behavior therapy, and acceptance and commitment therapy (Barnard & Curry, 2011). Compassionate mind training helps patients who are highly self-critical and have high levels of shame to be more self-soothing and self-reassuring (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Gilbert & Irons, 2005). The compassionate image method asks patients to visualize the "perfect nurturer" who will offer non-judgmental responses, warmth, and acceptance, and call upon this image whenever they feel the impulse to be self-critical (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Gilbert & Irons, 2004; Lee, 2005). The Gestalt two-chair method aids patients in developing more empathy for themselves. This technique asks patients to think of themselves as having two selves – one who is judgmental and the other on the receiving end of this judgement. They are asked to move between the two chairs, acting in the roles of these two selves both in giving judgement and experiencing it (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Gilbert & Irons, 2005; Neff et al., 2007).

In mindfulness-based stress reduction, patients learn mindfulness practices that encourage

them to be present and fully aware of their surroundings by focusing on all their sensory experiences. This helps them to separate themselves from thoughts that cause rumination and anxiety (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Shapiro et al., 2007). Dialectical behavior therapy requires the therapist to switch between accepting and validating the patient's desires, on the one hand, and encouraging behavioral change where necessary, on the other (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Linehan et al., 1999; Nicasastro et al., 2010). Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) assists patients in increasing their psychological flexibility, thus helping them live more in the present moment. The six core processes of ACT are: acceptance, cognitive diffusion, being present, self as context, values, and committed action (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Hayes et al., 2006). These methods could help to raise self-compassion, but perhaps a different approach to music education is worth considering.

Self-Compassion and Well-being

Studies have shown that positive psychological constructs are fundamental in the mental well-being of individuals; these constructs include resilience, self-compassion, engagement, and intrinsic motivation. Self-compassion is one of the most significant predictors of psychological and physical well-being among these constructs (Hall et al., 2013; Kotera et al., 2022; Kotera & Ting, 2021; Zessin et al., 2015). Self-compassion has been found to aid in human flourishing and has a positive correlation with many positive self-reported measures, including happiness, optimism, and agreeableness, and has a negative correlation with neuroticism (Neff et al., 2007; Verma & Tiwari, 2017). Another valuable insight into the effect of self-compassion is the increased motivation for self-improvement (Breines & Chen, 2012).

Compassion and Self-Compassion in Music Education

In her book, *Compassionate Music Teaching: A Framework for Motivation and Engagement in the 21st Century*, Hendricks (2018) refers to six qualities of compassion. These qualities are trust, empathy, patience, inclusion, community, and authentic connection (Hendricks, 2018). Juliet Hess (2020) states that self-compassionate music education can play a political role by providing a method of self-affirmation. Music educators can use music to affirm students' identities from different backgrounds and possibly encourage them to imagine another response to the current power structures. According to Hendricks (2018), "A compassionate and inclusive community is not only welcoming of different people, approaches, and needs, but it is also hospitable" (p. 127). There is also a genuine possibility that a teacher's mood or feelings can influence their students. It is thus of great importance that their relationship with themselves is a kind and nurturing one (Diaz, 2023): "the art of genuinely reaching outward requires us first to reach inward... Yet, by first coming to know and show compassion for ourselves, we open up the possibility of showing compassion to others" (Hendricks, 2018, p. 33). Unfortunately, research into self-compassion in the performing arts is still lacking

(Walton et al., 2022).

Self-Compassion and Performance

Walton et al. (2022) reviewed the literature on this topic, which had implications for all performers, including athletes, dancers, actors, and musicians. They state that self-compassion could help alleviate performers' distress and significantly influence the mental health of a population where this is of concern. Similarly, Ferguson et al. (2014) studied eleven female athletes to gain insight into their cultivation of self-compassion. Participants reported that self-compassion helped them remain more positive in times of failure. Also, concentrating on their strengths and not over-identifying with their weaknesses helped to strengthen their perseverance. The athletes reported lower levels of rumination as using self-compassion helped keep their emotions in balance. However, they had concerns over using self-compassion as they felt that sometimes it is necessary to be critical of oneself, and self-compassion might lead to mediocrity. The concept of self-compassion could also benefit performing musicians; thus, it is necessary to investigate how musicians may utilize it.

Methods

Concepts are the basic building blocks for theory construction. Concept analysis is used to identify the basic elements of a concept, refine ambiguous concepts, and help to clarify overused or vague concepts. A concept analysis results in a precise definition of a concept that increases its validity (Walker & Avant, 2018). The purpose of a concept analysis is to refine concepts and enhance their use in research and practice. It also aids the researcher in distinguishing between concepts and clarifying their relationships (Fitzpatrick & McCarthy, 2021). This study is focused on distinguishing between self-compassion and self-esteem. Self-esteem is categorized as a related case.

I completed the following steps when undertaking this concept analysis: 1) Selecting a concept; 2) Determining the aims of the analysis; 3) Placing the concept within the field; 4) Determining the defining attributes; 5) Identifying a model case; 6) Identifying borderline, related and contrary cases; 7) Identifying antecedents and consequences; and 8) Identifying empirical referents (Walker & Avant, 2018). The cases in a concept analysis are constructed on the basis of the interpretation of the defining attributes, antecedents, and consequences. These cases illustrate the use of these concepts. The model case, specifically, describes the ideal use of the concept (Fitzpatrick & McCarthy, 2021). These cases can be referred to as fictional stories – this term "may be understood as a bricolage of previously collected data, analyses and fictive elements" (Kallio, 2015, p. 3). The first step in understanding the concept of self-compassion in a musical setting was to understand how it is seen in the context of positive psychology. Terms and themes from the literature on positive psychology were used

as a priori codes to aid in analyzing the literature more specific to music (education and performance). The refined definition that results from the methodology of a concept analysis aids in understanding the concept and development of interventions, leading to a more specific measurable definition and identifying gaps in the literature. The researcher's background often plays a role in the choice of concept (Fitzpatrick & McCarthy, 2021).

Background and Positionality of the Researcher

When considering possible topics for my doctorate in flute performance, I wanted to examine my relationship with myself when preparing for and appearing on stage. I considered the way that I treated myself, especially when I made mistakes or when I failed to achieve the ever-elusive perfection. I wanted to find a new way to respond to these situations, and self-compassion seemed appropriate. This concept analysis is the first step in this research. I wanted to clarify what self-compassion for a performing musician would entail, giving me a better idea of my aim and how to measure it.

Defining Attributes

To fully understand a concept, it is necessary to identify the defining attributes that are essential to the concept. The attributes that define self-compassion are self-kindness as opposed to self-criticism, common humanity instead of being isolated, and regarding one's failures and pain mindfully instead of over-identifying with them (Kageyama, 2016; Neff, 2003a; Neff et al., 2005; Neff et al., 2007).

Self-kindness is the act of being kind to oneself in the face of failure or instances of pain. In such instances, acting with self-kindness would entail recognizing that one deserves love, affection, and happiness and treating oneself with sensitivity and empathy, extending warmth and comfort. Quite often, the way we should treat ourselves is the same as we would treat a loved one when they make a mistake or are in pain (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Hess, 2020; Johnson, 2016; Neff, 2003a, 2003b; Neff et al., 2007; Zessin et al., 2015).

Hess (2020) investigated self-compassionate music education and stated that self-kindness could be encouraged in the classroom. She advocated using Kratus' (2013) three feedback phases to validate individual voices. The three phases are generic positive feedback, descriptive feedback, and prescriptive feedback. When a teacher is purposefully kind when giving feedback, they model kindness as a path to self-kindness.

The term "common humanity" refers to the act of placing your experiences in relation to the larger human condition and not isolating yourself by allowing thoughts that lead to thinking that you are utterly alone in your experience. This concept helps us to allow self-acceptance

through social connectedness, thus negating a more self-focused approach. We can forgive ourselves for any mistakes or weaknesses we might have because we can recognize that these come from the fact that we are only humans who make mistakes and sometimes fail. Thus, in this situation, we are not alone, and we deserve our own kindness and forgiveness (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Hess, 2020; Kelley & Farley, 2019; Neff, 2003a, 2003b; Neff et al., 2007; Zessin et al., 2015).

Musicking provides a way to experience common humanity, because music is a vehicle to share ideas, emotions, and experiences. Musicking refers to taking part in the music-making process in any way – not only performing, but listening, composing, practicing, or taking part in any activity that could influence the musical performance. Thus, through this action, one becomes less isolated, and our experience is placed within the greater human experience and, in this way, the social component of musicking may contribute to enhanced well-being (Hess, 2020; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Small, 1999).

To be fully self-compassionate, one must also be mindful of one's feelings and not over-identify with them. A self-compassionate person does not ignore their thoughts or feelings, even negative ones. Instead, a self-compassionate person acknowledges these thoughts and feelings and can keep them in balance and deal with them instead of over-identifying and getting lost in them, which might lead to the person losing control over them. Striving towards a more self-compassionate existence, specifically a more self-compassionate practice and rehearsal routine, means that you are also striving for a healthier interaction with the world and yourself (Barnard & Curry, 2011; Carlson, 2019; Neff, 2003a, 2003b; Neff et al., 2007; Zessin et al., 2015).

Mindfulness practice is a common occurrence in music performance practice. It has been used to improve self-awareness and reduce stress in musicians (Carlson, 2019). Botha (2021) states that mindfulness is essential in practice routines and a possible coping mechanism for perfectionism. Mindfulness has been shown to change how musicians perceive their playing and help reduce performance anxiety (Thacker, 2018). The opposite of mindfulness, over-identification, has been found to influence performance anxiety (Kelley & Farley, 2019). Czajkowski et al. (2020) and Botha (2021) demonstrated that mindfulness improved self-kindness and reduced after-performance rumination, which significantly influences mental health and music performance anxiety. According to Zessin et al. (2015), "Self-compassion could weaken negative peaks, resulting in a reduced drop in well-being in persons with higher self-compassion. It could influence this process by buffering the negative events through cognitive, emotional reframing, diminishing the depth of negative peaks" (p. 344).

Model Case

A model case is a case that clearly describes the use of the concept and where all of the defining attributes are present (Walker & Avant, 2018). The following attributes are present in this case: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff, 2003a).

The Case

It's 6:30 in the morning, and Sarah is lying in bed. She woke up before her alarm could wake her. Today is an important day, and she can feel the nerves. This evening Sarah is the soloist in the Dvořák cello concerto with the New York Philharmonic orchestra. This is her first time performing with an orchestra of this caliber and this could be the start of the next phase of her career. The weight of this day and performance has been with her ever since she received the call.

Sarah gets out of bed and puts on her running gear – running has always helped to calm her mind and lift her spirits, and on a day like today she needs all the help she can get. Stepping onto a busy New York street, it's grounding to think that each person has their own thing going on today. She thinks to herself, "Perhaps one of them also has a big, important day ahead." Finding her way to Central Park, Sarah appreciates the show the city has put on for her. A beautiful spring morning with nature majestically waking up from its long slumber, enjoying the weather with Sarah. Whilst running, Sarah thinks back to this week's rehearsals and the hours of preparation before. The familiar sentiment comes up "If I only had two more weeks..." Sure, not everything is how she would have liked it to be and there have been some slips during the rehearsals, but then again, she is playing most of the piece extremely well. At this moment, Sarah promises herself that today she will look and think about the things she does well – moments of pure magic. She remembers that the goal is not to play and be perfect, but to openly express your passion and to give voice to your emotions and that of the composer. "You are not alone," she says out loud – not on that stage and not in the world. Mistakes will undoubtedly happen, but the music is most important.

Getting back to her hotel, Sarah feels ready and excited for this significant and important day. Looking forward to embracing all it has to offer and making beautiful music come alive.

Contrary Case

Contrary cases are examples that are definitely not illustrative of the concept; a contrary case does not possess any of the defining attributes of the concept (Walker & Avant, 2018). The following case includes the following defining attributes that are negatively correlated to self-compassion: self-criticism, isolation, and over-identification (Neff, 2003a).

The Case

John is a third-year music student studying oboe. Today, like most other days, John will spend a tremendous amount of time in a practice room. John is very ambitious and wants to be a fantastic oboist. He spends most of his practicing time searching for perfection – the perfect sound, intonation, technique and playing every piece with the perfect musicality. The only way John knows how to do this is to look at every aspect of his playing in extreme detail – dissecting every sound he makes. In John's mind, there is no room for any mistakes, and thus he is constantly pushing himself. Most days John does not attain the level of playing he wants and constantly thinks he might not possess the talent needed to become a great musician. "Is my dream perhaps completely out of reach? Do I perhaps not possess the talent?" John does not see the need to take stock and see how far he has come or what he does well. There is no reason to focus on those considerations, as he must look at his mistakes and fix those.

Most days John feels like he is the only one who is struggling with these feelings of hopelessness and uncertainty. His fellow students seem to be making much more progress than he is, and they do not seem to struggle as much as he does. These thoughts make him feel quite ashamed and they cause him to be afraid of stepping onto a stage. "What is the point of performing if you are not going to be perfect?" he asks himself. "Everyone is only judging and comparing me with the best, so how can I even compete with that?" These thoughts go through his mind before, during, and after any performance and most lessons. The rest of the time, he keeps replaying his mistakes in his mind and he finds it difficult to let go of them, which usually causes him to make even more mistakes. He wonders if he will ever be able to feel content with one of his performances. He finds it hard to be "in the moment" when playing and to be truly happy with what he has just achieved as he sees in so many of his fellow students.

Practicing and working harder, scrutinizing every note and action – John is sure that is the only way of getting to that place where he feels happy with his playing.

Related Case

A related case portrays another concept that is related to the main concept. This case helps to place the main concept within the subject field and allows us to see how the concept we are studying is unique (Walker & Avant, 2018). The following case represents the related concept of self-esteem and portrays the following defining attributes: worth, acceptance, and efficacy (AlHarbi, 2022).

The Case

On Monday evening, Devin is heading to rehearsal. He is looking forward to this week because Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* is on the program. As the principal trumpet of

the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra, he is ready to rock the solo! For all that might be lacking in Devin's personality – confidence is not it. Walking into the Linder Auditorium, Devin knows he is ready to do this. He is well prepared and knows he is a valuable orchestral member. Not only with his standard of playing, but also in the way he leads his section. Devin knows that he is not perfect, so therefore he works hard and prepares for concerts. In preparation for the orchestral rehearsals and during these rehearsals, he accepts that he might make some mistakes. He knows that, as a musician and player, he still has some progress to make. Still, he thinks he is doing a great job and is happy with his playing currently and with his preparation for the rehearsal. Sitting down on his chair and taking out his instrument, Devin starts warming up and getting into the zone. He does love this part of his job – everyone arriving, greeting, warming up. Creating this kaleidoscope of sounds with fragments of what is still to come.

Rehearsal starts, and the first movement, *Promenade*, goes off without a hitch. Devin knows that this concert is going to be epic!

Borderline Case

Borderline cases are examples that illustrate a significant number of the defining attributes, but not all of them (Walker & Avant, 2018). This borderline case portrays common humanity and mindfulness but not self-kindness, and instead shows self-criticism (Neff, 2003a).

The Case

For Nadia, every day of the week looks a bit different as she has very few standing appointments on her calendar. Nadia is a collaborative pianist living in Budapest and mostly likes this aspect of her life. Nadia can get bored quite quickly, and a repetitive routine would be soul-destroying. Her ever-changing schedule keeps life interesting, but sometimes it does make it difficult not to get overwhelmed by everything that happens and that she must do. As a collaborative pianist, Nadia's days involve numerous music-making experiences. She plays many chamber music concerts with various musicians and groups. In addition, she regularly plays when one of the orchestras requires a pianist. The biggest part of her work is undoubtedly playing for students at the university.

In a typical week, Nadia goes through many different pieces of music. It is of the utmost importance that she uses her practice time as effectively as possible. When practicing, she starts by looking for the parts that she wouldn't be able to sight-read easily and works on them first. Targeting these sections or areas saves her time instead of just playing through and seeing what works. When she struggles with a passage, she keeps in mind that everyone struggles with some sections. The only way to overcome sections like these is with intelligent

and deliberate practice. "If I practice it well, everyone will think it's easy for me," she thinks to herself. "That's how everyone does it." It is vital to keep her emotions in check, remembering that a difficult passage is a problem to solve, and one should just look for the solutions. Like so many colleagues, Nadia is a perfectionist. When practicing, she leaves no stone unturned. The only way she knows to prepare and practice is to evaluate every note with extreme criticism and attention to every detail. It has to be perfect. There is absolutely no other option.

"No, that is not right. You must get that perfect," she says to herself. "That note is still sticking out. Get that equal; those fingers are falling over one another." This is what her thoughts sound like every time she sits at the piano.

Antecedents

Antecedents are the conditions that must be in place for the concept to occur. In addition, antecedents are helpful in further defining the concept (Walker & Avant, 2018). Self-compassion is a way of dealing with or reacting to instances of pain, suffering or shortcomings. Accepting these aspects as part of the human condition is of the utmost importance, and acceptance is an antecedent needed for self-compassion to be of value (Neff, 2003b). In the model and borderline cases, Sarah and Nadia accept their shortcomings as part of the human condition, but John, in the contrary case, is extremely critical of his playing and feels isolated in his experience and struggles. On the other hand, Devin is confident and well-prepared in the related case, demonstrating self-esteem.

Kegelaers et al. (2021) reported relatively high mental health problems among classical musicians. In Kenny et al.'s (2014) study on the psychological well-being of orchestral musicians, the number one reason for performance anxiety ranked by the musicians was pressure from themselves. Johnson (2016) agrees with this aspect, commenting on her own self-critical and destructive behavior and how this is true for many musicians. This aligns with the views of Clark et al. (2014), who stated that less successful performances were described by musicians as being linked to negative mental outlooks, frustration, lack of enjoyment, and under-preparedness.

Consequences

Music performance anxiety (MPA) is one of the most evident mental disorders troubling musicians. It has, however, been connected to other mental illnesses, including acute stress disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder (McGrath et al., 2017). Recurring thought patterns relate to MPA and particularly to the way that we regularly deal with ourselves. Negative and uncaring thought patterns during practices and performances are examples of such destructive

thought patterns (McGrath et al., 2017). The contrary and borderline cases give us examples of these kinds of negative and uncaring thought patterns.

Self-compassion aids in changing negative emotions into more positive thoughts and behaviors, with evidence showing lower levels of depression and anxiety in performers (Neff, 2003b). In the model case, one can see how Sarah responds differently than Nadia and John did in moments of failure and situations of pressure. A person could increase their resilience by holding their emotions in balance and not over-identifying with them through mindfulness and mindfulness-based relaxation techniques. Resilience and physical health are two factors that protect against mental health issues (Kegelaers et al., 2021).

Another consequence of self-compassion is more regular practice. A study using self-determination theory to explore its influence on music students' practice revealed that meeting the psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy resulted in more frequent and higher-quality practice (Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016). Self-determination theory refers to three innate psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. When these needs are satisfied, enhanced self-motivation and mental health are experienced (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-compassion increases autonomy through mindfulness and relatedness through common humanity (Reyes, 2012).

Empirical Referents

The final stage of a concept analysis is determining the empirical referents or ways to measure the concept (Walker & Avant, 2018).

Neff (2003b) developed a scale with which to measure self-compassion. This scale is divided into questions that pertain to the three defining attributes and their negatives. When completing the questionnaire, participants are asked how often they behave in a certain way by assigning a number from 1 to 5. When calculating the results, the questions on the negative attributes are reversed.

The questions are as follows and have been grouped in their corresponding attributes. The number next to each question represents the order in which they appear on the test. The questions have been altered to fit music rehearsal room scenarios so that they can be used to ascertain the self-compassion of musicians.

Self-Kindness:

5. I try to be loving towards myself after an unsuccessful rehearsal or concert.
12. When I am struggling with a certain piece, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing stage fright.

- 23. I'm tolerant to my flaws and inadequacies as a musician.
- 26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my playing I don't like.

Self-Criticism:

- 1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies as a musician.
- 8. When I can't get a certain piece or passage right, I tend to be tough on myself.
- 11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my playing I don't like.
- 16. When identifying aspects of my playing I don't like, I get down on myself.
- 21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing stage fright.

Common Humanity:

- 3. When I have a bad practice session or performance, I recognize that it is part of life and that everyone has bad days.
- 7. When I'm down after an unsuccessful practice or performance, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I do.
- 10. When I feel inadequate in my playing, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- 15. I try to see my failings as a musician as part of the journey of growing and developing.

Isolation:

- 4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from other musicians.
- 13. When I'm not playing well, I tend to feel like most other musicians are probably playing better than I am.
- 18. When I'm really struggling to play something, I tend to feel like other musicians are not struggling with something like this.
- 25. When I play badly, I tend to feel alone in my failure.

Mindfulness:

- 9. When I have an upsetting performance or practice, I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- 14. When I make mistakes, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- 17. When I have a bad practice session or performance, I try to keep it in perspective.
- 22. When I'm feeling down about my playing, I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.

Over-identification:

- 2. When I'm practicing or performing, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- 6. When I have a bad practice of performance, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- 20. When I'm having an upsetting performance or practice, I get carried away with my

feelings.

24. When I make mistakes, I tend to blow them out of proportion.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore and define what the concept of self-compassion would look like from a performing musician and educator's perspective. Walker and Avant's (2018) eight-step concept analysis method was used to define self-compassion as a healthier response to the shortcomings and failures of performing musicians. Zessin et al. (2015, p. 340) state that "Self-compassion describes a positive and caring attitude of a person towards her- or himself in the face of failures and individual shortcomings. As a result of this caring attitude, individuals high in self-compassion are assumed to experience higher individual wellbeing." (p. 340). In the model case, Sarah is an example of an individual exhibiting mental and physical well-being. In contrast, John, in the contrary case, is clearly unwell and exhibits feelings of hopelessness, rumination, anxiety, and unhappiness. In comparison, Nadia, in the borderline case, exhibits well-being, but her lack of self-kindness causes rumination. Devin, in the related case, is confident and self-assured, but research has shown that self-esteem does not provide the same emotional resilience and stability as self-compassion (Neff, 2011).

Based on this concept analysis, self-compassion could be a valuable concept for musicians and should be instilled in students through music performance education. Self-compassion may enable performing musicians and music performance students to treat themselves in a new, more constructive way that could lessen music performance anxiety, improve general mental health, and increase practice time and quality.

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