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Finding focus : using external focus of attention for practicing and performing music

Williams, S.G.

Citation

Williams, S. G. (2019, June 6). *Finding focus : using external focus of attention for practicing and performing music*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/73832>

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Cover Page



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Author: Williams, S.G.

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Issue Date: 2019-06-06

PART III: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

In the introduction to this thesis, questions were raised about what musicians need to focus on in order to develop their ability to play and perform music convincingly. Declarative and procedural processes were discussed as well as the role of the conservatoire for teaching musicians how to practice. The research questions and hypotheses for the current research centred on the role of attentional focus in artistic practice. Questions concerning the nature of “optimal” focus for musicians, and what characterises external focus for music-making were put forward, leading to the main inquiry: the effects of external focus on learning and on performance.

In this final part, Chapter 8 describes the main findings of the current research, how they address the questions outlined earlier, and how they relate to previous theories and research on attentional focus. Areas for future research are suggested. Chapter 9 discusses the implications of the current research for music pedagogy by re-addressing the theme of procedural processes versus declarative processes, and offers suggestions for a holistic approach to music-making and a reformulated description of the stages of learning based on research on external focus. Areas for future research are summarised. This thesis ends with concrete recommendations for conservatoires about teaching musicians how to practice, and presents a workbook written and developed by the researcher about practicing and teaching practicing.