

THE IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS OF THE STUDENT IN THE PROCESS OF PIANO PRACTICE

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Ermanova Dilafruz

*Assistant Lecturer at the "Vocal" Department, Nukus Branch of the
Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture*

Abstract

This article explores the importance of the psychological readiness of the student in the process of piano practice. Psychological readiness is an educational factor that directly influences the student's success in music education, as well as their creative and technical development. Among the main aspects of psychological readiness, the article discusses the student's self-confidence, ability to manage stress, concentration, creative freedom, and decision-making skills. Furthermore, it analyzes the problems that may arise due to a lack of psychological readiness, such as loss of motivation, difficulties in concentration, creative blocks, and issues with self-control.

Keywords

piano, psychological readiness, music education, stress management, concentration, creative freedom, student, self-confidence, musical development, technical skills.

The piano is one of the most prominent and complex instruments in the art of music. This instrument requires a high level of musical expression and technical development. To be a pianist, technical preparation, such as finger strength, wrist and finger flexibility, and rhythm accuracy, is of great importance in collaboration between the teacher and the students. Technical preparation is the process of developing the primarily physiological and mechanical skills necessary for a pianist to perform musical works correctly and of high quality. This is essentially akin to the concept of "technique," which is one of the fundamental elements of musical performance. Technical preparation teaches the student to develop the correct formation of the hands and fingers, speed, precision, and continuity, as well as all the skills needed to ensure musical expression is rich and accurate.

Spiritual preparation begins with the first steps of a young musician. The student has already been influenced by their close ones, friends who are interested in music, as well as examples from books, movies, and TV shows. In fulfilling their

duties, the teacher should develop positive qualities that have become part of the youth's nature and shape the necessary traits for successful engagement in music. Developing the spiritual aspects of a musician is a primary and crucial task. This includes developing qualities such as consciousness, diligence, responsibility towards completed work, discipline, courage, perseverance, self-control, overcoming difficulties, determination, respect for the profession, and love for ancient arts like music.

These qualities are particularly evident in students who love their country, take pride in its history, its great people, as well as achievements in labor, science, culture, art, and sports. Through discussions and specific examples, the teacher should provide the students with knowledge about the lives of composers and famous musicians. All types of activities, including music performance, are related to overcoming difficulties and demand physical, mental, intellectual, and willpower from individuals. Willpower preparation should be an integral part of all other preparation aspects, especially in concert performance preparation. To successfully develop willpower qualities, the following is necessary:

Understanding the knowledgeable goal and realizing the need to overcome difficulties for it.

Setting realistic and achievable new and higher goals: prospective, intermediate, and specific goals.

Strict adherence to a daily routine, implementing a rational schedule for studying, working, practicing music independently, and participating in concert activities. Implementing independent willpower decisions. Developing the ability to resist emotional reactions in stressful situations that might hinder achieving high creative results. Being able to control one's activities and behavior and taking into account the work done. The obligation to complete planned, defined, and necessary tasks.

In music education, especially in piano performance, the psychological state of the student is just as important as their technical preparation. Many students, despite having mastered the piece well during practice, are unable to fully demonstrate their abilities when performing in front of an audience or teacher due to nervousness. Therefore, methods aimed at overcoming stage fright are a significant factor in improving performance skills. Performance anxiety may be related to factors such as lack of self-confidence, technically complex pieces, lack of stage experience, and the sense of responsibility in front of a teacher or audience. While a certain level of anxiety can have a positive effect on performance, excessive anxiety leads to reduced concentration, memory lapses, and technical errors. During piano practice, performance anxiety that arises in students can significantly

hinder their ability to fully demonstrate their technical abilities and artistic thinking. Therefore, controlling anxiety and applying methodological techniques aimed at directing it positively during the performance process is one of the important tasks in piano pedagogy. The main methodological approaches that have proven effective in practice are outlined below.

Firstly, the step-by-step performance method plays a crucial role in ensuring the student's psychological stability. This method involves dividing the piece into smaller musical sections rather than mastering it as a whole at once. Working on each section separately, gradually overcoming technical difficulties, and deeply understanding the musical text increases the student's self-confidence. As a result, the level of performance anxiety during the process significantly decreases.

The method of practicing at a slow tempo is also considered an important tool for overcoming anxiety. Performing the piece at a slow tempo ensures the accuracy of technical movements and helps form muscle memory. During this process, the student consciously controls each note, creating a strong connection between finger movements and auditory perception. Mastery of a piece at a slow tempo creates a foundation for performing it confidently at faster tempos, which is a key factor in reducing stage anxiety.

Mental performance, playing the piece mentally, holds a special place in overcoming anxiety. This method develops the student's musical memory and thinking. By imagining the piece without the piano, the student strengthens musical images, note sequences, and technical movements. Mental performance prevents memory lapses and helps the student feel freer on stage. Additionally, organizing mini-concerts is one of the effective methods in practice. By performing in front of a small audience such as classmates, friends, or teachers the student gradually adapts to the stage environment. This method provides an opportunity to test performance anxiety in real-life situations and develop the skills to manage it. When mini-concerts are regularly organized, the student's stage presence and performance confidence significantly improve.

Finally, breathing exercises and concentration techniques are important psychological factors in managing anxiety. Proper breathing techniques calm the nervous system and help normalize heart rate. Concentration exercises help direct the student's attention to the musical text and ensure they do not get distracted by external factors. When applied before and during practice sessions, these exercises significantly reduce the negative effects of anxiety.

In piano practice, the systematic and purposeful application of methods aimed at overcoming anxiety enhances the student's performance stability, technical

accuracy, and artistic expression. When these methods are used harmoniously, they help elevate the quality of piano performance to a new level.

Undoubtedly, experience plays a significant role in the successful execution of sight-reading. First, this involves the accumulation of necessary motor patterns, which is ensured through specific exercises aimed at developing finger motor skills. These patterns are stored as "gestalts" through visual perception and are later easily recognized and quickly converted into motor responses in the musical text. The process of reading familiar patterns is similar to reading words: attention is directed not at each individual symbol but at a combination of symbols.

Secondly, experience involves the high-speed development of the visual-motor interaction structure, meaning the ability to respond quickly and accurately to changing visual stimuli. E. Meints and D. Gambryk conducted a study exploring the relationship between sight-reading, working memory (WM), and practice among pianists. Their results showed that regular practice of sight-reading improves this skill, but the development of this ability is somewhat limited by the individual cognitive capacities of the pianist through complex mental activity.

This article discusses the crucial importance of experience in sight-reading. This aspect is directly related to overcoming performance anxiety in piano practice, as one of the main causes of anxiety is the lack of confidence when working with the musical text. Increased experience builds this confidence and ensures psychological stability. As highlighted in the article, the accumulation of motor patterns is achieved through the development of finger motor skills. This process leads to the automation of technical movements in piano practice. The automatic execution of technical movements frees the mind from excessive control during performance, allowing the focus to shift to musical expression and artistic interpretation. As a result, performance anxiety during stage appearances significantly decreases.

Additionally, perceiving the musical text as "gestalts" accelerates the performance process and reduces the likelihood of errors. This type of perception strengthens the pianist's musical thinking and memory, allowing them to remain composed even in unfamiliar situations. This freedom is a key psychological factor in overcoming performance anxiety.

The article also emphasizes the high-speed development of the visual-motor interaction, which is crucial for improving performance skills. When rapid and accurate motor responses are formed, the performer gains confidence in their movements. This ensures stability during performance in stressful stage situations. The findings from E. Meints and D. Gambryk's research scientifically support this aspect of the article. Their conclusions indicate that regular sight-reading practice

improves performance skills, but working memory capacity sets individual limits on the development of this ability. This points to the need for an individualized approach in piano pedagogy.

Considering the cognitive characteristics of the student when organizing practice sessions not only improves performance skills but also reduces the negative effects of anxiety.

However, mastering performance technique is still a time-consuming and effort-intensive process. Now, there is a clear need for advanced technologies that enable achieving the desired results with less effort and in a shorter period.

The problems that define the conditions for the development of performance techniques are very broad. Solving these issues can undoubtedly benefit educators. One of the lesser-studied problems is the lack of focus on improving specific methods and techniques for technical development, which often falls outside the scope of piano teachers' attention. Research efforts should aim to identify the directions that should guide the search for effective teaching methodologies.

The methods for developing piano technique have fundamentally changed. Previously, long daily technical exercises, numerous études, and practice sessions were the real markers of systematic innovation in a pianist's technique. Today, however, the development of technique is guided not only by the traditional recommendations of piano pedagogy but increasingly by new rules and advice from both teachers and pianists themselves. The number of hours devoted to technical work, the études and exercises studied, fingering principles, and daily practice time have all increased, but this occurs within the evolutionary process of forming and developing piano technique.

Psychological preparation mainly includes factors such as the student's self-confidence, ability to manage stress, concentration, creativity, and control over breaks. A student who is psychologically prepared is more likely to succeed in achieving their goals.

First, psychological preparation increases a student's self-confidence. Without confidence, a student may continue practicing while fearing mistakes, slowing down progress. A student with good psychological preparation, however, can learn from mistakes and use them to improve.

Second, psychological preparation develops the ability to manage stress. During piano study, students often face challenges such as learning complex pieces, mastering new techniques, or performing in concerts. In these situations, psychological preparation helps students manage stress, allowing them to control their emotions and continue practicing effectively.

Moreover, psychological preparation improves concentration and persistence during learning. This, in turn, leads to higher achievements in piano performance. A student capable of self-discipline and patiently correcting mistakes during practice will show significant improvement in musical technique and performance. Additionally, psychological preparation plays a key role in developing a student's creativity, enabling them to express themselves freely and perform musical works uniquely.

Thus, in piano lessons, psychological preparation enhances self-confidence, aids in stress management, improves concentration, and fosters creativity. All of these factors significantly increase the effectiveness of the learning process.

Psychological readiness also has a major impact on a student's creative and intellectual development and the formation of musical technique. It encompasses the student's mental state, attitude toward lessons, ability to manage stress, self-confidence, focus, and creative approach. A lack of psychological preparation can hinder musical activity and create various psychological and creative challenges.

When a student is not psychologically prepared, their self-confidence decreases. This is especially noticeable when learning new techniques, performing complex pieces, or playing in public. Lack of confidence may lead the student to face mistakes with fear or even doubt their abilities, frequently abandoning practice. As a result, instead of progressing, the student anticipates failure and refrains from taking action. This situation reduces motivation and makes achieving goals more difficult.

The process of musical performance, with its complexity and demands, can create stressful situations for the student. Without psychological preparation, managing stress can become challenging. For example, increased anxiety and fear may arise before a public performance or while learning a difficult piece. High levels of stress can reduce the student's positive attitude toward music and lower performance ability. Stress also interferes with concentration, reducing practice effectiveness.

A lack of psychological preparation causes problems with focus. Learning piano requires high levels of attention and concentration because each note, rhythm, and finger placement must be executed accurately. A student who is not psychologically prepared cannot maintain focus, resulting in frequent mistakes and incorrect performance. This hinders the development of technical skills and may lead to forgetting or misplaying the studied material.

Musical performance requires a creative approach. If a student lacks confidence or psychological readiness, they may struggle to express emotions through music. Limited creative freedom also prevents the development of unique

performance styles and the ability to express personal interpretation. The student may be overly cautious or make errors, resulting in performances that are superficial, lacking the depth or emotional impact of the music. This can decrease interest in music and limit creative development.

Without psychological readiness, students also face difficulties in self-control and problem-solving. Piano study, especially preparing for concerts and refining pieces, requires determination and self-discipline. A student who is not psychologically prepared may struggle to make quick decisions during the creative process, act impatiently when correcting mistakes, and become discouraged. These issues slow musical growth and negatively affect overall development.

In conclusion, psychological preparation is one of the main factors determining a student's overall success in learning piano. A lack of preparation can lead to low self-confidence, difficulties managing stress, focus problems, creative barriers, and indecision. Therefore, fostering and strengthening students' psychological readiness is crucial for the successful development of music education.

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