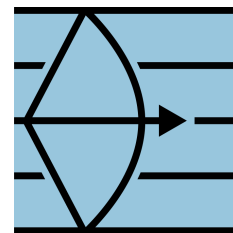


PRACTICING TASK FOCUS

"Fill your mind with sound. Use nuances. When you have controlled the sound (in your mind), you will have controlled the body" (Arnold Jacobs).



Both learning and performance benefit from task focus – this is backed up by research from movement and sports sciences on attentional focus, research on performance anxiety and on 'flow'.

Find and develop methods and strategies that help you to be totally absorbed in the task of music-making – both whilst you practice and during performance. Notice when thoughts and distractions come up, and let them go. The more you are focussed on the *task*, the less you are focussed on the *self*.

Your starting point is to formulate your musical intentions. Your goal is to be fully present and aware – *noticing* rather than judging and analysing.

Whilst playing, ask yourself things like:

- Am I in the here and now?
- Can I imagine vividly what I want to sound like/say/feel?
- Am I in touch with my instrument?
- What is the mood of the piece/phrase?

Tips

- Check if the task is too complex or stressful
- Avoid verbal and technical instructions
- Look for musical and expressive terms & concepts rather than technical ones
- Explore and experiment: improvise and play variations
- Look for ways to be in the senses: touch, hearing, sight
- Develop your ability to visualise/imagine the music: rich, nuanced and vivid
- Learn to let go of needing to intellectually understand or control everything

Questions:

What helps you to focus on the task?

What disturbs your task focus?

When you notice yourself shift into thinking & analysis, judgement, thoughts from the past or future, and distractions, invite yourself to come back into the task (and the present).