

MUSIC THERAPY FOR MUSICIANS (MTM) METHOD

An Integrative Music Therapy Approach to Treating and Preventing Musical Performance Stress

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The Music Therapy for Musicians Method is an effective treatment approach to dealing with the stress and anxiety associated with musical performance. The approach, developed by psychoanalyst, music therapist, and professional jazz pianist, Dr. Louise Montello, has been tested in a number of clinical studies in the Department of Psychology at New York University. Research findings indicated that the MTM Method not only significantly reduced anxiety in the participating musicians, but also significantly increased musicality as rated by trained observers. The research focused on a short-term 12 week integrative group music therapy intervention. The MTM Method has also been adapted and applied as a short-term individual therapy approach for anxious musicians. Clinical reports verify the effectiveness of the approach with individuals as well as with groups.

The integrative approach combines cognitive-behavioral techniques such as cognitive restructuring and behavior rehearsal with mind-body awareness techniques including breathing and relaxation exercises, autogenic training, focusing meditation, and visualization. A depth-oriented music therapy component encourages participants to explore their relationship to music through improvisation and other creative musical interactions. Through musical improvisation, the musicians begin to access their "essential musical intelligence" – the innate ability to use music and sound as self-reflecting, transformational tools - to gain access to unconscious, unresolved conflicts related to early and more recent performance experiences. These inner conflicts are often found to be the underlying causes of musical performance anxiety. Through the creative process of music therapy, the musicians are able to work through these conflicts and gain emotional resolution and clarity leading to the cessation of anxiety and more effective and enjoyable performing.

There is no other psychotherapeutic method that integrates the creative, transformational process of music therapy into a treatment approach in dealing with musical performance anxiety. Thus, I have been demonstrating my method through workshops and seminars for music therapists and educators at both national and international conferences over the last ten years. I have received favorable feedback from many of the therapists and teachers who have incorporated my approach into their work. The next frontier, however, is to use an adaptation of the MTM Method as a prevention tool that can be integrated into the core curriculums of music conservatories (along with their Preparatory Divisions). Training in a modified version of the MTM Method can also be quite helpful to music administrators, private music teachers, and music industry executives in their dealings with highly sensitive musical personalities. I am currently in the process of creating these prevention workshops for the music community at large, adapting the concepts, theories, and techniques of the MTM Method into a more educational framework, as opposed to the original therapeutic model.

