

# Adaptation of the Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment Approach for Groups of Adolescent Musicians: An Assessment of Music Performance Anxiety, Performance Boost, and Flow

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## ABSTRACT

### Background

Many musicians experience *Music Performance Anxiety* (MPA; Kenny, 2011) which may develop early, peak in adolescence (Osborne & Kenny, 2005) and continue into professional life, impacting on general well-being (Kenny, Driscoll, & Ackermann, 2014). Adrenaline in performance can have a positive effect, known as *performance boost* (Simoens, Puttonen, & Tervaniemi, 2015). Strategies assisting a state of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005) have been suggested to assist managing MPA (Lamont, 2012). Rather than challenging difficult thoughts, the Mindfulness, Acceptance and Commitment (MAC) Approach (Gardner & Moore, 2004) uses mindfulness and acceptance strategies that have been shown to decrease anxiety and increase flow in sport (Gardner & Moore, 2012).

### Aims

Exploration of MPA, performance boost, and flow may enhance psychological understanding of performance. The adaptation of the MAC Approach for musicians aims to develop an early intervention approach for MPA.

### Method

36 musicians (13-22yr) participated in seven focused and interactive group sessions of the MAC Approach, or a no-intervention control group, and completed questionnaires of demographics, MPA, boost, flow, and qualitative feedback.

### Results

Relationships between measures were all significant: MPA and boost ( $r = -.554, p < .001$ ), MPA and flow ( $r = -.476, p = .003$ ), and boost and flow ( $r = .485, p = .003$ ). Post MAC sessions the intervention group had a non-significant reduction in MPA compared to control ( $p = .097, \eta^2_p = .08$ , two-tailed), and a significant reduction in performance context factor ( $p = .048, \eta^2_p = .11$ ). No significant differences were found for boost or flow. Follow up results demonstrated a non-significant trend of reduced MPA for the intervention group, and also non-significant improvement in the control group. Analysis of qualitative feedback was 71% positive.

### Conclusions

Analysis of the relationships between MPA, performance boost, and flow presents an addition to current literature. Development of the MAC approach for adolescent musicians aims to address the need for early intervention for MPA.

While reduction in overall MPA was not significant, results are noteworthy for a small and variable population. Timing of the improvement of the control group MPA at follow-up raises the possibility of a 'coaching ripple effect' (O'Connor & Cavanagh, 2013) occurring as a result of shared experiential interactions that warrants further exploration. Factor analysis and qualitative feedback assist in understanding mechanisms of MPA. This study makes a valuable contribution to addressing a potentially debilitating problem for musicians.

### Keywords

performance anxiety; flow; performance boost; mindfulness; acceptance

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