

**Self-Compassion for Improving Flow and Reducing Music Performance Anxiety:
A Preliminary Mixed Methods Investigation of Musicians' Performance Experiences**

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Legend

Abbreviation	Definition
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BSI	Brief Symptom Inventory
CBCT	Cognitively-Based Compassion Training
CFT	Compassion-Focused Therapy
CLS	Compassionate Love Scale
CMSC	Center for Mindful Self-Compassion
CS	Compassion Scale
DFS	Dispositional Flow Scale
ESD	Extreme Studentized Deviate
ESM	Experience Sampling Method
FSS	Flow State Scale
MPA	Music Performance Anxiety
MPAI	Music Performance Anxiety Inventory
MSC	Mindful Self-Compassion
PAI	Performance Anxiety Inventory
PI	Principal Investigator
PSC	Performance Strategies Class
REB	Research Ethics Boards
SCBCS	Santa Clara Brief Compassion Scale
SCS	Self-Compassion Scale
SD	Standard Deviation
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

STAI State Trait Anxiety Inventory

TA Thematic Analysis

Abstract

The competitive demands of public performances significantly impact musicians' performance experiences within the traditional music education framework. Aiming to investigate the mediating role of self-compassion in enhancing music performance experiences, I explored 35 Chinese university students' flow and music performance anxiety (MPA), two antithetical constructs that influence performance experiences positively or negatively. Instead of focusing on performance outcomes, this interdisciplinary study examined participants' flow, MPA, and self-compassion before and after they undertook either the Performance Strategies Class (PSC) or the Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) program delivered by professional trainers. Employing mixed methods convergent design, I used questionnaires to assess trait measures (flow, MPA, and self-compassion) and collected data on state measures (flow and MPA) during public performance settings, where participants performed piano solo pieces by memory. Participants also provided qualitative written responses reflecting their self-perceived changes in their two live performance experiences. Mixed-design Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) showed significant improvements in all participants' performance experiences from pre- to post-training. Compared to the PSC program, the MSC program significantly improved participants' state flow and trait self-compassion. The MSC program also significantly outperformed the PSC program in reducing participants' trait and state MPA. Using reflexive thematic analysis, I identified key themes that corroborated the quantitative results. The mixed methods findings showed positive outcomes in both programs and demonstrated the superior effectiveness of the MSC program in improving flow and reducing MPA. These findings suggest that integrating self-compassion training into music performance strategies can effectively enhance musicians' overall positive performance experiences by reducing MPA and improving flow.

Keywords: music performance, self-compassion, flow, performance anxiety, positive performance experiences, Mindful Self-Compassion, mixed methods

Dedication

To my mother, Shujian Jia (贾曙剑), and Eula.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In the realm of music learning, the complex psychological states of musicians' performances have received increasing attention in contemporary research (Fernholz et al., 2019; Kegelaers & Oudejans, 2020). This thesis examines the intricate interplay between music performance anxiety (MPA), flow, and self-compassion within the context of classical music performance. When facing the demands of delivering artistic excellence in high-pressure public performances, I believe fostering a balanced mental state nurtured through a self-compassionate attitude can be a vital strategy for enhancing musicians' positive performance experience.

With its high standards and constant evaluations (McNeil et al., 2022), the competitive nature of classical music learning embedded in a rigorous traditional framework may exacerbate debilitating performance anxiety (Thomas & Nettelbeck, 2014). These repeated negative performance experiences in such intense learning environments may undermine musicians' abilities to achieve flow (Fullagar et al., 2013), which is an enjoyable and optimal mental state characterized by a seamless integration of action and awareness essential to a meaningful and fulfilling musical career (Hytönen-Ng, 2013; Silverman et al., 2016; Tan & Sin, 2020). Due to limited research investigating both the positive and negative psychological aspects of music performance (Cohen & Bodner, 2019b), I argue it is crucial to delineate the complex challenges musicians face in their performance careers, specifically by focusing on their performance experiences over outcomes.

Research Problem and Possible Solutions

On the spectrum of musicians' performances, two significant and opposite experiences can be found, namely, MPA and flow. MPA disrupts musicians' focus, emotional stability, and confidence (Kenny, 2004). In contrast, achieving flow marks the positive valence of

performance, enhancing one's focus, enabling seamless execution by aligning awareness with action, and sustaining musicians' learning motivation and satisfaction (Tay et al., 2021).

Musicians may struggle with maintaining momentum and sustainability in their careers because they may lack additional strategies to cope with challenging and difficult learning situations typical within traditional musical and technical training (MacAfee & Comeau, 2023). Ultimately, I believe this could hinder musicians' creative identity. This gap stresses the need for a more comprehensive research approach that focuses on proactively cultivating positive psychological states conducive to achieving flow, not just merely alleviating performance anxiety (Cohen & Bodner, 2019b).

Self-compassion is a psychological construct that focuses on mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness (Neff, 2003b). I argue that self-compassion may offer a dual approach to optimize musicians' performance experiences by simultaneously increasing flow and decreasing MPA. Recently, Walton et al. (2022) also mentioned the need for incorporating self-compassion in performers. Thus, this thesis seeks to bridge this gap by exploring how the mediating role of self-compassion training can impact Chinese musicians' flow and MPA compared to traditional music performance strategies, providing mixed methods insights into the cultivation of musicians' positive performance experiences.

Research Objective and Overarching Research Question

This thesis aims to use mixed methods to critically explore and investigate the comparative effectiveness of the Performance Strategies Class (PSC) and Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) programs on musicians' flow, MPA, and self-compassion. Employing a convergent design through integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the

overarching mixed methods research question guiding this inquiry is as follows: How do the PSC and MSC programs affect Chinese university students' music performance experiences?

Research Motivations

For the past three decades, I have been involved in learning, performing, teaching, and researching in the field of music. Throughout my journey from becoming a teacher to resuming my piano performance studies as an adult student, I have found it disheartening to witness many promising musicians become defeated and quit their musical pursuits when challenging performing and learning situations overwhelmed them. This is often due to repeated negative learning experiences filled with shame and guilt, which can amplify a sense of failure and lead to performance challenges, such as performance anxiety (Gill et al., 2024).

Performance anxiety is a common experience among performers (Barbar et al., 2014), and it may still resonate very heavily with many to this very day. Its presence is well-recognized and undeniably real, yet it is often avoided in open discussions because experiencing performance anxiety can be confusing, unpleasant, and scary. Performance anxiety can manifest as a rollercoaster of emotions, a savage whirlwind that sweeps through every fiber of a performer mercilessly. When it appears, the performer's heart races, their palms sweat, and a rush of adrenaline courses through their veins, creating a reality that is exhilarating and terrifying at the same time. It can make a performer feel as if they are standing on the edge of a cliff, knowing they are about to leap into an abyss, but without the option of turning back.

When the debilitating power of MPA shows up for a musician at the stage door, they may already feel the spotlight glaring down and burning away their confidence and focus, as if all eyes in the audience are about to fixate on their movements and are ready to scrutinize every single mistake they might make. The lonely sound of each step the musician takes on the stage as

they move towards the instrument can resound so loudly in the hall, which may cause their creative mind to become a chaotic battleground filled with self-doubt and fear, leaving them feeling almost paralyzed and far removed from their musical abilities.

When MPA strikes a pianist before they start playing their piece, they might suddenly notice the bench feels strangely uncomfortable. After a few notes into the first phrase, the pedal under their right foot may seem heavier and deeper than it did during their almost perfect dress rehearsal just days before. As the pianist continues their performance, knowing that the most difficult two bars are approaching, they might start questioning whether they can play them smoothly and may even start to pray that they will not freeze up and trigger a technical accident, not realizing that their thoughts have gone off track and have long since stopped paying attention to the phrase they are interpreting at that moment. Finally, after stumbling through a seemingly mediocre but actually commendable and captivating performance, the pianist may still feel sorry and embarrassed for themselves and their performance along with their belief of not being good enough that comes with a sense of shame or guilt, leaving them shaking in their spine as they weakly bow.

After a few nights of poor sleep, they cannot help but think there might have been something in the air that day haunting their ability to perform, scorning the countless hours they have religiously invested in the isolated practice rooms with their heart and soul. Yet, this haunting debility may not end there but may instead be carried with them into the next performance like an invisible parasite. So, once again, the performer may find themselves standing on the stage with an awkward smile, exposed, vulnerable, overwhelmed, and exhausted from being quietly eaten away and tormented from the inside.

Current research has found that a performer may repeatedly encounter MPA before, during, and after their performances (Papageorgi et al., 2007). These aforementioned depictions of the experience of MPA exemplify my own experiences of my first-ever panic attack on stage during my initial recital in Canada. Reflecting upon the lowest point in my life when I was struggling and painfully battling my performance demons, I was told that I should just practice more, trust myself, and believe that my next performance experience would be better. I was constantly reminded to accept that experiencing performance anxiety is a part of the learning journey for almost all successful musicians. In fact, the only explanation and solution I had was to practice and focus on the music more and try not to think about other things too much.

Before presenting my research, I want to humbly but boldly share my long-standing doubts about teaching traditions that have been followed and revered for centuries in our field. Thus, I want to contemplate the following questions inwardly. As a performer, am I truly satisfied with the standard solution of simply practicing more and avoiding overthinking? As a teacher, can I sincerely and authentically offer this standard solution repeatedly to my students and firmly convince them that it works, even if they keep experiencing the same struggles and challenges I had? As an individual who has studied music and performance in Asia and North America, am I willing to compromise and stubbornly force myself to hope that one day I will reconcile with and accept my unpleasant music performance and learning experiences as being the norm?

Having spent many years healing from my negative performance experiences triggered by severe MPA, my life lessons guided me to dare explore the positive spectrum concerning performance psychology. Consequently, I have expanded my research focus from solely reducing performance anxiety to also enhancing the experience of flow, which refers to a state of peak

performance accompanied by an optimal experience, representing a fearless, liberating, joyful, and satisfying solution that can counteract debilitating performance anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). As a result, my journey through personal and professional explorations has led me to discover that self-compassion might be one of the keys to navigating musicians' performance experiences. I believe that by practicing mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness, the concept of self-compassion could be one of the solutions that I, and perhaps many other musicians, have been searching for.

Overview of Theoretical Framework

Over the years, I have observed a significant emphasis on musicians' performance outcomes, particularly evident during competitions and examinations. This prevailing focus invites a reassessment of the values attributed to musicians' performance experiences rather than solely on their performance outcomes. Indeed, if the richness and depth of these performance experiences are truly significant, they undoubtedly merit greater emphasis than the results of performances. I argue such experiences not only underpin a musician's artistic development but also are integral to their long-term engagement and sustainability in music learning, collectively shaping their creative identity.

Using classical piano learning as an example, the musician's educational journey encompasses a diverse array of elements aimed at developing comprehensive musical skills. These elements include refining technical skills, studying repertoires, and participating in regular instructional lessons. Throughout this rigorous and extensive process, most musicians engage in masterclasses, perform in public recitals, and undergo formal examinations to gauge their skill development and overall proficiency. Drawing from my learning experiences, such evaluative settings test a musician's technical capacities and challenge their ability to convey their musical

interpretation under the intense pressure of live scrutiny, assessments that are critical as they evaluate both the precision of the performance and the expressiveness that characterizes true musical mastery. Consequently, public performance is often considered one of the most demanding aspects of music learning (Guyon et al., 2020).

Reflecting on my experiences as a pianist, I have come to realize that, unlike other settings where one can pause and rectify a mistake, live music performance is invariably unforgiving, unfolding in real time. For musicians striving for artistic perfection, this means that once a note is played incorrectly, there is no opportunity to reverse time to correct the mistake. As time relentlessly moves forward, mistakes made during a live performance may haunt musicians, starkly contrasting with the flawless version of interpretation they know by heart. This discrepancy between expectation and reality can create intense psychological dissonance, leaving musicians with no choice but to move on as the moment for correction has already passed. Without adequate knowledge, skills, and experiences, such instances may trigger a cycle of negative patterns, including ruminating on past errors, fearing future failures, and experiencing heightened performance anxiety (Papageorgi et al., 2007). I argue that these mental responses may severely undermine a musician's confidence and exacerbate the stress associated with live performances, potentially leading to a pervasive sense of inadequacy and increased sensitivity to public exposure that involves internal and external evaluations. Furthermore, I believe that this may have a devastating impact on musicians' self-worth and result in them considering an end to their musical career.

The nature of classical music training is particularly influenced by the traditional European teaching philosophies, which are deeply rooted in endless drills to achieve technical perfection through the master-apprentice approach (Burwell, 2013). Although these exacting

standards have crafted generations of skilled musicians, Thompson (2018) has argued that the rigorous and often repetitive nature of these practices could lead to a mechanical approach to music that prioritizes technical precision over expressive musicality, potentially diminishing the creative process of music learning. Reflecting on my role as a pianist, such a stringent focus on technical precision over expressivity directly impacted my ability to achieve flow, preventing me from fully engaging and performing at my peak.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1975), flow describes an optimal and enjoyable mental state in which the individual is highly motivated and fully engaged in the process of delivering a performance. Flow theory is based on the extensive pioneering studies of Csikszentmihalyi, who defined nine dimensions of flow. When these dimensions are experienced together, they result in optimal experiences leading to high-quality performances in music (Chirico et al., 2015), sport (Jackson & Marsh, 1996), work (Demerouti, 2006), and education (Egbert, 2003). Given the repetitive and structured nature of music practice, the ability to consistently access a flow state is necessary for musicians' optimal experiences (Tan & Sin, 2021). Based on key characteristics of flow theory, which involves individuals' heightened concentration and limited distractions, entering a state of flow during challenging performance situations can serve as a stabilizing anchor, amplifying intrinsic motivation, deepening engagement, and fostering a profound sense of mastery and accomplishment for musicians (Spahn et al., 2021).

However, the ability to consistently access the state of flow can be severely hindered by MPA, which is the feeling of fear experienced by performers before or during a public music performance (Kenny, 2011). A musician's trait anxiety level, perception of their competency, fear of negative evaluation, and environmental factors all contribute to the experience of MPA (Papageorgi, 2022), especially during solo performances (Cox & Kenardy, 1993). Notably, MPA

is often inversely related to the state of flow, where a decrease in flow can exacerbate anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), which can result in reduced motivation for further participation (Basco & Han, 2016).

Thus, the inverse relationship between flow and MPA suggests that the loss of motivation may cause behavioral reactions like isolation and low engagement, thereby preventing continued learning (Granero-Gallegos et al., 2019). Kenny (2016) emphasized the importance of preventing MPA by identifying strategies to improve individuals' psychological well-being. To date, studies on music pedagogy and performance psychology have mostly used unidirectional approaches either to promote flow (Tan & Sin, 2021) or alleviate MPA (Kenny, 2005). However, this unidirectional strategy misses the dynamic and antithetical relationships between flow and MPA, including how they collectively shape the performance and learning experiences of musicians. Thus, Cohen and Bodner (2019b) argued for a two-pronged approach that addresses flow and MPA simultaneously.

One possible approach to address the dynamic interplay between flow and MPA that shapes musicians' performance experiences is the cultivation of self-compassion, which includes mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness (Neff, 2003b). At a theoretical level, mindfulness directs individuals' intention to initiate motivation and prepares performers for the flow experience (Reid, 2011). Common humanity cultivates individuals' increased relatedness and reduces performance anxiety by alleviating the threat of social comparison in competitive environments (Gilbert et al., 1995). Self-kindness elicits a sense of warmth in individuals in response to the emotional pain that performance anxiety may cause (Shahar et al., 2015). Thus, I argue that self-compassion-based programs, such as the MSC program, can serve as a potential transformative pathway for enhancing musicians' performance and learning experiences,

potentially mitigating the psychological barriers imposed by traditional training methods and the inherent nature of stressful live performance.

Significance of Study

This research has the potential to impact performance psychology and several disciplines in music, including performance, pedagogy, and education. As a preliminary investigation, this project aims to illuminate how self-compassion may increase flow and decrease MPA for musicians, offering insights into the effectiveness of self-compassion-based training in enriching musicians' performance experiences. Diverging from most studies that address flow enhancement or performance anxiety reduction in isolation, this study employs a mixed methods approach to simultaneously investigate these two antithetical variables that can make or break individuals' performance experiences. By focusing on investigating participants' experiential journeys over performance outcomes, this research underscores the importance of balanced learning processes rather than mere outcome-oriented evaluations. Consequently, the insights of this research may reshape the traditional objectives of performance-based education, promoting the need for a more comprehensive understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching in music.

By equipping performers with strategies to effectively manage the psychological demands of their professions, my findings may offer interdisciplinary significance, supporting performers across various high-stress scenarios by protecting and sustaining their creative identity through self-compassion. Insights from this study might encourage educators to revise teaching curricula to emphasize the cultivation of rich music performance experiences and well-being alongside technical skills. This research could also be valuable for professionals designing

targeted interventions for individuals facing performance-related challenges, integrating self-compassion to address peak performance more holistically.

Such a perspective could be especially beneficial in nurturing learning environments by fostering a broader appreciation among parents and educators for the developmental value of musicians' learning processes. On a broader scale, the implications of this research may influence policy within educational and professional settings, advocating for the incorporation of psychological training into artistic curricula. Consequently, the findings of this study could help establish a more supportive and well-being-oriented learning culture in performance-based fields, potentially advancing current teaching objectives and reshaping educational philosophies.

While introducing new methodologies and pedagogical approaches, this study acknowledges the enduring value and benefits of traditional frameworks in music education. It seeks to build upon these robust foundations, following the rich legacy of traditional frameworks while incorporating novel strategies tailored to the contemporary needs of musicians. Traditional frameworks, recognized for their structured nature and capacity to offer rich experiential learning, have consistently fostered musical excellence and discipline across generations. Yet, I envision an opportunity to expand these traditional frameworks by integrating self-compassion, making them more comprehensive and better suited to address the holistic needs of musicians.

Overall, this study aspires to contribute insights into the psychological underpinnings of music performance and education. By promoting the integration of self-compassion into performance training, my intention is to promote a self-compassionate strategy to enhance musicians' performance experiences. I also wish to advocate for the awareness of discussing, researching, and applying self-compassion-based pedagogies across various disciplines.

Overview of Methodology

Adhering to ethical standards and operational procedures, this project employs a mixed methods convergent design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) to investigate the effectiveness of the PSC and the MSC programs on musicians' performance experiences. Both the PSC and MSC programs include eight content sessions and an additional class for group practice/discussion. Each session lasts 2.75 to 3 hours and features didactic materials, group reflections, individual sharing, and practical exercises. The PSC program aims to enhance musicians' skills in practice and performance. It includes practical strategies such as efficient practice, rehearsal planning, and performance goal setting. The MSC program, developed by Neff and Germer (2013), aims to enhance self-compassion through mindfulness practices. It helps individuals develop a compassionate relationship with themselves during difficult times. The MSC program includes practices such as affectionate breathing, loving-kindness, and giving and receiving compassion.

Participants were full-time undergraduate music major students enrolled in a Chinese higher education institution located in China. The research design utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the impacts of the PSC or the MSC program on participants' five psychological constructs, namely, trait flow, state flow, trait MPA, state MPA, and trait self-compassion.

Data collection occurred at pre-training and post-training. The quantitative component involved using questionnaires to assess participants' trait and state measures of the five psychological constructs. Concurrently, the qualitative component inquired about participants' reflections on their performance experiences and their perceived changes post-training through the use of short written responses.

Quantitative data were analyzed using mixed-design analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify changes in the five psychological constructs from pre-training to post-training.

Qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis (TA) and content analysis. Specifically, I used the framework of reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2022) to identify key patterns and themes. This dual approach enabled me to thoroughly examine each training program's effectiveness, providing a comprehensive view of how these interventions influence participants' psychological states and performance experiences. By integrating the quantitative results and qualitative findings, this study aims to deliver a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs. Thus, the mixed methods integration underscores the convergence and divergence between the quantitative results and qualitative findings by comparing and combining numerical data with personal narratives to answer the overarching research question (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is composed in a monograph style and adheres to the guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (American Psychological Association, 2020). The thesis is structured into six chapters, each designed to progressively elaborate on the outcomes of the study.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter sets the stage for the thesis by introducing the general topic of musicians' performance experiences, including concepts of flow, MPA, and self-compassion. It features a personal narrative that underscores the researcher's motivation for the study, setting the direction for the investigation.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework draws from established theories of flow, MPA, and self-compassion by discussing the role of self-compassion in the interplay between flow and MPA. It

also explores how the subcomponents of these three psychological constructs interact at a theoretical level. The theoretical discussions aim to illustrate the dynamic impacts of the three psychological constructs on musicians' performance experiences to justify the research approach.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This chapter reviews existing literature on flow, performance anxiety, and self-compassion within various performance fields. It builds on my proposed theoretical framework to synthesize empirical evidence supporting the research project, critically evaluating the research landscape and identifying key gaps that underpin the research objectives of the study. This literature review contextualizes the significance of the research gaps and highlights the necessity for further exploration and understanding of these interconnected psychological constructs in music performance. It also situates my proposed research project within the field, justifying its need and significance based on existing literature.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter demonstrates my application of the mixed methods convergent design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), encompassing participant recruitment, data collection methods, analysis procedures, and the integration of quantitative results with qualitative findings. A specific focus is given to the rationale behind choosing a mixed methods approach, discussing its strengths and challenges within the context of this study.

Chapter Five: Results

This chapter includes detailed reports on the quantitative analysis, reflexive TA, and content analysis. Following the framework of Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the chapter demonstrates how quantitative results and qualitative findings converge to form the mixed

methods results. An additional qualitative analysis of participants' prospective views on their future performances lays the groundwork for an ethnographic discussion in the final chapter.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

This final chapter interprets the results within the theoretical context, discussing the implications for theory and practice. It addresses the study's limitations and suggests directions for future research, including potential methodologies and theoretical explorations. This chapter includes an ethnographic discussion of musicians' prospective views on their future performances. Finally, I conclude the thesis by summarizing the findings and their implications, offering recommendations for musicians and educators, and discussing how the research can benefit practical applications in music performance and education.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I first provide an overview of the concept of performance experience to contextualize the psychological constructs central to this research, namely, flow, music performance anxiety (MPA), and self-compassion. Following this, I introduce and define each of these constructs, discussing their relationship from a theoretical perspective with methodologies commonly employed to study each of the constructs. This theoretical framework chapter aims to establish an understanding of these constructs and to explain the rationale behind examining self-compassion as a potential mediating factor between flow and MPA in contributing to musicians' performance experiences. Furthermore, this chapter lays the groundwork for the subsequent literature review, where I delve into empirical findings on the role of compassion-based training programs in the field of performance.

Defining Performance Experience in Music

Clayton et al. (2013) have described performance experience in music as the real-time creation of sound, emphasizing the actual act of making music and the significance of the creative process rather than viewing music performance as a final product. The authors highlighted the physical and mental engagement of musicians in producing, experiencing, and finding meaning in their performance processes within specific social, cultural, and environmental contexts. Given this view, it becomes evident that the experiences of musicians shape their artistic expression and identity by influencing how they connect with the compositions, their fellow musicians, and their audiences. In addition, Holmes and Holmes (2013) stated that music performance is not just a technical display, but a profound personal and expressive activity shaped and experienced by the performer's cognitive and emotional state. Holmes and Holmes argued that understanding musicians' subjective vision of their performance

experiences is essential for grasping their musical interpretation. They also suggested that traditional quantitative research methods often miss the deep psychological insights arising from the mental and physical constitutions of performance from the musicians' perspectives.

Extensive research into music performance often focuses primarily on performance outcomes, emphasizing evaluation measures, such as accuracy, technical proficiency, style, and audience reception (McPherson & Thompson, 1998). While this evaluative approach is crucial for understanding certain aspects of performance outcomes, I argue that it tends to overlook the nuanced experiences of performers themselves, especially on how they feel and react while engaging in their artistic processes. Research in this field has explored multiple dimensions, including cognitive and emotional states, physiological responses, and the influence of environmental factors on performance experiences (Barros et al., 2022). My definition of music performance experience is the physical and psychological states a musician experiences before, during, and after a performance. In this project, I investigated the positive and negative psychological aspects of music performance experiences, focusing on flow and music performance anxiety.

Recognizing the limitations of focusing solely on performance outcomes, it is my observation that there is a growing consensus among researchers about the importance of incorporating the internal experiences of performers into the broader study of music performance. Exploring the inner world of the performer's mind and body has facilitated the development of numerous theories that focus on the well-being and growth of performers beyond merely the quality of their performance outcomes. For example, the Yerkes–Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908) proposes that there is an optimal level of psychophysiological arousal for performance, and both too little and too much arousal can impair performance. This theory

emphasizes the importance of balancing arousal to achieve optimal performance in various tasks, including those in academic, athletic, and artistic domains. Furthermore, the Achievement Goal Theory (Nicholls, 1989) refines the understanding of how individuals' performance goals for self-improvement compare to their focus on the need to outperform others, which plays a critical role in shaping their intrinsic motivation and anxiety. In addition, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) offers a nuanced perspective on how performers assess and respond to stressors relating to performances, emphasizing that effective coping mechanisms can alleviate the negative impact of stress and anxiety, thereby fostering a state of balanced arousal conducive to achieving optimal performance.

To date, multiple studies have identified the antithetical relationship between flow and performance anxiety in the realm of music (Cohen & Bodner, 2019a; Fullagar et al., 2013; Kirchner et al., 2008). Building on such theories for understanding performers' internal experiences, my research focuses specifically on flow and MPA as two antithetical constructs that influence musicians' performance experiences. Regarding the positive and negative extremes in one's performance experience, flow represents a state of complete absorption and enjoyment in performance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), whereas maladaptive MPA is characterized by debilitating anxiety that can severely disrupt the performers' confidence in performance (Kenny, 2011). Thus, my research focus facilitates a targeted exploration of how musicians can employ psychology-based or performance-based programs to navigate between the two extremes in their performance experiences. Specifically, I examine whether techniques of self-compassion or performance strategies can effectively enhance musicians' performance experiences by improving flow and reducing MPA.

In the following sections, I present the theories of flow and MPA. This is followed by a discussion on the antithetical relationship between these two variables in the context of positive music performance experiences. Self-compassion is then introduced into the conversation as a mediating concept. Using the three subcomponents of self-compassion as anchors, my intent is to focus on explaining how self-compassion may facilitate the positive flow experience and alleviate maladaptive MPA on a theoretical level.

Theory of Flow

Csikszentmihalyi defined flow as “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). The flow experience describes a positive, optimal, and enjoyable mental state in which the individual is highly motivated and fully engaged in the process of delivering an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Based on the extensive and pioneering studies of Csikszentmihalyi (1975), the experience of flow has been researched in relation to performance experiences and outcomes in sports (Jackson & Marsh, 1996), work (Demerouti, 2006), and education (Egbert, 2003). According to Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2016), flow research originated in the 1960s when Csikszentmihalyi observed and interviewed numerous peak performers’ optimal experiences in the fields of sports and arts.

Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2016) stated that when these performers experience flow, they share similar positive performance experiences, including highly focused concentration, a sense of effortlessness, and fulfillment. The authors addressed that these phenomena and characteristics of flow were mainly measured by collecting individuals’ subjective reflections using questionnaires and interviews. Further, the authors stated that the

rapid development of flow research benefited from the emergence of the experience sampling method (ESM) in the 1970s, where researchers collected each participant's experiences at random points in time when a paging device notified them. Based on the massive data collected, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) summarized nine dimensions of flow, which serve as a theoretical model for this research. These nine dimensions of flow are the following:

1. Balance of challenge and skills—the individual perceives that they have the skills to match the requirements of a demanding task.
2. The integration of action and awareness—doing a task automatically without overthinking.
3. Clear goals—having precise aims for the performance.
4. Unambiguous feedback—being aware of the quality of one's performance and making appropriate adjustments.
5. Concentration on the task at hand—focusing intensively and being immersed in the ongoing performance.
6. Sense of control—feeling in control of the task.
7. Loss of self-consciousness—not being concerned about the judgment of the self or others.
8. Transformation of time—perceiving time differently while doing the task.
9. Autotelic experience—experiencing a strong sense of reward and satisfaction from doing the task.

Theoretically, these nine dimensions of flow are based on an individual's subjective perception of each dimension. As a multifaceted phenomenon, the flow state is perceived when some or all of these dimensions are experienced (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Situating flow

experiences in the context of music performance and based on my performance experiences as a pianist, I recognize how essential these dimensions are for musicians to achieve their optimal music performance experiences. When a musician has clear performance goals and can also adjust their performance based on the immediate feedback they hear or feel, these experiences represent the clear goals and immediate and unambiguous feedback dimensions of flow. When the musician's performance skills align with the difficulty of the piece, this shows a balance of demands and skills. During a performance, when the musician's body and mind become one, this is evidence of integrating action and awareness. As the performer's focus reaches its peak and they feel mastery over the performance, this embodies concentration on the task at hand and their sense of control. Finally, when the musician's self-criticism fades away and time becomes irrelevant, they perceive a strong sense of intrinsic motivation to relive the optimal performance experience again. These final three experiences instantiate loss of self-consciousness, transformation of time, and the autotelic experience of flow.

Theory of MPA

Kenny defined music performance anxiety as “the experience of marked and persistent anxious apprehension related to musical performance that has arisen through specific anxiety-conditioning experiences” (Kenny, 2010, p. 433). An extensive body of research reported that music performance anxiety (MPA) is a severe problem for music students (Orejudo Hernández et al., 2018) and professional musicians (Fernholz et al., 2019). The current research builds on three notable MPA theories that overlap and complement each other. First, LeBlanc (1994) identified eleven levels of internal (e.g., personal characteristics) and external (e.g., environmental factors) influences that a performer might perceive as potential threats to their upcoming performance, listing these levels in reverse order from 11 to 1. According to LeBlanc, level 11 covers the

performer's characteristics. As the levels approach level 3, which represents the actual performance event, the performer might encounter several physical and/or mental challenges that may amplify their experience of MPA. The final two levels (levels 2 and 1) describe the post-performance state, which might also influence the performer's self-perceived MPA due to the internal and/or external feedback they might receive.

This theory was complemented by the framework developed by Papageorgi et al. (2007), which clarified the adaptive and maladaptive aspects of MPA as ongoing phenomena that can cycle through stages before, during, and after the performance. This was further characterized by Kenny (2016), who categorized the somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of MPA. Kenny (2005) also emphasized the importance of preventing MPA by focusing on strategies that can develop individuals' psychological well-being, such as goal setting, self-monitoring, self-regulation, self-confidence, and positive self-talk to reduce perfectionism.

According to Wolfe (1989), MPA can function both positively and negatively for musicians. Adaptive MPA can enhance performance by increasing arousal, which helps musicians stay focused and energized, thus supporting their performances. Conversely, maladaptive MPA has detrimental effects, which can include nervousness, apprehension, and self-doubt, ultimately undermining performances. In this thesis, when MPA is mentioned, it specifically refers to maladaptive MPA that debilitates musicians' performance experiences.

The Theory of MPA in the Model Developed by LeBlanc

Following the sequential progress from distant to immediate aspects of a performance event, the theory proposed by LeBlanc (1994) detailed the various factors that are included in the eleven levels that can impact musicians' MPA experiences. Beginning with level 11, the performers' demographic characteristics and learning history reveal factors that impact their

experiences of MPA. However, factors such as age and personality generally fall outside the direct scope that can be directly influenced by music training. Regarding the performer's age, for example, when an individual progresses through different life stages, their vulnerability to MPA may fluctuate. This age-related susceptibility to MPA is not an element that can be directly addressed by music education. LeBlanc also mentioned that personality is another factor that is generally resistant to change through musical training. While music learning provides a platform for a performer to develop musicianship, it does not have the capacity to fundamentally transform the musician's personality traits, which are shaped by a complex combination of genetics and life experiences. Additionally, levels 10 and 9 of LeBlanc's framework address aspects of repertoire choices and practice preparation that are partially determined and guided by music educators and performance facilities. In level 10, decisions concerning the complexity of the chosen repertoire and their relevance to the performance context can be guided by teachers. Similarly, level 9 involves the thoroughness of practice and the condition of the instrument, both of which are partially dependent on the preparation of the teachers and students and environmental factors such as the quality of the instrument.

Within the structure of this theory (LeBlanc, 1994), levels 8 to 3 delineate a range of factors that play a critical role in shaping a musician's live performance experiences. These levels address the multifaceted nature of a musician's performance beginning from the immediate preparations that precede walking onto the stage to the actual moments when they deliver the performance. These progressive events and steps depend significantly on the performer's psychological state, such as their emotional reactions, the perception of the presence of an audience, their self-evaluation of the performance quality, and the level of their concentration when delivering the performance. Although some external factors, such as the

presence of recording devices, play a role that may impact the experiences of MPA in a performer, LeBlanc highlighted the psychological components within levels 8 to 3 as pivotal factors in determining a musician's perceived levels of maladaptive MPA, which peaks right before the beginning of a performance.

According to LeBlanc (1994), for example, a musician's immediate psychological state prior to the performance and the environment they are performing in emerge as notable influences, impacting their anxiety levels either positively or negatively. Furthermore, the musician's self-perceptions, their anticipation of performance, their ability to concentrate during performance, and their physiological reactions all play vital roles that shape the overall psychological landscape of their performance experiences. In such demanding situations, I argue that a musician's coping strategies and psychological stability are fundamental to their response and management of performance-related stress.

Moreover, both immediate and subsequent feedback regarding the performance outcomes are also psychological factors that can impact performers' experiences based on how the feedback is perceived (LeBlanc, 1994). Level 2 details the performer's immediate feedback on their performance quality, which can be perceived as a threat when self-criticism is involved. Finally, the post-event processing of the performance in level 1 adds another layer, emphasizing the evaluation and feedback from the self or others after the actual performance. Reviewing this theory, the eleven levels of factors range across and influence various stages of performance events. Within this framework, the author underscores the value of educational and psychological interventions to strategically address and mitigate the negative impact of MPA, thereby enhancing musicians' ability to manage and reduce anxiety and optimize their performance experiences.

The Theory of MPA in the Models Developed by Papageorgi et al. and Kenny

The conceptual framework of MPA developed by Papageorgi et al. (2007) further highlights MPA as a dynamic process unfolding across pre-, during-, and post-performance stages. Specifically, the authors emphasize how a performer's vulnerability, task efficacy, and the environment the performer is exposed to shape their emotional states pre-performance and affect their physiological responses during the performance. During the post-performance stage, the feedback from the self or others, whether positive or negative, influences a performer's beliefs and motivation, impacting their vision and attitudes toward their future performances. The authors emphasize the importance of providing psychological assistance to musicians alongside technical development while also raising awareness on developing coping strategies to manage performance effectively and enhance musicians' emotional well-being.

Furthermore, Kenny (2011) also states that MPA arises from a complex interplay of emotional, cognitive, psychological, and physical factors that are shaped by an array of personal attributes, such as temperament, intellectual growth, familial influences, proficiency in music, and past performance experiences on stage. Based on one proposed model of anxiety published more than two decades ago (Barlow, 2000), Kenny (2011) addressed the biological, psychological, and situational factors that may intertwine to form musicians' experiences of MPA.

In summary, the theories of MPA presented in this section underline a spectrum of factors ranging from internal characteristics to external performance conditions. While music training is essential, it becomes clear that programs that address musicians' psychological needs hold the most promise for effectively addressing MPA. The interweaving of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of MPA, as identified by the aforementioned authors, illustrates that MPA is a

complex issue with numerous facets. Theoretically, addressing the psychological mechanisms that lead to the negative impact of MPA can provide musicians with the tools for better managing their performance anxiety.

The Antithetical Relationship Between Flow and Performance Anxiety

Expanding on the exploration of the interplay between flow and performance anxiety provides a valuable context to understand how psychological aspects can influence performance. In flow theory, anxiety is the antithesis of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990). Regarding the challenge-skill balance dimension of flow theory, when the performer perceives the challenges of a task to be far greater than their capabilities, the general psychological state of the individual will be dominated by anxiety. In this case, Csikszentmihalyi mentioned that the state of anxiety could shift the performer's focused attention from delivering the ongoing performance task to irrelevant thoughts and overthinking, which may distract them from successfully performing the tasks. For example, Kenny (2011) stated that an individual might focus on negative evaluations, self-criticism, fear of performance outcomes, and ruminating on uncontrollable consequences when experiencing performance anxiety. In fact, studies by Kirchner et al. (2008), Fullagar et al. (2013), and Stocking (2013) all confirmed that when performers experienced high levels of performance anxiety, their flow experience was reduced.

By definition, flow and MPA are antithetical because one represents a state of absorption and peak functioning, while the other involves a preoccupation with judgment or a fear of failure, leading to a diminished capacity for positive performance experiences (Cohen & Bodner, 2019a). Thus, based on my understanding, flow and MPA represent opposite ends of the spectrum concerning a performer's psychological state in relation to the performance event and their performance experiences. From my perspective on musicians' performance experiences,

flow is associated with an integration of action and awareness, where the activity itself is perceived as rewarding. Conversely, MPA is associated with heightened self-consciousness and a sense of threat, leading to the performer's attention being disrupted or distracted by negative thoughts regarding their performance.

The occurrence of flow is intricately linked to the reduction of performance anxiety due to several key psychological mechanisms. For example, during states of flow, individuals experience a high level of focus, which limits the possibility of intrusive thoughts relating to anxiety. The intense engagement with the activity itself shifts the performer's attention away from self-consciousness and negative self-evaluation, which are typical characteristics of performance anxiety (Papageorgi et al., 2007). Moreover, flow states are associated with a sense of control and mastery over the activity, offering positive and encouraging feedback to the performer that further mitigates the potential impact of anxiety. When individuals feel competent and capable of delivering their skills, they are less likely to experience self-doubt or worry, which are common components of performance anxiety. Specifically, when performers perceive the tasks as achievable rather than threatening, this perspective can cultivate a sense of confidence and self-efficacy that diminishes performance anxiety. As this sense of confidence is strengthened over time, it may foster a lasting psychological environment conducive to peak performance.

Furthermore, the intrinsic motivation inherent in the experience of flow plays a significant role in counteracting performance anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). After a flow experience, the individual can perceive a sense of satisfaction, enjoyment, and accomplishment. These positive experiences may continuously fuel the autotelic nature of flow experience, motivating the performer to keep engaging with the performance activity itself rather than

seeking external validation or reward as their source of motivation. Based on my understanding of flow theory, this intrinsic motivation can serve as a powerful antidote to anxiety, as performers are driven by inherent factors that sustain motivation, such as passion, curiosity, a sense of purpose, and satisfaction from personal growth, rather than depending on external validation or approval for their accomplishments.

For all of the above reasons, instead of addressing flow or MPA separately, exploring the antithetical relationship between the two psychological constructs may offer a deeper understanding and a more comprehensive vision for enhancing musicians' positive performance experiences (Cohen & Bodner, 2019b). Therefore, identifying psychological concepts that may simultaneously improve flow and reduce MPA becomes evident. Self-compassion, an emerging psychological concept involving three subcomponents (Neff, 2003a), may serve as a two-pronged strategy (Cohen & Bodner, 2019b) to improve musicians' positive performance experiences based on its theoretical and potential connections with flow and MPA from my perspective.

Theories of Compassion and Self-Compassion

In the last twenty years, a substantial amount of research on compassion has emerged. Many of these studies attempt to define compassion (e.g., Chadwick, 2015; Perez-Bret et al., 2016) as well as look at this phenomenon through an empirical perspective (e.g., Collett et al., 2016; Sinclair et al., 2016). Researchers also developed numerous compassion-based interventions with the aim of helping to cultivate compassion towards the self and others (e.g., Germer & Neff, 2013; Gilbert, 2010; Jazaieri et al., 2013). Among these approaches, the notion of self-compassion conceptualized by Neff (2003b) has shown promising results. Training programs that teach individuals how to cultivate and apply the concepts of compassion and self-

compassion in their lives have been shown to improve individuals' general well-being (Gilbert, 2014; Neff & Germer, 2013). In the following section, I detail the various approaches that have been taken to investigate the concepts of compassion and self-compassion with a specific focus on the meanings, interpretations, and applications of this psychological construct. I offer a brief overview of how researchers in this field have designed and deployed interventions and measured their impacts.

Thích Nhất Hạnh (1997) once stated that the circle of compassion for others always includes the self. Therefore, one may argue that drawing a boundary between the self and others in the context of compassion splits the interconnectedness of this concept. In addition, different aspects between traditional Eastern and modern Western views of compassion learning present a challenge in studying the contemplative approach used in the majority of compassion-based training programs. Thus, Walsh-Frank (1996) stated that by looking at compassion from an Eastern perspective, researchers can enrich and balance the ethical discussions in Western practices. Traditionally, Eastern concepts of compassion prioritize a holistic, integrated practice deeply connected to individual well-being, whereas Western methodologies seek measurable, individualistic outcomes rooted in empirical study. Arguably, it is essential for researchers and teachers to make compassion-based practices accessible for both Western and Eastern cultures, by taking into account both the experiential and empirical aspects of compassion (Quaglia et al., 2021).

Compassion

The concept of compassion is considered one of the core values in many religions and cultures (Mascaro et al., 2020). From an evolutionary perspective, Darwin (1871) used the example of how mammals have the natural tendency to help others of their species experiencing

distress to explain the origin of sympathy. This notion overlaps with the meaning of empathy, altruism, or compassion. Definitions of compassion in modern literature encompass being present with a person's suffering and having the urge to offer help (Goetz et al., 2010; Lazarus, 1991), which is exemplified by the well-known definition of Gilbert (2009) stating the following: "Compassion can be defined in many ways, but its essence is a basic kindness, with a deep awareness of the suffering of oneself and of other living things, coupled with the wish and effort to relieve it" (p. xiii).

To acquire a deeper understanding of compassion, researchers have attempted to delineate its core principles. For example, Kanov et al. (2004) suggested the three subcomponents of compassion are seeing another person suffer, offering empathy, and having the intention to offer help. In other words, noticing, feeling, and responding, respectively underly the concept presented by the authors. However, researchers such as Wispé (1991) and Gilbert (2009) suggested a few complementary components to the construct of compassion. Wispé added to Kanov et al.'s understanding of compassion by including both the non-judgmental attitude towards others and the acceptance of one's own difficult emotions when witnessing another's suffering. Later, Gilbert (2010) developed six well-recognized elements of compassion, namely, sensitivity, sympathy, empathy, motivation/caring, distress tolerance, and non-judgement. Compared to the model of Kanov et al. (2004), the construct of Gilbert (2010) not only overlaps but gives a broader understanding of the concept of compassion. Specifically, the components of noticing, feeling, and responding mentioned by Kanov et al. (2004) correspond to the components of sensitivity, sympathy and empathy, and motivation/caring in the model of Gilbert (2010), respectively. However, the additional components of distress tolerance and non-

judgement in the construct of Gilbert (2010) further advance the model developed by Kanov et al. (2004).

Self-Compassion

Neff defines self-compassion as “being touched by and open to one’s own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one’s suffering and to heal oneself with kindness” (Neff, 2003b, p. 87). During the early 2000s, a significant number of studies focusing on self-compassion surfaced in the academic field. Based on the writings of Buddhist guides (Brach, 2003; Kornfield, 1993; Salzberg, 2008), Neff (2003b) shifted the focus of compassion inward to the self and conceptualized the definition of self-compassion.

According to Neff, when an individual suffers from painful emotions, self-compassion involves treating oneself in an accepting and compassionate way while wishing to help reduce the pain that comes with the suffering, which is similar to when individuals offer compassion to others.

Neff defines self-compassion as including three interrelating subcomponents. Each subcomponent has its antipode: mindfully offering moment-to-moment self-awareness to one’s situation, instead of over-identifying with that situation; recognizing one’s common humanity, instead of suffering in isolation; and treating the self with kindness, instead of criticism. In brief, Neff (2016) recognizes the three subcomponents of self-compassion, namely, mindfulness versus over-identification, common humanity versus isolation, and self-kindness versus self-judgment.

Addressing Misconceptions of Self-Compassion

While self-compassion has gained substantial recognition for its positive impact on emotional well-being and performance (Cormier et al., 2023; Zessin et al., 2015), addressing the criticisms and limitations of self-compassion is essential for providing a balanced and comprehensive understanding of this psychological construct. According to (Neff, 2015), there

are several misconceptions about self-compassion that prevent the understanding and practice of one's compassionate attitude toward oneself. Neff and Germer (2018) later clarified these misconceptions by explaining what self-compassion is not. Next, I discuss some of the common misgivings and relevant criticisms about self-compassion identified in the literature and provide a critical analysis drawing on empirical findings to offer a more objective discussion on the role of self-compassion in the context of performance.

Self-Compassion Does Not Mean Self-Pity. According to Neff and Germer (2018), some people argue that self-compassion involves feeling sorry for oneself and becoming overly absorbed in one's own difficulties, which can lead to a cycle of negativity and helplessness focusing on self-pity. The authors stated that while self-pity involves an excessive focus on one's own challenging situations as being uniquely afflicted, whereas self-compassion cultivates a balanced view of one's suffering from the awareness of common humanity. Therefore, the authors addressed that self-compassion encourages individuals to acknowledge their difficulties without becoming overwhelmed by them, fostering a gentler and more self-aware response to oneself. Studies found that individuals who practice self-compassion tend to adopt a more open attitude instead of fixating on their personal distress (Neff & Pommier, 2013). Additionally, individuals with a self-compassionate attitude are less prone to dwelling on unfortunate circumstances or negative ruminations (Odou & Brinker, 2014; Raes, 2010). These findings suggest that self-compassion, rather than leading to self-pity, can enhance one's abilities to cope with adversity in a healthy and effective manner, which is fundamentally different from the negative and self-focused nature of self-pity.

Self-Compassion Does Not Mean Weakness. Another criticism of self-compassion is the perception that it signifies weakness or can be seen as a lack of resilience (Neff, 2015). In

other words, this view suggests that being kind to oneself in times of failure or distress means avoiding challenges or responsibilities. This misconception also implies that self-compassion promotes a passive approach to difficulties, potentially undermining individuals' capacities to cope with adversity. However, Neff and Germer (2018) argued that self-compassion gives individuals the strength to confront challenges and difficulties while maintaining a supportive and understanding attitude toward oneself. A self-compassionate approach fosters resilience by helping individuals recover from setbacks more effectively by maintaining a positive outlook in the face of difficulties. To support this statement, multiple studies have found that individuals with higher levels of self-compassion are more equipped to manage challenging circumstances, such as divorce (Sbarra et al., 2012), traumatic event (Hiraoka et al., 2015), chronic illness (Sirois et al., 2015), and chronic pain (Wren et al., 2012). Therefore, one may argue that instead of resorting to avoidance or denial, self-compassionate individuals are more likely to engage in problem-solving and seek social support when needed. This proactive approach to coping demonstrates that self-compassion does not equate to weakness but rather equips individuals with the emotional resources to manage challenging situations constructively (Neff, 2011).

Self-Compassion Does Not Mean Selfishness. Another criticism of self-compassion is the belief that it has the potential for overemphasis on the self as a form of selfishness (Neff, 2015). This view holds that focusing on oneself from a compassionate perspective reduces the individual's capacity and ability to care for others. This suggests the possibility that self-compassion could lead individuals to prioritize their own needs over those of others, fostering a self-centered attitude that undermines social connection. However, Neff and Germer (2018) argued that self-compassion enhances one's capacity for compassion towards others. In fact, researchers found that when individuals treat themselves with kindness and understanding, they

are more likely to extend a similar attitude toward others (Neff & Beretvas, 2013). Research has also shown that self-compassionate individuals tend to exhibit greater social behavior and are less jealous (Tandler & Petersen, 2020). One possible explanation is that self-compassion may help individuals mitigate burnout and emotional exhaustion, which are common barriers to effective caregiving and social engagement (Neff & Pommier, 2013). Thus, self-compassionate individuals are more caring toward others. This stance allows individuals to provide support to others without neglecting their own well-being, leading to more sustainable personal and interpersonal connections (Neff, 2011).

Self-Compassion Does Not Mean Self-Indulgence. Neff (2015) addressed another misunderstanding that self-compassion means self-indulgence, which implies that self-compassion may lead to avoidance of responsibilities and ignoring the mistake or rationalizing it away without learning from the experience. In contrast, the author clarified that self-compassion fosters positive actions and personal growth. Instead of using self-criticism towards one's own mistakes, a self-compassionate mindset involves embracing a few positive approaches. For example, acknowledging the mistake without harsh judgment, understanding that making mistakes is part of being human, and making a plan to avoid the same mistake in the future. Neff and Germer (2018) specifically responded to this misconception, stating that self-compassion guides individuals toward a more balanced view of one's flaws and mistakes rather than focusing on satisfying their immediate gratification.

Therefore, it can be argued that self-compassion lays a foundation for a resilient mindset. This mindset enables individuals to face challenges and setbacks with a constructive attitude and promotes recovery and learning rather than following a path of avoidance, rumination, or denial (Krieger et al., 2013). Over time, a self-compassionate approach strengthens individuals' inner

relationships with themselves and enhances interpersonal relationships, as individuals learn to extend the same compassion and understanding they grant themselves to others. This seamless extension of self-compassion to interpersonal interactions is supported by findings that self-compassionate individuals are more likely to adopt behaviors that promote health and well-being (Brooks et al., 2012; Magnus et al., 2010).

Self-compassion Does Not Mean Making Excuses. Another common criticism of self-compassion is the belief that it might lead to making excuses for poor behavior or lack of effort Neff and Germer (2018). This misconception arises from the idea that being too forgiving of oneself could prevent one from addressing areas where accountability is needed. However, Neff and Germer argued that self-compassionate individuals are better equipped to handle setbacks and criticism, while also maintaining motivation and engaging in self-improvement practices. Therefore, rather than excusing one's poor behavior, self-compassion encourages individuals to acknowledge their mistakes and learn from them from a constructive mindset. Instead of being paralyzed by fear of failure during challenging situations, self-compassionate individuals are more likely to face these difficulties, understanding that mistakes and failure are a natural part of learning and life. For example, Leary et al. (2007) found that self-compassionate individuals take greater responsibility and accountability for their actions. Breines and Chen (2012) found that self-compassionate people are more likely to take responsibility for their actions and demonstrate a greater desire to improve their behavior.

Self-Compassion Does Not Mean Undermining Motivation. Neff (2015) responded to another common concern about self-compassion that being compassionate to oneself might undermine their motivation. This view suggests that self-compassion might foster a mindset where individuals are satisfied with mediocrity and lack the necessary motivation and drive to

achieve excellence. In other words, this misconception suggests that by being too forgiving of oneself, people might avoid pushing themselves to achieve higher standards. However, research has shown that self-compassion is a powerful motivator because it is rooted in the desire for long-term well-being. Neff and Germer (2018) acknowledged that many assume that self-criticism drives motivation, but it can also diminish self-confidence and instill a fear of failure or personal deficiency. When adopting a self-compassionate approach, individuals' drive to meet objectives is not rooted in feelings of inadequacy or harsh self-judgment. Instead, self-compassion guides individuals to appreciate their worth and aspire to enhance their abilities. Thus, a self-compassionate approach suggests that motivation fueled by self-compassion is likely healthier and more sustainable than motivation driven by self-criticism (Powers et al., 2007). Studies found that when people approach personal growth and change with self-compassion, they create an emotionally supportive environment that is conducive to making sustainable changes (Dundas et al., 2017; Zhang & Chen, 2016). Moreover, researchers also found that self-compassion aids individuals in maintaining motivation when facing setbacks (Neff et al., 2005).

Clarifying the Differences Between Self-Compassion and Self-Esteem. Since both self-compassion and self-esteem relate to how individuals view themselves, addressing the differences between self-compassion and self-esteem is important to understanding the theoretical framework of self-compassion. Muris and Otgaar (2023) proposed that self-compassion and self-esteem should be viewed as complementary concepts, each playing a unique role in psychological health. However, each concept functions in distinct ways and has different implications for psychological well-being. Neff (2011) explained that self-esteem is about our perception of our own value or worth, which is typically influenced by how we measure our skills and accomplishments in comparison to others. While having high self-esteem

can offer feelings of assurance and capability, it often depends on achieving specific standards or receiving validation from others. Arguably, this dependency on self-esteem can lead individuals to feel overwhelmed or vulnerable in their successes and failures, especially in the context of performance. While self-esteem is often linked to positive outcomes such as increased confidence and general well-being, research by Baumeister et al. (2003) highlighted how self-esteem can also lead to undesirable effects, including tendencies toward narcissism, social comparisons, and external validation. Unlike self-esteem, self-compassion fosters a stable sense of self-worth that is less dependent on external circumstances and more resilient to setbacks (Neff & Vonk, 2009).

Neff and Germer (2018) drew a clear distinction between self-compassion and self-esteem, pointing out that self-esteem centers around a positive assessment of one's worth, often driven by a desire to perceive oneself as better than others. The need to maintain an elevated sense of self-esteem can sometimes lead individuals to engage in negative behaviors as they strive to uphold their superior self-image, which can lead to narcissism when an individual's self-worth is threatened. In contrast, the authors stated that self-compassion encourages a balanced view of oneself and reduces the need to be defensive or feel superior to others. In fact, self-compassion fosters a relationship with oneself that is rooted in kindness and acceptance, particularly in times when individuals confront their own failures or feelings of inadequacy. Therefore, according to Neff and Germer, being compassionate towards oneself does not require individuals to feel superior to others, and a self-compassionate attitude does not require self-evaluation or social comparison. Overall, self-compassion encourages the understanding that imperfection is part of the human experience. This perspective encourages a broader view, not only towards oneself but also towards others, reinforcing the shared nature of our imperfections.

Addressing the misconceptions surrounding self-compassion is crucial for understanding its concept and value within the theoretical framework of this study. I now introduce several compassion-based training programs that have been shown to enhance individuals' levels of self-compassion. I then discuss in detail the three subcomponents of self-compassion in relation to musicians' positive performance experiences. I specifically explain how the roles of mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness can be addressed to the constructs of flow and MPA from a theoretical perspective.

Compassion-Based Training Programs

A recent meta-analysis showed that compassion-based interventions promote well-being and emotional health (Kirby et al., 2017), which also indicates that compassion is a skill that can be taught in practical settings. As a result, researchers have developed many forms of compassion-based training programs to help cultivate effective skills and efficient responses toward aversive emotions that arise from difficult challenges or situations.

The existing compassion-based training programs vary in length and depth. The majority of programs have a non-intensive format that usually lasts from six to nine sessions. Specifically, the non-intensive model requires participants to meet their teachers weekly for two to three hours in a group setting with assigned daily practices between sessions. In contrast, the intensive model (e.g., the 5-day Mindful Self-Compassion intensive) is designed for a shorter duration (five to seven days) where participants meet in groups for six hours per day. These interventions often have a variety of training components, such as didactic instruction, group meditation practice, group discussion, writing exercises, self-reflection, and inquiry. The following section offers a brief overview of four compassion-based training programs and demonstrates the empirical evidence for their effectiveness.

Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT). Based on contemplative traditions and applied psychological science research, CBCT is a program of contemplative exercises to strengthen and sustain compassion. CBCT usually consists of an 8-session class with weekly meetings for 1.5 to 2 hours (Negi, 2013). The in-class sessions include an overview, guided meditations, interactive exercises and discussions (Ash et al., 2021). In the years after the development of the program, CBCT training was provided to various populations, including medical professionals, adolescents in foster care, veterans, and cancer survivors (González-Hernández et al., 2021; Lang et al., 2020; Pace et al., 2013).

Dodds et al. (2015) first assessed the impact of using CBCT on breast cancer survivors. After the training period, participants showed significant psychological improvements, such as reduced depression. Gonzalez-Hernandez et al. (2018) further assessed the effectiveness of CBCT in breast cancer patients and found CBCT was effective in reducing patients' stress and increasing their overall self-compassion, mindfulness, and awareness. Furthermore, the study conducted by Pahlitzsch (2019) investigated the feasibility of CBCT for tumor cancer survivors and their caregivers. The study found similar results indicating CBCT improved cancer survivors' emotional health.

Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT). According to Gilbert and Procter (2006), an individual's harsh self-criticism and shame are more likely to develop by not receiving sufficient warmth and affection in childhood. To target high levels of self-criticism and shame (Gilbert, 2014), Gilbert and colleagues developed CFT, another treatment model (Gilbert, 2010). On the basis of evolutionary psychology, attachment theory, and applied psychology processes from neuroscience and social psychology, the CFT program consists of various techniques to develop individuals' compassionate thoughts toward themselves. During training, participants meet in 2-

hour group sessions for eight to 12 weeks. Examples of the exercises include mindfulness, visualizations, yoga, and compassionate cognitive responses. More recently, researchers and clinicians have successfully adopted CFT to reduce depression (Braehler et al., 2013).

In a pilot study conducted by Gilbert and Procter (2006), researchers applied a structured program based on CFT to help hospital patients struggling with shame and self-criticism. Data analysis demonstrated significant decreases in depression, self-attacking, and shame. Later, Braehler et al. (2013) invited 40 participants with schizophrenia-spectrum disorder to undertake either the CFT treatment or treatment as usual for a comparative study. Researchers found CFT was associated with greater clinical improvement, including reduced depression and negative affects.

Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC). To shift the ways that people see, think, and treat themselves, and specifically for enhancing self-compassion, Germer and Neff (2013) developed the MSC program targeting both the general public and clinical populations. Based on the principles of mindfulness and self-compassion, MSC focuses on developing individuals' compassionate voice toward their own pain and suffering and adopting a more humanistic and self-comforting stance (Neff et al., 2007). In this 8-session program, participants meet for about 2.5 hours weekly and attend a 3-hour silent retreat. According to Neff (2023), the MSC program teaches three core meditations (affectionate breathing, loving-kindness for ourselves, and giving and receiving compassion), as well as some informal practices (e.g., compassionate movement, self-compassionate letter writing, and self-compassion in daily life).

Neff and Germer (2013) conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the MSC program. The researchers found the MSC program significantly improved participants' self-compassion, mindfulness, and various outcomes regarding their general well-being. All gains in

outcomes were maintained at 6-month and 12-month follow-ups. Bluth et al. (2016) applied the MSC program to a group of adolescents to explore its effectiveness in reducing anxiety and depressive symptoms and found the training program has the potential to reduce stress and improved social connection with life satisfaction.

Delaney (2018) used a sample of 13 female nurses to assess whether MSC is effective in reducing the participants' compassion fatigue and improving their resilience. This study demonstrated negative correlations between self-compassion and burnout. The results also showed that the MSC program has been found to improve nurses' resilience after training. Recently, Guo et al. (2020) used a 6-session internet-based MSC program to prevent postpartum depression in a group of pregnant women. Their findings indicate that the MSC program has significant positive effects on depressive and anxiety behaviors.

Research Methodologies for Investigating Flow, MPA, and Self-Compassion

Contemporary research into the psychological constructs of flow, MPA, and self-compassion employs a diverse range of methodologies that often cross the boundaries of quantitative and qualitative methods. These methodologies, while adaptable to the unique aspects of each psychological construct, share a collective aim to capture the complex and multifaceted nature of individuals' psychological dynamics and personal experiences.

When studying flow, researchers use a combination of methodologies to capture the nuanced and dynamic nature of trait and state flow. The ESM, briefly mentioned earlier, prompts participants to report on their immediate flow experiences at random points in time regarding their engagement with activities during the day (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987). Such time-intensive methodologies are augmented by comprehensive psychometric assessments using validated questionnaires that are developed based on the nine dimensions of flow. Specifically,

the Dispositional Flow Scale–2 (DFS–2; Jackson & Eklund, 2002) measures trait flow to reflect individuals’ general tendency to experience flow, and the Flow State Scale–2 (FSS–2; Jackson & Eklund, 2002) captures the occurrence and intensity of flow during specific activities. These quantitative methodologies are further enriched by qualitative interviews that retrospectively reconstruct personal experiences of flow and provide detailed descriptions of the flow experience (Clementson, 2019).

The exploration into MPA benefits from a similar methodological approach. Researchers often use questionnaires to assess the symptoms and severity of performance anxiety. For example, the Kenny Music Performance Anxiety Inventory (K-MPAI; Kenny, 2009, 2023) or the Performance Anxiety Inventory (PAI; Nagel et al., 1989) are commonly used.

In addition to quantitative questionnaires, physiological measures like heart rate, cortisol levels, or galvanic skin response provide empirical data on the bodily response to performance-related stress (Yoshie et al., 2009). Qualitative methods also play a critical role in understanding the experience of MPA (Kirchner, 2003). These methods delve into the rich narratives of performers’ internal reflections through interviews. Performers are invited to narrate their experiences in their own words, offering insights into the triggers, manifestations, and coping strategies regarding their experiences of MPA.

Turning to compassion and self-compassion, empirical studies employing different methodological approaches in the academic field have also greatly increased in the last decade. Mascaro et al. (2020) stated that compassion could be examined subjectively, intersubjectively, and objectively, or, in other words, from a first-, second-, or third-person angle. The first-person view looks at individuals’ personal experiences. Data from this category demonstrates an individual’s self-assessment of the compassion they have received or offered. Researchers can

use interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups for data collection. Next, the second-person view offers an opportunity to look at compassion in the relationship between two or more participants. Data generated from this category reports how participants can observe or experience compassion in others and when the act of compassion occurs. Data can be collected through methods such as informant reports and in-depth interviews. Finally, the third-person view offers the bystander a chance to evaluate compassion through observing interactions between two or more agents. Both the quantitative and qualitative data generated from this category represent the observer's understanding of how and how much compassionate behavior occurred in an event.

Moreover, researchers have developed a series of reliable and effective self-reporting measures to determine a person's experience when receiving compassion and their tendency to offer compassion to others. For measuring compassion, Sprecher and Fehr (2005) developed the Compassionate Love Scale (CLS) to assess an individual's compassionate caring for others close to them, for strangers, and for humankind. The CLS consisted of 21 self-assessment items on a Likert scale and was validated as a reliable tool. Hwang et al. (2008) developed the Santa Clara Brief Compassion Scale (SCBCS), which was a shortened version of the CLS. This scale specifically measured an individual's compassion towards strangers in a similar Likert scale format but is limited to five questions. The SCBCS was rated high for internal reliability in their study. The Compassion Scale (CS) developed by Pommier et al. (2020) is another self-report scale designed to examine levels of compassion. This 24-item scale measured individuals' compassion towards others on a 5-point Likert scale, which includes an assessment of their mindfulness, kindness, and common humanity. Data analysis showed that this scale is satisfactory regarding reliability and construct validity. Focusing on assessing individuals' levels

of self-compassion, Neff (2003a) developed a 26-item scale named the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) to assess individuals' compassion towards themselves using a Likert scale construct. The SCS requires participants to respond on a 5-point scale. Specifically, the SCS focuses on the three sub-components of self-compassion, namely, mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness. The SCS demonstrates good construct validity and reliability (Neff, 2023). Raes et al. (2011) further developed a shortened version of the Self-Compassion Scale. The 12-item Self-Compassion Scale–Short Form (SCS–SF) demonstrated adequate internal consistency and high correlation with its original version. It is considered reliable in assessing an individual's overall levels of self-compassion.

Employing Mixed Methods to Study Self-Compassion, Flow, and MPA

Accordingly, both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to collect and analyze data for studying compassion (Bluth et al., 2016). Quantitative data uses numeric values to measure compassionate phenomena. Specifically, a quantitative research question on compassion can help researchers determine relationships between two or more variables by asking a question like “Do university students with low trait self-compassion experience more social anxiety?” In contrast, qualitative data uses non-mathematical methods to describe compassion phenomena by using images or language. Specifically, a qualitative research question on compassion can ask participants about their processes, feelings, experiences, and reflections when recalling a compassionate event. For example, after a concentrated compassion-based training program, participants such as university students might be asked: “What do you perceive to be the barriers to practicing self-compassion on a daily basis?” Recently, several compassion (e.g., Dasan et al., 2015) and self-compassion (e.g., Ferguson et al., 2014) studies using mixed methods designs have emerged. According to Tashakkori and Creswell (2007), mixed methods research is seen as

“research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry” (p. 4). Therefore, mixed methods can offer a third option for compassion research.

Similarly, in the investigation of flow, mixed methods research has provided a resourceful foundation for understanding the complexities of this optimal experience. Multiple studies have demonstrated the use of mixed methods in capturing both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of flow (Bressler & Bodzin, 2013; Clementson, 2019). In parallel, studies of MPA have also benefitted from the use of mixed methods (Czajkowski et al., 2022), bringing together the objectivity of quantitative measures and the richness of qualitative narratives. Such methods enable a multifaceted view of MPA, accounting for both the intensity of performance anxiety as measured by quantifiable measurements and the lived experience of performers as they navigate through their anxiety before, during, and after performances.

Empirical research into psychological constructs like flow, MPA, and self-compassion has increasingly employed experimental designs to establish causal relationships and assess the efficacy of interventions. In the domain of flow, experimental studies have manipulated variables, such as task difficulty and participant skill level, to elicit the flow state, providing a controlled environment to test hypotheses regarding its antecedents and effects on performance (e.g., Keller & Bless, 2008). Similarly, MPA has been studied in experimental settings where performance situations are simulated to induce anxiety, allowing for the examination of coping strategies and the impact of therapeutic interventions (e.g., Stanson et al., 2022). Interventions aimed at enhancing self-compassion, such as self-compassion-related programs, have also been evaluated through experimental designs, measuring changes in self-report scales pre- and post-

intervention to ascertain their effectiveness (e.g., Neff & Germer, 2013). These experimental approaches not only elucidate the underlying mechanisms of these constructs but also contribute to the development of targeted strategies to optimize psychological well-being and performance in various settings.

Therefore, using a mixed methods design in experimental settings to study psychological constructs brings several benefits. It enables a more complete understanding of research phenomena by combining the statistical strength of quantitative data with the contextual richness of qualitative insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach allows for a nuanced exploration of how individuals experience and interpret these psychological states within the controlled parameters of an experiment by providing a lens through which to validate and elaborate on the research findings (Powell et al., 2008). Using qualitative data to triangulate quantitative results, the mixed methods design bridges the gap between the generalizability of experimental results and the personal relevance of individual experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In essence, Creswell and Plano Clark stated that employing mixed methods design in experimental settings offers an approach that amplifies the strengths and mitigates the weaknesses of singular methodologies, paving the way for comprehensive and insightful psychological research.

Three Subcomponents of Self-Compassion in Relation to Positive Performance Experiences

After detailing the overall benefits of self-compassion practices, the following sections address each of self-compassion's subcomponents in relation to flow and MPA in the order of mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness for two reasons from a theoretical perspective. First, it is essential to explain the elements of mindfulness because the method of cultivating self-compassion in current research is grounded in mindfulness practices (Neff &

Dahm, 2015). Second, novel research has started exploring the relationship between mindfulness and flow, but the roles of common humanity and self-kindness in relation to performance have not been fully established yet. Next, I first connect mindfulness to different dimensions of flow and discuss the potential role that common humanity and self-kindness may address in performance anxiety.

In the theoretical framework of this study, positive performance experiences are conceptualized by two key variables: the presence of flow experiences and the reduction of MPA. In investigating the positive and negative valence of performance experiences, I position self-compassion as a mediating factor that could potentially influence the multifaceted performance experiences of musicians (see Figure 1). Focusing on the three subcomponents of self-compassion, namely, mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness, this section first explores the relationships between mindfulness and flow from a theoretical level. This is followed by a discussion of the roles of common humanity and self-kindness in alleviating MPA. Presenting this theoretical framework might seem ambitious in optimizing the role of self-compassion, as existing research does not conclusively prove the degree of impact that self-compassion has on human performance. However, the following theoretical underpinnings suggest potential pathways worth exploring the role of self-compassion as a buffer and facilitator in the performance context, especially regarding musicians.

Mindfulness as a Subcomponent of Self-Compassion in Facilitating Flow

As one foundational subcomponent and as a strategy to cultivate self-compassion, mindfulness helps individuals nurture a non-judgemental and moment-to-moment awareness with curiosity. (Baer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Teasdale et al., 2000). According to Reid (2011), being present in the moment, having highly focused attention, and engaging actively in the task

are three shared features of mindfulness and flow. Therefore, I argue the practice of mindfulness is relevant in cultivating the flow experience for the following reasons.

Focusing on the balance of challenge and skills dimension of flow, the enhanced self-awareness cultivated through mindfulness practices may help individuals more accurately assess whether their skill level aligns with the difficulty of a task. This awareness promotes a realistic evaluation of one's capabilities, allowing individuals to engage and proceed with tasks they perceive as achievable. Additionally, mindfulness cultivates a mindset that approaches tasks with openness and acceptance, which can further facilitate task engagement and performance.

Moreover, mindfulness could facilitate the integration of action and awareness by enhancing an individual's ability to concentrate fully on their tasks. The practice of mindfulness may also prevent overthinking, allowing the mind and actions to integrate more seamlessly when delivering a task. Therefore, cultivating present-moment awareness through mindfulness may enable individuals to engage in tasks at a more instinctual level and allow their actions to flow more automatically.

Establishing clear goals is also essential for achieving flow. Mindfulness practice can facilitate this process by assisting individuals in clarifying their intentions for engaging in a task. From a mindful approach that fosters clarity and balanced attention, individuals may be able to better articulate precise and well-defined goals, thereby initiating their flow experiences.

In terms of receiving and making adjustments to unambiguous feedback, mindfulness fosters a non-judgmental awareness that enables individuals to respond effectively and adaptively during a task. This awareness may help prevent excessive self-criticism and emotional reactions that can occur from overly identifying with internal or external evaluations, thereby allowing for appropriate adjustments during an ongoing performance.

Focusing intensely on the task at hand can become more achievable through practicing mindfulness because developing sustained concentration and focus are the core elements of mindfulness practices. Through mindfulness, individuals can focus more on the task at hand and minimize internal and external distractions.

Furthermore, mindfulness practice may nurture individuals' sense of control. When facing performance tasks, mindfulness may improve emotional regulation and promote a state of composure. This calm and stable mental state, in addition to focused concentration, forms the foundation for more effectively executing tasks with precise control during performances.

The dimension of loss of self-consciousness in flow theory may also be achieved by mindfulness because mindfulness practice often leads to a reduction in self-consciousness. In addition, mindfulness can diminish worry about being judged by oneself or others. Instead, it allows individuals to focus their attention on the performance, enabling a fuller immersion in the present moment of the performance rather than being cautious about how well they deliver their skills.

An individual's perception of time can also be influenced by experiences of mindfulness. Being fully engaged in the present moment can alter one's experience of time, often making it seem to pass more quickly or slowly. By concentrating fully on the present, the mind may perceive the moment as more expansive, altering the usual sense of how quickly or slowly time passes.

Finally, the autotelic experience of flow may be enhanced through mindfulness practice, which fosters a state of engagement and presence that appreciates the process rather than the outcome. By cultivating a non-judgmental awareness of the present moment, mindfulness

practice may boost the intrinsic motivation and enjoyment derived from meaningful tasks. This approach potentially leads to a richer and more fulfilling performance experience.

The connections between mindfulness and each of the nine dimensions of flow also correspond to existing frameworks of mindfulness. For example, Shapiro et al. (2006) proposed three mechanisms of mindfulness, namely, intention, attention, and attitude. These three elements of mindfulness also correspond to flow theory based on the following explanations.

Intention. In mindfulness, reflecting on one's intention helps the individual discover their motivation for doing the task (Shapiro et al., 2006). Thus, one's intention serves as a prerequisite for achieving a goal. Similarly, focusing on one's intention before doing a task corresponds to two dimensions in flow theory, namely, challenge-skill balance and clear goals. Through practice, mindfulness helps individuals establish clear and reasonable goals by evaluating the difficulty of the tasks and one's abilities in advance, therefore allowing the individual to enter the flow state smoothly and effortlessly.

Attention. One of the main purposes of mindfulness is to develop one's concentration to achieve a state of balanced awareness (Shapiro et al., 2006). Through mindfulness practice, an individual learns to pay focused attention not only to the world around them but to the tasks at hand in the present moment. Attention in flow experience can be reflected in these four dimensions, namely, concentrating on the task at hand, integrating action and awareness when delivering the task, perceiving a sense of control, and making adjustments in response to the unambiguous feedback received. All these dimensions of flow require maintaining highly focused concentration and awareness that may be achieved by practicing mindfulness.

Attitude. The attitude element of mindfulness refers to the quality of one's attention (Shapiro et al., 2006). In contrast to taking a judgmental and resistant stance, directing one's

critical thoughts towards kindness and curiosity can lead to states of acceptance of oneself and an openness towards the present situation. Corresponding with the loss of self-consciousness dimension in flow theory, if an individual focuses on judgment and worries about the evaluation of others, their perspective may be limited to negative thoughts, which can interrupt the flow state and the performance. Thus, mindfulness practice might be beneficial for performers in competitive environments because of the accepting and open mindset it nurtures.

Common Humanity as a Subcomponent of Self-Compassion in Reducing MPA

In exploring the role of common humanity in relation to MPA, I highlight the impact of recognizing our shared human experiences as a possible mitigating factor against feelings of isolation and anxiety that performers often face. As a second component of self-compassion, common humanity cultivates the awareness that we are not alone in our struggles, which may serve as a beneficial element in the highly evaluative context of music performance. This section attempts to build the theoretical connections on how common humanity can potentially act as a buffer against MPA.

First, the concept of common humanity offers an individual a balanced perspective that confronts the isolating belief that experiencing MPA is a unique and personal struggle. By recognizing performance anxiety as a shared human experience, performers may shift from viewing their nervousness as an individual shortcoming to understanding it as a common challenge. This psychological shift in perception is critical in reducing feelings of isolation, a factor that intensifies anxiety (Hwang et al., 2022). In addition, an appreciation of common humanity may normalize the experiences of MPA and act as a counterbalance to the stigma that surrounds performance-related stress.

Furthermore, the recognition of common humanity within the world of performance may strengthen social connections among performers. This enhanced sense of belonging and interconnectedness arises from the mutual acknowledgment that individuals share similar learning successes and setbacks. When musicians realize they are part of a community that often encounters positive and negative performance experiences, their heightened performance-related stress may begin to diminish.

Moreover, an awareness of common humanity may reduce the tendency of negative evaluations. These evaluations can range from comparing one's own performance outcomes against others or against one's expectations, both of which may contribute to fear of negative evaluation that is a cause of MPA (Dobos et al., 2019). Specifically, these evaluative thoughts usually happen before or after a performance event when performers critically assess their performance outcomes. Therefore, by reducing the emphasis on comparative judgment, performers may lessen the cycle of rumination and situate their perceived internal and/or external evaluations into a broader perspective, where single performances are seen as moments in a continuum of shared learning experiences rather than intermittent moments of harsh judgment.

Thus, a sense of common humanity may act as a coping mechanism, providing psychological comfort that counteracts the isolating effects of performance-related stress. This shared sense of experience may foster a mental environment to promote resilience when performers face difficult moments in performing and learning.

Self-Kindness as a Subcomponent of Self-Compassion in Alleviating MPA

Self-kindness, as the third subcomponent of self-compassion, refers to the tendency to be caring and understanding with oneself rather than being harshly critical. Such an attitude may reduce the intense emotional pain and suffering MPA causes. In other words, by nurturing a

gentle and understanding relationship with oneself, performers may alleviate the harsh internal criticism and debilitating fear that are often associated with maladaptive MPA.

First, self-criticism among performers is a pervasive issue that can amplify MPA (Paese & Eggermann, 2024). Unfortunately, many performers use self-criticism as a tool to motivate themselves for higher achievements. Over time, this harsh and critical inner voice can become a persistent source of distress, reinforcing negative self-concepts and fueling the cycle of anxiety (Khalaila, 2015). In such situations, self-kindness may serve as an antidote to this pattern. By cultivating an understanding and supportive internal dialogue, performers can reduce the intensity and frequency of self-critical thoughts. This means that when mistakes are met with kindness rather than judgment, an individual's perception of learning acknowledges and values both progress and regress on their learning path, which can reduce the generalization of negative self-criticism.

Traditionally, perfectionism is common to the world of classical training and is often deeply ingrained in high-performing artists (McNeil et al., 2022; Skoogh & Frisk, 2019). Relentlessly striving for flawlessness while pursuing excellence can compel performers to set exceedingly high standards for themselves that are often unattainable in the short term, usually leading to a sense of failure and self-criticism. By cultivating self-kindness, performers can learn to approach their practices and performances with a more understanding mindset. It enables them to appreciate the progress they make, rather than solely fixating on the ideal expectations and outcomes they have not yet accomplished. This balanced view allows for a realistic assessment of an individual's abilities and achievements, acknowledging that perfection is driven by human nature and should not be a decisive measure of their own self-worth.

Additionally, the pursuit of perfection in performance often comes with an emotional cost. Perfectionism not only fuels the fear of failure but also amplifies the emotional turmoil when performers fall short of their own stringent expectations (Smith et al., 2022). This emotional pain often causes suffering that can intensify an individual's MPA. In such difficult situations, self-kindness may provide a soothing solution for this emotional distress. When performers approach their perceived failures with a self-kindness mindset, this warm attitude may mitigate the emotional pain associated with performance anxiety. Therefore, the practice of self-kindness lays the groundwork for a more balanced emotional response to the inevitable imperfections that arise in the pursuit of artistic excellence.

Finally, the practice of self-kindness may shape an overall supportive inner narrative that serves as a powerful motivator for performers. This internal dialogue, characterized by words of encouragement and self-support, is crucial for healing the pain MPA causes. Over time, a self-kindness mindset can lead to long-term changes in how performers respond to their performance dissatisfactions and offers a nurturing and supportive inner voice that transforms the internal landscape from one of criticism to one of encouragement, ultimately contributing to a significant shift in the experience of MPA.

In concluding this theoretical exploration, it is posited that the three sub-components of self-compassion may play a pivotal role in both fostering flow and mitigating MPA. Specifically, mindfulness cultivates attention and awareness that may initiate or enhance the flow experience. Common humanity offers a sense of perspective that may reduce performance anxiety by alleviating the threat of social comparison in competitive environments. Self-kindness brings a sense of warmth to the emotional pain that performance anxiety causes. By embodying these

three subcomponents, self-compassion appears to be a psychological concept that can promote positive performance experiences from a theoretical perspective.

In conclusion, it is crucial to note that empirical validation is necessary to fully support and substantiate this proposed theoretical framework. However, it is reasonable to argue that fostering self-compassion could be an effective and practical strategy for musicians seeking to enrich their positive performance experiences. To support this proposed theoretical framework, the following literature review presents key findings, critical analyses, and empirical studies that underpin the relationship between self-compassion, flow, and MPA in the field of performance. These existing research findings will be woven together to highlight how the practice of self-compassion can be instrumental in enhancing flow experiences and reducing MPA among musicians.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

Transitioning from the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter, this current chapter embarks on a literature review that examines in detail the current research on how self-compassion influences performance across varied domains, such as academia, sports, and music. This chapter aims to synthesize existing empirical research, critically assess the interaction of psychological constructs within these domains and identify significant gaps that offer opportunities for further research directions.

Specifically, I start by exploring the role of self-compassion in academic settings to provide a foundational understanding of how self-compassion might similarly impact other performance domains. Following this, my review explores the context of sports performance, where the discussion is focused on how athletes can leverage self-compassion to manage stress and enhance performance. The discussion then shifts to music performance, a domain where the interplay between self-compassion, flow, and music performance anxiety (MPA) becomes critical. I particularly review theoretical and empirical findings on how musicians' performance experiences may be enhanced through self-compassion. By connecting findings from across these domains, my literature review stresses the importance of drawing on experimental studies using interventions that incorporate self-compassion to bring deeper insight into the field of music performance.

Towards the end of the chapter, my review highlights the research gaps that have emerged and discuss the lack of exploration regarding the role and application of self-compassion in the field of music performance. Overall, this chapter acts as a pivotal intersection that informs the connections between my proposed theoretical framework and the research methodology employed in this study. This approach provides a deeper understanding of how self-compassion

may influence musicians' experiences through its mediating role between flow and MPA by focusing on musicians' performance experiences rather than solely on their performance outcomes.

The Impact of Self-Compassion on Academic Performance

In this section, I delve into empirical studies examining the role of self-compassion in academic performance, particularly its influence on academic-related performance anxiety. While academic performance shares some commonalities with sports and music performance, such as inducing significant stress before evaluative events, impacting individual well-being and confidence, and potentially leading to prolonged negative ruminations, the way these pressures manifest can be different. In my view, academic evaluations, such as in-class examinations, often lack the public exposure and the immediate internal and external evaluations, which are integral to the contexts of sports and music performance. This means that while the anxiety is still present, it may not be amplified by a live audience's scrutiny, making the nature of the pressure qualitatively different. Unlike sports or music, academic performance typically does not involve intense physical effort or the need to execute complex physical movements in a performance setting. However, the mental exertion, strategic preparation, and the significance of the outcomes in academic settings can be just as demanding and potentially as threatening as those found in performances involving intense physical efforts.

Furthermore, I argue that most academic evaluations often hinge on long-term outcomes rather than momentary displays of skill. This may cause performance-related anxiety, worry, and rumination to persist over extended periods. Therefore, understanding these nuances is crucial for developing tailored strategies that enhance student well-being and performance in such high-pressure academic settings. Moreover, this establishes the grounds for valuable discussion as to

the role of self-compassion and related training programs in terms of their psychological benefits for students' academic achievements and overall well-being. The following studies in this section explore the beneficial role of self-compassion in academic settings. By examining how self-compassion supports students in managing academic-related anxiety and enhancing overall well-being, these insights pave the way for addressing gaps in current knowledge in other performance-related fields, such as sports and music.

In their paper, Buljubašić and Bulut (2022) provided a theoretical discussion of self-compassion, discussing its impact on academic performance and achievement. They highlighted how self-compassion can positively affect students' capacity to manage academic pressures by mitigating negative reactions to failures and stress, thus fostering emotional resilience and a growth-oriented mindset. One of the main points of the authors is to compare self-compassion with self-esteem. They noted that self-esteem can sometimes encourage narcissism and defensive behaviors that feed unnecessary social comparison and tension. In contrast, self-compassion offers a more constructive approach to personal challenges by acknowledging that difficult learning moments are common conditions in one's educational experience. The paper emphasized the significance of incorporating self-compassion programs into educational frameworks to enhance students' intrinsic motivation and support their long-term well-being.

Moving beyond theory, Al-Awamleh (2020) investigated the impact of self-compassion on academic achievement among sports science students. Utilizing the Arabic version of the Self-Compassion Scale (Teleb & Al Awamleh, 2013), the researcher measured self-compassion levels in 315 participants and compared these scores with their academic performance, as indicated by their Grade Point Average. Data analysis revealed that while most participants exhibited moderate levels of self-compassion, there was no significant correlation between self-

compassion and either mindfulness or academic achievement. Notably, female participants showed higher levels of self-compassion compared to male participants. Although these findings diverge from the following studies, which identify positive correlations between self-compassion and academic performance, as well as different gender dynamics, this study remains valuable to the existing literature since it underscores the nuanced role of self-compassion across diverse contexts and populations.

In contrast, the following two studies demonstrate a positive correlation between self-compassion and academic performance, revealing that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with improved learning behaviors. To begin with, Long and Neff (2018) explored how self-compassion relates to student communication behaviors in academic settings, with a particular focus on their fear of evaluation. The authors studied 691 undergraduate students who completed surveys assessing their self-compassion, fear of evaluation, and various academic communication behaviors. The results showed that students with higher self-compassion had lower levels of fear of evaluation. Additionally, these self-compassionate students were more likely to participate in class, ask questions, and seek help. The study found that the reduced fear of evaluation played a significant role in mediating the relationship between self-compassion and communication behaviors among participants. Based on these findings, one could argue that self-compassion helps to reduce participants' anxiety and fear of evaluation and also helps to facilitate more proactive and adaptive communication skills in academic settings. These insights are particularly relevant for music performance research, where fears of evaluations and performance pressures are usually present.

Taking a similar approach, Egan et al. (2021) investigated how the roles of mindfulness, self-compassion, resiliency, and well-being are related to academic performance. Using

questionnaires, the researchers collected data from 206 undergraduate students to assess their levels of resilience, mindfulness, self-compassion, self-criticism, procrastination, perceived future consequences, and social comparison. The researchers used participants' academic records gathered at the end of the year to indicate their academic performance. The researchers found that students with higher levels of resiliency, mindfulness, self-compassion, and an awareness of future consequences performed better academically, while procrastination negatively impacted their performance. More specifically, self-compassion significantly predicted participants' overall academic performance. These findings underscore the potential benefits of integrating self-compassion practices into higher education to enhance student well-being and success.

After exploring the relationship between self-compassion and students' overall academic performance, the subsequent six studies focus specifically on examining the relationship between self-compassion and test anxiety. The findings from these studies consistently show positive outcomes across participants from different age groups. The first four studies involve adult samples, demonstrating how self-compassion effectively manages test anxiety in mature populations. The latter two studies involve adolescent participants, extending insights into how self-compassion supports younger individuals facing similar academic pressure. Collectively, these studies underscore the significance of self-compassion in alleviating test anxiety and the potential of using self-compassion to enhance performance across diverse educational settings.

The study by Tang (2019) explored the relationships between resilience, self-compassion, emotions regarding personal achievements, test anxiety, and academic performance in 202 undergraduate students. Utilizing multiple questions on participants' levels of self-compassion, intolerance of uncertain situations, resilience, and test anxiety, the researcher found a few correlations. Specifically, data analysis revealed positive correlations between participants' self-

compassion and resilience. Also, self-compassion negatively correlated with cognitive test anxiety in participants. These results suggest that self-compassion can be considered a significant predictor of test anxiety. The negative relationship between self-compassion and test anxiety thus highlights the potential of self-compassion interventions to improve academic performance by reducing anxiety and enhancing emotional resilience.

Focusing on reducing statistics anxiety, the study by Zhang et al. (2021) examined how a self-compassionate mindset impacts students' performance in a research methods course focusing on statistics. The final research sample included 90 undergraduates who completed questionnaires to assess their levels of self-compassion, intelligence, and statistical anxiety. The researcher also used the students' final grades of the statistical course as one of the variables. Data analysis revealed that students with a self-compassion growth mindset performed better in the course because this mindset led to an increase in their belief in the ability to grow their intelligence. This mindset also resulted in a reduction in their anxiety about statistics. Together, this contributed to their improved course performance. These findings highlight the potential benefits of fostering self-compassion to improve academic performance by alleviating anxiety associated with challenging subjects.

The next study by Nazari and Taghipour (2022) focused on understanding how self-compassion and emotion regulation strategies, such as managing worry, excitement, and anxiety, predict test anxiety among undergraduate students. Using questionnaires, the researchers collected data on 312 participants' test anxiety, emotion regulation strategies, and self-compassion. The findings revealed that better emotion regulation and higher self-compassion levels were linked to lower levels of test anxiety. More specifically, the researchers confirmed that participants' levels of mindfulness and awareness of common humanity negatively

correlated with their test anxiety, while feelings of isolation and self-judgment tended to increase test anxiety. The study highlights the potential benefits of psychological training programs in educational settings that aim to enhance students' self-compassion levels in their academic performance and well-being. Such findings are particularly relevant for exploring how self-compassion can be applied to managing performance anxiety in other performance-related fields.

Focusing on undergraduate students, the study conducted by Leppma and Darrah (2024) explored the effects of self-efficacy, mindfulness, and self-compassion on math anxiety among 345 individuals. The participants filled out self-reported questionnaires, and the results showed that self-efficacy and self-compassion were both strong predictors of participants' math anxiety. Specifically, self-compassion demonstrated a negative correlation with math anxiety, indicating that participants with higher levels of self-compassion were associated with lower levels of math anxiety.

Prioritizing their study on a younger population, the study conducted by Santos (2020) explored how striving, shame, and self-compassion affect the relationship between performance-avoidance goal orientation and test anxiety in adolescents. Involving 463 participants, individuals completed questionnaires on their test anxiety, performance-avoidance goal orientation, striving, shame, and self-compassion. The results showed that self-compassion acted as a mediator in the relationship between test anxiety and performance-avoidance goal orientation, which refers to an individual's desire to avoid performing poorly and the fear of negative evaluation. In addition, this effect is particularly pronounced in students with lower levels of self-compassion. These findings highlight the importance of cultivating self-compassion in adolescents to help reduce test anxiety.

The sixth and final study on the interplay between self-compassion and test anxiety was conducted by O'Driscoll and McAleese (2023). The authors examined how self-compassion can help reduce test anxiety in adolescents. This study involved 47 adolescents who answered questionnaires assessing their test anxiety, state anxiety, and self-compassion. The authors found that female adolescents and participants with higher general anxiety experienced more test anxiety. Regarding the role of self-compassion, data analysis revealed that higher self-compassion levels were significantly linked to lower test anxiety. These results indicate that self-compassion can act as a mitigating factor against test anxiety, showing its potential role in educational settings to support students' psychological well-being and academic success. The study emphasizes the need for self-compassion interventions to build resilience and reduce anxiety in adolescents, especially during high-stakes exams.

These six studies collectively demonstrate the positive role of self-compassion in reducing academic stress and enhancing performance in educational settings. However, it is important to note that individuals who lack strategies to maintain high performance in stressful academic settings may experience various negative consequences, such as burnout, anxiety, and perfectionism, which can have a significant and lasting impact on their well-being. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics, the next two studies incorporate burnout as a variable, expanding the conversation about the impacts of academic demands on student health and performance.

For example, the research by Cheraghian et al. (2016) investigated how self-compassion might buffer the negative effects of academic burnout on the mental well-being of students. Involving 200 participants in a cross-sectional analysis, the authors utilized questionnaires to measure participants' self-compassion, academic burnout, and mental health. Results indicated

that self-compassion negatively correlated with academic burnout and positively with mental health, serving as a moderator to reduce the adverse effects of burnout on students' mental health.

In addition, the study by Fisher et al. (2023) examined how self-compassion, test anxiety, and maladaptive perfectionism contribute to academic burnout among accounting students. Using questionnaires, the researchers assessed 159 participants' levels of self-compassion, test anxiety, maladaptive perfectionism, and burnout. The results showed that a large majority of participants experienced moderate to high levels of burnout. Notably, high cognitive test anxiety and maladaptive perfectionism were strong predictors of their burnout. In contrast, students with higher self-compassion levels experienced lower test anxiety and maladaptive perfectionism, indicating the positive role self-compassion has in mitigating burnout. The study highlighted that self-compassion could reduce the negative effects of perfectionism and anxiety, especially during stressful times like exams. These findings suggest that encouraging self-compassion in educational settings can help reduce academic burnout and improve students' well-being and performance.

Having explored a comprehensive range of studies on how self-compassion may impact academic performance, a clear pattern emerges from these studies. Self-compassion not only reduces performance anxiety but also shields against the long-term effects of academic stress and burnout. These insights highlight how crucial self-compassion is for enhancing student resilience and improving mental health within academic settings. Next, I shift my discussion to performance in sports. By exploring how self-compassion is applied in sports, I seek to demonstrate the role self-compassion has in promoting the well-being of athletes.

The Impact of Self-Compassion on Sports Performance

Based on my understanding, sports performance and music performance share remarkable similarities in their contexts and settings, reflecting the intense and rigorous demands placed on individuals in both fields. Both fields emphasize the traditional view that consistent practice and pushing through pain are virtues essential to achieving success. Often, athletes and musicians must dedicate significant time and effort from a young age to develop their skills under the guidance of coaches and instructors who provide technical training and emotional support. Additionally, both sports and music are inherently competitive, with performers continually working to improve their abilities and outperform others. This competitive nature often culminates in events or performances where they demonstrate their skills in front of live audiences, which adds an extra layer of excitement or pressure.

Moreover, the public exposure of these performance contexts further underscores their similarities. I believe that most high performers in both fields are acutely aware that every move is scrutinized, which can dramatically amplify negative performance experiences, potentially hindering or enhancing performers' execution of their skills. Furthermore, both sports and music performances demand not only physical effort but also emotional expression. They require performers to blend technical skill with artistic interpretation, which must be meticulously prepared but interpreted as effortless during execution. This combination of physical and expressive elements necessitates a balanced mental state, underscoring the importance of psychological resilience and emotional regulation for success in either field.

Theoretically, performance anxiety in sports and music performance are rooted in similar psychological processes. Both are driven by factors, such as perfectionism, a fear of negative evaluation, the desire to excel, and ruminating on the consequences of not meeting performance expectations (Barros et al., 2022; Patel et al., 2010). An increased heart rate, trembling, cognitive

issues such as excessive worry or negative thinking, and behavioral reactions including avoidance or excessive practicing, are some examples of physical symptoms individuals may face when the pressure of MPA is present (Taborsky, 2007). Conversely, optimal performance in both sports and music brings profound personal fulfillment. This can act as a powerful motivator, enhancing further dedication to the performer's learning motivation and career. Repeated positive performance experiences in these areas offer numerous benefits, including increased self-esteem, recognition, and the intrinsic joy of mastering a skill (Goddard et al., 2023). Such rewards underscore the importance of striving for peak performance, further aligning the goals and experiences of athletes and musicians.

According to my observation, research and studies in sports psychology often introduce strategies for enhancing human performance, providing a rich resource for understanding and advancing performers' comprehensive development. Given the psychological benefit of self-compassion, the concept and application of this psychological construct have shown to be a vital tool for athletes. Due to the shared elements of sports and music performance, understanding how self-compassion supports athletes in handling competitive stress could lead to similar strategies for musicians, leading to new directions for enhancing performance through the foundation of performance psychology. Through this interdisciplinary discussion of the positive role self-compassion offers to athletes, I aim to enrich the understanding and highlight current research on the practical benefits of applying self-compassion in the context of sports, potentially revealing the gaps in research and translating these findings and strategies to the realm of music performance.

A scoping review by Cormier et al. (2023) assessed the current development and findings of research on self-compassion in sports. This review included 69 studies focusing on key

themes of athletes' well-being, mindfulness, striving for excellence, and overcoming setbacks. The review highlighted the positive correlations between self-compassion and various adaptive psychological constructs such as body appreciation, self-esteem, and self-confidence. The authors also addressed negative correlations between self-compassion and maladaptive constructs like burnout and performance anxiety. Despite substantial growth in the field, the authors pointed out that gaps remain in understanding the relationship between self-compassion and performance, the distinctiveness between self-compassion and mindfulness, and the integration of intersectionality and diversity into research. The review underscores the need for more comprehensive methodologies and theoretical models to guide future research, suggesting that self-compassion can significantly contribute to athletes' psychological resilience and performance outcomes.

The next two studies employ qualitative methodologies to explore athletes' perceptions regarding the integration of self-compassion into their practice and performance routines. These investigations delve into how athletes perceive the value and impact of adopting a self-compassionate attitude, examining the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating such practices within their regular athletic training and competitive environments. First, the study conducted by Eke et al. (2020) investigated how self-compassion on body image affects the performance perceptions and emotional well-being of adolescent female athletes. The study involved seven participants, all engaged in competitive sports. Employing narrative inquiry as the research approach, the researchers used interviews and journal entries to collect data. Qualitative data analysis identified four main themes: the participants' confidence in their bodies, the impact of others' perceptions, their efforts to achieve their potential, and the emotional aspects of their experiences. The authors found that self-compassion facilitated athletes to

maintain positive emotions and attitudes towards their performances. Also, participants' reduced comparison between themselves and others improved their overall confidence. Although this study has a relatively small sample size, it still highlighted the potential of using self-compassion to enhance positive emotions in high performers.

Adopting a similar qualitative approach, Frentz et al. (2020) explored how athletes' self-perception changed from self-criticism to self-compassion in managing sport-related challenges. The researchers collected data from 11 athletes through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis revealed several key themes from participants' narratives. For example, the crucial role of supportive coaching and constructive feedback, the influence of teammates and their shared struggles despite competitive dynamics, the impact of parents and mentors, the importance of developing balanced self-awareness, and maintaining an open mindset. The researchers found that athletes gained significant benefits from recognizing their value beyond their performances, building on self-belief, and leveraging past coping successes. In addition, a supportive environment, including coaches, parents, and peers, was crucial in fostering self-compassion.

Next, the following three studies build on understanding the positive role self-compassion plays in sports, focusing on its impact in reducing self-criticism, enhancing motivation, and improving coping strategies. These investigations collectively underscore how self-compassion contributes significantly to athletes' psychological well-being and performance. First, Killham et al. (2018) explored how self-compassion and self-criticism relate to how young female athletes perceive their athletic performance. The study involved 82 female athletes who completed surveys on self-compassion, self-criticism, and their performance before and after a competition. The researchers found that self-compassion was positively correlated with perceived performance and negatively correlated with self-criticism. The results indicate that self-

compassion may enhance athletes' perceptions of their performance and serve as a valuable psychological resource, especially when performers are negatively impacted by harsh self-criticism.

Next, Barczak and Eklund (2020) investigated how self-compassion affects the way competitive swimmers face performance evaluations and their subsequent coping and motivation skills. The study involved 121 swimmers who filled out questionnaires about their performance evaluations, self-compassion, coping methods, and motivation levels. The results showed that self-compassion played a key role in helping swimmers develop more effective coping strategies after experiencing less successful performances. For example, participants with higher levels of self-compassion were more likely to use task-oriented coping strategies. The researchers also found that self-compassion was linked to higher levels of motivation. These findings highlight that in high-pressure performance situations, self-compassion can help athletes stay resilient and maintain their motivation. This study has important implications for competitive performance scenarios and could be applied to music performance as well. By incorporating self-compassion training, performers may be better equipped to handle setbacks.

Additionally, the study by Doorley et al. (2022) examined how self-compassion influences athletes' emotional regulation and their ability to rebound from performance setbacks. Involving 67 individuals, the researchers collected data from various questionnaires assessing participants' self-compassion, goal-specific hope, and confidence. Participants' emotions and strategies to regulate those emotions were collected from their daily journals. Data analysis revealed that athletes with higher self-compassion were better at interpreting negative competitive events more positively, therefore, helping them handle stress more effectively. Additionally, higher levels of self-compassion were linked to participants' improved performance

after setbacks, suggesting that athletes who are kinder to themselves and less self-critical can recover from poor performances more quickly. These findings suggest that self-compassion plays a crucial role in stabilizing emotional responses and enhancing performance recovery, offering significant implications for developing mental resilience in athletes.

The next three studies delve specifically into the relationship between self-compassion and performance-related anxiety in athletes. The purpose of these investigations was to unpack how self-compassion may act as a buffer against the pressures of competitive sports, exploring its potential to mitigate anxiety and enhance overall athletic performance. By focusing on this dynamic, the studies contribute to a deeper understanding of how psychological resilience can impact athletes' mental states in competitive scenarios through self-compassion.

The research conducted by Mohebi et al. (2019) examined how self-compassion affects pre-competition anxiety in female martial arts athletes. The authors recruited 140 tae kwon do and 113 karate athletes. Before their competitions, participants completed the Short Form of the Self-Compassion Scale (Raes et al., 2011) and the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory (Cox et al., 2003). Data analysis on the 253 participants showed a strong negative correlation between participants' self-compassion and their cognitive and somatic levels of anxiety. Additionally, the researchers found self-compassion was positively correlated with self-confidence, providing further evidence that greater self-compassion was a predictor of reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence before individuals engage in competitive events. These findings suggest that self-compassion can act as a buffer against pre-competition anxiety and boost self-confidence among female athletes. Thus, this study underscores the potential benefits of integrating self-compassion training into sports training routines to help athletes manage their anxiety and enhance their performance.

In addition, Jansen (2021) explored the relationship between self-compassion, repetitive thinking, and fear of the future among football players. The study involved 55 athletes who responded to questionnaires regarding their levels of self-compassion, tendencies towards rumination and worry, and their apprehensions about future events. Data analysis indicated that higher levels of self-compassion were significantly correlated with lower depressive moods and less anxiety about future events among participants. This suggests that individuals' levels of self-compassion can influence their tendency to engage in rumination or obsessive thoughts, which in turn could affect their perception of future competitive events. These results highlight the importance of self-compassion as a potential intervention to reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms in athletes, suggesting that fostering self-compassion could help mitigate psychological distress during intense competition.

Casali et al. (2022) conducted a comprehensive study investigating the links between self-compassion, rumination, and anxiety among athletes. Involving 263 participants from various sports, participants answered questionnaires regarding their levels of self-compassion, worry, rumination, and competition anxiety. The researchers found participants' competition anxiety was negatively correlated with self-compassion and positively correlated with worry in sports practices. This study underscores the critical role of self-compassion in managing athletes' anxiety, particularly through mitigating worry, and suggests targeted interventions to enhance self-compassion for alleviating competition anxiety.

My exploration of the role of self-compassion in sports has revealed its significant potential to enhance athletes' mental resilience, reduce performance anxiety, and foster positive coping strategies. These studies collectively demonstrate how integrating self-compassion into sports training can mitigate the negative impacts of competitive pressures and promote a

healthier psychological state among athletes. Building on empirical findings from both academic and sports performance, numerous scholars have advocated for applying self-compassion strategies to the arts, particularly in music performance. Although integrating performance psychology with musicians' experiences from an interdisciplinary perspective presents research challenges, it holds considerable promise. The following theoretical discussions in the music field outline scholars' suggestions for incorporating self-compassion into music performance and education, which provides a deeper understanding of how artists' creative processes and their performance experiences can benefit from the interaction with self-compassion.

Conceptualizing Self-Compassion in Music Performance and Education

The article by Kageyama (2014) discussed how self-compassion can benefit musicians, especially in handling setbacks and staying motivated. The author noted that musicians often experience challenging practice situations and may be tempted to criticize themselves or avoid practicing. Therefore, Kageyama suggested incorporating the concept of self-compassion into the music learning environment could be a more effective approach for musicians' practice and artistic growth. Additionally, the author mentioned that self-compassion is linked to lower levels of anxiety and depression, greater resilience, and better overall well-being. Furthermore, the author addressed concerns that self-compassion might lead to laziness or reduced standards by clarifying that a self-compassionate attitude can coexist with high-performance standards and musicians' intrinsic motivation. Thus, Kageyama proposed considering self-compassion to foster a balanced mindset in students' music learning.

Building on the psychological benefits of self-compassion listed by Kageyama, the exploration of self-compassion's practical application in music performance and education continues. In another paper, Johnson (2016) explored the concept of self-compassion in music

performance and teaching. The author highlighted how self-compassion can help musicians and educators face their mistakes without harsh judgment, therefore, fostering a healthier psychological environment with fuller engagement in individuals' creative processes. The author also emphasized the importance of mindfulness with a non-judgmental attitude in cultivating self-compassion. Additionally, the paper offered practical advice for incorporating self-compassion into practice routines and teaching methodologies, suggesting that it can improve mental health, reduce performance anxiety, and lead to more authentic musical expressions. Furthermore, the author advocated for a shift in how musicians and educators perceive and react to imperfections, proposing that a self-compassionate approach enhances both personal well-being and professional development in music education. However, it could be argued that a more detailed exploration from an empirical perspective regarding how to implement self-compassion strategies in competitive environments could further strengthen the practical application of these recommendations.

Following along the same lines of discussion, subsequent research begins to explore how self-compassion may impact broader aspects of well-being in music education settings. Diaz (2023) discussed how mindfulness, self-compassion, and gratitude can positively impact mental and social well-being. The author highlighted that self-compassion helps people approach their failures and flaws with kindness and acceptance, recognizing that suffering is a common human experience. Diaz also underscored the importance of gratitude in directing attention to positive aspects of life, which can improve well-being. These psychological concepts are particularly relevant in music education, where artistic interpretations reflecting personal preferences in a caring and supportive educational environment for both the teachers and students are crucial. However, Diaz argued that although the mindfulness-related concepts and practices have

transformative potential, they must be applied with a thorough understanding of their capabilities and limitations to truly benefit music educational settings.

As the discourse around self-compassion in music performance and education continues to develop, newer theoretical discussions have begun to critically assess not just the benefits but also the challenges of integrating these practices into existing frameworks, particularly in competitive environments. In a recent paper, Oosthuizen (2024) examined the essential yet often overlooked role of self-compassion in music performance and education. The author argued that self-compassion is not merely a beneficial trait but a critical psychological resource for musicians. By helping musicians foster self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, self-compassion could mitigate MPA, enhance psychological health, and improve musicians' efficiency during practice. Though the paper convincingly highlights these benefits, it does not sufficiently address potential challenges with empirical evidence in integrating self-compassion into existing music education frameworks, particularly in environments that prioritize performance excellence and competition.

Building on these insights, the most recent work by Lam (2024) explored coping strategies and the development of psychological resilience and self-compassion among music students, aiming to bridge the knowledge gap in understanding how these psychological factors interplay and influence musicians' well-being. One of the studies included in Lam's work surveyed 120 students, and the author found that effective coping strategies and self-compassion were positively correlated with increased resilience, health, and overall well-being among the participants.

Based on these theoretical suggestions, several studies have explored the specific correlations between self-compassion and MPA. The following two studies have found notable

and consistent results between these two variables, demonstrating that higher levels of self-compassion are significantly associated with lower levels of MPA. First, Sigurðardóttir (2020) examined the interplay between self-compassion and MPA among Icelandic musicians. By administering questionnaires to 79 musicians, the researcher assessed participants' levels of MPA, self-compassion, and general anxiety. Data analysis revealed participants' higher MPA levels were positively correlated with their levels of general anxiety. In addition, individuals experiencing higher levels of MPA had lower self-compassion levels. Specifically, mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness all had significant negative correlations with MPA. In contrast, participants' over-identification, isolation, and self-criticism were strongly associated with MPA. The results suggest that enhancing self-compassion could be a beneficial strategy for mitigating MPA, particularly through interventions that reduce over-identification with negative thoughts and emotions. This research underscores the need for further exploration into self-compassion-based programs as potential strategies for reducing performance anxiety in musicians. Thus, this study provided valuable preliminary insights into the relationship between self-compassion and MPA, offering both theoretical and empirical support for my research approach.

Subsequently, Farley and Kelley (2023) investigated how self-compassion related to MPA in 119 university music students. Using questionnaires, the researchers found a significant negative correlation between participants' self-compassion and MPA, indicating that participants experiencing higher levels of self-compassion were associated with lower MPA. Notably, the self-kindness subcomponent of self-compassion was specifically identified as a key predictor for participants' lower levels of MPA. The study underscores the potential benefits of integrating self-compassion-focused interventions to improve musicians' mental health and performance.

Based on the antithetical relationship discovered in the data analysis, this research supports the implementation of strategies that promote self-compassion as a tool to mitigate the adverse effects of MPA, providing a valuable theoretical foundation for applying the concept of self-compassion and related training programs in music education.

Exploring the literature on self-compassion across academia, sports, and music unveils common themes that underscore the development of this interdisciplinary approach. The scholarly dialogue initially focused on the potential benefits of self-compassion in performance-based fields, providing theoretical insights that established a foundation for subsequent correlation studies. These studies have been instrumental in demonstrating significant relationships between self-compassion and various psychological constructs that play critical roles in shaping performers' experiences. Building upon this groundwork, the next section of this literature review delves into empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of self-compassion-related programs in academia, sports, and music. The findings in these studies provide solid and empirical evidence for the practical utility of self-compassion-related interventions, underscoring their relevance and effectiveness in real-world applications. By exploring this evidence, I aim to substantiate the role of self-compassion in improving musicians' performance experiences and bridge a crucial gap in the current literature.

Applying Self-Compassion-Related Interventions in Academic, Sports, and Music

Performance

To date, the comprehensive progression from theory to correlation and empirical studies highlights the essential role of self-compassion in enhancing performance and well-being across diverse disciplines. By exploring the effectiveness of self-compassion-related programs in academia, sports, and music, this section of this literature review enables the identification of the

crucial role that self-compassion plays in enhancing musicians' positive performance experiences. In addition, pursuing this direction underscores the importance of incorporating self-compassion-based strategies tailored to musicians, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how these strategies can be effectively integrated into performance training and education frameworks in music.

After exploring the role of self-compassion across various performance domains, a promising trend has been observed in the literature. Research focused on self-compassion consistently demonstrates its beneficial effects on well-being and performance in the fields of academia, sports, and music, as supported by correlational studies based on theoretical analyses. These findings underscore the importance of developing and evaluating self-compassion-related strategies that address a broader scope of psychological constructs that may impact performers' experiences and outcomes. Moving forward, my discussion delves into the effectiveness of self-compassion-related interventions within experimental settings in academia and sports. This exploration underscores the compelling need to extend such research into the realm of music performance, where empirical evidence is notably scarce.

Self-Compassion-Related Interventions for Academic Performance

The study conducted by DeLury and Poulin (2018) explored how self-compassion affects academic performance, particularly under conditions where participants' self-esteem is challenged. Participants were divided into two groups: one practiced self-compassion exercises, and the other did expressive writing as a control condition. The self-compassion exercises included writing activities aimed at promoting self-kindness, recognizing common humanity, and fostering mindfulness. After these interventions, all participants were tested using the Graduate Record Examinations verbal analogy tasks to assess their performance. Data collected from 333

participants revealed that self-compassion effectively reduced the negative effects of self-esteem threats on Graduate Record Examinations performance, with individuals in the self-compassion group maintaining their performance levels even when faced with these challenges and obstacles. These results indicate that self-compassion can be a crucial psychological tool in enhancing academic performance during stressful situations.

The study by McEwan et al. (2018) evaluated the impact of a web-based self-compassion program on reducing assessment anxiety in university students. The study involved 48 students who reported high levels of assessment anxiety. These students were randomly divided into two groups. During the experiment, the self-compassion group worked on exercises designed to increase self-compassion, while the control group focused on relaxation techniques. Participants in both groups experienced increased self-compassion and self-reassurance. Additionally, they experienced decreased self-criticism, depression, and stress. For assessment anxiety, significant reductions were observed only in participants who initially had high levels of assessment anxiety. Comparing the two interventions, the compassionate imagery exercises had a greater impact on improving self-compassion, while the relaxation imagery exercises were more effective at improving participants' goal orientation. This study is valuable because it demonstrates that both compassionate imagery and relaxation exercises can effectively reduce anxiety and improve mental well-being among students. Moreover, the study shows that different types of interventions can have unique benefits. These insights can inform the development of programs aimed at improving student well-being and academic performance, making the study a significant contribution to educational and psychological research.

Moeini et al. (2019) examined the impact of a self-compassion-based intervention on nursing students' self-efficacy in their clinical performance. The study involved 52 internship

nurses who were randomly assigned to the intervention or control groups. The intervention was an 8-week self-compassion training program with weekly 90-minute sessions, though the specific content of the program was not provided. Using questionnaires, the data analysis revealed significant improvements in the intervention group's self-efficacy regarding their clinical performance compared to the control group. The results pointed to the value and practicality of self-compassion training for improving the clinical performance of nursing students. Despite these positive findings, the study's limitations include a lack of detailed intervention content and a detailed description of the research procedure.

Self-Compassion-Related Interventions for Sports Performance

The study by Flegar (2021) examined the feasibility and potential benefits of an online self-compassion training program for athletes, particularly focusing on the role of self-compassion relating to participants' mindfulness, performance, and anxiety. The study focused on 80 athletes who were divided into either a self-compassion training group or a wait-list control group. The self-compassion group participated in a 4-week program featuring writing exercises, educational videos, and meditations on self-compassion. The researcher used questionnaires to collect participants' levels of mindfulness, self-compassion, general anxiety, sport-related anxiety, perceived athletic performance, and objective perception of their performances. The results showed that self-compassion training significantly improved participants' self-compassion and mindfulness. However, the researcher did not find notable differences between the two groups in terms of anxiety reduction or athletic performance. Despite these mixed outcomes, this study demonstrated that online self-compassion interventions are feasible and can effectively boost self-compassion and mindfulness among athletes. For

studies on self-compassion in music performance, this research suggests that similar programs delivered through online settings could be a practical strategy that may benefit musicians.

Röthlin and Leiggener (2021) used a randomized control trial over two weeks to explore the impact of self-compassion on reducing performance anxiety among 60 climbers. Participants were divided into an intervention group and a wait-list control group. Using self-compassionate writing tasks as the intervention, the authors found that the intervention group exhibited an increase in self-compassion. Although participants' cognitive performance anxiety remained unchanged after the intervention, the study confirmed a decrease in their somatic performance anxiety. These findings indicate the potential of self-compassion strategies in alleviating physical anxiety symptoms in athletic contexts.

The study conducted by Kuchar et al. (2023) aimed to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of the Resilience and Enhancement in Sport, Exercise, & Training program, an online self-compassion intervention adapted from the Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) program that specifically focused on athletes. This program was designed to improve athletes' well-being and perceived performance. A total of 250 participants were assigned to the intervention group (148 participants) and the wait-list control group (102 participants). Using questionnaires, the researchers measured participants' psychological constructs including self-compassion, self-criticism, fear of self-compassion, resilience, depression, anxiety, and stress. Participants' sports performance measures were assessed by both themselves and their coaches using Likert scales. In addition, the researcher also assessed the feasibility of the intervention program. The intervention consisted of six online sessions that incorporated sport-specific language with sports psychology principles including positive self-talk and imagery exercises. Results showed that the intervention group had significant increases in self-compassion and significant decreases in self-

criticism, particularly among individuals with lower self-compassion or higher self-criticism at baseline. Additionally, the researchers also found significant reductions in participants' levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. For the performance measures, both the coach-rated performance and the self-rated performance improved more in the intervention group. Overall, the Resilience and Enhancement in Sport, Exercise, & Training program demonstrated promising effectiveness in enhancing self-compassion and reducing self-criticism, showing positive effects on perceived performance and well-being.

Self-Compassion-Related Interventions for Music Performance

Campbell (2019) investigated the effectiveness of a self-compassion intervention in reducing perfectionism in college music students. Through the intervention, the study focused on alleviating the negative components associated with perfectionistic concerns. The researcher recruited 12 college music students who were randomly assigned to either a self-compassion intervention group or an attention control group. Data collection methods included pre- and post-intervention questionnaires assessing personal standards, perfectionistic aspirations, doubts about actions, concerns over mistakes, negative reactions to imperfect performance, and self-compassion. Participants engaged in 30-minute sessions each week over a 6-week period. The self-compassion training was based on the MSC program, focusing on techniques and practices to enhance self-kindness and mindfulness. In contrast, the control group received intervention consisting of psychological skills training aimed at optimizing performance, but it did not incorporate any elements of self-compassion. Data analysis did not reveal significant differences between the intervention and control groups in terms of changes in perfectionistic strivings, perfectionistic concerns, or self-compassion levels. According to the author, the lack of significant findings was attributed to several reasons, which include the smaller sample size and

the timing of final data collection during participants' busy exam and audition seasons. The author suggested that while their use of the self-compassion program did not show clear results in reducing perfectionism among college music students, self-compassion could still be a helpful concept warranting further exploration. Thus, the author recommended that future research use bigger sample sizes and that researchers use strategies to avoid scheduling conflicts in the research design. The study by Campbell provides valuable insights for my current research, particularly in terms of research design and the challenges of data collection due to participants' different class schedules. Regarding the lack of training effectiveness identified in the findings, I would argue to the best of my understanding that the adaptation of the MSC program in Campbell's study could be one of the reasons for their unexpected results. According to the author, this adaptation of the MSC program did not include offering the complete length of the original program, which may have limited participants' full engagement with the program's in-depth self-compassion exercises. This limitation was a factor in my deliberate choice of using the complete MSC program, delivered by professionally trained teachers from the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion to ensure participants receive the full benefits of the program with the potential effectiveness that can be observed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Also looking at perfectionism as one of the variables, the study conducted by Uhl (2024) investigated the relationship between self-compassion, perfectionism, and performance in university music students. Using a mixed-methods approach, the author investigated whether journaling exercises focused on gratitude or music practice would influence participants' levels of self-compassion and perfectionism. The researcher recruited 12 music students and they were randomly assigned to either a gratitude journaling group or a control group for journaling their music practices. Quantitative data were collected using questionnaires, and qualitative data were

gathered by identifying the occurrence of self-compassion-related themes in each participant's journals. Data analysis revealed that participants in both the experimental and control groups experienced improved self-compassion. Participants also exhibited a decrease in perfectionism towards more common or average levels and demonstrated diverse outcomes in their performance. Qualitatively, some reflections in the control group were marked by self-critical thoughts, contrasting with those in the experimental group. This pilot study supports further exploration into these relationships and the potential benefits of integrating self-compassion-based programs in music education. Although this study had a small sample size with mixed results, one can argue that mixed methods could be a feasible tool to investigate musicians' performances and experiences from a more comprehensive approach.

Austin (2020) investigated the effectiveness of biofeedback and compassion in reducing stress and performance anxiety among college musicians. Specifically, the researcher aimed to compare the Heart Rate Variability biofeedback and Compassion Focused Therapy on stress and performance anxiety among college music students. The comparative effectiveness of the two conditions was reflected by participants' cortisol levels, self-reported stress, mood, and anxiety before and after their performances at the end of their semester. This study involved 30 university students who were randomly assigned to receive biofeedback or Compassion Focused Therapy training. Using repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to evaluate the effects of the interventions on pre- and post-intervention data comparisons, both groups exhibited significant improvements in pre-performance anxiety, depression, stress, and alpha-amylase levels, indicating a decrease in their sympathetic activation under stress. However, participants' negative affect and cortisol levels remained unchanged after their interventions, indicating that the interventions did not have a measurable impact on participants' negative emotions or their

physiological stress responses as measured by their cortisol levels. These findings suggest that both the Heart Rate Variability biofeedback and the Compassion Focused Therapy program can effectively reduce performance anxiety symptoms and manage stress in students, highlighting the potential for integrating such strategies in music education to enhance students' psychological resilience. The study advocates for broader application and further research with larger and more diverse samples to confirm these results and refine intervention strategies.

Similar to the aforementioned study conducted by McEwan et al. (2018), which compared two interventions in one experimental design, this study by Austin (2020) also has practical implications for my research design due to its comparison of the effectiveness of two different intervention approaches to reduce performance anxiety. Beyond the control and experimental group design, both interventions applied by the author showed promising results in reducing performance anxiety. Therefore, this study offers a balanced view of multiple and diverse intervention strategies for reducing performance-related stress and highlights the potential to explore the dynamics of reducing MPA through compassion-based interventions.

My examination of self-compassion-related interventions across academic, sports, and music performance reveals their profound impact on enhancing well-being, reducing anxiety, and improving overall performance. Although some studies showed mixed results, the overall findings demonstrate the adaptability and efficacy of self-compassion strategies in diverse settings and underscore the value of further research to optimize and tailor these interventions toward the needs of performers in different fields. It becomes clear that integrating self-compassion-based interventions into regular training programs could significantly benefit performers across disciplines, providing them with the psychological tools necessary to excel under pressure and maintain well-being in competitive environments. This focus is particularly

important for music performance, where the high levels of stress and anxiety associated with auditions, recitals, and continuous practice demands can greatly impact a musician's mental health and overall performance experiences. Therefore, I now delve into the intricate roles that self-compassion may play in addressing flow and performance anxiety, two fundamental aspects that determine either the positive or negative valence of musicians' performance experiences.

The Role of Self-Compassion in Mediating the Relationship Between Flow and MPA

Having explored the role of self-compassion across various domains, from academic to sports performance, and its particular significance in the realm of music, it is evident that self-compassion-based interventions hold substantial promise for enhancing performance. So far, I have discussed the empirical support for such interventions, demonstrating their effectiveness in fostering resilience and improving performance, specifically in relation to enhancing the psychological states and experiences of performers in these diverse performance-based contexts. As I pivot from a broad examination of the impact of self-compassion, it becomes crucial to delve deeper into the specific psychological constructs that interplay to influence performers' positive and negative experiences, namely, flow and performance anxiety.

To date, most empirical studies have examined two of the three variables in combination: the relationship between flow and performance anxiety, self-compassion and flow, or self-compassion and performance anxiety. However, limiting the investigation to two variables in one research design lacks the comprehensiveness needed to fully understand performers' psychological states and their dynamic performance experiences. This reveals a noticeable gap in research designs that could benefit from collectively investigating the three variables by examining the role of self-compassion in improving flow and reducing performance anxiety within a single framework.

In the following sections, I first present the role of flow and MPA in current research and review studies that identified the antithetical relationship between flow and performance anxiety in the realm of music. With this foundational and theoretical understanding, I then delve into empirical evidence on the effectiveness of self-compassion-related strategies and explore how these strategies could promote flow and mitigate performance anxiety. This dual examination bridges the research gaps, highlighting the need to investigate the mediating role of self-compassion between flow and performance anxiety collectively. Using this approach, my aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding and propose self-compassion as a potential strategy for addressing the positive and negative aspects that contribute to the full spectrum of performance experiences.

Before situating any strategy for evaluating its effectiveness for enhancing music performance experience, it is crucial to understand the interplay between flow and MPA on a theoretical level. Without this foundational knowledge, employing various tools or methods to improve performance may lack both theoretical and practical perspectives. To the best of my knowledge, the lack of research using flow to mitigate MPA is possibly due to the unclear relationships between these constructs in music performance. Therefore, the following literature review aims to explore the nuanced academic debate surrounding the contrasting concepts of flow and MPA, shedding light on their complex relationship within the context of music performances to support my proposed theoretical framework and inform the structure of my interdisciplinary research project. By examining these relationships more closely, these studies allow me to clarify how improving flow can serve as a non-traditional path for reducing performance anxiety and fostering optimal performance among musicians.

Empirical Findings on the Antithetical Relationship Between Flow and Music Performance Anxiety

This section delves into the intricate relationship between flow experiences and MPA. By examining a range of studies, I aim to elucidate how these two psychological constructs interact within diverse musical contexts. The first four studies systematically explore and confirm the antithetical relationship between flow and MPA. Recognizing this antithetical relationship is essential, as it establishes a theoretical foundation that underpins empirical research into these two critical variables that influence musicians' performance experiences.

First, Fritz and Avsec (2007) conducted research on the experience of flow and subjective well-being in 84 music students. The authors used several questionnaires to collect participants' flow, positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. The researchers found that higher levels of flow were significantly associated with increased positive affect, decreased negative affect, and greater life satisfaction. By focusing on key dimensions of flow theory, the researchers found that certain dimensions, such as having clear goals, maintaining a balance between challenge and skill, concentrating intensely on tasks, and engaging in activities, are key predictors of participants' positive emotions. Notably, maintaining a balance between challenge and skill is crucial for reducing participants' negative emotions. The study concludes that the experience of flow is closely associated with the positive psychological well-being of musicians. Although this study did not specifically list MPA as a variable, it laid the foundation for further investigation into how flow might impact various emotional states related to music performance.

With a sharper focus on the positive and negative experiences of musicians, Kirchner et al. (2008) conducted a study to explore the relationship between flow and MPA among 90 undergraduate music students. Using questionnaires to collect data, the authors found a

significant negative correlation between performance anxiety and flow proneness, which refers to an individual's tendency to experience flow. In addition, data analysis revealed participants' abilities to perform without negative self-criticism contributed to their reduced anxiety levels. The study suggests that although flow and performance anxiety can coexist at different stages during a performance, fostering flow may help mitigate performance anxiety. However, there remains a significant gap in research regarding the interplay between these two psychological constructs in influencing musicians' performance experiences and the development of strategies to enhance flow as a method for reducing performance anxiety in musicians.

Following a similar direction, but with a specific focus on one dimension of flow theory, Fullagar et al. (2013) conducted a study on 27 music students to examine the relationships between the challenge-skill balance dimension of flow theory, participants' flow experiences, and their levels of performance anxiety. Over a period of 10 weeks, students practiced designated musical excerpts and answered questions regarding their perceived performance challenge and their perceived skill levels in completing the task. The researchers used the Flow State Scale-2 (Jackson & Eklund, 2002) to assess participants' flow and used a 1-item scale to measure performance anxiety. Data analysis demonstrated a positive correlation between participants' balance of challenge and skill and their flow experiences, revealing that participants' well-matched balance between their perceived challenges and skills correlates with their increased flow and decreased performance anxiety. Notably, the researchers confirmed a negative correlation between flow and MPA. These findings suggest that fostering flow can help mitigate performance anxiety, providing theoretical evidence that improving the balance between challenges and skills in music practice can be an effective strategy for enhancing optimal performance in musicians.

To consolidate and confirm the negative correlation between flow and MPA across a larger sample of classical musicians, Cohen and Bodner (2019a) focused on examining the relationship between flow and MPA in 202 classical orchestral musicians. Using questionnaires, the researchers measured participants' trait flow, MPA, and their somatic tension with emotional mood regarding their music performances. The researchers found a strong negative correlation between participants' flow and MPA. They confirmed that facilitating flow could serve as an effective strategy for alleviating MPA. The authors further recommended developing techniques to facilitate flow by equipping musicians with the skills to achieve optimal performance without experiencing debilitating performance anxiety or relying on pharmacological aids.

The preceding four studies collectively examined the correlations between flow and MPA, validating the argument on their inverse relationship. The following four studies reinforce this connection and explore additional musical and psychological factors that may facilitate flow and reduce MPA. They provide a deeper understanding of how these elements interact within the context of music performance.

Stocking (2013) undertook an examination of performance anxiety and trait flow on musicians' audition success. The research sample consisted of 112 percussionists. The author used the Music Performance Anxiety Inventory for Adolescents (MPAI-A; Osborne et al., 2005) and the Challenge-Skill Balance subscale of the Dispositional Flow Scale-2 (DFS-2; Jackson & Eklund, 2002) for data collection. Additionally, participants' audition outcomes were recorded for data analysis. The findings indicate that musicians who experienced higher levels of performance anxiety tended to perform less successfully in auditions. Further, the study found that flow functioned as a mediator between MPA and audition success, highlighting that participants with lower levels of performance anxiety and higher levels of flow had more

successful outcomes in their auditions. While confirming the antithetical relationship between flow and MPA, the findings point to the importance of understanding the interplay between psychological factors and performance success in stressful audition situations.

Using a mixed methods approach, Li (2019) carried out an investigation into the relationship between flow and MPA among 75 university music students. The author collected data using the Kenny Music Performance Anxiety Inventory-Revised (K-MPAI-R; Kenny, 2009) and the Activity Flow State Scale (Payne et al., 2011). Quantitative analysis confirmed the negative correlation between flow and MPA. The results indicated the dimensions of clear goals, unambiguous feedback, loss of self-consciousness, and autotelic experience in flow theory played the most significant roles in the antithetical relationship between flow and MPA. Specifically, higher flow experiences were associated with lower levels of performance anxiety. Additionally, the qualitative component of this study emphasized the role of performance preparation and positive demonstrations by teachers in facilitating music students' flow experiences to reduce their MPA. This study contributes to the literature by offering participants' qualitative insights into how flow can be facilitated to mitigate their MPA, thereby enhancing music students' performance experiences and overall well-being.

In addition, Spahn et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between flow experiences and MPA in 363 professional and non-professional musicians performing in live music settings. Utilizing questionnaires to assess participants' levels of flow and performance anxiety, participants completed the questionnaires immediately after a live concert, reflecting on their experiences before, during, and after their performances. The authors found negative correlations between flow and MPA. They confirmed self-efficacy as a crucial predictor of flow, underscoring the important role that musicians' confidence plays in reducing MPA. The authors believed that

rather than focusing solely on strategies to reduce MPA, improving flow experiences by fostering self-efficacy and establishing effective coping strategies can help reduce the negative impact of MPA on musicians' performances.

Finally, the study by Rakei et al. (2022) examined the interactions between individuals' flow proneness, trait anxiety, and emotional intelligence in 664 contemporary musicians. The researchers used standardized questionnaires to measure participants' flow proneness, trait anxiety, emotional intelligence, musical sophistication, personality traits, locus of control, and perseverance. Data analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between flow proneness and trait anxiety. The researchers also found that emotional intelligence was positively linked to flow proneness and negatively linked to anxiety. These findings indicate that musicians with higher emotional intelligence were more likely to experience flow while having lower levels of anxiety. It also showed that musicians' high emotional intelligence could mitigate the negative impact of anxiety they experience and improve their ability to achieve flow. This study highlights the importance of fostering emotional intelligence and providing targeted musical training programs to mitigate performance anxiety and enhance flow.

Together, these studies illustrate that while flow naturally counteracts MPA, the relationship is significantly influenced by additional musical and psychological factors. These factors, such as self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and structured performance preparation, play a crucial role in optimizing musicians' ability to achieve flow and minimize the negative impacts of performance anxiety. The following three studies explore into the relationship between flow and MPA, with a particular focus on how performance context and instrument type can influence this dynamic. In addition to the previously mentioned psychological factors, these musical and practical elements also play a critical role in the interaction between flow and MPA.

First, Statham (2016) conducted a study to examine the influence of personality traits, performance anxiety, and levels of trait flow on the music performance outcomes of students. Using questionnaires to assess participants' personality, performance anxiety, and flow, data analysis was conducted on 73 participants' answers to these questionnaires in addition to their music jury results. The author found a strong negative correlation between performance anxiety and trait flow, indicating that higher flow states could mitigate performance anxiety. In addition, the author found solo performance settings provoke higher performance anxiety than group or practice settings. This study suggests that reducing performance anxiety by fostering trait flow can enhance musicians' performance outcomes. For future research, the author suggested using mindfulness-related training programs to help increase musicians' self-confidence in stressful performance events.

Later, Cohen and Bodner (2021) analyzed the influence of contextual and background variables on the relationship between flow and MPA among 202 classical orchestral musicians. Using questionnaires for data collection, the results revealed a few notable findings. Compared to associate principals and the rest of the orchestra musicians, principal players experienced higher levels of flow. In terms of MPA levels, associate principal players displayed higher levels of MPA compared to principal players. In addition, percussionists reported lower levels of MPA and higher flow compared to string musicians. Regression analysis also showed that musicians imagining themselves performing solo has a substantial impact on increasing their MPA levels. Overall, the type of instrument played influenced the negative relationship between MPA and flow, indicating that different instruments may influence how performance anxiety and flow interact in musicians' performances. The authors suggested using both qualitative and

quantitative methodologies to deepen the understanding of the internal and external factors that influence musicians' experiences of flow and MPA.

Aiming to explore the interplay between MPA and different dimensions of flow in music performances, Guyon et al. (2020) provided a detailed analysis of how both MPA and the presence of an audience influence the flow experience of classical music students in private or public performance settings. The research sample consisted of 121 university music students. Participants performed a solo music piece, once privately, and once in front of an audience. Using questionnaires to assess participants' levels of anxiety, flow, and depression, the researchers found that when participants experienced higher levels of anxiety, particularly in public performances, they had lower levels of flow experiences. Their reduced flow experiences were specifically reflected in dimensions such as clear and immediate feedback from their actions, their ability to concentrate, their sense of control over the performance, and their capacity to fully engage in their performance experiences. Researchers also found that participants experienced fewer negative effects, such as anxiety or stress, when performing in private settings as opposed to public performances. Notably, female participants reported feeling less in control and having less clear performance goals compared to male participants. Regarding the role of music practice, having more preparation time between performances helped participants feel more balanced in their skills and challenges, have clearer goals, feel more focused, and have more control. The study's findings stress the critical role of managing performance anxiety to achieve flow in musicians. The research indicates that music educators should incorporate strategies to balance performance anxiety and flow experiences in musicians, taking into account the differences between public performance exposure and private practices.

Up to this point, previous studies have explored the antithetical relationship between flow and MPA within the context of music performance. Researchers have confirmed this inverse relationship and identified a range of psychological, practical, musical, and contextual factors that influence this dynamic, revealing the complexity of this interaction. Building on these findings, the subsequent studies attempted to employ specific experimental interventions to manipulate performance experiences, aiming to determine whether such interventions can significantly impact this relationship.

For example, after confirming the antithetical relationship between flow and MPA in their previous study, Cohen and Bodner (2019b) investigated the potential of using strategies to improve flow while reducing MPA in 24 graduate-level music students. Using an experimental design with an intervention group and a wait-list control group, the participants were assigned to receive a training program that focused on mental skills, somatic awareness, improvisation, and performance simulations over the course of 11 weeks. The authors used the following questionnaires for data collection, namely, the short version of the Dispositional Flow Scale–2 (Martin & Jackson, 2008), the Performance Anxiety Inventory (Nagel et al., 1989), the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)–18 (Derogatis, 2000), the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988), and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger et al., 1983). Participants' performance quality and performance anxiety were measured based on video rating scales (Montello et al., 1990). Statistical analysis included independent *t* tests for baseline comparisons and repeated-measures ANOVAs to assess changes in the experimental and control groups before and after the intervention. Although data analysis did not reveal a significant improvement in flow, the researchers found significant improvements in participants' performance quality. The researchers also identified reductions in participants' self-reported MPA

and their state anxiety after the music performance skills intervention. Based on these findings, the authors recommended incorporating performance skills training into music education curricula to promote positive functioning and reduce MPA.

Using an experimental approach, Moral-Bofill et al. (2022) examined the effectiveness of the online Self-Regulation Skills for Performing Musicians program in improving flow and reducing MPA in 62 musicians. Participants were assigned to an experimental group or a control group. Rooted in positive psychology, this 12-week online program included strategies such as mindfulness and music performance preparation exercises. Using questionnaires to collect participants' flow, MPA, and levels of social skills, data analysis revealed significant improvements in the experimental group's flow state and sense of control, coupled with reductions in their levels of MPA and self-consciousness. Furthermore, the researchers found significant negative correlations between flow and MPA, and positive correlations between participants' flow and their social skills. The findings suggest that online interventions are successful in improving flow while reducing MPA. This indicates that skills like mindfulness are crucial for achieving optimal performance states and for effectively mitigating performance anxiety levels. Based on these results, the researchers advocated for the inclusion of these types of programs in music education curricula and for further investigation of the long-term effects of interventions for improving music performance.

The divergent outcomes from the studies by Cohen and Bodner (2019b) and Moral-Bofill et al. (2022) demonstrate the complexity of undertaking research on flow and MPA through experimental interventions. The variance in findings can be attributed to several factors including differences in theoretical approaches, methodologies, participant characteristics, musical performance contexts, and underlying psychological factors. Each of these elements adds layers

of complexity to the research process, demonstrating how multifaceted and challenging it is to manipulate and measure these constructs effectively within experimental settings. Given these complexities and the mixed results observed, there is a clear need for further empirical research to explore the antithetical relationship between flow and MPA. This is crucial as it can potentially advance theoretical knowledge in the field of music performance and offer practical implications for developing effective strategies to enhance musicians' performance and psychological well-being.

The studies reviewed so far provide an examination of the antithetical relationship between flow and MPA, affirming their inverse correlation in music performance contexts. These investigations also reveal the complex interplay of psychological, practical, musical, and contextual factors that influence flow and MPA. This complexity points to the multifaceted nature of how these elements intersect to impact musicians' emotional states and their performance experiences. These findings expose critical gaps in our understanding, particularly regarding the conditions necessary for implementing interventions to mitigate flow and MPA. The diversity of influencing factors, ranging from individual psychological traits to broader musical settings also points to the multi-layered complexity that makes this area of research both valuable and challenging. It underscores the need for further empirical studies that are methodologically sound and theoretically grounded if researchers are to better understand and manipulate these dynamic variables in addressing the holistic needs of musicians, with the ultimate goal of enriching the discourse in music performance psychology.

Identifying Research Gaps in Exploring the Effectiveness of Self-Compassion-Based Interventions for Flow and MPA

Three notable studies in sports performance have emerged as particularly relevant to my investigation, illuminating critical research gaps and closely aligning with the variables I examine in my current research. These three studies on sports performance explore the role that self-compassion plays in athletes' performance and psychological states, offering invaluable insights into how self-compassion can enhance flow and reduce performance anxiety. However, despite these findings in sports, there is a marked gap in the literature regarding the application of self-compassion within the context of music performance. This gap underscores the need for further research to explore whether the benefits of self-compassion observed in athletes can be translated to musicians. By bridging this gap, my research aims to extend these inspirations from sports psychology to music education, ultimately advancing my investigation into how flow and MPA can be influenced by self-compassion in an experimental setting.

To begin with, Feraco et al. (2021) explored the interplay between self-compassion, flow, and judo practice among 52 athletes. The researchers collected data using questionnaires assessing participants' levels of self-compassion, trait flow, and judo strategies. Although data analysis found a non-significant correlation between participants' levels of self-compassion and trait flow, the authors found a positive correlation between participants' ability to apply the appropriate judo strategies and their flow experiences, suggesting that strategic approaches that focus on the skill level of athletes can improve the flow states of athletes. This research highlights the potential importance of strategic training in achieving optimal psychological states in martial arts, pointing to the need for further studies to explore the broader psychological and motivational constructs essential for improving athletes' flow experiences.

Carraça et al. (2019) examined the impact of the Mindfulness-Based Soccer Program on elite soccer players and focused on its effectiveness on participants' levels of flow, mindfulness,

and psychological distress. The Mindfulness-Based Soccer Program included eight weeks of training on mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological flexibility. A total of 57 soccer players were divided into an experimental group and a control group. In contrast to the study conducted by Feraco et al. (2021), data analysis revealed negative correlations between participants' anxiety and their levels of self-compassion and mindfulness. Regarding the effectiveness of the training program, the results indicated that participants who underwent the training had significant positive changes in several psychological constructs including thought suppression, psychological distress, anxiety symptoms, non-judgmental attitude, and self-compassion. Among all the constructs measured, dispositional flow showed a statistically significant improvement from before to after the intervention. These results suggested that the training was effective in enhancing various psychological and mindfulness-related aspects for the athletes. Thus, the authors recommended using strategies that can improve mindfulness, self-compassion, and psychological flexibility to enhance athlete's positive flow experiences and reduce their performance-related psychological distress.

In their study, Lyon and Plisco (2020) investigated the relationships between self-compassion, mindfulness, performance anxiety, and flow in elite athletes. Using validated questionnaires, the researchers collected data on 48 elite female swimmers' levels of self-compassion, mindfulness, trait flow, and sports anxiety. Results indicated that higher levels of self-compassion and mindfulness were significantly correlated with lower performance anxiety and higher flow states. The researchers found both mindfulness and self-compassion are important for managing participants' performance anxiety and promoting their flow experiences. In addition to mindfulness, the authors found that self-compassion added unique value to participants' improved flow and reduced anxiety. In other words, mindfulness contributed greatly

to participants' positive experiences, and self-compassion offered additional positive effects that further improved participants' flow and reduced their performance anxiety. Thus, the authors stressed the unique contributing role of self-compassion in improving participants' optimal performance states. These findings highlight the potential benefits of incorporating self-compassion and mindfulness training in athletic programs to improve performance and psychological well-being. Although this study focused on swimmers, it stands out as one of the most noteworthy investigations into the mediating role that self-compassion plays in the antithetical relationship between flow and performance anxiety. This research underscores how self-compassion can influence flow and performance anxiety, making it highly relevant and valuable for my research project, which examines the same psychological constructs in musicians. Overall, the findings demonstrate the potential for self-compassion training programs to improve performance and enhance the performers' experiences, which has potential application in the field of music.

Conclusion

In summarizing the current landscape of research, it becomes evident that while several studies have investigated the intersections between flow and performance anxiety through self-compassion, substantial gaps remain. Sports psychology appears to be more advanced than performance psychology in music in integrating self-compassion into the study of flow and performance anxiety. This suggests a pivotal area of development for research within the field of music, where such dynamics are equally critical yet remain less explored. The studies discussed in this literature review also underscore the gap in investigating the effectiveness of self-compassion-based interventions within the antithetical relationship between flow and performance anxiety, particularly in the field of music performance.

Beginning with research in sports, the study by Feraco et al. (2021) focused on the relationship between self-compassion and flow but did not incorporate interventions into their investigation. However, incorporating an experimental design with an intervention, Carraça et al. (2019) explored the relationship between flow and performance-related stress through a self-compassion-related intervention for athletes, but their study did not highlight performance anxiety as a variable. Although Lyon and Plisco (2020) collectively investigated flow, performance anxiety, and self-compassion, their study was limited to identifying correlations rather than undertaking an experimental investigation on the effectiveness of any interventions. Referring to the aforementioned two studies by Flegar, (2021) and Röthlin and Leiggenger (2021), both studies investigated self-compassion and performance anxiety in athletes by incorporating intervention in their research design. Nonetheless, these studies did not include the variable of flow, limiting the scope of their research to fully understand the comprehensive dynamics of psychological states during athletic performance.

Similar findings have been observed in the field of music, specifically regarding three studies mentioned earlier in this literature review. The two studies by Sigurðardóttir (2020) and Farley and Kelley (2023) have investigated the correlation between self-compassion and MPA, but they did not include the variable of flow. Austin (2020) attempted to bridge these gaps by employing an approach using intervention. However, the absence of flow as a variable in Austin's study is another omission in research examining the relationship between self-compassion and MPA in musicians.

Following a clear path from correlation studies to more dynamic intervention studies, these research projects point to a crucial gap in the current research landscape on performance psychology. In fact, existing research using self-compassion for reducing performance anxiety

often narrows its focus on these two variables, generally overlooking the critical element of flow, which represents the positive side of performance experience. This suggests a gap in understanding how self-compassion could potentially enhance peak performance in flow experiences, rather than merely mitigating performance anxiety.

Additionally, while several studies have begun to explore the relationships between self-compassion, flow, and performance anxiety, the lack of experimental interventions in these studies restricts their ability to thoroughly examine the true effectiveness of training programs designed to enhance performers' subjective experiences when delivering their performances. Moreover, in the music domain, there is a distinct scarcity of research that collectively integrates the variables of self-compassion, flow, and MPA within an experimental framework. Most notably, it seems that the prevailing research focus has predominantly concentrated around performance outcomes, rather than the performers' experiences when delivering their performances. This observation raises a pivotal question about the long-term development of musicians. Comparing one's performance outcome with performance experiences, which focus holds more substantial value with sustainable benefits? This query underscores another significant gap and propels my research to not only fill this void but also to redefine the priorities within performance psychology by emphasizing the holistic well-being and experiences of performers.

Moving forward, my research aim is to extend the research approach from merely reducing performance anxiety in musicians toward considering the peak experience of flow that brings great satisfaction and enjoyment for musicians. To address this gap, my experimental research design incorporates the Performance Strategies Class (PSC) and the Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) program to examine their comparative effectiveness in enhancing musicians'

positive performance experiences. Using mixed methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), my study is tailored to rigorously assess both the trait and state aspects of flow and performance anxiety by integrating the quantitative results and qualitative narratives from musicians. This dual emphasis aligns with the foundational goals of positive psychology, which seeks to promote flourishing and optimize the well-being of individuals beyond their artistic performance. By conducting a mixed methods study on this topic, my proposed approach of incorporating self-compassion for musicians' positive performance experiences through mediating their flow and MPA may reveal the nurturing role and benefits that self-compassion can bring to the world of music performance.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

This methodology chapter details the mixed methods approach taken to assess the comparative effectiveness of the Performance Strategies Class (PSC) and Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) programs in improving musicians' performance experiences. I present the research design and explain the mixed methods approach employed to capture the nuanced dynamics of music performance experiences, including both the psychological and practical insights gained from the quantitative and qualitative datasets collected from participants.

I detail the mixed methods framework, covering the research process from pre-training to post-training data collection. Within this framework, I quantitatively collected the five psychological constructs from the participants in the following order: trait flow, trait music performance anxiety (MPA), trait self-compassion, state MPA, and state flow. In parallel, I used the qualitative questions to inquire about participants' changed performance experiences with contributing factors they perceived during the post-training performance that made these changes. Together, the integration of the quantitative results and qualitative findings offered a comprehensive examination of how self-compassion, as delivered by the MSC program, influenced participants' music performance experiences compared to the performance strategies imparted by the PSC program. Thus, the mixed methods integration answered the core research question and completed the mixed methods results of this study.

Furthermore, the additional qualitative question on participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances extended the discussion beyond the mixed methods. This pre- and post-training qualitative comparison offered possible ethnographic insights into participants' music learning journeys.

Mixed Methods Convergent Design

The core aim of this study was to explore and compare the effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs in influencing participants' music performance experiences. Guided by the mixed methods convergent design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), the methodology addressed the pivotal mixed methods research question: How do the PSC and MSC programs affect Chinese university students' music performance experiences?

This overarching research question addressed the multifaceted influences of the PSC and MSC programs on the musical and psychological aspects of musicians' performance experiences. Thus, a mixed methods convergent design was used to integrate quantitative results and qualitative findings, which enabled the examination of the comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs in discovering their potential to enhance positive music performance experiences in practical settings.

Employing Mixed Methods Convergent Design

In the convergent design, a mixed methods framework is employed when both quantitative and qualitative data sets are collected and analyzed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Thus, the convergent design facilitates an in-depth exploration of the research question from two distinct perspectives. The primary goal of the convergent design is to integrate these two strands of data, enabling comprehensive mixed methods results that leverage the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). According to the authors, the convergence of these analytical approaches is particularly valuable in research focusing on integrating numerical results with narrative findings, as this integration process facilitates a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the research question.

In this study, I decided to use the mixed methods convergent design because this methodological framework allows both strands of data to be examined (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). During the research process, the strand of quantitative data was obtained using validated questionnaires to assess participants' five psychological constructs pre- and post-training. Qualitative answers were sourced from participants' short written responses on their perceived changes in performance experiences and the specific contributing factors they attributed to these changes.

In the context of this study, an advantage of using the mixed methods convergent design was its capacity for separate analyses of quantitative and qualitative data, with an integration process of these findings for holistic conclusions. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), this approach can facilitate a robust triangulation of the datasets, increasing the credibility of the results from both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Thus, employing the convergent design provided deeper insights into the comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs on musicians' performance experiences, enriching the overall examination of the mixed methods research question.

Although not part of the mixed methods convergent design, the additional qualitative inquiry into participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances functioned as an extension, moving beyond the mixed methods results to facilitate a possible discussion from an ethnographic perspective. This additional qualitative component added depth to the understanding of how participants envisioned their future performances by eliciting insights into their pre- and post-training performance experiences. Consequently, their qualitative answers may serve as an indirect reflection of the learning environment they were immersed in.

In essence, including the additional qualitative question provided an opportunity to explore the broader implications of the results, potentially enriching the existing educational framework.

Operational Steps in Mixed Methods Convergent Design

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the implementation of the convergent design involves four interrelated stages. During data collection, the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data. After the data collection, each dataset is separately analyzed with suitable analytical strategies. Subsequently, the independently obtained quantitative results and qualitative findings are integrated through a comparative process. Finally, the researcher evaluates the merged results, interpreting and discussing the interconnections between the two datasets by assessing whether the quantitative results and qualitative findings converge, diverge, or complement each other (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007).

Research Question and Convergent Design Alignment

Employing mixed methods convergent design is particularly well-suited for exploring the main research question of this study: How do the PSC and MSC programs affect Chinese university students' music performance experiences? This approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the impacts of the PSC and MSC programs on the multifaceted nature of music performance experiences, encompassing participants' trait characteristics and state experiences when facing public performances.

Specifically, the quantitative component of this study provided a structured and objective assessment of changes in participants' five psychological constructs before and after the training period. These measures offered quantifiable evidence of each program's effectiveness on these five psychological constructs, allowing for a systematic comparison. Additionally, the qualitative component delved into participants' nuanced reflections, offering insights into how their

performance experiences evolved from participating in the PSC or MSC programs. This qualitative component of the study captured the subjective realities and personal narratives that quantitative data alone cannot fully convey.

By integrating these qualitative findings with quantitative results, the mixed methods approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the research question. Using the convergent design, these quantitative results and qualitative findings were integrated to form the comprehensive mixed methods results. Thus, the mixed methods integration ensured the rigor of quantitative examination combined with enriched qualitative insights.

Philosophical Underpinnings of Mixed Methods Convergent Design

The methodological choice of this research is anchored in the philosophical underpinnings of pragmatism and constructivism. Collectively, pragmatism (Florezak, 2014) and constructivism (Sabnis & Newman, 2023) offer a comprehensive perspective for investigating the mixed methods research questions. Notably, these philosophical underpinnings play a crucial role in guiding the selection of the mixed methods convergent design to inform the interpretation and discussion of the research findings.

Pragmatism is particularly suited as a philosophical foundation for the mixed methods convergent design, given its focus on the practicality of answering research inquiries (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Therefore, this research employed a pragmatic foundation and aimed to evaluate the impact and the comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs on participants' real-world performance experiences embedded in their learning journeys. From a methodological perspective, pragmatism also encouraged the employment of diverse data collection with suitable analytical methods to attain a comprehensive view of the learning trajectory experienced by participants.

Moreover, pragmatism values outcomes that facilitate changes and possible advancements in the field (Islam, 2022). In addition to the practical outcomes identified in the research, pragmatism could influence the development of curricula, teaching strategies, and student support, directly offering the possible application of the results to other performance-related and educational-based fields. Thus, the employed convergent design aligned with pragmatic principles by focusing on specific questions to generate practical and actionable outcomes from the study, potentially laying the groundwork for future research.

Complementarily, the view of constructivism supports that individuals establish their understanding and knowledge of reality through interactions with elements in their environments (Shively, 2015). In this study, constructivism placed the focus on the qualitative component and stressed the value of participants' personal and reflective experiences from participating in their respective programs. Employing a constructivist approach, the qualitative data collection and analyses aimed to explore participants' perceived contributing factors to their improved post-training performances. Hence, this philosophical foundation facilitated an examination of how the participants collectively interpreted and understood their interactions with the PSC or MSC programs and with their fellow group members during the training period to provide further insights that enhanced the quantitative results.

In brief, pragmatism and constructivism collectively created the philosophical foundations for this research. Both philosophical underpinnings facilitated the determination of the methodological and analytical strategies of mixed methods convergent design with the subsequent qualitative component of discovering participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances. By leveraging the strengths of both philosophical foundations, the study design attained a balance between objective quantification and subjective

interpretation. Accordingly, this enabled a thorough and intricate research process to comprehensively address the research question.

Instruments and Training Programs

Questionnaires

In this study, the Chinese versions of five questionnaires were used to measure participants' trait flow, state flow, trait MPA, state MPA, and trait self-compassion. These questionnaires included the following.

Questionnaire for Assessing Trait Flow. The Chinese version of the Dispositional Flow Scale-2 (DFS-2; Jackson & Eklund, 2002) was used to assess trait flow. Based on the nine dimensions of flow, the DFS-2 was designed to assess trait flow by measuring how often the flow experience occurs in individuals. The reliability for the DFS-2 was reported from .78 to .90 (Jackson & Eklund, 2002) and from .80 to .89 (Jackson et al., 2008). The DFS-2 incorporates 36 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*). Liu et al. (2012) translated and validated the DFS-2 in Chinese and named it the Chinese version of the Dispositional Flow Scale-2 (CDFS-2). The coefficient for the CDFS-2 ranged from .65 to .92. The CDFS-2 underwent modifications, with the second, sixth, and twenty-first items from the DFS-2 removed, leading to a scale including 33 items.

Questionnaire for Assessing State Flow. The Chinese version of the Flow State Scale-2 (FSS-2; Jackson & Eklund, 2002) was used to assess state flow. Based on the nine dimensions of flow, the FSS-2 was designed to assess individuals' flow experience regarding an activity just completed. The reliability for the FSS-2 was reported from .80 to .92 (Jackson & Eklund, 2002) and from .76 to .90 (Jackson et al., 2008). The FSS-2 incorporates 36 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Liu et al. (2012) translated and validated the

FSS-2 in Chinese and named it the Chinese version of the Flow State Scale-2 (CFSS-2). The coefficient for the CFSS-2 ranged from .64 to .92. The CFSS-2 underwent modifications, with the second, sixth, and twenty-first items from the FSS-2 removed, leading to a scale including 33 items.

Questionnaire for Assessing Trait MPA. My certified Chinese translation of the Kenny Music Performance Anxiety Inventory-Revised (K-MPAI-R; Kenny, 2009) was used to measure trait MPA. Based on the theory of MPA, the K-MPAI-R was designed to measure the multi-dimensional aspects of anxiety that musicians experience during their music learning and performances, encompassing cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms with generational factors that may be linked to the experience of MPA. The internal consistency of the K-MPAI-R was reported as .94 (Kenny, 2009). The K-MPAI-R incorporates 40 items on a 7-point Likert scale (0 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*, or 0 = *strongly agree* to 6 = *strongly disagree*). Some items are reverse-scored, altering the Likert scale direction for those specific items. This means that strongly agree and/or strongly disagree do not consistently correspond to the lowest or highest score across all questions. Translated by the PI, the certified Chinese version of the K-MPAI-R has not yet been formally validated in a Chinese-speaking population. However, this Chinese translation underwent professional translation and certification procedures and received acknowledgment from Kenny (2023) for its adherence to the original scale.

Questionnaire for Assessing State MPA. The Chinese version of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory-State (STAI-S; Spielberger et al., 1983) was used to measure state MPA. The STAI-S was designed to measure the level of state anxiety, which refers to the temporary and situational feelings of stress, nervousness, and discomfort that an individual experiences in response to

specific situations. The internal consistency of the scale was reported from .86 to .95 (Spielberger et al., 1983). The STAI-S incorporates 20 items on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = *not at all* to 4 = *very much so*). Translated by Tsoi et al. (1986), the Chinese version of the STAI (C-STAI) demonstrated a coefficient of .90 for the state section of the C-STAI (Shek, 1988).

Questionnaire for Assessing Trait Self-Compassion. The Chinese version of the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003a) was used to assess trait self-compassion. Based on the three components of self-compassion and their opposite constructs, the SCS was designed to assess how individuals treat themselves in times of difficulty to reflect their trait self-compassion levels. The reliability of the SCS was reported as .92 (Neff, 2003a). The SCS incorporates 26 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *almost never* to 5 = *almost always*). The Chinese version of the SCS reported a Cronbach's alpha of .84 (Chen et al., 2011).

Training Programs

In the context of this research, participating in either the PSC or MSC programs are considered independent variables due to their roles as experimental interventions. These two distinct training programs are the manipulated conditions that the research design applied to participants to determine each program's effectiveness in influencing music performance experiences. While both programs are comparable in terms of duration and structure, they differ significantly in their training objectives and program content. In other words, there is no overlap in terms of training material between the two distinct programs. The following section delves into the distinct objectives and detailed course content of the two training programs.

Structural Commonalities in the PSC and MSC Programs. Both the PSC and MSC programs share common structural elements, with each comprising eight content sessions supplemented by an additional class dedicated to group practice and/or discussion. Each session

in both programs lasts between 2.75 and 3 hours and features a combination of didactic materials, facilitated group reflections, individual sharing, and practical exercises. Both programs are facilitated by two professional trainers, ensuring a high level of instruction and support for participants.

The PSC Program. Developed by the PI, the PSC program aims to enhance the skill set of musicians in various aspects of practice and performance. Central to the PSC program is its focus on actionable strategies that musicians can directly apply to their practice routines, performances, and future teaching opportunities. The PSC program openly addresses the common performance challenges, such as performance anxiety, that musicians face. While dissecting the theory of performance anxiety, the PSC program also explores the concept of optimal performance, guiding musicians with strategies that may help them deliver their best performances possible. In this program, the two trainers demonstrate practical strategies, such as efficient practice, rehearsal planning, and performance goal setting. Practically, the PSC program incorporates components where participants can engage in group exercises that simulate real-life performance scenarios, allowing them to apply the strategies they learn in a supportive and constructive environment. Furthermore, the PSC program addresses the long-term development of musicians by exploring how these skills can be transferred to their future teaching and mentoring roles. Thus, the program also covers, for example, repertoire selections for recitals and effective communication skills with students. In addition to the traditional music teaching framework, the PSC program offers an approach that moves beyond what music students typically learn from their weekly music lessons with the practical skills to empower them to achieve performance excellence in their roles as musicians. The specific session titles of the PSC program are the following:

Session 1: Foundations of Performance Strategies

Session 2: Body and Mind in Performance

Session 3: Performance Obstacles

Session 4: Efficient Practice

Session 5: Performance Preparation

Additional Session: Group Activity

Session 6: Optimal Performance

Session 7: Roles as Musician and Teacher

Session 8: Applying Performance Strategies for Work and Career

The MSC Program. Developed by (Neff & Germer, 2013), the MSC program was designed to enhance individuals' levels of self-compassion through the practice of mindfulness. According to the authors, the core of the MSC program is the principle of developing a compassionate and understanding relationship with oneself when facing difficult challenges in life. This program helps individuals develop skills to cultivate a mindful and compassionate stance toward their challenging experiences in life. Over the course of the program, participants are immersed in a variety of mindfulness-based practices aimed at nurturing self-compassion with the support of two trained MSC teachers. The curriculum delves into the psychological underpinnings of self-compassion, elucidating how the construct of self-compassion can mitigate over-identification, isolation, and self-criticism. There are three core meditation practices in the MSC program, namely, affectionate breathing, loving-kindness for ourselves, and giving and receiving compassion. Through these structured yet flexible practices, the MSC program aims to build an accessible and sustainable self-compassion practice that individuals can integrate into

their everyday lives when facing difficulties. According to Germer and Neff (2020), the specific session titles of the MSC program are the following:

“Session 1 – Discovering mindful self-compassion” (p. 360)

“Session 2 – Practicing mindfulness” (p. 360)

“Session 3 – Practicing loving-kindness” (p. 360)

“Session 4 – Discovering your compassionate voice” (p. 360)

“Session 5 – Living deeply” (p. 361)

“Retreat” (p. 361)

“Session 6 – Meeting difficult emotions” (p. 361)

“Session 7– Exploring challenging relationships” (p. 361)

“Session 8 – Embracing your life” (p. 361)

Hypotheses

Hypotheses for Trait and State Flow

Measured by the Chinese versions of the DFS-2 and FSS-2, it is hypothesized that the PSC group and the MSC group will increase trait and state flow, respectively. Additionally, it is hypothesized that the increases in trait and state flow will be more significant in the MSC group.

Hypotheses for Trait and State MPA

Measured by the Chinese versions of the K-MPAI-R and STAI-S, it is hypothesized that the PSC group and the MSC group will decrease trait and state MPA, respectively. Additionally, it is hypothesized that the decreases in trait and state MPA will be more significant in the MSC group.

Hypothesis for Trait Self-Compassion

Measured by the Chinese version of the SCS, it is hypothesized that the trait self-compassion in the PSC group will not significantly change, but trait self-compassion will increase in the MSC group.

Integration of Hypotheses with Research Design

The research design and hypotheses are fundamentally linked, with each element reinforcing the other. The research design focuses on comparing the effectiveness of the PSC and MSC training programs on musicians' performance experiences, which is crucial in assessing the hypotheses to verify the comparative impact of the two distinct training programs on the selected psychological constructs that contribute to music performance experiences, namely, trait flow, state flow, trait MPA, and state MPA.

For trait flow, the hypothesis anticipates an increase in both groups, with a greater increase in the MSC group. This aligns with the comparative analysis in the research design, which aims for an assessment of each of the two training programs' effectiveness in enhancing trait flow before and after the training period. For state flow, the hypothesis anticipates an increase in both groups, with a greater increase in the MSC group. This hypothesis focuses on comparative measures of each group's state flow immediately following their pre- and post-training performances. This enables a retrospective examination of changes in state flow resulting from the two distinct training programs.

For trait MPA, the hypothesis anticipates a decrease in both groups, with a greater decrease in the MSC group. This reflects the methodological intent of the research design to directly compare the two training programs' effectiveness in reducing trait MPA. For state MPA, the hypothesis anticipates a decrease in both groups, with a greater decrease in the MSC group. This hypothesis aligns with the research design to evaluate the impact of the two training

programs on reducing state MPA immediately before participants start their pre- and post-training performances.

The hypothesis of trait self-compassion critically distinguishes the two groups. It postulates that the PSC participants will not exhibit significant changes in trait self-compassion because the objective of the PSC program is to develop musicians' performance skills rather than self-compassion. In contrast, an increase in trait self-compassion is anticipated in the MSC group, which is in line with the emphasis of the MSC program on cultivating self-compassion through mindfulness practices. This hypothesis is central to clarifying the distinct effects of the two training programs. Additionally, measuring trait self-compassion levels in both groups serves as validation for the research design, highlighting the contrast between the distinct training content and objectives of the PSC and MSC programs.

Situating Quantitative Hypotheses With Qualitative Components in Mixed Methods Design

From a quantitative perspective, these five hypotheses are aligned with the research design, encompassing the theoretical, practical, and analytical aspects. Central to this study is the exploration of critical psychological constructs, namely, the positive construct of flow and the negative construct of MPA in the context of music performance. The antithetical relationships between flow and performance anxiety are fundamental to the research design based on the literature (Cohen & Bodner, 2019b). Thus, assessing both flow and MPA in this two-pronged approach is essential for understanding the multi-dimensional performance experiences of musicians. In addition, the two chosen training programs serve as a vehicle for comparing their effectiveness in influencing flow and MPA from both musical and psychological perspectives. In terms of each program, the musical perspective is addressed by the PSC program's intent to improve music performance skills, whereas the psychological perspective is addressed by the

MSC program's aim to cultivate self-compassion through mindfulness. Therefore, these two distinct approaches provide valuable insight into the differential effects of these programs on both flow and MPA. From an analytical perspective, the within-groups and between-groups comparisons from pre- to post-training provide statistical evidence for a preliminary understanding of the multifaceted nature of musicians' performance experiences.

From a qualitative perspective, the integration of a qualitative component in this mixed methods study is crucial. It triangulates the quantitative findings and expands the understanding of the data through detailed narratives of the PSC and MSC participants' personal growth and professional development. Ultimately, the hypotheses within the quantitative framework ensure that interpretations and conclusions are grounded in the statistical evidence, while the qualitative insights address the reflective and ethnographic aspects, collectively constructing a holistic picture to understand musicians' performance experiences.

Overview of Research Design

The following section provides a high-level overview of the research design (see Figure 2), from the initial ethical approvals and participant recruitment through the data collection procedures. This section also outlines the analytical strategies for the quantitative and qualitative data, and presents how the mixed methods results are obtained from the integration of the quantitative results and qualitative findings. Finally, I discuss potential confounding factors and conclude with a reflection on my role in the research process. Please note that all verbal interactions between the trainers and participants were in Mandarin Chinese. All quantitative and qualitative data were collected in Simplified Chinese. This study was conducted in China to avoid potential scheduling conflicts associated with the Canadian academic term, which could have interfered with participants' exam preparation. The academic calendar in China offered a

more accommodating timeframe, allowing participants to engage in the study without conflict with their final exams. Therefore, conducting this research in China with Chinese participants enabled an approach that balanced research participation with participants' academic obligations.

Securing Approvals

After finalizing the research design and determining the intended sample size range, the research process commenced. Before recruiting participants, I first secured the necessary approvals to meet ethical and institutional standards. This included obtaining approval from the Chinese institution for recruiting students as potential participants, gaining approval from the Canadian University Research Ethics Boards (REB) to confirm the ethical integrity of the research design, and receiving permission from the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion (CMSC) to use their MSC curriculum for this research project. Subsequently, I contacted potential, qualified, and willing co-teachers for permission to deliver the PSC and MSC programs with me during the training period.

Recruiting, Screening, and Group Allocation

Following the necessary approvals, participant recruitment began at the School of Music of a Chinese higher education institution located in China. The study was presented as a free program to enhance music performance experiences for volunteer students. The strategy of promoting the project as a single music performance experiences enhancement program was to blind participants from the specific PSC and MSC program assignments to ensure their unbiased participation and expectations. Then, I screened individuals based on their eligibility to ensure a relevant and representative sample. After recruiting the participants, I completed the group allocation based on participants' common availabilities and conducted several randomization processes using a randomization software program (graphpad.com).

Collecting Pre-Training Data

I initiated the research process in the following sequential order: pre-training data collection, training period, and post-training data collection. All quantitative and qualitative data were collected using an encrypted online platform (wjx.cn) accessible through participants' mobile phones. Importantly, no data were collected during the training period.

During the pre-training data collection, each participant first completed the consent form displayed and signed digitally by clicking the "I agree to participate" button. Using questionnaires, all participants completed three quantitative trait measures in the following order: trait flow, trait MPA, and trait self-compassion. Subsequently, on a designated later date, they were invited to participate in the pre-training performance.

On the day of the pre-training performance, each participant answered a brief quantitative questionnaire on their state MPA immediately before each performance. Following this, each individual performed a piano solo piece from memory in a public setting following the previously arranged, randomized, and fixed performance order. Right after each performance, each participant immediately filled out another quantitative questionnaire on their state flow and responded to qualitative questions with short answers.

Training Period

Based on participants' common availabilities, all training sessions were scheduled and occurred outside the participants' regular course hours. During the training period, participants in the PSC group underwent the PSC program, while those in the MSC group engaged with the MSC program. Each program consisted of eight content sessions, with an additional class between the fifth and sixth sessions dedicated to group practice and/or discussion.

Independently delivered online, both programs were taught by two trained professionals. As the Principal Investigator (PI) of the research project, I served as one of the trainers for delivering approximately 50% of the materials for the PSC program and the MSC program. Specifically, the PSC program was delivered by the PI and the second PSC trainer, and the MSC program was delivered by the PI and the second MSC trainer. Each group of participants received their respective programs through the remote teaching audio and video systems by physically gathering in the classroom. To maintain the integrity of the research design, participants were instructed not to share any training content with individuals outside their respective groups.

Collecting Post-Training Data

The post-training data collection followed the sequence and procedures of the pre-training data collection. Participants first completed the same three quantitative trait measures in the same order. They then attended the post-training performance on a scheduled later date. Before their performances, each participant completed a short questionnaire assessing state MPA. Then, each individual performed the same piano solo piece from memory in a public setting following the same performance order. Immediately after each performance, each participant completed a quantitative state measure on state flow and responded to qualitative questions with short answers. To conclude the entire research process, a debriefing procedure was conducted after the post-training data collection, with no further follow-up data collected.

Analyzing Quantitative Data

After the data collection, the data analyses meticulously followed the mixed methods convergent design framework, ensuring a thorough and independent examination of both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A comprehensive process of

data cleaning and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative datasets using suitable analytical software programs was then performed.

Using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29.0.1.0), the quantitative data of trait and state measures collected through the pre- and post-training assessments were analyzed using mixed-design analyses of variance (ANOVAs). This analytical strategy aimed to uncover significant patterns and trends that could determine the overall influence and comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs on participants' flow (trait and state), MPA (trait and state), and self-compassion (trait).

Analyzing Qualitative Data

Using NVivo (Version 14), the qualitative answers from participants' written responses were analyzed using a combination of reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) and content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Reflexive TA offered the identification of key themes and patterns that emerged from participants' reflections. Content analysis was employed to identify the number of references to each theme and to calculate the percentages of the thematic representations for each theme when needed. Thus, the findings of content analysis provided a quantitative element to support the mixed methods integration.

Integrating Mixed Methods Results

Upon completing the independent analyses, the quantitative results and qualitative findings were first brought together for comparison. This step was crucial in determining the convergence, divergence, or complementarity of the quantitative results and qualitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The following mixed methods integration process involved examining whether the qualitative thematic representations and specific themes supported or further explained the quantitative results, enhancing the overall depth of the research findings.

Following the examples provided by Guetterman et al. (2015), I developed joint displays to facilitate the comparison and integration of quantitative results and qualitative findings. Through these joint displays, a cohesive narrative was constructed, combining the statistical evidence, thematic representations, themes, and example quotations from participants to provide a holistic view of the comparative effectiveness of the two training programs on participants' flow, MPA, and self-compassion. Importantly, these joint displays also contributed to the discovery and insights into how the PSC and MSC programs influenced participants' music performance experiences.

Analyzing the Additional Qualitative Question for an Ethnographic Discussion

Independent of the mixed methods results, an additional qualitative analysis was conducted on participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances (Case et al., 2014; Marcén et al., 2013). Employing the same reflexive TA and content analysis methods through the lens of pre- and post-training comparisons, this additional qualitative analysis provided further depth to the study, offering possible ethnographic insights that may extend beyond the mixed methods results, thereby enriching the final conclusions of the dissertation.

Confounding Variables in the Research

It is crucial to recognize that the research design and methodological approach were crafted to reduce the impact of potential confounding variables on the research results due to the practical implications of the research procedure. However, completely isolating the confounding variables in such a dynamic and experimental context was challenging. Maturation, for example, was recognized as a noteworthy confounding variable inherent in the nature of music learning (Trainor, 2012). Focusing on the role of practice, the study by Ruthsatz et al. (2008) found that

although practice substantially contributes to musical expertise, it is primarily a blend of innate traits like intelligence that drives variations in musicians' performance levels. Similarly, Mosing et al. (2014) found that musical ability is significantly heritable and predominantly influenced by genetics rather than practice. Given the factor of maturation, which refers to the natural progression in practice and performance over time, it was necessary to account for the potential influence of maturation when participants were required to perform the same piano piece for both their pre- and post-training performances within the scope of this research design. Thus, with the intricate influence of the amount of practice, maturation still presented challenges in isolating the specific training effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs under investigation. Therefore, in addition to the quantitative data, the research design planned to collect participants' qualitative responses to generate potential themes that may reflect their recognition of confounding variables, such as maturation. Under the influence of such confounding variables, careful attention is necessary when interpreting the research outcomes, ensuring that the influence of maturation and other confounding factors are appropriately accounted for.

Additionally, the focus on using the piano as a common instrument to facilitate the performance settings in the research project mitigated concerns regarding the variability of participants' major instruments or university levels. At this Chinese higher education institution, piano classes are a curriculum requirement for first- and second-year music students, who are also required to participate in end-of-semester piano juries. The third- and fourth-year students have the option to continue taking piano classes if they choose to. Thus, the curriculum requirement ensured a shared foundation in music education across different university levels with a minimum of two years of piano training, providing uniformity in participants' piano performance experiences. This uniformity also addressed potential concerns of variations in

performance exposure, whether due to different instrumental specializations or academic progression, which could skew the study's outcomes. Thus, the consistent piano training background with adequate performance exposure among all participants contributed to the isolation of the effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs, ensuring that any observed changes in performance experiences were attributable to the training programs rather than discrepancies in instrumental expertise or academic levels.

Reflecting on the Researcher's Role

Professionally, my background as a pianist, music educator, and trained MSC teacher from the CMSC equipped me with the comprehensive understanding and expertise required to design and conduct this study. Consequently, I served multiple roles in this research project, including research designer, creator of the qualitative questions, designer of the PSC program, one of the trainers to deliver half of the content for both programs, and analyst for quantitative and qualitative data. My personal experiences, such as repeatedly achieving flow in my piano performances in China, suffering from severe and chronic MPA in Canada, and engaging in self-compassion practices on my healing journey, were intertwined with my research roles. Knowing that my experiences could have influenced my interpretation of the data, I was acutely aware of the need for careful consideration and management of my overlapping identities and personal experiences to reduce potential research biases and preserve objectivity throughout the study.

To address these considerations, several strategies were implemented. I maintained a clear separation between my responsibilities as one of the trainers for both programs and my duties as a researcher. During the research design, I adhered to the protocol that required two trainers for delivering each program to prioritize participants' emotional safety. This consideration was particularly crucial because both programs encompassed topics, such as the

theory of MPA in the PSC program and strategies to face difficult emotions in the MSC program, which could be challenging to some participants. By having two trainers for each program, the training team was able to address and support participants' emotional needs effectively when necessary.

Additionally, the qualitative questions I crafted were designed to honor participants' experiences and backgrounds. In developing these questions, I focused specifically on inquiring about participants' performance experiences rather than their self-evaluation of their performance outcomes, inviting them to explore their internal processes openly. This approach was adopted to potentially mitigate participants' harsh self-criticism of their performance outcomes, allowing for a more experiential and less evaluative examination of their pre- and post-training performances.

Moreover, the interactions between the trainers and participants could inadvertently impact participants' training experiences and expectations, potentially introducing bias into the results (Greenberg & Folger, 1988). Focusing on the roles of the three members of the training team, namely, the second PSC trainer, the second MSC trainer, and the PI, I was conscious of the trainers' potential to influence participants' responses or behaviors if any data were collected during the training period. To mitigate this, I decided not to collect any data during the training period and clearly informed participants of this decision during the recruitment.

Finally, I ensured that participants were guaranteed their involvement in this research project would not affect their academic standing. Participants were informed that none of the trainers were affiliated with the School of Music at any point in the research process, a guiding principle that served to eliminate any potential conflicts of interest or perceptions of pressure. Furthermore, I acknowledged participants' privacy with the guiding principle that none of the data would be shared with individuals at the School of Music. These measures were taken to

maintain a clear ethical boundary and to reassure participants of the independence of the research from their academic progression. Together, these approaches ensured that participants' engagement in this research project was free from any undue influence or repercussions.

To conclude, my multiple roles in this research project necessitated meticulous management to ensure objectivity and minimize biases. After establishing the rationale for the mixed methods convergent design and its philosophical foundations, I now detail the specific research procedures applied in this study. Starting with the research and analytical procedures, I outline the systematic approaches to data collection and analysis. These steps include a thorough examination of the quantitative and qualitative methods employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

Detailed Procedures of Research Implementation

This study was structured based on a pre- and post-training design, enabling a systematic evaluation of the overall changes in participants' trait and state psychological measures. Following the sequential order of collecting participants' trait flow, trait MPA, trait self-compassion, state MPA, and state flow, this design was selected for its ability to provide a clear and comparative assessment of the effectiveness of the two distinct training programs.

The rationale for choosing this design is closely aligned with the research questions, which aimed to assess the impact of the PSC and MSC programs on Chinese university students' music performance experiences. The pre-training quantitative data collection served as a baseline measurement, assessing participants' initial levels of the five psychological constructs with the qualitative inquiry of their prospective views toward their future performances.

Following the training period, the post-training quantitative data collection allowed for the assessment of any changes in these psychological constructs attributable to the PSC and MSC

programs. In the qualitative component, the binary question on whether participants perceived a change in their post-training performance experiences, the inquiry on the contributing factors they recognized that made these changes, and the additional question on participants' prospective views toward their future performances offered resourceful reflections and insights.

Thus, the pre- and post-training design facilitated a systematic comparison of each program's impact on participants' five psychological constructs before and after the training period. By assessing participants' three trait and two state measures at these two time points using questionnaires, the quantitative results specifically highlighted any observed changes made by the two training programs. By identifying the binary question results on whether participants noticed a change in their post-training performance experiences, I was able to preliminarily triangulate the quantitative results obtained. By inquiring about the contributing factors participants recognized post-training, I revealed themes with thematic representations that can be used to corroborate the quantitative results for mixed methods integration. Finally, by analyzing the additional qualitative data on participants' prospective views toward their future performances from pre-training to post-training, I was able to create a brief ethnographic discussion that extends beyond the mixed methods results to conclude this dissertation.

Determining Intended Sample Size

In designing the research, careful planning was made to establish an appropriate sample size that would meet the practical and statistical considerations of this preliminary study. Statistically, a power analysis was conducted using G*Power software (Version 3.1) to determine the sufficient sample size required for conducting mixed-design ANOVAs. The objective of using mixed-design ANOVAs was to observe the effects of time across all participants as well as the interaction of time and training between the two groups (Field, 2018). In anticipation of a

medium to large effect size, aligned with existing research on the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions in reducing levels of anxiety (Stanson et al., 2022; Vøllestad et al., 2011), the power was set at .80, and the significance level was set at .05. This analysis determined that a total of 34 participants would provide adequate power to detect the expected differences between the two groups from pre- to post-training. Therefore, an intended sample size ranging from 32 to 40 participants is practical and reasonable for this preliminary study. Based on the power analysis, I established an intended total sample size of 32 to 40 participants, targeting a minimum enrollment of 32 participants to facilitate adequate comparisons between the PSC and MSC groups. This plan was designed to ensure that each group contained at least 16 participants to reflect the ethical considerations and the practical needs for conducting this research.

From the teaching perspective, an ideal group size of 8 to 20 individuals per group would best ensure privacy and emotional safety, allowing for effective interaction and personal attention in each group. This range of sample size aligns with existing studies conducted in the context of music performance (e.g., Austin, 2020; Cohen & Bodner, 2019b). Consequently, the decision of a minimum recruitment of 16 participants for each group was made, considering this number optimal for fostering an environment conducive to effective group reflection and sharing. Additionally, this sample size was manageable for trainers, ensuring they could sufficiently assist participants' needs during the training period.

Regarding the live performance conditions built into the research design, I estimated the total performance time of the 32 to 40 participants in each of the pre- and post-training performances to align with a typical length of a music jury. This consideration was applied to avoid excessive time demands on participants.

Securing Permissions and Approvals

To ensure compliance with ethical standards and operational feasibility, I secured the necessary permissions to set the groundwork for this research project after designing the research and determining the intended sample size. First, I sought permission from the School of Music of this Chinese higher education institution to conduct my study involving human participants. After receiving permission from the institution, I submitted my research ethics application to the Canadian university's REB for evaluation. This step was crucial to ensure that my study adhered to the standards of ethical research practice, particularly concerning human participants. My application detailed the study's objectives, methods, potential risks, and the measures in place to mitigate these risks. After the review process, my research project received the certificate of ethics approval, allowing me to proceed with the research. The third step involved seeking permission to use the MSC content and curriculum for research purposes. I am an MSC teacher professionally trained at the CMSC. I hold certificates to teach Mindful Self-Compassion, Mindful Self-Compassion for Teens, and the Short Course in Mindful Self-Compassion in an online format. With my intention to use and deliver the MSC curriculum with another trained teacher from the same institution, I received confirmation from the administrative representative at the CMSC that I was given permission to use and teach the MSC curriculum for this research.

Finally, I contacted the two professionals who were qualified and were willing to deliver the PSC or MSC program with me as my two co-teachers. I received personal confirmations from both individuals, indicating their willingness to undertake the teaching responsibilities for their respective programs. I verified the flexibility of their schedules for our online collaboration and confirmed they had no affiliations with the School of Music at this Chinese higher education institution throughout the research project. Notably, the two co-teachers for either the PSC or MSC program were independent of each other and had no prior relationship. Additionally, they

maintained this independence, with no introduction to one another or interactions throughout the duration of the research project. Having established the permissions for conducting this study, the subsequent sections detail the recruitment process.

Recruitment of Participants

Inclusion and Exclusion. Participants for this study were required to be volunteers, emphasizing the importance of consent and willingness to participate in the research process. Inclusion criteria stipulated that participants must be first-, second-, or third-year students enrolled at the School of Music of this Chinese higher education institution. Additionally, they needed to have prior public music performance experience, such as performing in recitals, concerts, or juries to ensure they had an adequate amount of performance exposure in public settings. Competency in Mandarin Chinese was essential, as participants must be fluent in listening, reading, speaking, writing, and comprehending the language to fully engage with the study materials and instructions. Moreover, the ability to perform a piano solo piece from memory, with a duration of approximately 8 minutes or less, was necessary to meet the performance requirements of the study.

Exclusion criteria were carefully considered to maintain the study's integrity and feasibility. Fourth-year students were excluded from the study due to their commitments to off-campus practicums, which limited their availability to engage in the research process. Additionally, individuals who had previously participated in mindfulness and/or self-compassion training programs were excluded. These exclusion criteria were crucial to ensure that all participants started the study with limited knowledge and exposure to mindfulness-related practices, establishing a clearer baseline for examining the effectiveness of the two training programs.

Recruitment Process

Preparing and Delivering Recruitment Materials. To avoid coercion and prevent conflicts of interest, recruitment materials were delivered by an independent research assistant employed by the same Chinese higher education institution from a different department. I prepared the recruitment leaflets with an invitation to participate letter, and the IRA distributed these recruitment materials during collective meetings at the School of Music. These materials advertised the research project as a single and free program aimed at enhancing music performance experiences. The recruiting materials detailed the following information: the objective of this study, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the detailed research process, the duration of the project, information about the trainers, and the contact information of the PI for signing up.

The recruitment materials also included a detailed section on notice of participation, providing prospective participants with information about the research project. In this section, I clarified that participation would be considered and enrolled on a first-come, first-served basis. I emphasized the focus of the study on evaluating the participants' music performance experiences rather than their performance outcomes. The materials addressed that the project had received ethical approval and was being conducted independently of the School of Music of this Chinese higher education institution, ensuring that no data would be shared with the School of Music. Furthermore, the notice stated that participating in the study would not influence prospective participants' academic standing, such as GPA, grades, or annual evaluations. Participants were clearly informed that their involvement was voluntary and uncompensated, with the added assurance that they could withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason. It was also stated that the trainers delivering the training programs were professionals with no

affiliations with this Chinese higher education institution throughout the research project. The notice also highlighted the confidentiality measures in place and specified that personal information and data collected would be securely protected and exclusively used for research purposes. Importantly, it was explicitly stated that no audio or video recordings would be made at any point during this research project.

Recruiting and Screening. The recruitment process began with individuals contacting the PI to express interest in participation. I scheduled one-on-one phone calls with each prospective participant to explain the specific research process in detail. After these phone calls, some individuals decided not to continue with the study. Subsequently, I conducted one-on-one screening phone calls to assess prospective participants' eligibility and noted each individual's course schedule to determine common availability for scheduling the specific research activities. During this process, a few individuals encountered scheduling conflicts that prevented their further participation and were gently excluded. These participants were informed they would be given priority for participation should a similar research project be conducted again in the near future. Individuals currently undergoing psychological therapy were excluded for emotional safety reasons. This exclusion also aimed to avoid any additional stress that participation in the study might impose on individuals already seeking professional assistance.

During the recruitment process, I maintained a waiting list for additional volunteers if the number of prospective participants exceeded the anticipated enrollment of 32 to 40 participants. Should any of the initially selected participants withdraw before the study began, individuals from the waiting list would be included in the study on a first-come, first-served basis. Ultimately, a final cohort of 38 individuals met the eligibility criteria and were enrolled in the study. These participants were then divided into two groups based on their common availability.

Participant Allocation and Randomization

Recognizing the practical necessity of scheduling participants according to their common availabilities, I acknowledge this approach as a deviation from true randomization, which could be seen as a potential limitation of the study. Nevertheless, to maintain the integrity of the research design, I used a randomization software program (graphpad.com) to establish the following three important aspects of the study. First, the software determined which group would receive the PSC program and which would receive the MSC program. Second, the software assigned unique identification numbers to each participant, incorporating a letter prefix indicative of their group assignment to streamline participant tracking and data analyses. For example, participants P16 and M16 were two independent participants from either the PSC or the MSC program, respectively. Finally, the software established a randomized and fixed performance order, which participants adhered to during both their pre-training and post-training performances to maintain a consistent performance environment.

Participation

The research project was structured into three distinct phases: pre-training, training period, and post-training, each with its specific components. Data collection occurred only during the pre-training and post-training phases. All quantitative and qualitative data were collected using an encrypted online platform (wjx.cn) accessible through participants' mobile phones. No data was collected during the training period.

Pre-Training. The pre-training data collection included receiving consent, collecting three quantitative trait measures, collecting two quantitative state measures, and one qualitative inquiry about participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances.

Day Before Pre-Training Performance. Each participant completed the consent form digitally and then completed three quantitative questionnaires on the three psychological trait measures displayed on the online platform. These questionnaires were administered in the following order to assess participants' levels of trait flow, trait MPA, and trait self-compassion.

Day of Pre-Training Performance. State MPA, as one of the two quantitative state measures, was assessed immediately before each participant's pre-training performance. After answering this short questionnaire, each participant performed a piano solo piece from memory in a public setting following the predetermined, randomized, and fixed performance order. Immediately after each performance, each participant answered another short questionnaire on state flow, the second quantitative state measure of interest. Following this, participants were directed to give written responses using short answers to the qualitative question: "What would you say to your future self when you face your next public performance opportunity? (A minimum of one or two sentences)." The completion of this qualitative question concluded the pre-training data collection.

Training Period. During the training period, the PSC group received the PSC program, and the MSC group received the MSC program. Both training programs consisted of eight content sessions, with an additional class between the fifth and sixth sessions for group practice and/or discussion. Each session was approximately 2.75 to 3 hours long. Participants met twice a week over a span of about 4.5 weeks to complete their respective training programs. Each training program occurred at fixed times each week. For example, PSC sessions occurred on Monday and Thursday evenings, and MSC sessions on Tuesday and Friday evenings. All training sessions of the PSC and MSC programs were scheduled outside of participants' regular course hours.

Each program was delivered by two professional online trainers to participants gathered in a private and quiet classroom. The PSC program was led by two professional musicians with expertise in teaching PSC, and the PI, holding graduate degrees in piano performance and piano pedagogy, delivered approximately 50% of the PSC program. Similarly, the MSC training was delivered by two MSC teachers professionally trained at the CMSC. The PI, being one of the trained MSC teachers, delivered approximately 50% of the MSC program. Notably, no data were collected during the training period.

Post-Training. The post-training phase mirrored the structure of the pre-training phase, with an additional debriefing process to conclude the data collection.

Day Before Post-Training Performance. Each participant completed the three identical quantitative questionnaires on the three psychological trait measures following the same order, namely, trait flow, trait MPA, and trait self-compassion.

Day of Post-Training Performance. Participants first answered a short questionnaire assessing state MPA. Then, each participant performed the same piano solo piece they had performed in the pre-training performance. Adhering to the same performance requirement, they performed this piece from memory in a public setting following the same performance order. Immediately after each performance, each participant answered a short questionnaire on state flow to complete the post-training quantitative assessment.

Following this, participants moved on to respond to several qualitative questions. They first answered a binary question: “In comparison, were your personal experiences in post-training performance different from your pre-training performance?” Subsequently, they were asked to identify the factors contributing to these changes through the question: “If your personal experiences in post-training performance were different from those in pre-training performance,

what factors can you identify that made a difference in your post-training performance experiences? (A minimum of one or two sentences).” Finally, participants provided short answers to the identical qualitative question asked after their pre-training performances: “What would you say to your future self when you face your next public performance opportunity? (A minimum of one or two sentences).” The completion of this qualitative question concluded the post-training data collection.

Debriefing Procedure. Twenty-four hours after completing data collection, all participants received a letter from the PI, which included a debriefing on the research objectives, research questions, the design of incorporating two distinct training programs, and the psychological constructs measured in the study. Specifically, the PI explained the rationale for keeping participants unaware of the two distinct training programs until the completion of the data collection, highlighting that this blinding strategy was crucial for preserving the integrity of the research design. Additionally, the PI informed participants that their individual responses to the questionnaires, along with the scoring forms, were available upon request. A handout outlining either the PSC or MSC training program was offered to those interested. The completion of the debriefing procedure marked the conclusion of the entire data collection process with no further follow-up data collected.

Analytical Strategies for Processing Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Before proceeding with the detailed data analyses, I scrutinized, checked, and cleaned the entire dataset. This crucial preparatory step ensured the accuracy and completeness of the quantitative and qualitative datasets to establish a solid foundation for the subsequent analyses. This section outlines the quantitative and qualitative methodologies employed to determine the

overall and comparative effectiveness of PSC and MSC programs on participants' music performance experiences.

The quantitative analytical strategy provided statistical results essential for comprehensive analyses between pre- and post-training assessments of the five psychological constructs collected using validated questionnaires. These structured analytical strategies provided a statistical foundation for understanding the impact of each training program. Concurrently, the qualitative analytical strategy enabled nuanced findings essential for mixed methods integration. These nuanced insights allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of each training program's effectiveness through key themes and thematic representations identified from participants' short written reflections. Finally, the additional qualitative findings on participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances paved the way for a possible ethnographic perspective, extending the discussion beyond mixed methods results to offer a contextual understanding of the participants' learning journeys.

Quantitative Data Analyses

This research aimed to explore the impact of the PSC and MSC programs on various psychological constructs related to musicians' performance experiences. Five psychological constructs were measured before and after the training period using questionnaires in the following order: trait flow, trait MPA, trait self-compassion, state MPA, and state flow. To process the collected data, I decided to employ the mixed-design analysis of variance for its comprehensive analytical capabilities.

Employing Mixed-Design ANOVAs. Mixed-design analysis of variance, also known as mixed-design ANOVA or split-plot ANOVA, is a statistical model used when researchers aim to examine the effects of two or more types of variables at the same time (Field, 2018). Specifically,

it combines the within-groups component and the between-groups component into one statistical model. In the current study, I collected the PSC and MSC participants' levels of five psychological constructs twice, once before and once after their participation in either the PSC or MSC program. Thus, mixed-design ANOVA offers the capacity to analyze the within-groups component and the between-groups component simultaneously.

Specifically, the within-groups component of mixed-design ANOVA allowed me to track the changes in the five psychological constructs within each group before and after the training period by providing a clear picture of how the PSC and MSC programs influenced each group's levels of the five psychological constructs over time. Furthermore, the between-groups component of mixed-design ANOVA facilitated a comparative analysis of the training effects between the two distinct programs. Following this analytical choice, I was able to identify the overall effects of the PSC and MSC programs on their own participants. Moreover, I was able to observe how the effectiveness of the PSC program compared to the MSC program in influencing participants' levels of the five psychological constructs measured before and after the training period.

Employing mixed-design ANOVAs streamlined my quantitative analysis by consolidating multiple tests into a single and more powerful analytical process. This approach reduced the complexity of multiple tests and avoided the potential errors that could arise from conducting numerous separate tests, such as paired samples *t* tests for each of the five psychological constructs in each group. Additionally, mixed-design ANOVAs facilitated a more detailed examination of the data, enabling the assessments of how different training programs (PSC and MSC) interacted with the changes observed over time (pre-training and post-training). Thus, mixed-design ANOVAs offered a more comprehensive understanding of the changes in

participants' five psychological constructs by allowing me to observe the interactions between the two distinct training programs at two different time points, a level of detail that paired samples t tests cannot efficiently provide. Overall, I was able to achieve robust and effective statistical analyses while maintaining the integrity of the results using mixed-design ANOVAs to process the quantitative data.

Assumption Tests for Conducting Mixed-Design ANOVAs. Before conducting mixed-design ANOVAs, I employed several assumption tests to ensure the validity of using mixed-design ANOVA as the primary analytical model for analyzing the quantitative data. The results of these tests are critical to ensure the validity and reliability of the quantitative results.

Independence of Observations. A fundamental assumption of mixed-design ANOVA is the independence of observations, which stipulates that each participant's response is not influenced by the responses of other participants or the other group. Based on the research design, this assumption was confirmed during the data collection. All quantitative and qualitative data were collected independently through the online platform, with each participant using their own device to submit their responses. This approach minimized any potential sources of interaction or influence because utilizing an online platform for data collection ensured a controlled environment that was consistent for all participants. Thus, the assumption of independence of observations was met.

Group Assignment and Random Sampling. The integrity of the mixed-design ANOVA relies on the random sampling of participants or their random assignment to groups. Both considerations ensure that the groups are comparable. In this study, the allocation of participants to groups was determined by their common availability, which is a factor that could have potentially compromised true randomization. Nevertheless, the subsequent use of randomization

software to determine which group receives the PSC program and which group receives the MSC program leveraged the methodological rigor to a certain degree. This approach was not the ideal scenario for randomization, but it balanced the need for recruiting a sufficient number of participants with the imperative for randomized group assignments. Therefore, the assumption of randomization was achieved to the maximum degree possible.

Assessment of Outliers. An essential step in preparing for mixed-design ANOVA is to assess the data for outliers, as their presence can significantly impact the results (Field, 2018). For this purpose, outlier detection analysis was conducted using the Extreme Studentized Deviate (ESD) method on each group's pre- and post-training scores of the five psychological constructs. Outliers were identified based on the number of standard deviations a data point is from the mean of the dataset, presented as z scores. Upon thorough examination of each dataset's z scores, all values were found to fall within the conventional range between -2.58 and 2.58 , which corresponds to a 99% confidence interval under a normal distribution (Field, 2018; Fitrianto et al., 2022; Paul & Fung, 1991). This finding indicates the absence of significant outliers in the datasets, thus meeting one of the assumptions for conducting valid mixed-design ANOVAs.

Assessment of Normality. The normality of data distribution is a crucial assumption for mixed-design ANOVA, as it ensures the validity of the inferential statistics. The Shapiro-Wilk test is sensitive in detecting departures from normality in relatively small sample sizes (Field, 2018; Hanusz & Tarasińska, 2014). Thus, the Shapiro-Wilk test was employed to assess normality, which is appropriate given the small sample size in this study. For determining normality, a conventional significance level of .05 was used. I verified each group's pre- and post-training scores and confirmed that all the p values were greater than .05. This indicates that

the data from each group's scores did not significantly differ from a normal distribution, thus meeting the normality assumption required for conducting mixed-design ANOVAs.

Assessment of Homogeneity of Variance. For the validity of mixed-design ANOVA, it is essential that the variances among the groups are equal. To assess this assumption, Levene's test was employed before conducting the mixed-design ANOVA to determine whether the different groups have similar levels of variance (Field, 2018). For determining the homogeneity of variance, a conventional significance level of .05 was used. The outcomes indicated that all p values were above this threshold. This suggests that there were no significant differences in variances among the groups, confirming the homogeneity of variance assumption for conducting mixed-design ANOVAs.

Assessment of Sphericity. Building upon the confirmation of homogeneity of variances, the next critical step in the data validation for conducting mixed-design ANOVA was to affirm the assumption of sphericity. Assessing sphericity is a critical step when examining repeated measures that include three or more time points or conditions. Using Mauchly's test, sphericity ensures that the variances of the differences between all combinations of related groups are equal (Field, 2018). However, in the context of this study, Mauchly's test for sphericity was not conducted, as it was not applicable to the research design. The current design involved two groups with only two data points from pre-training to post-training. This constitutes a two-level repeated measures design. In such designs, sphericity is not a concern as there is only one possible pair of differences for each dataset from pre- to post-training. Therefore, the assumption of sphericity does not apply to the current design. Consequently, this step in the assumption assessments for conducting mixed-design ANOVAs was deemed unnecessary. Overall, conducting these assumption checks laid the foundation for my quantitative analytical

procedures, ensuring that the quantitative datasets met the necessary conditions for valid and reliable statistical analyses.

Qualitative Data Analyses

After examining the feasibility of various qualitative analytical strategies, reflexive TA and content analysis were chosen to be the primary qualitative analytical tools employed. In this section, I begin by introducing the concept of thematic analysis and the role of reflexivity, a key feature in reflexive TA. Then, I provide a rationale for employing reflexive TA with content analysis in analyzing the qualitative data, and detail the specific advantages reflexive TA offers in the pursuit of the research objectives. Together, the following sections offer a roadmap of the analytical framework guiding the qualitative analyses.

Thematic Analysis and Content Analysis. According to Braun & Clarke (2022), thematic analysis presents a robust approach for researchers to explore qualitative data. Thematic analysis focuses on identifying, analyzing, and generating patterns within the dataset through a comprehensive coding process. The aim of thematic analysis is to extract themes for understanding specific research questions. Moreover, thematic analysis offers flexibility to organize and refine themes during the coding process. The flexibility embedded in thematic analysis offers a wide range of epistemological positions and philosophical foundations, enabling researchers to analyze the data in both deductive and inductive coding strategies. Consequently, thematic analysis equips researchers with a systemic qualitative data analysis process to generate explanations of the findings.

Complementing thematic analysis, content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) serves as a supplementary approach in my qualitative analyses, providing a means to quantify and systematically present the thematic representations of identified themes. Thus, content analysis

assists in enriching the thematic interpretation by offering a numerical view of the thematic representations identified within the dataset, thereby enhancing the comprehensiveness of my qualitative analyses.

The Role of Reflexivity in Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis and reflexive TA are both qualitative research methods used to analyze, categorize, and report themes identified from the qualitative dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022). While both approaches aim to identify themes within qualitative data, the authors stated that reflexive TA places greater emphasis on the researcher's role and subjectivity as an integral part of the analytic process. They also addressed the importance of reflexivity in thematic analysis because reflexive TA constantly reminds the researcher to undertake a process of critical self-reflection, thereby ensuring that the analysis is conducted with greater transparency and integrity. The process of introspection embedded in reflexive TA contributes to the credibility of the research findings. According to the authors, the reflexive processes in reflexive TA require the researcher to scrutinize and reconsider their methodological steps and choices during each of the six steps of the analysis. Re-evaluating the codes, patterns, and themes in a progressive sequence increases the coherence between the data and conclusions. Finally, Braun and Clarke addressed that the reflexive process allows for the inclusion of an ethical consideration to address the depth and subtlety of qualitative analysis. This ensures that the researchers interpret participants' responses with the necessary depth, maintaining an open and respectful stance to participants' shared beliefs and attitudes about the social environments in which they live.

The Rationale for Using Reflexive TA and Content Analysis. My choice to use reflexive TA with content analysis to process the qualitative data directly reflected the alignment with the research questions, objectives, and philosophical foundations that formed the basis of

this investigation. As the PI of this project, I decided to use reflexive TA to acknowledge and emphasize my subjectivity vis-à-vis my musical background. As a musician and researcher who has a rich background and experience in multiple facets of music performance, I recognized the influence of my own insights and viewpoints when interacting with participants' responses. By employing reflexive TA in my qualitative data analyses, I acknowledged that my contextual comprehension shaped how I interpreted the data. Therefore, I have decided to use reflexive TA to identify key themes and patterns with the support of content analysis to quantify these themes based on the following reasons.

Navigating Researcher Bias. As the sole researcher processing the qualitative data, I employed reflexive TA to recognize how my engagement and diverse roles in the research project might color my interpretation. My multiple roles as a researcher, trainer, qualitative question designer, and my experiences in music and self-compassion teaching, necessitated a reflexive approach to ensure a transparent and unbiased analytical approach. Following this need, reflexive TA offered me a rigorous introspective and reflective lens to assess my assumptions and beliefs critically when processing the qualitative data. Reflexive TA highlights the importance of re-evaluation, especially during the coding, theme development, theme refinement, and theme naming steps to improve reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Considering my personal experiences of peak performance, MPA, self-compassion practices, and teaching the MSC program, using reflexive TA in my qualitative data analysis helped me to avoid researcher bias to the best of my ability.

Bridging Cultural Nuances and Addressing Linguistic Challenges. Given that the data I collected consists of brief textual descriptions from Chinese participants, reflexive TA allowed me to delve into a detailed, context-driven analysis of the data. Following this route, I was able

to grasp and comprehend the complexity and richness of participants' narratives, which were essential for a detailed and contextual understanding of the two distinct training programs that impacted participants' performance experiences and learning journeys. When conducting research in multiple languages, Littig and Pöchhacker (2014) addressed the importance of adopting a deliberate method to account for linguistic and cultural factors at every stage during the research process. In this research, all participants are native Chinese speakers and provided their responses in Chinese, which is also my native language. This linguistic coherence allowed me a clear and nuanced understanding of the data within its cultural context. Therefore, it was unnecessary to translate all the qualitative answers from Chinese to English before conducting any qualitative analysis.

Following the six steps of the reflexive TA process (Braun & Clarke, 2022), I first immersed myself meticulously in the Chinese data. From the second step onward, I conducted my coding procedure in English until the completion of the reflexive TA process. Although this transition from comprehending data in Chinese to coding, theming, and finalizing the report in English could present linguistic challenges, using a reflexive lens to examine the Chinese data during the thematic analysis ensured my accurate understanding of participants' responses for the following benefits. First, reading the data using my native language allowed me to engage myself deeply in the nuances of the data for an accurate interpretation within the appropriate cultural context. Second, reflexivity through repeated reading ensured the thoroughness of my interpretation. In other words, this procedure required constant cross-checking to ensure the original meanings of each Chinese excerpt corresponded accurately to each English code. Third, using English from the coding step positioned the research findings to coherently reflect established theories of flow, MPA, and self-compassion within the existing literature. Finally,

from an ethical perspective, my bilingual skills allowed me to clearly explain all aspects of the study when participants or scholars needed to understand this research project in either Chinese or English.

Facilitating Mixed Methods Integration. As the core component of this research, the mixed methods convergent design requires a rigorous triangulation and corroboration of the research outcomes. In analyzing participants' short written responses, the validation process of the qualitative data is anchored in reflexive TA, where the reflexive process itself is the source of validation (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In my analysis, the reflexive nature of reflexive TA allowed the identification of pivotal themes, and content analysis augmented the identified themes through a quantifiable lens. This quantitative lens from content analysis labelled each theme with a numerical attribute, which can be calculated as percentages representing each theme's thematic representation. Together, the number of participants' references on each theme with the theme's specific thematic representation can facilitate a systematic comparison with the quantitative results captured by mixed-design ANOVAs. Such corroboration enabled the overall mixed methods integration.

Comparing Thematic Representations From Pre-Training to Post-Training. Finally, with a possible ethnographic approach to understand the additional qualitative question of participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances after the mixed methods results, reflexive TA and content analysis offered an overview for understanding participants' common beliefs and attitudes from pre-training to post-training. Again, reflexive TA allowed me to capture the reflections of participants through the identified themes, and content analysis provided a structured method to quantify these themes, allowing for a systematic comparison.

Ultimately, the integration of reflexive TA with content analysis was essential in discovering insights and tracking changes in the qualitative component of this study. Employing reflexive TA to identify themes while using content analysis to quantify each theme's thematic representation provided valuable tools for meeting the requirements of the mixed methods convergent design. This integration also facilitated the discussion of possible ethnographic insights that extend beyond the mixed methods results from the additional qualitative inquiry. To the best of my knowledge, the strategic integration of reflexive TA and content analysis in this mixed methods study was the ideal analytical strategy for processing the qualitative data. This approach offered me the capacity to meet the need for processing the qualitative data in the mixed methods design with the ability to effectively capture the nuanced dynamics of participants' responses to the additional qualitative question.

Building upon the rationale for employing reflexive TA and content analysis for processing the qualitative data, I now detail the systematic analytical procedures of the qualitative analyses. I first introduce the six practical steps of conducting reflexive TA with three appropriate steps to conduct content analysis. This is followed by an explanation of the inductive and deductive coding strategies I applied in identifying the themes during the reflexive TA process. Following this, I present a sequential overview of the qualitative analytical process. This process starts from the binary question and the contributing factors participants shared, which concludes the qualitative component critical to mixed methods integration. Finally, this qualitative analytical process also includes an overview for processing the additional qualitative question on participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances that function as an extension after the mixed methods results for a possible ethnographic discussion.

Procedure of Conducting Reflexive TA. When conducting reflexive TA on the qualitative written responses I collected, I closely followed the sequential order of conducting reflexive TA suggested by Braun and Clarke (2022). To accomplish this, I conducted my analytical process recursively by moving back and forth through the six steps of reflexive TA. Additionally, I revisited participants' responses multiple times to capture the depth and nuances of the analysis. After confirming the identified themes through reflexive TA, I employed content analysis to quantitatively assess the number of references of each theme and calculated each theme's thematic representations when needed. All the qualitative analytical steps were conducted using NVivo.

Step 1: Reading and Comprehending the Data. Before entering a comprehensive state of data analysis, the phase of becoming acquainted with the data is essential (Byrne, 2022). This step involves thoroughly reading and repeatedly reviewing the complete dataset to gain a deep understanding of participants' responses. Such in-depth familiarity with the data is crucial for me to connect meaningful information with my research questions. I imported the Chinese qualitative responses to NVivo and repeatedly read through each participant's responses to each specific qualitative question. This intense exploration enabled me to capture the details and variations in the narratives of each group.

The qualitative questions inquired about participants' reflections on contributing factors to their post-training performance experiences, with an additional question asked twice to inquire about their prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances before and after the training period. Thus, meticulously reading each participant's specific responses to these questions was essential. This initial step of becoming thoroughly familiar with the entire qualitative data helped me to establish a preliminary understanding of participants' overall

impressions reflected in their answers written in Chinese. During this step, I noted my initial analytical observations in relation to the dataset. These early observations and impressions created a detailed foundation for my subsequent coding step.

Step 2: Preliminary Coding. In my analytical process, coding was the first interpretive step that offered me the chance to systematically label excerpts and sentiments from the data that may collectively evolve into themes to address my research questions later in the reflexive TA process. Since I was the only coder processing the qualitative data, I paid equal attention to every participant's response. I deconstructed the data into excerpts and assigned an initial English code to each excerpt. While conducting the systematic procedure to identify a variety of codes, I paid attention to important information that emerged from the data related to my qualitative questions. For each excerpt, I assigned clear and meaningful codes that reflected participants' thoughts, ideas, and attitudes to capture both explicit and implicit information.

To ensure a comprehensive coding process, I first coded all participants' responses to my preliminary codes. Then, I repeatedly cycled through my preliminary codes and deepened my understanding and familiarity with the data. This recursive process enabled me to determine and highlight the importance of each code that may effectively contribute to theme interpretation. During this step, I created a codebook for each of the qualitative questions and detailed my preliminary codes in these respective codebooks while conducting each round of the coding process. These codes were then carefully sifted, categorized, assessed, and summarized to facilitate the subsequent steps of my reflexive TA process.

Step 3: Theme Exploration and Development. After my preliminary coding, I focused on extracting the collective meanings and insights across the entire dataset. I reviewed participants' reflections under each code and combined different codes with shared meanings to

develop my initial themes. Specifically, I paid attention to the connections between various codes and investigated how these connections may be collectively organized into themes that can answer my qualitative questions.

With a refined codebook in hand for each of the qualitative questions, I redirected my attention from details to a broader view, seeking overarching patterns that could be organized and categorized as themes. By assigning codes under collective concepts, I started to form initial themes that offered meaningful insights into the qualitative questions. This process required frequent evaluation of the excerpts and codes to affirm the accurate categorizations of the themes. The reflexive process in this step reminded me that themes were not pre-existing in the dataset. Rather, they were systematically identified during the reflexive TA process. As a result, I actively revisited the data, the qualitative questions, my interpretations, and the discipline-specific terminology to organize and develop the initial themes.

Step 4: Theme Refinement. At this stage, I assessed the coherence of the themes with the data in relation to the specific qualitative question. I scrutinized the initial themes, refining them to ensure they captured the essence and breadth of the data comprehensively. Again, I revisited the entire dataset multiple times to verify that each theme represented a concrete concept, which collectively addressed the key patterns that were meaningful to the qualitative questions and codes. When necessary, I combined and divided certain themes into appropriate categories to confirm the accurate representation of certain concepts from participants' qualitative responses.

Step 5: Theme Naming. During this step, I determined the specific titles for each theme. With careful attention, I described each theme for the purpose of representing the significant and central idea specific to the concept of the theme. I constantly re-evaluated my rationale for the name of each theme. Then, I gave each theme a precise title that was both indicative and

evocative of the data. Also, I included clear terms in the theme titles to avoid confusion (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In addition, I updated my codebooks to construct question-specific sections, which included the title of each theme, the definition of each theme, and example excerpts of each theme.

Step 6: Compiling the Analysis to Form Research Report. In this final step, my objective was to create a coherent and persuasive narrative that interweaves analytical insights with compelling excerpts to effectively address the research questions. This document included an investigative narrative that highlighted the thematic complexities in connection to each qualitative question asked. During the drafting process, I continuously engaged with the data reflexively. When specific excerpts are needed to support important findings, the excerpts originally reported in Chinese were translated into English for the purpose of demonstration in the results and discussion chapters of this dissertation. This document was also crafted based on the findings identified through content analysis, which included the number of mentions of each theme and the thematic representations of each theme when necessary.

Procedure of Conducting Content Analysis. Following the identification and confirmation of themes through reflexive TA, I recorded the number of mentions of each theme within each group regarding the qualitative question on contributing factors. I also recorded the number of mentions of each theme within each group from pre-training to post-training of the additional qualitative question on participants' prospective views regarding their future performances. To achieve this detailed content analysis, the following steps were systematically undertaken.

Step 1: Documenting the Number of Mentions in Each Theme. This step involved a careful review of the qualitative data to ensure every occurrence of each theme was accurately

captured, categorized, and attributed to the relevant training group. Instead of counting each reference of a theme across the entire dataset, I documented the occurrence of each theme based on the number of participants who mentioned each theme to avoid duplicative coding.

Step 2: Calculating Thematic Representations. When the thematic representation of a theme needs to be presented in the form of a percentage, I calculated the percentage of each theme's mentions relative to the total mentions of all themes within each group and/or within all participants. This calculation provided a clearer understanding of the proportional representation of each theme, offering a quantitative measure of thematic importance.

Step 3: Comparing Thematic Representations. I first engaged in a comparative analysis to discern any changes or consistencies in thematic representations between the two groups for the contributing factors identified after their post-training performances. Regarding the additional qualitative question of participants' prospective views of future performances, I engaged in a comparative analysis to track notable changes from pre-training to post-training within each group based on the themes identified. The calculated thematic representation assisted my mixed methods integration and facilitated my presentation of participants' prospective views toward their future performances before and after the training period.

Coding Strategies Employed in Reflexive TA. Coding is the process of assigning a label or keyword to a segment or excerpt of content to categorize and summarize its subject matter (Belotto, 2018). In the following section, I outline the coding strategies used for the qualitative data. I specifically elaborate on the rationale for selecting inductive and/or deductive coding strategies for participants' responses to each qualitative question.

Deductive Coding and Inductive Coding for Identifying Contributing Factors. After collecting participants' final quantitative measures on state flow during the post-training data

collection, I asked a binary question regarding whether they noticed a change in their post-training performance experiences compared to pre-training performance. Then, I specifically inquired about the factors or reasons that contributed to the changes in their post-training performance experiences using short answers. Both questions were only asked once during the post-training data collection. The specific questions I asked were as follows:

“In comparison, were your personal experiences in post-training performance different from your experiences in pre-training performance?”

“If your personal experiences in post-training performance were different from those in pre-training performance, what factors can you identify that made a difference in your post-training performance experiences?”

Based on the factors that may contribute to an individual’s positive performance experiences previously established in the theoretical framework (Kenny, 2016; Papageorgi et al., 2007), I undertook a first round of deductive coding and a second round of inductive coding to discover the contributing factors participants recognized. Compared to inductive coding, deductive coding applies a specific set of predetermined codes to the data from the theoretical framework detailed in the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Therefore, deductive coding facilitates the precise correlation between participants’ reflections expressed in the data and pre-existing theories. Using deductive coding allowed me to use clear and discipline-specific concepts as themes. To achieve this step, I used the factors listed on the quantitative questionnaires as my deductive codes. Overall, adopting a deductive coding approach in my initial coding process to identify contributing factors that were both corroborated by existing theory and mentioned in participants’ responses enabled me to form my codebook with theoretical and empirical insights.

Although deductive coding was the dominant coding strategy used in the question inquiring about contributing factors to participants' performance experiences, I used an additional inductive coding procedure to ascertain if any new and unexpected codes could be identified during the coding process. Therefore, by combining deductive and inductive coding strategies together, I was able to document a comprehensive list of factors that have contributed to participants' post-training performance experiences from the qualitative data.

In summary, it was necessary to include the factors already established in the theories with those newly discovered in participants' responses through a deductive and inductive coding process. Therefore, employing both deductive coding and inductive coding strengthened the findings by allowing for the inclusion of a range of diverse factors that can impact performance experiences. The coding sequence I employed to process participants' shared contributing factors was as follows: the PSC group after post-training performance, followed by the MSC group after post-training performance.

Inductive Coding for Participants' Prospective Views on Future Performances. As an additional qualitative question, all participants offered their written responses to the same question twice, once after the pre-training performance and again after the post-training performance. The same question posed after the pre-training and post-training performances was as follows: "What would you say to your future self when you face your next public performance opportunity?"

To openly explore participants' collective attitudes and beliefs regarding their future music performance opportunities, I applied inductive coding to each group's responses. Inductive coding is an exploratory approach that allows the emergence of common ideas and expressions directly from participants' narratives without the influence of the researcher's pre-existing

knowledge (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). For these specific questions, inductive coding was used because the questions invited a broad range of personal beliefs and views that participants may have for their future performances. In this study, using inductive coding was particularly effective for identifying fresh insights into participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs in the context of public music performances and music learning.

Therefore, the inductive coding strategy was appropriate to generate patterns that may arise from each group's answers to the question: "What would you say to your future self when you face your next public performance opportunity?" For this question, the coding sequence I employed was as follows: the PSC group after pre-training performance, the MSC group after pre-training performance, followed by the PSC group after post-training performance, and finally, the MSC group after post-training performance.

The Sequence of Conducting Qualitative Analyses. Regarding the binary question, "In comparison, were your personal experiences in post-training performance different from your experiences in pre-training performance?" I used participants' responses to record the number of individuals in each group who acknowledged a change in their post-training performance experiences.

Regarding the qualitative question, "If your personal experiences in post-training performance were different from those in pre-training performance, what factors can you identify that made a difference in your post-training performance experiences?" I systematically analyzed the PSC group's responses first, followed by the MSC group. This approach first involved a deductive coding process to organize themes based on established theories and then an inductive process, allowing additional themes to be identified (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). By analyzing the PSC group's responses in advance and comparing them with those from the MSC

program, I was able to ensure a clearer and more controlled comparison. I followed this sequence to first explore the PSC participants' qualitative answers for a specific reason. While the PSC content provided new performance strategies beyond the participants' regular weekly music lessons, it remained centered on the subject of music performance. In contrast, the MSC program introduced the concept of self-compassion and focused on psychological development, which was less familiar to the participants, thereby requiring a more nuanced approach to comparison.

Regarding the additional qualitative question, "What would you say to your future self when you face your next public performance opportunity?" I chose to first analyze the responses from the PSC group after the pre-training performance, followed by the MSC group's responses after the pre-training performance. This strategy established a baseline of themes between the two groups before any training took effect. Subsequently, I examined the PSC group's responses after post-training performance, and then the MSC group's responses after post-training performance. This sequence provided me with insights into the thematic progression and development within each group. Analyzing the qualitative data in this sequence allowed me to discover the changes in themes and thematic representations within each group that occurred over time.

After completing the comprehensive qualitative analyses through reflexive TA and content analysis, I obtained the following qualitative findings, namely, the findings on the binary question, the findings of the contributing factors question, and the findings of participants' prospective views on their future performances. Specifically, the findings on the binary and contributing factors were used for mixed methods integration. The findings of participants' prospective views on their future performances were used to facilitate a possible ethnographic discussion beyond mixed methods results to conclude the dissertation.

Mixed Methods Integration

Integrating quantitative and qualitative data is the most significant aspect of mixed methods research as it ensures the rigor and comprehensiveness of the research outcome (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). According to the authors, failing to integrate the quantitative and qualitative strands can miss opportunities for triangulation and validation, which are essential components of the mixed methods convergent design. Through a deliberate and methodological integration process, the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative strands are maximized, enabling a multi-dimensional exploration of the research question that neither approach could achieve in isolation. Without this critical step of integration, the research outcomes may lack the depth and breadth to comprehensively address the research questions that mixed methods design is uniquely positioned to answer. More specifically, the authors addressed that quantitative results offer patterns and trends, while qualitative findings contribute depth and context that describe and explain the statistical evidence. Therefore, employing mixed methods integration helps researchers avoid potential biases that can arise from solely relying on either the quantitative or qualitative methods. During the integration process, convergent findings reinforce the credibility of the research, while divergent results prompt further discussion and investigation that can lead to richer insights for a deeper understanding of the research question (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The purpose of integrating the quantitative results with the qualitative findings was to assess and compare the effectiveness of the PSC and MSC training programs in influencing participants' music performance experiences. Additionally, I aimed to provide explanatory insights by identifying factors perceived by the participants that contributed to their post-training performance experiences. The quantitative results offered an overview of observed trends and

patterns in participants' changes in flow and MPA, while the qualitative findings provided explanations and examples of these patterns based on participants' shared experiences.

Specifically, the mixed methods integration process began after the quantitative and qualitative analyses. I also used joint displays to facilitate comparisons and narrative descriptions to capture the complexity of the data. Anticipated outcomes included the core contributing factors that influenced participants' performance experiences, which led to the completion of the mixed methods results by offering insights into how these factors correspond with existing theories of flow and MPA in music performance.

Mixed Methods Research Question Alignment. The integration of quantitative results with qualitative findings aligned with the central research objective of determining the comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs on participants' music performance experiences. The quantitative data was gathered through questionnaires that measured participants' changes in flow and MPA levels. Thus, the quantitative strand provided an assessment of the pre- to post-training changes within each group and between the two groups, allowing me to observe the overall and comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC training programs using mixed-design ANOVAs. In parallel, the qualitative analyses conducted using both reflexive TA and content analysis uncovered rich narratives that resonated with participants' lived music performance experiences. The identified themes offered a qualitative counterpart to the quantitative data, providing a means to triangulate and thereby enrich my understanding of the quantitative results. The examination of these two strands through mixed methods integration ensured a comprehensive exploration of the research question.

Situating Mixed Methods Integration in the Current Study. In the current study, the primary impetus for using the mixed methods convergent design was to integrate and compare

the quantitative results with the qualitative findings. This methodological choice aimed to enhance the validity of the research outcome by using multiple data sources for corroboration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). By integrating these two strands of data, I was able to compare and corroborate the themes identified from participants' narratives with their quantitative measurements to validate the mixed methods conclusions. During the mixed methods integration, I discerned the factors that participants deemed most significant to their performance growth and positioned these contributing factors as the source for my mixed methods interpretation and discussion.

At a theoretical level, the mixed methods integration allowed me to align participants' learning experiences with existing theories of flow and MPA. By mapping these observed experiences onto the theoretical frameworks, I was able to affirm and expand my current understanding of participants' music performance experiences. Thus, the identified themes served as a reflection of the theoretical frameworks and allowed me to connect the empirical data to the theoretical discourse in the literature. Additionally, I was able to determine whether my empirical findings aligned with or diverged from existing knowledge. Themes that aligned with current theories served to confirm and reinforce the proposed theoretical frameworks, adding empirical and preliminary support to situate the potential role of self-compassion as a contributing factor in the interplay between flow and MPA. Moreover, the identification of unexpected outcomes revealed novel insights into the complex nature of music performance and learning. The overall findings underscored the dynamic nature of performance experiences and opened potential avenues for theoretical advancements and practical strategies that can be used to enhance the positive learning journeys of musicians.

Quantitative Results Standardization and Qualitative Findings Transformation. The integration procedure was conducted after the quantitative results and qualitative findings had been established (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). I normalized the quantitative results and qualitative findings as the foundation for creating joint displays. The joint displays greatly facilitated the finalization of the mixed methods results, as they allowed for a comprehensive understanding that highlighted both numerical trends and thematic trajectories.

I standardized the quantitative results and transformed a portion of the qualitative findings to ensure comparability between the two sets of data. The quantitative results were assessed using five questionnaires that utilized distinct Likert scales ranging from four to seven points, which did not offer a direct comparison. Recognizing the necessity for a standardized metric, I confirmed the minimum and maximum possible scores of each questionnaire and converted all quantitative mean scores to a standardized 0 to 100 range. This process was carefully executed, ensuring that the lowest possible score on each original scale corresponded to 0 on the standardized scale and the highest possible score aligned with 100. By standardizing the quantitative results, I enhanced the comparability of the data, allowing for more precise pattern recognition and facilitation of the integrated joint displays.

During both the reflexive TA and content analysis, I documented the number of participants in each group who made comments on each theme to calculate the thematic representation of each theme using percentages. Instead of counting each reference of a theme across the entire qualitative dataset, I noted the occurrences based on the number of participants who mentioned each theme. This approach was implemented to avoid duplicative coding. In other words, if an individual repeatedly mentioned a particular concept, I did not count each repetition separately. Instead, I focused on the number of individuals who commented on this

theme, ensuring that each unique perspective was captured without inflating the count due to repeated mentions by the same individual. These documented number of mentions of each theme by the participants offered me a chance to calculate the percentage of each theme referenced in each group (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2021). For the purpose of mixed methods integration, I identified the themes that reflected the training effectiveness. Then, I used the calculated thematic representations of these themes to triangulate the quantitative results.

By comparing the standardized quantitative results and the transformed qualitative findings, I was able to identify areas of convergence or divergence, enriching the overall analyses and interpretations of the research findings. Additionally, this approach helped me to validate the overall findings by integrating the quantitative results and the qualitative findings, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research outcomes.

Joint Displays Development. Joint displays function as a methodological tool to visually demonstrate the integrated mixed methods outcomes, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research question (McCrudden et al., 2021). Specifically, the joint displays illustrate areas of convergence where quantitative measures and qualitative themes mutually confirm the same patterns or trends (Haynes-Brown & Fetters, 2021). These joint displays also enable the discovery of possible divergences, where the data may disconfirm or challenge each set of outcomes.

In the context of this research, I developed multiple joint displays that included standardized quantitative results and transformed qualitative findings with example quotations from participants. Using this tool, I was able to explore and demonstrate how the qualitative findings elaborated on the quantitative results, offering an expanded understanding and contextual framework to explain expected and unanticipated outcomes. Finally, these joint

displays facilitated the mixed methods discussion, where the combined evidence from the quantitative and qualitative components of the study was interpreted to form a cohesive discussion (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Additional Qualitative Analysis

Finally, building upon the mixed methods results, I was also able to explore the themes from participants' responses regarding their prospective views and attitudes on their future performance opportunities, which allowed for a potential ethnographic discussion. This additional qualitative component enabled an exploration of how the music learning environment shaped participants' beliefs and attitudes toward their future performance opportunities. Based on these observations, the additional qualitative findings on participants' prospective views and beliefs uncovered nuanced insights that extended and expanded the depth and breadth of the mixed methods outcome.

Summary of Methodology

In this chapter, I outlined the data collection procedures and the analytical tools used to generate the quantitative results, qualitative findings, and mixed methods results. I also delved into the additional qualitative analysis, which paved the way for a possible ethnographic discussion that may enrich the mixed methods findings. Additionally, I justified my research design and the selection of analytical methods, providing reasons for their suitability in addressing the research questions. Furthermore, I reflected on my extensive involvement in the entire research process, addressing how my role of engagement may influence the study. This chapter establishes the methodological procedures that support the overall findings and discussions of this dissertation.

Chapter Five: Results

Introduction

In this chapter, I present a systematic exploration of the research findings. This begins with detailing the quantitative results on participants' changes in trait flow, state flow, trait music performance anxiety (MPA), state MPA, and trait self-compassion from pre- to post-training. Following this, I provide qualitative analyses of participants' answers to the binary question and factor question. This includes examining if the participants perceived any changes in their post-training performance experiences, and then identifying the factors they believed contributed to these changes. These quantitative results and qualitative findings establish the groundwork for mixed methods integration.

Using joint displays, I then reveal the mixed methods results, highlighting the effectiveness of the Performance Strategies Class (PSC) and Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) programs in impacting participants' music performance experiences. The mixed methods results form the core of this dissertation by offering a holistic understanding of the research inquiry. Finally, I briefly explore the findings from the additional qualitative question on participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances from pre-training to post-training, extending beyond the mixed methods results to provide a possible ethnographic discussion to complete the research.

Timeline of Recruitment and Data Collection

Scheduled for three weeks, the recruitment commenced in the first week of the spring semester in mid-February 2023 after the Lunar New Year. After screening, I confirmed the participant list at the end of the recruitment period. The pre-training data collection with pre-training performance started at the beginning of March 2023. Then, the training period started

and lasted until mid-April. No data were collected during the training period. Upon the completion of the training period, the post-training data collection with post-training performance was conducted, which signified the conclusion of the data collection. Finally, I conducted a debriefing process, which marked the completion of the entire research process by the end of April 2023. There was no subsequent follow-up data collection after the completion of the research process.

Participant Flow

As shown in Figure 3, the recruitment began with 62 individuals (48 women and 14 men) who expressed interest and participated in the initial phone calls to understand the specific research process. Following these phone calls, nine individuals (seven women and two men) chose not to proceed with the study. In addition, five individuals (four women and one man) did not respond to the invitation for the subsequent screening phone call. This resulted in 48 individuals (37 women and 11 men) who completed the screening phone calls. Of these, 10 individuals (eight women and two men) agreed to participate but faced scheduling conflicts that prevented further participation.

Ultimately, this study successfully enrolled 38 participants (29 women and nine men) who met the eligibility criteria and provided consent, aligning well with the intended sample size range. These participants were then allocated into two groups: the PSC group with 19 participants (15 women and four men), and the MSC group also with 19 participants (14 women and five men).

A total of three participants withdrew during the training period. In the PSC group, one female participant withdrew after the second session and another female participant after the seventh session. This resulted in a total of 17 participants (13 women and four men) in the PSC

group. In the MSC group, only one male participant withdrew after the first session. This resulted in a total of 18 participants (14 women and four men) in the MSC group. In total, 35 participants (27 women and eight men) completed the study and were included in the quantitative and qualitative data analyses. There were no missing data, as all participants provided complete quantitative and qualitative answers.

Demographic Composition

As shown in Table 1, all 35 participants in this study were of Chinese ethnicity and demonstrated fluency in Mandarin Chinese. The participants were all young adults, with an age range of 18 to 23 years ($M = 20.14$, $SD = 1.33$), indicating a homogeneous age distribution across the study. In the PSC group, the age distribution showed a moderate variance with a mean age of 19.88 years ($SD = 1.28$). Similarly, the MSC group exhibited a moderate age variance, with a mean age of 20.39 years ($SD = 1.34$). The homogeneous age distribution and Chinese ethnicity of the participants ensured a culturally and demographically consistent sample for examining the impact of the PSC and MSC programs.

The majority of participants in the study were female, representing approximately 77.1% ($N = 27$) of the total sample. Specifically, in the PSC group, females comprised approximately 76.5% ($n = 13$) and males 23.5% ($n = 4$). In the MSC group, the distribution was approximately 77.8% female ($n = 14$) and approximately 22.2% male ($n = 4$). This gender distribution underscores a predominant female presence in both the PSC and MSC groups.

Quantitative Results

Table 2 demonstrates the means and standard deviations of the pre-training and post-training scores of the PSC group, the MSC group, and the total participants. In addition, mean score changes in the five psychological constructs (trait flow, state flow, trait MPA, state MPA,

and trait self-compassion) from pre-training to post-training can be found in Figure 4A, Figure 4B, Figure 4C, Figure 4D, and Figure 4E, respectively.

Five mixed-design analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to assess the main effects of time (a within-groups factor with two levels for all 35 participants: pre-training and post-training) and the effectiveness of training programs (a between-groups factor with two levels: PSC program and MSC program) on participants' scores of trait flow, state flow, trait MPA, state MPA, and trait self-compassion (see Table 3). All inferential statistics used p values of less than .05 to indicate statistical significance.

Trait Flow

Although the PSC group started with slightly higher scores than the MSC group before the training, the MSC group demonstrated higher scores after the training. There was a significant increase in trait flow scores for all participants from pre- to post-training, as confirmed by a significant main effect of time with a large effect size, $F(1, 33) = 33.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .50$. The variation in trait flow scores from pre- to post-training did not significantly differ between the PSC and MSC groups, as evidenced by a non-significant interaction effect of time and training with a medium effect size, $F(1, 33) = 3.73, p = .062, \eta_p^2 = .10$.

State Flow

A more pronounced improvement in the MSC group was notable, given that the MSC group began with slightly lower scores before the training compared to the PSC group. There was a significant improvement in state flow scores for all participants from pre- to post-training, as shown by a significant main effect of time with a large effect size, $F(1, 33) = 31.65, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .49$. The improvement of state flow from pre- to post-training differed significantly

between the PSC and MSC groups, as evidenced by a significant interaction effect of time and training with a large effect size, $F(1, 33) = 6.69, p = .014, \eta_p^2 = .17$.

Trait MPA

A more pronounced reduction in the MSC group was notable, given that the MSC group began with slightly higher scores before the training compared to the PSC group. There was a significant decrease in trait MPA scores for all participants from pre- to post-training, as evidenced by a significant main effect of time with a large effect size, $F(1, 33) = 78.70, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .71$. The variation in trait MPA scores from pre- to post-training differed significantly between the PSC and MSC groups, as evidenced by a significant interaction effect of time and training with a large effect size, $F(1, 33) = 15.74, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .32$.

State MPA

Despite the MSC group having slightly higher scores than the PSC group before the training, the MSC group demonstrated lower scores than the PSC group after the training. There was a significant decrease of state MPA for all participants from pre- to post-training, as evidenced by a significant main effect of time with a large effect size, $F(1, 33) = 84.47, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .72$. The decrease in state MPA scores from pre- to post-training differed significantly between the PSC and MSC groups, as evidenced by a significant interaction effect of time and training with a large effect size, $F(1, 33) = 8.98, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .21$.

Trait Self-Compassion

Compared to the PSC group, the MSC group maintained higher scores from before the training and demonstrated a more substantial improvement in trait self-compassion after the training. Trait self-compassion scores showed a significant increase for all participants from pre- to post-training, as demonstrated by a significant main effect of time with a large effect size, $F(1,$

33) = 23.26, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .41$. The variation in trait self-compassion from pre- to post-training differed significantly between the PSC and MSC groups, as evidenced by a significant interaction effect of time and training with a large effect size, $F(1, 33) = 8.59$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .21$.

Evaluation of Quantitative Data Validity

In evaluating the validity of the quantitative results, I scrutinized z scores approaching the established threshold between -2.58 and 2.58 in the PSC and MSC groups regarding outlier detection (Field, 2018). One z score of 2.50 was identified in the dataset of the PSC group post-training trait flow. Although this score was not considered an outlier in the data analysis, it approached but did not exceed the upper threshold. Three z scores of -2.32 , 2.32 , and 2.34 were identified in the following datasets, respectively: MSC group pre-training self-compassion, MSC group post-training trait MPA, and MSC group post-training state flow. Although these three scores were not considered outliers in the data analysis, they approached but did not exceed the lower and upper thresholds. Therefore, these scores might indicate areas warranting attention and may require careful interpretation of the mixed-design ANOVA results.

Moreover, particular attention was paid to the homogeneity of variances as indicated by Levene's test results. Levene's test on the post-training trait flow scores yielded a p value of $.052$, which approached the conventional alpha level of $.05$. This suggested a possible marginal violation of the assumption of equal variances. Despite the proximity of $.052$ to the conventional threshold, this value was not deemed a decisive violation of the homogeneity of variances. Therefore, the mixed-design ANOVA was conducted using the post-training trait flow scores. However, this warranted a cautious interpretation of the ANOVA results. In addition, the post-training trait MPA scores produced a p value of $.069$, which was above the conventional significance threshold. This value did not provide strong evidence against the assumption of

equal variances. However, given that this value was relatively close to the conventional threshold, it suggested that the assumption of homogeneity of variances may not be robust. These findings implied that while the assumption of equal variances was not violated, the proximity of these two p values to the conventional level of .05 indicated the need for careful interpretations of the ANOVA results.

Qualitative Findings

In this following section on the qualitative findings, I unveil the discoveries from the qualitative analysis of each group's responses and present the significance of each theme with the support of thematic representation. I first explore participants' responses to the binary question of whether their post-training performance experiences were different from pre-training performance. Specifically, I focus on presenting why some of the participants' self-perceived post-training performance experiences were similar to their pre-training performance experiences.

For those who identified a change between their two performance experiences before and after participating in their programs, I summarize the factors that participants believed impacted their post-training performance experiences. Specifically, I delve into participants' narratives about these contributing factors and offer an in-depth analysis of the multifaceted perspectives they shared, which were identified as core themes. The specific themes identified from reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) and the thematic representations generated by content analysis are then used to corroborate with the quantitative results to complete the mixed methods investigation on discovering the comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs on participants' music performance experiences. In essence, my analyses of the binary question and the contributing

factors are used to corroborate the quantitative results to facilitate the core mixed methods integration.

To conclude this chapter, I detail each group's prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances before and after the training period. This additional analysis may offer a potential ethnographic discussion as an extension beyond the mixed methods results to conclude the dissertation.

Qualitative Findings of the Binary Question

All 18 participants (100%) in the MSC group reported a change in their post-training performance experiences compared to their pre-training performance. This unanimous acknowledgment within the MSC group contrasted with the PSC group's responses. Within the entire PSC group of 17 participants, 15 individuals (approximately 88%) reported a change in their post-training performance experiences, whereas two participants (approximately 12%), P05 and P14, perceived their post-training performance experiences as being similar to pre-training performance.

Focusing on the two PSC participants who did not identify a change in their post-training performances, P05 stated, "When I performed in pre-training performance, I was nervous, very nervous. I still felt very nervous in my post-training performance. I think that developing psychological resilience for public performance requires the accumulation of performance experiences." This statement reflected their persistent experience of performance anxiety despite their participation in the PSC program. One can argue that the PSC program did not sufficiently address their performance anxiety. P05's insight into the necessity of the "accumulation of performance experiences" to enhance their "psychological resilience for public performance"

resonated with the common belief that increasing the frequency of performance can improve one's comfort in public music performance situations.

Similarly, P14 is the second participant in the PSC group who did not identify a change in their post-training performance experience. P14 shared, "I still felt nervous, and I still made mistakes. I could not play through the entire piece without being conscious of the audience. I was not able to enjoy the process of performing, and it seemed like time had slowed down." In my analysis, P14 still expressed their experience of performance anxiety in their post-training performance, and they conveyed a heightened self-consciousness during their performance, which prevented them from enjoying the process. The comments from P14 reflected a common concern among many professional musicians who tend to ruminate on their mistakes after their performances.

Insights and Summary of the Binary Question

Based on each group's responses to the binary question, I discerned a clear disparity in the influence of the MSC and PSC programs on their participants' post-training performance experiences. The complete affirmation of the MSC group participants underscored a potentially impactful difference in how the MSC program influenced their post-training performance experiences. However, the different responses within the PSC group pointed to slight variations in the impact of the PSC program.

P05 believed that continuous exposure to a public performance context might build their confidence and reduce performance anxiety. However, I argue that simply increasing the frequency of performance is only one facet that may contribute to one's overall positive performance experiences. While beneficial, simply increasing the amount of performance experiences does not encompass the entire spectrum of positive performance experiences, nor

does it guarantee the achievement of flow state. The perspective of P05 highlights the need to address the multifaceted nature of positive performance experiences. Therefore, the belief that the singular solution of simply increasing the frequency of public performances to address the complex issue of performance anxiety in the realm of music pedagogy does not offer a comprehensive approach. I argue using this singular solution is problematic because it may limit one's perspective of performance anxiety to the surface level. In fact, a comprehensive approach that includes varied strategies to address musical and psychological support is crucial for achieving peak performance.

By observing the response of P14 in relation to the theories of MPA and flow, I argue that this explanation reflected the antithetical relationship between performance anxiety and flow state. The participant's inability to play without worrying about the presence of the audience directly conflicts with the ability to achieve the loss of self-consciousness dimension necessary for the flow state. Although the participant's report of time slowing down can be seen as the time transformation dimension of the flow state, the statement "I was not able to enjoy the process of performing" indicates that they did not achieve the autotelic experience dimension of flow. Instead, for this participant, time seemed to drag. From P14's description of their post-training performance experience, their attention was still dominated by nervousness, the awareness of mistakes, a sense of time dragging, and the presence of an audience. This preoccupation not only impeded their enjoyment but also disrupted their concentration, which is fundamental to achieving flow. The answer from P14 illustrates how performance anxiety could function as a barrier to achieving the flow state. Their experiences not only demonstrate the antithesis between anxiety and flow but also emphasize the necessity of addressing the psychological barriers performers constantly face in their music performances.

In summary, both programs appear to have a positive impact on changing participants' performance experiences based on the binary question asked. However, the MSC program demonstrates a higher effectiveness in this regard when compared to the PSC program. This distinction suggests that the MSC program may be more effective in addressing the challenges of performance anxiety because it showed a more pronounced positive change in participants' perceptions and experiences of their performances.

Qualitative Findings of Contributing Factors to Performance Experiences

After discussing the two PSC participants who did not report a change in their post-training performance experience, I now turn my attention to those in the PSC and MSC groups who did perceive a change in their performance experiences from pre- to post-training. This exploration aims to discover the specific factors participants attributed to their improved experiences.

I analyzed the qualitative responses of participants who reported a distinct change in their post-training performance experiences. During the coding and theming process, I identified a total of 16 themes that participants recognized as contributing to their improved post-training performances. The 16 themes are grouped into three categories: nine MPA-Related Themes, four Flow-Related Themes, and three Training Effectiveness Themes.

I used deductive coding to identify the first two categories and inductive coding to identify the third category. The deductive codebook included constructs from the theories of MPA and flow, which are considered the dependent variables that collectively determine musicians' performance experiences. The inductive codebook enabled me to identify information that validates the research design, triangulate the quantitative findings for mixed methods integration, and recognize the effectiveness of the MSC training.

Acknowledging the interconnectedness of the theories of flow, MPA, and self-compassion, I have found that many themes can overlap between categories. This means that themes can simultaneously belong to several categories depending on the coder's subjective understanding of the data, indicating the intricate relationships between these concepts. While my theoretical framework encompasses a broad range of constructs for each theory, it is important to note that the 16 themes reflect only those constructs which could be directly identified from participants' responses. Therefore, not all theoretical constructs in each theory are represented in the 16 themes identified from participants' responses. Based on the number of references in descending order, my analysis below first presents the three Training Effectiveness Themes, followed by the nine MPA-Related Themes and finally the four Flow-Related Themes.

The three Training Effectiveness Themes and their definitions are the following:

1. Acknowledged Performance Experience Enhancement. Serving as a validation, this theme encompasses participants' affirmations of their improved onstage experiences in their post-training performances.
2. Recognized Mindset Development. Providing additional confirmation, this theme reflects the psychological shifts participants recognized after their participation in the training programs.
3. Practiced Self-Compassion. Supporting the research design, this MSC group-specific theme collects participants' feedback on their use of self-compassion practices before their post-training performances.

The nine MPA-Related Themes with their definitions are the following:

1. Familiarized With the Performance Environment. This theme identifies some participants' growing comfort with the venue as a contributor to their post-training performance experience.
2. Familiarized With the Fellow Group Members. This theme outlines that some participants' strengthened interpersonal relationships within their group, which they perceived as a key factor in improving their performances.
3. Adjusted Attitude Towards External Judgement. This theme signifies a change in some participants' perspectives regarding the opinions or views of others, representing a shift in their mindset.
4. Repeated Performance Exposure. This theme refers to the act of performing prior to the training serving as a practical confidence builder, allowing participants to familiarize themselves with the live setting and its inherent pressures.
5. Familiarized With the Piece. This theme reflects some participants' growing mastery of the music, which supports their confidence and improved performance experience.
6. Reduced Somatic Anxiety. This theme captures the reduction of physical symptoms of MPA, a positive change participants noticed in their post-training performances. Only reported in the MSC group, this theme reflects the benefits of practicing self-compassion before performing.
7. Balanced Approach Towards Mistakes. This theme demonstrates a change in how participants perceive and respond to mistakes during their post-training performance by adopting a constructive attitude.
8. Familiarized With the Instrument. This theme underscores the importance of becoming accustomed to the piano provided at the performance venue.

9. Deepened Music Memory. This theme centers on the value of enhanced music memory in fostering a musician's confidence during performances.

Finally, the four Flow-Related Themes and their definitions are the following:

1. Enhanced Concentration. This theme identifies the factor of participants' improved focus during performances, which is pivotal for achieving a state of flow.
2. Improved Control. This theme underscores the factor of participants' improved ability to accurately deliver their performance actions.
3. Perceived Autotelic Experience. This theme reflects the factor of participants experiencing intrinsic motivation and enjoyment in their post-training performances.
4. Refined Performance Goals. This theme reflects participants' ability to determine clearer and more targeted performance objectives.

After outlining the theme names along with definitions for each theme, the subsequent section delves into my analysis of each theme based on participants' reflections. I systematically present my analysis of the three Training Effectiveness Themes, the nine MPA-Related Themes, and the four Flow-Related Themes in an uninterrupted sequence. This is followed by providing summaries of the findings related to the respective three categories of themes. Figure 5 illustrates the specific themes of the contributing factors and the number of participants from each group who commented on these themes.

Detailed Analysis of the Three Training Effectiveness Themes. In this section, I undertake a comprehensive exploration of each theme by focusing on participants' shared narratives. Special attention is given to the thematic representation to reflect the effectiveness of each training program. The insights and thematic representations gathered from this detailed analysis form the qualitative component for the mixed methods integration.

Training Effectiveness Theme 1: Acknowledged Performance Experience

Enhancement. This theme encompasses participants' recognition of enhanced onstage experiences following the completion of their respective training programs. I identified a total of 25 references (8 PSC and 17 MSC) that confirmed this improvement. These acknowledgments are essential for triangulating the quantitative results and setting the stage for a deeper exploration into the specific factors that participants attribute to their post-training advancements.

In the PSC group, eight participants (approximately 47%) made comments on this theme. The overall reflections indicate a moderate but noticeable improvement in their post-training performances. For example, P06 stated, "Post-training performance is a bit better than pre-training performance." P09 commented, "During my post-training performance, I feel slightly more relaxed." P10 highlighted, "I no longer feel the extremely oppressive tension and fear." P13 said, "My mindset has stabilized a lot." These participants' comments imply a reduction in negative apprehension and an increase in their composure.

In contrast, 17 MSC participants (approximately 94%) confirmed their improved performance experiences. They shared a clear and consistent recognition of their relaxed state of mind and their growing sense of composure during their post-training performances. For instance, M01 stated, "Post-training performance is more relaxed compared to pre-training performance." M04 commented, "In the post-training performance, I feel completely relaxed, not drifting above." M06 highlighted, "My mindset is more relaxed compared to my pre-training performance." M11 shared, "I am not particularly tense." M15 continued, "I feel very relaxed and light-hearted during the performance." M16 confirmed, "My sense of stability has clearly strengthened." The repeated use of the word "relaxed" illustrates a profound increased reduction

in anxiety and tension compared to their pre-training state. The mention of a “clearly strengthened” sense of stability further suggests that this participant was experiencing a more profound sense of composure and resilience. The consistency and clarity of the MSC group’s responses suggest that the MSC program may have effectively cultivated a relaxed and composed mindset in participants, which is crucial for optimal performance.

While both groups acknowledged improvements in their post-training performances, the PSC participants reported only a moderate enhancement in their performance and emotional state, while the MSC participants consistently described a significant increase in their peace of mind. The variation in the frequency and depth of the reported improvements between the two groups may reflect the differing nature and potential effectiveness of the strategies taught in each program.

This theme serves as a significant qualitative counterpart to the quantitative data, offering a nuanced perspective that supports and enriches the quantitative findings. The qualitative accounts of improved post-training performance experiences from both PSC and MSC participants align with the quantitative results, showing an overall reduction in state MPA and an increase in state flow in both groups from pre- to post-training. Furthermore, the PSC group’s moderate improvement and the MSC group’s more pronounced sense of relaxation and composure provide group-specific qualitative evidence that complements the quantitative data observed between the two groups. The MSC participants’ frequent references to feeling “relaxed” are particularly important. These descriptive reflections point towards a significant shift in the internal experience of the performers, likely reflecting the reduced state MPA and improved state flow levels observed in the quantitative results. It suggests that the training

programs, and perhaps the MSC program in particular, may have provided strategies that contributed to a greater sense of ease and focus during performances.

Training Effectiveness Theme 2: Recognized Mindset Development. This theme captures participants' acknowledged changes in state of mind and attitude following the training period. I identified a total of 12 mentions (6 PSC and 6 MSC) on this theme. This theme is particularly significant as it directly relates to the psychological shifts that impacted participants' overall performance experiences. The fact that participants from both the PSC and MSC groups mentioned improvements in their mindset not only reinforces the qualitative findings but also triangulates with quantitative results, suggesting an overall improvement in participants' experiences post-training.

This theme is referenced six times in the PSC group. Participants' expressions suggest increased interest and positivity in their learning process, a newfound ability for self-regulation, and a significant change in attitude and abilities. Specifically, P01 mentioned, "The learning process of this topic is very interesting, and there has been a positive change in my mindset." P06 commented, "When facing this kind of tension, I can regulate my mood to a certain level." P17 said, "My overall mood and abilities have greatly changed and improved." These reflections point to an enhancement in how participants perceive and face their psychological and emotional states, suggesting that the PSC program may have provided them with valuable strategies for personal development in addition to performance strategies. Despite the primary focus of the PSC group being on developing performance strategies rather than prioritizing emotional stability, these participants' acknowledgment of their enhanced mindset suggests their understanding of the benefits of learning mental performance strategies alongside technical skills.

In the MSC group, this theme was similarly mentioned by six participants, reflecting a shared recognition of psychological development post-training. The participants' comments point to an increased level of confidence, an ability to overcome nervousness, and the capacity to achieve emotional balance during performances. For example, M02 said, "I am more confident." M12 expressed, "I am a bit nervous mentally, but I can still overcome it." M16 stated, "My mood can gradually stabilize during the performance." These reflections suggest that the MSC program may have equipped these participants with tools for actively coping and addressing their emotional and mental needs when facing performances. Moreover, participants' emphasis on their ability to overcome psychological barriers and stabilize their mood indicates a deepened engagement with their emotional state regarding performance.

Reviewing both groups' reflections, this theme displays nuanced differences in the nature and perception of participants' improvements. While the PSC group's reflections predominantly discuss their overall improved psychological state, indicating a general growth, the MSC group specifically highlights increased confidence and the ability to adjust and accept emotional challenges during performances. This distinction is especially significant in the context of public performance, where the ability to regulate one's psychological state in real-time can greatly influence the quality and results of an ongoing performance. Both groups' participants confirm the positive changes they received from the training programs. Their recognition also reinforces the need for a pedagogical concept that offers a more targeted approach to address situational and discipline-specific demands that arise during music performances.

Notably, the qualitative reflections of the participants on their state of mind and attitude reveal a psychological shift that aligns with the quantitative data, indicating increased state flow and decreased state MPA for both groups post-training. Both groups' reflections on their

improved mindset complement the quantitative results, providing a nuanced understanding of the impact of each training program.

Training Effectiveness Theme 3: Practiced Self-Compassion. This theme revolves around participants' deliberate use of self-compassion practices to balance their emotional and psychological state before their post-training performances. Though none of the PSC participants commented on this theme, 12 MSC participants reported the use of self-compassion practices. The MSC participants identified the use of these practices as a contributing factor to their improved post-training performance experiences. For example, M01 said, "I did a self-compassion practice before my performance, it alleviated my tension at the start of the performance." M03 expressed, "The self-compassion practice before my post-training performance was an adjustment, it offered me a transition from tension to relaxation." M04 agreed, "Using self-compassion, I adjusted my breathing, calmed down, and improved my state." M11 elaborated, "Having learned and practiced self-compassion in class, while waiting to play the piano, I naturally recalled the class content and remembered the warm words of self-compassion, so I was not overly tense." M13 shared, "I used a self-compassion practice, hugging myself, caring for myself." These participants describe using self-compassion as a tool for regulation, moving from tension to relaxation. They detail specific practices like adjusting breathing, recalling warm words, and physical gestures of self-compassion, which collectively allowed them to calm and nurture themselves before their performances. These self-compassion practices appear to be a practical strategy for alleviating performance anxiety and maintaining a balanced mindset for the participants. Participants' decision to integrate self-compassion practices into their pre-performance routine suggests that these techniques are both accessible and practical strategies.

The detailed descriptions from the MSC participants demonstrate that self-compassion practices are not just theoretical concepts but practical and actionable strategies that they can use to significantly ground their emotional state before a performance. Their ability to transition from tension to relaxation and the capacity to calm themselves through such practices indicates the effectiveness and practicality of the MSC program.

In addition, participants' references suggest that such practices can be particularly beneficial for musicians, providing them with a set of tools to enhance their psychological and emotional readiness and, consequently, their performance experiences. Their proactive and varied use of these techniques highlights the versatility and adaptability of self-compassion practices in meeting individual needs and challenging situations, which underscores the potential of using self-compassion practices as a valuable tool in the performance domain.

The distinct difference in the number of mentions attributing self-compassion practices as a factor between the PSC and MSC groups is directly connected to the research design, where only the MSC group received training in self-compassion. The absence of any references to self-compassion in the PSC group effectively triangulates the research procedure, suggesting that participants in both groups adhered to the guideline of not sharing class notes and training content with individuals outside their respective groups. Furthermore, the MSC participants' number of comments highlighted their reduced tension, which correlates with the quantitative results that show a significant improvement in trait self-compassion levels within the MSC group.

By choosing to engage in these practices before their post-training performances, the participants are taking proactive steps to cultivate a kind and caring attitude toward themselves, especially in moments of potential stress and vulnerability. This reflects an understanding and

application of self-compassion theory, which posits that being compassionate towards oneself is a crucial skill. Therefore, it would be reasonable to suggest that the proactive use of self-compassion practices by MSC participants essentially represents the embodiment of self-compassion.

Detailed Analysis of the Nine MPA-Related Themes. In this section, I examine the themes that reflect the intersection of music performance theories with participants' performance experiences. These themes mirror the theoretical constructs, offering real-world insights that enrich our understanding of music performance based on the shared narratives of the participants' experiences.

MPA-Related Theme 1: Familiarized With the Performance Environment. This theme reflects participants' perceptions that familiarity with the performance environment contributes to their improved experiences. A total of 10 participants (3 PSC and 7 MSC) commented on this theme. Participants' recognition of this factor underscores the importance of environmental comfort in enhancing their confidence while reducing anxiety.

The three mentions from the PSC group reflect a nuanced recognition of the impact of environmental factors on participants' performances. The initial perception of the performance venue as a threat among these participants diminished over time. For example, P07 stated, "The setting became somewhat familiar." P09 summarized, "The environment is no longer as unfamiliar and frightening as before." These thematic findings suggest that venue familiarization may be a factor influencing performers' comfort and their overall performance experiences. This gradual shift from anxiety to familiarity underscores the importance of environmental factors in performance psychology.

Seven participants in the MSC group also mentioned this theme, indicating a clear recognition of the importance of environmental factors. Unlike the PSC group, the MSC participants not only noted increased familiarity with the venue but also emphasized feeling safe in the venue. For example, M12 said, “I believe that I am in a relatively comforting environment.” M15 shared, “Being familiar with the environment gave me a sense of security.” M18 added, “I also felt very safe in the performance venue.” Participants’ statements suggest that the MSC program may have improved their composure, allowing them to recognize the performance venue as a supportive environment. In other words, becoming familiar with the setting anchors the participants’ inner calm and gives them a sense of safety. The idea of feeling safe is particularly prominent in the context of performance, where anxiety and vulnerability can negatively impact a performer’s state of mind. For example, by recognizing the impact of environmental factors, the PSC participants noticed a transition from perceiving the venue as a burden to it becoming a somewhat familiar and less intimidating space. In contrast, the MSC group’s reflections acknowledged both their increased familiarity with the venue and a sense of safety and support.

This theme also serves as an implicit validation of the research design, which involved participants performing in the same setting twice. Both group’s comments suggest that this repetition allowed for a natural increase in comfort and confidence. More importantly, this research design enables the nuanced reflection of safety in the MSC group to be discovered and appreciated. By having participants perform in the same environment twice, the study considered environmental familiarity as a variable that may naturally enhance all participants’ post-training performance experiences. Thus, this design enables a foundation for comparing the effectiveness of the two distinct training programs.

Drawing from the theory of MPA, familiarity with the performance venue can play a significant role in reducing performance anxiety. As the performers see the venue as a familiar space, their anxiety is likely to decrease to a certain level. This reduction in anxiety is crucial in performance contexts where psychological comfort can contribute to a more relaxed and controlled presentation.

MPA-Related Theme 2: Familiarized With the Fellow Group Members. This theme captures participants' perception that knowing and bonding with their group members over the training period contributed to their improved experience. The sense of support from familiar group members provides comfort and confidence that participants attribute as a beneficial factor to their performances. This theme also validates an aspect of the research design that considers the potential impact of group dynamics over time.

A total of seven participants (5 PSC and 2 MSC) acknowledged this factor. Five PSC participants attributed their improved performance experience to this theme. These participants reflected on the importance of social support and the psychological comfort they perceived. For example, P09 admitted, "The main reason might be that I became familiar with my group members." P15 added, "Perhaps it is because, after spending some time with my fellow group members, I became more familiar with them and no longer felt the initial sense of unfamiliarity." This change suggests that a supportive group environment cultivated throughout the research process creates a sense of belonging, which contributes to a more relaxed atmosphere for these participants.

Similarly, two MSC participants also commented on this theme, showing that increased familiarity with fellow group members has a positive impact. Both participants reflected on the progression from being mere acquaintances to becoming more familiar and comfortable with

their peers over time. M08 stated, “I have been with my group mates for a long time and have become familiar with them.” M17 commented, “Being more familiar with my group mates is one of the reasons.” The comments from these MSC participants confirmed that they recognize the role social support can have in performance contexts.

As participants become more familiar and comfortable with their fellow group members, they are likely to feel less self-conscious and more at ease, contributing to a state where their awareness is fully immersed in the activity itself. This connection with others can help shift the focus away from individual insecurities toward optimizing their performances, potentially facilitating a flow experience. Thus, as the performers become more acquainted, the performance anxiety often associated with how they are perceived by their peers may decrease. Moreover, the structured group training experience, which was predetermined by the research design, may lead to a perceived group dynamic that positively influences participants’ sense of belonging. By undergoing training in such a group setting, participants are likely to foster a sense of connection that counters the perception of isolation. These aspects also reflect the theory of self-compassion, which emphasizes the importance of shared human experience. Although the PSC participants did not undergo any self-compassion training, the group environment incorporated into the research design may have nurtured a sense of connection within each group.

MPA-Related Theme 3: Adjusted Attitude Towards External Judgement. This theme reflects a shift in participants’ attitudes toward the potential judgements of others. It captures a transformative change in mindset, where participants report a decreased concern regarding how they and their performances might be perceived by others. Such a shift indicates a move towards a more internalized focus, where the value and assessment of one’s performance become less attached to external evaluation. A total of six participants (3 PSC and 3 MSC) mentioned this

theme after their training programs. This change in perception can free performers' mindsets, allowing them to focus more on their creative process and personal growth rather than on potential criticism.

The three comments from the PSC group convey a clear and deliberate shift towards disregarding the potential judgements of others. For example, P10 said, "I no longer pay much attention to the reactions and emotions of those around me." P13 shared, "I do not care much about others' opinions anymore. Since I stopped caring, I feel less severe anxiety." These changes reflect that participants may have developed a stronger sense of self and autonomy, enabling them to concentrate more on their performances without being affected by self-doubts that could arise from external evaluations.

The three MSC participants also shared a similar change in perception. For example, M05 said, "I feel more inclusive and open overall, no longer caring about others' opinions." M10 commented, "I might care less about what others think of me, which makes me more relaxed." These reports of feeling liberated from being preoccupied with others' judgements enabled participants to relax and embrace an open attitude regarding their performances. The comments from the MSC participants point to their internalization of self-acceptance, thereby allowing them to mitigate the impact of the scrutiny of others on their performances. The use of words like "inclusive" and "open" is particularly notable as it suggests a shift from not just ignoring external judgments but embracing a mindset of openness and self-acceptance.

This theme can be connected to the comprehensive theoretical frameworks in performance psychology and performance studies. Adjusted attitudes towards judgment may facilitate conditions conducive to experiencing flow, which is reflected in the loss of self-consciousness dimension. When performers are not preoccupied with external or internal

judgments, they are more likely to focus deeply on the performance itself, potentially entering a flow state. Additionally, a decreased concern for external judgment is also related to the theory of MPA because the heightened fear of negative evaluation from others may induce performance anxiety. Finally, the theory of self-compassion is highly relevant to the theme, as it involves treating oneself with kindness instead of focusing on harsh judgment that may arise from the perception of failure by the self or others.

MPA-Related Theme 4: Repeated Performance Exposure. This theme encompasses some participants' recognition that their repeated opportunities to perform in the same performance setting contributed to their improved post-training performances. This concept is grounded in the principle that consistent exposure to the same performance settings can enhance the musicians' overall comfort level.

Additionally, this repeated exposure is a crucial element of the research design, intended to control potential variables and enable a reliable assessment of the effectiveness of both the PSC and MSC programs through a comparative analysis. The fact that some participants from both groups attributed their improvement to this factor validates the research design.

Four participants (3 PSC and 1 MSC) mentioned this theme. For example, P11 stated, "The first time is new, the second time is familiar." P15 explained, "It's related to experience: I have already been on stage once during the pre-training performance." M06 also addressed, "I have the experience gained from my pre-training performance." These statements suggest that repeated performance exposure acts as a practical learning opportunity, where the act of performing is a form of practice that enhances familiarity and comfort for some participants.

This theme can be linked to the theory of MPA. The participants' reflections suggest that familiarity gained through repeated performances may function as a supportive factor that

mitigates uncertainty. By performing multiple times in the same setting, musicians can transform what was once a stress-inducing experience into one that feels more routine and manageable.

MPA-Related Theme 5: Familiarized With the Piece. This theme reflects participants' acknowledgment that their improved post-training performance experiences are attributed to their growing knowledge and practice of the musical piece over the course of the study. This theme speaks to the fundamental principle that familiarity and repeated practice with a piece naturally enhance a performer's overall confidence.

Specifically, four participants (2 PSC and 2 MSC) mentioned this factor, indicating a shared recognition of this theme in both groups. Again, this theme serves to triangulate the research design. By acknowledging that their increased familiarity with the piece contributed to their post-training performances, these participants validate the research assumption that over time, increased familiarity and practice are likely to lead to better performance with increased confidence. This confirmation of the research design underscores the importance of accounting for the natural progression of learning and familiarity.

In the PSC group, the comments from the two participants provide insights into how sustained practice and time investment directly contributed to their improved post-training performances. Both participants emphasize the developmental aspect of their practice, indicating a steady dedication to mastering the piece. P07 said, "I practiced the piece for a long time, which increased my proficiency with it." P08 commented, "I spent more time practicing the piece, and my proficiency in it has been gradually improving." Their language suggests an awareness of the direct correlation between their time invested in practicing and increased proficiency.

The comments from the two MSC participants similarly acknowledged a clear recognition of their performance improvement being attributed to their growing proficiency and

confidence. M02 realized, “The proficiency level of the piece has increased.” M06 stated, “I am more confident in my practice than last time.” These comments indicated that participants were aware of the positive impact of continual practice on the progress they made in their musical skills.

As participants progress through the research project, it is logical that they directly associate increased practice with their enhanced performance experiences. This correlation reaffirms the research design, which requires participants to perform the same piece in both their pre- and post-training performances. The integral role of practice and familiarity functions as an inevitable factor that shapes participants’ performance experiences. For that reason, the underlying increase in proficiency through repeated practice represents a fundamental factor that must be acknowledged. It also addresses a potential limitation in the research design, where the impact of the training might be intertwined with the natural benefits of increased familiarity and practice.

This theme can be especially important in relation to the theory of MPA. As performers become more familiar with a piece through consistent practice, their anxiety levels during performance may diminish. This reduction in anxiety is often attributed to a decreased fear of the uncertainties typically associated with live performances.

MPA-Related Theme 6: Reduced Somatic Anxiety. This theme relates to the bodily manifestations of performance anxiety, such as tension in the muscles and shaking in the hands, which are often involuntary responses to stress. I argue that reduced somatic anxiety can be a vital factor in the context of performance experience because the physical manifestations of anxiety can directly impact musicians’ ability to execute performance tasks.

After the post-training performance, three MSC participants reported reduced somatic symptoms, while none of the PSC participants commented on this theme. The disparity in the number of answers between the two groups may validate the differing effectiveness of the training programs in relation to participants' subjective experience of somatic anxiety. Specifically, M04 realized, "My hands did not tremble." M12 confirmed, "My body and muscles did not feel very tight. Instead, they were relaxed." M16 reflected, "My hands were not overly tense." The acknowledgments of M04 and M16 highlight a reduction in involuntary physical responses typically associated with nervousness. One may infer from these comments that this steadiness suggests an improved sense of control, which is critical for delivering precise movements during a performance. The reflection of M12 also points to a decrease in muscular tension. Their perceived reduction in tightness and improvement in relaxation likely allowed for a foundation of a successful onstage experience.

In connection with the theoretical frameworks, this theme aligns closely with the theory of MPA. Participants' reduction in their somatic symptoms may lead to improved concentration and decreased chances of making mistakes. This improved bodily sensation may also facilitate the state of flow, where the musicians' focused attention is not disrupted by physical discomfort, allowing for complete immersion and a sense of effortlessness in the act of performing. Another possibility is that the mindfulness component of the MSC program may have taught participants practical and effective skills to alleviate somatic anxiety.

MPA-Related Theme 7: Balanced Approach Towards Mistakes. This theme captures a shift in participants' perspectives regarding their performance mistakes, which is characterized by a more forgiving and constructive attitude. Two participants (1 PSC and 1 MSC) reported a positive change in their response to mistakes following their respective training programs. This

change serves as a positive factor that participants noticed. P01 stated, “Although I played some wrong notes, I did not feel a sense of complete helplessness, nor was I at a loss.” M14 said, “Although there were wrong notes, I just let them be, I can correct and practice them later.” Specifically, P01 acknowledged noticing their mistakes without feeling helpless or embarrassed. This suggests they had developed a more resilient approach to their performance. Such a reaction indicates an acceptance of imperfection and an understanding that performance mistakes do not define the musicians’ overall musical ability. Choosing to accept the wrong notes during the performance and deferring corrections to a later time allowed M14 to exhibit an ability to maintain composure and focus on the continuity of the performance. This suggests a strategic mindset that prioritizes the flow of music over the immediate rectification of these specific mistakes, which could disrupt the performer’s concentration.

P01’s comments suggest that they were able to notice the immediate feedback on performance mistakes while still maintaining their focus on their ongoing performance. Therefore, one may argue that P01’s ability to acknowledge mistakes without letting them interrupt the performance is aligned with the concept of flow, which involves a state of complete immersion and focus on the activity at hand. On the other hand, this theme also aligns with the theory of MPA because musicians’ perceptions and attitudes toward their own performance mistakes impact their emotional state and confidence, which may also influence their MPA levels. Furthermore, this theme can be linked to the theory of self-compassion. Instead of using harsh judgment when facing mistakes, M14’s willingness to accept and move past their mistakes aligns with the principles of self-compassion.

MPA-Related Theme 8: Familiarized With the Instrument. This theme refers to participants’ recognition that increased familiarity with the instrument can significantly enhance

one's performance experiences. Two PSC participants mentioned this factor as a contributing element to their improved post-training performances, while none of the MSC participants commented on this theme. Specifically, P11 said, "During the pre-training performance, this piano felt different from the one in the practice room, but I became more familiar with it in the post-training performance." P16 expressed, "My only concern during the pre-training performance was that I was not familiar with this grand piano." The reflection of P11 exemplifies the benefit of this familiarity because the process of adapting to the piano's sound and touch is an integral part of performance preparation. The concern of P16 further underscores this point as they highlighted how the physical connection with the instrument can influence a performer's mental and emotional state.

These reflections point to the necessity of incorporating instrument acclimatization into pedagogical approaches. It suggests that such physical acclimatization should stand alongside technical and psychological preparation in musicians' development. Although not always possible, ensuring musicians have the chance to adapt to their performance instruments could be as crucial as other preparation strategies. These small but necessary steps may significantly boost performers' confidence and readiness.

This theme also contributes to the triangulation of the research design, which requires participants to perform at the same venue on the same instrument before and after their respective training programs. This research design served as a method to control for external factors that could potentially influence the comparative results. By providing participants in both groups with the same experiences on the same instrument, this design established a consistent setting that allowed a more reliable assessment of the PSC and MSC programs' comparative effectiveness. In essence, this aspect of the research design created a controlled environment that

enhanced the reliability and validity of the study by isolating the impact of the training programs from other potential variables.

This theme may also intersect with the theory of MPA. One may argue that the confidence gained from participants' familiarity with the instrument can mitigate apprehension and allow the musician to focus more on the expressive aspects of performance, rather than being preoccupied with the unpredictability of an unfamiliar instrument. Thus, the process of familiarization with the instrument is not merely a physical adjustment but also a strategic approach to alleviating performance-related stress.

MPA-Related Theme 9: Deepened Music Memory. This theme captures the participants' improved music memory following the training. Music memory is a crucial factor in performance as it allows the musician to internalize the piece with greater confidence, expressiveness, and technical precision.

Although noted by only one individual, a PSC participant, this reference indicates the importance of deepened music memory in freeing the performer to focus more on the emotional and interpretative aspects of their performance. P12 specifically mentioned an enhanced clarity of the piece and said, "I might remember the music score more clearly during the post-training performance." This single reference suggests that the PSC training may have strengthened participants' understanding of music memory by providing useful strategies.

It is also important to consider that this observed improvement in music memory might be attributed to the research design, which requires participants to perform the same piece twice, before and after their training programs. Therefore, this repeated exposure naturally provides an opportunity for strengthening participants' music memory, thereby potentially enhancing their improved performance experiences.

Regarding the theory of MPA, a deepened music memory could potentially alleviate some of the stress and anxiety associated with performance, as the musician may feel more prepared and confident in their ability to execute the piece. This improved music memory may offer a sense of security on stage when musicians face multiple layers of performance challenges. Therefore, acknowledging music memory as a contributing factor reflects the necessity of considering both technical and psychological aspects of music performance.

Detailed Analysis of the Four Flow-Related Themes. In this section, I explore the four Flow-Related Themes identified from participants' responses. Although the following four themes do not encompass all nine dimensions of flow theory, they do highlight the most significant aspects of flow from participants' experiences and perspectives.

Flow-Related Theme 1: Enhanced Concentration. This theme centers around participants' efforts and perception of their level of concentration during performances. It directly addresses the importance of maintaining and directing attention effectively to ensure an immersed onstage experience. Overall, a total of five participants (2 PSC and 3 MSC) made comments on this theme. These comments reflect the participants' determination and effort to stay fully present and absorbed in their performances.

In the PSC group, the two participants who commented on this theme provided evidence of their increased focus and engagement during their performances. The language used by these participants indicates increased attention and deeper involvement in the performance task. Specifically, P10 said, "I focused more attention on the ongoing performance than before." P13 added, "I became more engaged." These participants' comments underline the importance of concentration, where the quality of attention can impact the quality of the musicians' performance experience and outcome. The three MSC participants' comments also reveal their

enhanced concentration during their performances. The language and details they provided indicate a move towards a more centered and controlled mental state. M13 said, “I stopped thinking about the unknowns and what might happen during my performance process.” M14 shared, “I only focused on my own performance.” M16 stated, “My attention was relatively focused.” The reflections demonstrate the participants’ improved internal focus, suggesting that they are engaging more deeply with themselves. One may assert that these participants prioritized their focused concentration and achieved a present and a more attuned engagement in their performance experiences.

Both groups’ responses illuminate the crucial role of focused attention in the realm of performance, which is a theme that can be connected to theories of flow, MPA, and self-compassion. Participants’ increased focus and engagement during performances are indicative of the concentration necessary to enter a flow state. Additionally, one of the characteristics associated with MPA is overthinking and ruminating on negative thoughts. Therefore, enhanced concentration may be an indicator of reduced MPA. Finally, this theme may also be connected to the theory of self-compassion. The mindfulness skills integrated into the MSC program may have played a significant role in participants’ improved concentration. By delivering self-compassion skills through mindfulness practices, these MSC participants may have developed the ability to remain non-judgemental and connected to their performances.

Flow-Related Theme 2: Improved Control. This theme captures participants’ perceptions of increased mastery and physical sensation over their performance after the training period. Participants’ reflections directly address their improved ability to manage and direct their actions and responses during their performances. Having control is essential for maintaining composure,

which allows the performer to make timely adjustments to unexpected performance situations. A total of four participants (1 PSC and 3 MSC) offered their comments on this theme.

The one PSC participant's brief statement suggests a notable shift in their perception of their own performance abilities. Specifically, P13 said, "My control has greatly improved." This comment underscores their recognition of their increased ability to manage and navigate their actions during the performance. This statement may suggest that the PSC program assisted some participants in building technical proficiency, which led to a greater sense of mastery during performance. In contrast, the three MSC participants' comments provide insights into their perceived improvements in being able to control their physical execution. Specifically, M01 commented, "I can slightly control my hands better now, without the feeling of losing control like I was in my pre-training performance." M02 noticed, "The details are better controlled compared to last time." M16 shared, "I can feel I am able to control my actions." These comments suggest that the participants perceived an enhanced physical ability to achieve a higher level of control. Thus, these comments suggest that the MSC training may have helped participants foster an increased level of autonomy and competence.

This theme is directly linked to the theory of flow because an enhanced sense of control represents one of the dimensions of flow. A sense of control is also a significant factor in the theory of MPA because an improved level of control may reflect a reduction in the somatic symptoms typically associated with performance anxiety.

Flow-Related Theme 3: Perceived Autotelic Experience. This theme refers to some participants' awareness of the intrinsic reward and enjoyment derived from their performances, independent of external rewards or recognition. Three participants (2 PSC and 1 MSC) reflected on enjoying their post-training performance experience. These reflections are important because

they indicate that these performers experienced personal fulfillment and joy in the act of performing, which can significantly enhance the quality and depth of their performance experiences. Consistent enjoyment from performances can also serve as a powerful motivator for musicians because these positive and rewarding onstage experiences have the potential to shift the perception of one's performance from being overwhelming to one that is seen as challenging yet fulfilling.

Each participant's reflection points to a positive emotional transformation post-training. Specifically, P01 stated, "I was very happy and enjoyed it." This comment indicates a positive emotional state that is fundamental to the autotelic experience. P13 expressed, "The feeling is much more exhilarating than during my pre-training performance." This comment suggests a heightened sense of excitement and fulfillment. This increase in exhilaration could be indicative of a deeper connection to the music and a more profound sense of achievement. M16 shared, "I was in a cheerful mood." This simple sharing reflects a light-hearted approach to the performance. Being in a cheerful mood may alleviate performance pressure, allowing for a more relaxed and natural presentation.

This theme aligns most naturally with flow theory. The participants' reflections on increased happiness and exhilaration during their post-training performances are indicative of their possible experiences of flow.

Flow-Related Theme 4: Refined Performance Goals. This goal reflects how participants recognized the development of clearer and more targeted goals for their performances after the training period. This clarity in goals is essential as it relates to the cognitive aspects of music performance, stressing the need for specific objectives to enhance the musicians' performance experience. Clear goals provide a direction for maintaining focus, which can improve the overall

performance quality. By establishing clear performance goals, musicians can guide their performance progress with precision and adjust their performance choices in response to specific challenges they encounter.

Although mentioned by only one individual, a PSC participant, this theme points to the potential impact that well-defined performance goals can have on one's performance experience. Specifically, P12 stated, "During the post-training performance, I was thinking about how I should play and what dynamics and speed I should follow." This comment suggests a shift towards a more strategic and focused approach to performing, where attention to expressive details is indicative of thoughtful performance planning and execution.

Aligned with flow theory, this theme suggests that having clear objectives is a key component in achieving an optimal state of engagement in an activity. By adopting such targeted performance goals, musicians might find themselves better equipped to navigate the complexities of their performance tasks, leading to a richer and more connected performance experience. This theme can also be linked to the theory of MPA. Setting clear and achievable goals may provide musicians with a structured approach to their performances, which can establish a sense of preparedness and control. By focusing on concrete objectives, musicians can direct their attention away from anxiety-inducing thoughts and enable them to be fully engaged with their interpretations. Therefore, holding realistic and refined performance goals may also serve as anchors for balancing musicians' performance anxiety.

Summary of the Three Training Effectiveness Themes. These three themes offer a thematic narrative summarizing key insights from the participants' post-training experiences. The first theme, Acknowledged Performance Experience Enhancement, includes participants' recognition of their improved onstage experiences. This theme highlights the overall

improvement of participants' post-training performances, providing a qualitative correspondence to the quantitative results. The second theme, Recognized Mindset Development, documents the changes in participants' state of mind after their training. This change is crucial as it highlights the growth in mindset. Moving to the third theme, Practiced Self-Compassion, a distinct pattern was found where the majority of reports emphasized the role of self-compassion practices in enhancing their psychological state during their post-training performances. Exclusively reported by only MSC participants, this theme suggests the benefit of the MSC program. Together, these three Training Effectiveness Themes validate the research design and add qualitative depth to the quantitative results, offering an overview of participants' subjective experiences of the training programs.

Summary of the Nine MPA-Related Themes. The nine MPA-Related Themes summarize how participants believe these factors have contributed to their performance experiences. The first theme, Familiarized With the Performance Environment, illustrates how comfort in the performance setting can directly reduce anxiety and enhance confidence. The second theme, Familiarized With the Fellow Group Members, shows the value of building relationships within the group. This sense of support was identified by some participants as a crucial factor in improving performance experiences. The third theme, Adjusted Attitude Towards External Judgment, describes a pivotal shift in mindset among some participants, where concerns about the opinions and judgements of others changed.

The fourth theme, Repeated Performance Exposure, reflects some participants' recognition of the benefits of playing in the same performance venue twice due to the research design, which fostered a sense of familiarity and ease in the performance environment. Moving forward, the fifth theme, Familiarized With the Piece, underscores the importance of in-depth

knowledge of the music, which participants identified as a key element in boosting their post-training performance confidence. The sixth theme, Reduced Somatic Anxiety, speaks to a decrease in some MSC participants' symptoms of anxiety. This MSC group-specific theme indicates a direct impact of the MSC training on the musicians' performance abilities.

The seventh theme, Balanced Approach Towards Mistakes, captures a change in how participants perceive and respond to performance mistakes, moving towards a more forgiving and constructive viewpoint. In the eighth theme, Familiarized With the Instrument, participants noted that becoming more comfortable with the piano provided at the venue improved their performance experiences. Lastly, the ninth theme, Deepened Music Memory, focuses on the importance of internalizing the music during performance situations, which is crucial for confidence, expressiveness, and precision in performance.

Summary of the Four Flow-Related Themes. The four Flow-Related Themes provide a concise narrative of factors that address the dimensions of flow. The first theme, Enhanced Concentration, highlights participants' improved focus, which is fundamental for a fully immersed performance experience. The second theme, Improved Control, discusses some participants' sense of increased performance execution, which stresses the participants' feeling of improved performance capabilities. The third theme, Perceived Autotelic Experience, points to a critical realization among some participants that the sense of enjoyment and satisfaction can be a reward gained from performing music. Finally, the fourth theme, Refined Performance Goals, reveals the participants' more refined performance objectives they identified after training. This underlines the value of having clear, achievable targets regarding participants' improved onstage experience. Together, these themes weave a story of growth and refinement, suggesting that both

the PSC and MSC programs had an impact on enhancing participants' focus, control, enjoyment, and objectives in their performance journey.

Insights and Summary of the Contributing Factors

In conclusion, the insights gathered from the thematic analysis offer an overview of the interconnections between the Training Effectiveness Themes and both the MPA and Flow-Related Themes. The analysis begins with the acknowledgment of overall improvements in performance and psychological growth post-training. These positive changes set the stage for more detailed insights into specific areas of growth. The nine MPA-Related Themes provide a deeper dive into the environment and mindset changes, detailing how familiarity and comfort in various performance-related aspects significantly mitigate MPA. Next, the Flow-Related Themes build upon this, illustrating a progression from reduced anxiety to heightened experiences of flow.

At a theoretical level, MPA and flow represent antithetical constructs in the context of music performance. From the participants' experiences of the PSC program, the technical groundwork was essential since it addresses the factors necessary for musical preparation. The addition of the MSC training appears to mitigate the emotional and cognitive dimensions of MPA. By cultivating a compassionate stance towards oneself, musicians can learn to accept and move past performance failures, rather than being derailed by them. This emotional resilience not only mitigates the negative impacts of MPA but also promotes the psychological state necessary for flow. Therefore, it is possible to argue that pedagogical programs that address both the technical and psychological facets of learning may potentially serve as a powerful solution to reaching peak performance.

The analysis of the contributing factors that participants shared regarding their improved performance experiences reveals distinct outcomes. The MSC program demonstrated a more profound and consistent impact on participants, as evidenced by the qualitative findings across various themes. For example, the MSC group reported a notable enhancement in their onstage experiences, consistently describing a significant reduction in performance anxiety and an increase in composure. While participants from both groups acknowledged improvements in their mindset, those in the MSC group specifically highlighted an increase in confidence and the ability to manage emotional challenges during performances. Notably, the theme of Practiced Self-Compassion was unique to the MSC group, where participants reported the use of self-compassion practices as a crucial factor in their improved performance experiences.

Regarding the Flow-Related Themes, it appears that both the PSC and MSC programs demonstrate comparative effectiveness. Participants from both groups referenced a similar number of key elements associated with the flow state, such as enhanced concentration, improved control, and autotelic experience.

In summary, while both the PSC and MSC training groups showed improvements in various aspects related to performance anxiety and flow, the MSC group reported more substantial and consistent enhancements in their performance experiences, mindset development, and particularly in the benefits of self-compassion practices. Therefore, the MSC training appears to be more effective in improving participants' overall performance experiences.

Mixed Methods Results

Overall Enhanced Music Performance Experiences in PSC and MSC Participants

Table 4 shows the mixed methods results of the enhanced music performance experiences in the total sample. Regarding all 35 participants, the quantitative results showed positive

impacts on both PSC and MSC participants' music performance experiences after the training period. Both programs yielded positive psychological outcomes, evidenced by significant increases in trait flow (12%) and state flow (10%). Additionally, both programs yielded reductions in negative psychological constructs, evidenced by significant decreases in trait MPA (−9%) and state MPA (−28%).

Regarding all participants' answers to the binary question after their post-training performances, 33 of 35 participants (approximately 94%) perceived a change in their post-training performance experiences. Specifically, 15 of 17 PSC participants (approximately 88%) and 18 of 18 MSC participants (100%) reported this perceived change. Thus, participants' answers to the binary question supported the quantitative results on both the PSC and MSC programs' positive impact.

Qualitatively, six of 17 PSC participants (approximately 35%) and six of 18 MSC participants (approximately 33%) commented on the theme of Recognized Mindset Development, which may partially explain the positive impacts both programs made. Overall, this mixed methods integration revealed an alignment between the quantitative results and qualitative findings and demonstrated the overall positive impact both the PSC and MSC programs had from pre-training to post-training.

Comparative Effectiveness of the PSC and MSC Programs in Improving Music Performance Experiences

Table 5 shows the mixed methods results of the comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs in increasing flow (trait and state) and decreasing MPA (trait and state). By focusing on the comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs on participants' music performance experiences, the mixed methods integration offered the following insights. From the

quantitative analyses, the MSC program demonstrated significantly greater effectiveness in increasing participants' state flow compared to the PSC program. The MSC program also significantly reduced participants' trait MPA and state MPA compared to the PSC program. However, both the PSC and MSC programs demonstrated comparable effectiveness in improving participants' trait flow.

The above-mentioned binary question preliminarily demonstrated the greater effectiveness of the MSC program compared to the PSC program. Qualitatively, eight of 17 PSC participants (approximately 47%) and 17 of 18 MSC participants (approximately 94%) commented on the theme of Acknowledged Performance Experience Enhancement, which further supported the greater effectiveness of the MSC program compared to the PSC program. This disparity in the thematic representation demonstrated the greater effectiveness of the MSC program compared to the PSC program.

Following the research design, none of the PSC participants (0%) received self-compassion training, whereas all 18 MSC participants (100%) received self-compassion training. In the MSC group, 12 individuals (approximately 67%) specifically commented on the theme of Practiced Self-Compassion. This engagement with self-compassion practices among the MSC participants also demonstrated the MSC programs' greater effectiveness compared to the PSC program. From the perspective of mixed methods integration, the qualitative findings related to self-compassion training explained the greater effectiveness of the MSC program compared to the PSC program in improving participants' performance experiences.

Nevertheless, a critical consideration is necessary when integrating qualitative findings with quantitative results. The qualitative questions, probing the contributing factors influencing participants' post-training performance experiences, were asked only once after the training

period, primarily capturing participants' immediate performance experiences around their post-training performance. Consequently, participants' qualitative answers were likely focused on their state psychological constructs (state flow and state MPA), which reflected their immediate performance experiences. It is worth restating that the state and trait psychological constructs were assessed individually using quantitative questionnaires. Thus, corroborating the qualitative findings with quantitative results indicated that the qualitative themes might not fully represent the quantitative changes in participants' trait psychological constructs (trait flow and trait MPA), which captured their psychological characteristics. Therefore, caution must be exercised when using qualitative themes to fully corroborate quantitative findings regarding the greater effectiveness of the MSC program.

Unexpected Findings and Possible Explanations

The mixed-design ANOVAs revealed two unexpected results that partially challenged the initial hypotheses. These two unexpected results were the increase in self-compassion levels in the PSC group and the comparable effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs in promoting trait flow. Additional statistical analyses, such as *t* tests, were not conducted due to the following considerations.

First, to answer the quantitative research questions, the mixed-design ANOVAs provided comprehensive insights into the data by highlighting significant differences and interactions of the comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs, making additional statistical tests redundant and unnecessary. Second, the qualitative component of the study did not specifically inquire about participants' reflections on either trait self-compassion or trait flow. Although quantitative data on these traits were collected, the lack of qualitative data on these specific aspects pointed to insufficient qualitative data to fully corroborate the quantitative findings. In

this context, however, some themes identified in the qualitative analyses may offer possible insights into these two unexpected results, providing a deeper understanding of the nuanced dynamics of music performance experiences at play.

Unexpected Findings on Increased Trait Self-Compassion in the PSC Group. Table 6 shows the mixed methods results of unexpected improvement of trait self-compassion in the PSC group. Regarding trait self-compassion, it was hypothesized that the trait self-compassion in the PSC group would not significantly change after the training period since the PSC program was not designed to improve self-compassion levels. However, the quantitative results demonstrated improved trait self-compassion levels in the PSC group. From a mixed methods perspective, the qualitative findings may offer some possible insights.

In the PSC group, five of 17 participants (approximately 29%) commented on the MPA-Related Theme of Familiarized With the Fellow Group Members. This theme suggested that some participants in the PSC group may have gradually developed a sense of community and belonging by becoming more familiar with their peers during their participation in the PSC learning process. Such a perceived supportive environment may foster self-compassion by reducing feelings of isolation and enhancing a sense of common humanity, which is one of the components of self-compassion.

Additionally, three of 17 participants (approximately 18%) commented on the MPA-Related Theme of Adjusted Attitude Towards External Judgement. This theme indicated that some PSC participants learned to adjust their perspectives on how their performances were viewed by others. By commenting on this theme, some participants may have placed less emphasis on external validation and criticism by offering self-kindness towards themselves during their post-training performances, which is another component of self-compassion.

Next, two of 17 participants (approximately 12%) commented on the Flow-Related Theme of Enhanced Concentration. This theme suggested that some PSC participants experienced improved focus during the PSC program, which can lead to a more immersive and satisfying performance experience. This state of deep engagement can also be achieved by practicing mindfulness, which is the core component of self-compassion.

Finally, two of 17 participants (approximately 12%) commented on the Flow-Related Theme of Perceived Autotelic Experience. This theme referred to some PSC participants' improved satisfaction and fulfillment from participating in the PSC program. With these enhanced performance experiences, the PSC program may have improved some participants' levels of self-compassion, as they were more likely to appreciate their capabilities and savour the meaning of their music performance through unintended acts of self-kindness.

These themes and their thematic representations revealed that some PSC participants experienced an enhanced sense of connection, shifted attitudes towards external judgment, improved focus, and achieved greater intrinsic satisfaction from participating in the PSC program. Therefore, these qualitative findings may offer some potential explanations for the unexpected improvement of trait self-compassion levels evidenced in the quantitative results.

Unexpected Findings on the Comparable Effectiveness of the PSC and MSC Programs on Enhancing Trait Flow. The similar effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs for enhancing trait flow challenged the initial hypothesis, which posited that increases in trait flow would be more pronounced in the MSC group. A few possible explanations for this unexpected finding can be made despite the lack of qualitative findings due to the insufficient qualitative inquiry on participants' trait flow, as mentioned above.

The PSC program's focus on addressing various facets of music performance experiences may have greatly improved participants' trait flow in multiple dimensions. By enhancing skills and strategies such as music practice and performance preparation, the program may have improved participants' goal setting and sense of control, which are key components contributing to the flow experience. With the performance strategies cultivated in the PSC program, participants' engagement and motivation to advance their practices and performances may also have been improved, which are central to improved trait flow levels.

Furthermore, both quantitative and qualitative results showed reductions in PSC participants' trait and state MPA. Thus, it was evident that the performance strategies taught in the PSC program effectively reduced participants' performance anxiety, which is the antithetical construct of flow. As participants experienced reduced performance anxiety, they might have found it easier to deeply engage in the learning process, leading to increased trait flow.

In conclusion, while the comparable effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs in improving trait flow was an unexpected quantitative result, it underscored the significant value of performance strategies taught in the PSC program that concentrate on the practical and musical aspects of learning. This finding highlighted the importance of a balanced approach that integrated both musical and psychological strategies to enhance music performance experiences.

Despite its primary focus on performance strategies, rather than on explicitly developing levels of flow or self-compassion, the PSC program's success in improving trait flow illustrated the broader benefits of the PSC program. It reinforced the notion that addressing the practical aspect of music performance can yield substantial psychological benefits, affirming the positive performance experiences of musicians. Thus, a comprehensive approach that delivers musical

and practical strategies that incorporate additional psychological components may greatly contribute to a more enriched and fulfilling music learning experience.

Summary of Mixed Methods Integration and Results

From the mixed methods perspective, the effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs revealed their significant positive impacts on participants' music performance experiences. Quantitatively, both the PSC and MSC programs positively improved participants' flow and MPA, with the MSC program showing significantly greater effectiveness. Qualitatively, themes such as Acknowledged Performance Experience Enhancement and Practiced Self-Compassion were more prevalent among MSC participants, which corroborated the quantitative findings with possible explanations.

Unexpectedly, the quantitative analysis showed that both programs were similarly effective in enhancing trait flow. The PSC program's effectiveness in improving trait self-compassion was also surprising. These pointed to the value of integrating practical music performance strategies with psychological skills training, warranting future examination.

Despite these positive outcomes, the methodological nuances, particularly in the timing and design of limited qualitative inquiries, suggested taking a cautious approach to interpreting the mixed methods results. Ultimately, this study underscored the importance of incorporating holistic training approaches in music education that value and situate the psychological needs of musicians as a priority in the process of learning practical performance skills. These empirical and preliminary findings could lead to enriched music performance experiences and achieve sustainable learning journeys.

Additional Qualitative Findings

Qualitative Findings of Participants' Prospective Views on Future Performances

Using reflexive TA, I identified 12 themes in analyzing participants' responses to the question: "What would you say to your future self when you face your next public performance opportunity?" To ensure an accurate representation of responses provided by each participant, I refrained from double-coding any repeated segments when a participant commented on the same theme using different expressions. These 12 distinct themes can be categorized into four Musical Themes and eight Psychological Themes. Figure 6 shows the 12 themes of the PSC and MSC participants' prospective views on their future performances before and after the training period.

The four Musical Themes encompass the technical dimensions typically delivered through traditional music training. These themes exhibit several foundational elements crucial for developing musicians' performance routines and skills. The eight Psychological Themes reflect the mental, emotional, and cognitive components that participants considered critical to their optimal performance experiences. The results of the four Musical Themes and eight Psychological Themes are presented below in descending order based on the number of references from participants. Following this sequence, the musical themes address participants' acknowledgment of the musical and technical skills they learned from traditional pedagogy, while the psychological themes summarize participants' expanded awareness of necessary strategies that may positively impact their optimal performance experiences. Together, the 12 themes point to an interdisciplinary integration comprising both musical and psychological aspects that are essential for enhanced onstage experiences and successful performances.

The four Musical Themes and their definitions are the following:

1. Encouraging Perseverance and Ongoing Effort. This theme stresses the importance of resilience and continuous effort in developing one's performance skills. It reflects the consensus of participants that dedication is essential for their musical development.

2. Committing to Diligent Practice. This theme emphasizes disciplined practice, which reflects participants' willingness to engage in ongoing practice as their strategy for artistic improvement. This theme focuses on the participants' recognition of the importance of increasing proficiency in their skills.

3. Playing on Stage as if in the Practice Room. This theme demonstrates participants' expectations of replicating the ease and comfort they usually experience in their private practice sessions to the more challenging public performance environment on stage.

4. Gaining More Public Performance Experiences. This theme underscores participants' openness to embrace public performance opportunities proactively. It reflects their belief that each experience on stage can be a stepping stone towards the next successful performance.

The eight Psychological Themes and their definitions are the following:

1. Cultivating Relaxation and Overcoming Performance Anxiety. This theme expresses participants' desire to be more relaxed in their future performances. It also implies the value of developing psychological strategies to mitigate performance anxiety.

2. Building Confidence Through Self-Affirmation. This theme demonstrates how participants employ positive self-talk as a strategy to prepare for their forthcoming performances.

3. Holding a Balanced Attitude Towards Mistakes. This theme illustrates the participants' approach of cultivating a balanced mindset that frames mistakes as valuable learning opportunities rather than negative self-criticisms.

4. Maintaining Focus and Avoiding Overthinking. This theme reinforces participants' recognition of heightened concentration as a valuable asset during their ongoing

performances. It emphasizes an approach of focusing on the task at hand instead of being preoccupied with distracting thoughts that might undermine musicians' performances.

5. Disregarding External Judgements. Similarly, this theme embodies some participants' intention to remain detached from possible external evaluations. Some musicians may consider other people's opinions and assessments regarding their performances as threats. This theme reflects a common concern of participants.

6. Prioritizing Enjoyment Over Outcome in Performance. This theme reveals how participants shifted their focus from fixating on performance outcomes to appreciating the joy of performing. This development underscores participants' re-evaluation of their fundamental values in relation to their learning.

7. Sustaining Positive Performance Experiences. This theme validates the improved post-training performance experiences of some participants. It expresses some participants' desire to maintain and expand their positive performance experiences in the future.

8. Embracing Self-Compassion Practices. This theme encapsulates the intention of some participants to use self-compassion practices as a beneficial strategy to cultivate a positive state of mind in their future performances.

Structure of the Comparative Analyses

Reflexive TA is a valuable tool for understanding participants' attitudes and beliefs regarding their future performance opportunities. Following the design of this study, participants in the PSC and MSC groups responded to the same question before and after their training programs. This research design thus offers four sets of data that may share common patterns and themes: PSC Pre-Training, MSC Pre-Training, PSC Post-Training, and MSC Post-Training. The comparative analysis will be presented in the following order.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. This comparative exploration between the two groups before the training period is critical since it delves into the initial mindsets and attitudes of the PSC and MSC participants. This comparison offers a qualitative overview of each group's initial perspectives and beliefs.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. This comparison between pre- and post-training within the PSC group allows for the discovery of any changes and developments reflected in the twelve themes from PSC participants' responses.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. A similar within-group comparison is then applied to the MSC group. This comparison between the pre- and post-training within the MSC group allows for the discovery of any changes and developments reflected in the twelve themes from MSC participants' responses.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. This between-group comparison focuses on the responses of the PSC and MSC participants after their training programs. This comparison offers a qualitative overview of each group's post-training perspectives and beliefs.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. Where the data indicates, I review the progression within each group from pre- to post-training and identify the contrasts between the two groups. This section highlights the trajectory of participants' attitudes and beliefs in both groups and establishes a comprehensive foundation for further discussion.

Comparative Analysis of the Four Musical Themes Regarding Participants' Prospective Views on Future Performances

Musical Theme 1: Encouraging Perseverance and Ongoing Improvement. This theme reflects participants' motivational dialogue on fostering resilience and continuous dedication to their learning. Participants' responses highlight their commitment to ongoing

improvement in future performances. This theme thus underlines their recognition of the value of persistent effort. I identified a total of 13 references across the dataset, suggesting that both groups value the significance of perseverance and self-encouragement. There is an increase in the number of mentions in the PSC group after training. Conversely, the MSC group shows a decline in the number of references to this theme.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. Before training, two PSC and five MSC participants commented on this theme. The two PSC participants offered a common expression often used to convey support and belief in one's competency to achieve success. Specifically, P16 and P17 stated, "Keep it up." In contrast, five MSC participants expressed similar sentiments with a variety of expressions. For example, M03 said, "Keep it up, continue to work hard." M06 commented, "Try harder next time." M10 stated, "Do better next time." These reflections imply a commitment to ongoing effort and improvement.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. Comparing the PSC group's expressions before and after their participation in the PSC program, two participants initially offered straightforward comments expressing perseverance. After participants' engagement with the program, four participants used more specific expressions in their comments. For example, P03 said, "I hope to put in even more effort next time." P09 told themselves, "Just do your best." These increased positive statements suggest a deeper recognition of the importance of investing effort for future performances. The progressions from using common phrases of encouragement to more specific and individualized expressions indicate the PSC program may have fostered an enhanced self-understanding of learning goals for some participants. In other words, the increased positive self-encouragement after training directly points to the participants' deeper

recognition of the value of continued effort. These comments reflect the PSC program's possible efficacy in fostering a proactive and determined approach to learning.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Before the MSC program, five participants referred to determination and perseverance as necessary for their future performances. Their expressions suggest a common learning environment valuing continuous effort and improvement. After the MSC training, the number of individuals expressing similar sentiments decreased to two. Specifically, M03 said, "Keep working hard." M13 stated, "Keep going and keep it up." These comments reflect participants' continued commitment and positive outlook for their future performances. It would be reasonable to argue that the decline in the number of mentions may imply that the training provided by the MSC program has redirected participants' attention from seeking validation to a more self-assured appreciation of their personal commitment.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. After the training programs, four PSC participants articulated their commitment to continued hard work and effort, whereas two MSC participants offered a similar approach toward their future performances. This comparison shows both groups value encouragement and perseverance, but their expressions differ in complexity and quantity. The PSC program may have placed greater emphasis on participants' conscious recognition of effort and commitment as a part of the learning process. On the other hand, the MSC program may have delivered a more introspective and mindful approach, leading to participants' reduced need to explicitly articulate this theme.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. Looking at the responses from both groups, the PSC participants exhibit a clear trajectory of growth in their motivational dialogue. This suggests that the PSC program may have deepened participants'

commitment to personal growth in their learning journey. In contrast, the changes in MSC participants' responses imply that the MSC program may have shifted participants' focus inward, possibly leading to a less vocal and more internalized approach to perseverance and commitment. This analysis underscores a shared belief in the value of continued effort across both groups and highlights their paths to embodying this belief. Thus, this comparison lays the groundwork for a further discussion on the impact of different programs on participants' attitudes and beliefs regarding their future performance opportunities.

Musical Theme 2: Committing to Diligent Practice. This theme demonstrates participants' intention to allocate more time and effort to practice. It suggests participants' recognition of the importance of practice in improving their musical skills and future performances. I identified 11 references to this theme. Following the training period, the number of mentions in the PSC group increased, while the number of comments from the MSC group decreased slightly.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. Before the training period, two PSC and three MSC participants addressed this theme. The PSC participants commented on the need to improve the quality of their practice. P08 said, "Practice well." P11 mentioned, "Practice to become more proficient." Similarly, the MSC participants expressed the need to increase their amount of practice by adjusting their attitude. For example, M05 felt their practice was still insufficient and said, "The practice is still not enough." M10 commented, "Practice the piano more earnestly." These statements reveal that both PSC and MSC participants honestly value their practices and acknowledge the importance of practice as a crucial element for achieving success.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. Initially, two participants expressed their need to increase practice for better proficiency. After training, this sentiment expanded to four participants with nuanced practice objectives. For example, P07 mentioned, “I still need to improve my skills.” P12 confirmed, “I must diligently practice the parts I played wrong this time.” P14 also commented, “Next time, practice the piece until even more proficient, and aim to master it completely.” These post-training reflections indicate an increased dedication and focused plan to achieve specific practice goals. The change from a broad to a more targeted focus on practice underscores the PSC program’s potential to cultivate a strategic and disciplined attitude toward practice.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. In the MSC group, there was a slight decrease in the number of mentions from three participants pre-training to two participants post-training. Initially, participants acknowledged the necessity for more practice to enhance proficiency. After training, their focus shifted slightly. M08 stated, “Prepare well outside of class too.” M10 aimed for improved and thorough practice with a joyful tone, “Practice until you are proficient, hahaha.” This transition reflects a shift from viewing practice as a strict obligation to valuing it as an integral and enjoyable process.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. After the training programs, four PSC participants articulated a focused intention to improve their practice, with statements on holding a serious attitude towards practice, the need to enhance their skills, and specific plans to resolve their mistakes. In contrast, the two MSC participants revealed a lighter and more relaxed perspective on practice. This comparison suggests that while both groups continue to value music practice, the PSC participants favour a more intensive and technically focused approach. In comparison, the MSC participants emphasized a more gentle and relaxed attitude.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. The overall trajectory for the PSC participants indicates a deepening commitment to practice, with an increase in both the number of comments and the specificity of their practice goals after training. This pattern implies the PSC program's influence in navigating participants towards a systematic and structured approach to skill enhancement. Conversely, the development of the MSC group reflects a nuanced shift from focusing on the amount of practice time to appreciating practice with a sense of joy and humour. This contrast highlights the different focus of the two programs: the PSC program prioritizes a structured and rigorous path to musical development, while the MSC program incorporates a gentler attitude toward oneself.

Musical Theme 3: Playing on Stage as if in the Practice Room. The performance state one can achieve in the practice room is often the ideal scenario that musicians aspire to replicate on stage. This theme confirms participants' desire to authentically reflect their optimal private practice state in their future public performances. I identified a total of eight references. The number of comments in the PSC group increased after the training, while the number of comments in the MSC group remained the same.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. Before the training, one PSC participant suggested approaching their future performances as if they were in practice. P10 stated, "Just treat it as if you are practicing in the practice room." Similarly, two MSC participants expressed their wish to focus on maintaining a consistent practice state in the future. M01 mentioned, "Deliver your usual performance state." M13 stated, "Perform your usual standard." These pre-training comments suggest participants' recognition of the need to maintain a consistent performance level between both private practices and public performances.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. After training, the number of references in the PSC group increased to three. Initially, one participant articulated their wish to perform as comfortably on stage as if in the practice room. This sentiment was echoed by three participants after their PSC training. Specifically, P05 said, “Perform it just like when you are practicing on your own.” P09 stated, “Delivering your usual standard is fine.” P12 mentioned, “There is a difference between practicing and performing on stage.” This increase reflects some participants’ stronger desire to replicate practice room standards in their public performances.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. This theme was mentioned twice before and twice after the MSC training. Initially, two MSC participants aimed to bring their usual practice level to their public performances. After the MSC program, two participants continued to express their need to replicate normal practice levels with a less demanding tone. M09 said, “Achieving my usual standard is good enough.” M13 stated, “Replicate the relaxation you have during regular practices.” This shift suggests that the MSC program may have influenced participants to hold a more forgiving and less pressured attitude regarding their performance expectations.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. After the training period, three PSC and two MSC participants expressed their intent to maintain a normal performance state, emphasizing their need to perform as they would in practice. The responses from the PSC participants suggest a straightforward approach to performance, in which replicating their practice proficiency in public is the goal. However, the MSC participants’ comments point to an open and less perfectionistic view regarding their performance expectations. Further, the MSC participants’ use of language reflects their acceptance of the learning process and a somewhat relaxed mindset rather than being closely attached to higher performance expectations.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. The thematic discussion across both groups reveals a shared objective among some participants. They express their common desire to achieve the same level of ease and skills in public performances as they normally experience in private practices. The PSC group demonstrates a marginally increased articulation of this desire after training, suggesting a growing commitment to overcoming this performance barrier between practice and performance. This thematic thread implies that the PSC training may not have provided sufficient practical approaches to meeting the expectations of some participants. On the other hand, some participants in the MSC program revealed a softer tone in their expectations, suggesting the MSC training may have helped participants cultivate a more balanced approach toward their future performances.

Musical Theme 4: Gaining More Public Performance Experiences. This theme underscores some participants' belief that increased live performance experiences can lead to successful public performances. It also reflects their desire to engage in more public performance opportunities as a strategy to enhance their learning. Notably, this theme was referenced exclusively post-training by two PSC participants. P01 stated, "Gain more experience from performing on stage." P09 realized, "With your own onstage experiences, you can manage problems and emotions encountered during a performance." These statements illustrate participants' understanding that proficiency is not solely developed in practices or rehearsals but can also be gained from successful live performances.

The two post-training mentions in the PSC group suggest that these participants not only recognized but also valued the emphasis on increasing public performance, which is a strategy addressed in the PSC program. In contrast, the absence of comments in the MSC group reflects that this aspect of performance strategy was not prioritized in the MSC training. The presence

and absence of discussions on this theme across both groups provide a point of triangulation in my research design from participants' reflections. This PSC group-specific theme validates the distinct approaches between the PSC and MSC programs and reinforces the purpose of selecting both programs for comparative study.

Comparative Analysis of the Eight Psychological Themes Regarding Participants' Prospective Views on Future Performances

Psychological Theme 1: Cultivating Relaxation and Overcoming Performance

Anxiety. This theme reflects participants' desire to manage performance-related stress and enhance their state of calmness in future performances. The participants' comments highlight their understanding that a managed level of anxiety before performance can lead to an improved experience and outcome. This theme is the most frequently mentioned theme, with a total of 45 references. The significant number of references suggests that participants are aware of the impact that psychological aspects can have on their performance experiences.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. Before the training period, 11 PSC and 12 MSC participants mentioned this theme. For example, P01 expressed, "I hope I can be more relaxed than this time." P09 stated, "Have a balanced mindset." These statements capture participants' desire for a reduction of performance anxiety in future performances.

Some MSC participants had similar responses that resonated with this sentiment. For example, M02 said, "Relax, do not be nervous." M17 stated, "I can be a bit more relaxed." The responses from both groups share a similar thematic significance. They express a strong desire to reduce anxiety and improve relaxation, indicating a shared understanding of what these psychological aspects can have on their future performances. The overarching commonality

between the two groups also underlines participants' significant concern about the impact of performance anxiety on their future performances and a shared desire to overcome it.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. After the training, the number of mentions in the PSC group remained constant, with 11 individuals commenting on the same theme. Initially, the PSC participants shared a desire to achieve a calmer state, indicating their hope for managing performance anxiety. After training, some participants used a comforting and supportive tone towards themselves. For example, P01 mentioned, "There is no need to feel anxious, just play and take it easy." P04 stated, "I still need to relax, and reach a comfortable state." P10 commented, "There is no need to feel anxious, it is unnecessary to feel afraid." These comments reflect participants' improved self-confidence and belief in their ability to face future performances with a positive outlook. This comparison suggests that the PSC program may have provided participants with techniques or coping strategies, leading them to a more comfortable and self-assured mindset.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Examining the MSC group's responses, the number of comments in the MSC group slightly decreased from 12 to 11 after training. Prior to the training, the MSC participants frequently expressed a need to relax. Their comments suggest that participants were aware of being tense and expressed their need to overcome it. After training, while the number of references persisted, there was an emphasis on stability and self-assurance. For example, M06 said, "Have a balanced mindset, the performance in front of you is just an opportunity to express yourself. Do not be nervous." M16 mentioned, "Relax even more." At this point, the language used by these participants suggests that while performance anxiety remained a concern, there was a greater focus on achieving a balanced mindset and viewing performances as opportunities for self-expression. These shifts imply that

the MSC program may have encouraged some participants to adopt a more constructive perspective. From encountering nervousness to accepting performance as an opportunity, the comparison between the MSC group's comments from pre- to post-training highlights a notable shift in their attitude towards future performances.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Comparing the PSC group and MSC groups' responses after training, both continue to express a desire to manage their nervousness in their future performances. However, there are a few subtle differences in their statements. Some comments from the PSC group reflect a sense of improved reassurance and openness, while several participants from the MSC group stress the importance of seeing public performance as an opportunity. Clearly, both groups still share a common desire to continue managing performance anxiety more effectively in the future.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. Analyzing the PSC and MSC groups' reflections, there is a clear consensus of both groups' desire to manage performance anxiety and foster a more relaxed mental state in their future performances. Initially, both groups articulated their need to mitigate their performance anxiety. After training, the PSC group's language evolved to reflect a sense of understanding and assurance. These reflections indicate a decrease in their apprehension and uncertainty regarding future performances. The MSC group's reflections, while still aligned with the goal of reducing nervousness, also framed performances as opportunities for self-expression and personal growth, pointing to a change in perspective possibly cultivated by the MSC program. Overall, the PSC and MSC programs seem to have a positive impact on both groups' perceptions regarding their future performance opportunities.

Psychological Theme 2: Building Confidence Through Self-Affirmation. While exploring all participants' responses, this theme represents a strategy that participants use to encourage themselves when facing performances. Participants shared a strong belief that self-confidence and trust in one's performance abilities are crucial for optimizing their performance experiences. Overall, I identified a total of 12 supportive comments that participants made to acknowledge their performance capabilities. Before the training, only one participant from each group mentioned this theme. After the training, the number of mentions in both groups increased.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. Before the training, only one participant in each group expressed self-belief towards their future performances. P05 stated, "Next time will be better than this time." This statement indicates an optimistic attitude toward their potential for improvement and growth. This comment also shows that the participant believes they have the capacity to enhance their skills and deliver an improved performance. In the MSC group, M12 commented, "Believe in myself." This comment reflects their perception that self-belief is fundamental to their successful performances. The parallel expressions of self-belief by a single participant from each group underline the importance they attach to being confident. This initial observation suggests that self-confidence may serve as a tool for participants' engagement with the training and their subsequent development.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. In examining the PSC group's progression after their training, three participants expressed stronger comments using positive self-talk about their future performances. For example, P08 expressed, "Believe in yourself." P16 stated, "You will keep getting better." These comments reflect an increased focus on self-belief and the internalization of a positive outlook on performance development. The shift from a single

mention to three suggests that the PSC program may have encouraged its participants to embrace a sense of self-confidence and trust in their upcoming performances.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. I identified a noticeable increase in participants' references after their MSC training. Initially, a single MSC participant used self-affirmation phrases for encouragement. After training, seven participants expressed similar sentiments. This significant improvement can be seen in the following examples. M02 stated, "Believe in yourself, you can do it, you are capable." M17 said, "I feel that if I face this kind of performance again, I will definitely do better." These more robust affirmations suggest a growth in participants' courage to face performance challenges with a more positive attitude. This comparison indicates that the MSC program may have effectively nurtured a stronger sense of self-affirmation and an optimistic outlook toward continuous improvement.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Comparing the PSC and MSC groups' reflections after their programs, there is a growing emphasis on cultivating self-belief, but the depth and expression of this theme varied. The comments of the three PSC participants reflect an encouraging tone with a focus on continued improvement. The comments of the seven MSC participants indicate improved confidence and a belief in their potential for growth. While both groups highlight the importance of believing in one's musical abilities, the MSC group's reflections demonstrate a more pronounced expression of this belief. This finding suggests that the MSC program may have significantly impacted participants' confidence levels compared to the PSC program. This difference may point to the MSC program's effectiveness in not just strengthening self-belief but also in helping musicians envision and articulate improved performance goals in the future.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. This theme across the PSC and MSC groups reveals a compelling narrative of personal growth and empowerment in the context of future performance opportunities. As the participants of both groups progressed through their programs, the theme of self-belief became more prominent. In the PSC group, the number of participants engaging in positive self-talk increased, with comments suggesting a shift towards a stronger and more positive attitude towards oneself. This improvement was mirrored in the MSC group, in which the number of positive comments increased to seven. The marked increase in expressions across both PSC and MSC groups post-training suggests a significant impact of the programs on participants' confidence levels. Notably, the expansion from one to seven participants adopting a more positive outlook in the MSC group reflects a substantial improvement that may point to the greater effectiveness of the MSC program in fostering psychological resilience.

Psychological Theme 3: Holding a Balanced Attitude Towards Mistakes. This theme reflects the different responses and attitudes participants held toward the mistakes they made during their performances. Participants' reflections include negative self-criticism, neutral self-assessment, and positive encouragement. There are a total of nine comments made on this theme. After the training period, the PSC group's number of comments remained the same, while the MSC group's number of comments slightly decreased.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. Initially, one participant in the PSC group had a different view regarding performance mistakes compared to the four MSC participants. Specifically, the PSC participant used self-critical language to comment on their mistakes. In contrast, the four MSC participants showed a more forgiving and constructive approach towards themselves. In particular, P08 blamed themselves for their mistakes and

commented, “Next time, I cannot make mistakes again. How can I still play the piece poorly after months of practice? I played it through completely before going on stage, but still made many mistakes. I am very dissatisfied with myself, and I will not allow myself to do this again.” This statement reflects a strong self-critical attitude following a performance. The words used by this participant clearly express their frustration, disappointment, and high expectations of not repeating the same mistakes again.

Conversely, two MSC participants used comforting and supportive comments, while the other two participants focused on neutral technical elements to improve their future performances. M05 stated, “Do not be afraid of making mistakes.” M09 said, “They are all minor issues.” M10 made a precise aim and stated, “Strive for no wrong notes next time.” M11 commented constructively, “Master the rhythm and make fewer mistakes.” These statements from the four MSC participants imply their recognition of their mistakes and reflect their plan to proactively correct these mistakes.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. After the PSC training, the harsh self-criticism of P08 no longer appeared to be an issue. On the other hand, another participant acknowledged their mistakes as an opportunity for improvement. Specifically, P10 stated, “Do not be afraid to make mistakes. There is still a chance to correct them.” This comment reflects a more accepting and constructive perspective on their performance mistakes, with the participant’s understanding that making mistakes is a normal part of their learning journey.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Comparing the MSC participants’ comments from pre- to post-training, there was a shift in their attitudes. Before the training, some participants expressed a supportive attitude toward their performance mistakes. After training, the MSC groups’ comments reflected an improved resilience in facing mistakes. For example,

M01 stated, “Even if I make a mistake, stay calm.” M16 said, “If I make a mistake, just keep playing, I am still great.” M18 noted, “Avoid the problems that occurred this time.” These comments suggest an accepting attitude towards possible future mistakes. The comment of M01 shows an understanding of maintaining composure when mistakes happen. The words of M16 express self-encouragement with a positive self-image, emphasizing their ability to continue performing confidently despite mistakes. The comments of M18 were intended as a reminder to learn from their current mistakes to prevent future ones instead of setting higher performance expectations. Overall, these comments represent a constructive mindset that embraces mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth while also stressing the need to maintain self-confidence.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Comparing participants’ comments after their programs, I identified a notable difference in the attitudes and approaches regarding performance mistakes. In the PSC group, only one participant embraced the idea that making mistakes is not something to worry about, as there is always the opportunity to make corrections. This reflects their growing insight towards a more forgiving and proactive mindset. In the MSC group, the three participants’ comments display a balanced attitude that involves maintaining composure, encouraging oneself with self-affirmation, and actively seeking to learn from the current mistakes to avoid future repetition. This analysis indicates that some participants have cultivated a constructive and positive mindset as a necessary component for their continued growth and skill development.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. Both the PSC and MSC groups reveal changes in their attitudes toward performance mistakes. The overall trajectory for both groups indicates a transition from a somewhat negative and/or neutral attitude

to a more adaptive and open mindset regarding their mistakes. This development indicates that while both programs foster growth, the MSC program's framework may offer a variety of tools to help participants develop greater psychological resilience when facing performance challenges.

Psychological Theme 4: Maintaining Focus and Avoiding Overthinking. This theme captures participants' desire to maintain concentration in their performances. Several participants also mentioned strategies that may support them in remaining focused during their performances. In other words, this theme displays participants' consideration and effort to cultivate a mental state in which their entire being becomes attuned to the performance at hand. I identified a total of eight references on this theme. Following the training period, the PSC group's number of mentions marginally decreased, while the number of mentions in the MSC group showed a small increase.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. Before training, four PSC participants expressed their desire to minimize distractions during their ongoing performances. For example, P02 stated, "Stop overthinking, and just play, nothing else matters." P13 commented, "Find your own world of focus and immerse yourself in it, be completely undistracted." In contrast, none of the MSC participants commented on this theme before training. The absence of comments from the MSC group could indicate that this topic was not a primary concern within this group before training.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. Within the PSC group, there was a consistent emphasis on the need for mental focus during performance. However, these comments were conceptualized and articulated differently. Before training, some participants suggested ignoring all surroundings to avoid distractions and spoke about finding one's mental space and

fully immersing in it without worrying about distractions. These comments may have suggested that the participants were already aware of the value of concentration. After the training, there were three PSC participants who still emphasized the importance of concentration, stating that a moment-to-moment focus is essential. For example, P02 said, “Focus your attention on the performance.” P11 expressed, “Tell yourself that all you can see is yourself and the piano.” P17 realized, “Do not think, just play. Your body and mind should only belong to the present moment. Do not think about anything else.” Although the number of comments in the PSC group decreased slightly after training, the responses from the three participants following their training suggest that the PSC program did emphasize the role of concentration in music performance. However, these responses also indicate that the PSC program may not have provided participants with practical strategies on how to enhance their concentration effectively.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Initially, there was no mention of this theme by participants before their MSC training. This absence could indicate that concentration was not a primary concern for participants. After training, one participant commented on this theme. M07 said, “Immerse yourself in your own performance.” This single comment indicates a gradual realization of the theme’s significance for this one MSC participant after they received the training.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. After training, three PSC participants’ comments revealed a continued emphasis on concentration, while one MSC participant also pointed to their developing awareness of the need to remain focused. One may argue that the PSC program may have had an impact on the participants’ understanding and prioritization of concentration during performance, whereas the MSC group’s fewer mentions

may indicate that participants were at a starting point in a longer-term development that had not yet fully expanded.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. The trajectory of the PSC group from pre- to post-training indicates a maturation in developing a deeper understanding of concentration. Initially, participants expressed a desire to avoid distractions. Post-training, their focus evolved into a more internalized approach, emphasizing moment-to-moment awareness and a more profound engagement with the ongoing performance. In contrast, one MSC participant's newly emerged reference suggests the training may have initiated or enhanced their recognition of concentration.

Psychological Theme 5: Disregarding External Judgements. This theme signifies the importance of performers anchoring themselves in their own artistic expression rather than being influenced or disheartened by the audience's presence or the potential critique of others. Across the four sets of data, I identified a total of eight participants' comments on this theme. The number of comments in both groups slightly increased after training.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. Before training, this theme was mentioned by two PSC participants and one MSC participant. The PSC participants' comments emphasized resisting the perceived influence of previous performers or audiences. P09 stated, "Try not to be influenced by those who perform before you." P15 stated, "Nobody cares how you perform." The single MSC participant shared a similar sentiment, stressing the importance of not being overly concerned with the views of other people. M12 said, "Do not pay too much attention to other people's opinions." These reflections point to a common concern among participants about external judgements, indicating a shared desire to cultivate a balanced mindset when facing potential criticisms.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. Initially, two participants in the PSC group emphasized the importance of not being influenced by others. After training, this theme expanded to three participants who continued the discussion around ignoring others' judgements. P02 mentioned, "Do not always listen to what others say, do not always pay attention to others." P11 stated, "Try to overcome the nervousness of having people around you." P15 said, "Nobody cares about the outcome of your performance, the performance time only belongs to you." The shift in the PSC group's focus suggests a growing internalization of personal agency in performances. After the PSC program, participants show an enhanced commitment to emotional self-regulation and a confident assertion of ownership over their performance space, demonstrating a maturing perspective on the psychological aspects related to public performance.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Initially, one MSC participant stressed the importance of not being overly concerned with the audience's opinions. After training, two participants shared similar comments, with one advocating for self-determination and minimizing external distractions. M05 stated, "Walk your own path, let others say what they will, and do not mind their words." M14 mentioned, "Do not be disturbed by the outside world anymore." This shift suggests a growing sense of self-assurance and independence among some MSC participants as they progressed in the program.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. In this comparison, both groups express a desire for self-assurance and independence. The three comments in the PSC group highlight the importance of not constantly being bothered by others' opinions, overcoming nervousness caused by audiences, and recognizing that the performance experience belongs to the performer. Meanwhile, the two MSC participants express their need to avoid external

distractions. This shared desire suggests a growing sense of self-confidence and resilience among both groups in their pursuit of musical excellence.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. The overall changes between groups reveal a notable shift in participants' attitudes regarding external judgments and influences, which may have significant impacts on musicians' mindsets. Before the training period, both groups had participants concerned about external judgments. This theme slightly expanded after the training period, with participants from both groups emphasizing the importance of emotional self-regulation and asserting ownership over their public performances. This change indicates a maturing perspective in both groups on the psychological aspects of performing and reflects participants' common desire for self-assurance and independence in their public performances.

Psychological Theme 6: Prioritizing Enjoyment Over Outcome in Performance. This theme refers to participants' shift in focus from the performance results to the ongoing performance experiences and enjoyment. Instead of expecting a perfect outcome or a positive reception from the audience, this theme captures a mindset that values the process of performing, the participants' emotional engagement with the music, and the enjoyment that comes from personal expression. Overall, I identified six references in the dataset. After training, both groups' recognition of this theme increased. This pattern across both groups indicates an emerging shift toward emphasizing the intrinsic rewards and experiences of performing.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Pre-Training. Initially, one PSC participant commented on this theme, suggesting a preliminary awareness and understanding of the concept. This PSC participant specifically mentioned their need to increase performance enjoyment for themselves. P01 said, "Enjoy the performance a bit more." This comment suggests that even at

this early stage, there is at least a nascent appreciation for the experiential aspects of performance in the participant's mind. Conversely, none of the MSC participants mentioned this focus, which could imply that the mindset of the MSC participants at this stage was perhaps more oriented toward other aspects of performance.

PSC Pre-Training Compared to PSC Post-Training. Observing the progression from pre- to post-training, there is a clear increase in the number of PSC participants who expressed a desire to enjoy the performance process. Initially, only one participant mentioned their need to focus more on the enjoyment of performing. After the training, however, the number of participants expressing similar sentiments increased to three. These individuals not only echo the initial notion of enjoying the performance but also expand on it, with one advising to simply enjoy the stage, another encouraging a deep immersion into performances, and a third emphasizing the importance of focusing on the execution rather than worrying about the performance outcome. Specifically, P01 stated, "Just enjoy being on the stage." P15 said, "Try to immerse yourself in the performance and enjoy the process." P16 expressed, "Do not worry about the outcome, as long as you do what you need to do well." These comments and insights offer a clear indication that more PSC participants started to value the performance process. Their consensus on prioritizing personal fulfillment and engagement suggests a deeper appreciation for the intrinsic aspects of performing.

MSC Pre-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Initially, none of the MSC participants expressed their need for enjoyment during the performance process. This lack of awareness could indicate that the attention on the performance process was not yet a focal point for the MSC participants. After the MSC program, two participants articulated a newfound appreciation for the performance process. One individual emphasized an awareness of gradually

building a deeper connection between the performance and the performer. The other individual advocated savouring the performance process regardless of the quality or the performance outcome. Particularly, M11 stated, “Take my time to feel the performance and to feel myself in the performance process.” M15 mentioned, “No matter how you play, enjoy the process and feel the beauty of the music.” This shift indicates that participants in the MSC group began to value the performance process as an opportunity for self-expression and personal satisfaction, possibly reflecting the MSC program’s focus on being present and engaged.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. Comparing participants’ reflections on the enjoyment of the performance process between the PSC and MSC groups after their programs, I observed an increased focus on this concept, albeit with a slight difference in the number of mentions. Three PSC participants’ comments reflect a comprehensive approach to the performance, emphasizing the experience over the outcome and suggesting a holistic development in their perspective on performance. Similarly, two MSC participants echo this sentiment and elaborate on the internal experience of the performance and the inherent joy of performing. The comparison between the two groups after training demonstrates a shared acknowledgment of the performance process as a valuable aspect of the participants’ musical journey. Both groups reveal a shift towards a mindset that values the process of performing as an opportunity for enjoyment and musical expression rather than solely a means to achieve a desired outcome.

Changes Between the PSC and MSC Groups From Pre- to Post-Training. Through the discussion of this theme, the changes in the PSC and MSC groups can be interpreted as a maturing process in their learning journey. Both groups show an increase in the number of participants who acknowledge the importance of enjoying the performance. Their articulation of

the theme also deepened. Additionally, the parallel increase in the focus on performance processes instead of performance outcomes displays a shared pedagogical emphasis. These changes may reflect a shift towards embracing the performance process as a rich, enjoyable, and personal experience in both groups. At this point, participants who made comments on this theme may have developed their musical skills but also experienced a transformation of thought to prioritize their personal satisfaction through experiencing the joy of musical expression.

Psychological Theme 7: Sustaining Positive Performance Experiences. This theme captures participants' reflections on their improved performance experiences during the second performance after their completion of the training programs. It highlights their recognition of this positive onstage experience and their strong wish to maintain or even further develop the quality of their performance experiences. This theme is characterized by a sense of satisfaction with their recent improvement and a desire to continue experiencing this enhanced state in the future. Before the training period, none of the participants in either group mentioned this theme. After finishing their programs, I identified a total of five references. This shift in perception suggests that these participants noticed and confirmed their improved post-training performance experiences.

PSC Post-Training Compared to MSC Post-Training. The two reflections from the PSC group suggest that they recognize and hope their future experiences will mirror the positive aspects of their post-training performance. These participants expressed a wish for future performances to be similar, indicating their satisfaction with their improvement. P07 stated, "I hope my next experience will be similar to this time." P08 mentioned, "I was not so nervous this time." These comments on reduced nervousness imply that there had been a noticeable improvement in their performance experiences. Similarly, the MSC group's reflections conveyed

a stronger emphasis on progression and relaxation. They not only wish to remember the positive onstage feeling but want each subsequent performance to be better and more relaxed. M03 said, “Remember this feeling, it feels good this time.” M12 stated, “I hope to always be as relaxed as I was in this performance, hoping each time will be better and more relaxed than the last.” M13 commented, “I hope to continue maintaining this state.” These positive expressions reflect the MSC participants’ recognition of their improved performance and the desire to maintain their positive experiences. Overall, the thematic analysis points to both groups clearly valuing the positive experiences they had and their level of optimism about their future performances after their participation in the programs. The qualitative responses from each group’s participants serve as testimony to their improved post-training experiences.

Psychological Theme 8: Embracing Self-Compassion Practices. This theme was only addressed in the MSC program. After the training, two participants suggested using self-compassion practices to facilitate their future performance experiences. Their sharing reflects a nurturing approach to their future performances. Simply, M05 stated, “Use self-compassion.” M14 expressed their gratitude, “I am thankful to the teachers for teaching me self-compassion, and I am thankful to myself.” This participant’s sharing demonstrates that embracing self-compassion is not just a concept but also a lived practice. Their reflection suggests that they have internalized the value of acknowledging and appreciating their own efforts to learn and practice self-compassion.

These reflections illustrate the participants’ evolving understanding that excellence in music performance is not just about individual talent or technical proficiency. It requires a supportive emotional landscape for musicians to achieve their artistic identity. Compared to solely improving performance strategies, the two MSC participants’ comments may point to a

more comprehensive pedagogical approach that prioritizes the performer's balanced internal state of mind. Finally, this MSC group-specific theme supports the methodological choices of introducing self-compassion into traditional music training for a comprehensive approach that empowers musicians to embrace their optimal performance experiences fully.

Summary of Four Musical Themes. To summarize the four Musical Themes, I systematically analyzed the distinct thematic elements that indicate the musical and technical aspects reflected in participants' comments. The first theme, Encouraging Perseverance and Ongoing Effort, surfaces as a foundational element, with data underscoring participants' acknowledgment of the value of continuous effort. The second theme, Committing to Diligent Practice, further emphasizes the methodical and disciplined approach recognized by the participants. The number of references to this theme indicates a reinforced belief in structured practice as a strategy for developing performance skills. Transitioning into the third theme, Playing on Stage as if in the Practice Room, I noted some participants' desire to replicate their private practice levels on stage, highlighting their belief in creating a congruence between practice and performance conditions. The fourth theme, Gaining More Public Performance Experiences, reveals a strategic approach in some PSC participants only. These participants advocated for the need for increased live performance exposure to enhance their overall performance skills.

Summary of Eight Psychological Themes. Concluding the eight Psychological Themes, the thematic thread begins with participants' shared desire to cultivate relaxation and overcome performance anxiety. This first theme, Cultivating Relaxation and Overcoming Performance Anxiety, is the most frequently referenced, indicating a collective desire among participants to manage performance-related stress and achieve a state of calmness. The consistent emphasis

before and after training on reducing performance anxiety reveals a clear understanding of the impact of psychological dynamics on performance. The narrative progresses to the second theme, Building Confidence Through Self-Affirmation, where an increased number of participants used supportive comments post-training to enhance self-confidence and trust in their performance abilities. In the third theme, Holding a Balanced Attitude Towards Mistakes, the analysis reveals a shift in participants' comments from using harsh self-criticism to a more forgiving and constructive tone. This development suggests that participants are moving towards an adaptive and resilient mindset, recognizing mistakes as an integral part of the learning process.

Following the previous discussions, the fourth theme, Maintaining Focus and Avoiding Overthinking, highlights some participants' strong desire to maintain concentration and minimize distractions during performances. This deeper concentration is characterized by moment-to-moment awareness and a deeper connection with the task at hand. The fifth theme, Disregarding External Judgments, reflects a growing internalization of personal agency and emotional self-regulation. Some participants increasingly emphasized the importance of focusing on their own artistic expression and maintaining a sense of self-assurance, indicating a maturation in their ability to manage and mitigate the negative impact of external opinions and potential judgments.

It is worth mentioning that participants developed a clear shift from emphasizing performance outcomes to valuing the performance process and personal enjoyment, which can be seen in the sixth theme, Prioritizing Enjoyment Over Outcome in Performance. This shift indicates a pedagogical emphasis on enjoying the musical journey and expressing oneself authentically, highlighting the significance of intrinsic motivation and engagement in performance. Next, the seventh theme, Sustaining Positive Performance Experiences, serves as a

validation of participants' improved performance experiences after the training period. This theme captures participants' desire to maintain their improved performance experiences. It reflects a sense of satisfaction and optimism, suggesting that both the PSC and MSC training programs may have positively impacted participants' performance experiences and enhanced their desire to continue this positive trajectory. Finally, the eighth theme, Embracing Self-Compassion Practices, suggests a growing understanding among the MSC participants that a nurturing and supportive mindset toward oneself is crucial for achieving excellence in performance.

When considering the thematic development of participants' attitudes and desires toward their future public performances before and after their training programs, it is essential to maintain a balanced view of both the musical and psychological themes. Both sets of themes are integral to a musician's overall performance and learning experiences and can mutually reinforce one another. Improvement in the four Musical Themes may boost musical practice and mitigate performance anxiety at a certain level, thereby influencing participants' attitudes and desires toward future performances. The aspects discussed in the eight Psychological Themes serve as underlying components that enable musicians to hold and expand their mental capacity for performance enjoyment. Clearly, the interplay between the musical and psychological themes is where the role of a positive performance experience comes into focus. A musician might feel psychologically prepared but still require the technical assurance that comes from musical training to perform optimally. Conversely, a performer who is technically proficient but psychologically unsettled may not perform to their fullest capacity.

In conclusion, the musical themes address the necessary technical aspects that function as a prerequisite to initiating the performance, and the psychological themes may have a significant

influence on the participants' outlook and are vital for creating and sustaining positive performance experiences. Therefore, the current needs of the discipline call for a pedagogical direction that addresses both the technical and psychological aspects of musicians' needs.

Summary of the Results

In this chapter, I provided a comprehensive account of the quantitative data. This was followed by a presentation of the qualitative analyses of both the binary and factor questions. Integrating the quantitative results and qualitative findings, I was able to confirm the overall positive impact both programs made on participants' music performance experiences. Using joint displays, the mixed methods integration also confirmed the greater effectiveness of the MSC program than the PSC program in promoting musicians' positive performance experiences. Moreover, the mixed methods convergent design paved the way for discovering two unexpected outcomes that warrant further discussion. Finally, this results chapter detailed the qualitative analysis of participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances. The structured presentation of results in this chapter serves as a foundation for the in-depth discussions in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This dissertation aimed to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of the Performance Strategies Class (PSC) and Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) programs in enriching Chinese university students' positive music performance experiences. Using a mixed methods convergent design, this research explored the multifaceted nature of music performance experiences by examining the interplay between flow, music performance anxiety (MPA), and self-compassion. From the pre- to post-training comparisons between two groups of participants, this study specifically explored the mediating role of self-compassion between the antithetical constructs of flow and MPA.

Based on the participants' engagements with either the PSC or the MSC programs, the quantitative findings from the mixed-design analyses of variance (ANOVAs) demonstrated the significant positive impact both programs made on improving participants' flow (state and trait) while simultaneously reducing their MPA (state and trait). Compared to the PSC program, the MSC program showed significantly greater effectiveness in improving state flow while reducing state and trait MPA. These promising quantitative results were also supported and enriched by the qualitative findings.

Furthermore, this study revealed some unanticipated findings. Although primarily focused on developing musicians' performance strategies, the PSC program unexpectedly improved participants' trait self-compassion. Additionally, the PSC and MSC programs demonstrated comparable effectiveness in enhancing trait flow, an outcome that challenged the greater effectiveness of the MSC program in improving trait flow as originally hypothesized.

Supported by the observed empirical data, the mixed methods results revealed the positive impact both programs made in improving music performance experiences and highlighted the antithetical relationship between the theories of flow and MPA that existed in the literature. The practical implications of the PSC and MSC programs in enhancing music performance experiences are therefore worthy of discussion when grounded in the existing theoretical framework. Together, these promising results and unexpected findings provide an opportunity to delve deeper into the complexities of musicians' performance experiences and performance psychology. Although this preliminary investigation used a small sample size, the mixed methods results still offer potential new directions for future practice and inquiry that may advance current knowledge.

In the following sections, I begin with a detailed discussion of the two convergent results regarding the overall and comparative effectiveness of the two training programs. Next, I explore the unexpected findings and explore possible answers and explanations based on the qualitative findings. Then, I progress to the overall discussion of the study, weaving together theoretical, practical, and educational strands to form a comprehensive understanding of the mixed methods results. I also reflect on the study's limitations, providing a transparent examination of the research design with recommendations for future research. Finally, I conclude this thesis by exploring the additional qualitative themes derived from participants' prospective views and attitudes on their future performances, and offer a potential ethnographic extension to the mixed methods discussion for concluding this dissertation.

Given that the mixed methods results stress the importance of the often ignored and underemphasized psychological aspects of music performance, this discussion aims to create a dialogue between the quantitative data and qualitative narratives, between the empirical evidence

and theoretical frameworks, and between the expected and unexpected research outcomes to construct a comprehensive interpretation of the study's findings. Following this route, I intend to engage in a deeper discussion of how the application of self-compassion and the critical significance of performance psychology can contribute to advancing the traditional framework of music teaching and pedagogy.

Exploration of Convergent Results

Overall Positive Impacts of the PSC and MSC Programs in Improving Flow and Reducing MPA

Validating the Overall Positive Impacts of the PSC and MSC Programs. Both the PSC and MSC programs enhanced their participants' positive performance experiences, as evidenced by improvements in flow (state and trait) and reductions in MPA (state and trait). Flow, the experience of being fully immersed in an activity, is critical for musicians' positive performance experiences (Tan & Sin, 2021). The quantitative findings on both programs in improving state and trait flow suggest that both programs can play crucial roles in cultivating optimal experiences for their participants. The Flow-Related Themes identified from participants' reflections on contributing factors validate that both the PSC and MSC programs, to a certain degree, created conditions of flow for their participants. For example, themes such as Enhanced Concentration, Improved Control, and Perceived Autotelic Experience are potential factors to explain both the PSC and MSC participants' improved levels of flow.

Meanwhile, the reductions in MPA from participating in either the PSC program or the MSC program are noteworthy. Functioning as the antithetical construct of flow, anxiety is a significant barrier to optimal performance and well-being (Cohen & Bodner, 2019a; Fullagar et al., 2013; Kirchner et al., 2008). Therefore, both programs' effectiveness in reducing state and

trait MPA observed in the quantitative results suggests that implementing either the PSC or MSC program can foster more relaxed and confident states for participants' performances. These reductions in MPA are supported by themes such as Familiarized With the Performance Environment, Familiarized With the Fellow Group Members, Adjusted Attitude Towards External Judgement, and Balanced Approach Towards Mistakes. Thus, the overall positive impacts of both the PSC and MSC programs, carry significant implications for theoretical understanding and practical application.

Proposing the Immediate and Enduring Effectiveness of the PSC and MSC Programs. Theoretically, the observed positive impacts validate the conceptual frameworks underlying the PSC and MSC programs. These findings require a re-evaluation of the focus of traditional music training frameworks, which do not fully address the psychological needs of musicians. Taken one step further, the observed positive impacts of both the PSC and MSC programs serve to highlight the critical need to incorporate psychological components in traditional music training.

Practically speaking, the PSC and MSC programs present actionable frameworks that support musicians with useful performance strategies and self-compassion skills that can provide benefits for both immediate use in live performance scenarios and enduring application in their roles as performers. As demonstrated by the positive impact both programs made on participants' state and trait psychological constructs, two practical applications can be inferred. First, the improved state measures support the value of practical strategies that can be applied right before musicians' performances, where pressure is immediate and the need for focus and calm is a paramount priority. Second, the observed improvements in trait measures speak to the possibility of broader and long-term applications of the performance strategies delivered in the PSC

program and the self-compassion skills delivered in the MSC program, thus offering a sustainable development of musicians' psychological resilience and well-being.

Although lacking follow-up data, the observed improved trait measures, reflecting the musicians' psychological characteristics, still suggest that the benefits of the PSC and MSC programs may impact more than a single performance, as it can also potentially shape musicians' overall psychological state over the long term. This dual effect of improving the positive construct of flow while reducing the negative construct of MPA on both state and trait measures suggests both programs have the potential to enhance positive music performance experiences. These promising results position the PSC and MSC programs as pivotal training approaches because they offer the dual effect of assisting both the present performance readiness and the long-term psychological growth of musicians.

Conceptualizing the Integration of PSC and MSC Programs. Based on the observed benefits, envisioning the integration of the PSC and MSC programs into the traditional music education framework is compelling. Each program, with its distinct training perspective, addresses an area that the traditional framework often overlooks when delivering technical and musical training. The PSC program, with its focus on developing performance strategies, equips musicians with tools tailored to enhance their overall performance skills. On the other hand, the MSC program, grounded in principles of mindfulness and self-compassion, addresses the emotional and psychological needs of musicians when facing challenging performance and learning situations. Additionally, emphasizing the psychological aspects of music learning that go beyond mere technical and musical proficiency may bring greater benefits that could profoundly influence musicians' overall performance experiences and career longevity.

Integrating either program into traditional curricula undoubtedly adds value, offering a dimension that the traditional focus of technical and musical development usually overlooks. However, the combination of both PSC and MSC programs could produce a synergistic effect, in which the collective benefits exceed the sum of the individual contributions of each program. By integrating the approaches from both PSC and MSC programs, music educators could provide a more comprehensive skillset that prepares musicians to face a wider spectrum of challenges throughout their learning journeys. Thus, the possibility of the sum being greater than the whole of its parts (i.e., the effect of $1 + 1 > 2$) suggests that, when combined, the PSC and MSC programs may release a remarkable potential that could significantly transform and advance the traditional framework of music training. In other words, integrating the PSC and MSC programs can help musicians embrace their positive performance experiences with personal fulfillment, while also enabling them to achieve high levels of performance outcomes more effortlessly, which are outcomes that traditional frameworks consistently strive for.

Significantly Greater Effectiveness of the MSC Program in Enhancing Music Performance Experiences

Situating the Greater Positive Impact of the MSC Program Within the Theoretical Framework. The MSC program's greater effectiveness in improving state flow represents a compelling finding in the field of music performance psychology. This finding can be supported by the higher number of thematic representations of two Flow-Related Themes (Enhanced Concentration and Improved Control) observed in the MSC group in comparison to the PSC group.

Multiple studies have found a positive correlation between mindfulness and flow experiences (Schutte & Malouff, 2023). Consequently, these Flow-Related Themes are

intrinsically connected to the theory of self-compassion since mindfulness is the core component of self-compassion. Mindfulness practices help individuals cultivate balanced awareness in the present moment, which is beneficial for enhanced concentration. The heightened awareness fostered by mindfulness practices can also strengthen one's sense of control, leading to a more regulated response to stressors and a decrease in reactivity under stressful situations. Therefore, the mindfulness practices embedded within the MSC program are seen as a contributing factor in the observed improvements in state flow.

Additionally, the MSC program's greater effectiveness in reducing both state and trait MPA is an anticipated yet exciting discovery because maladaptive MPA is one of the most prevalent challenges negatively impacting musicians (Barbar et al., 2014; Orejudo Hernández et al., 2018). In the qualitative data, the greater thematic representations of Practiced Self-Compassion and Reduced Somatic Anxiety that were identified only in the MSC group, provide direct support for the significant reductions in MPA levels among MSC participants. These findings align with the theories of self-compassion and MPA.

Presented in the theoretical framework of this dissertation, self-compassion consists of three core components: mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness (Neff, 2003b). Mindfulness encourages a balanced mindset to one's emotions, neither suppressing nor over-identifying their interpretation and reaction to the situation. Therefore, the practice of mindfulness is crucial in fostering composure and higher concentration necessary for achieving optimal performance. Recognizing the concept of our common humanity helps individuals understand that mistakes and stress are shared human experiences. Thus, the awareness of our common humanity can diminish the threat of MPA and reduce the sense of isolation MPA often exacerbates. Finally, self-kindness allows individuals to be gentle and understanding with

themselves rather than harshly self-critical. This shift in attitude can lower the fear of failure and the anxiety it produces during performance situations.

Regarding the theory of MPA, these components of self-compassion likely contributed to MSC participants' abilities to regulate their stress responses when performance anxiety is present. At a practical level, the self-compassion skills and mindfulness exercises delivered in the MSC program also reduced the physical symptoms of anxiety in participants, leading to a significant decrease in their MPA levels. More specifically, these practical tools effectively diminished the physical symptoms of anxiety in some participants, leading to decreased MPA. Thus, these findings hold great importance in the theoretical framework of performance psychology in informing the practical application of self-compassion in music training.

Practical Implications of the MSC Program's Immediate Benefits to Performance Experiences. Compared to the PSC program, the markedly greater effectiveness of the MSC program in enhancing state flow and reducing state MPA holds substantial implications for the realm of music performance psychology. The improvements in state flow are particularly salient to achieving positive performance experiences because musicians' in-the-moment abilities to engage deeply with the present task determine their chances of attaining optimal experiences on stage. Crucial for optimal experiences, these moments of deep engagement may be more accessible to musicians through the practice of self-compassion, elevating their artistic output to achieve new levels of creativity and connection. Therefore, the effectiveness of the MSC program in improving state flow may be used as one piece of preliminary evidence that provides musicians with the techniques to engage deeply with their performances in practical situations. Regarding optimal experiences, musicians' capacities to enter a flow state can be greatly beneficial in situations where maintaining high concentration for optimal artistic expression is

primary. Thus, the practice of self-compassion may unlock this unpredicted, yet potentially accessible path to flow, which allows musicians to transcend technical execution and enter a state of connection for a meaningful optimal onstage experience.

In addition, the evidenced reductions in state MPA from the MSC group are also notably relevant to performers because an individual's capacity to manage performance anxiety with finesse and precision during the acute moments of a performance event is crucial. In practical situations, the MSC program's strategies offer musicians a toolkit to mitigate efficiently and effectively the debilitating impact of performance anxiety. In scenarios where maladaptive MPA can damage performance experiences with compromised performance outcomes, this capacity to quickly counteract the threat and damage of MPA is indispensable. Such capacity for a swift response is a necessity in high-pressure performance situations, as it enables performers to navigate their psychological landscape from chaotic distractions and interruptions to a more centered and tranquil psychological space by practicing self-compassion.

In summary, the MSC program is a pivotal resource in addressing key challenges within performance psychology by demonstrating its greater effectiveness in enhancing positive music performance experiences compared to the PSC program. By simultaneously increasing flow and reducing MPA, self-compassion practices may enable musicians to approach performances with a grounded sense of self. As they engage more deeply with their performances, musicians can rise above the mechanical aspects of music training and achieve a synthesis of their positive performance experiences with desirable performance outcomes. Thus, the incorporation of self-compassion practices signifies a substantial advancement beyond the PSC program, which has already moved past the traditional emphasis on technical skill development and musical execution. Logically, the practice of self-compassion may open a pathway to a more integrated

approach to music performance and training, where emotional and psychological well-being are recognized as integral to the artistry of performance and the goal of musicianship.

Overall, self-compassion practices have the potential to redefine both our notions of success in music performance and the entrenched understanding of music training. As self-compassion becomes intertwined with a musician's learning trajectory, it may nurture their learning process to cultivate positive performance experiences. When a self-compassionate attitude is accepted by the traditional music learning framework, it may redirect our vision to value those wholehearted artists who intentionally elevate their well-being to the same level as their authentic performances, and whose artistic creations touch their audience on a grounded human level through a shared appreciation and practice of self-compassion.

Exploration of Unexpected Findings

Exploring Unanticipated Self-Compassion Improvement in the PSC Group

The finding of increased trait self-compassion in the PSC group emerges as an unexpected but novel discovery. Although this result surfaced in this preliminary study with a small sample size, it merits further discussion. As reported in the theoretical framework, numerous research has supported that self-compassion, as a construct within positive psychology, can be cultivated through various psychological training (Kirby et al., 2017). Thus, the observed improved levels of self-compassion from the PSC group introduce an innovative direction suggesting that self-compassion may be cultivated by a performance-based class in the context of music training.

Theoretically, programs or curricula that directly or indirectly address the three components of self-compassion (mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness) have the potential to improve self-compassion levels. As evidenced in the qualitative findings, some PSC

participants' responses indirectly corroborate this possibility, particularly in relation to the following themes: Familiarized With the Performance Environment, Familiarized With the Fellow Group Members, Repeated Performance Exposure, and Adjusted Attitude Towards External Judgement.

These themes clearly demonstrate the benefits of environmental and psychological factors incorporated into the learning progress of the PSC program. With the support of such themes, it appears reasonable to argue that even without any focus on improving self-compassion, the construct of the PSC program embedded in the research design may have facilitated participants' psychological development. This insight indirectly supports the fact that positive psychological constructs can be enhanced through various musical and educational contexts (White, 2016). In other words, even though the PSC's content does not explicitly focus on enhancing self-kindness, common humanity, or mindfulness, the interactions between participants within the supportive environment of the PSC program still promoted some notable positive interactions within the PSC participants, which possibly resulted in their improved self-compassion levels.

Traditional music learning environments are mostly centered around individual lessons, masterclasses, rehearsals, and performances. These settings, whether solo or collaborative, strive for efficient execution and high-level performance outcomes. However, despite the unseen negative impacts, repeatedly situating musicians in such isolating and evaluative contexts is often seen as the hallmark of classical music training as stated in the theoretical framework chapter. In such an environment, performers, their parents, and music educators are exposed to the spotlight of scrutiny and judgment, carrying a considerable amount of stress due to their responsibilities, consequences, and expectations.

Thus, the PSC participants' improved self-compassion may be explained by the nonjudgmental environment and open discussion opportunities that the PSC program offered. In such environments, peer musicians are welcome to share their common performance challenges, such as experiencing MPA. With the guidance of two professional trainers, such dialogues may have normalized the common performance challenges peer musicians often encounter, therefore fostering a sense of mutual understanding among the PSC participants by enhancing their self-compassion.

Following this path, incorporating this model of peer discourse into classical music training could potentially destigmatize performance-related issues like MPA by recognizing that the negative aspects of musicians' performance experiences are a shared human condition. In musical terms, if composers can touch their audiences' emotions by manipulating compositional elements that transcend the barriers of language, in-depth discussions among peer musicians about their difficulties could also resonate with other musicians who struggle with similar experiences, creating a powerful echo of the shared human experiences. While not discounting the role of chance, a re-examination of the theories of flow, MPA, and self-compassion suggests a potential path by which the PSC program can awaken participants' awareness of the common humanity component of self-compassion, thereby leading to their improved trait self-compassion.

Exploring Unanticipated Similar Effectiveness of PSC and MSC Programs on Improving Trait Flow

In a mixed methods design, using qualitative themes can provide various perspectives to explain unanticipated quantitative results to a certain degree (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Focusing on the quantitative results, the PSC program unexpectedly demonstrated similar

effectiveness in enhancing participants' trait flow compared to the MSC program. The qualitative questions were asked right after participants' post-training performances without undertaking to specifically inquire about their perceived trait flow. Therefore, without direct qualitative insights into participants' trait flow, the observed comparable positive effectiveness of both programs should be interpreted cautiously. This understanding is best approached from a practical perspective grounded in theoretical principles, particularly regarding the PSC program.

The focus of the PSC program on performance strategies, such as effective music practice skills and rehearsal preparation techniques, likely improved participants' goal-setting abilities and sense of control, which are key dimensions of flow theory. From PSC participants' positive training experiences, the reflections on the performance strategies they learned may have also improved their learning motivation. Although learning motivation was not included as one of the dependent variables in this research, the theoretical connections between learning motivation and trait flow, that might be cultivated by the PSC program, could offer some additional insights.

Piniel and Albert (2019) discussed the interconnection between flow and motivation and proposed that research focus on the interconnectedness between these two psychological constructs as key elements in educational contexts. Thus, the PSC program may have situated participants in a condition where they were able to perceive the growth of their competency in managing music performance challenges with higher levels of motivation, thereby experiencing higher levels of trait flow over the course of the research. In the context of the PSC program, when participants see the relevance of their newly learned performance strategies in relation to their broader musical capabilities, the alignment between their performance strategies and learning goals may strengthen their learning motivation. Furthermore, this alignment may encourage their persistence in practice, leading to more frequent and deeper engagement in

participants' learning experiences, thus offering a possibility for their experiencing increased trait flow. While it is plausible and ambitious to make this inference, learning motivation, which was likely strengthened by participants' improved performance strategies, might be one of the cornerstones of their enhanced trait flow. Therefore, it might be worthwhile considering this aspect further from both a theoretical and practical perspective.

Theoretical, Practical, Educational, and Interdisciplinary Implications

Theoretical Implications: Exploring Self-Compassion in the Antithetical Relationships Between Flow and MPA

The established antithetical relationship between flow and MPA serves as the core theoretical foundation of this research. When designing this research, instead of focusing on a singular approach of either promoting flow or reducing MPA, I proposed that positive music performance experiences may have a greater chance to be achieved when musicians are deeply engaged in flow and simultaneously free from the threat of performance anxiety. The findings from this study corroborate this hypothesis. Specifically, under the influence of either the PSC or MSC program, each program demonstrated positive impacts on improving participants' levels of flow while reducing their levels of MPA.

In the context of music performance, this antithetical relationship emphasizes the importance of designing training programs that offer a two-pronged approach that simultaneously mitigates MPA and fosters conditions conducive to flow. When grounded in established theoretical constructs and supported by current and future empirical evidence, such comprehensive programs with dual effects may provide musicians with significant opportunities to optimize their positive performance experiences and lead to sustainable musical careers filled with fulfillment, satisfaction, and meaningful artistic growth in the long term.

By cultivating self-kindness and fostering a sense of common humanity, the self-compassionate mindset delivered by the MSC program through mindfulness practices may serve as a crucial precondition for achieving flow. At the same time, the relationship between MPA and self-compassion is essential. This research finds that self-compassion may act as a buffer, mitigating MPA by promoting a compassionate view of oneself to reduce the negative impact of MPA. Collectively, these findings provide empirical support for a theoretical advancement in music performance and performance psychology, advocating for the incorporation of self-compassion practices as a means to simultaneously improve flow and reduce MPA, thereby cultivating musicians' positive performance experiences. In practical terms, this mediating role of self-compassion implies that music educators could consider including structured self-compassion practices as part of their current curricula to address challenging moments faced by musicians during their real-time performances, which could also bring additional benefits in the long term.

Practical Implications: Synergistic Effects of Combined PSC and MSC Programs

While the role of self-compassion in enhancing flow and reducing MPA is critical, the MSC program is predominantly a psychology-based program that incorporates minimal musical elements. Focusing on musicians, this distinction in training objectives and contents between the MSC and PSC programs also highlights the value of the PSC program, which delivers practical music performance strategies that are often underrepresented in traditional music teaching frameworks. Specifically, the PSC program equips musicians with skills and strategies to directly enhance their performance capabilities, addressing aspects of musical execution that psychological programs do not fully capture. Thus, the concept of integrating the PSC and MSC programs presents a compelling approach that may advance traditional music training. This

combination leverages the MSC programs' strengths in fostering psychological resilience and the PSC programs' advantages in developing music performance skills. Such a synergistic approach could encourage more interdisciplinary strategies within music education curricula, proposing a model where psychological well-being and practical performance excellence are developed in unison.

The collaboration of psychological and performance-focused programs offers greater potential for enhancing musicians' positive performance experiences compared to those programs that primarily address reducing MPA, thus providing reasonable justifications for the integrated use of both PSC and MSC programs in music pedagogy. In other words, this integrative approach does not merely add one program to another but may strategically combine their strengths in the context of music training to support musicians in navigating the complexities of contemporary performance environments.

Educational Implications: Cultivating a Self-Compassionate Circle between Students, Teachers, and Parents

The positive findings on self-compassion from this study call for an expanded examination that goes beyond the current focus on musicians to also include teachers and parents within the pedagogical framework. It is also worth examining how self-compassion practices can positively influence the dynamic relationships among students, teachers, and parents. In fact, the presence of self-compassionate teachers and parents may significantly amplify the learning atmosphere by their use of compassionate words with a caring and supportive tone. Extending compassion to others by actively practicing self-compassion to foster a nurturing and learning-conducive environment could also redefine the dynamics between the three stakeholders in ways that prioritize mutual respect and shared goals over unilateral demands imposed on students.

A self-compassionate teacher embodies openness, warmth, and kindness, qualities that are perceptible to students. Teachers with such qualities and strategies recognize the pressures and nervousness experienced by students, especially in environments that traditionally emphasize high achievement and perfection. By embodying self-compassion, teachers can demonstrate to students that it is acceptable to acknowledge vulnerabilities and view them as opportunities for growth and learning, instead of seeing them as weaknesses. Using this model, students and their peers may gradually cultivate a self-compassionate attitude toward themselves in music lessons, enabling them to navigate their musical journeys by taking a balanced perspective on their successes and setbacks.

When a self-compassionate interaction is created, students and teachers may use these moments to engage in constructive dialogue, focusing on what can be learned rather than what went wrong. This approach alleviates the fear of judgment often associated with MPA, allowing students to openly explore and express their creativity. Additionally, cultivating self-compassion in the interactions between students and teachers may open an avenue for moving away from imposing demands to collaborating on agreed goals. This collaboration on goal-setting could foster a sense of ownership and motivation in students, encouraging them to pursue their musical careers with enthusiasm and confidence.

Taken one step further, expanding the vision of self-compassion to include parents underscores their pivotal role in music learning outside of the classroom. Parents who adopt and support these principles contribute to creating a broader environment of compassion that extends the lessons learned in the music studio into the home and performance environments. Thus, self-compassion may equip parents with the tools to thoughtfully set their intentions and adjust their expectations for their children.

Importantly, it is necessary to consider that embracing self-compassion does not imply a reduction in care nor encourage excuses towards mediocrity (Neff & Germer, 2018). Rather, it enables parents to attend to their own needs and expectations in a way that balances with the educational objectives and learning strategies of young musicians. With a self-compassionate mindset, parents may demonstrate the importance of compassionate learning outside regular music lessons, emphasizing the value of facing challenges and difficult moments with soothing skills for long-term benefits. This perspective may also equip young musicians with skills that extend beyond music performance into future life experiences. By role modelling and practicing self-compassion, parents may guide their children to navigate the pressures of learning and performance with an insightful and constructive attitude. This compassionate approach may support young musicians in their current musical development and can lay the groundwork for developing sustainable resilience, which is invaluable in all areas of life.

Overall, the concept of creating a self-compassionate circle that holds the warm experiences of students, teachers, and parents offers a potential transformative paradigm for current music education. Such a concept has the potential to fundamentally reconfigure the traditional dynamics of teaching and learning. Within this circle, self-compassion becomes the soothing heartbeat of interactions among students, teachers, and parents to create an atmosphere that cherishes openness, mutual respect, and kindness during challenging learning moments. Together, this self-compassionate circle creates a nurturing space where learning is driven by curiosity, resilience, and a shared commitment to growth. It is a space where the fear of judgment is replaced by the freedom to explore, where challenges are seen as opportunities, and where the journey of music education becomes a vehicle for supporting students, not just as musicians, but as compassionate, well-rounded individuals ready to face the world beyond the music studio.

This self-compassionate circle, therefore, could be the key to unlock a more holistic, supportive, effective, and sustainable approach to music education.

Interdisciplinary Implications: Integration of Self-Compassion Across Performance-Based Fields

In this study, the effectiveness of self-compassion is investigated in the context of music performance. The promising results indicate significant potential for the application of self-compassion practices to a broader stage of performance-based disciplines. The underlying mechanisms explained by the theories of flow and performance anxiety serve as the foundation for achieving optimal performance in various disciplines such as sports, academic performance, and public speaking. For example, in sports, athletes must maintain a focus on the present moment and execute skills with precision under the pressure of competition. Academic performance, especially in examination settings, demands a similar concentration and the management of anxiety to achieve one's best results. Public speaking, which is feared by many, also relies on the ability to enter a state of flow to effectively engage with the audience while managing the self-critical thoughts that can interrupt the speaker's delivery.

Referring back to the theoretical framework presented earlier, the common thread among these varied disciplines is the presence of a performance component that requires the performer to engage deeply with a task under the scrutiny of an audience or evaluators. By fostering a kinder inner relationship with oneself, individuals can approach their performances with less fear of judgment and failure, which are often the psychological barriers that inhibit flow and amplify anxiety during performance situations. Although the specific performance contexts and demands of these disciplines differ, the core mechanisms that underlie optimal performance and performance anxiety share similar theoretical connections. Given these shared connections, it is

reasonable to propose the integration of self-compassion into broader multidisciplinary situations because of the positive impact the MSC program demonstrated in this study and in other empirical research.

Limitations

Limitations Relating to the Research Design

Sample Size. Despite the power analysis validating the sufficiency of the number of participants, it must be recognized that a small sample size in this study lacks the depth to capture the spectrum of potential nuances within the data. Although the results from this mixed methods study offer valuable insights, the limitation of a small sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings and necessitates caution in interpreting and extrapolating the results to broader populations or contexts.

Selection Bias. I decided to select participants solely from one Chinese higher education institution located in China for practical purposes. However, this single-institution population could influence the study's outcomes due to shared educational experiences and resources that are not necessarily present in other settings. Although recruiting participants from only one institution reduces the difficulty of conducting the research, the specific effectiveness of PSC and MSC programs only reflects a limited range of educational environments.

Absence of a Control Group. The absence of a control group is a notable limitation of this study. With only two experimental conditions compared against each other, the lack of a control group means that I am not able to completely attribute the observed impacts to the training programs. Ideally, in addition to the PSC and MSC groups, including a control group undergoing no training would have provided a baseline for comparison, allowing for a clearer assessment of the specific effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs on the five psychological

variables of interest. Thus, the absence of a control group limits my ability to draw firmer conclusions regarding causality and the impact of the two programs.

Absence of Follow-Up Design. Immediate post-training results may offer positive indications, but they do not account for the potential changes, challenges, or developments that can emerge over time. Therefore, long-term follow-ups are critical for observing whether the initial benefits of self-compassion practices are sustainable. Although the study's design was constrained to short-term assessment, the lack of follow-up assessments is a notable limitation that must be acknowledged.

Control of External Variables. The maturation effect, particularly in the current research design of requesting participants to perform the same piano piece twice, is an inherent limitation in performance-based studies, as maturation may confound the effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs. Rather than focusing on inquiring about performance outcomes, the study's focus on inquiring about participants' performance experiences helped to mitigate this limitation to some extent. The addition of a control group would also have mitigated this variable.

In addition, the use of piano solo as a standard performance condition for all participants may be considered a potential limitation because not all participants may have had piano as their major instrument. Consequently, the assessment of peak performance and performance anxiety through the sole lens of solo piano performances may not fully capture the breadth of participants' performance expertise in performing on their major instruments. Moreover, while participants shared a common curriculum that included piano lessons, there was still inherent variability in their backgrounds in piano learning. For instance, a third-year student might have had only a few years of formal piano training, while a first-year student might have been

practicing piano since early childhood. The uncontrolled variable of each participant's potential level of prior piano experience poses a limitation, as it introduces a variable that could impact their performance experiences, independent of the PSC and MSC programs' impact. This variation in musical training history among the participants could influence both their baseline performance abilities and their responsiveness to either the PSC or MSC program, thus presenting another level of complexity in interpreting the outcomes.

Limitations Relating to the Research Implementation

Randomization Challenges. The need to accommodate participants' common schedules to form the two groups means that true randomization was not achieved. This approach was necessary to ensure participation but may have introduced some baseline differences between groups. Recognizing this limitation highlights the considerations between ideal research conditions and the reality of participants' availability.

Participant Attrition. Although the final data analysis was conducted on a complete dataset from 35 individuals, the dropout of three participants from the study is a limitation that could impact the study's findings to a certain degree.

Instrument Validity and Reliability. I used my Chinese translation of the Kenny Music Performance Anxiety Inventory-Revised (K-MPAI-R) to collect participants' trait MPA levels. Although this certified translation underwent a professional translation procedure and was acknowledged by its original author (Kenny, 2023), this certified Chinese version of K-MPAI-R did not go through a comprehensive validation process in a Chinese-speaking population.

Potential Bias in Qualitative Analysis. Despite employing reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) to mitigate bias during my thematic analysis, the subjective nature of qualitative analysis necessitates careful consideration. Since I am the only person who conducted the reflexive TA

process on the qualitative data, it must be acknowledged that my own experiences with flow, MPA, and self-compassion could color my interpretations.

Ethnographic Insights. Including an ethnographic discussion based on additional qualitative responses was a deliberate choice to highlight the study's cultural context. While this approach may seem tangential in addition to the core mixed methods results, it was pursued to capture some potential nuances that might be helpful to situate the study in the Chinese cultural context.

In summary, each of these limitations, while presenting constraints, also serves to define the specific context within which the study's findings can be situated. They offer a pathway for future research to expand upon this work under different circumstances and with alternative methodological choices. Moreover, each of these limitations regarding the research implementation underscores the nature of research under certain conditions, informing both the interpretation of the study's results and the design of future research. They underscore the balance between methodological rigor and the practicalities of conducting research in a performance setting, as well as the importance of recognizing the need to reflect cultural relevance in the research process.

Recommendations for Future Research

Exploring Interrelationships Among Flow, MPA, and Self-Compassion

A promising avenue for future research is to investigate the intricate relationships between the constructs of flow, MPA, and self-compassion. Each of these constructs is multifaceted, with flow encompassing nine dimensions, self-compassion consisting of three components, and MPA involving multiple aspects, such as, physiological, psychological, cognitive, and emotional factors. Thus, correlation studies examining the relationships of these

three psychological constructs and specifically on how each of their sub-components interacts may offer empirical data that could provide deeper insights into the understanding of performance psychology.

Specifically, future studies should consider conducting correlation studies to explore how the trait and state aspects of the three psychological constructs interact and how each of their specific sub-components are related. For example, when situating trait self-compassion as the mediating construct between trait flow and trait MPA, it would be invaluable to investigate whether the component of self-kindness rather than self-criticism in trait self-compassion is positively correlated with the dimension of loss of self-consciousness in trait flow. Following this pattern, future research could also explore whether the component of self-kindness in trait self-compassion is negatively correlated with the factor of worry/dread (negative cognitions) focused on self/other scrutiny, included on the K-MPAI-R for assessing trait MPA. Such correlation investigations could uncover nuanced pathways to understand both the positive and negative experiences of music performance with additional insights to uncover the mediating role of self-compassion practices.

Another example is to understand how mindfulness, a sub-component of self-compassion correlates with the dimension of sense of control in state flow and how it correlates with the factor of proximal somatic anxiety and worry about performance listed on the K-MPAI-R for assessing MPA. Investigating these correlations could yield a deeper understanding of the interplay between an individual's momentary psychological states during performances, potentially revealing how specific components of flow, MPA, and self-compassion, interact to influence the psychological landscape of performers. Overall, exploring the relationships

between flow, MPA, and self-compassion, especially at a factor level, may offer significant theoretical insights for supporting experimental research in the future.

Exploring the Impact of Self-Compassion on Adolescent Musicians' Positive Performance Experiences

As a music educator with twenty years of experience, it has been disheartening to witness many promising adolescent musicians become defeated and withdraw at this pivotal developmental stage. This is often due to negative daily practice experiences filled with shame and guilt, which can amplify a sense of failure and lead to repeated performance challenges (Costa-Giomi, 2004; Hallam, 1998). According to MacIntyre et al. (2012), if an adolescent's musical journey can be supported by strategies that enhance their positive engagement in the learning and performance process, they stand a better chance of growing and maintaining their creative passions throughout life.

Building on the promising findings of this current research on university-level musicians, future research could concentrate on the design and evaluation of self-compassion-based interventions tailored to adolescent musicians. Given the unique challenges and developmental stages faced by adolescents, such studies could examine if self-compassion can address adolescent musicians' specific needs in their learning experiences.

Exploring the Value of Self-Compassion in Different Cultures

Given the cultural diversity inherent in globalized educational and performance settings, understanding the role of self-compassion in various cultural contexts becomes a pivotal research path. I argue that the construct of self-compassion may manifest differently across cultures, influenced by distinct notions of self, emotional expression, and interpersonal relations. Future studies could explore cross-cultural comparisons to investigate the role of self-compassion in

performance-related fields expressed within different cultural dynamics. For instance, research could compare how self-compassion training affects students in Eastern educational settings with those in Western contexts. Researchers with the capacity to conduct cross-cultural studies can also extend this comparison to include the experiences of second-generation immigrant students, who often navigate a complex interplay between cultures. These studies might reveal differences in the reception and effectiveness of self-compassion-based programs.

In addition, many compassion-based questionnaires and scales are translated and validated into other languages, which supports the possibility of conducting cross-cultural examinations. With these tools in hand, future research can provide a cross-cultural vision for comparing how self-compassion is conceptualized, taught, and practiced across diverse cultural landscapes, leading to a richer and more comprehensive understanding of its culture-specific value and application.

Examining the Long-Term Effectiveness of Self-Compassion Training Programs

Finally, the long-term effectiveness of self-compassion in performance contexts remains an area needing in-depth exploration. Future research could focus on the sustainability of self-compassion training and its long-term influence on performer's performance quality, well-being, and resilience in the face of setbacks or difficulties. Although facing greater methodological challenges, longitudinal studies would provide invaluable insights into the lasting benefits of self-compassion practices. In the context of performance, such research could observe performers across various learning stages of their development and across different performance domains. This approach would allow for the examination of whether and how self-compassion may evolve as a stable trait over time with its long-term contributions to career longevity. These long-term studies in performance contexts could shift the understanding from using self-

compassion as a short-term coping strategy to one in which self-compassion creates a foundation for enduring growth that enhances the overall development of performers. These research projects may have the potential to revolutionize the current pedagogical approaches and educational standards in the field of music.

So far, this dissertation underscores the core discussion of the mixed methods findings and offers a holistic approach that incorporates both psychological well-being and technical skills. The subsequent ethnographic insights section delves briefly into the personal narratives that weave through the qualitative findings from the participants' prospective views and attitudes toward their future performances, contextualizing the understanding of their desires, attitudes, and beliefs in the learning environment they are immersed in. Following the discussion of these ethnographic insights, the final conclusion of this dissertation focuses on synthesizing the quantitative results, qualitative findings, mixed methods results, and ethnographic insights. My aim is to conclude this dissertation by drawing upon the interconnectedness of musicians' psychological well-being and positive music performance experiences to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the PSC and MSC programs on musicians' learning trajectories.

Ethnographic Insights on Additional Qualitative Question

Reviewing participants' prospective views on their future performances before and after the training period, I undertook to examine the nuanced reflections participants expressed through their engagement in the PSC and MSC programs. Employing an ethnographic perspective, I discuss participants' desires, attitudes, and beliefs that collectively shaped and defined their evolved performance experiences (see Figure 7).

Following this framework, I detail the forward-looking aspirations of the participants by examining themes such as overcoming performance anxiety and the desire for improved concentration on stage. Through understanding their desires and needs, I gained deeper insights into the challenges they faced in their learning. This, in turn, allowed me to identify gaps in current pedagogical frameworks and explore strategies that can better support their music learning. Examining participants' attitudes toward future performance opportunities provided valuable insights into understanding their change of mindset. Through themes such as perseverance in the face of challenges and the prioritization of enjoyment over performance outcome, I gained insight into the training experiences and adaptive approaches reflected by the participants. This was necessary for discussing strategies that may effectively facilitate positive music performance experiences.

By delving into the beliefs of participants, I further uncovered the guiding principles that informed their current approach to performance. Through themes such as the importance of building confidence through self-affirmation and embracing self-compassion practices, I initiated a discussion that focused on participants' core values. This provided an opportunity to adapt current pedagogical frameworks for creating an environment that supports a more fulfilling and sustainable music learning experience.

Therefore, I categorized the themes into participants' desires, attitudes, and beliefs with the aim of presenting a comprehensive view that respects the complexity of their experiences while providing a structured approach through ethnographic insights. Through this discussion, I seek to contribute to the broader conversation on music performance and education, offering nuanced perspectives that may inform future pedagogical practices and curriculum development. However, it is crucial to note that while this categorization aids in organizing my discussion,

some themes undoubtedly overlap the boundaries between categories, reflecting the complex, nuanced, and multifaceted nature of individual and collective experiences within music performance. Despite the potential overlaps, the chosen categorization was deliberately selected for its capacity to clearly demonstrate the complex tapestry of individual and collective experiences from the ethnographic insights embedded within the qualitative data.

Exploring Common Learning Desires to Understand Traditional Frameworks

Exploring participants' responses within traditional pedagogical frameworks uncovers a series of interconnected challenges that underscore their desire for a more adaptive and comprehensive pedagogical approach. These challenges and desires revolve around managing performance anxiety (45 references), maintaining focus during performance (8 references), navigating external judgments (8 references), achieving a seamless integration between practice and performance environments (8 references), and sustaining positive performance experiences (5 references).

The constant number of references by participants on the theme of Cultivating Relaxation and Overcoming Performance Anxiety reveals a persistent and shared narrative regarding the common challenge of experiencing MPA and participants' desire for strategies that can address their needs. Despite the different focus of the PSC and MSC programs, participants' reflections on their varied experiences regarding MPA remain remarkably consistent. Thus, this theme speaks to an aspiration to achieve psychological equilibrium and to manage performance anxiety as necessary skills integral to protecting musicians' creative identities. As a result, this theme points to potential areas for further curriculum development that would effectively address the enduring learning challenges musicians experience.

The theme of Maintaining Focus and Avoiding Overthinking highlighted participants' desire to achieve heightened concentration during their performances. This aspiration also revealed a significant growth in their self-awareness, as participants increasingly recognized the detrimental consequences of overthinking and intrusive distractions during their performances. This recognition marks a pivotal point in their growth since they begin to identify and articulate the barriers that impede their focused concentration during performances. Consequently, this theme emphasizes participants' increasing awareness of the intricate interplay between cognitive processes in their performances, highlighting the necessity for developing effective strategies that address their psychological aspects and technical skills.

The theme of Disregarding External Judgements across the PSC and MSC groups reflects a broader narrative of psychological empowerment and resilience in the face of potential external judgments. Participants' attempts to disregard external judgments emerged as a critical component throughout their learning. This theme reflects participants' understanding that perceived external judgments may significantly impede their positive performance experiences. Additionally, it expresses a deeper desire for actionable and effective strategies that empower participants to actively counteract these perceived external pressures. Thus, this theme reflects their quest for a more proactive approach to performing that facilitates their need for continuing improvement.

The theme of Playing on Stage as if in the Practice Room highlights a shared desire among participants to achieve a seamless transition from practice to performance, with the intent of aiming for a level of consistency that mirrors their grounded and controlled environment in the practice room. This aspiration is fundamental to participants, highlighting their ongoing need

to replicate the relaxed performance state they experienced in their practice sessions in order to gain an overall sense of performance stability.

The theme of Sustaining Positive Performance Experiences underscores a collective desire among participants to maintain and sustain their positive post-training performance experiences, reflecting a deeper appreciation for the intrinsic rewards they felt from their improved performance experiences. Through the success of fostering positive performance experiences by participating in this research project, it is reasonable to argue that our traditional pedagogical framework has great potential to significantly influence musicians' aspirations and attitudes toward their music learning when their performance experiences are prioritized. In a broader context, the sustained pursuit of positive performance experiences can serve as a catalyst that holds significant value in the philosophy of music pedagogy and the environment of music learning.

These common challenges and desires shared by participants are not isolated reflections. Instead, they represent interconnected facets that warrant careful consideration and active integration into the current educational frameworks. The theme of Cultivating Relaxation and Overcoming Performance Anxiety underscores the foundational challenge of managing the psychological pressures inherent in music performance. This challenge is intrinsically linked to the theme of Maintaining Focus and Avoiding Overthinking, as both address the cognitive and emotional barriers that musicians perceive. Central to overcoming these challenges is the capacity to Disregard External Judgements, a theme that points to the importance of psychological resilience and the cultivation of inner stability, enabling musicians to perform with high concentration in their creative process. This resilience is further reflected in the theme of Playing on Stage as if in the Practice Room, a common desire that encapsulates the quest for

consistency and the seamless integration of practice and performance environments, emphasizing the aspiration for a stable performance state that mirrors the experiences in rehearsal and practice spaces. Finally, the theme of Sustaining Positive Performance Experiences ties the benefits of the training programs together, highlighting participants' recognition of the positive and rewarding experiences they have perceived after their participation in the PSC and MSC programs.

Therefore, addressing these challenges and desires requires a paradigm shift towards a more integrated and balanced approach that equally prioritizes the psychological aspects of learning alongside the development of music skills. Such a shift may enhance the pedagogical landscape of music education to foster a more supportive and fulfilling journey for musicians navigating the complexities of music performance and learning.

Discovering Shared Learning Attitudes to Uncover Participants' Qualities

Despite the common challenges and desires they expressed, participants' responses reveal a wealth of qualities they hold in their pursuit to become musicians and teachers, possibly shaped by the learning environment they are immersed in. These attitudes are reflected in the themes of Encouraging Perseverance and Ongoing Effort (13 references), Committing to Diligent Practice (11 references), Holding a Balanced Attitude Towards Mistakes (9 references), and Prioritizing Enjoyment Over Outcome in Performance (6 references).

The theme of Encouraging Perseverance and Ongoing Effort reveals a dynamic interplay between shared perspectives and individual attitudes among participants. The increase in references by PSC participants underscores the acknowledgement of perseverance as a valued tradition. In contrast, the decrease in mentions in the MSC group may indicate a shift towards embracing a more self-compassionate attitude to music performance and learning, valuing and balancing the continuous effort musicians must invest while re-examining traditional beliefs that

exclusively equate success solely with relentless striving. This decrease might not necessarily imply that MSC participants intend to lessen their efforts toward their practice and learning. Instead, it signifies a deeper integration of self-compassion into their overall developmental process, indicating a thoughtful reassessment of how continuous effort and personal well-being must coexist to facilitate musicians' growth through their learning. Moreover, it suggests a need for a critical exploration of whether the traditional framework of music training and performance can be expanded to include a self-compassionate approach. In other words, participants' changes in attitudes re-examine whether perseverance and endless drills should remain the sole paradigms of artistic development. As a result, participants' shared attitudes reflect a broader philosophical conversation about redefining success in performing arts, highlighting the transformative potential of educational programs and pedagogical frameworks to influence the construction of industry norms and values that prioritize psychological well-being as a critical component of musicians' growth.

The theme of Committing to Diligent Practice reveals distinct yet complementary narratives about participants' approaches to their musical development. The increase in the number of references by PSC participants underscores a reinforced commitment to disciplined practice, suggesting that participants are committed to applying the performance strategies to continually enhance their performances through practice. This mirrors a broader traditional acknowledgment in music learning of the necessity for rigorous and structured practice as the foundation for musical excellence. Conversely, the slight reduction in references by MSC participants might indicate a nuanced shift reflecting a gentler attitude towards themselves when facing repetitive and mindless drills. Rather than indicating a reduced commitment, this shift highlights an enriched approach to practice, where participants balance diligence with a balanced

mindset, aiming for a more efficient and holistic approach that incorporates self-compassion and emotional well-being as additional guiding principles for achieving their musical excellence.

The nuanced shifts in the theme of Holding a Balanced Attitude Towards Mistakes by both PSC and MSC participants reflected the complex interplay between performance, personal reflections, and individual perspectives toward performance mistakes. While some PSC participants appeared to maintain a balanced view of their mistakes, the number of references by MSC participants may indicate a shift towards embracing and accepting imperfection and viewing mistakes as opportunities for growth rather than a source of harsh self-criticism.

The theme of Prioritizing Enjoyment Over Outcome in Performance signals a pivotal shift in participants' attitudes toward live performances, reflecting a deeper understanding and appreciation for the intrinsic value of their artistic process. This shift away from external validation towards personal enjoyment and fulfillment represents an evolving psychological development in their training. It suggests participants prioritized their personal satisfaction and the joy of expression in performing over conventional measures of musical achievement. Such a perspective nourishes the musicians' performance experiences and sustains their intrinsic motivation for learning. Thus, this shift towards prioritizing enjoyment over outcome challenges traditional frameworks and expands avenues for music education, advocating for an approach that nurtures the musicians' passion and reinforces their intention to pursue music learning.

These themes collectively reflect the qualities participants cultivated within their current learning environment. Foremost among the qualities identified were participants' resilience and determination, which was evident in their commitment to musical excellence despite encountering challenges reflected in the theme of Encouraging Perseverance and Ongoing Effort and the theme of Committing to Diligent Practice. Participants bravely faced the inherent

challenges of music performance by allowing themselves to show their vulnerability throughout their artistic growth. This perseverance underscores their dedication and commitment to their musical journey, while their adaptability demonstrates their ability to navigate challenges with openness. Moreover, they exhibited a capacity for self-reflection and an open mindset, evidenced in the theme of Holding a Balanced Attitude Towards Mistakes. They actively sought opportunities for personal development where mistakes were seen as valuable learning experiences. Additionally, they developed a growing appreciation for the intrinsic value of their artistic processes, indicated in the theme of Prioritizing Enjoyment Over Outcome in Performance. This reflects a deeper understanding and appreciation for personal satisfaction and the joy of expression in music performance, nourishing participants' performance experiences and sustaining their intrinsic motivation for learning.

Discerning Collective Beliefs to Highlight Areas for Framework Refinement

The themes of participants' shared beliefs underscore pedagogical elements the music education community should consider incorporating into the traditional frameworks. These beliefs were reflected in the themes of Building Confidence Through Self-Affirmation (12 references), Gaining More Public Performance Experiences (2 references), and Embracing Self-Compassion Practices (2 references).

The theme of Building Confidence Through Self-Affirmation reported in the MSC group post-training signifies a profound psychological transformation among participants. This improvement in confidence underscores a transformative shift towards adopting positive beliefs amid the challenges participants faced during their music performance. The enhanced self-confidence across both groups mirrors a growing determination and resilience in the face of performance-related challenges, highlighting participants' courage and persistence to keep

learning. The notable increase in self-affirmation and confidence among MSC participants points to the role of self-compassion as a powerful psychological tool in enhancing positive performance experiences. This indicates the value of recognizing psychological well-being and actively nurturing musicians' positive performance experiences in performing arts.

Mentioned by only a couple of PSC participants after their training, the theme of Gaining More Public Performance Experiences indicates their shared beliefs to actively seek opportunities that challenge and refine their skills in real-world contexts. This emphasis on real-world performance experiences reflects a deeper commitment to professional development and a desire to translate theoretical knowledge into practical skills, ultimately contributing to their growth as musicians.

Referenced by only a couple of MSC participants, the theme of Embracing Self-Compassion Practices illustrates MSC participants' recognition and belief of the positive impact self-compassion practices can have on their performance experiences. Despite a smaller number of references, this theme signals some initial acknowledgment by participants regarding the importance of embracing self-compassion in their music performances, marking a shift towards a more supportive, understanding, and warm performance environment, where psychological well-being is recognized as necessary for personal fulfillment and artistic achievement.

These themes collectively advocate for a balanced approach to musicians' overall pedagogical development by equally prioritizing psychological well-being alongside the cultivation of technical skills. By adjusting traditional music practices and values to include psychological dimensions, music education can evolve to meet the unique needs of musicians, fostering an environment that supports their growth as both artists and individuals.

Conclusion

Summary of Quantitative Results

This preliminary research examined the impact of self-compassion on musicians' flow and MPA, factors that contribute to musicians' overall performance experiences. Involving 35 participants within a mixed methods convergent design, I assessed the comparative effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs on the participants' trait flow, state flow, trait MPA, state MPA, and trait self-compassion using quantitative methods. Using qualitative short answers, I conducted reflexive thematic analysis and content analysis on the contributing factors the participants perceived regarding their changed performance experiences from pre-training to post-training. These two strands of data collectively informed the mixed methods results. Following a similar qualitative approach with a specific focus on ethnographic insights, I identified specific themes reflecting the participants' prospective views on their future performances before and after their participation in either the PSC or MSC programs.

Mixed-design ANOVAs revealed significant improvements across several psychological constructs for participants enrolled in either the PSC or MSC program. Trait flow scores increased significantly for all participants, with analysis showing no significant differences in the effectiveness between the PSC ($n = 17$) and MSC ($n = 18$) programs in enhancing trait flow. This suggests that both programs are effective in improving trait flow. Additionally, both programs demonstrated a significant positive impact on state flow for all participants, with the MSC program outperforming the PSC program significantly. This highlights the MSC program's greater effectiveness in improving participants' state flow.

Similar positive results were observed in all participants' significant reductions in trait and state MPA levels from pre-training to post-training. Comparatively, the MSC program demonstrated significantly greater effectiveness in reducing trait and state MPA than the PSC

program. This indicates that the MSC program may be more effective in reducing both trait and state MPA. Furthermore, both programs demonstrated positive effectiveness in improving participants' trait self-compassion levels, and the MSC group showed significantly greater effectiveness in improving trait self-compassion compared to the PSC group. This underscores the greater efficacy of the MSC program in enhancing self-compassion. Finally, the quantitative analysis also revealed two surprising results. First, despite the PSC programs focusing solely on improving music performance strategies, the program unexpectedly increased participants' levels of trait self-compassion. Second, both the PSC and MSC programs demonstrated comparative effectiveness in improving trait flow.

Overall, the quantitative results highlight the importance of incorporating psychological training programs stressing self-compassion into music education to simultaneously address the complex interplay between flow and MPA through strategies that can enhance positive performance experiences, ultimately supporting musicians in achieving their full artistic potential.

Summary of Qualitative and Mixed Methods Findings

In analyzing the qualitative responses provided by participants who noted improvements in their performance experiences post-training, I identified 16 distinct themes, which were organized into three categories including nine MPA-Related Themes, four Flow-Related Themes, and three Training Effectiveness Themes. The three Training Effectiveness Themes supported the quantitative results, providing qualitative evidence of improved performance experiences for most participants in both groups. Notably, these themes underscored the superior effectiveness of the MSC program in fostering participants' positive music performance experiences.

Focusing on the contributing factors participants attributed to their improved post-training performance experiences, the nine MPA-Related Themes and the four Flow-Related Themes highlighted the substantial role in influencing participants' perceived performance experiences. Regarding the 12 themes reflecting participants' prospective views on their future performances, their common desires were focused on the need to reduce negative performance experiences such as performance anxiety and overthinking. In contrast, participants also showed a positive commitment to investing continued effort into the further development of their musical skills. Notably, they stressed the crucial role of self-confidence in enhancing their future performances.

The exploration of participants' experiences within the PSC and MSC programs, juxtaposed against the backdrop of traditional music education frameworks, reveals a compelling narrative of potential transformation and growth. Throughout the entire research project, the reflections from participants in the PSC and MSC programs offered a clear affirmation that there is significant room for the integration of psychological components alongside technical training in music performance and learning.

The PSC program, with its focus on performance strategies, provided participants with the technical tools necessary to enhance their musical proficiency. On the other hand, the MSC program prioritized psychological well-being, fostering a nurturing inner environment where participants learned to proactively offer compassion towards themselves to mitigate the challenges they experienced during the difficult moments of learning and performing music. More importantly, this focus on cultivating self-compassion through mindfulness practices introduces a crucial dimension to music education that has often been overlooked in traditional pedagogical settings.

Participants' changed attitudes towards future performances, as expressed from their engagement with either the PSC or MSC programs, underscored a transformative shift in how positive music performance experiences can be cultivated. The integration of performance skill development in conjunction with self-compassion strategies presents a dynamic and balanced model that prepares musicians for the demands of performing and equips them with the psychological resilience needed to navigate the pressures and challenges of their musical careers. This dual focus addresses the multifaceted nature of music performance and acknowledges the need for integrating psychological training to expand the capacity of musicianship to optimize performance excellence.

The insights collected from PSC and MSC participants highlight the existing gaps in traditional music education and pave a sustainable path forward. By including self-compassion into this integrated approach, music education can evolve to meet the dynamic and diverse needs of musicians, fostering environments that support both their artistic growth and personal well-being. For this reason, it can be argued that a combined approach could significantly contribute to enhancing traditional practices in music performance and education. By weaving together the technical advancements fostered by the PSC program with the psychological growth cultivated by the MSC program, educators can create a more comprehensive and supportive framework in music education.

Final Reflections

In the concluding stage of this thesis, I find myself reflecting on a saying once shared by a musician I studied with, who regarded piano as their religion. Back then, I was in awe and humbled by their dedication to classical music, not realizing that my piano learning experience in Canada would be completely different from what I had imagined.

Piano performance was all that I had in my life, and I came to Canada for it. At first, my ego arrogantly guarded my idealistic, ambitious, and dream-filled passion for studying piano. Indeed, I was trained so exceedingly well to correct my wrong notes, correct my interpretation, and correct my music aesthetics. While being so accurate and successful in correcting mistakes of my own and my students, I lost my self-permission, lost my courage, and lost my memory of what it feels like to connect with my playing, connect with my heart, and connect with my being.

Day after day, repeated criticism and perfectionism poured over my fiery enthusiasm like relentless buckets of icy water, weakening it to a mere flicker, barely alive. Suddenly, my ego, once basking in its own grandeur, became as humble and feeble as this fragile flicker, so in danger that even a gentle sway could have extinguished it. Thankfully, my being somehow struggled to manage and shield this vulnerable flicker, so tiny it teetered on the brink of extinction. Even now, I still wonder which part of my being protected this almost invisible flicker as it fearlessly confronted the darkest side of human nature, which seemed most powerful but was secretly shattered, rotten, lonely, and narcissistic from the inside.

I am grateful for that part of my being that rescued my remaining flicker for my tenuous desire to continue to learn music, infusing it with just enough breath to survive amid unseen suffocation and manipulation in a place where everything appears just and fair. However, I am fortunate to have been told more than once that if I can endure the hardships of piano learning for these many years, nothing else can truly defeat me.

Practicing self-compassion is no different than learning piano because both require hard work and heart work. If I am not well, neither is my music. Therefore, without allowing myself to be compassionate towards myself, my being will lack the capacity to deliver an authentic and compassionate performance that aligns with my core artistic values.

As I move forward, the critical question I will impart to my future students is whether we can start to learn to treat ourselves a little better when we must face the challenges of music learning. It is true that it takes hard work to correct the wrong notes and habits we have learned in the practice rooms, but please also be aware that it takes more heart work to connect our doings with our beings. As I advance beyond research and academic exploration, this thesis has shaped my pedagogical practice and profoundly informed my teaching philosophy. Therefore, I must carry forward a pivotal inquiry: Can we proactively embrace self-compassion as fervently as we pursue one of the most sublime forms of art on earth? If I may rephrase this inquiry one step closer to my heart: Can we teach performers to cherish themselves as much as, if not more than, their performances so that they can start to become aware of being self-compassionate and practice self-compassion for themselves and, consequently, towards their music?

Thus, this thesis is not merely an academic monograph. It is a personal manifesto calling for a self-compassion-based pedagogy, one that holds the artists' psychological landscape as fundamental as their professional skills. Finally, this is the message I share with all of you who took your time to read this thesis: Always offer care to yourself first and more than to your music.

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Table 1*Demographic Characteristics of Participants by Group*

Characteristic	PSC group (<i>n</i> = 17)	MSC group (<i>n</i> = 18)	Total sample (<i>N</i> = 35)
Age			
<i>M</i>	19.88	20.39	20.14
<i>SD</i>	1.28	1.34	1.33
Gender			
Female	13 (76.5%)	14 (77.8%)	27 (77.1%)
Male	4 (23.5%)	4 (22.2%)	8 (22.9%)

Note. This table presents the final count of participants included in the data analysis. PSC =

Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion.

Table 2*Means and Standard Deviations of Pre- and Post-Training Measures by Group*

Psychological construct	PSC group (<i>n</i> = 17)		MSC group (<i>n</i> = 18)		Total sample (<i>N</i> = 35)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Trait flow						
Pre-training	2.97	0.40	2.86	0.44	2.91	0.42
Post-training	3.27	0.37	3.47	0.60	3.37	0.51
State flow						
Pre-training	3.17	0.51	3.00	0.42	3.08	0.46
Post-training	3.38	0.42	3.59	0.41	3.49	0.43
Trait MPA						
Pre-training	137.06	19.77	140.39	26.84	138.77	23.39
Post-training	125.71	15.33	110.67	28.14	117.97	23.76
State MPA						
Pre-training	59.59	10.61	61.39	11.67	60.51	11.04
Post-training	48.24	10.18	39.06	10.38	43.51	11.15
Trait self-compassion						
Pre-training	3.08	0.54	3.10	0.54	3.09	0.53
Post-training	3.24	0.52	3.75	0.60	3.50	0.61

Note. This table presents mean scores and standard deviations for five psychological constructs assessed before and after training in two groups. PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion; MPA = Music Performance Anxiety.

Table 3*Mixed Design ANOVA Statistics of the Five Psychological Constructs*

Psychological construct	ANOVA				
	Effect	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Trait flow	Time	1	33.16	< .001	.50
	Time and training	1	3.73	.062	.10
State flow	Time	1	31.65	< .001	.49
	Time and training	1	6.69	.014	.17
Trait MPA	Time	1	78.70	< .001	.71
	Time and training	1	15.74	< .001	.32
State MPA	Time	1	84.47	< .001	.72
	Time and training	1	8.98	.005	.21
Trait self-compassion	Time	1	23.26	< .001	.41
	Time and training	1	8.59	.006	.21

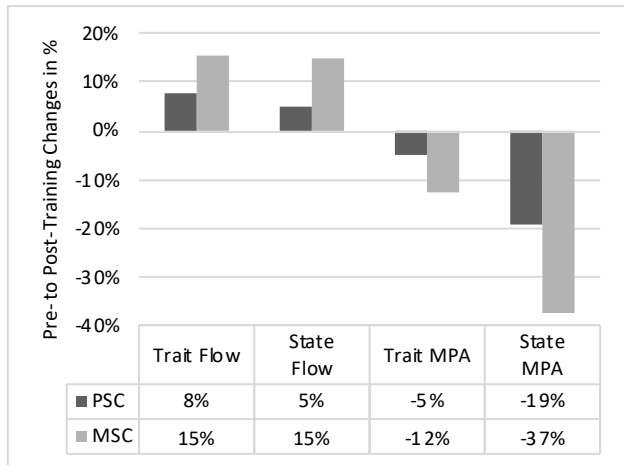
Note. This table presents the ANOVA statistics of the five psychological constructs. The effect of time indicates the changes in each psychological construct reported by all participants ($N = 35$) from pre- to post-training. The effect of time and training indicates the comparative effectiveness of the two training programs in each psychological construct observed in the PSC participants ($n = 17$) and the MSC participants ($n = 18$) from pre- to post-training. ANOVA = analysis of variance.

Table 4*Mixed Methods Results of Enhanced Music Performance Experiences in the Total Sample*

Quantitative Results		Qualitative Findings										
Increased Flow and Decreased MPA in the Total Sample (N = 35)		Binary Question and Thematic Representation										
<table><thead><tr><th></th><th>Trait Flow</th><th>State Flow</th><th>Trait MPA</th><th>State MPA</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Increased or Decreased</td><td>12%</td><td>10%</td><td>-9%</td><td>-28%</td></tr></tbody></table>			Trait Flow	State Flow	Trait MPA	State MPA	Increased or Decreased	12%	10%	-9%	-28%	Thirty-three of 35 participants (approximately 94%) perceived a change in their post-training performance experience. Six of 17 PSC participants (approximately 35%) and 6 of 18 MSC participants (approximately 33%) commented on the theme of Recognized Mindset Development.
	Trait Flow	State Flow	Trait MPA	State MPA								
Increased or Decreased	12%	10%	-9%	-28%								
Example Quotations After Post-Training Performance												
PSC Participants		MSC Participants										
“Post-training performance is a bit better than pre-training performance.” (Participant P06) “I no longer feel the extremely oppressive tension and fear.” (Participant P10)		“Post-training performance is more relaxed compared to pre-training performance.” (Participant M01) “I feel very relaxed and light-hearted during the performance.” (Participant M15)										

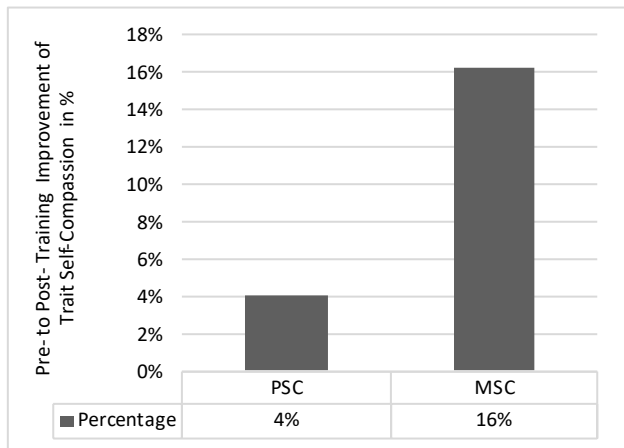
Note. This table presents all participants’ improved music performance experiences from pre-training to post-training represented by their increased flow (trait and state) and decreased MPA (trait and state). PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion; MPA = Music Performance Anxiety.

Table 5*Mixed Methods Results of Comparative Effectiveness of the PSC and MSC Programs*

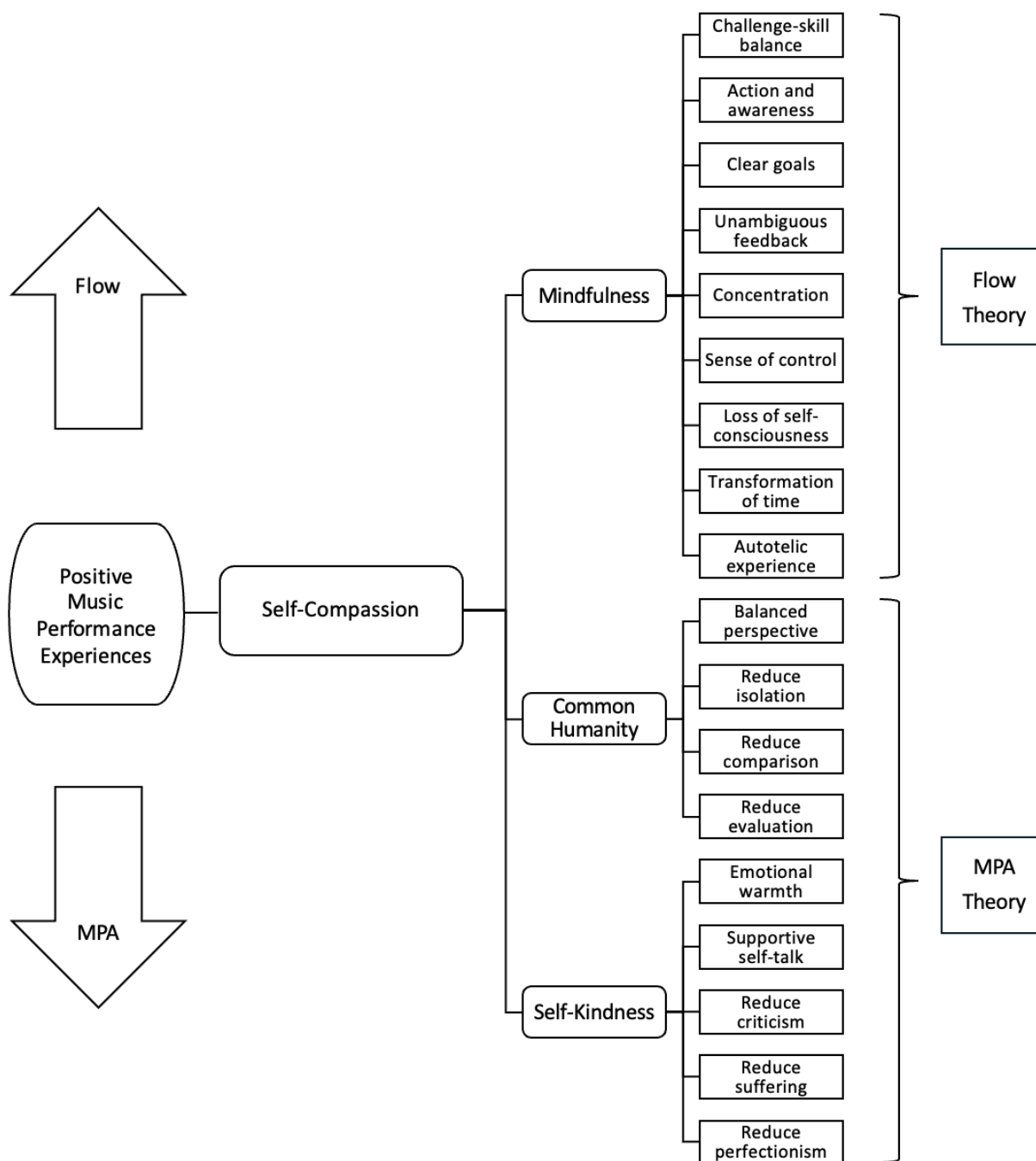
Quantitative Results		Qualitative Findings																
Comparative Effectiveness of the PSC (<i>n</i> = 17) and MSC (<i>n</i> = 18) Programs Reflected by Increased Flow and Reduced MPA.		Theme and Thematic Representation																
		PSC %	MSC %															
 <table><thead><tr><th></th><th>Trait Flow</th><th>State Flow</th><th>Trait MPA</th><th>State MPA</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>■ PSC</td><td>8%</td><td>5%</td><td>-5 %</td><td>-19%</td></tr><tr><td>■ MSC</td><td>15%</td><td>15%</td><td>-1.2%</td><td>-3.7%</td></tr></tbody></table>			Trait Flow	State Flow	Trait MPA	State MPA	■ PSC	8%	5%	-5 %	-19%	■ MSC	15%	15%	-1.2%	-3.7%	Different Post-Training Performance Experiences	88100
			Trait Flow	State Flow	Trait MPA	State MPA												
		■ PSC	8%	5%	-5 %	-19%												
		■ MSC	15%	15%	-1.2%	-3.7%												
		Similar Post-Training Performance Experiences	120															
Acknowledged Performance Experience Enhancement	4794																	
Practiced Self-Compassion	067																	
Example Quotations After Post-Training Performance																		
PSC Participants		MSC Participants																
“During my post-training performance, I feel slightly more relaxed.” (Participant P09)		“In the post-training performance, I feel completely relaxed, not drifting above.” (Participant M04)																
“My mindset has stabilized a lot.” (Participant P10)		“My mindset is more relaxed compared to my pre-training performance.” (Participant M06)																
		“My sense of stability has clearly strengthened.” (Participant M16)																

Note. This table presents the effectiveness of the PSC and MSC programs in enhancing music performance experiences. Results indicate increased flow (trait and state) and decreased MPA (trait and state) in each group from pre-training to post-training. PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion; MPA = Music Performance Anxiety.

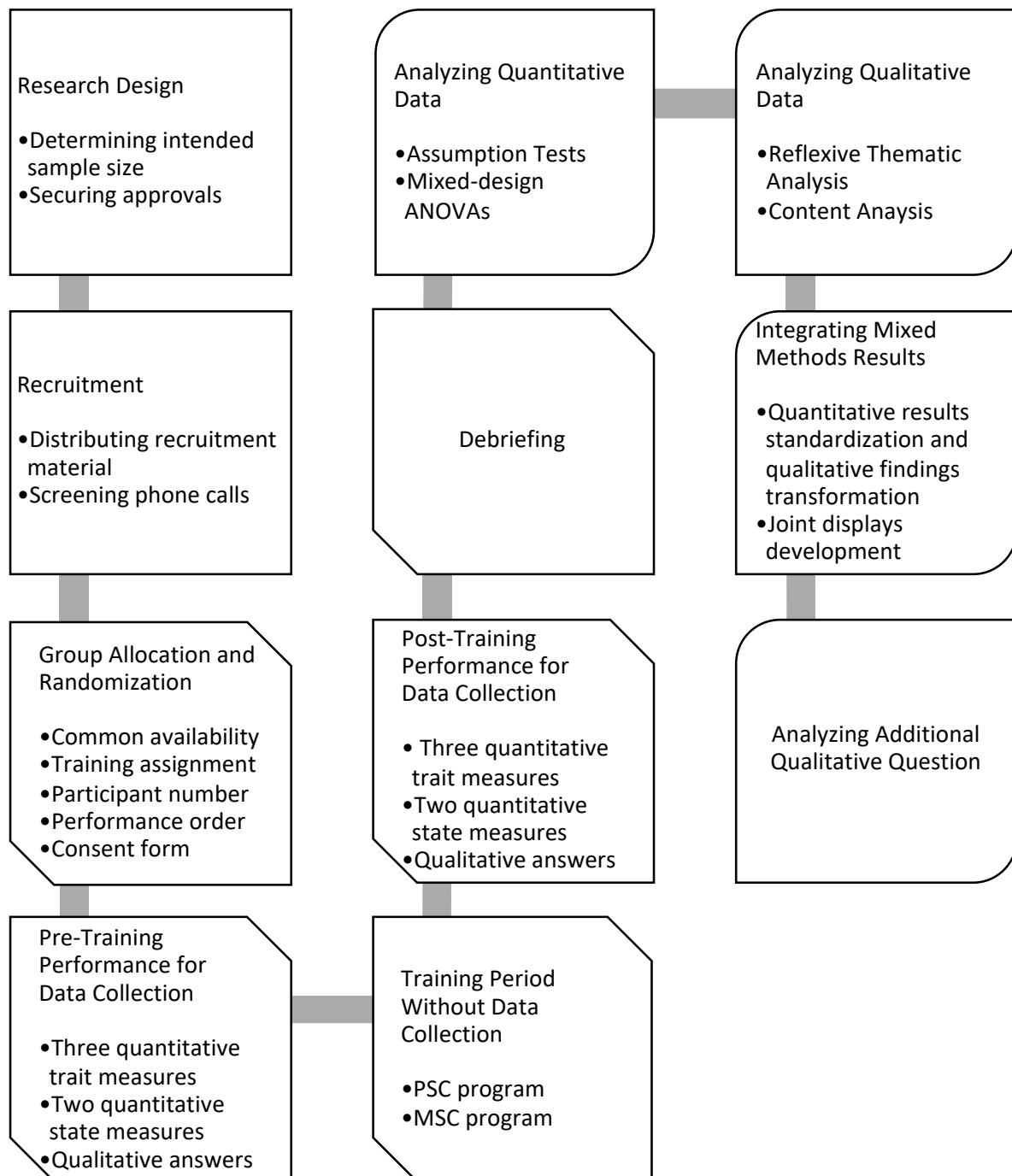
Table 6*Mixed Methods Results of Unexpected Improvement of Trait Self-Compassion in the PSC Group*

Quantitative Results		Qualitative Findings	
Trait Self-Compassion Improvements in the PSC and MSC Groups		Theme and Thematic Representation	
		PSC %	MSC %
		Familiarized With the Fellow Group Members	29 11
		Adjusted Attitude Towards External Judgement	18 17
		Enhanced Concentration	12 17
		Perceived Autotelic Experience	12 6
Example Quotations From PSC Participants After Post-Training Performance			
“The main reason might be that I became familiar with my group members.” (Participant P09)			
“Perhaps it is because, after spending some time with my fellow group members, I became more familiar with them and no longer felt the initial sense of unfamiliarity.” (Participant P15)			
“I no longer pay much attention to the reactions and emotions of those around me.” (Participant P10)			
“I do not care much about others’ opinions anymore. Since I stopped caring, I feel less severe anxiety.” (Participant P13)			
“I focused more attention on the ongoing performance than before.” (Participant P10)			
“I was very happy and enjoyed it.” (Participant P01)			

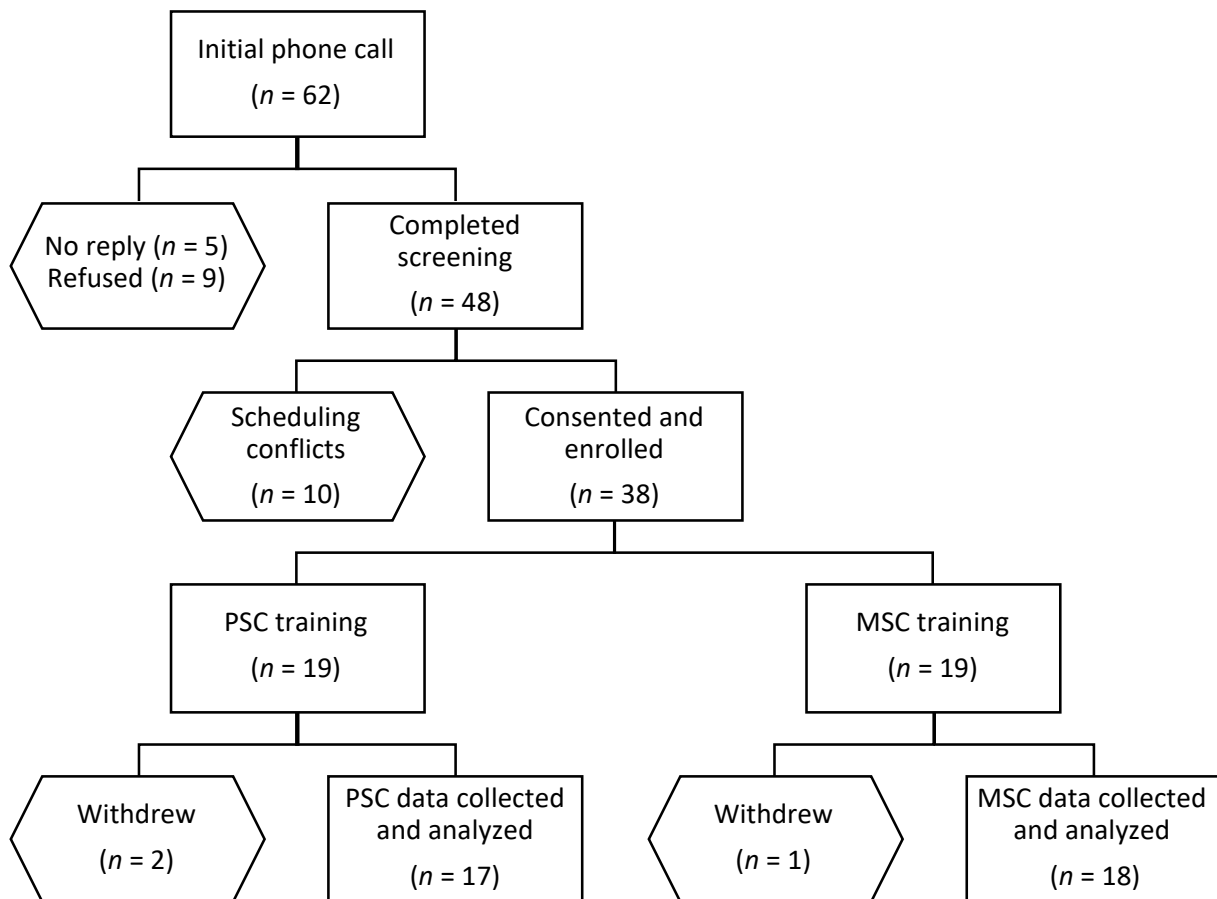
Note. Compared to the expected increase of trait self-compassion in the MSC participants, which resulted in a 16% improvement, the 4% unexpected increase in the trait self-compassion levels of the PSC participants is noteworthy despite the absence of any self-compassion-related content in the PSC program. PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion.

Figure 1*Theoretical Model of Self-Compassion for Improving Positive Music Performance Experiences*

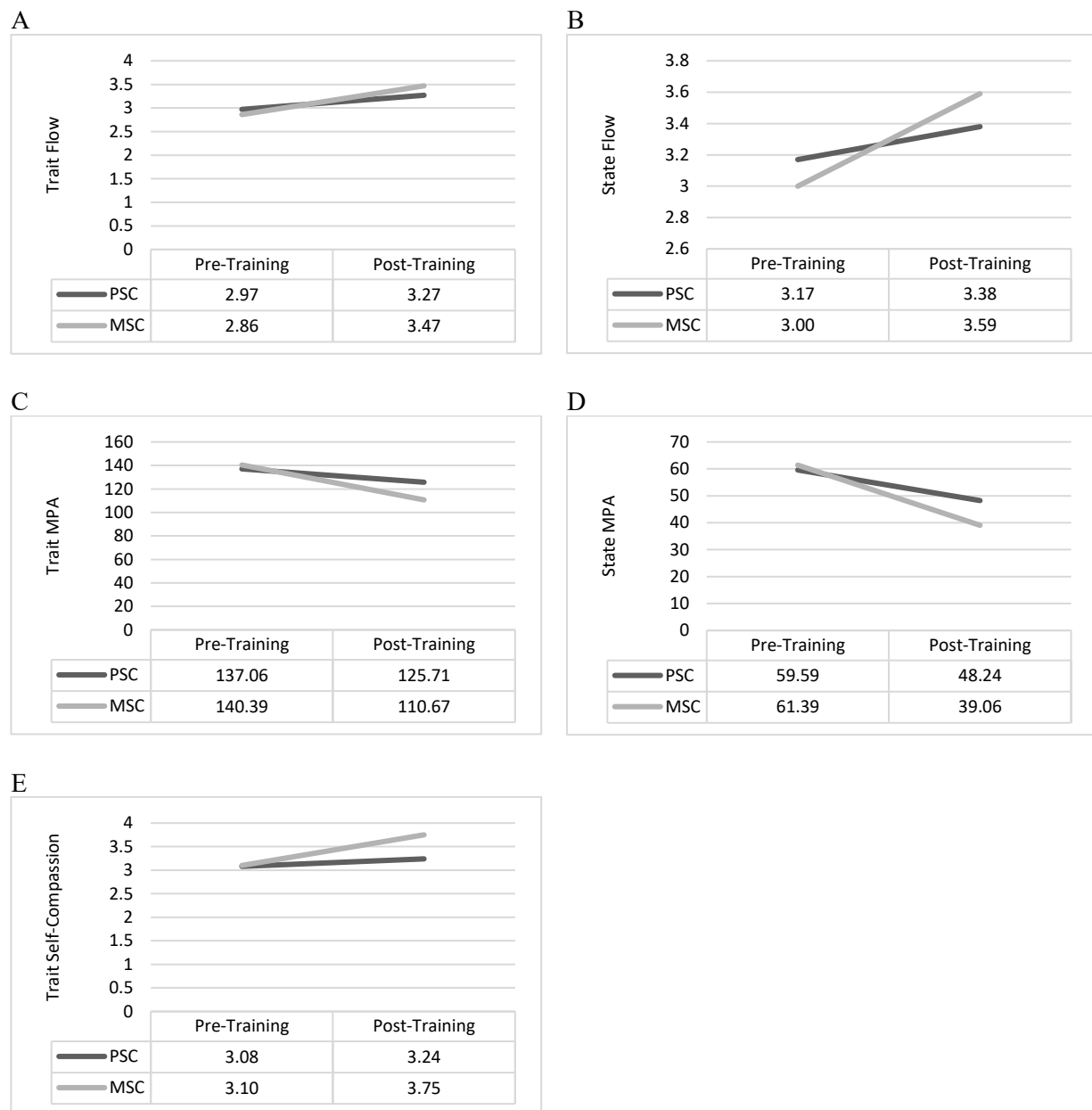
Note. Given the complexity of the theory of MPA, this model does not encompass all possible factors that contribute to MPA. MPA = Music Performance Anxiety.

Figure 2*Overview of the Mixed Methods Research Process*

Note. PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion; ANOVA = analysis of variance.

Figure 3*Participant Flow*

Note. PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion.

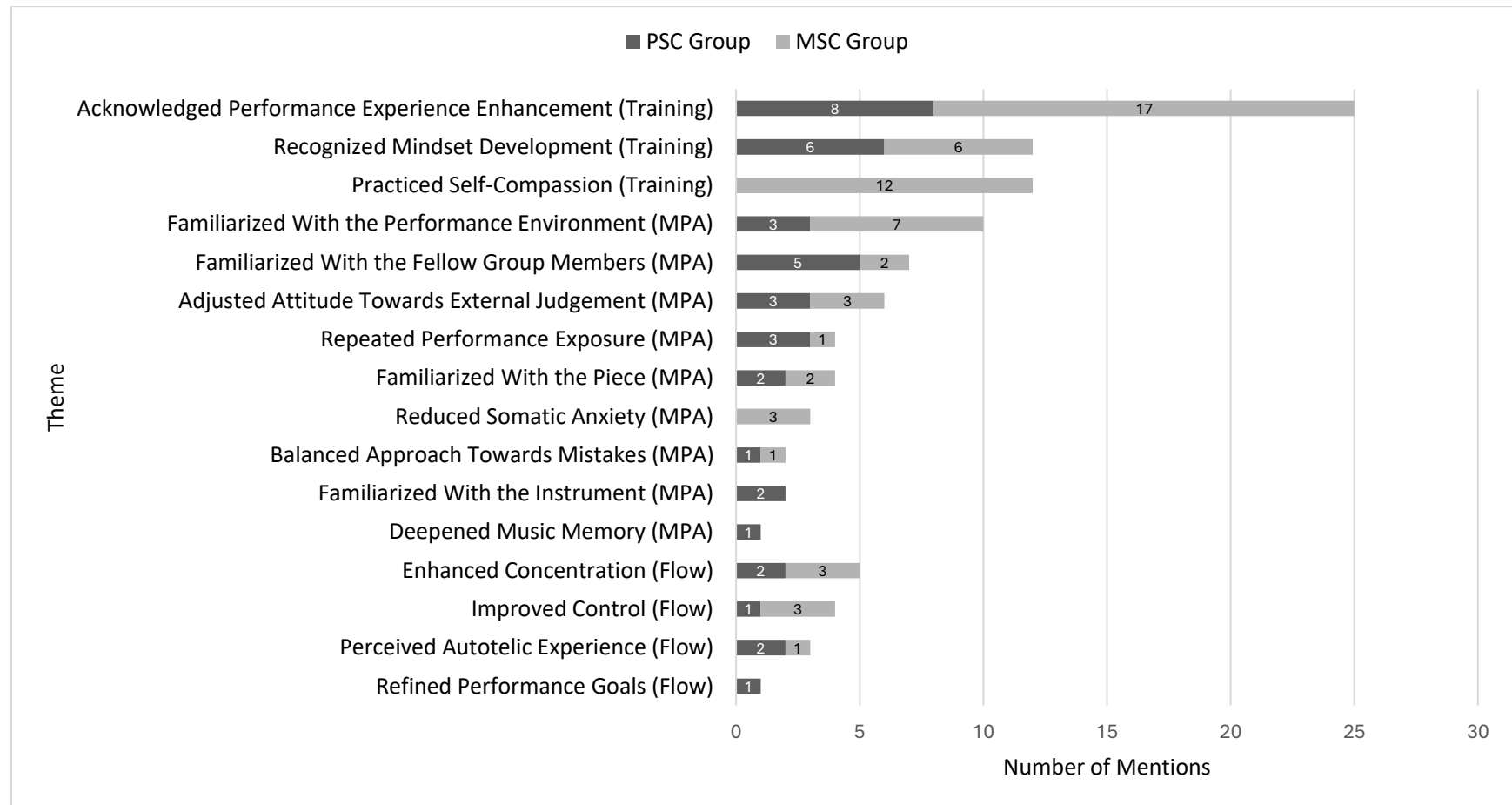
Figure 4*Mean Score Changes in Five Psychological Constructs from Pre- to Post-Training*

Note. Participants' trait and state measures were collected twice: pre-training and post-training. Specifically, state MPA was assessed immediately before their pre-training and post-training performances, while state flow was assessed immediately after their pre-training and post-training performances. Trait flow was assessed using the Chinese version of the Dispositional

Flow Scale–2 (33 items, 5-point Likert scale). State flow was assessed using the Chinese version of the Flow State Scale–2 (33 items, 5-point Likert scale). Trait MPA was assessed using my certified Chinese translation of the Kenny Music Performance Anxiety Inventory-Revised (40 items, 7-point Likert scale). State MPA was assessed using the Chinese version of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory-State (20 items, 4-point Likert scale). Trait self-compassion was assessed using the Chinese version of the Self-Compassion Scale (26 items, 5-point Likert scale). PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion; MPA = Music Performance Anxiety.

Figure 5

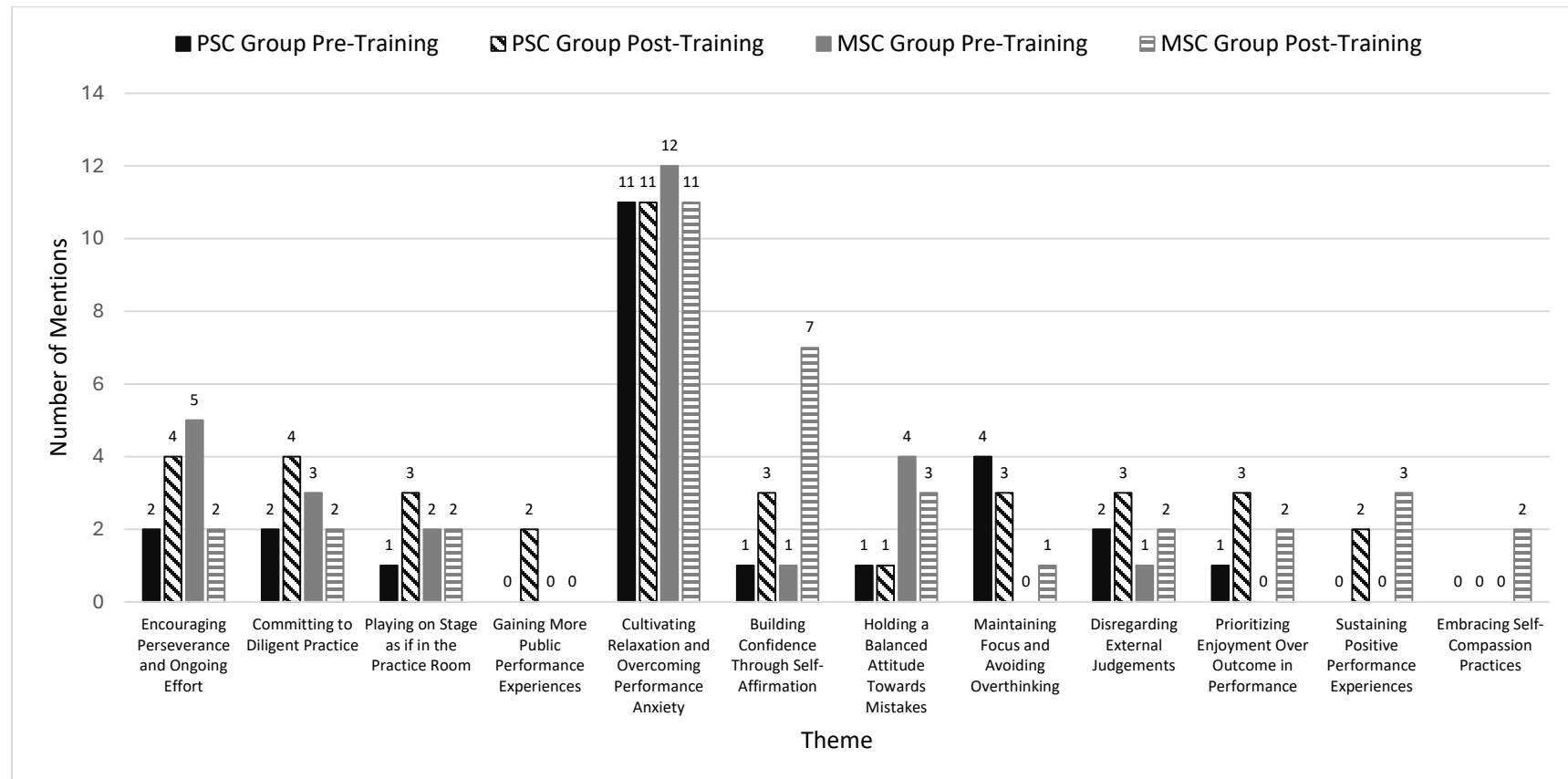
Themes of Contributing Factors to Participants' Changed Music Performance Experiences



Note. PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion; MPA = Music Performance Anxiety.

Figure 6

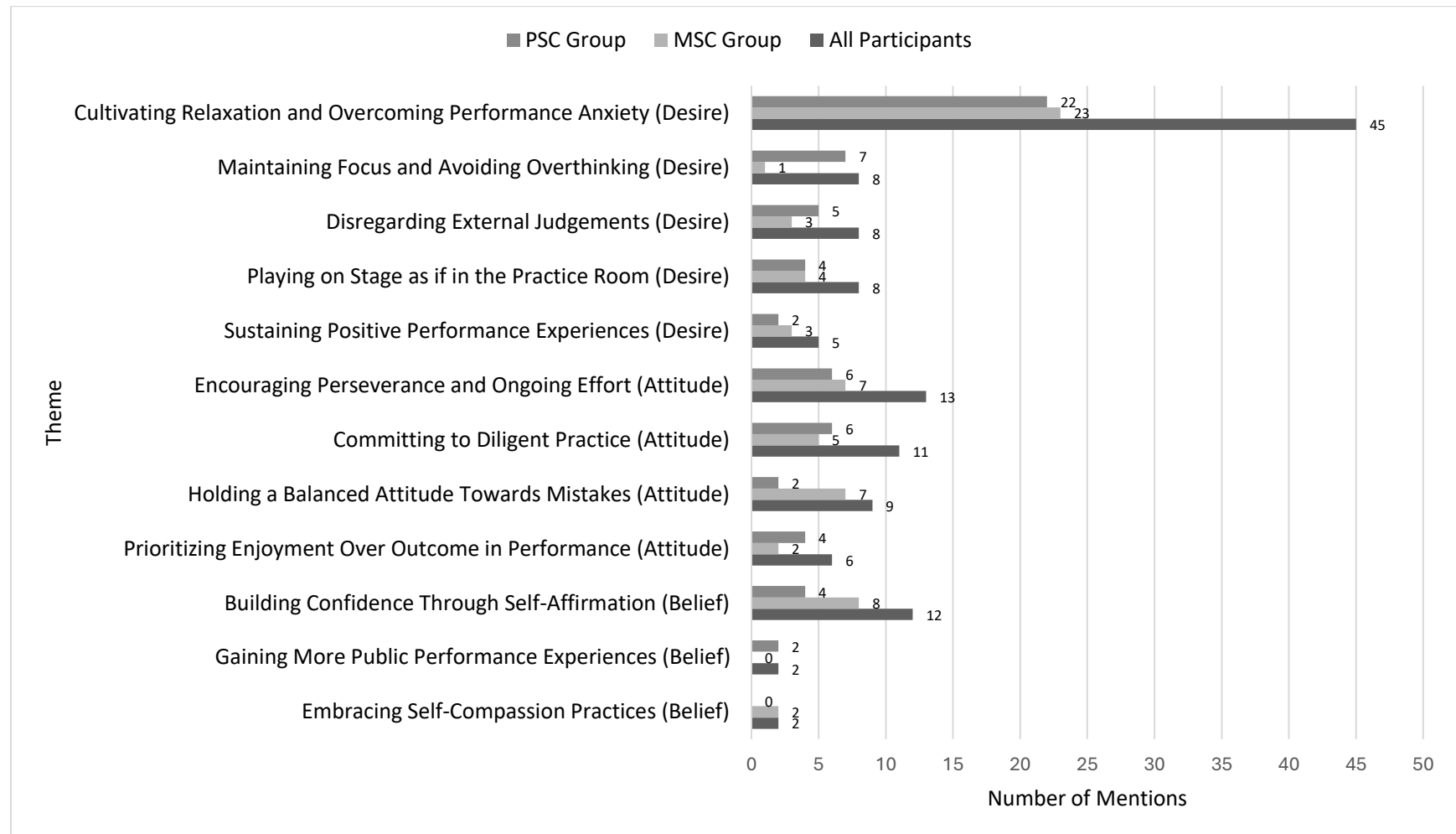
Themes of PSC and MSC Participants' Prospective Views on Future Performances From Pre-Training to Post-Training



Note. The four Musical Themes come first, followed by the eight Psychological Themes, reading from left to right along the bottom of the figure. PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion.

Figure 7

Themes Reflecting Participants' Desires, Attitudes, and Beliefs Through an Ethnographic Perspective



Note. PSC = Performance Strategies Class; MSC = Mindful Self-Compassion.