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EXCELLENCE IN THE
PERFORMING ARTS: A Study of Elite
Musicians' Mental Readiness to Perform

by Carole Talbot-Honeck
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A thesis submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Sciences
in Kinanthropology

Running head: EXCELLENCE IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

 Carole Talbot-Honeck, Ottawa, Canada, 1994



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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Gerhart Hetzel, former first concert master of the Vienna Philharmonic. He was a most respected colleague, friend and mentor of Rainer's. He was dedicated to music and to his students and was very interested in this thesis because he could see a way of helping them in it. I'm very sorry he did not get to read it.

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Abstract

Sixteen elite classical musicians from six countries were interviewed to explore and document their mental readiness to excel and to assess the relevance of Orlick's model of excellence (1989) to musical excellence. Five of Orlick's components were found to be common among elite musicians: an extremely high level of commitment, a clear focus on the music, an ability to refocus, highly developed imagery (or visualization) skills and constructive performance evaluation. Musicians do not have very specific or detailed mental preparation plans for practicing or for performing; they prefer to follow general guidelines. Three qualities were added to the list of skills/qualities required to excel in music: spontaneity, creativity and flexibility. Other determining factors in the musician's level of excellence were the nature of their goals, the perspective they carry into their musical endeavours and their abiding love and enjoyment of music. Problems encountered are discussed and future avenues of research are suggested.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	3
COMMITMENT	4
FOCUSING	5
REFOCUSING	6
MENTAL IMAGERY	7
POSITIVE PREPARATION FOR TRAINING	8
POSITIVE PREPARATION FOR PERFORMANCE	9
CONSTRUCTIVE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION	10
PERFORMANCE ANXIETY	11
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	13
METHODOLOGY	13
SUBJECTS	13
INSTRUMENT	14

RESEARCH DESIGN	15
PROCEDURE	16
DATA ANALYSIS	17
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	18
DEMOGRAPHICS	19
ESSENCE OF EXCELLENCE	22
Commitment	23
Goals/Dreams/Motivation	27
Goals Pertaining to Self-Growth and/or Personal Excellence	28
Goals Pertaining to Music	28
Goals of Communicating/Expressing Something through Music	29
Self-esteem/Self-confidence	32
Perspective for Excellence	37
Opportunities for Growth; Continuous Learning	37
Keeping Sight of the Whole Picture	39
Positive Thinking	40
Feeling in Control	41
Enjoyment	42
PRACTICING	46
Motivation to Practice	47
Goals for Practicing	49
Mental Preparation for Practice	50

Practice Session	52
Simulation	55
MENTAL READINESS TO PERFORM	58
Pre-Performance Routine	59
Day-of-Performance Routine	60
Rest/nap in the Afternoon	60
Eating Only Light Things or Not Eating Just Before	61
Practicing/Rehearsing	61
Pre-Performance Routine (at the Hall)	61
Mental Preparation for Performance	64
Focus for Performance	65
Mental Preparation Plan	67
Activation Level	69
Low Activation Level	70
Performance Anxiety	71
Causes of Performance Anxiety	73
Solutions - Helpful Suggestions for Combating Anxiety	76
Mental Training	80
Teachers/Sources of Influence	82
Family Background/Parents	82
Teachers	83
Colleagues	85
Students	86
Other Sources of Influence	86
Mental Readiness to Perform - Summary	87

QUALITIES/MENTAL READINESS SKILLS	89
Concentration/Focusing	89
Distraction Control/Refocusing	91
Distractions	92
Distractions from Within	92
Distractions from Outside	93
Ways of Refocusing	94
Visualization/Mental Imagery	96
Uses of Visualization	97
Memorization	97
Musical Interpretation	98
Mental Practice	100
Motivation/Goals	100
Simulation	101
Other Uses of Visualization	101
Quality of Images	101
Constructive Evaluation	106
Other Qualities Required to Excel	109
Spontaneity and Creativity	109
Flexibility	112
 ORLICK'S MODEL OF EXCELLENCE	 115
 LIMITATIONS - PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED	 118
 RECOMMENDATIONS - FUTURE AVENUES OF RESEARCH	 121

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WIND PLAYERS AND STRING PLAYERS	122
BALANCE IN ONE'S LIFE	123
DRUGS AND ALCOHOL	124
KNOWLEDGE OF SELF	124
CONCLUSION	124
REFERENCES	126
APPENDIX A:	131
MUSICIAN INTERVIEW GUIDE	131
APPENDIX B:	137
INTERVIEW # 1	137
APPENDIX C:	173
SUMMARY OF RESULTS	173

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, more and more has been written about the important contribution of mental readiness skills in enhancing performance (Gauron, 1984; May & Asken, 1987; Orlick, 1990). Orlick (1989) has drawn upon years of experience in working with elite athletes and conducting research documenting mental readiness for Olympic competition (Orlick & Partington, 1988) to formulate a model of excellence.

Orlick's original model elaborated on those components that were, according to him, necessary to excel in one's chosen sport: commitment, focusing, refocusing, mental imagery, positive preparation for training, positive preparation for performance and, performance evaluation. Orlick (1992) later revised this model to include belief, along with commitment, as the center (or hub) of excellence and to combine mental readiness to perform and to practice under one heading (mental readiness). Since the present research was designed and conducted using Orlick's original model (1989) as a framework, that format has been maintained throughout (see the section on Orlick's model of excellence at the end of the Results and Discussion for a comparison of the results with the new version).

While Orlick's (1989) model of excellence was developed based on interviews with elite Olympic athletes, other fields where performance excellence is a goal are beginning to recognize the value of a thorough understanding of human excellence: the world of management (Loehr & McLaughlin, 1986), medicine (McDonald & Orlick, 1993), the military (Druckman & Swets, 1988; Orlick & Partington, 1988) and, the performing arts (Green & Gallwey, 1986; Grindea, 1984; Molo & Ness, 1992; Piperek, 1981; Reubart, 1985).

While the performing arts are probably the most closely related to elite athletic performance in terms of the demands on mental readiness skills and mental toughness, only the very beginnings of performance psychology as applied to the arts are present in

the literature. Stage fright is a fashionable topic that has been addressed in the research (e.g., Clark & Agras, 1991; Grindea, 1984; Lehrer, 1981; Steptoe, 1989; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987; Reubart, 1985) but, that is the extent of performance psychology. Mental preparation is seen as a remedial approach in dealing with neurotic and/or incapacitating performance anxiety. This is the stage at which sport psychology was in the late 1960's (May & Asken, 1987).

A comprehensive approach to analyzing and explaining the contribution of the mind in performance excellence is needed. One must look beyond this pathological perspective of performance towards a more holistic approach in order to be able to help performers grow in their chosen art and attain their goal of excellence without compromising their mental balance and their enjoyment in "playing".

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The primary purpose of this research was to explore and document the mental readiness to perform and excel of elite classical musicians. Orlick's original model of excellence (1989) offered a suitable theoretical framework to present the review of literature, to develop the instrument for the research and to present the results of the study. The model was considered useful because it was believed to be comprehensive and because the research data on which it was partly based was collected with a research instrument that has since been validated by several studies documenting mental readiness skills in elite athletes (Barbour & Orlick, 1994; Imai & Orlick, 1994; McCaffery & Orlick, 1989; Orlick & Partington, 1988) and elite surgeons (McDonald & Orlick, 1993).

A secondary purpose of this research was to assess the relevance of Orlick's model of excellence to the performing arts, namely, to elite classical musicians.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a foreword to Psyched (Orlick & Partington, 1986), Abby Hoffman, former Director of Sport Canada stated that: "The stories in this book demonstrate that if we neglect the mental side of high performance, we will do so at our peril."

Likewise, Reubart (1985) stressed the importance of understanding the mental processes involved in playing a musical instrument at a high degree of excellence. He stated that:

"After reading Maslow, and becoming convinced of the wisdom of polling the 'Olympic gold medal winners', I found confirmation for most of my suppositions in the diverse responses to my queries by pianists who enjoy reputations for reliability as well as excellence in performance. What are the pianist's thought processes during performance when he is at his best? If common denominators could be discovered, would it not be wise to model after such thought processes whenever possible? Would not those whose 'crooked' thinking stands in the way of their potential achievement come closer to its realization with such knowledge?" (p.xx)

If one replaced the word "pianist" with the word "athlete" in the above citation, one would both introduce and justify Orlick and Partington's research with elite Olympic athletes (1988). Orlick's model (1989) evolved from just such a "polling" of what it is that goes on in the mind of champions when their performances are good and when they are less than good. One purpose of the Orlick and Partington study (1988) was to generate knowledge to help other aspiring athletes. There is a need for studies of this nature with musicians if we are to understand what makes them great and be able to help in their pursuit of excellence.

The parallels between top athletes and top musicians certainly make intuitive sense; support for such comparisons comes from books and articles in each of the two respective fields: the psychology of music (Fogle, 1982; Grindea, 1984; Lipton, 1987; Ross, 1985;

Whitaker & Tanner, 1987) and sport psychology (Gallwey, 1974; Gauron, 1984; Hanson, 1992; Molo & Ness, 1992; Nideffer & Sharpe, 1978; Orlick, 1989;). Musicians at the most elite levels have already recognized the value and pertinence of sport psychology in addressing their concerns and they strive to apply it to their field. For example, evidence of this interest can be seen in the participation of Tony Innauer, former Austrian Olympic gold medallist in ski jumping and trainer of the austrian ski jumping team, as guest speaker at the International Horn Player's Symposium in Linz in 1991. The systematic effort to understand human excellence as a whole in the performing arts is still missing however. It is believed that Orlick's model provides a suitable theoretical framework for studying applied performance psychology.

Orlick (1989) identifies seven basic components to excellence: commitment, focusing, refocusing, mental imagery, positive preparation for training, positive preparation for performance and, performance evaluation. The model evolved in part from empirical research done by Orlick and Partington (1988) to determine what the mental links to excellence are. They studied what Olympic athletes did to achieve excellence. They looked at what these athletes did when everything went well and they performed at their best and what they did when they did not perform as well. Similarities of thinking and mental preparation were found among successful athletes. These mental processes were also found to be different for less successful athletes. Thus, invaluable insights were gained as to the mental skills necessary to excel.

The seven components listed by Orlick as necessary to excel in sports will be briefly explained using Orlick's own definitions. Books and research in the performing arts pertaining to each element of excellence will also be discussed in this review of literature.

COMMITMENT

This first "excellence component" is the underpinning of excellence according to Orlick (1989). Commitment is only present when the individual has strong personal reasons

to excel or a strong desire to be the very best that he or she can possibly be. The degree to which an individual is committed to the goal of excellence determines the extent of his/her success, given his/her talent and potential. It will determine the amount of energy (mental or physical) and time that that person is willing to invest towards the attainment of his/her goal (Orlick, 1989; Orlick & Partington, 1986; Reubart, 1985; Wills & Cooper, 1984).

Nowhere else is the need to set priorities and follow them through as obvious as in athletics and the performing arts. Musicians, like athletes, come to their instrument (or sport) very early in life; many other activities are sacrificed for the sake of excelling in their sport or music. Many hours are spent mastering the basic skills of the discipline (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Whitaker & Tanner, 1987) and many frustrations must be overcome along the way to technical mastery (Reubart, 1985). Without talent, proper technical and physical training and, commitment to the discipline, there is no hope of going on to excellence (Lehrer, 1984; Orlick, 1989).

If the individual is committed to pursuing excellence and dedicated to developing his/her potential to the fullest, the following six "mental readiness skills" are critical to his/her achievement of excellence (Orlick, 1989).

FOCUSING

Orlick (1989) defined focusing as a total concentration on the task at hand, an ability to connect totally to what one is doing to the exclusion of all other irrelevant thoughts, ideas or events.

This critical skill has been investigated thoroughly in both sport psychology (Gauron, 1984; May & Asken, 1987; Orlick, 1990, 1989; Orlick & Partington, 1988) and music psychology (Fogle, 1982; Havas, 1984; Reubart, 1985; Tobacyk & Downs, 1986; Whitaker & Tanner, 1987).

Piperek (1981) studied the medical, psychological, sociological and legal strain factors in a symphony orchestra musician's profession. He pointed out that musicians

required intense concentration for two to three hours at a time (the duration of a concert) and this, at a time of day when the regenerative processes of the mind are normally taking over (after 8:00 p.m.).

Most researchers investigating performance anxiety and ways of dealing with it listed an inability to concentrate on the task at hand and the fear of not being able to do it as major sources of anxiety and hence, major causes of performance decrement (Grindea, 1984; Reubart, 1985; Whitaker & Tanner, 1987).

Reubart (1985) contended that a good performance required the pianist to have mastered all technical difficulties of the music to the extent that they were relegated to the subconscious thus freeing the conscious thoughts to concentrate fully on the musical gestalt and the desired interpretation of the piece.

REFOCUSING

Refocusing is defined as the ability to come back to the desired focus when confronted with distractions, negative inputs or setbacks (Orlick, 1989). While this topic is sadly neglected in the music research, it is hinted at as a necessary way of coping during performance to avoid undue anxiety. For example, Lehrer (1984) stated that proper artistic preparation "...should include for some predictable contingencies: for example, a memory slip or feelings of muscle tightness. Preparation of the music should include strategies for gracefully finding one's place when one is lost and for relaxing muscles that have, because of anxiety and/or technical problems, become tight" (p.145).

Lehrer (cited in Whitaker & Tanner, 1987) noted that some techniques she has found helpful in combating performance tension are: (a) visualizing a performance situation, (b) pre-planning how to deal with performance errors [italics added] and, (c) taping performances.

Any comprehensive understanding of excellence should include concrete ways used by elite performers to refocus or to "find one's place" in the psychological sense of returning the focus of attention to the task at hand.

MENTAL IMAGERY

Mental imagery, often also referred to as mental rehearsal, mental practice or imagery, allows the individual to "pre-experience" or "re-experience" desired performance skills or outcomes in his/her own mind (Orlick, 1989). It is a widely recognized tool for acquiring basic motor skills (Druckman & Swets, 1988; Gauron, 1984; May & Asken, 1987). It has also been recognized as a valuable addition (and time-saver skill) to the physical training in the acquisition of motor skills for trombonists (Ross, 1985) and for conductors (Bird & Wilson, 1988). Lim and Lippman (1991) also found that mental practice, especially when combined with listening to a recording, helped students memorize piano music faster.

In working with elite athletes, mental imagery is a very powerful tool in the mental preparation for training and performance (discussed in the next two sections). In the Orlick and Partington study (1988), top athletes were found to have very well developed imagery skills and to use them daily. "They used imagery to prepare themselves to get what they wanted out of training, to perfect skills within the training session, to make technical corrections, to imagine themselves being successful in competition, to set a positive frame of focus within competitions and to see themselves achieving their goals." (Orlick, 1989, p.26)

Some very interesting if not recent literature (Agnew, 1922; Lindauer, 1977; Richardson, 1969) indicated that artists and aesthetic people had superior mental imagery skills. For example, Agnew (cited in Lindauer, 1977) found that musicians "...had clearer and more introspective imagery than a group of psychologists and children. The imagery was often reported to be as clear as the actual auditory experience felt in listening to music" (p. 350). Agnew (1922), in a bibliographic study of five musicians also indicated

that accomplished musicians had "...a keen sensory enjoyment [and] vivid imaginative power [and that their imagery had a] voluntary quality" (p. 287).

In light of such interesting and promising findings, it is hard to understand why the use of mental imagery in music has not been more thoroughly researched in recent years. While visualization is recognized by Whitaker and Tanner (1987) as a valuable tool to improve self-esteem, to change negative thoughts or to convince oneself that the desired outcome of an event is within one's reach, the use of imagery for those purposes is not well documented in the music literature. It is largely ignored by otherwise exhaustive books on musical performance anxiety such as Grindea's Tensions in the Performance of Musicians (1984) and Reubart's Anxiety and Musical Performance (1985).

POSITIVE PREPARATION FOR TRAINING

Positive and complete preparation for training involves developing effective procedures to follow in order to be in one's best frame of mind and fully focused in each training session. This allows one to maximize the benefits of the training session and to be most efficient in one's use of time and energy. For Olympic athletes, positive preparation for training included: (a) mental preparation for quality training, (b) setting clear daily goals, (c) mental imagery and, (d) making extensive use of simulation training (Orlick, 1989).

Mental preparation for practice or rehearsal is not documented in the research on music psychology as such. Contrary to what normally occurs in training for athletic performance, young musicians are generally left to their own devices when they practice. The typical learning routine involves visiting the music teacher once a week to show him/her one's progress and to receive instructions for the following week. Mental preparation for practice was seen as one area where insights gained from this research could be of great potential value to developing musicians.

Two of Orlick's four components listed under mental preparation for practice are discussed to some extent in the music literature: goal setting and the use of simulation.

The importance of short term and long term goals were recognized by Whitaker and Tanner (1987) when they pointed out that "... for most people, goal-setting is necessary in order to achieve the height of accomplishment" (p.15-16). Frustration in attaining one's goals is cited as a major contributing factor to anxiety and/or frustration in orchestra musicians (Piperek, 1981; Smith D.W.E., 1988; Smith T.S. & Murphy, 1984; Wills & Cooper, 1984). While this points to the importance of establishing challenging but realistic goals, more research will need to look at goal setting as a useful and integral part of positive preparation to both training and performance.

The importance of good and extensive simulation training has not been greatly discussed in the music literature that was reviewed. However, it is thought that this omission is not because musicians fail to use simulation in training for a performance but rather, because such training is taken for granted as an integral part of musical education, at least in the formative years. For example, playing for an audience, sometimes made up of family and friends, or "Klassenabend" (class recitals) are part of the routine of young performers so they get used to playing concerts in front of an audience. Whether such simulation is still used by established musicians when preparing for important concerts was explored in this research.

POSITIVE PREPARATION FOR PERFORMANCE

Positive preparation for performance involves developing a systematic and effective approach to performance. As is the case with positive preparation for training, performers must have a way of placing themselves in the best frame of mind for performing. It is not enough to prepare physically and "hope for the best". Rather, the performers must discover what focus works best for them. They must then draw upon this knowledge to mentally prepare for performance. This involves developing and utilizing an effective pre-event plan (which could include the use of mental imagery) and a refined event focus plan (Orlick, 1989).

This component of excellence along with positive preparation for training are certainly the most neglected in the music literature. Do music coaches not recognize the value of actively preparing mentally for a performance or do they take it for granted, not wanting to interfere with the individual formula of each performer? What about mentally preparing for practice and/or rehearsals? These two components were carefully addressed in the present research.

CONSTRUCTIVE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Orlick (1989) stated that "developing and following effective post event debriefing procedures in order to draw out important lessons from all performance situations and to act upon those lessons in preparation for subsequent event[s]" was of prime importance. He went on to say that "All victories, losses, mistakes, or setbacks [can] become positive lessons which are acted upon with the goal of improved consistency and a higher level of personal excellence." (p.26)

Such performance evaluation was not discussed in the literature reviewed. However, it seems like it must be just as important for musicians to use all performances in a positive way in order to learn to avoid recurring poor performances. As well, these "less than best" performances should not be dwelt upon. Performers must realize that one bad performance is not "the end of the world"; they must draw the lessons from the performance and then, "put it away" or move on.

In an indirect reference to the importance of constructive performance evaluation, some of the literature reviewed indicated that failing to separate one's overall value or self-esteem from one's performance on a given night is one of the major causes of performance anxiety (Lehrer, 1981; Reubart, 1985; Whitaker & Tanner, 1987).

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

This section has been added to the list of seven components since it is one of the most extensively discussed topic in the literature reviewed. It was not discussed in Orlick's model of excellence.

Various causes of performance anxiety have already been pointed out throughout this review of literature: inability to concentrate on the task at hand or the fear of not being able to do so (Whitaker & Tanner, 1987); performance errors that lead to a loss of concentration (Lehrer, cited in Whitaker & Tanner, 1987); frustration in attaining one's goals (Piperek, 1981; Smith, D.W.E., 1988, Smith, T.S. & Murphy, 1984; Wills & Cooper, 1984); having too high expectations (either from oneself or from others) of one's own performance and "catastrophising" or exaggerating the consequences of a less-than-perfect performance thus endangering one's own sense of self (Lehrer, 1981; Piperek, 1985; Whitaker & Tanner, 1987).

Craske and Craig (1984) compared two theories to try and explain musical performance anxiety: the three-systems model from Lang and the self-efficacy theory proposed by Bandura. While the three-systems model explained the discordance of the behavioral, physiological and verbal systems' response to fear and anxiety, the self-efficacy theory explained the interrelation between one's perception of his/her own ability to perform particular tasks and his/her subjective automatic and behavioral anxiety. If performers are well prepared and confident of their preparation, they will be much less subject to performance anxiety.

Hamann (1982), in an assessment of anxiety in instrumental and vocal performances found that anxiety was not always detrimental to musical performance quality. Anxiety was found to enhance performance with certain subjects who possessed a very high level of training or ability (task mastery). Fredrikson and Gunnarsson (1992) tried to understand how performance anxiety affects the performance of musicians by analysing

the differences in neuroendocrine, cardiovascular and subjective reactions when high- and low-anxious performers play their instruments privately or publicly. They also found that increased anxiety and physical activation was not necessarily detrimental to the musicians' performance when assessed by a rater who listened to their performance but could not see them.

The effect of anxiety on performance depends greatly on how it is perceived by the performer. If it creates a "trying-too-hard" effect, the highly automatized behaviour is disrupted by the anxious effort to avoid mistakes (Fogle, 1982). All major forms of treatment against performance anxiety involve bringing the fear of failure into perspective (Steptoe, 1989). Performers must come to see that negative self-thoughts do not have a basis in reality and that catastrophizing or tending to view bad or unfortunate situations as catastrophes is a common but nonetheless irrational thought process (Lehrer, 1984).

Various methods used to combat performance anxiety are discussed in the music literature: the quieting response (developed by Stroebe), eastern self-regulation disciplines (e.g., yoga, tai-chi, aikido), the Alexander technique, Feldenkrais, progressive relaxation (started by Jacobson), autogenic training, and biofeedback (Grindea, 1984; Morasky, Reynolds & Sowell, 1983; Reubart, 1985; Whitaker & Tanner, 1987). All of these techniques meet with more or less success depending on the level of anxiety, the personality of the performer and his/her needs and beliefs. Musicians have also been known to resort to tranquilizers (e.g., Beta blockers or alcohol) to relieve or control their performance anxiety (Neftel et al, 1982; Piperek, 1981; Wills & Cooper, 1984).

While beta blockers help control sympathetic responses to stress (Clark & Agras, 1991; Neftel et al, 1982; Steptoe, 1989; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987) and thus can improve the technical performance of anxious musicians, some evidence suggests that there is not a direct relation between these physiological responses to stress and perceived anxiety or

even, the level of performance of the musicians (Clark & Agras, 1991; Steptoe, 1989; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987).

In cases of extreme or neurotic anxiety, clinical methods such as systematic desensitization or flooding have been used (Reubart, 1985).

All this research shows that attention is being paid to performance anxiety. It also points once again to the need to evolve from a symptom-treating, pathological view of performance towards a fully integrated, holistic theory of excellence that will allow the performers to consistently achieve excellence, if such is their goal, without losing their love for and enjoyment of what they are doing.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This review of literature has shown that while the field of music or performance psychology is active in trying to understand the mental processes involved in performing, it lacks a unifying model of excellence that would allow us to use these mental skills in a consistent way.

An effort was made to review the literature using Orlick's model (1989) as a theoretical framework. The parallels between sports and the performing arts were pointed out, lending credence to this use of Orlick's model to explore the mental processes of musicians before, during and after their performances. As Reubart (1985) pointed out, it is by polling elite performers that the greatest insights will be gained concerning what must be done to consistently excel in performance. This was the purpose of the present research.

METHODOLOGY

SUBJECTS

Sixteen internationally renowned soloists in the field of classical music served as subjects for this research. Participants were selected on the basis of their reputation for excellence. Such criteria as the musicians' participation in international music festivals

(e.g., Salzburg, Bregenz, Tanglewood, Bayreuth), their having been a guest soloist with orchestras of international standing (e.g., Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, London Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra), their having made at least 3 recordings on national labels or, their being a member of a world renowned chamber music ensemble (e.g., trio, quartet, quintet) were considered in this selection process. Availability was a necessary criteria since interviews required a long time and world class musicians are very busy and travel extensively. Efforts were made to interview both string and wind players as well as pianists.

A list of the names of artists interviewed were given to 10 professional musicians along with a list of the criteria for selection. They were asked to confirm the subjects' level of excellence. While over 30 interviews were conducted, only 16 were retained by the panel of musicians (see Problems Encountered). These 16 musicians constituted the sample for the present study (see Demographics).

Of the 16 musicians selected, 4 had met the criteria for excellence in the past (or had been well on the way to doing it at one time) but they all had for some reason, taken a step back. It was considered important to include them in the sample for purposes of comparison since it could be argued that factors other than technical/musical mastery was the determining factor in their not achieving (or not wanting to achieve) their goals (e.g., problems with performance anxiety or lack of commitment).

INSTRUMENT

Participants were interviewed using the Musician Interview Guide, adapted from Orlick and Partington's Athlete Interview Guide (1988). This guide consisted of 25 mostly open-ended questions with three questions requiring numerical ratings from the interviewee (see Data Analysis for reasons why the numerical rating questions were not analysed).

The interview guide had a high face validity because it was based on a research instrument that has been validated and was tested in a pilot study with seven professional musicians. These musicians were interviewed using a proposed Interview Guide and were asked to provide feedback as to the pertinence of the questions, the order in which they were asked as well as the vocabulary used. Musicians were also asked whether they had any other suggestions that would add to the completeness of the interview. The order of the questions as well as the questions themselves were adapted after each of these pilot interviews to ensure clear comprehension and a good flow during the interviews. Tapes of these interviews were reviewed by an experienced research interviewer to ensure that the researcher used an acceptable and effective interviewing technique and that the guide was adequate. Again, some adjustments were made to the interview guide and interviewing procedure on the basis of that feedback. The finalized version of the Musician Interview Guide was included as Appendix A.

RESEARCH DESIGN

All interviews were conducted using the Musician Interview Guide. The interview approach was considered most appropriate for several reasons. As stated by Orlick and Partington (1988), interviews provided an opportunity for the open probing necessary to explore elite musicians' mental preparation strategies, interviews enabled the investigator to learn and understand the terms musicians use to discuss mental preparation topics and, interviews scheduled at the musicians' convenience increased the likelihood that highly sought after performers would participate in the study.

The interview study was designed to provide information that would allow within-subject and between-subject comparisons. Within-subject comparisons could be made since questions pertaining to "best" and "less than best" performances were included. Between-subject comparisons were made possible by extracting similarities as well as differences from the answers to the questions by the different musicians interviewed.

PROCEDURE

It has been noted by previous researchers (Kreiner & Orlick, 1993; McCaffrey & Orlick, 1984; McDonald & Orlick, 1993; Orlick & Partington, 1988) that direct personal contact, through a contact person or through personal initiative, at an appropriate time and place is by far the most direct and effective way to approach elite performers for the purpose of an interview. Since this approach was considered feasible with regards to contacting elite musicians (e.g., at the concert hall after a rehearsal), it was the approach used by the researcher for the purposes of this study. The original personal contact was used by the interviewer to introduce herself, to briefly explain the purpose of the proposed research, the reasons why the musicians had been selected for the study as well as what would be requested of them. It was also pointed out that the performers themselves might benefit from their participation in the study and the musicians were assured that the interviews were confidential (i.e., that no names would be associated with the specific content of the interviews without prior approval from the interviewee).

Most interviews were set up and conducted during two international festivals in Austria (the "Mozartwoche" and the "Salzburg Festspiele") from 1991 to 1993. These festivals typically bring together many soloists with important international standing. Other interviews were scheduled in Europe, Japan and North America as required.

Following the procedure established by Orlick and Partington (1988), all interviews were recorded in their entirety and, verbatim transcripts were made from the recordings. Five of the transcripts were selected at random and sent to the musicians interviewed for authentication of content. Such an authentication meant that the musician thought the transcript reflected adequately what transpired during the interview and that the interviewer did not influence his/her responses in any way. The five participants asked readily supplied this authentication.

DATA ANALYSIS

The transcripts of the interviews were qualitatively analysed. First, two interviews were read and reviewed by the researcher. From these first readings of the raw data, initial tags were made "...by identifying key words, sentences, and/or phrases exemplifying what the interviewee focused upon or emphasized" (Wentzell, 1986, p. 39). The tags with similar meanings (or meaning units) were then regrouped to create categories following the procedural guidelines outlined by Côté, Salmela, Baria and Russell (1993). After meeting with another coder experienced in qualitative studies in order to clarify and agree upon the category labels used, two further interviews were analysed; categories were enlarged to encompass other similar comments from other musicians and other categories were added as required to cover ideas not expressed by the previous interviewees. Four such meetings were required and all the interviews were analysed once before "theoretical saturation" (Glaser as cited in Côté et al, 1993) was felt to have been reached.

All 16 interviews were thoroughly re-analyzed using the final list of categories. An independent assessor was then given descriptors of each of the categories and was asked to analyze two transcripts using the list of categories. Inter-assessor reliability was very high (92.7%).

The three questions requiring numerical ratings from the musicians interviewed could not be quantitatively analysed because not enough musicians answered the questions and, those who did preferred not to give any numerical ratings (see Problems Encountered).

Orlick's seven components of excellence (1989) were the starting point in identifying mental readiness skills common to elite musicians but, using an inductive approach, any other "success elements" that surfaced in the interviews were assessed to determine their pertinence to achieving excellence in the performing arts. A list of additional or

complementary mental readiness elements found to be common in the elite musicians interviewed was compiled. Where applicable, individual differences were pointed out.

The final step of this analysis was a comparison between the mental readiness skills found to be common in elite musicians in this study and those common to elite athletes as presented in Orlick's model of excellence. The relevance of Orlick's model (1989) to elite performance in music was discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results are presented using the general order of the questions in the Musician Interview Guide and Orlick's model of excellence. Categories not contained in the original model were added in the appropriate place (e.g., new skills or qualities found to be important by elite musicians were added in a relevant place within the presentation of the results as opposed to listing them in a separate section at the end) to facilitate reading. Representative quotes follow a brief discussion/explanation of each category throughout.

Where applicable, references are made to the music literature reviewed. It must be pointed out however, that this is almost only the case in the section on performance anxiety; as pointed out in the review of literature, that is pretty well the extent of the music psychology literature to date. Furthermore, all the research reviewed had been conducted with students or with orchestra musicians; it is possible that the differences noted are because of the distinction between soloists or chamber musicians and orchestra musicians or music students.

Where quotes from interviews conducted in German were used, they were translated in English by the researcher and given to an independent reader fully proficient in both languages for verification. The specific sources of the quotes are not identified in an effort to preserve anonymity. Because the participants interviewed are world renowned musicians whose names and histories are very recognizable, any mention of specific information (e.g., a divided commitment between instrumental and conducting aspirations)

would identify the participant for many readers. A label affixed to the quote (e.g., S1) would then identify the source of subsequent quotes used from that participant's interview transcript. Hence, no such labels were used and only the page numbers of the interview transcript from which the quotes were taken are listed after each quote.

In order to preserve the credibility of the analysis, an effort was made to use approximately the same number of quotes from every participant (number of quotes used: 8 to 25; average, 17.4). Two of the musicians interviewed provided valuable information but quotes from their transcripts could not be used as often because they were not very fluent in English.

In a further effort to preserve anonymity, only masculine pronouns (he, his, him) are used in discussing the participants in this presentation and discussion of the results.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Sixteen accomplished musicians were interviewed for the purpose of this study (see Table 1). Interviews ranged from 52 minutes to 2 hours 16 minutes; the average length was 1 hour 24 minutes.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Number of Participants	16
Age (at time of interview)	Range - 15 to 54 years Mean - 40.2 years Standard Deviation - 10.28

Table 1 (cont'd)
Demographics

Sex	Male - 13 Female - 3
Musical Background	Yes - 11 No - 5
Nationality	Austrian - 10 Russian - 2* American - 1 Italian - 1 German - 1 Australian - 1
Instruments	6 Violins 3 Celli 10 Strings 1 Viola 1 Flute 1 Trombone 4 Winds 1 Horn 1 Clarinet 2 Pianos
Age (started)**	Range - 3 to 12 years Mean - 6.5 Standard Deviation - 1.70
Age (it became serious)	Always (n=6) *** Others (n=10) Range - 11 to 18 years Mean - 10.6 Standard Deviation 3.34
Working status (at time of interview)	Primarily soloist 6 Primarily solo instrument in renowned orchestra 9 Primarily orchestra member 1 Other activities related to music: Chamber music 12 Teaching 7 Conducting 3 Composing 1 Accompanist 1

* Russian in origin so raised and trained in the Russian tradition, with Russian teachers but now citizens of a different country.

** Age started in music as some only came to their instrument later after studying another one for some time

*** Age started was used for statistical purposes..

All participants were rated as elite musicians in terms of ability and potential by a panel of their peers. Of the 16 musicians, 12 were currently functioning at the very top level of their profession; four of them had abandoned or scaled back their solo/chamber music careers to function at a less elite level in terms of their instrument. Of these, three were still fully committed to music albeit in a different form (i.e., as a teacher, composer and/or conductor); the fourth currently "less than elite" performer struggled with performance anxiety problems. He still played in a renowned orchestra but he was not functioning at the level of excellence his musical talent or abilities might have allowed. While his views were extreme in many instances and therefore cannot be generalized, it was believed that his contribution was valuable in pointing out some of the dangers inherent to this high pressure profession.

Musicians interviewed were mostly males (n=13; females, n=3) and ranged in ages between 15 and 54 years. Eleven musicians came from families with strong musical background; two of the remaining five had at least one parent who was a hobby musician.

Six different nationalities were represented in the sample although the majority was Austrian (n=10). Instruments played were divided into ten strings, four winds and two pianos.

For the musicians interviewed, the first step into the music world occurred between the ages of 3 and 12. Six said that music had always been a serious endeavour (i.e., that they never contemplated another profession), while the remainder (n=10) said that music became serious as a profession between the ages of 11 and 18 years.

For six of the participants interviewed (37.5%), the primary emphasis and the basis on which their reputation was founded was solo work, for eight musicians (50.0%) the primary responsibility was the solo position of their respective group in a renowned orchestra, one musician (6.3%) was a member of the first violin group in such an orchestra and one (6.3%) was primarily a teacher. Almost all of the musicians (n=14 or 87.5% of the

participants) reported being very active in music in a variety of ways: all of the musicians in solo positions in an orchestra were also active soloists; 12 musicians listed chamber music as a very important "side job". Seven were teaching; three were aspiring conductors; one was a composer and one supplemented his income as an accompanist.

ESSENCE OF EXCELLENCE

Five elements were believed to be essential in achieving and/or maintaining excellence in the field of music. The first element, commitment, was the same as in Orlick's model (1989). The other four elements (goals/dreams/motivation, self-esteem/self-confidence, perspective for excellence and enjoyment) were added to the section to provide a more complete picture of what drives musicians to excel.

Musicians interviewed clearly had dedicated their lives to the pursuit of musical excellence. Their goals/dreams/motivation are presented. They were seen to have very non-materialistic goals; the goals they did have pertained to self-growth or personal excellence, to the music or to the composer directly and/or to expressing oneself or communicating through the music.

A third element of the essence of excellence is belief in oneself and what one does. While musicians clearly considered self-esteem a necessity in order to function, let alone excel, in their field, this view did not translate into a strong sense of self for most of the musicians. Many said they considered self-effacement a much more fitting descriptor. Musicians also felt that you could have too much self-esteem. A brief discussion of these results suggests possible explanations for this apparent dichotomy.

Another fourth element in the essence of excellence was the perspectives that musicians carry into their endeavours. They were seen to be open to learning opportunities, they did not want to be bogged down with details that might make them lose their direction, they looked for the positive in every situation and they felt in control of their lives or careers.

Finally, musicians interviewed loved music and enjoyed doing what they did.

Commitment

Commitment was the underpinning of excellence according to Orlick (1989). The musicians interviewed were committed as evidenced by the amount of time they devoted to their musical pursuits (see Table 2).

Table 2

Commitment to musical pursuits

Hours of practice per day (when young)	Hours devoted to musical pursuits today: studying, practicing, playing travelling,...
10-12	...busy with music constantly except for one or two breaks to read a book!
3-4	at least 90% of my time.
10-12	if I've got [piece] and I'm on tour, it's like, 24 hrs a day. I'll practice up to six hours a day. And sometimes there are days of playing 8, 9, 10 hours.
6-7	when you're a musician, you spend the whole day with music.
*relatively little	spend a lot of time, most of my time with music in one way or another.
3	at least 10 hrs a day; all of the time I'm awake except for 2-3 hours.
5-6	Always; I live with the music!
3	In the last ten years, everything has to do with music directly or indirectly.
5-6	The whole day actually, the whole day.
4-8	Almost all of my time is devoted to music.
5-6	Can't divide it; everything is geared towards it.
**did nothing else	The music itself, 24 hours; on the instrument itself, a little less.

Table 2 (cont'd)

Commitment to musical pursuits

Hours of practice per day (when young)	Hours devoted to musical pursuits today: studying, practicing, playing travelling,...
**did nothing else	My God! I don't think there's a hour in the day that I don't do something in music.
5	3 or 4 hours a day altogether!
6-7	90% of my time
5	6 to 8 hours a day but, 4 to 6 hours of that is my job as an accompanist.

mean = 6.2 hours

S.D.= 2.96

* smallest number of hours given was used for statistical purposes. (3 hours)

** Highest number of hours given was used for statistical purposes

The musicians' involvement with music had started very early (refer to Table 1) and by the age of 15, 87.5 per cent of them had already made the commitment to pursue a career in music.

"[started learning instrument at 10]...a little while later, one or two years, I got really bad in school because I wasn't learning any more. I wasn't interested in anything any more and was just fixated on playing." (2)

"[Played instrument]...when I became 15, I switched to [present instrument] and was captivated. I was such a horrible student... I never really did something that I didn't like to do and I never liked to study so... I lived to practice though.... When I was in college, I practiced even more...I was [having] 10 hour days of practicing and, I was always having to take time off if I had an important concert coming up

because I was practicing so much that my lips were like, worn down to a frazzle...(2-3)."

For two participants who decided to pursue a career in music later (when they were 18 years old), the commitment to music was just as strong once it was made.

"[committed to music] ...very late, very late. Because I was interested in many things. I was attending the conservatory because in [country] at the conservatory you don't study any other matter [sic] than music. So, at the same time, I was attending High School and I liked a lot of other subjects too. So, at 18, I wanted to...study at the university. So I inscribed [sic] at [sic] the law course but...after [a] few months I understood that it was nonsense. I really wanted to go on with my music so, at 18, I decided." (2-3)

For 14 of the 16 musicians, music was still the focal point of their lives.

"So, I came to the conclusion, made a deal with myself where I knew [that] in the first place is not so much my career but, music and all that pertains to it, my instrument and through that, the [orchestra] and everything you do. That's the most important! Everything else will have to, not submit to it but, fit in somehow."(4-5)

"Very few people are privileged to combine their profession with their hobby... Something that they love more than anything else. Music is the most important thing in my life... Music is my whole life." (7)

Two participants who perhaps did not achieve their full potential with their instrument were still highly committed to music if not to playing. One gradually devoted himself to teaching after a very difficult period while for the other, instrument playing was always only one of various interests in music.

"When I was young, I played solo regularly and it got out of hand... It was too much! I had to study too much program, too fast.... Because of that, from the time I was [age], I lacked self-confidence... Then at [age when a personal tragedy occurred], ...I

was under even more pressure and I didn't enjoy practicing any more. I practically stopped playing solo. You need time to get over something like that.... By the time I started practicing again, I couldn't play solo any more, I was already in the [orchestra]. I didn't have time to practice or even the will power to get a hold of myself. You have to be enthusiastic to practice. You need to practice with love; to like practicing..." (1-2)

"When I was young, I worked mostly with my instrument but, over the years, I work with music more from an intellectual point of view. I would say that since I don't have a possibility or even an ambition to play solo, I just found my way as a teacher; it's so important to pass on to the young people."(13)

"I always wanted to be a musician, not particularly a [instrument]... My whole way was very crooked... My first professional teacher was a [other instrument]. Not only that...I can remember that my greatest wish between 5 and 10 was to get [sic] a great composer, not a [instrument] and not a [other instrument]...I had always, almost in all fields, even in conducting, so many good teachers that I couldn't say I'm leaving this because I want to be a [primary instrument]."(2-3)

Another two musicians had problems with commitment throughout their youth and/or now, as adults:

[Queried about when the decision to play instrument was made]..."Over my head. It was...people decided. Not I. I was raped.... Now, [instrument] is relative...before it was everything. Now, it's one of a hundred things. The interests have changed. I read a lot. Reading is my passion." (3)

"Started learning [instrument] at six... After two years, I stopped... Then, when I was 10, I met [my old] teacher and he said 'Why don't you come again?' I came again, one year. [Because of problems with teacher]...I was rather unhappy... And really, at the age of 15, I found a teacher who could work with [me]... Four months

later, I played my first recital. It was from 0 to 100 in a few months... She helped me a lot. At 15...I practised five hours a day...for three or four years... Then I became a student and I suddenly [was] enjoying so much [the] student's life and forgot a little bit about my ideals...I went away from my fantastic teacher. I discovered [that] in life, there is something else... Now, I [want to] cool down with all other points and...come back to these ideas I really planned before I was a student." (4-10)

In summing up, it seemed clear that elite musicians were highly committed to their musical pursuits. Those interviewed had made music the focal point of their lives even if they had families and/or other interests and this commitment was made very early in their lives. Commitment was clearly one factor that determined whether participants achieved their full potential with their chosen instrument. While remaining highly committed to music, one participant (6.3%) shifted his energies from playing to teaching and went on to excel at that; one always had divided interests even if they were all music related; one detached himself completely from music and one had a lot of problems maintaining the necessary dedication and was just now resuming his career full time.

For 13 of the musicians interviewed then, a very high level of commitment was clear and unequivocal. They had dedicated their lives to achieving their goals. The nature of these goals was also seen to be determinant; they are the subject of the next category discussed.

Goals/Dreams/Motivation

All participants readily talked about their dreams and aspirations concerning their music. These goals could for the most part be separated in three distinct sub-categories: self-growth or personal excellence goals; goals concerning the music itself (i.e., a desire to interpret the music as the composer would have liked or simply to do it justice) and, a strong desire to express something with their music or to give something of themselves in

their interpretation of it. Some musicians also talked about how their goals/aspirations have changed or evolved over the years.

Goals Pertaining to Self-Growth and/or Personal Excellence

Nine of the musicians interviewed (56.39%) felt strongly that music gave them an opportunity to grow, to be the best they could possibly be or to better themselves.

"Of course I've got an aim to become a good soloist, a good musician. I will do the best [I can] but, I want to be a very good musician. I think that's the only aim a musician can have." (5)

"...working towards a long [term] goal which is to play consistently well and always, to play, over a long period of time, a little bit better." (62)

"I have only one long-term goal, always had it: through the music, through the study of music, to develop, to discover myself, my personality and to grow." (5)

"You want to play as well as possible, that's enough. You spend your whole life with this one goal because somehow, you always fall short of what you imagined." (3)

Goals Pertaining to Music

For 56.3 per cent of the musicians (n=9,) music itself was a top priority. They had aspirations of interpreting the music as well as they possibly could, of respecting the composer's intent when interpreting a piece and/or of understanding the music more and more:

"When I practice, when I learn a piece, I always feel very much respect for the work. I would like to be an honest interpreter of the thing I want to play. I think the rule of an interpreter must be [to] try to be as honest as possible regarding the composer. So, this is a very big goal."(4)

"...the most important thing is this [sic]... priorities. I try to keep it very clear: the instrument is only a vehicle and the main goal [of] my existence as an interpreter is the music; the instrument just helps you express.... I happen to play [instrument]....

Sometimes, priorities get switched around, music becomes a vehicle in order to show...how wonderful [sic] they can play that instrument: how fast, how clean, how loud.... It's the end of my profession in my opinion. The most important thing, the music, gets secondary." (5)

"The goal is the same for all of us I think: you try to play a piece on your instrument as you imagine it should be. That's the goal of a lifetime.. as far as technique and musicality is concerned." (8)

"I only know that this is necessary in order to do the music justice. You must learn to give yourself completely to the idea behind the music notes. There is always an idea, a tone quality and you have to be always freer and more knowledgeable to be able to interpret it properly. Purer somehow." (5)

"The general goal should be that you should try to learn to understand music and to handle it as best you can. But that's a thing that has no end. You can never say 'I've done it'." (35-36)

"I try to play as if I would think that the composer could get at least a little satisfaction out of it. ...I want just to try to play the composition as I think the composer has meant it because I think that composition is the most important thing you have to present to the public."(23)

Goals of Communicating/Expressing Something through Music

For many musicians, music was a vehicle to communicate with the audience or with their colleagues (i.e., when playing chamber music). Seven musicians (43.8%) expressed their goal (or one of their goals) in these terms.

"It's very hard to explain it but, I think it's...all what you feel, you have to...express it. To let the people feel what you feel.... So, all what you think, all what you want to express, that's it really; that the people really can hear it; not just that you feel it. Cause you have to put it across." (46)

"Then, I can transmit, communicate this to the people faster and more directly. Of course, that's the other goal, I want to make the people happy." (5)

These three sub-categories encompassed most of the general goals or dreams or motivation that drive the elite musicians to ever higher levels of excellence. It was interesting to note that for the most part, goals were not expressed in material or competitive terms at all. Only one participant was clearly materialistic in his approach to music because of his problems and general disillusionment with it.

"Goals are like Fromm says: the career is to have.... To run after money, to maintain your standard of living and to work, work, work. I live after that...free time, live comfortably. That's [been] my goal for many many years!" (4)

On the other hand, 25.0 per cent of the musicians interviewed insisted that it was wrong and/or impossible to set or live by materialistic goals in their profession.

"[specific goals] ...have nothing to do with the music itself.... I must say honestly that I'd rather play at home to my heart's content than say I can play in the best concert halls of the world and it's not as good. I'd rather have it the other way around." (4)

"There are people who dream of worthless things; he [sic] needs a Mercedes or a television or whatever, material things. I try to give them [his students] more idealistic dreams; that they dream of the music, what they can do with a piece...to develop a certain ambition from these dreams." (12)

"I combine enjoyment with my profession which I think [is] my greatest ambition. ...because I don't believe in...Mr. X, the number one cellist or violinist or pianist in the world and the greatest. I don't believe really that such things exist in the music anyway. ...what does it mean #1, #2 or whatever? ...you could say who is the most famous maybe or the best paid, yes, O.K.. But, the greatest? It's a matter of taste anyway. There is no such thing." (8)

A further 31.3 per cent of the participants (n=5) pointed out that these more materialistic and/or competitive goals were more often a strong motivating factor when a musician is young. In the early years of learning an instrument when so much of the work is mastering the technical skills required to play, it may even be necessary to have such goals because one is not yet able to see the broader picture - the music.

"Children don't see so far in advance. My goal as a child was to get out of [a former communist country] and the way to do it was to get to be so good with the [instrument] that they'd allow you to go to competitions. That's what I did! Later, the goals were always more concrete...career oriented goals. Anyway, I think that goals change a lot with age. When you're young (competition age), goals are determined by the need to measure yourself with others. Later, this becomes boring...the goals change, they become more related to the music itself." (3)

"My God! When you're so young, that's how it is. At the High School [of music], you have so many classmates and you watch each other: 'Ah...I can play this too!' These are completely different goals. You don't think then 'How do I feel about the music?' 'How will I play this piece?'" (4)

The goals of the elite musicians remained idealistic and general even after many many years in their profession. Their love for and commitment to the music remained strong. It is interesting to note that for at least four of the musicians interviewed (25.0%), their commitment to excelling and/or making beautiful music transcended the commitment they made to their instrument.

"Because I don't see any real future in playing the [instrument]...the only future is B or C or D grade music; not music of the highest quality. In a sense, it's like wasting energy for a second grade artistic result. Even if I play as well as anyone can play, it's only a B grade result because the music is only B grade.

...

I think that the interest in conducting became very clear...two years and four or five months ago... I had this realization that I had things I could do and things I could say but, the instrument didn't allow me to do it."(5-6)

"I love [instrument] and I never regretted playing [instrument] no, it's fine...but I wish sometimes I would play piano or be a conductor just because of the amount of music it's [sic] available. There's so much great music which, as a [instrument] I can't really...enjoy. By listening to it of course but, not by participating. As I say, I love [instrument] and I think [it] has fantastic qualities but so does any other instrument. And mainly again, as I say, [instrument] is secondary for me. Music is most important."

This same point will be discussed again in the section on nerves and anxiety because some musicians mentioned that one reason they may get nervous for a performance is when they do not find the music they play convincing.

As outlined in the demographics section, elite musicians fulfil a variety of different roles: solo position in an orchestra, soloist, chamber musician and/or teacher. As evidenced by the extensive amount of time devoted to their musical pursuits (refer to Table 2), they were fully committed to their endeavours and to achieving their goals. A question that arose out of this commitment was whether there was any room left for them to lead a balanced life? Only one musician stated that leading a balanced life and pursuing his many other interests was a goal he had set when he embarked on his career. This musician further stated that he quickly realized that this was not possible and that the goal of having a balanced life had to be put "on hold" until his retirement - which got pushed back again and again as he continually passed the age he had set for retirement!

Self-esteem/Self-confidence

There was no doubt in the musicians' minds concerning the importance of having a strong sense of self in order to even just survive in their chosen profession.

"Good God, you have to be! If you don't feel confident, it's all over."(14)

"It's like in sports, self-confidence and security are two of the most important factors. If you approach something with fear and think 'Now I have to play this', I'm already able to function only at 40-50 per cent of my abilities. I always have to think 'I can do everything'."(14)

"Yes, it's very important. To protect [yourself]... Otherwise, you get [sic-become] a victim of all the circumstances. ...It's a very important question and it's...essential...to being an artist or being a musician..."(87-88)

"Self-assurance is important! Maybe the confidence in yourself that the performance now... Self-confidence is better, yes; that's important. It goes well in concert, when I say: 'I can play the piece'; 'It suits me!...'I'll make it'. 'I can do this!'"(49)

This belief that self-confidence was very important, even necessary, in order to excel did not always translate into actual possession of that trait. Only 3 of the 16 musicians (18.8%) interviewed displayed an unwavering confidence in their own ability to do the job.

"I believe there is enough space for many different kinds of musicians and I have my own qualities even though I know that some colleagues have some other qualities which are stronger than mine. But, I have something that I want to say and people want to hear so..."(8)

"[What allows me to excel?]...The belief, the confidence you have that you can do it better than others!"(41)

Most of the musicians interviewed appeared to lack self-confidence or they experienced fluctuations in their level of self-confidence:

"I think that most of the time, I'm unsure. You think: 'I hope nothing goes wrong!'... Of course then, the self-confidence comes in. 'You can do everything...' It's a

constant up and down...I think that when I'm playing on the stage then, the self-esteem wins."(13)

"Ambivalent! I try to [believe in myself] I try to prepare myself for it because I know I must do it..."(14)

Many musicians tended to experience last minute doubts concerning their ability to perform as well as they would want to. Factors that brought on these doubts and the musicians' remedies will be discussed at length in the section on nerves and anxiety as these last minute doubts were determining factors in nervousness.

Sometimes, the musicians' love of music and commitment to it seemed to supersede their own sense of self. Hence, four musicians (25.0%) said that in order to excel, self-effacement would be a better word than self-esteem:

"I find that humility is one of the most important things in your approach to music. I can't say any more than that. You have to defer to music and not have the feeling that you have to make the music. Humility in the face of something really great.

...

I have to say honestly, self-esteem is a very important thing for [instrument] playing and playing music as a professional. But, the self-esteem shouldn't get so big that you lose the humility.... You get humility when you see the genius...of the great composers...then you can only be humbled. And if you don't have that then you can never be a great musician."(22-26)

"So, self-esteem...is a condition that everyone wants to have because they associate it with inner strength. I aspire to it but...I don't think much of having self-esteem and nothing else.... I think self-effacement is worth more to me than self-esteem because I have now a picture in my mind of a child who plays totally without self consciousness,...open to everything in the world. When this child would say, I

have self-esteem, he would get all caught up in himself and couldn't play any more."(35-36)

"It's very probably true [that self-esteem is a prerequisite for performance] but, if we are talking about elite performance, I think self-effacement is a better word than self-esteem."(32)

Along the same lines, one musician mentioned that belief in oneself was directly tied to one's belief in what one does:

"[Self-esteem is important]...if it's not confused with self conceit. Let's say a consciousness that makes you aware... Like, it's difficult to be aware in life. I'd change it for self-confidence. Oh yeah! That's important! It has a lot to do with belief in what you do. The belief that it is necessary to do these things, that it has meaning or that what you do is not totally pointless."(37-38)

Another 25 per cent of the musicians felt that while self-confidence was important, too much of it could be detrimental:

"Yes [self-confidence is]...terribly important in order to perform, tremendously important. But it's...maybe even self-confidence can hurt you too. I mean now the positive side of self-confidence but there's a negative side too. The negative side makes you uncritical of yourself!"(50)

"It's...extremely important [but] it can get overbearing too. I mean, I cannot let myself think 'I'm so great'..."(35)

Finally, two participants admitted having serious problems with self-esteem. Both of them were musicians who had not achieved their full potential.

"[self-esteem]...is a big problem for me because I have also [sic] to learn it. I'm not very...sure of myself... Yes. It's a personal problem that I [have] had to learn not to apologize that I'm here now..."(86)

"Very important. Very important! No [I am] not at all [self confident]. In every situation of life, it's the same."(13)

This last quote came from a musician who had given up any ambition as far as playing his instrument as a soloist. He also felt that in order to be self-confident, one has to believe in what one does and, by his own admission, his lack of belief was already a major problem when he was a child, never wanting to play for people except from behind a closed door.

"I was ashamed! It seemed so stupid to me; someone standing there going like this [motion of playing the instrument]... Later even, in the orchestra, I had that problem for many many years. It just seemed stupid; like a puppet, standing there and fiddling around with the [instrument]. Music was wonderful to listen to but, the act of playing seemed stupid to me somehow!"(5-6)

In summary, all of the musicians interviewed recognized the importance of self-esteem and/or self-confidence, even (or maybe particularly) those musicians that seemed to be suffering from a lack of it. However, only three of the musicians (18.8%) unequivocally stated having confidence in themselves or in their work.

Self-effacement is a very interesting concept that was brought up by 25.0 per cent of the musicians and could very well be an important perspective to carry into a professional musical career. It reaffirms the musician's belief in and commitment to the music. It is believed though, that self-effacement and self-esteem are not mutually exclusive as the musicians seemed to think. On the contrary, one must have a very strong sense of self to have the courage to forget oneself and focus on the music or on the task at hand (see Focus for Performance in Mental Preparation for Performance).

The apparent fluctuations in self-confidence of people who had attained (and still have) very high levels of performance are impossible to explain on the basis of this study. It could very well be that there were problems in defining or interpreting the terms self-

esteem and self-confidence; perhaps musicians were guarded against saying they were self-confident because that word still carried a negative connotation and they were afraid it could mean being full of oneself (conceited) and/or too busy with oneself (self-centered). Future research in mental readiness with elite musicians should try to clarify the issue and make clear distinctions between self-esteem, self-confidence, self-assurance, self-effacement, conceit and self-centeredness.

Another possible explanation for this apparent dichotomy (excelling at something yet not having a strong sense of self or an unwavering self-confidence) might be absolute dedication to one's work. It might be that elite musicians are too dedicated to their musical endeavours (refer to commitment/time devoted to musical pursuits), foregoing a balanced life. If they make a mistake or play badly, their entire sense of self could be threatened when their self-esteem is too directly tied up with how well they perform. Again, future research will have to investigate this further.

Perspective for Excellence

As a result of listening to musicians talk about their goals and aspirations, their approach to music as well as the focus they aspire to have, it became clear that elite musicians interviewed shared a common perspective. With the exception of the one participant who had already given up his early career aspirations, they viewed their work as an opportunity for self-growth and felt it was always necessary to continue to learn. The musicians were also positive thinkers and they felt that it was important to keep the big picture in sight rather than getting lost in details. A fourth component of this perspective for excellence might be a feeling of being in control of one's life and/or career.

Opportunities for Growth: Continuous Learning

Most musicians (n=10 or 62.5%) commented on the fact that they greatly enjoyed learning and looked for opportunities to grow in their music and other areas of their lives. They constantly sought out opportunities to play with different (and better) musicians in

order to continue to learn. They felt that they were always growing and learning and that a given concert only represented a stage in their development, not their last word on a given piece!

"Probably, one of the fundamental things is that people have to see the whole process of being a musician as a developmental thing...be very aware that where you are now is just a stage in the process of where you can go to and that it's possible to continue developing and you shouldn't burden yourself with things that happened before.... My belief in my ability to play well has improved enormously over the last ten years...by just gradually refining what I do and working to reveal more of my potential. What you should do is very much, try to enjoy the process of developing rather than focusing on particular events."(62)

"When I think of my future life, about music, I like to see it with no arrival point. Like a road, you always have to [keep] going...you don't find a stop and you always go farther. I like to think [that] when I will be old, [it will] still [be] going on."(3)

"You have to be open, to play with different people - that's my leitmotiv, always play with better people... Always something new from pianists, from violinists, from winds...you always learn something. I believe that's very important."(28-29)

"It's very important to look for better musicians and to learn from them. You must continue to grow, never stagnate. You can never say, 'Now, I can do everything; I don't need anyone any more'."(22)

"Above all, I hardly think that there is someone who can claim to know everything. He'd have to be at least 500 years old... Everything is relative and that's why I say you have to be flexible, you must be like a chicken pecking corn: I need this, I can learn something here, I can benefit from that, I can contribute there.... Everywhere kernels are lying around. Some eat everything in sight and have nothing from it. Others won't touch anything. You have to find out which kernels you need!"(27)

"I always hope that my best concert is still to come! If I feel one day that I have played my best, I'd probably quit, change profession.... I don't think I ever will feel this way because I feel that there's an unlimited amount of feelings..."(14)

"There's no such thing as perfection! And, if there was, it would be terrible too. If you could reach it, you'd lose interest for the whole thing because there would be no more room for development or growth any more!"(22)

Keeping Sight of the Whole Picture

Generally, musicians felt that the "big picture" was the process of on-going development just outlined and the pursuit of their long-term goals.

"Events are important milestones but, in music, you have so many events [concerts] that there's no point in focusing on every event exclusively; you should really focus on the developmental side and see the big picture... That takes a little bit of pressure off. You can feel more relaxed, that you are working towards a long[term] goal..."(62)

The big picture was also important in the music itself. Musicians felt that there was sometimes a danger of concentrating on minor details in a piece thereby losing sight of what this piece was all about.

"...At first, you have the whole picture, that's the music. Then, I start to cut it up or take it apart, pieces at a time, to turn them over and look at them closely... totally apart from the music actually. You don't even know where this part fits in the whole... I know earlier, I found it extremely difficult to put it together again. Today, I try not to lose the whole picture from the beginning even as I am taking it apart...to keep the music whole in my head. Even if I practice a tiny little piece, I try to slip it back in where it belongs at the end."(7-8)

"[about his playing] ...there are different kind[s] of lenses which you can use and two major kinds is [sic] the zoom lens and [the] wide angle lens. So, I think...I kind of

upgraded my assortment of lenses. And if, when I was young, I was using zoom much more you know, to zoom in to [sic] little details of music and play this beautiful and this little phrase more beautiful or whatever. Then, now, I use much more, together with the zoom, [the] wide lens, [I] try to see the whole long line in the music... And which is, finally, most important because those little things are important too but they still are secondary and the shape of the music and the long line is, in my opinion the most important."(11)

This aspect of "Perspective for Excellence" has very practical implications for determining what the focus while playing should be (see section on Focus while Playing).

Positive Thinking

The third component of the perspective for excellence is positive thinking. Ninety-three percent of the musicians interviewed shared a very positive attitude. They were optimistic in their approach; they always tried to see setbacks and/or mistakes in a positive light, learn from them or even use them as a catalyst to performance excellence.

"I think that deep down, I'm an optimist because I've never come to a situation where I've said: 'That's it, can't go any further! Now, everything is messed up; a catastrophe'... No, I'm not a pessimist."(30)

"Every once in a while we'll miss a note... I try not to think of it. It's gone. And if it happened in a solo concert, I'm always relieved because now, I can play [better]."(28-29)

"If I played well then...it's a great feeling; if not then, you say 'O.K. Now, it'll be better!'"(32)

"[About a not-so-good concert]...It was very upsetting for me, very disappointing. But in a way, [it] was good to recognize [that] I have to change something

...

It was one of the best things that happened to me.... It's good it happened at that time, at the beginning; I had more time to do better!"(37)

Mistakes or difficult situations (e.g., when conductors made mistakes) became opportunities to be even better or to be the one to make it all right again. Similarly, stage fright or pre-performance nervousness was accepted as a normal or even positive reaction.

"Of course, there's always stage fright and, it's always there but, for me, it's a thing that inspires me more than anything!"(16)

"Conductors get a bit haywired! That's quite exciting too...it frees you to play even better because you're not thinking about yourself!"(37)

One of the musicians interviewed did not carry a perspective for growth nor did he succeed on keeping the big picture in sight (see Performance Anxiety). He was generally a very pessimistic person:

"I'm a pessimist...I see my problem tied up with the problem that I live. That I live is already negative for me; that's the root of the whole thing."(32)

Feeling in Control

Another component of what might be considered a perspective for excellence which only surfaced in a number of interviews was a feeling of being in control of one's life or one's destiny, accepting the things one does not have control over but working hard at changing what you can. For example, one musician refused to accept the view that he was the victim of a non-receptive audience.

"Because you have them [the audience] in your hand, you're the one to make them attentive. Who else would have that in hand? ...Only for very special performances would they all be together, euphoric and all concentrated on [the music]. Usually, they are all over the place and you should consider that there are many individuals sitting there, that you have to gather them! You can gather them yourself or not!"(25)

Another musician accepted that he was not in control as far as winning a competition was concerned. He went in to the competition to do his very best and hoping to win but realising that he was not responsible for that part of it.

"Of course, if you play a competition everybody wants to win. Or, he hopes to win. When I played my competition in [city] ..., I didn't think: 'I have to win otherwise...I don't know what'. But I thought, just do the best and [the rest] doesn't depend only on you. It doesn't depend on you if you...win, not only on you. When you play your best then, you can be pleased. The other thing [winning], it's the jury or other people."(49)

These two quotes are not representative of all musicians interviewed but, they raised interesting possibilities for further research.

To sum up, elite musicians interviewed carried common perspectives into their musical endeavours: they viewed playing music as an on-going developmental experience and had goals of continued growth; they felt it was important to keep the "big picture" in mind, and they were positive thinkers. A fourth element of the perspective for excellence might be a feeling of being in control of one's own level of excellence, while accepting things that cannot be changed. Future research will have to confirm this final perspective as only two (12.5%) of the musicians mentioned it.

Enjoyment

Musicians were asked whether their enjoyment of playing had changed over the years. All but one participant said that they enjoyed music as much or more than in the early years. Eleven musicians (68.8%) said that their enjoyment had increased over the years; two of them said that it had not changed and only one of them reported a decrease. Two participants were not asked the question directly but their enjoyment of music was still expressed when answering other questions.

"Generally speaking, unless I feel really lousy...physically or whatever, I enjoy playing.... Usually it's a festive occasion. I am nervous of course, but in a kind of positive way; because I enjoy it and I look forward to it!"(14)

For the most part, the increase in enjoyment came from feeling that they knew more or understood more about music now, that they appreciated it more or that they had extended their horizons by including new music or music that did not interest them before!

"[the enjoyment is]...more intense now. Because I think I understood much less before what I was doing. Now, [I understand] a little bit more."(41)

"Yes! I [enjoy it]! Very much. Maybe even more; because I understand a lot more about music so, I enjoy it even more!"(24)

"It changed a lot. A whole lot...I always enjoyed it a lot but now, I'm like addicted...I'm really addicted."(29)

"Yes, [enjoyment has changed]...but of course *I've* [italics added] changed! All has changed. How I play, how I enjoy it also. I'm able to enjoy it more than in early times."(70)

"I've got more [enjoyment]. A lot more! I've learned to enjoy the moment, to create in the moment... For me, I started really enjoying it now. Now, at this time, it's optimal because I really enjoy seeing that I'm getting something across!"(24-25)

"I enjoy music more than before. Yes, absolutely. Things that really didn't interest me that much before... I like to listen to music from the pre-classical period now. I didn't know [composer] and [composer] because there was no [instrument] part in it. I didn't know it!"(45)

Other reasons stated for an increase in enjoyment were overcoming anxiety problems or leaving stressful situations (see also Performance Anxiety) and being more active in playing music as opposed to the more passive listening enjoyment.

One musician said his enjoyment of music had increased but he pointed out that it was very important to focus on the positive in order to be able to do so.

"Basically, it would never decrease. On the contrary, I always want more. It's just like this: if you always raise expectations, maybe the feeling that it can be good is reduced. Because I set the goals higher... It's hard to draw the line, not to let yourself listen for mistakes otherwise you see everything too negative[ly]. It would take away the enjoyment in making music totally. You have to be a bit more generous. You have to raise expectations and the level but not so that you concentrate on the mistakes. [You have to] develop the positive."(29-30)

Only one musician reported a decrease in enjoyment over the years. Because he suffered from extreme performance anxiety he did not enjoy playing any more. He did say that when he was not nervous, he could enjoy it more although other problems like having too much work, playing too much, playing the same pieces over and over again or feeling used by the orchestra management interfered with this enjoyment. He did enjoy playing music for himself though, playing little pieces in very private setting for his friends and family.

Finally, two musicians said that, while the focus of their enjoyment had changed, the feeling of enjoyment itself had not increased or decreased. They both felt that their interests had changed from putting the emphasis on their instruments to either conducting and/or composing.

In summary, similar to the findings of Barbour and Orlick (1994) in their study of the mental readiness of professional hockey players, enjoyment in doing what they did seemed to be determinant in elite musicians' readiness to perform and excel; musicians interviewed enjoyed playing and making music. For a majority of musicians, years of hard work had not in any way diminished their enjoyment of music; on the contrary, it had

increased and intensified over the years as their levels of expertise has risen. They felt that they knew and understood more and, they loved it even more.

Only in the one instance of the musician who suffered from extreme performance anxiety had the enjoyment of playing suffered while the list of perceived job-related stress had increased perhaps supporting Steptoe's (1989) view that the perception of job-related stress is related to performance anxiety.

For some, the enjoyment had changed as interests changed away from their instrument towards conducting, composing and/or teaching or from passive listening to the active making of music. Factors such as increased understanding, playing different music, playing with different people, resolving stressful situations or re-orienting interest were said to increase enjoyment. Stress and anxiety, too much work, and playing the same pieces too often were some of the factors mentioned as reducing enjoyment of playing.

This "Enjoyment" component concludes the first part of the presentation and analysis of results. Orlick (1989) listed commitment as the first component of excellence in his model; in the later model (1992), he enlarged the "hub" of the "wheel of excellence" to encompass "beliefs" as well as commitment.

The present study enlarged the essence of excellence even further: elite musicians were highly committed to music. Their musical pursuits formed the central focus of their lives, in some instances perhaps the entire focus of their lives. The goals they pursued were seen to be determinant; they were divided into three main categories: goals pertaining to personal growth and/or personal excellence; goals pertaining to music and musical interpretation; and, goals of expressing themselves and communicating with the audience or with their colleagues.

There seemed to be confusion concerning the definitions of such terms as self-esteem, self-confidence, self-assurance and conceit (see Problems Encountered). Musicians felt strongly that self-confidence was a prerequisite for functioning in their field,

let alone excelling at it, yet they did not display the constant self-confidence expected. Two possible explanations were suggested.

The concept of self-effacement elaborated on by some musicians is interesting and should be pursued in future research. It is believed however, that the two terms are not as mutually exclusive as they seemed to feel; it requires a strong sense of self to forget oneself wholly and defer to the music.

Two other components were considered essential for achieving excellence: perspective for excellence and, enjoyment of what one does. Musicians carried a perspective for growth, they refused to get bogged down in details and preferred to look at the "big picture" and, they were positive thinkers. One last aspect of this perspective was only hinted at by two of the participants but it was considered important enough to be included in this discussion: a feeling of being in control of your life and your success and, accepting those things that you do not have control over.

Finally, one thing was very clear from the present study: musicians loved music and they enjoyed playing. Years of experience only served to increase this enjoyment.

PRACTICING

Musicians were asked to elaborate on their practicing habits, motivation and goals. They were also asked whether they mentally prepared to practice and about the nature of this preparation. In the case of the participant that was now primarily a teacher, the answers to all questions about practicing pertained to the importance of practice or what he tried to instill in his students.

Responses to these questions are presented below using the following categories: Motivation to Practice, Goals for Practicing, Mental Preparation for Practicing, Practice Session, and Simulation.

Motivation to Practice

Fifteen musicians answered the question concerning their motivation to practice. Of those, 12 musicians (75.0% of the total sample) said that they were well motivated to practice and that they never or hardly ever had to convince themselves or force themselves to practice. This finding would seem to contradict Ericsson et al's (1993) postulate that deliberate practice was effortful and not inherently enjoyable. It must be pointed out however that the question as to whether musicians enjoyed the practicing itself or what they would gain from the practicing (e.g., improvement in their level of performance or increased success) was not pursued in this research and that some musicians did qualify their statements (see further on).

"[Enjoy practicing?].... Of course I do! You have to. You have to like it!"(6)

"That I really didn't feel like it at all, I can't remember ever. When I have the time and the possibility, I'm very happy to practice."(5)

"Yes, very much! Do you mean practice for myself or rehearse? I like to practice for myself very much. Anytime actually. I never have to force myself, no!... The readiness is always there...."(5-6)

"Yes I do, yes...I like to prepare myself. I come to the rehearsals well prepared and the whole rehearsal work is very pleasant for me!"(5-6)

As already mentioned, 6 of those 12 musicians qualified their statement, saying that they enjoyed practicing more when they saw improvements, when they had a goal or reason to do it, and/or when it was not too much. Two of them enjoyed practicing now but had had periods of time where they did not (because of lack of goals and/or inefficiency in practice). Two of them also said that it was a lot more fun working on a musical interpretation and/or on a specific technical problem. The routine technical exercises just meant to help you "stay on top of things" were necessary but a lot less interesting or enjoyable.

For the 12 participants who said they enjoyed practicing, the only time they had to force themselves to practice might be when they were just physically and/or mentally tired. They tended to listen to what their body told them by not practicing at those times:

"Well, when I know, I am practicing and I don't really...it doesn't make sense in [sic] that moment because either I'm tired or I have no ideas or so, I don't practice. I prefer to rest and to...get back [my] energy because I don't like to practice like a machine!"(7)

"Of course, there are days that can be really bad, it's just no fun because nothing goes forward, you're not getting anywhere or maybe even you're making a step backwards. Then you think it would be better not to practice at all rather than practice badly, that you have to listen to more mistakes than you can correct!"(6)

Of the three musicians who expressed reservations about their own motivation to practice, one of them had been devoting his energies more towards conducting, one felt he needed to overcome a tendency to laze around but did so and practiced every day and, the third felt that there were many more things involved in practicing than just spending time with the instrument so, he did "practice" a lot, it was just not practicing in the regular sense (see also Visualization).

In these relatively rare instances when musicians felt they had to overcome a reluctance to practice, some of the thoughts or actions that seemed to help were thinking of what the teacher would say at the next lesson, remembering short term goals (e.g., important concert with a great orchestra coming up), fear of failing if not well prepared, playing or listening to beautiful music, playing technically challenging things "just for fun" and getting physically ready (e.g., preparing the notes, taking the instrument out, taking it up in one's hands).

In summary, musicians interviewed were highly motivated to practice and they seldom needed to force themselves to do so. When they did not feel like practicing, it was

generally because they were very tired and then, they found it more productive to rest and practice later!

Goals for Practicing

Musicians interviewed had three major goals (or reasons) for practicing: technical practice to get or to stay on top of their form, preparing pieces or concerts they liked in order to enlarge their repertoire or just having a piece ready "in case" an opportunity arose to play it and, preparing for the next performance (concert, audition or competition).

All of the musicians interviewed divided their practicing time between the first (technical exercises to stay in form) and the third (preparing for an event). Most of them always incorporated both goals in a typical practice session (see Practice Session). Four of them (25.0%) said they sometimes chose pieces they liked and practiced them for their own enjoyment or with a view of using them in a concert if the occasion arose.

"[If there's a concert coming up]...of course then, that's what I practice. If there is no concert coming up soon that I need to practice, then I try to keep the technical skills up, exercises to keep fit... Or, I try to study a new piece that I don't really need but that I think that...I can take into the program."(4)

"[I like to practice]...I have so many interesting things, notes for interesting pieces at home, even things I'll never play. I choose something and just practice it because it's interesting or because I feel my fingers are still running."(6)

With regards to specific short-term goals within a practice session, musicians were quite clear that they only had a very general idea of what they actually would practice on a given day. If they were preparing a piece for a concert, most of them said they would just start and see what needed to be done as they went along (see also Mental Preparation for Practice).

"No, I don't know exactly beforehand, only approximately. You have a framework but, you can't know exactly before because a lot of the work you have to do is only evident after you actually start."(4)

"No, not at all; I leave this open. I don't have any goals. I just do what I have time for and whatever needs done."(4)

Musicians did not seem to set clear daily goals in terms of their practice time until they actually got into a session. They started practicing with a general idea and remained flexible to the needs that surfaced as they got into the music. With their busy schedules, they generally had enough to practice for the next concert with little time to spare. In periods of time where they did not have quite as much to do, the main goal of their practicing was to "keep the fingers running" or to keep on top of their form. Some of the musicians (n=4 or 25.0%) said that they were apt to take up a piece they particularly liked or found interesting and practice it for their own enjoyment.

Mental Preparation for Practice

Perhaps because the musicians interviewed were highly motivated to practice and they felt that their readiness to do so was almost always there, they had mixed responses to the question pertaining to mental preparation.

One musician did not answer the question because of time constraints. Five (31.3%) felt that they did not mentally prepare for practicing because they really did not need it.

"I didn't need it! I can practice anytime. I don't need to prepare for it...I can take the [instrument] now and start practicing."(32)

"No no actually, I don't have that. [Fifteen minutes before practicing I could be doing]...anything at all. Everything. Absolutely anything."(13-14)

"Can't afford to; not enough time! I had to get used to practicing between phone calls, children crying and everything... With my workload, it would not have been possible to build myself a special 'practice zone'."(61)

This same musician felt that although it was not possible, mental preparation for practice might be a very good thing.

"It would be great! It would certainly have advantages. But it's a luxury; nice if you have it but that you often can't afford."(6)

Four musicians (25.0%) saw a need for mentally preparing some of the time but mostly, they felt that it depended on the type of person. All four said they had noticed that it was necessary with some of their students.

"I didn't always realize this you know. Just later, I experienced this with my students: that you have to prepare him for example, to know how to schedule his practice time, how to have enough strength to practice a difficult passage, that he has the strength and the patience to say 'I still can't do this but the day after tomorrow, I'll be able to.' You need courage to practice. Every form of depression is poison. If someone lacks courage and says 'I'll never be able to do that', you have to help him get over that and that's where mental preparation to practice comes in and is very important."(13-14)

"I do that with my students when I see that they are weak or lazy...so they play something without preparing themselves, without thinking. When they play without thinking... I do a lot with them; I tell them how important it is. That they shouldn't play without knowing why or being prepared...they should play in a state of readiness...[like] a preparation."(30)

Six musicians (37.5%) mentioned that they did mentally prepare to play, however briefly or irregularly.

"The way to prepare for practicing would be just to make sure that when you go to practice, you feel your best! And [that] you feel completely awake, not still drowsy and, you know, thick in the head... Leading up to an event, I become much more structured about the whole thing... I try each morning to get up at the same time. I'd

try...to do half an hour of yoga or go for a jog or something that would mean that at say, 8:30, I was actually feeling my best."(11)

"No, no, if I'm going to the [instrument before practising], I'm taking out the [instrument] and then I think [of] what I will do, just two minutes..."(9)

"I think it's good when there is obviously something missing. Then, you should try to do something in order to be able to practice concentrated and efficiently right from the beginning."(30)

Only one of these six musicians had a very systematic 5-step preparation plan that he did before every practice session and that paralleled his pre-performance routine (see section on Pre-Performance Routine).

In summary, the musicians' initial reaction to mental preparation for practicing was to question its usefulness, but they quickly added that it was necessary or good in some instances (for themselves) or for some people (e.g., their students). Six of the musicians did say they felt a need to collect their thoughts or shift their focus to a practicing "mode". One participant would have liked the idea but felt he did not have the time.

Because of their high levels of motivation to practice, musicians for the most part felt that they did not need mental preparation for practice at all (n=9 or 56.3%). Only one (6.3%) had a set preparation plan and followed it before each practice session. It was interesting to note that this participant was also the only musician who said he needed to push himself to practice (refer to Motivation for Practice).

Practice Session

Each musician interviewed had a very personalized approach to organizing their practice time or to practicing in general. Some musicians practiced more than others; some liked to have many short breaks while others preferred to practice for two hours or more without taking a break; some liked to practice in the morning, others found that their

best time was at night; some liked to play the whole concert through without stopping, others left playing through till the very end of their preparation (just before the concert).

Ericsson et al (1993) presented a theoretical framework that would make the amount (in numbers of hours) of deliberate practice accumulated the major determinant of an expert performer's level of performance. Certainly, there would be a need for an in-depth understanding of what constitutes "deliberate practice"; research into the organisation and content of elite performers' practice sessions would greatly contribute to such understanding. It was beyond the scope of this research to analyse the answers to these questions in greater detail as this study concerned itself only with the mental aspects of excellence and not with the acquisition of expertise.

However, some common elements found in the musicians' approach did have implications in terms of the mental components of excellence; one of these was the musicians' discussion of how they approached a new piece.

When learning a new piece or deciding on the musical interpretation, musicians felt very strongly that getting to know the piece as a whole was the first step. This was often done without the instrument (see also Visualization), just reading through the score and learning the notes or finding out what the piece was all about. Indeed, some musicians, felt that it was sometimes better to be free of the technical limitations of the instrument when deciding how a piece should be played.

"What I find is, I progress much faster towards the resolution of problems, even technical ones - when I see or when I'm on the way to finding the musical ideal inherent in this or this passage or, the energy flow in it."(7)

"...I believe that before trying to put it in actual sounds on the instrument, you have to have a rather good and clear idea [of] what you want to say and how you want the final result to sound... Then, you have a much better chance to succeed....if you start with the technical side, you're much more likely to go the wrong direction

because you [would be] adapting the musical expression to your technical problems and not the other way around."(9)

"Being free from the [instrument] just in my thinking...very often, I think in terms of singing... If you sing, it's difficult for you to give a wrong accent on what you're singing. When you play, maybe a finger doesn't work or...on the [instrument] it's a problem. We play many things simultaneously; melody, harmony, rhythm...it's much easier if I think of only the rhythm or...only the melody. This is why, if I sing this melody, just free from all the other things happening in the piece, it's much easier."(11-12)

"I have to read it first. I have to do it without [instrument]. You just save a lot of time. I believe that this just fiddling through the notes doesn't bring anything... When I don't know the piece, I first have to go through it in my head, thinking 'How could this be?'... You save about 20-25 per cent time when you went through it before!"(21-22)

"The fingering[s] come from the interpretation you imagined. At least they should [emphasis added] come after because they are influenced by it; they're not just done mechanically [otherwise], it's not an interpretation, it's just arbitrary...a comfortable solution!"(11)

So the first step in preparing a piece was deciding what it was all about, what they wanted to do with it. Then, the musicians took the piece apart, identifying technical difficulties and practicing them separately (refer to the discussion on not losing sight of the big picture in Perspective for Excellence).

Finally, towards the end of their preparation the musicians liked to play through more and more and they looked for opportunities to "test" their readiness.

Simulation

Use of simulation was not discussed in the literature but probably because it is taken for granted, not because it is not used. Most of the musicians interviewed (n=12 or 75.0%) had made use of simulations in their preparation for concerts at some time or another. Certainly, all of them had experienced class recitals when they were studying and all musicians who had students (n=7) still actively used simulations with their own students.

"I try to impress them: 'Look, now I am the director of the conservatory; you play in front of me!' My chamber music teacher used to wear the smoking [sic], (the concert dress) at home, to perform at home with the dress, to feel more tense."(45)

"Yes, I do [use simulation]...very often. Very often I make the students aware of how dangerous the situation is in an audition, competition or concert; where the particularities are, what's dangerous, what he'll have to be concerned with...what happens in a concert when the spotlights raise the temperature to 40 degrees and his hands are sweating.... Just what I learned through experience; That's what this simulating is, passing on what you've learned through experience."(25)

"That's why I never let my students repeat a passage that they missed in the lesson:

'In concert, you can't do that either you know.'"(30)

"To practice under serious, realistic conditions, yes... Just as you say, for students I think it's very important."(30)

Three of the musicians (18.8%) felt that for themselves, simulations were not as necessary because of the frequency with which they actually stood on the stage and played for an audience.

The others however (n=13 or 81.3%) still made active use of simulations by playing their program through for family and friends before an important concert.

"Before I play a concert, always, I play parts of the program or the whole program for people at home. Because,...it's difficult for me to play in a concert. As long as I

get more used to doing it, it's easier. Or, it gives me less shock or worrying. Above all, when I play a new piece I play it for the people at home...it helps very much.

...

Performing at home is like a check...to see if I keep the energy through the whole piece. Or, if there are points where my energy or my concentration gets down. I cannot perform the same piece alone, it's not the same thing!"(20)

"Simulation is very important. Oh yes! It's like you first start by playing something for your wife. You simulate an auditorium in miniature...almost everyone does that. It's important. A step by step simulation of a real concert. It's true, Yes...it helps a little."(29)

Another way of using simulation that musicians found helpful was relying on their visualization skills (see also Visualization) to recreate tensions or feelings they have to confront in the "real thing".

"I try to do it as close to the way an audition would feel...even to the extent of walking out of the practice room and maybe, closing your eyes and just trying to create as many of the feelings of an audition as possible... Often when I do this, I'm almost shaking with nerves.... Then, I try to just walk in as if it were an audition...looking confident, feeling confident and doing everything, not too hurriedly and taking my time...for orchestral excerpts, I have a little clock on the stand. I make a point of waiting 30 seconds between each one...finish one excerpt, turn the page, take a few breaths look at the next one, have it in your head..."(14)

"I can't [always] simulate. I practice and then I simulate. For example, I play along with a recording...and simulate the real concert. I sit there and try to get caught up in it: the stress, the energy, the creativity. That doesn't happen all that often. Often, it's just practice. Then I think: 'Now, it's serious'...for auditions.... It's important."(32)

"[Students often need simulations]...but I think it's more because they don't try to imagine the situation like that, even without the audience. To stand there as if they would be playing in front of an audience. They probably never do it. And the people who do do it have less problems with that. They're 'there' right away."(36)

Musicians made extensive use of simulation in the process of preparing for a concert. All of the musicians who were also teachers considered it very important to have students play under realistic conditions; one teacher said he even sent his students on auditions for positions they did not really want or hope to have, just to "test" their level of readiness.

For most musicians, even after many years of performing, simulations were an integral part of their preparation. They created opportunities to play for family and friends before important concerts and, they used their imagination to recreate moods and feelings of a live performance at home while practicing.

This concludes the section on practicing. Motivation for practice was seen to be extremely high, with most musicians reporting that they enjoyed practicing and hardly ever had to push themselves to do it. Goals for practicing were very concrete for the most part: the next concert, audition or competition. Musicians approached their practicing with a loose framework, not wanting to make plans or schedules they could not keep. They preferred to start practicing and to see what needed to be done and, what could be done that day.

Musicians considered mental preparation for practice useful but they did not always take the time to put it into practice. Only one musician made use of a mental preparation plan consistently. Other musicians recognized its importance for others or, only on an "as needed" basis for themselves. They may not need it because they have a very high level of readiness/motivation to practice already.

Finally, as expected and discussed in the review of literature musicians made extensive use of simulations (both for their students and for themselves) in getting ready to perform.

MENTAL READINESS TO PERFORM

The great J. Heifetz, one of the greatest violinists of all times, is known to have answered "No, but I'll never be any readier" to a technician asking Mr Heifetz if he was ready for a recording (as related by one of the participants). This section looks at how "ready" musicians felt they were for a performance.

On the whole, musicians felt that one of the key determining factors in "feeling ready" to perform was simply how well prepared they actually were. When one gets to the concert hall, one can not lie to oneself any more; if one has prepared well, then one can tell oneself so and have the feeling that everything will be all right. Only two of the musicians interviewed (12.5%) said they always felt "ready" to perform. One of them was quite young and did not play many concerts in one year so he felt he had plenty of time to prepare properly, while the other exemplified the perspective for growth discussed in the first section.

"It depends what you mean 'ready'...[it's very] limited because [in] music I don't believe there is perfection.... I might be readier eventually. I never pretend to be as ready as I even could be. I always hope that my best concert is still to come..."(14)

All other musicians (n=14 or 87.5) said that their feeling of readiness varied extensively; seven (43.8%) felt ready most of the time with only occasional problems with anxiety or self-doubts, three (18.8%) felt that it was really up and down or, that they went through phases where they felt ready and phases where they did not feel ready; and, four (25%) said that they hardly ever felt ready to perform (two of these four do not play solo any more because of major problems with anxiety - see Performance Anxiety).

"No, the feeling of being ready, of having finished practicing is a feeling I haven't had in decades. When I was studying sometimes, I got close to it but now, in my professional routine, never! No time! Never enough time."(13)

"[played solo very young] ...I had to study too much program too fast! It means I never had time to study my program so that I could go to the concert with a clear conscience and calm feelings. I always played...I was always under stress."(1)

"[Ready?] Yes, technically. It depends if I'm afraid of the concert or not. If I'm afraid then the big technical preparation doesn't do any good."(11)

Musicians were asked to elaborate on their pre-performance routine and their mental preparation to perform. They recognized that the ideal activation level is very individualized but most (n=14 or 87.5%) were not very good at achieving what they felt was their ideal activation level. All 14 felt they were too activated (or nervous) some of the time and that they sometimes (but not very often) were not activated enough for a concert.

Performance anxiety will be discussed in greater details in a separate section as it was a major preoccupation for many of the musicians interviewed.

Finally, a list of the types of mental training used or known to musicians is reviewed as well as a list of the major sources of influence regarding their level of mental readiness to perform.

Pre-Performance Routine

For most musicians (n=15 or 93.8%), their pre-performance routine covered the whole day but, it was not very structured until they actually got to the hall, if at all. Only one young musician (6.3%) had a very definite plan to organise his whole day. The other musicians felt that it was pointless to have a very specific routine that might be impossible to follow, and some felt it might not even be good if they were dependent on one. It must be remembered that musicians played many concerts; they might be on tour for three

weeks at a time, playing a concert in a different city everyday. It would be difficult indeed to maintain a set daily routine under such circumstances.

Day-of-Performance Routine

As already mentioned, musicians (n=15 or 93.8%) did not have a set routine for the day of a performance. However, years of experience had taught them what served them well (e.g., a nap in the afternoon, light meals, light practice) and what things they should absolutely avoid on those days (e.g., running around all day, too much sports, stress situations, practice all day). They tried to follow these guidelines whenever possible.

Rest/nap in the Afternoon

Generally speaking, musicians did not want to be rushed or under pressure on the day of their performance. A majority of them indicated that they really enjoyed having a nap or at least, having a few hours to rest in the afternoon (n=10 or 62.5%):

"Absolutely. I don't do this or this or that but I try, I need to lay down for a nap before a concert and to be there in plenty of time not to get uptight. It doesn't always work!"(15)

"Because I find it so absolutely important that when I'm on stage, I have to be calm and relaxed; I don't structure my day [so] I'm running around doing this and...that, go running to the hall and then, relax; it doesn't work that way. I have to make my whole day a calm and relaxed meditation so that it doesn't fly apart at the seams."(18)

Only three musicians (18.8%) said that they wanted to be active (e.g., going for a walk or a jog in the afternoon).

"But the day of [a concert] ...is uncomfortable...I used to wash the car that afternoon or something so I'd get distracted, you know.... Or I go jogging...but I can't read a book or something, it's too difficult. I'd find it hard to learn something that day too."(26-27)

Eating Only Light Things or Not Eating Just Before

Most musicians (n=10 or 62.5%) felt it was important not to eat too much, or to eat heavy foods too close to the performance time. A few also mentioned that it was important to try to continue to eat regularly, even when on tour and travelling around.

Practicing/Rehearsing

Musicians felt that the day of a performance should be a relatively light day for practicing. It is quite usual for musicians to be travelling and/or rehearsing on the morning of a performance. Four musicians (25.0%) included a rehearsal and/or travelling as part of their morning routine. When there was no a rehearsal, they (n=8 or 50%) said they liked to practice a little in the morning, but not too much or concentrating too much on technical difficulties, preferring to just stay loose and conserve their strength. One musician (6.3%) specified that he did not like to play through completely before the "real" concert (see also Spontaneity).

"If the concert is at night usually, in the morning, I practice the whole program but not with much effort [i.e., run through]...just a little work of technique and warming up... Seeing if I remember everything because, all the work has been done before. So, not much 'in' [intense], to save energy for the night."(23)

"On the concert day, you shouldn't be working so much on technical things. It wouldn't get better and besides, it should be mastered already by then."(15)

"Usually, I'm at [sic] the city already...cause you have rehearsals there. The concert [day]...you sleep as long as you want, not too long (till 10 or 11:00 maybe). Then, I get up and practice two...one, two hours and then, I go to eat, to have lunch."(22-23)

Pre-Performance Routine (at the Hall)

All musicians interviewed felt they had to get to the performance hall in "plenty" of time. Plenty of time, like everything else in the preparation for a concert was very individual, varying between 30 minutes ("at the most") and two hours. Musicians divided

their preparation time into three different components: changing clothes and preparing their instrument and notes, warming up and, relaxing or calming down.

Twelve musicians (75.0%) had general guidelines they liked to follow at the hall; a further two (12.5%) could be said to have a loose pre-performance routine; and two musicians (12.5%) had a fairly exact warm up routine which paralleled the one they did at home before practicing.

For most musicians (n=15 or 93.8%) the pre-performance routine included a warm up on the instrument, keeping it light and not too geared towards technically difficult passages (as per the day-of-performance routine).

"I try to be there 1 1/2 to 2 hours before. I play [instrument]. Not technical exercises any more; it's not productive. Just having or establishing contact with the instrument."(15)

The one participant who did not have a physical warm up purposely did not do so to avoid becoming dependent on it.

"I trained myself not to need a warm up because often, you can't have it and then what? I prefer to kind of train myself to be able to warm up mentally."(18)

Two components of the musicians' pre-performance routine deserve further comment. First, musicians said that they did not have specific thoughts or mental processes during their routine. Some musicians (n=5 or 31.3%) said they wanted to "be with the music" or that their focus should be on the "big picture" but they had not developed ways of achieving that focus. They reported that their thoughts were "free" although they wanted it to be on the music (see Mental Preparation for Performance).

The second interesting point was that a number of musicians (n=6 or 37.5%) indicated that they did not like to be left to themselves before the concert. While they did not want an entourage that made demands on them, they felt it was nicer or even

necessary to be surrounded by people, colleagues or friends so they could "soak in" the atmosphere or feel that they could share the burden around.

"I'm happy when somebody comes. Not that they [should] tell me a sob story about his [sic] children or grandmother...not that. But I don't mind if an old high school colleague drops by and asks how I'm doing. I really like that. To be sort of "tucked in" ... you just want warmth from somewhere."(27)

"[I want to be alone but]...with contact to what's coming. I mean, I don't want to be locked up [in a soloist's room] and that someone comes and gets me all of a sudden! I want to be able to look out, to the conductor or the orchestra musicians. I want to keep the thread, a small thread to the concert. I don't want to lose a small thread to the world, to the audience but, I don't want this thread to make demands on me. I mean, I don't want to have to answer [questions] or to worry about tickets or something. I don't want that."(10)

"When I play [a] solo recital, I really feel I am alone to do this. ...when I play chamber music, when we are going out on stage, I try always to get a human contact with [the persons with] whom I am playing; like ...a little word to say 'let's do it together, fine'."(25)

In summary, elite musicians have a very personalized routine on the day of a performance. For most of them, it was not a very detailed or specific routine. Over the years, they have come up with a list of things they like to do and things they prefer to avoid on the day of a concert: they should not be rushing or running around all day and hope to be relaxed at night; ideally, they would have a nap or rest a few hours in the afternoon; they would keep practice light and general (not hope to master skills at the last minute); and, they would eat a light meal plenty of time before the concert so they are not too full but they should not feel hungry either!

Musicians liked to come to the concert hall between 30 minutes and two hours before the performance. Most of them had general guidelines for getting ready. Certainly, they wanted to change their clothes and prepare their instrument (make sure nothing was missing); warm up by just playing passages through (not playing technically difficult parts over and over again) and, just generally be calm and soak in the atmosphere.

The content of their physical and/or technical pre-performance guidelines or routine was analysed in some details as they have important implications for the mental preparation plan (see next category).

Two interesting things came out of the analysis. Just as musicians did not have a very specific physical routine, they did not appear to have very specific thought patterns associated with their preparation to perform. They knew the focus they wanted to have (the music - see also Focus) but they did not appear to have determined just how this proper focus occurred (or not!).

The second point is that at least some musicians felt a need to soak in the atmosphere of the concert; before performing, they did not like to be left alone in a soloist's room (as is often the case), cut off from the rest of the people. They wanted to feel a human contact, a sense of solidarity with their colleagues, family or friends but, they did not want this contact to disturb their peace of mind or to impose demands on them.

Mental Preparation for Performance

Musicians were asked to provide details of their thoughts and feelings during their pre-performance routine. It was thought that just as they warm up and prepare themselves to be physically and technically ready to perform, they would also have a plan to prepare themselves mentally for performing. Orlick (1989) stated that such a positive preparation would include a pre-event plan and an event focus plan.

It has already been pointed out that musicians did not have or follow a very strict pre-event plan. They generally knew how they wanted to feel (e.g., well rested, not too full,

not hungry, calm...) and they tried to live and perform by these personal guidelines. In a similar way, musicians knew how they wanted to feel and where they wanted their focus to be before and during a performance. They also knew very well where the performance focus should not be.

Focus for Performance

All the musicians wanted their focus to be on the music, on the musical interpretation or on the task at hand (refer to Goals Pertaining to Music and Goals of Communicating).

"[What you want to focus on] ...the music. Just the music."(50-51)

"Intonation. Music...[is the focus you should carry on stage]. The more you concentrate on the piece, the less distractions can come up!"(19)

"When I play, I never asked myself something [sic] because it means another thinking [sic] comes through my mind! There is no space for other things [other than the music]."(30)

Musicians also said that they wanted their focus to be on the "here and now" rather than on the past (mistakes) or the future (outcome, critical evaluation, winning a position...). (See also Distraction Control/Refocusing).

"Concentrate on the here and now and let yourself be influenced by the music. Let it take you.!"(21)

Another distracting focus was being too concerned with yourself, your own ego, problems or fears (refer to Self-esteem/Self-effacement; see also Distraction Control/Refocus).

"[About The Inner Game of Tennis; Gallwey, 1974] What I find good is that you learn to go out of yourself. You learn to concentrate, not on yourself, your ego, but on the task at hand, on the goal. For myself and for my students, it's always a

useful exercise to do that; we are all too centered on ourselves and our egos.

Everything that takes us away from that is useful and good."(12)

As discussed in the section on Perspective for Excellence, musicians also did not want to get too caught up in the technical details of the piece:

"[About problems/obstacles to being free and giving yourself over to the music]...for me, I think it's a very deeply rooted belief (a crazy belief) that I must know every tiniest detail of the technique of each note on the instrument. I see each note and it's difficulties separately, and then, I can't let myself go with the flow of the music. If I don't prepare that ahead of time, to see the music as a whole, especially in the difficult passages, I lose the flow. I'm much too conscious of my hands and eager to play each note...[then], I don't achieve the result I want."(7)

Six of the musicians (37.5%) said that there had to be an interplay between technical considerations and musical gestalt.

"I think it's a constant interplay between thinking and feeling. You can't stop thinking completely, you need your markers. You can't stop feeling because then, you're out of the music. There has to be a happy medium between the two."(12)

"I need the self-control even during the concert. I often think there are so many examples of people that play something...all mixed up, very loud slides and all. These are people that give themselves so totally up that they don't care, they just play. I want to be under control and [italics added] I want it to be beautiful."(10)

Definitely, the desired focus for elite musicians was the music. Anything else that might get in the way, even if it was related to the piece (e.g., technical details) was seen as a wrong focus or a distraction. The musicians interviewed knew what their desired focus was but, just as was the case for their pre-performance routine, they did not have very elaborate ways of mentally preparing themselves to be in the right frame of mind (see Mental Skills - Concentration/Focusing).

Mental Preparation Plan

Seven musicians (43.8%) felt that mental preparation was something you did only when you had specific reasons to, for example because of nervousness problems, feeling totally run down or for an extremely important concert.

"For [specific performance], I mentally prepared myself for the first time in my life. I tried to find recipes to clear my head of all unwanted thoughts. I think somehow, I was pretty successful."(11)

"Six years ago, I found that before a concert I was nervy, jumpy... not nervous but jumpy.... It happened because I was running around like a lunatic, doing far too much, not getting enough sleep, not living properly.... One night I thought: 'I'm going down and lie in a dark room for 15 minutes, breathing properly.' And I did. And I went on stage and...I felt great, I felt normal. So, in a way, it was very clear...I didn't go and lie down in a dark room before every concert but it just made it clear that what you've gotta [sic] do is be very settled and quiet and relaxed if you're going to go out and play well..."(32-33)

"No, [the preparation should not be mental as well].... It just happens and I think it's very different. There are people that [sic] when they have enough strength within themselves and you try to influence things then, you can make mistakes. You bring things out of 'whack' and you can destroy something. Only when people feel insecurity should we try to prepare them mentally."(13-14)

"Whenever I'm noticing that I have any stage fright problems, like if I ...feel my own mind starting to bounce around, I'll sit down right away and sort things out with some breathing exercises and concentration exercises."(16)

Three musicians (18.8%) could be said to have a mental preparation plan.

"Yes, I've trained myself in certain mantras just, with the light and, if I'm doing like...after my warm up break, after I have my warm up and before I do the last

[preparation of instrument], I have these 20 minutes or so and I sat down and did [meditation] ...I used a mantra hooked up with my breath that is just energy and...combining light and sound energy."(19)

[Quote pertaining to mental preparation for practice]. "It's the same as for a performance. When you get up in the morning, already brushing your teeth, you think about what you have to do, how you'll do it... It happens, you can describe it like this: it's like a tiny air balloon in your brain. It's getting slowly bigger and finally, it's there, it overshadows everything and pulls you to your instrument. It starts so small; you're doing other things but thinking of practicing... It takes more and more room so that in the end, you can't do anything else anymore...you have to release the pressure."

...

[Quote pertaining to mental preparation for performance] "It's the same! It's this thread that's always there. The closer it gets to the concert, the bigger the balloon gets."(6-8)

The other six musicians (37.5%) stated that they did not consciously mentally prepare to perform or at least, had no specific plan to do so. They knew what their desired focus was and they felt that just being there, at the hall, going through the motions of physically getting ready was preparation enough to find their focus.

"I'm not sure I do, I probably don't. This warm up on the [instrument] is a very physical sort of thing in that you don't need very much mental application for it...like doing a series of stretches. When you know them very well, you just do them which means your mind might be free to travel around and do other things. So, at first, that probably happens. But the very act of going through the stretching...tends to quieten everything so that by the time you get..."(32)

"If you've done everything possible to prepare for a performance, you don't need psychological preparation. Then, my heart is pure and I can stand straight and I don't need any tricks."(38)

It seemed that musicians interviewed did not have very specific mental preparation plans. While they were very clear on where their focus should be before a performance (on the music) they did not seem to have a conscious way of actually creating the mental state that would give it to them. Interestingly, only one musician (6.3%) referred to the right feeling (as opposed to focus) by saying that he called up images of past concerts to create the right feelings/mental state to perform.

Most musicians relied on the physical motions of preparing themselves and their instruments to set them in the right frame of mind to perform.

Activation Level

An effective way of mentally preparing for a performance would not only include ways of finding the right focus or frame of mind and placing oneself in it, it would also include finding just the right level of tension for an optimal performance. Ideal activation level is also a very personal/individualized thing; each musician must know for himself what his optimal level is. Musicians all agreed on one thing: one has to feel excitement and look forward to playing with the telltale butterflies saying this will be something special. These opinions agree with most of the literature reviewed concerning performance anxiety: some excitement (or activation) is necessary in order to produce a great performance. Only when it is too much or rather, when it is perceived as being too much by the performer does it become a problem (Fogle, 1982; Frederikson & Gunnarsson, 1992; Grindea, 1978; Hamann, 1982; Reubart, 1985; Steptoe, 1989).

All musicians interviewed had experienced performances where their activation level was not ideal, feeling a bit flat and uninspired at times or, having nervousness problems at other times.

Low Activation Level

Twelve of the musicians interviewed (75.0%) said that they had had problems at one time or another because they were not activated enough. For the most part, it was because they were physically run-down or tired or because it was a concert where they did not feel challenged because of the difficulty of the piece or the importance of the concert.

"Sometimes [I'm not up enough] ...but mainly, it's a question of physical condition.

When you travel so much, like I do...having jet lag and playing in different parts of the world, it's very tiring and sometimes, just physically, you're not at all in the right condition to do it!"(15)

"Every concert should be important but, compared to the big ones, if you play very little ones...you are also prepared but you're not such [sic] nervous...and maybe, you don't give all what [sic] you could give."(21)

"When I play solo or chamber music, it doesn't happen [that I'm not up enough].... It can happen in a concert that I'm just disinterested. Actually really only in [piece where his instrument doesn't have much to do]. It can happen that you sit there in a [piece] and you couldn't care less. You get through it...it's on automatic."(14)

"Never for solos...maybe for an orchestral concert where I just have an average contribution to make. And very occasionally, I might feel a bit flat...not really activated enough."(24)

It seemed clear from the quotes that not being activated enough was not a big problem for elite musicians. It happened very rarely and when queried as to what they tried to do about it when it did happen, most of them said that just "listening to the music", "feeling the music" or "remembering the music" was enough to get them going again (see also Distraction Control/Refocus).

"I don't think I do it consciously [activate himself]...; music itself does it. Music...is such a great medium."(15)

"Sometimes it happened to me [that], before the concert, I felt like that. Then, when I played... because it's always the question...about the respect for the work you are performing so, I have not [sic] the right to put [my personal problems] ...between me and the work."(22)

Only one musician (6.3%) said that he never had a problem with not being activated enough. Three musicians (18.8%) did not answer this question.

"Even if you're playing the piece for the umpteenth time, you're always excited. I'm [italics added] always excited! I don't get motivation problems like that."(18)

Two musicians (12.5%) mentioned that sometimes, when they played and felt they were not activated enough, they found that they played much better technically but, that the creativity or the inspiration suffered. Again, this view might corroborate the findings cited in the review of literature (Frederikson & Gunnarsson, 1986; Neftel et al, 1982; Steptoe, 1989) that appeasing or controlling the sympathetic reactions that accompany performance anxiety does not necessarily mean that performance will be enhanced.

For most of the musicians interviewed, the problems caused by being too highly activated were much more complex, serious and/or frequent than problems of not being activated enough.

Performance Anxiety

Problems with performance anxiety was a major concern for most of the musicians interviewed. Twelve (75.0%) had had problems related to nervousness or anxiety at some time in their careers.

For four musicians (25.0%), the problems had occurred when they were much younger and they had learned to live with it for the most part.

"When I was younger [it was a problem], I think it happened to me a couple of times...but I didn't really have a good method of practicing. I learned later. Of course, I was running more risks."

"When I was 16 [or] 17. I used to get 'that' nervous yeah [that it caused me not to play well]. I remember...[my] first competition (at 14 or something), I was very good but, I was nervous, it felt like I couldn't play.... I did go through a phase where I would start very confident... and I'd actually get more nervous through the piece. I was my most nervous at the end, even if it had gone well... I didn't do anything [about it] really; it just stopped."(22-24)

Six musicians (37.5%) stated that they sometimes had problems with nervousness for a variety of reasons (see Causes and Solutions further in this section). Four of those six musicians said that their nervousness was very unpredictable, they could not tell when or where they would be nervous.

"I never can tell beforehand how well the nerves will hold up when I'm there on the stage. It's partly unpredictable. Sometimes, for relatively unimportant performances, it's very difficult. Other times, for very important ones, it's not so bad...or the other way around. It's totally unpredictable."(14)

"I can't say exactly! I can tell you what doesn't make me nervous.... It's hard to explain, I'm very cool and under control for the most difficult solos and then, with the easiest things, I get terribly nervous! I can't explain it."(12-13)

Two musicians (12.5%) had given up promising careers very early because of major problems with nervousness. These problems seemed to have started very early on and to have gotten progressively worse.

"I just wasn't made for playing [instrument]. I was always very shy and nervous. I never wanted to play for friends when they came to visit. I only played in another room behind a closed door...I liked playing [instrument] but I was very nervous, terribly nervous.(1.2)

...

It affected my health. I had bleeding ulcers often. I had an operation for it. At 18 [or] 19, I had the first hemorrhages. At 20, I was operated on twice..."(10)

"When I was young, I played solo a lot. A whole lot. It was too much for me somehow because I played too much. I had to study too much program... I had always, was always under stress so-to-speak... I never had enough time. Of course, when you're always under stress, you get used up faster! Even more so when you're young [because] you're particularly sensitive [then]..."(1-2)

Finally, four musicians (25.0%) reported not having had problems with nervousness except on very rare occasions. The distinguishing feature that set them apart from the other musicians was their positive attitude towards stage fright (refer to Perspective for Excellence). They viewed stage fright as a normal and positive tension that spurred them on.

"Of course stage fright is always there but for me, it's a thing that inspires me more than anything else."(16)

"Of course, ...everybody is nervous before the concert. Maybe, it's good [be]cause then, you really play all what you can [sic- give it all you have], you do all for the best."(17)

Causes of Performance Anxiety

Musicians were asked to elaborate on the things that made them nervous or anxious. Most of their answers to that question could be divided in four major causes of anxiety: having the wrong focus, not being well prepared, lacking of self-confidence and, being physically or mentally tired. All of these causes except for the last one (being physically or mentally tired) were described in some of the literature pertaining to stage fright.

Having the wrong focus. Being focused on things that were irrelevant to the task at hand or to the music was a major cause of anxiety. Eleven items from seven of the

musicians (43.8%) were grouped under this heading. Examples of the reasons given for being nervous were: focus on future event (fear of what is coming, fear of coming solo), focus on outcome (fear of failure, fear of the audience's reaction) and/or catastrophising (exaggerating the consequences of a less-than-perfect outcome), being focused on themselves and, allowing distractions to rob them of their proper focus.

"It's always the same, ...I know well ahead of time that the solo is coming. I think ahead that the people have no idea that I'll soon play on alone. It's a crazy thought but it's often there. You can't stop it and then the solo comes and you feel like you're all alone because I think, you project too much onto yourself. It doesn't interest anybody how I'm feeling They just want to hear...[the music].... I think most often you over-emphasize the 'I'; 'I am the interpreter of this solo' and that's a damaging thought, to write this 'I' big."(19-20)

"You know, when I play a duo, I always feel much freer. In the [orchestra] there are a lot of things going on around you, often it's the conductor who will do something that irritates you or whatever - during a solo, I shouldn't even look at him - still, I let myself get irritated."(14)

Not being well prepared. Not being well prepared was the reason given most often given by musicians (n=10 or 62.5%) to explain their nervousness. They stated that there simply was not any way of getting around it; one must be well prepared and feel like one is well prepared in order to play very well. Musicians said they tended to get nervous if they had not had enough time to prepare, if they had too few rehearsals with an orchestra, if they did not have a proper method of practicing or, if there were still too many unknowns about the performance. This explanation of the causes of nervousness or anxiety supports Bandura's self-efficacy theory (Craske & Craig, 1984).

"[I don't get nervous]...unless I play something which...is new for me and [for] which I didn't have enough time, which happens sometimes... then I feel that I'm really not prepared enough."(15)

"Naturally, if you are not well prepared and you neglected to do things, then you're more nervous than if you've done everything you possibly could."(22)

"If I am prepared, I don't have to worry and the nervousness, it's not that big."(18-19)

Lack of self-confidence. Four musicians (25.0%) indicated that doubts about their own abilities to do the job or fear of failure were at the root of their problems with nervousness.

"I'm always driven to such extreme preparation I think in a way because I am afraid of messing up.... In a way, that's ego-motivated in a negative sense."(48)

"I want to play as well as possible and not have to be ashamed of myself. I don't want that. I'm quite afraid - fear is maybe wrong or, maybe it is fear - of failure, I have that! Fears of standing on the stage and not be able to play.... That's terrible."(3)

It must be pointed out that this break down of the causes of anxiety is somewhat arbitrary because they are so closely interrelated. For example, poor preparation would reflect on a musician's confidence in his own ability to do the job. In the same way, a lack of self-confidence can be a problem in and of itself but in mentally preparing for a given performance, it could perhaps be considered (or at least be treated) as a distraction from the desired focus (Steptoe, 1989).

Being physically or mentally tired. Only two musicians (12.5%) listed fatigue as being a contributing factor of nervousness or anxiety. It was listed as a fourth major factor in nervousness because being well rested is something a great majority of elite musicians considered necessary in order to perform well (refer to Pre-performance Routine).

Ericsson et al (1993) also listed being well-rested and "napping" as the second most important determinant of the level of performance (after deliberate practice).

"I think fatigue is a big element in nerves getting out of control. If you're mentally tired, you don't have the reservoir of mental energy to just keep nerves naturally in shape."(42)

"[Sometimes]...I don't find that quiet feeling I need. Sometimes, [I do] sometimes [I don't]; maybe because of other factors that cause me to need a much longer relaxation phase. Maybe because I haven't slept well or enough!"(13)

While being tired may not be a cause of nervousness in itself, it could be a contributing factor because one just does not have the same energy reserve to fight off or deal with nervousness.

Future studies or research in the area of performance anxiety would be necessary to verify the link between fatigue and anxiety.

Other factors contributing to anxiety. Other factors that musicians listed as contributing to their being nervous were: pressure to do well or high expectations from themselves, other colleagues or the audience; outside stress (e.g., family tragedies, personal problems), not finding the music you play convincing (refer to Enjoyment or Commitment to music) and, being over-worked.

Solutions - Helpful Suggestions for Combating Anxiety

Musicians listed those activities or things which they found helpful in combating nervousness. Not surprisingly, the solutions address the causes directly. The majority of solutions to anxiety could be grouped in five main categories.

Practicing/preparing well. If lack of preparation was seen as a major source of anxiety, proper preparation was obviously the first step in combating nervousness. Seven musicians (43.8%) said they fought against performance anxiety by being very well prepared.

"The more...[good basic skills you have], the more you can function with nervousness. ...the nervousness doesn't bother you as much as when you can't do so much."(7-8)

"[to fight nervousness]...I think that you need a very strong sense of self for that. How you can achieve this sense of self [is] by being well prepared so that you can say: 'Nothing can happen. I'm extremely well prepared.' I think it's the only way to get self-esteem."(24)

Proper Focus/Refocus. As mentioned in the section on causes of anxiety, being able to put away distractions was considered a helpful tool in order to perform well. While it is not a long-term solution in dealing with a lack of self-confidence, it would certainly help contain the performance anxiety (see Distraction Control/Refocusing).

Experience. Six musicians (37.5%) stated that problems with nerves often solved themselves as one gained experience. The best remedy was to stand on stage often and/or regularly.

"Some of it..., is a frequency thing. If you only play a solo once every six months, you're much more likely to be nervous. If you play a solo every second day, it's unlikely you'll be nervous for all that long... I think if you start performing when you're very young...you get up, and play, you have no fears. Then, when you hit adolescence...you have already an established pattern of performing [and you] just go straight through and there's no problem."(23-24)

"[recommendations to get over anxiety problems] I can only say, to get as much performance experience as possible and, [to] play as many different works as possible. I think both is [sic] really important at a young age because, the more works one studies, the easier it gets later."(46)

Build up slowly/build on successes. The previously mentioned solution of starting early and playing often is in direct contrast with two musicians' points of view. They had

had a lot of problems with anxiety and felt that it was because they had been pushed too much as children, having to learn and perform too much, too fast. They said that that was the way that their self-confidence had been destroyed.

"I was standing on the stage from the time I was 10...the best solution would have been if I had had enough time to finish studying [without having to rush] of course, with the usual concerts...but, not to burn myself out... Less concerts! And I should have had the possibility of not having to earn money."(3)

Both of these musicians felt that it would have been better if they had been given a chance to build up a repertoire slowly, not having to constantly experience half successes or even full successes where they did not feel good about themselves.

"I think it depends on the success; if you've played a lot of concerts with success and you've recognized that you can play, then, these thoughts aren't there any more.!"(5)

Rationalizing/self-talk. Some musicians found it helpful to remind themselves that everything is relative and that being nervous was unproductive. This remedy against catastrophising is the basis of the most effective cognitive and behavioral treatments of performance anxiety: learning to understand the chain of thoughts that leads to anxiety, to recognize it when it starts and to deal with it (disrupt it) before it gets out of control (Grindea, 1984; Lehrer, 1981; Morasky et al, 1983; Reubart, 1985; Steptoe, 1989; Tobacyk & Downs, 1986; Whitaker & Tanner, 1987).

Six musicians (37.5%) found this self-talk useful in combating nervousness.

"The basic condition for not being nervous is that you have to remember.... When I make a mistake, then it upsets a few people, a few laugh, a few don't notice, others sleep through it...or a few other possible reactions.... But basically, nothing earth shattering will happen so there's just no reason to let yourself get under terrible stress over it."(18)

"I just keep it like [sic] it's normal. I don't make a case [of it]. It's normal. I just think everybody would be nervous. I accept it."(16)

Other Solutions. Five musicians (31.3%) said that it was very important to be well rested and physically active; four (25.0%) reported practicing some forms of mental training: yoga, autogenic training, progressive relaxation and breathing exercises (see also Mental Training).

Only one musician (6.3%) mentioned using medication to control his anxiety. He had very serious problems in dealing with stage fright and had not played solo in years other than for the odd house concert. This is less than might have been expected from the literature reviewed where percentages of musicians who admitted using drugs or alcohol to control their performance anxiety was always at least 20 per cent (Frederikson & Gunnarsson, 1992; Hamann, 1982; Lehrer, 1984; Neftel et al, 1982). It must be pointed out that no direct questions pertaining to the use of drugs and alcohol were asked in the present study and it is believed that alcohol and beta blockers are quite often resorted to by elite musicians. Future research in the area of mental readiness will have to further explore this topic.

In summary, most of the musicians interviewed (n=12 or 75.0%) in the present study had at some point experienced problems in dealing with performance anxiety. Two of them (12.5%) had given up hope of a solo career because of performance anxiety; four (25.0%) reported having had a lot of problems in the past but having learned to live with them for the most part and six musicians (37.5%) said that they occasionally struggled with anxiety problems. Four of the musicians interviewed never or hardly ever had problems dealing with fear or anxiety. They did have stage fright but they considered it a very healthy motivation or inspiration that gave them the necessary energy to produce the 'special' performance. All musicians, even those with debilitating fears or nervousness

problems, recognized that some butterflies in the stomach were a necessary ingredient of elite performance.

It is important to point out that although performance anxiety was a major concern of elite musicians, they were highly functioning individuals performing at the highest levels of excellence under conditions that most 'normal' persons would not endure! Yet, they were not only functioning, they were thriving and enjoying it for the most part.

Mental Training

Musicians were asked whether they practiced any form of mental training. A majority (n=11 or 68.8%) were familiar with some of the most popular techniques used (see Table 3). Only one of those (6.3% of total sample) used yoga/meditation on a regular basis and had made it a part of his daily mental preparation for practice and his pre-performance routine.

Table 3

List of the forms of mental training used by or known to elite musicians

Mental training form	Number of participants who said they had learned/practiced it
Autogenic training	5
Breathing exercises/relaxation	4
Yoga/Meditation	3
Alexander technique	2
Tai-chi	1
Concentrated movement therapy	1
Muscle Relaxation	1
Sport Psychology	2
- The Inner Game of Tennis, (Gallwey, 1974)	2
- Zen & the Art of Archery	3

The other musicians who said they had some knowledge or had taken some courses did not practice a mental training technique regularly because they found it either too time consuming or not effective. Most resorted to breathing exercises or autogenic training when they felt they needed it. They also said that they adapted the techniques to fit their own needs.

"You can go into a room and well, it's not yoga but, you just sit and breathe and close your eyes and just, calm down."(35)

"For a time I was very interested in autogenic training. I learned it with [name] and, I found it to be a great help. I learned it and now, I can always go back to it when I need it... It helped me find peace and more distance (even from one's self) while playing. Also, it helps to reduce stress - it can't make it disappear because stress is inherent in our profession."(6-7)

"Sometimes I feel I need [it]...only once I made [an effort] but I had to stop because it was not possible with all the work I do. I was attending a course of tai-chi. So, I learned a little [of] this kind of breathing from the stomach and sometimes, when I feel very stressed or very nervous, I try to relax, breathing like this."(15)

"Yes, of course [I do yoga]. But not in the form most people think.... I learned to do it with the instrument. I find that practicing is a meditative activity. Like archery. It's the same thing, the same movement...change of position... If I do it 5,000 times a day, it's a meditative exercise. The same sinking of the mind as when watching the pendulum swing. Notes are swinging. You imagine those notes. I would say I practice yoga and autogenic training in the way I live."(23)

All but one musician (n=10 or 62.5% of total sample) who used some form of mental training did so in order to relax. One musician stated that he would never want to do autogenic training because he did not like to be passive! The musician who practiced yoga

regularly used it to relax when he was nervous and to get energized before a performance (refer to Mental Preparation for Performance).

One of the musicians who had severe problems with performance anxiety had undergone psychotherapy for two years. He had also taken a course in autogenic training but did not practice it regularly.

Teachers/Sources of Influence

The participants were asked to identify the sources that have influenced their approach to music or their mental readiness to perform. These sources were grouped in six major categories.

Family Background/Parents

Eleven of the musicians interviewed (68.8%) had a musical family background. Obviously, this constituted one of the early influences on their interest in music. They discovered music in the family and their interests in it were nurtured and supported by their family. Musicians often talked about having listened to their parents play music and very soon, having participated in family music-making.

"Music was always in the family, from the [sic] mother; she was playing piano and when I was a baby or a very small child,... This is one of the first impression[s], that she plays some Schubert [so] that we sleep my brother and me [sic]. She played...the piano was in our room...these were the first happy moment[s]."(2)

"I grew up in a musical home, there was always some music making at home and I was not a problem child; I always wanted to make music. From the beginning it seemed, it fascinated me to make music and I wanted to be what my father was [a musician]."(1)

"[About a long family history of professional musicians]... one of the prerequisites to becoming a musician is to grow up from childhood on in a family that's open to

music or at least, to have a person that you look up to (parents or friends) as a child who is active in music."(1)

For three of the musicians interviewed (18.8%) this early musical experience within the family might not have been totally positive.

"Through my father, a hobby musician! Pure hobby...he played four different instruments.... He said 'Learn this, you might like it.' That's how it started. ...No, I didn't [enjoy it]. I wasn't made for that, for playing [instrument]...."(1)

The support of their families when they were young was determining in the musicians' early decision to make music a profession but not in terms of "pushing" them into playing an instrument; for the most part, the children's early enjoyment of music was very clear. Two of the musicians even said that their family tried to dissuade them from pursuing musical careers but that when they persisted, the family was supportive of their decision.

Teachers

Fourteen musicians (87.5%) listed some of their teachers as having greatly influenced their mental readiness to perform.

"It's like that in pedagogy... A good teacher is not the one that teaches a child to write properly or to add properly in math or how the economy of Pakistan functions! ...These are all important, they are prerequisites but, [what's important]...is that the ones who learn, are interested and stay with it... When you think of it, who were our good teachers? They were the ones who gave you more than the technical knowledge."(4)

"More important still are probably influences that are subconscious; I played a lot of concerts with my teachers. Right there, you probably pick up on a lot of mental things without knowing, without thinking."(25-26)

Only one musician (6.3%) stated that teachers did not really play a big role in his mental readiness to perform although he quickly added that one teacher had made a significant, if accidental, contribution.

"I don't think teachers play much of a part in that [mental readiness]. Except, my last [instrument] teacher said: 'What you gotta [sic] do son is, you gotta [sic] sit in a chair and you just flop; let all your muscles go limp, breathe in and out.' I thought 'What a crackpot idea' at the time. Now, it's 'What else could you do?' But generally, music training doesn't have any of that."(53)

Five musicians (31.3%) stated that the actions of their teachers had a negative effect on their state of mental readiness to perform:

"My teacher was proud of me and, he could show off what he had [in me] ...and I got presented everywhere...it got to be too much. ...even though he was a wonderful musician, he didn't know that you shouldn't do that!"(7)

"He absolutely made it worse. He was terribly ambitious and he abused of his students that way, to become famous himself."(23)

"This goal [of freeing yourself, giving yourself over to the music]...came as a reaction against where my teacher was leading me... My intensive study years were with [teacher], a great teacher. He was a brilliant thinker and analyst...he was really a great teacher but for me, as shy as I was...he wanted to draw me out, he wanted to motivate me...but, it wasn't right. I always had to play louder and louder to give something. But I thought it couldn't be right, that I was becoming more and more aggressive; it didn't have anything to do with devotion any more! He wanted something from me that wasn't me. I tried to do it for him for a while but it was a terrible burden for me. ...I soon started looking for an alternative. What he wanted was right...he knew I had a lot of talent... Expressiveness is good but it must be free; a dynamic thing. Stay dynamic inside, not just be loud."(9-10)

Colleagues

Colleagues or chamber music partners were great sources of learning for four of the musicians (25.0%). It must be remembered that musicians spend a great deal of time with their colleagues. When they go on tours, they have long hours of travelling together, eating together, rehearsing together and of course, playing together. Colleagues can contribute or be a hindrance to one's state of readiness to perform.

"You often learn the most from people that you would never have thought [to learn from]... because they are so calm and loose. You'd never have thought they are or were nervous! Actually, this exchange with other musicians who live the same situations starts when you enter the world of music and only intensifies..."(20)

The perceptions a musician had of his colleagues was the determining factor in whether they became a source of learning to him. If they are seen as competition, their help would less likely be sought out. In playing chamber music, the confidence musicians had in their partners' ability and reliability greatly affected their own self-confidence; if they trusted their partners then, they felt free to be spontaneous.

"In a duo recital, I feel much better if I have a good partner I can rely on and he knows he can rely on me; even if you get a bit nervous, it's still no problems. I can still fulfil all my expectations. Maybe not perfectly but still, much easier."(14)

"I had the chance to come in this orchestra where [number] other good people are...you learn from that too. One colleague [name] influenced me a lot. I didn't love him, he was somehow competition...but he did influence me a lot. I had to measure up to him. Other colleagues too, it's a challenge when they're good."(44-45)

"...I do improvise a lot too. And that's why I love playing with partners who are very sensitive to different.... [name] is a perfect example. She's amazingly flexible and, if you play with a partner like this and you prepare good understanding [sic] and the

same...vibration, the same frequency you know. If you are on the same wavelength, you can communicate within [a] split second you know. You know, [even before] you do something, the other already feels it and immediately reacts. Then, you feel free of doing..."(26)

Students

Four of the seven musicians who are also teachers stated that their students were their greatest source of learning.

"A student can even help me help another one along. Often, there's like a spark where I see it helps this one student, maybe it'll help the other one too!"(13)

"But, what gave me the most was teaching. I would suggest to everybody to teach [sic] because, unless you have a very good teacher who makes you conscious of each movement you do,. conscious of most of the things you do, one of the easiest way is to teach. Through my pupils, I really built a method for myself because I could check what works and what doesn't."(41)

Other Sources of Influence

Other sources of influence mentioned by musicians (n=5 or 31.3%) were books and courses. These sources were quoted in reference to mental training strategies (autogenic training and yoga).

Two musicians (12.5%) said they were greatly influenced by conductors. One learned through his own negative experiences.

"I must say, I've learned the most out of my own experience. I have tried never to repeat the mistakes that were made in my case. I have tried to do that and for the most part, I think I succeeded. I ...I've never put a student under such a stress that he had to practice till he fell over or that he was physically or mentally finished."(3-4)

Mental Readiness to Perform - Summary

This section tried to paint a picture of how the musicians interviewed mentally and physically prepared themselves for a performance.

Musicians knew exactly how they wanted to feel before a performance and what they wanted to focus their thoughts on (see Table 4 for a composite view of their ideal performance state based on the musicians' answers).

Table 4

Ideal Performance State - Composite View of the Musicians' Desired Physical, Technical and Mental State of Readiness

Physically:	- fit; healthy - well rested - not hungry; not too full
Technically:	- very well prepared - technical skills automated
Mentally:	- feeling loose, comfortable - feeling sure, confident of own ability - looking forward to the experience - in harmony with the surroundings - "in" the atmosphere (audience, hall) - feeling open for what's coming
Focus:	- on the music; just the music - on the whole picture of the music - on the here and now
Thoughts:	- no thoughts

Table 4 (cont'd)
Ideal Performance State

Level of Activation	- excited; a bit nervous - not too nervous
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Descriptions of Peak Performance:

Music is flowing and I let myself be a part of the music.
 I live the concert; very quiet inside.
 Relaxed concentration; communication with the audience.
 ...kind of not belonging to that time and place.
 Playing with a pure heart.
 When I'm not playing; IT plays, IT happens.
 ...all movements and activities smooth, not rubbing.
 Dive in at the beginning and come out at the end.
 Feeling ready for what comes.
 Feeling open for what comes.

For the most part, musicians were not aware of how they achieved this state of mental readiness. They mostly followed general guidelines for the day of the performance: being well rested, eating properly, being calm and not rushing to master technical skills at the last minute.

What stood out in this discussion was the musicians' flexibility and adaptability to their surroundings (see also Flexibility). It was suggested that they do not insist on a detailed pre-performance plan because experience has taught them that it would be pointless to do so; they often travel or rehearse on the day of a performance, sometimes almost until 30 minutes before they have to perform. If they depended on a very detailed routine or preparation plan, they often would not have the opportunity to use it at all.

The pre-performance routine and the mental preparation of the musicians were also based on general guidelines rather than on detailed plans.

Musicians interviewed did seem to have suffered from inconsistency in their state of mental readiness with regards to achieving their ideal activation level for a performance. They had had problems with not being up enough for a concert or with being too nervous

to perform as they would like. Perhaps this was a result of not being aware of how they had prepared when it went well. Future research on mental readiness might look at trying to establish whether more elaborate preparation plans (having a set routine or mental preparation and event focus plans) might contribute to the feeling of readiness that musicians want to have when they perform.

A short presentation of the forms of mental training most often used or known by musicians as well as their major sources of influence concerning mental readiness completed this section.

QUALITIES/MENTAL READINESS SKILLS

In this section, a list of mental skills and qualities considered important in performance excellence is presented. They include four of Orlick's five original (1989) elements of excellence: focusing or concentration, refocusing or distraction control, visualization and constructive evaluation (Mental preparation for practice and for performance were discussed in previous sections). Question 25 of the Musician Interview guide required the musicians to assign a numerical rating to the relative importance of those mental skills in order to be able to excel as a musician. Unfortunately, not enough musicians agreed to assign numbers to their views on each item, so a quantitative analysis was not possible (refer to Analysis of the results). Where some numerical ratings were available they were pointed out in the discussion.

Three qualities that musicians considered necessary in order to excel in their field are added to this original list: creativity, flexibility and spontaneity.

Concentration/Focusing

The desired pre-performance and performance focus was discussed (refer to the section on Mental Readiness). The musicians interviewed all felt that concentration was a necessary element of excellence. Six (37.5%) assigned a numerical rating (range 8 to "at

least" 10; mean, 9.5) to indicate how important it was; others expressed its importance in words.

"It's necessary, I mean, the necessity is certainly 10 but, it doesn't always work that way. Often I can concentrate like crazy but it still won't go. I often don't get 10 but I know it's necessary and I'm always trying."(30)

"Concentration is a thing you have to learn first and foremost... You have to guide them [the students] so they learn these things. Discipline is also a ground rule of the ability to concentrate; that you learn to turn off whatever thoughts are going around in a circle. These things are very important. There are many things going through your head and you must see to it that these things bring you to one point and you leave the others."(23)

"'Collect myself' ...means that your thoughts are not all over the place.... So that I'm not all excited and jumping around from one thought to another but rather, that I'm ready."(23)

Many musicians (n=7 or 43.8%), however, did not perceive concentration as an ability or a skill. They felt that it was "there", it just happened and if one tried to control it or create it, one would lose it!

"What is concentration? How do you achieve it? I don't think that concentration is a defined expression, where you can say it has a very specific form and you have to do very specific things to achieve it."(33)

"Concentration is good, very good. But it doesn't encompass everything. The expression is just not enough for me. It is certainly important...it's not a good collective noun. If I'm reaching for concentration then, I can fail to have a good disposition just because of it. Because I'm thinking too much and trying to will it to work too much."(28-29)

"It's a prerequisite but, if you try to have it, if you pursue it then, it's an obstacle. Only as long as it's not forced and not willed but is just there, it is helpful. But then, [it's] very [helpful]."(28)

It can be said that musicians considered concentration an essential element of excellence, something one could not ever hope to perform without. However, they recognized it more as a frame of mind or a mental state than as an ability or skill. The ability would be perhaps more in choosing the right focus (refer to Perspective for Excellence) and of course, controlling distractions in order to regain the desired focus if one lost it. This is the next mental readiness skill discussed.

Distraction Control/Refocusing

There was no doubt in the minds of the musicians as to the usefulness or necessity of being able to refocus before or during a performance. Only five musicians (31.3%) assigned refocusing a numerical rating but these five all rated it '10'! The comments of the other musicians also indicated that the ability to refocus was an essential requirement in their profession.

"Of course! If you want to be a professional, you have to know how [to] do it. It's ...one of the most important things... Yes."(77)

"...[in practice], if you're not pleased with something then, you repeat that and, at the concert, this is impossible. And, when you're not pleased then, you better forget it [be]cause [otherwise] ...it can get very bad in a very short period of time.

[Otherwise, the mistakes] are coming more and more and more!"(24)

"[It's] terribly important. You have to be able to [refocus].... Even when it's going badly and you almost flip out, to find the thread again. To be able to still hang on to something and say: 'Now, I have to get through this' and maybe...maybe then in the next seconds, the peak performance comes!"(46)

"In our profession, it's a tool that you can't get around. When you're in a situation where you've gone off, you have to come back to your proper focus. You constantly need it."(28)

"That's very important! Naturally! It comes up over and over again... It happens so often with students, [they make a mistake and] ...right away, a whole part of the piece is bad. You have to try to think: 'O.K. It's done' and concentrate again."(3)

Distractions

It is almost impossible to categorize the kinds of things that can disturb musicians because there are so many different ones and musicians will not be distracted by things in the same way every time they occur. Musicians stated that if they were really focused, nothing could disturb them. If, on the other hand, they were not focused, almost everything became a potential distraction! For the purposes of the presentation, distractions were divided into two main areas: distractions from within and distractions from outside. One participant expressed an interesting thought when he stated that distractions really always come from within:

"Yes, some things can disturb you! [list of things]... It distracts me. At best you're in the music and not thinking of anything, (not even myself) so that even I can't distract myself... That's the ideal. The worst case is that you fight all night, trying to get in, that you consciously try to control things but, nothing happens. You can't get in. You distract yourself through conductors, orchestra members, audiences, through whatever."(11)

Distractions from Within

All of the thoughts and feelings that interfered with giving yourself over to the music completely were placed in this category. Twelve musicians (75.0%) said that their own thoughts and feelings often robbed them of their concentration. The thoughts listed as major sources of distractions included such things as: judging their playing during a

performance, thinking ahead of themselves to what is coming, thinking of the outcome, trying too hard to concentrate, fears, thoughts of personal problems, placing too high expectations on themselves, harping on mistakes, being sad, angry, happy or irritated with themselves. Four musicians (25.0%) listed being nervous or anxious as one of the major distractions they had to deal with (refer to Performance Anxiety).

Distractions from Outside

Ten of the musicians interviewed (62.5%) said that they were distracted by outside influences at times although none of them said it was a major problem. Things that they found distracting included: members of the audience making noise or getting up to leave during the piece, conductors making mistakes or fiddling around too much, problems with their instruments, colleagues making mistakes, various things in the concert hall (e.g., lights, chair, heat, humidity) and, people making demands on them shortly before a concert.

It was interesting to note that musicians did not list a change in their pre-performance routine as a source of distractions. As discussed earlier, musicians did not appear to follow a rigid, pre-performance routine. However, wanting peace and calm was one of the things they considered most important in their pre-performance routine. Perhaps, this was a way of avoiding distractions.

Another interesting point was that five of the musicians (31.3%) stated that distractions or small mistakes could often be good because they forced one to shift one's focus to where it should be.

"In a way, it's almost good ...to crack a note or do something bad because, for some reason with me, that completes my concentration; from then on, I have no problem concentrating. In a way, playing really well is more dangerous than having made a mistake because for me, when I make a mistake, my concentration is total."(43)

Ways of Refocusing

Fighting distractions was almost an everyday occurrence for elite musicians. They recognized refocusing as an essential skill in their professions but, they did not really know how they did it; perhaps this was because they used it so much that it just seemed to be second nature to them!

"I don't know; that's a thing you're born with too! One will have the reflex to be on track right away; the other, not. He's out of it and needs longer to get back. And we don't have that time, otherwise you're completely out of it. It's a special talent, to be able to change course right away, to just get up and go again and not just fall over!"(34)

"I don't know exactly! I'd have to watch myself closely to see what I do when I lose concentration. Check out what I do!"(33)

"I think of something else...[laughs]...like a kind of will [power], I don't want [to, so] I think of something else."(22)

"I'm trying not to get distracted too much by this because, it doesn't help...it's not positive."(24)

Musicians were not very aware of how they refocused during a performance. Seven musicians (43.8%) did indicate that a thought flashed through their minds for a split second before they went on with the music perhaps indicating that they made use of cue words to refocus. Only two of those seven musicians indicated that they always tried to do the same thing.

"I don't know about other people but my way is to think 'Aha, there it is again' and I try to do the same thing everytime...: concentrate on the 'here and now' and let yourself be influenced by the music."(21)

"Now, I tell myself: 'Forget it! No more!' You have to cut out the past and the future, you have to live in and swing with the now!"(12)

If the other musicians made use of cue words, they probably did so instinctively, without being aware of it.

"In this thousandth of a second, I think 'What am I doing?' Then it's gone, the piece goes on!"(15)

"Shit! For a moment you think it's 'shit' [laughs] ...and then, you carry on! ...Of course, it's so quick, you played and it goes [clap hands]; it carries on so it's [a] very short time to think during the play [sic]."(27)

"Oh yes, [distractions happen]. But what can I say? You say 'Don't think of that'. That's what I do, [I say] 'What is this?' I reprimand myself."(25)

Four musicians (25.0%) said that they found it distracting when people made demands on them before the concert. All four of them said that they usually chose to deal with it and do what was asked of them rather than get upset over it if it was a small thing or politely excused themselves to go and practice if it persisted for any length of time.

"If it's a simple question or thing to do, then I give in to it. I let myself be distracted. Take it in stride. But if it's a big thing like someone telling a story, or whatever, then I tell him: 'I'm sorry but I have to prepare now.'"(10-11)

"...most of the time, if they approach you, it's because there are things left to settle like the lights or whatever. So, you can't avoid it, the only thing you can do is to face it and not to let it upset you and make you nervous!"(16-19)

Other "tricks" musicians found helpful in finding their way back to the music were: playing louder; singing along inwardly to the music; closing their eyes and playing by heart; if they had to read the notes and the distraction was visual, lowering their head so their line of vision stopped at the top of the page; concentrating all the more on the notes; knowing that distractions will always be there and accepting them and; using visualization to refocus (see Visualization).

Refocusing was a basic requirement for elite musicians as they are constantly subjected to distractions. For the most part, they accepted the distractions as normal and dealt with them. If distractions occurred before a concert, they felt it was better to do what was asked of them quickly and return to their preparation rather than getting upset over it. If they found they couldn't deal with it quickly, they excused themselves politely but firmly.

Ways of refocusing during the concert were centered around the use of cue words or the music itself (listening to it, feeling it, singing it, looking at the notes).

Visualization/Mental Imagery

Elite musicians were found to have very vivid and detailed pictures in their minds and they regularly applied these imagery skills in their pursuit of musical excellence. They found visualization (or imagination) to be very important, associating it closely with creativity (see Creativity in this section) and musicality. This interpretation of visualization did make the data analysis difficult at times; it seemed sometimes that musicians really meant creativity or inspiration when they talked about "vivid imagination" or visualization. It must be remembered that many of the musicians interviewed did not have English as their mother tongue! (See also Problems Encountered).

Six musicians (37.5%) assigned a numerical rating to the importance of visualization in order to excel as a musician (Range, 7.5 to 10; mean, 9.25). The other musicians also agreed that visualization was a determining factor in musical excellence.

"Well, it's everything. I find it's 10... If you don't have imagination, it will only [ever] be an average performance."(46)

"Yes, very very high!... I don't think you can be a great musician without it. Because music depends too much on visualization skills. It is music's department, it's language ...otherwise, it would be just a technical exercise."(30)

"I would say it's the basis of all artistic work; at least 10!"(29)

Musicians used their visualization skills in a number of ways: to memorize a new piece, to interpret the music, for mental practice, for motivation and goals, for relaxation, in focusing or refocusing, as simulation training and in their warm-up or mental preparation for performance.

As in the studies cited in the review of literature (Agnew, 1922; Lindauer, 1977; Richardson, 1969), the quality of the musicians' mental images seemed very high; most of them talked about "feeling and hearing" the music in their mind. Some of the musicians' imaging skills were extremely realistic in content.

Most musicians said that their visualization was mostly spontaneous (except when they were learning a new piece or practicing in their mind). Indeed, quite a few musicians said they were "victims of their images!"

Uses of Visualization

Memorization

In accordance with the findings of Lim & Lippman (1991), seven musicians (43.8%) said that they found visualization very useful when they were learning a new piece or taking up a piece again after not having played it for a long time.

"In my half hour break, after I warm up, I will do a mental run through of the whole concerto ...to get it memorized."(10)

"I call it up ...like when I rehearse in my mind, when I actively recall a piece to re-learn it so-to-speak."(9-10)

"For instance, I practice in my mind very much about memory. When I have to learn a piece, I always check if I can remember all the piece without playing... All parts separately also... You have to think of it all and, if you can remember every note in your mind...it's good."(13)

Musical Interpretation

Musicians felt that learning a piece by heart was the first step in approaching a new piece. The second step was getting to know it well enough to decide how they wanted to play it, what the piece expressed and so on. Again, a lot of this work was done with visualization.

Although it was not discussed in the literature reviewed, 13 musicians (81.3%) said that they used visualization to develop their own interpretation of the piece they were preparing.

"I'm just singing something to myself in my head! Like I know that next year, I have an important [performance]. It's very important for me, and certain things just never leave my head. Certain parts or difficult passages, fingerings or possibilities. It's working in my head...these thoughts are mostly musical. The percentage of technical things is very small, after all, it's all been done..in the actual practice you know... If I don't have the instrument, then it's mostly musical thoughts."(4)

"Looking through the piece [and visualizing the music] ...or thinking of the piece also. Very much. It's also a question of...time. When you travel you cannot practice but you have to learn a piece in a short time and so, you cannot stay always at home and practicing [sic]. So you learn in a way, how to think of a piece and go farther with your knowing."(9)

"[I use visualization] ...to compare different interpretations to one I'm actually listening to."(10)

While two musicians (12.5%) did not mention using visualization to interpret the music, only one of them (6.3%) specifically said that he did not use visualization to interpret the music because he could not. His explanation for that statement exemplifies how an over-ambitious teacher can inflict a lot of damage on his students' mental readiness to perform.

"It would be advantageous [to be able to use visualization in musical interpretation]. I've never had ...[training in that]. You know why? Because at the [conservatory] I was excused from all theoretical courses! [Teacher] said: 'Only [instrument], only [instrument]; nothing, else. You must practice, practice, practice.' Freed of all music theory!... It would have been a waste of time [the teacher said]. Only practice; only the [instrument]. It was very bad...I'm missing all of the theory of music; this imagination is important to be able to analyse the phrasing, and the piece as a whole. How you interpret it. It might have helped me with my fear. [But I only had]...pure technical training."(49)

Five musicians (31.3%) stated that they used visualization to transcend technical or instrumental limitations in order to have a clearer purer interpretation of what they want.

"Other things too [than just memorization], so I notice more how this or that phrase goes... I imagine how I want this part to sound and sometimes, it's just in a pitch that doesn't sound nice - that's just how the composer composed it... Then, maybe I'll just practice them in a different pitch... I bring it over to a pitch where it sounds good, where I can do everything as I want it...play it so often that it gets in my ear...then go back and, play it in [the] original pitch and try to make it sound the same... In the end you have ...the sound you want... Just the fact that you say: 'Musically, I want to play it like this'. That's good. You have to have this idea, this picture, and then, you have to realise it."(10-11)

"[practicing musically or technically in your mind?].... Both. ...the two kind of run into the other. So often, [when] there's a musical problem, it's because the technique is not sufficient to create that which...a person hears in his [mind] or would like to realise!"(10)

Mental Practice

Some musicians (n=5 or 31.3%) used their imagery skills to practice in their mind or to solve technical difficulties in the piece. This use of visualization was studied by Ross (1985) and, Bird and Wilson (1988).

"You can also work on mechanical problems very well in your head. For athletes, it's probably the same; the high jumper has to go through his jump one thousand times..."(13)

"I've tried this [mental practice] with études I didn't know...[to see] how much it brings if you take a half hour before, without instrument, to look through it.... You save about 20-25 per cent of the time when you went through it before."(21-22)

Motivation/Goals

Four musicians (25.0%) said that they visualized or daydreamed about their goals to keep themselves motivated or simply to make the goals seem more attainable (refer to dreams/goals/motivation for a discussion of how these musicians felt that daydreaming about their goals brought them closer to realising them). They said they were convinced that the visualization of their dreams or goals, either when they were young or now, contributed to the attainment of these goals.

"I remember maybe when I was 16, I went through a time when I just often daydreamed about sitting, playing first [instrument] in [one orchestra] or [other orchestra]. It wasn't until...I got these jobs that I remembered dreaming about them. I suddenly thought: 'I wonder if that's why I got them?'... Sure, yeah [it helps]. ...I'd say definitely.... In a sense, every action you take is eased [sic - made easier] by having already, even if only for a short time, seen it as a sort of ...reality inside your own head."(17)

"Now I try [to get students to] ...have a more idealistic dream; that they dream of music, what he can make of a piece; that he develops a certain ambition from this

dream.... Certainly [these dreams help achieve the goals]. These dreams are a big part of it I think. They're one of the most important things."(12)

Simulation

Musicians made extensive use of visualization in order to recreate realistic conditions in their practice room. This use of visualization was discussed in the section on Practicing - Simulation training.

Other Uses of Visualization

Musicians used visualization in their mental preparation for practice and/or for performance (n=3 or 18.8%). One musician said that he trained himself not to need a physical warm up with his instrument (refer to Mental Readiness - Mental preparation for performance).

Two musicians (12.5%) said that they used vivid imagery to call up their desired focus or to help them refocus if they had lost it (see also Focusing).

"When it went well [in a performance]...you should know it was good and 'feel' again why you were good. I generally try to take the whole experience.... I need something that will work fast for me the next time; I need a picture that brings me right back in this condition again. The whole feeling then works better than if I try to remember a thousand details."(34)

One participant (6.3%) also elaborated on avoiding negative imagery:

"I tend not to want to imagine the bad situations too exactly because then, you just call them up!"(32)

Quality of Images

All musicians reported having a vivid and active imagination with things going on in their mind all the time.

"Yes, I think so. I reflect a lot. I think about the things I experience. ... The very best is when thoughts just come in your head naturally that then complement a situation, that make things clear."(13)

"Always a lot. There are always a thousand things going through my head yes. My head is not empty. There's probably a lot of craziness in it too!... I think I'm easily influenced by my surroundings. So, if your mind is relatively free and you're willing to let it out then, anything is liable to get it going."(8)

"Yeah [a lot of things on my mind]. I'd say extrapolations of possibilities...tangents and developments of whatever it is I'm doing at the time."(16)

"Yes, a lot. A lot of things on my mind... I enjoy a 14 hour flight because I can think quietly."(17)

For the most part, the images produced were vivid and realistic. All musicians reported using internal imagery (i.e., seeing or experiencing the imagery as if looking out of their own eyes). Three musicians (18.8%) said that they also used external imagery at times.

"Seeing" was the sense most often associated with the images perceived (n=10 or 62.5%); other senses involved were "feeling" (n=9 or 56.3%) and "hearing" (n=8 or 50.0%).

"When I want to 'fix' the technical things in my brain in order to play it by heart, then I 'see' the notes, lots of notes. Sometimes, it's just cue notes and then, a passage where the notes are not so clear then, I 'feel' the fingers, where they will rest on the [instrument] and then again, a cue note..."(14-15)

"Of course I [hear it]! Of course, [I feel it]! I try to imagine how I would play it really. So, I imagine that I am playing now...I see the music in front of me."(15)

"...I feel the music. Sometimes I [am] really...totally involved in this and then, I do this as a full-time occupation, even without the instrument... But very often it's...on

the way to doing something else... If I can concentrate on this...then, I have certain pictures in my imagination, but usually it's not so much myself playing or the music itself...but it's certain images; feelings and images."(12-13)

"For every passage I think of special [images]...here a crescendo, there hold back the tone, here a point, there a phrase... For me, it's worth a lot more to think:

'Imagine a field, fresh air and, you're running through the forget-me-nots' and then, you play it like that. That's how I do it. It's not so important whether the note is shorter or longer... If it was such an objective thing, music... how could Bernstein, Karajan, Maazel, Böhm...conduct the same piece and make it so different?"(19)

Three musicians (18.8%) mentioned that their images were so clear and realistic that they sweat when they visualized playing or shook with nerves when visualizing their fear(s).

"It's hard work for me, I sweat; it's harder work for me to mentally run through a concerto than with the [instrument]..."(10)

"I'm always afraid, in every situation. Most nervous and pessimistic. I always imagine the worst case; ...always expect the worst and...[it's] very realistic and...visual. Then I shake..., automatically...just while imagining!"(12)

All the musicians interviewed said that they often had spontaneous images pertaining to their music and six of them (37.5%) said that they could call up images when they wanted to. They indicated that they could call up these images when they wanted it in terms of their "musical" visualization at any rate but certainly, they often had spontaneous images, thoughts, music going through their mind whether they wanted to or not.

"Sometimes [you do this]...looking at the notes. Sometimes, I look at the notes and try to sing it in my memory and try to...analyse it... Sometimes it's difficult [to know] if you are thinking of a problem...if it's my rational way then, I go and...find a solution [but], sometimes, it's an intuition you have! Something makes me associate. Then

suddenly... [even when] I'm thinking of something else, I see something that tells me something and I immediately refer to what I am working on..."(10)

"I remember when I was a child until maybe 20 or so, there was not a second in the day where I didn't have some musical acoustical thing playing in my inner ear.

Later, it became less and less so. Now, it only happens when I consciously call upon it. They are not an automatic, constant background film in my head like it was as a child. ...concrete music...constant inner music it was. Sometimes specific pieces I knew or I was learning, sometimes just fantasy."(9)

Musicians interviewed had a head full of music. Maybe too full! Five of them (31.3%) reported being "a victim" of their imagination; they could turn it on (i.e., call images up) but they were not that good at turning it off.

"Oh yeah! I have [a vivid imagination]. ...I don't have sleep troubles but there are days where I can't sleep for a long time because my thoughts are just crisscrossing around...of all possible pieces.... They stick to you sometimes. I mean, some things or a certain phrase just won't go away, they follow you around constantly. You can't get rid of it. It's hard to turn off. Really hard!"(12)

"A lot of things on my mind. Unfortunately, they come even when I don't want them. Like when I'm jogging, I don't want to think about the concert any more... I think: 'Why should I think of the concert? It won't bring me anything.' But still, it keeps coming back in my head..."(17)

One musician had recognized the danger of letting his musical images take over his life:

"One thing...I've tried to avoid is to let myself being tortured by my music. And that is...I have to have time to think of...other things. As an example,...sometimes you're so caught up in rehearsing a piece and so overwhelmed with the music, it's hard even to go to sleep at night because you lay down and your head is so filled with

music. But I...use meditation techniques to give myself a... clear space....I have to be able to turn it off."(16)

Finally, it was interesting to note that some musicians also made use of "moving imagery", adding to the quality of the imagery by going through at least parts of the motion of playing the instrument.

"A thing that [instrument] players do is to practice just with the mouthpiece... I do do that... Earlier, I did it a lot, carried my mouthpiece around and just...played. So you have it down to everything that was technical here [showing mouth and throat] and the mouthpiece. You can really concentrate on that one facet without the actual sound of the instrument."(9-10)

"Yes and more important, I teach it a lot. When a student is all cramped up, not free when he plays, you can't teach them with words. You have to take them and make them put emphasis on body movement. Some don't like it, they're afraid of working without the instrument... Some are so stiff in the legs and want to start being asymmetrical (like we need to be) from the waist up! They are not free, it doesn't flow through... Then, when I'm teaching them, I teach a lot so it takes up a lot of my thoughts, I work a whole hour without instrument... Then, when we take up the instrument, usually, they play very differently. A lot of problems are solved that way."(14)

To sum up, musicians seemed to possess a very powerful tool in their mental imagery or visualization skills. There did not seem to be much time they did not spend imagining or thinking about music or running through a piece in their mind! Only one musician said he felt he had succeeded in stopping it whereas five musicians said they could not do it very well at all.

They could also call up images/music in their minds to learn or memorize a new piece and to decide on or compare musical interpretations. They found mental practice to

be a useful tool although they used visualization even more extensively for musical interpretation purposes. The musicians' use of visualization in simulation training again pointed to its usefulness as a skill for elite musicians. Visualization was also used for warming up without the instrument, visualizing dreams and goals, and focusing or refocusing.

The quality of the imagery was very high. Musicians reported practicing internal imagery, feeling and hearing the music in their inner ear. Some musicians, also talked about their use of moving imagery either for themselves or for their students.

Constructive Evaluation

The last of Orlick's seven elements was constructive evaluation. It was found to be very important by all musicians who answered the question (n=14 or 87.5%). Only two of the musicians assigned a numerical rating to its relative importance in order to excel (both said it was 9).

"You have to analyse exactly what was good, what was bad, what you could do different, what didn't work technically, etc..."(30-31)

"A good musician must have a certain resistance, a thick skin so that you can say very openly: that was good, that was bad, that was fantastic, here we can make it a bit better or achieve it a better way... I don't see anything negative about being open - with a certain sensibility."(25-26)

"Yes, yes; [it's] terribly important! Naturally. ...you have to consider everything. Put it all in."(49)

"I like the constructive critique so much, yes! Because I always ask [my] colleagues also, to tell me really [how it was], not just some beautiful words! ...and, I try to do [it] for [myself] too, to analyse. It is very important to be in the real world..."(84)

All musicians who commented on the importance of constructive evaluation said that it was important; they tried to analyse the concert critically, finding out what went wrong and what they could do differently the next time.

"I try to, think about [the] things that went wrong in order not to repeat it and learn from mistakes. At the same time, I'm trying to be positive and see positive things too... no matter what happened, there are always..., good things that happened too. And it's just a question of...thinking, of attitude."(28)

"Well, here's what I do. After a concert but, not immediately [italics added] after... I would go home and tear myself apart with problems [if I did it right after the concert]. It's happened, it's done! The people probably enjoyed it. Only when I go to play it again, then I re-work it. So, critical yes, but with a little more distance maybe!"(33)

Three musicians (18.8%) said that constructive evaluation was important as long as it was done after, not during a performance (refer to Mental Preparation - Desired Focus).

"So, self-critique, when it's after, yes. Not during! I still remember a concert when I was 15, where I made a mistake... I'll never forget that so I don't make the same mistake again!

Five musicians (31.3%) said that although constructive analysis was very important, it was not easy to do because one can never be objective about one's own playing or because, as one gets better and know more about the music, one becomes more critical, maybe even too critical.

"I can only analyze something that I produce myself subjectively, for the simple reason that acoustically, I [can only] hear [the sound going] away from myself. What comes back is very different than what others hear. I can't get out of my skin and into someone else's!"(37)

"As you get better, you get more critical...you hear yourself playing more and, you're more critical and therefore, you don't have too many times when you're as pleased

as you used to be because you were young and naive and didn't know how to hear."
 "(21)

Two musicians (12.5%) recognized the necessity of analysing concerts that did not go very well but found it more difficult or even detrimental to analyse good ones.

"The good things, not quite so much because they're less easily accessible by the consciousness. An error of fingerings that leads to a mistake is easy to define. I can 'save' it in the memory and have it always. I can also actively do something to correct it."(31)

"When it went well, you don't need to take it apart as much... You shouldn't. I think you would start to question it if you took it apart too much."(34)

Finally, three musicians (18.8%) stated that they felt bad for a few days after a performance that did not go as well as it should.

"Sometimes, you do a concert and you don't play your best...so you have to live with the feeling of disappointment for a few days and it can be quite intense. For me, it tends to be like that...I feel bad for a couple of days."(27)

All three musicians said that they did not actively do anything about the feelings of disappointment; they just needed a little bit of time or a good subsequent concert to feel better again.

In summary, the musicians interviewed all agreed that constructive evaluation was very important in order to excel as a musician. They did not always have a systematic approach to this evaluation but they knew they should draw the lessons and ask the proper questions (what went well, what did not go well, what can I do differently the next time?). For different reasons, some musicians critically evaluated their concerts only some of the time (e.g., only for important or for not-so-good concerts). Finally, some musicians sometimes found it hard to put a concert behind them.

Other Qualities Required to Excel

In the course of the interviews, the musicians often referred to the qualities they felt were necessary in order to be an excellent musician. They also talked about what they felt made them excellent. Most of the answers to those questions come under one or the other elements of excellence already discussed in this analysis.

None of the additional qualities were viewed as adding enormously to the "big picture" of mental readiness for excellence. Three interrelated qualities/skills found by some musicians to be essential in order to excel are discussed: spontaneity, creativity, and flexibility. The literature on creativity and musical talent or musical performance is quite extensive but it was not reviewed for the purpose of this research. However, none of these three qualities were mentioned by Ericsson et al (1993) in their discussion of the difference between expert and eminent musicians yet the musicians interviewed consistently referred to them as "making the difference" between a good and a great musician; indeed, many would have called "talent" this combination of creativity, spontaneity and flexibility. Certainly, future research will have to clarify this issue.

Spontaneity and Creativity

It is very difficult to separate spontaneity and creativity. Creativity was believed to be the process that musicians described when they talked about visualization, imagination and/or musical interpretation (refer to Uses of Visualization). Musicians took up a new piece, learned it (or memorized it) and then, they lived with it: they drove around with it on the train, tram or car; carried it around in every situation of their lives, they even took it to bed with them. What came out and was expressed in a concert was a personal expression of the feelings and emotions that the music had aroused in them, refined and perfected by the hard work of preparing the piece technically on the instrument. This was thought to be the creative process of the artist at work by the researcher.

Spontaneity was believed to be the musicians' openness to the creativity of the moment, expressing impulses or inspirations as they were felt or experienced during a performance.

Musicians interviewed valued creativity and spontaneity and felt that it was these elements that could make their performance special.

"...to what extent I can be first class in our field is not only a question of knowledge and capability but, of talent. Knowledge and skill are obviously the basis to even work in the field. But, you will only understand if you can grasp my feeling.... Knowledge is there to acquire...you don't need me for that.... You have something personal to deliver, you [have the chance to] develop creativity...it can't be learned by reading."(10)

"[It's] just the musician side...[that makes me excellent]... Technically...there are thousands better. But this special thing why there are so few fantastic [instrument - names of famous instrumentalists]...is the talent...[the] creativity: what you find [in a piece]...a certain genius...it's hard to find the words...it's what you feel."(46)

"[talking about the ideal concentration for a great concert].... A lot is automatic...even the phrasing is automatic. ...[it's] the slight improvisation that you sprinkle above the skill...that you do differently from what you've learned or studied about the piece. There's something extra there that you didn't do at home when you were practicing. It comes in the concert but you can't explain it. It comes from talent; from the desire to lay something personal down on the table. These things play a big role; the situation of the moment and the creativity, the stimulation of creativity is so determining."(21-22)

"I've learned to enjoy the moment; to create in the moment. Something you can't practice beforehand or rehearse beforehand! Conditions are to be well prepared,

physically fit and not to have done too much. If [these factors] are positive then, playing is a lot of fun; you just start and it just happens..."(24.25)

"There are two types of musicians. One type is very intellectual and, another is [the] intuitive type. ...I'm more intuitive but...the best is a compromise between the two! I try to...find a balance between the two...I think a lot about music and I try to be, as much as I can, intellectual about it. But then, I still trust my intuition and let it lead me. Although it is intuition, it's...affected by...[the] intellectual approach but still, it prevails at the end. So, during the performance I...still think about everything what's [sic] happening and about the music...but, I do improvise a lot too!"(26)

Musicians felt that they must protect and nurture these qualities. Eleven of them (68.8%) said that they did not like to do too much repetitive work in practicing, in rehearsing just before the performance or in playing the same concert too often in a row.

"I'm not one of these people who think I have to play this passage through 400 times [perfectly] when I practice so that I'm guaranteed that it's perfect that night."(11)

"I don't like to practice like a machine. Like, always stay there [drumming fingers]. There are people I know, they are very good because they practice a passage maybe a 100 times and then, they are very good because it's like a machine, it's automatically [sic]. I don't like this very much and when I practice, I try to put new ideas in what I do, not just move fingers."(7)

"I can't play the technical things in my sleep. But I can't play a passage 500 times in a row either. I play a difficult passage a few times; once it's good, once it's not so good.... I have to leave it at that. Then, you have to trust yourself and dive in!"(33)

"It's our main problem this 'being ready'. If you're on tour and you have to play the same concert 10 times in a row, the same program. Every night, you have to be playing like it was the first time. It's very difficult.... When you do a thing over and

over again, there's an automatic that sets in... That's why this kind of routine work is not good for us."(16)

Routine work was also a contributing factor in the anxiety and disillusion problems of the participant who was not functioning at the elite level any more.

"[doesn't enjoy popular works any more]...No, they were played to death. I've been in the orchestra [number of years]. I joined when I was [very young age].... Crazy. Much too early.... [I still enjoy playing]...works that are not too well known, little played and that I like.... Not pieces that have been played to death. That came gradually. At the beginning, I enjoyed popular pieces too.... The only way to enjoy music again is to stop playing and listening to it a long time...then, it's a fresh expression over again!"(4)

In sum, 14 of the musicians interviewed felt that spontaneity and creativity were prerequisites to excellence in their field. Creativity was defined as the process of interpreting a piece and making it into a personal expression. Visualization was the major tool by which this process was achieved. Musicians lived with a piece in their mind for such a long time that it became a part of themselves!

Spontaneity was defined as the expression of creativity of the moment. Musicians referred to it as inspiration or improvisation as well. The biggest danger to spontaneity and creativity was seen to be routine or repetitive work. While repetition and perfectionism gave security in automatization, musicians felt that it destroyed creativity and spontaneity.

Flexibility

If spontaneity was being open to the creativity of the moment or inspiration and it's expression, flexibility could be seen as being open to the dynamics of the moment.

Not as many of the musicians talked about flexibility directly (n=5 or 37.5%) but it was still seen as essential in order to achieve excellence in music. They talked about the

importance of not being so set in "instrumental habits" going in to rehearsals that one could not see a better way of doing things when presented with one.

"It may sound stupid but, I hardly ever practice the parts for a string quartet [beforehand]. ...I always have the feeling that if I practiced my part exactly then I'd be 'fixated' in it. I'll have drilled it into me. Then, I can't be flexible when I play with the others. They'd have to go with me constantly. But so, I can still be open; I can mark the notes during the rehearsal: 'Aha, maybe that's a good way of bringing this out!'. It comes automatically. But when I say: 'It's the only way to play this' maybe it doesn't sound so good when you mix it with the others." (12)

"It's better to practice less than too much. Spending too much time with the instrument and being too concerned, too busy with solving technical problems and repeating again and again technical things [sic]...is rather dangerous because, unconsciously,...you get a certain routine and you get certain instrumental habits that become hard to change" (4)

They also spoke of flexibility in terms of being open to what is happening during a performance; of going with the flow rather than try to fight it (refer to Ideal Mental State).

"[I] taught myself to let a concert develop. At the beginning, I'm not quite so tense any more or aggressive 'This must [italics added] be good'. No! Consciously, I just let go at the beginning. I wait and see what will happen; how the atmosphere is.... It helped me a lot because it's the only way I'm in a position to control the piece. Because I depend on the 'now', on the hall, on the acoustic. When I can go with that, I can get 'in'. On the contrary, if I try to force something so it's like I imagined - that's how I practiced, that's how it must be - then I don't come into what happens...[If] I don't accept the conditions as they are now, it means I'm out." (24)

"When I'm at home and I read a score then, I say to myself 'How can I best listen to the music?' No one disturbs me, there's no problem with balance... When I read

the score and can imagine the sound of it then, I can hear every part in the score. The reality is very different. ...This [imaginative] listening to the piece gives you the greatest experience. So, I can hardly go in [to a rehearsal] and say: 'This is how we'll do it!' I'd be constantly disturbed, upset. Things will always come out different than what my expectations were. Somehow, I have to go along with it, I can't shut myself off...the soloist has to play along [with] what's there; he can't just stand there, and do his thing... It would be terrible! You can't do that!"(5)

"The preparation is there to have a concept of what to do. The concert itself is in this room, this acoustic. How it sounds depends on how many people are there. I try to pick up the atmosphere of this concert and to slide in[to] what is necessary. Basically, you try to forget everything you planned and free yourself as if you'd hear the piece for the first time; try to pick up the atmosphere, how the orchestra is playing, pick up the tempi [from the orchestra].

Being flexible was also implicit in the musician's perspective for growth and continuous learning (refer to Perspective for Excellence).

"I've always been someone...if I say today this is black doesn't mean that tomorrow I'll still say that. You know, there are ground rules but also [there are] always things where you must be willing to revise yourself. I can't swear that when I said something is like this 20 years ago that I'll still say that today. Then I'm stupid.... Then I'm stupid, inflexible and have no possibility to develop! As long as I'm not totally calcified, I'll still try to throw everything on it's head, not to let it set in cement. That's very important. "(27)

In sum, flexibility was the third quality that musicians considered necessary in order to excel. Although only five musicians talked about it directly, flexibility was added to the list of skills/qualities required to excel because it seemed implicit in the musicians' attitudes: in their perspective for excellence (refer to that section); in their willingness to forego a

very detailed pre-performance routine, preferring to settle for some broad general outlines; and, in the mental state they wanted to carry into a performance (refer to Mental Preparation for Performance).

ORLICK'S MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

The present study used Orlick's model of excellence (1989) as a framework for the review of the literature and the research design. The rationale for doing so was elaborated on in the Statement of the Problem.

The primary purpose of the present research was to explore and document elite musicians' mental readiness to perform. A secondary purpose was to assess the relevance of Orlick's model of excellence in the field of classical music.

Orlick's model (1989) stated that there are seven components considered necessary in order to excel in one's chosen discipline: commitment, focusing, refocusing, mental imagery (or visualization), positive preparation for training, positive preparation for performance and, constructive performance evaluation.

Five of the seven components were clearly substantiated as contributing to elite musicians' mental readiness to perform. The other two components, mental preparation for practice and for performance were not fully substantiated as components of excellence in the present research as only some of the elements contained in the two components were found to be actively used by elite musicians.

Commitment to music was extremely high for elite musicians. In the present study, four additional elements were found to complete the "underpinning" of excellence: the nature of goals/dreams/motivation, self-esteem or self-confidence, perspective for excellence and, continued enjoyment of the music.

The Goals/dreams/motivation and the Self-confidence components were implicit in Orlick's original commitment factor (Orlick, 1989). The revised model (Orlick, 1992) separated Commitment and Belief (self-confidence) and considered them as the "Hub" of

the "Wheel of Excellence". Goals/dreams/motivation continued to be implicit in the commitment factor while the Perspective for Excellence component (not a part of Orlick's original model) was implicit in the new model as part of the Mental Readiness component (Orlick, 1992).

The results of this study suggest that the components goals/dreams/motivation, self-confidence and, perspective for excellence were too essential to the pursuit of excellence to be presented as sub-categories of other components. They were critical enough to be components in their own right. As a group, along with commitment and enjoyment, they were considered to constitute the "essence of excellence".

In support of Orlick's model (1989 but unchanged in the 1992 version), focusing, refocusing, mental imagery (or visualization) and, constructive performance evaluation were all considered extremely important elements of excellence by the musicians interviewed. Refocusing was virtually a way of life for the musicians because they were confronted with distractions all the time and had to be able to refocus effectively and play on.

Musicians spoke readily about what they felt the proper focus to perform should be. However, they referred to it more as a state of mind than as a skill. They also felt that the real skill in concentrating was choosing the proper focus. The musicians supported Orlick's descriptions of best focus (or "Full focus") in that they believed it to be a kind of "relaxed concentration", of not trying to force oneself to concentrate but rather, as a way of creating the right circumstances (feelings, emotions, surroundings) so that the proper focus could "happen". This ability was considered essential by musicians although some did not feel that they had much direct control over it.

Constructive performance evaluation was also considered essential by musicians interviewed. However, for some of them, the next logical step to that assertion, implementing systematic strategies to actually do it, appeared to be lacking. Most

musicians appeared to evaluate their performances only on an irregular basis. It was felt that the musicians perhaps did much more informal or casual self evaluation. Future research in this area will have to determine the truthfulness of this statement.

Orlick's listing of mental imagery as a critical element of excellence was fully substantiated in the present study with elite musicians. They used imagery and visualization very effectively for a variety of purposes.

The last two elements of Orlick's model were mental preparation for practice and for performance. They were not substantiated as components of excellence in the present study. Musicians said that they hardly ever mentally prepared to practice. They did recognize that some people might need it (i.e., their students) but, they did not feel that they needed it themselves because they usually looked forward to and enjoyed practicing so much; they felt that they did not need "tricks" to get themselves ready to practice.

Orlick (1989) listed four elements under mental preparation for practice: mental preparation, setting clear daily goals, mental imagery and, use of simulation training. The goals for practicing were very clear for the musicians interviewed but they did not consider that to be an ability or skill; they always had much work to do and, getting ready for the next concert simply became the goal. They did not like to commit themselves to a definite plan concerning the amount of work they would do in a given practice session. They preferred to start with a general idea and remain flexible (i.e., "see what had to be done") as they went along.

Extensive visualization and simulation training were integral parts of elite musicians' "working tools" for effective preparation.

The last component, mental preparation for performance was also not substantiated in the present study as musicians did not report using a systematic mental preparation plan for performance (refer to Mental Preparation for Performance). They did follow general physical and technical guidelines to organise the day of a performance. At the concert hall,

their pre-performance routine remained very flexible. They had no plan to achieve their desired focus; they just knew what they wanted their focus to be.

Finally, additional components of excellence which appeared to be very important for elite classical musicians were added to Orlick's model of excellence: spontaneity, creativity and, flexibility (refer to these sections). Future research will have to verify their pertinence to performance excellence in the field of classical music as well as to other fields (e.g., sport psychology) and hence, determine if and to what extent they should be a part of Orlick's wheel of excellence (1992).

In summary, Orlick's model of excellence (1989) was very useful as a theoretical framework for documenting elite musicians' mental readiness to excel. Some elements of Orlick's model were substantiated in the present research (commitment, focusing, refocusing, mental imagery and constructive evaluation); the last two (mental preparation for practice and for performance) were not fully applicable to elite musicians' mental readiness to excel in their present form. It is believed however, that elite musicians do much more to prepare themselves mentally than they actually are conscious of. Future research with musicians might clarify some of the issues brought up in the present study (i.e., why elite musicians who excel seem to have an inconsistent level of self-confidence and to have had recurring problems with performance anxiety).

LIMITATIONS - PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Problems encountered in the present study pertained to terminology, language, length of the interviews and, the nature of music and musicians. They are outlined and recommendations are made for future studies.

Terminology was a problem with regards to self-esteem or self-confidence in the present study (refer to that section). Further terminology problems arose out of the difficulty in translating specialized words into German. "Visualization" was often understood to mean "vivid imagination" or even "creativity" by some of the German

speaking musicians. Similarly, the word "commitment" is difficult to translate into German. For the purposes of this study, it was translated as a combination of "Hingabe" (devotion) and "Opferbereitschaft" (willingness to sacrifice). Future research where interviews are used for the collection of data should clearly define such terms before setting out to do the interviews.

Language was also a problem at times with musicians who were interviewed in English but whose mother tongue was Russian, Italian or German. They sometimes did not understand the questions and/or much time was lost in trying to explain the terms. In future, the research instrument might be pilot tested in all the languages that will be used to conduct the research; perhaps a prepared definition of the words that cause confusion in the pilot interviews might save time and ensure that the participants have the same understanding of the words used.

The analysis of the results was also made more difficult at times because the participants interviewed were not fluent in English; some quotes used in the presentation of the results might not be as clear as they should be as a result of it and, two participants could not be quoted as often as the others because of the level of English.

It must be pointed out however, that the advantages of having an international sample far outweighed these few language difficulties.

The interviews were very long (an average of 1 hr 24 min and as long as 2 hr 16 min); again, this was a mixed blessing. They provided a wealth of useful and interesting information but the fact that they required such a long time caused some difficulties. Some musicians originally balked at the amount of time required because of their busy schedules. Although they were assured that half an interview was better than none at all, their initial reaction was sometimes hard to overcome.

The fact that not all of the questions were answered at times (either the last questions when time ran out or the ones considered "less" important by the researcher

when it was known ahead of time that there would not be enough time for all the questions) made the comparison between musicians difficult at times in the analysis.

In some cases, interviews were interrupted and finished in a second meeting. This was a very good indication of the interest generated by this study! It was felt however, that the flow was often lost as a result of this interruption. The second half of the interview often seemed less congenial or productive than the first half had been.

Future research using the interview technique with elite performers would do well to limit the projected length of time to complete all essential interview questions to one hour at most. This would increase the likelihood of success in obtaining interviews with really great performers. It would also simplify the analysis of the data if all essential questions were completed. In the case where a longer interview is deemed necessary, the most important questions might be pre-marked and covered first when necessary.

One final problem encountered in the present research: the world of music is very different from that of sports in that it is very difficult to determine who the top musicians are or to define levels of excellence. The criteria taken for the purposes of this study were practical but might also be viewed as arbitrary. Over 30 musicians were interviewed but only 16 of them met with the approval of a panel of 10 professional musicians (as meeting their subjective criteria for true or potential excellence).

The nature of many musicians may also be different than that of athletes. They hesitated and really did not like assigning numerical ratings to their own performance or to the relative importance of mental readiness skills. They did not think in numbers. They also found it very difficult to even talk about a "best concert". Best for whom? Their perception of a concert can be very different from that of the audience or their colleagues. It might even be different from their own subsequent perception if they have a chance to listen to a recording. Four of the musicians simply refused to identify a best concert during the interview.

The problems in identifying excellence, or excellent performers, and their reluctance to speak or think in terms of numbers was believed to be inherent to the nature of the arts and artists. Future research cannot avoid the problem (if indeed it is a problem). It is believed therefore that further studies of a qualitative nature are the best way of expanding our understanding of excellence in music.

RECOMMENDATIONS - FUTURE AVENUES OF RESEARCH

Future avenues of research pertaining to aspects of mental readiness to excel in music were pointed out throughout the presentation of the results.

Two major avenues of future research were discussed. First, it was recommended that future research in mental readiness to excel try to document the musicians' sense of self. All musicians interviewed considered that self-confidence was almost a survival skill in their profession! This belief did not seem to be translated into a consistently strong sense of self. This could be because of a terminology problem: a clear distinction was not made between self-esteem and self-confidence in the present study. Musicians at times seemed to mean self-confidence when they used the word self-esteem.

The second important recommended avenue of future research pertained to the three qualities added to the list of mental readiness skills/qualities for musicians: spontaneity, creativity and flexibility. These qualities might be a determining factor in maintaining commitment and in pursuing true excellence. Musicians interviewed were extremely committed to their music (and to achieving excellence in their music) and they loved music and enjoyed playing, even after years of performing. They were more willing to compromise on technical perfection than on musical interpretation and/or freshness of expression. That might be the reason why their enjoyment and love of music continued to increase over the years.

Future research in the area of performance excellence should further investigate these three qualities' contribution to the musician's level of excellence and their possible relevance in pursuing excellence in other disciplines.

It must also be pointed out that use of the term "quality" to describe spontaneity, creativity and flexibility in this research was strictly to distinguish them from Orlick's mental readiness skills in the same section. It was not meant to imply that those "qualities" cannot be learned or at least, nurtured. It is believed that flexibility and spontaneity can be "developed" by changing a person's perspective (like learning to think positive). Future research in this area should determine the accuracy of this statement.

Other areas of interest for possible future research were not included in the presentation of the results. They pertain to perceived differences between wind and string players, balance in one's life, drugs and alcohol and knowledge of oneself.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WIND PLAYERS AND STRING PLAYERS

Wind and string players might have very different needs in terms of mental readiness to excel, especially when they are playing in an orchestra. Wind instruments are very loud and, their part is very exposed (i.e., they play solo or with very few others) so that if they make a mistake, it is often very noticeable. They also very often have relatively little to play within a piece. If they do not play these things well, they have less of a chance to make up for it by subsequently playing better.

These differences appeared to increase the pressure they felt for playing perfectly and it could be a reason why wind players seemed to have more problems with performance anxiety.

Wind players also seemed to use visualization more actively and more effectively for mental practice than string players did. This could be because of the physical requirements of playing their respective instruments; wind players often cannot spend many hours practicing because their lips and face muscles get tired more quickly (than the

string player's fingers) and their mouth dries up. It might be that wind player's naturally look for ways of making up for that "lost" practice time by using their visualization more often or, more effectively.

A final difference between wind and string players might affect their state of mental readiness; top orchestra wind players can and are often considered to be the top in their field. A solo career is very very difficult for a wind instrument because there is very little literature or requests for concerts from managers to support many solo wind instrumentalists (e.g., flute, clarinet, oboe).

These differences between string and wind players probably affect their needs and desires in terms of mental readiness to perform. The differences should be looked at in greater detail in future research on excellence with musicians.

BALANCE IN ONE'S LIFE

It was noted that the musicians interviewed in this study did not seem to have balance in their lives. It also seemed clear that the two musicians who had had serious problems with nervousness and anxiety as children had suffered tremendously from this one-sidedness and/or being pushed into a musical career too early. Future studies in the field should explore this topic further and, if these statements are substantiated, the research should explore ways of helping classical musicians attain high levels of excellence while maintaining balance in their lives.

Related to the issue of leading a balanced life is the fact that the musicians in this study did not seem to have much of a family life (although most of them were married). This subject was not directly addressed in the present study but research into the effect of their family relationships on their work, or vice versa, would be an important contribution to our understanding of excellence in music. Zitzelsberger and Orlick (1992) conducted a similar study with elite national coaches. Their research design might be adaptable for research with elite classical musicians.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

The topic was not directly addressed in this study, however it is believed that the use of tranquillisers, beta blockers and alcohol is prevalent in many world renowned orchestras, especially among wind players. This is a very serious subject, affecting many musicians' lives. Future research on the use of drugs and on mental readiness to perform should be conducted.

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

Musicians interviewed for this study did not appear to have specific ways of preparing themselves to perform. Follow up discussions with the musicians interviewed and, four years of intensive discussions with many other world class musicians suggest that musicians often are not really aware of what they do to prepare themselves for performing or what their needs are. They were often grateful to this researcher for having pointed out or reminded them of things they did or had done in the past that had helped them perform well.

This points to the importance and timeliness of research in the field of mental readiness to excel. Musicians, even those at the highest levels of their profession, feel a need for it.

CONCLUSION

In this presentation and analysis of the results, an effort was made to paint a picture of elite musicians' mental readiness to perform and excel. A comprehensive summary is included at Appendix C.

Musicians interviewed were seen to be highly dedicated performers with refined mental skills; their refocusing and visualization abilities were especially refined and extensively put to use.

In addition to those skills listed by Orlick in his model of excellence (1989), determining factors in their level of excellence were found to be the perspective they carry

into their endeavours, the nature of their goals and dreams and their enjoyment of playing even after years and years of doing it on an almost daily basis. The secret to their continued enjoyment might lie in their spontaneity and flexibility and in their willingness to constantly re-think the music they play so it is forever fresh and played as if it was the first time.

While it is obvious that there is not as much room for creativity or spontaneity in the pursuit of excellence in other disciplines (e.g., for elite athletes), these findings might find applications in the approach taken towards training. It is possible that the specificity of training in today's athletics has robbed elite athletes of their enjoyment in their sport. Future research might look at the possibility that renewed enjoyment might compensate for a slight loss of automaticity.

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APPENDIX A:
MUSICIAN INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Can you tell me briefly how you got started (e.g., at what age, what instrument, when it became serious, why)?
2. How much time is devoted to musical pursuits every day? (Include such things as practicing, listening to music, thinking about a piece, travelling to and from concerts.)
 - 2.1 How does this compare with your younger years?
3. Do you set specific goals for yourself with respect to your music?
 - 3.1 What type (i.e., long term, short term)?
 - 3.2 Do you set goals for each performance?
 - 3.3 Do you set goals for each practice session? What type?
4. Are you well motivated to practice (i.e., do you like to practice)? Always?

If not always, how do you get yourself to practice on days when you do not feel like it?
5. Do you have a preferred time of day to practice (i.e., when practicing is more effective)?
6. What do you do to get ready to practice (i.e., what would you typically be doing half an hour before practice)?
 - 6.1 How does this compare to your younger years?
7. What does a typical practice session entail (e.g., how long it lasts, technical difficulties, musicality, play through or broken up in sections, simulation, imagery)?
8. Do you have a lot of things going on in your mind all the time (e.g., images, ideas, thoughts, feelings, interpretations, plans, ...)?
9. Do you do any practicing in your mind (i.e., mental imagery)?

If yes, when, where, how much, quality of imagery (i.e., do you hear, see, feel, what do you see...)?

10. Do you practice any form of mental training (i.e. yoga, meditation)?
11. When you get to the concert hall, are you ready?
 - 11.1 Do you believe in yourself, in your own ability to play well? Do you ever have last minute doubts?
If yes, what kinds of doubts, what brings them on? What do you try to do about them?
If no, how do you develop the belief that you can do it? Where does the confidence come from?
12. Do you ever get nervous before or during a performance?
If yes, what kinds of things make you nervous?
 - 12.1 Is it or has it been a problem?
If yes, what do you try to do about it?
 - 12.2 Does it happen that you are not "up" enough for a concert? If yes,, what do you try to do about it?
13. Do you have a set routine (physically and/or mentally) that you go through before a performance (i.e., certain exercises you do, thoughts you have, clothes you wear)?
If yes, how long before the concert does the routine start (e.g., when you get to the concert hall, or when you wake up the day of the concert...)? Take me through your whole routine in detail... [probe for details of pre event warmup, thoughts, imagery used, self-talk, rituals, sources (e.g., professor, friends, colleagues,...)].
If no, what sorts of things would you typically do on the day of an important performance? [Probe for details...]
14. Do unforeseen things ever happen before a performance that affect your playing?
What kinds of things?
 - 14.1 Do they disturb or distract you (or do you sometimes play even better because of them)?

If yes, what do you try to do about it? How do you get back on track (what thoughts you have that help you find yourself)? Where or how did you learn how to do this?

15. Do unforeseen things ever happen during the performance?

15.1 Do they disturb or distract you? How do you get back on track?

16. Think of one of your best performances in the last year or two. Can you tell me specifically which one you are thinking of?

16.1 How were you feeling that day? What were you thinking of or saying to yourself before that performance?

16.2 Where was your attention focused

... immediately before you walked out on stage?

... during the performance?

... in the pauses (i.e., when the orchestra plays on without you)?

16.3 Can you assign a number (from zero to ten) to describe how well prepared you felt you were for this performance physically, technically and mentally?

Not prepared at all 100% prepared

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Physically

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Technically

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Mentally

17. Now, think of a performance where you did not play so well in the last year or two.

Can you tell me specifically which one you are thinking of?

17.1 How were you feeling before that performance?

17.2 What were you thinking of or saying to yourself just before the performance?

17.3 Where was your attention focused

... immediately before you walked out on stage?

... during the performance?

... in the pauses?

17.4 Can you assign a number (from zero to ten) to describe how well prepared you felt you were for this performance, physically, technically and mentally?

Not prepared at all 100% prepared

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Physically

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Technically

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Mentally

18. What do you think made the difference between this "best" and "less than best" performance?

19. What would be an ideal mental state for a performance (i.e., how would you prefer to be focused for such a performance)?

20. What is it that makes you excellent (i.e., what is it that drives you to excel)?

20.1 Are you competitive?

If yes, is it just in music playing or in everything in life (e.g., card playing, sports)?

21. What role do you think your music teacher had in your level of excellence? What role did he/she have in your mental readiness to perform?

22. Did anybody or anything else (e.g., friends, other musicians, psychologist, books) help you attain your level of excellence? Your level of mental readiness to perform?

23. What would you recommend to a very talented young musician in terms of his/her mental preparation? To music teachers when they have such a young talent on their hands?

23.1 Your recommendations in dealing with performance anxiety?

23.2 Your recommendations in terms of planning/organizing practice time?

24. Has your enjoyment for playing changed over the years? How so?
25. Can you assign a numerical rating (from zero to ten) to describe the importance of the following "mental readiness skills" in order to excel as a musician?

Note: Zero = Not important at all; I do not do it at all

Ten = Extremely important; I can do this perfectly

Commitment

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Focusing

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Refocusing

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Mental Imagery

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Mental Preparation for Practice

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Goal Setting

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Simulation

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Mental Preparation for Performance

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Constructive Performance Evaluation

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Self-esteem

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

[A short definition will be given by the interviewer if necessary.]

26. Do you have any other points you would like to add related to excellence or mental readiness to perform?
27. Can you tell me briefly about your other interests (i.e., what kinds of things "lift" you outside of music)?

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW # 1

Q- [und] a very brief overview of how you started, how you came to your instrument.

A- Uh, well, that was just pure chance really. In a way. When I went to my high school, which is when I was 12 years old, uh, the class, the phys.ed. class I was in, the music teacher wanted to start a drum corps. You know, a group of drummers to play with this band and uh, he asked our class who were [sic] interested. Everyone said yes you know, play the drum, fantastic, so, we had to go to a place at a pre-arranged time at night and, on that night, only three people came and it was just as well cause there were only two drums. So, there were two drums and one old [instrument] and, the way he decided who would get which was to have people line up and hold their arms out and I had the longest arms so, I got the [instrument]. So, that was how I play the [instrument]. I took it home and made [sic] noises for a few hours and decided I really liked it and so, [und] then I played. There was no music in my family; no history of music at all. And uh, I think one of the things that really made me enjoy it so much was the fact that I did it just for myself, that nobody else told me to do it or even suggested it really. It was just something that happened and, my parents were very supportive but, it was always something I did for myself and they would never, you know, think of saying: "Would you go and practice".

Q- No? They never ever did? You always did it on your own?

A- No. And even, and after a while actually, I would even be sensitive. Even if my mother made the subtlest suggestion that she hadn't heard me practice for a little while, I wouldn't like it. Because, that would make me feel like when I was practicing, I was doing it for someone else and I didn't want to feel like that.

Q- Uh, uhm, great.

A- So.

Q- When did it become serious? Like, when did you know you would be a musician?

A- I think probably after four years. Probably after four years, when I was about 15 or 16. Sixteen maybe. It was clear by then I think.

Q- Was there a, a determining factor like, that the switch occurred and then, from then on, it was ..

A- I think when I was still 16, I still considered doing other things. But, no, I don't think there was a moment when there was a switch. I considered joining the Air Force actually. I remember studying that, the other thing and I wouldn't mind doing that: flying jet planes around; probably be good fun. Uh, but it just became clear, it was just what I was

interested in, it was just what I was good at, what I liked to do all the time. So, it was just simple except that, where I came from wasn't a big city; it wasn't a big city and because my family had no connection with music at all, people thought I was being a bit silly if I said: "Well, I want to be a [instrument player] and play in a symphony orchestra". People would say: "Well, you know, that's very nice but perhaps, perhaps you need a second string to your bow". You know, so, and, and, you know, that was reasonable; so, in the end, I did a high school music teaching course so, basically, I studied for, to be a teacher. But, of course, I was playing all the time and, also studying; I also did a performing diploma as well, to get it at the same time so. And now, when I look back on it, of course, they were right, to suggest well, you know, maybe, because...

Q- Make sure.

A- Obviously, I had some talent but also, you have always, need a little bit of luck to get, to get the sort of job that you're going to be happy in. Uh, ...

Q- How much, how much time would you have been spending on your instrument a day, at that time?

A- Either practicing or playing?

Q- Yeah.

A- When I was how old, 15, 16?

Q- Yeah, when it became serious, slowly; at 15, 16.

A- At 16, probably an average of around three; that's practicing or playing, not just practicing.

Q- And that's going to school and then, coming home and doing this stuff.

A- Yeah, you know, I'd have band practices or, maybe the band would play somewhere or,... So, in total, about three hours.

Q- And how much time would say is devoted to musical pursuits today?

A- Ah, aye. In one form or another, I'd say 10 hours a day.

Q- Practicing, listening, going to and from...

A- Rehearsing, although I, it would be at least 10 hours a day; it could be more than that. Because uh, at the moment, I'm in... I'm also trying to conduct which means I'm also spending a lot of time just studying scores and also, organizing concerts which takes, as much time as you have. Uhm, so, it would be at least 10 hours, maybe even more, I don't know. It would be all the time I'm awake except for two or three hours, practically I mean. Which is not healthy.

Q- And something, but something that you do gladly?

A- Yeah, yeah, sure.

Q- Do you always set specific goals for yourself with respect to your music?

A- Uh... No, I wouldn't say specific goals, no. No. I, with playing the [instrument], a general goal is to play in the orchestra, to play well. To play very well over a very long period of time. Because, for me, playing very well in one concert is of no consequence. It's only if you can play very well in concert after concert, year after year, that is really an achievement because everyone, you know, lots of people can play very well for one concert, it can happen by accident almost. But, to play well in concert after concert for years is something that takes a lot of dedication. But, in a way, with the [instrument], I don't feel like I set too many specific goals because, in another way, I've lost interest...

Q- Because of your conducting interest now?

A- Yeah, well, because I don't see any real future in playing the [instrument] because the only future in playing the [instrument] is playing B grade and C grade and D grade music. You know, music that's not of the highest quality. And I sort of think: "Well, I don't really want to...". Like, I don't want to spend a lot of time organizing to make a record of [instrument] concertos because the music I'll get to play is not great music.

Q- I see.

A- So, in a sense it's like wasting, you know, this energy for a second grade artistic result. Even if I play as well as anyone can play, it's still only B grade result because the music is only B grade.

Q- And, and that's the reason for your interest in conducting?

A- Yeah.

Q- ...for extending your horizons so to speak.

A- Yeah. So...

Q- And when did that come about?

A- Yeah, it's a good question. I think, probably the interest in conducting became very clear about two and I could almost say to the month about two years and four or five months ago. But, the, the, sort of coming to the conclusion that, in a sense, there was no point in putting creative energy into the [instrument] because, in the end, there was alw.. It doesn't justify it for me, probably about three to four years ago. Uhm, just, it just became clear because I, I started doing more and more solo things and, uh, started to play really in a way which was probably better than I ever had, much more expressive and free. And, in a sense, it suddenly hit me that, you know, I had some musical potential, possibilities; more than maybe I thought I had before. And I suddenly,.. so I had this realization that, I had things I could do and things I could say but, the instrument or, the music for the instrument didn't allow me to do it. And then, it took another year or two before I suddenly

thought: "Oh well, what I've gotta do is conduct". Uhm, and then, it sort of hit me a little bit like a truck.

Q- Is that right?

A- Yeah, like, almost just one night, it went "bang" and the next morning I thought: "Right, O.K.". So, yeah.

Q- And in a sense, this was the new goal, this was reorienting your goals to fulfil yourself...

A- Oh, yeah. Sure. Yeah, Yeah.

Q- ...your ability, your potential.

A- Yeah, well, yes, I think so. I mean, at first, it was a little bit, like I decided to do it but at the same time, it was a little bit hesitating psychologically, inside my own head. Because it, it's a very, it's a very big shift of direction. Because, I mean, orchestral players, by nature, are very critical of conductors and, of course, I am an orchestral player so, I was as critical of conductors as anyone else. So, to suddenly think, well, I would like to be one, means that at the same time you want to be a conductor and you're also an orchestral player who is by nature extremely critical of conductors so, you're doing both these things at once.

Q- You have to reconcile the two.

A- So, it's taken a while and, you know, maybe I feel more comfortable about it all now.

Q- Good. Uh, do you set goals for performance? Like, before the performance, do you say: "This is what I'm going to get out of tonight"? Or: "This is what I want to do"? Or: "This is what I want to give"? or...

A- No. I don't think I do. I mean, there's, there's always the goal that I want to play well.

Q- Uh, uh. So that's like the overriding...

A- Yeah, but, it wouldn't be any more specific than that except of course that, each, the [instrument] in an orchestra is unusual in the sense that you often have very little to play. But, very often, that very little is incredibly important. And often, really exposed. So, it's very dissatisfying in a way because, you don't get the physical satisfaction of playing; all you get is the, the mental tension of the small important things that you have to play without actually feeling comfortable. Because some times, like in Brahms' Symphonies, you sit for 30 to 35 minutes without playing at all, then you have to play a very important entry. Just, completely cold. It's an unusu... very, it's a very unusual experience; like, string players wouldn't, would never have...

Q- Wouldn't know that.

A- ...would never have that experience. They would have no conception of what it was like. Uhm, so, no, the general goal is just to do everything perfectly.

Q- To do it well?

A- To do everything perfectly. I mean, it is possible in the [instrument], to do everything perfectly. As an orchestral string player, it probably isn't.

Q- Uh, uh.

A- Even the very best player is never going to play perfectly; a string player because, they just have so many thousands and millions of notes that, they're going to make a mistake. I mean, every concert is going to have one to a thousand mistakes in it really, to some degree or another. But, on the [instrument], you can, you can theoretically play close to perfectly. So, I mean, that's the goal.

Q- Uh, uh. Good. Do you ... what about your, for practicing? Do you have then, a very definite idea of what you're going to get out of this practice session?

A- Uh,... Yeah. Often I, I do [a] very consistent practice routine, something that takes about, maybe one hour and, I do it each day. And the, other practice I do on top of that but, I try to do this one thing every day. Certain pattern of exercises and breathing exercises and things. So, the goal of that is just to do it properly in a physical sense. If you, if you practice it in the right physical way, like breathing correctly and, and, having an open throat and just being relaxed, even if some days, it doesn't sound good, if you keep doing it the right way, it'll be O.K.. I mean, it'll be, it works, it serves it's purpose. Even if one, one day, occasionally, you just don't sound very good.

Q- But did you get this routine from your teacher?

A- Uh, no.

Q- Or is it something that you established over the years that was the best routine for you?

A- Yeah, it's a combination of that and it's also somebody else's; just a published set of exercises that seem to work quite well and, I've done them on and off for 15 years now, so, you know...

Q- Are you well motivated to practice?

A- Yyyy... I wouldn't say I was well motivated, recently, ... average, I think, average. I mean, I'm no... I practice, in a sense, to the degree I need to practice. Sort of calculating, up to a degree. Like, if I've got an important recital coming up then, I do, do the right things to make sure that for the recital, I play my very best. So, you know. Five or six weeks before, I might start doing, not an hour's practice a day but doing, some days, two hour's practice. And then, a few weeks before, I might do most days two hours and some days, three hours. And then, the week before, I'll do most days, three hours. And then, coming up to the recital, I'd taper off a little bit so I felt fresh and, ... But, I don't spend every day, practicing three or four hours, like I'm not a, not a manic practicer.

Q- Uh. How do you get yourself to practice on days when you don't feel like it?

A- Just by thinking: "I have to do this today". And sometimes, I do it at midnight. I do it before I go to bed somehow.

Q- So you have a very strong feeling of: "I have to practice every day", or what?

A- Yeah, if I don't practice on a day, it's a big decision. Cause, it's, the [instrument] is a very physical instrument. It's like uh, like uh, physical exercise in that uh, it's very unlikely that a world class ... marathon runner is gonna just say: "Oh, no, I won't go for my run today". He's not going to do it; he's going to, every day, he will have, even if it's three days before the big marathon at the Olympics, he'll go for a half an hour jog, at a 6-minute kilometre pace. But, he wouldn't just say: "No, I don't feel like it". You... it's something you have to do and, so, ... sometimes, I do it. Sometimes, I don't practice but, I feel bad. I feel guilty. Uh, and it's better if you think: "Well, even if I, even if it's only some 20 minute thing that you practice that day" and, sometimes, I mean, I've done, I've practiced at two, two a.m. in the morning just to make sure I've done it before I go to bed.

Q- But is this the type of, of.... what kind of thoughts would get you over this. And practice? You know you're going to feel bad if you don't?

A- Yeah.

Q- Like, do you tell this to yourself or what kind of things...

A- Uh, that would, that would be it. That's, if I'd got into bed then, I probably wouldn't sleep anyway cause I'd think, I'd be thinking: "Oh, I should do this". "I should have done it".

Q- So you do it?

A- Yeah.

Q- Has it happened that you've gone to bed and then, gotten up and done it?

A- Ohhh.... [laughs] It might have, I can't remember a particular occasion... If you could practice in bed, it would be perfect. If not...

Q- What do you do to get ready to practice? Or do you do anything to get ready to practice?

A- Again, it depends whether it's leading up to an event. Leading up to a particular event, I become much more structured about the whole thing. Like, if it was a big audition for a job I really wanted then, I'd try each morning to get up at the same time. I'd try each morning to do a half an hour's yoga or go for a jog or, something that would make, which would mean that at say, 8:30, I was actually feeling my best. Not still half awake. And then, at 8:30, I would ... what was the question? [laughs]

Q- How you get ready to practice.

A- Yeah, and then, at 8:30, I would do a particular thing. I mean, I have a, a very structured, very basically this exercise routine I mentioned before except that getting closer

to the time, I would do something else. I would do exactly what I would prepare, what I would do on the day of the audition. Which is: I'd, I'd warm up in a particular way; it might take me 25 minutes to a half an hour, not too much so that I wasn't tired. And then, I would play my audition, or I'd guess at what the audition would be if I didn't know what the orchestral excerpts were, I'd guess, I'd pick 12 or something, you know. And I'd do a simulated audition; that would be for a couple of weeks before but, yeah, the way to prepare for practicing would be just to make sure that when you go to practice, you feel your best. And you feel completely awake, not still drowsy and, you know, thick in the head.

Q- Uh, uh.

A- But apart from that, that would be it.

Q- But still you found for example that, that even if you practice at two o'clock in the morning, when you're certainly not the freshest anymore, it's still more important to, get the practice over with. Like, do some practice, than none at all.

A- Yes. Yeah, that's, yeah, that's something different. I mean, in a way, I don't even think of that as practice, that's... In the end, it's probably much more psychological than physical.

Q- It's just making you feel better?

A- It's just making you think: "Well, I've done that".... I've uh, uh,... But it does make a difference actually. I mean, it is better if you've done 20 minutes than if you've done nothing. In fact, it can be good; I mean, if you're very tired, if you've been playing a lot and you're really tired, it's great to have a day where you only practice 20 minutes. But it depends, if you would, say, if you choose that tomorrow is an easy day and I can only practice 20 minutes, no more because I want to be fresh the day after; that's one thing. But if, you think, tomorrow I should practice three hours but you don't, you practice 20 minutes, then, you feel, it's bad. I mean, it's happened for the wrong reasons.

Q- So that, and, and [a] typical practice session depends [on] how close you are to the performance if I understood this right.

A- Yeah, yeah. It's almost like building [up] for an event.

Q- From an exercise, an exercise program, you'll go into the piece? Slowly or...

A- Into the pieces more yeah, into the pieces more and the excerpts more and, and, as I develop more strength above what would be a sort of a base level for my general playing, then, you can do more and more. Cause it's, it takes [a] great deal of strength, especially if you're playing concertos or orchestral excerpts which are usually chosen because they're extremely demanding. That you can't just go from say, your normal station through the

way, your normal level of preparedness to play, you can't just go "click" and practice concertos for four hours a day, cause you'll kill yourself. I mean all of it, you can do it one day and the next day, you won't be able to play, cause you're just so tired. So, you just have to build up to it, you know.

Q- Is that right?

A- So, you...

Q- And do you find that you play through more, or that you just study the bits and parts, like, the difficult pieces or?

A- As it gets closer, you play through more, yeah. I do, anyway. I mean, I do yeah. I'll, I would separate playing through and practicing small bits; I would do them at separate times. But, first thing in the day, I would play through; later in the day, I would tend to practice small bits. So, you get the practice of playing from the beginning to the end, even if you have problems. Even if something goes wrong and you play a bit badly, you keep going right through, so you see the piece, you see the whole thing as one piece. And also, so you just simply get used to playing on...

Q- After a mistake or something.

A- ... through your problem, yeah.

Q- Great, yeah. Uhm, and then, of course, when you do this simulation, you just decide, maybe what the audition is going to be and you play right through what...

A- Yeah, and I do it, I try to do it as close to the way an audition would feel as possible.

Like, as I said to a friend a few days ago, yeah, I mean, even to the extent of walking out of the practice room and maybe closing your eyes and just trying to create as many of the feelings of an audition as possible. Which actually, I seem to be able to do quite well, because often, when I do this, I'm almost shaking with nerves.

Q- Is that right?

A- yeah, that's it, that's a... I can sort of create the picture so strongly that I actually probably get more nervous than I would for the real event. And then, I try to just walk in as if it were an audition, you know: looking confident and feeling confident and, doing everything, not too hurriedly and taking my time and. Uh, also to the extent of say, with orchestral excerpts, I, I try to have a little clock on the stand and, I make a point of waiting 30 seconds between each one; exactly 30 seconds and that gives you enough time to finish one excerpt, turn the page, just take a few breathers, also, look at the next one and, have it in your head. Lots of people... because what I find is, I'm not settled; probably, hundreds of audition panels now, listening to other people audition and, what I find is, people go from one to the next far too quickly. You can tell from the sound as they play the

next excerpt, that their mind hasn't caught up. They're playing the notes but the mind is still with the last excerpt.

Q- Ah, ah.

A- And, and so, I just practice, 30 seconds is a reasonable time: it's not too long for the panel to wait because, if you go too long, people start sort of going [drumming fingers] "Who's this dink", you know, "What's he wasting our time for". If you go too quickly, the people listening, even behind a screen, I mean, so they can't see you or anything, it makes them nervous; it makes them agitated.

Q- Even they don't have time to switch.

A- Yeah, they don't like it, yeah. Yeah. So uh, I do that and uh, just basically try to be as close to...

Q- To the real thing?

A- ...to the real thing as possible.

Q- Great. But, how do you make yourself nervous? What kinds of thoughts? What do you do actually? Are you deliberately breathing faster or are you?... What are you doing?

A- No, that happens by itself. I just, I just think of the, I think of the day. I sort of think: "Alright, well, this is it. This is the audition, I'm standing outside the door, [I've] got to go in, I've got to play the audition, there are 10 people on the panel behind the screen and I'd really like this job and".... Then, I get nervous, I mean, it's not, you know, I don't have to do any more than that. Or, for an orchestral piece like Bolero or Mahler three or anything like that, you know.

Q- Uh. Do you have a lot of things going on in your mind all the time?

A- Yeah. When, just in general?

Q- Generally,

A- Yes.

Q- Would you say you have a vivid imagination or that you...?

A- Yeah.

Q- What kinds of things? So, ideas, thoughts, feelings, scenarios...

A- I'd say generally, extrapolations of possibilities. Like, just, like, sitting here now, while I'm answering the questions, I'm also thinking about the thesis and, you know, whether it'll turn into a book and, whether I can show it to people or whether, when I read it I can get some use out of this. Things like... that just, just tend to...

Q- Sort of fleeting thoughts...

A- Yeah, tangents and developments of whatever it is I'm doing at the time. Uh.

Q- Do you practice in your mind?

A- Practice the [instrument] in my mind? Generally, no, I'd say. Not music. I might practice events like, as I've described with the audition. I might practice [an] event. I also daydream a lot I'd say, I daydream a lot. So, you know, it wouldn't be unusual for me to sort of just be sitting somewhere thinking about getting up and playing a [instrument] concerto brilliantly. It wouldn't be unusual for me to think of that or, like, I remember, when I was maybe 16, I went through a time when I just often daydreamed about sitting, playing first [instrument] in the [orchestra]. Or the [other orchestra]. And, it wasn't until I got these jobs that I suddenly thought ah, I used to dream about that. It's true, you know, I suddenly thought: "I wonder if that's why I got them?".

Q- I was just going to ask you, do you think that it has contributed to you getting them?

A- Sure, yeah, I'd say definitely because, in a sense, every action you take is, is eased by having already... even if only for a short time, seen it as a sort of form of reality inside your own head. Even if, if when you're doing it, you're daydreaming and you know you're daydreaming but, at least, it creates a picture of, so that uh, you feel comfortable with the idea.

Q- Yeah, yeah.

A- So you, you don't go to the audition thinking: "I'm not good enough for this"... Although, I have done that too. I mean, that's not completely true but, I mean, at least, you know, there is an element of...

Q- But it does make it seem more realistic; it creates a realistic picture.. because of familiarity maybe, if nothing else.

A- Well like now, I mean, I often daydream about say, getting up and conducting my orchestra in a Bruckner symphony. Now, it may never happen but, I can't help suspecting that it might because, I think about it all the time.

Q- Yeah, uh, uhm. Yeah, it's great. But you don't practice like, even when you're daydreaming, when you daydreamed before about being, playing in this and this orchestra, in the [orchestra] or whatever, you, did you see yourself playing the notes? Like did you play it or did you just have this general picture of the orchestra with you sitting in it? Or?

A- I think a bit of both. Actually, I think probably, a bit of both. I, I can't remember now, whether... I can't remember then. Now, I'd see it probably fairly, fairly explicitly, you know. Even almost to the extent of seeing myself conducting particular passages. So it would be fairly specific now, whether it was before, I don't know; probably, it was, yeah.

Q- Super. Uh, when you do this daydreaming, now or before, would you say, how could I ask this? Which senses are involved? Would you say that you hear things? That you see

things? That you smell things? That you feel things? Like, how vivid was this picture of you playing in the Symphony, did you hear what you were playing?

A- I'd say, probably, see and hear. I don't know about feeling or smelling or tasting, no. It would be see and hear.

Q- It would be visual and...

A- ...and imaginarily [sic] auditory, yeah.

Q- O.K. When you get to the concert hall, to play, are you ready?

A- Often not. Often not. I've been through phases where, for a year, I was never ready, anywhere near ready psychologically or even physically because I'd been so busy and running around and, just you know, it was like I, I'd rush into the concert just as a bit of an afterthought and that sort of reflected in my playing, because the playing was a little bit nervy and a bit sort of unsettled. You know, not, not necessarily bad; I mean, in fact I don't know that, I don't think I was ever bad but, for me, it was unsettled and just not, really strong and clear, relaxed and firm. I mean whether other people could hear a difference, I don't know, but I felt a difference. And uh, and then, it suddenly just hit me that this is silly, so then, I changed, I actually made this decision: on the day of a concert, I wouldn't do anything else in the afternoon. I would just be at home or, that was it. And, it made a huge difference cause, I would get to the concert feeling much more relaxed and settled and, that alone, I mean, for me, made a huge difference. Because again, it... this is part of this business of being [instrument] in that, you don't have any chance to settle down during the piece because often, you don't have enough to play. So you have to actually be really settled and really warmed up. Like, [instrument] apparently, all over the world, are the first person, people that come to the concert hall to warm up for the concert. Because they have so little to play in the concert, they have to be perfectly prepared for the little bits because whereas, it's not unusual, I mean, I wouldn't say it's common but it's certainly not unusual for a string player to turn up and take their violin out maybe five minutes before a concert. And have a quick warm up and check [if] everything is fine and tune the instrument and, because they know that, once they get out there, they start playing and they don't stop till the end. So the, the concert itself warms them up and prepares them and,...

Q- Do you have confidence in your own ability to play well? Getting to the concert hall?

A- As I go there? Aye, aye, aye....

Q- Like, do you have last minute doubts: "What if I can't play this"...

A- Oh, yeah, yeah, definitely.

Q- And what kinds of circumstances would bring these doubts or this...?

A- Uh, just difficult pieces. I mean, it's, again, it's keeps boiling down to this thing about the [instrument], you see. That, the best player in the world, on any night, can actually look, pretty ordinary, if they crack one note. Like in, let's say Brahms' first symphony, the [instrument]s don't play for the first three movements and then, they don't play for almost three or four minutes and then, everything stops and, the three [instrument]s go; the first [instrument]s quite high, this goes [singing it]. Now, anybody, the greatest player in the world can crack that top note... and look like a fool. So, you have to live with this thing, you just have to live with it and sort of think: "Well, it could happen tonight". It's like [piece from composer], you know, you sit there for 10 minutes without playing and then you come in: [singing]. It's extremely difficult and, I've played it maybe, 15 times now and, it's never gone badly, it's always gone at least good. And it usually goes very very well and people are really pleased but, some day, it's gonna go badly, it's going to happen. It will. It has to happen some day that it'll go badly so, you live with that thinking: "Well, will it be tonight?".

Q- How do you live with it? Like, if you're walking along and you're thinking: "What if tonight's the night" or whatever...

A- Well, you worry about it.

Q- And, how do you stop worrying? Because you have to go out and play...

A- I don't know that I completely stop worrying until it's over. No, I don't completely stop worrying until I start to play. Or in about say, I think I'll stop worrying about it as I take the breath that will be the breath that I play with; so that as I go [breathing in deep and blowing out as in the [instrument]], that's when I stop worrying because it's too late. There's nothing. It's almost like uh, "click" - at that moment, there's nothing anybody can do about it. All I can do is breathe in and blow.

Q- But how do you control those... is this what?

A- Well, I don't know that I do control them very well.

Q- Well, what do you think? Let's say you're sitting well, this will come in a minute, maybe we'll leave it and, and come back to it in a bit.

A- Yeah, alright.

Q- So, you, do you ever get nervous before, during the performance?

A- Yeah, sure.

Q- Yes, you do. And, have you ever been nervous to the point that it has affected your performance?

A- Well, as a young guy, yeah. When I was 16, 17, yeah. I used to get very nervous. Very nervous so that it would affect my performance, yeah. When I was younger. I remember the very first time I went into a competition, I was only, 14 or something, and I

was ... quite, very good for, I mean, for the age and everything but, I was so nervous that, I felt like I couldn't... I felt like I couldn't play at all. Now, it's one of those things; it's a bit of an illusion in that, often, you'd think you'd play disastrously and you've been so nervous that it's been horrible but, it's not nearly so bad. I mean, ... most of the disaster is inside your head and,

Q- Right, right.

A- That's something that's, well, I don't know, but, and I've just went through phases until you know, it just gradually got better and better.

Q- How did it get better and better?

A- Well, I think I tried certain, I just tried [a] variety of things. Like, I remember, when I was about 20, or maybe, 19, I used to talk myself out of being nervous by, you know, say it was a half an hour before I had to play, or, I'd be getting very nervous and I'd sort of sit down and say: "Well, you know, this is really very silly, being nervous because, being nervous is only going to pl... make me play worse. I mean, if I'm not nervous, then, I'll play my best. If I'm very nervous, I'll play my worst. So, it's really silly being nervous so, stop being nervous and". You know, it's sort of like I'm talking to someone up here [pointing to head]. And generally, that... well, it would, it tended to work quite well until I got on the stage and I couldn't do it anymore, then I'd get nervous. [laughs]

Q- But you could talk to yourself in your mind...

A- Well, I was too busy playing for... actually, I did go through a phase where I would start very confident and no problems and I'd actually get more nervous through the piece.

Q- Is that right?

A- So it was actually, I was actually my most nervous at the end, even if it had gone well.

Q- Is that right?

A- Even if it was going well, now, the problem is, everything, I'd actually get more nervous.

Q- And what did you do about that?

A- Well, I don't think I did anything really. It just stopped happening over time. See, some of it too, is, is a frequency thing. That, if you only play a solo once every six months, then, you're much more likely to be nervous. If you play a solo every second day, it's very unlikely that you're going to be nervous for all that long. You might be nervous for the first few weeks but, after that, you're gonna [sic] think well, this is just life and, you'll get up and play. And that's something that some people have luck with in a way. Also, I think, if you start performing when you're very young, maybe even, you know, nine, ten, eleven, before you hit adolescence, then, you often, when you're young like that, you just get up and play because, you really don't have any fears. I mean, you just get up and you play; people

like it and it's great. But then, once you hit adolescence, I think that's where the danger area is. And for people that already have an established pattern of performing before that, usually they just go straight through and there's no problem. But people who start to perform around that age, I think, have more problems because, it's an age where you really feel fairly insecure, and you try to find out what life's about and where you fit in and everything; so, if you have self doubts personally, then they reflect through the instrument. That's just my little theory.

Q- Uh, uhm. Pretty good one I think. Does.. has it ever happen or does it ever happen that you're not up enough for concerts?

A- Occasionally, yeah. Occasionally. Never for something where I'm doing solos or, just maybe for an orchestral concert where I maybe just have an average contribution to make, very occasionally, I might feel a bit flat and, well, you know, not really activated enough, not... Yes, but, fairly unusual.

Q- What do you do about it if it happens? Like, does... is it something you feel before the concert and...

A- Occasionally, I have, occasionally, I'll have some concentration problem and I'll sort of ...you know, it's a little bit like driving a car, sometimes you suddenly think... you can't remember the last five kilometres and you sort of think: "Well, what happened, where?". "What happened, why didn't I drive into something and"... Sometimes, that happens to me where I suddenly think: "Well, I can't remember the last page; what did I play?" And, I really don't do anything except try and focus on the music. Usually, if you can think about the music, you're O.K. because that also stops you thinking about yourself. Also, when I'm nervous, that's the other thing I should have said before: if you do get nervous, one of the really good ways to, to combat it is to firstly, just to try and breathe deeply; but also, just to focus on only the music. Don't think about people or anything, just hear the sounds and try to be as much as possible, part of the sound. Because then, that takes you out of yourself and if you're thinking about the breathing too, well, they're the two things that are really very good. And that's uh, that's the other thing, when I talked about nerves before that, that was the other way I would get over my nervousness: concentrating on breathing. I remember once, I'd got into the final of a concerto competition; it was the final and, I was playing with an orchestra, a big symphony orchestra and, 20 minutes before I had to go on, not 15 minutes before I had to go on, I got horribly nervous. The rehearsals had all gone really well, no problems, everyone kept saying it sounded terrific and, I could play it basically. There was [sic] no problems, I could play and, I just got very nervous and I got angry that I was nervous and I just started... I put the [instrument] down and I just started

breathing [breathing in deeply] through the nose. It's important I think, through the nose. [exhaling slowly] out through the mouth. Just long and slow and, it just worked and I went out and I wasn't nervous.

Q- Great.

A- And uh, this all happened within virtually 10 minutes. Ten minutes before I had to go on, I was almost panicking and, in the 10 minutes, I could control it and went out and played.

Q- Can you remember what triggered this nervousness? Triggered this panic?

A- No.

Q- What kind of beliefs or thoughts or things were going through your head and?

A- Well, just that uh, that [und]... cough it up and play better. Because if I play badly then...

Q- But what would bring this thought if everything had gone well?

A- That I would play...

Q- and everything was fine and then,...

A- Because every, because everybody knows that a concert is different. A rehearsal is a rehearsal; it's not a concert, the concert is different. Everything is much more critical in a concert; everything is much more uh, how to say it, you know. Because you're under a microscope, things can happen differently.

Q- Uh, uhm.

A- And, and, it's possible that if you're feeling nervous and a bit tense that you, your muscle strength will disappear. Sometimes, if you are a little bit tired and you get very nervous, the nervousness makes you weaker.

Q- Uh, uh.

A- Whereas if you're fresh, very fresh, and you get nervous, the nervousness usually makes you stronger. But sometimes, you don't know and, funny things can happen. But uh, actually, actual thoughts that trigger the nervousness... would be, would be that I play badly which means that I've got to live with feeling pissed off with myself. Which means that the work I've done is being a bit wasted... Uh...

Q- But is this what you think about ...when you get nervous? You think of after the concert, after you've played badly, what's going to happen? Is this what you imagine or?

A- Yeah, that's what I'd say. Yeah. I'd say that's what it would be. That now, it's a little different now because I'm older, I mean I, generally, sometimes you do a concert and you don't play your best, you know. You don't play badly but, you just don't play your best and, so you, basically, in a sense, have to live with that feeling of disappointment for a few days

and it can be quite intense. Uh, for me, it tends to be like that; it's very intense. You know, I feel very bad for a couple of days.

Q- How bad? Like, or do you have your thoughts: "God, you're a..." or?

A- Uh, no.

Q- Like, do you get down on yourself or?

A- No, I don't get, I don't sort of swear at myself or anything, I just feel bad, I just feel... It's, I'm not sure if I can say specifically what it is. I'd say, I'd say it's just basically disappointed, disappointment in myself.

Q- How do you get over it?

A- It's just time, it's just time. Just in a couple of days, it's O.K.. Because, it, because uh, once I get over the initial disappointment, I mean, my mi... my rational mind says well, you pay, you play 150 concerts a year, I mean, it's ridiculous to expect that every one is going to be your best.

Q- Uh, uh.

A- I mean, as long as none of them are bad, then, you're going O.K.. And as long as, you know, even the worst ones are still, in a sense, good, then, that's, that's all you can ask of yourself. But it doesn't change the fact that for a day or two, I feel very bad.

Q- Yeah. But, this is basically how you get over it; your thoughts, your rational thoughts take over.

A- I think so, yeah. And also, often, when I have the next concert and I play well, then, those feelings then supersede the other ones.

Q- Great. Good. uhm. I think you, I understand anyway, that you have a fairly set routine before a concert.

A- I try to do [a] fairly similar sort of warm up so that, that I know that works, that when I get out there, I feel generally flexible and uh, free, yes.

Q- How long before a concert would this routine start? Like, the...

A- About forty-five minutes. Oh, you mean, this is purely on the instrument or?

Q- No, no, no, just generally, I mean, do you try to always get up at the same time? Or, do you even have a way of practicing the night before or? Like, what would you say is a pre-performance [routine]?

A- Well, again, it depends a little bit on what sort of performance it is. You know, if it's an orchestral concert in which I have no prominent solos or unusually significant parts then, uh, I would just, as much as possible, try to make sure that when I get to the concert, I feel, not tired. So, I mean, I, as much as possible, would try not to be running around like a maniac all day, when the concert is at night. I mean, as a general rule; I mean, you just

gotta [sic] be sensible and make sure you have a few hours where you can just relax a little bit and, have a bath and you know, not feel like you're running around, throwing your coat in the car and screaming off to the hall and, I mean, that happens sometimes. But, you know, you try to avoid it. Uh, but if..

Q- So what... Sorry.

A- No, you go, you ask.

Q- Sorry. About 45 minutes before you say, you're at the concert hall already.

A- Yeah, I'm there already and I just uh, do this particular warm up and I try to do it slowly. And often, I do half of it and wander off and have a cup of tea and talk with a few people and come back and.... I find that works even better if I do it with a few little breaks. Uh, and it just gets me into the groove and feels uh... of course, the other thing too is that I, because I'm the principal [instrument], the way we work it for major concerts is that the, the associate principal plays in the first half and I play in the second half. So often, not only I'm not playing all the time but I only play half the concert so, often I don't come on until halfway through, 9:00 o'clock or 9:15. So that's a...

Q- And you'd still be there 45 minutes before the concert starts or, before you start?

A- Ahhhh... No, I'd always be there before the concert starts. So, I'd always, and because, I'm, married to [spouse], she's almost always in the whole concert so, we, we generally get there at 7:30. So, I'd actually be there usually, an hour and a half before I play. Which is, in a way, it's great, it's almost like enforced organisation.

Q- Uh, uh.

A- Because, if it was just me, I'd probably get there at ten past eight, Just after the concert started so, if someone was sick, I'd go straight on and replace them. Uh, but because she, obviously has to get there for her to feel comfortable, then, we usually get there at seven thirty or twenty past seven. Which, in a way, has been good for me because it's meant that I've got more time to relax and feel settled when I get there too.

Q- Would, would there be some things that would happen in this time when you're preparing that would upset you or take you out of yourself or your present...

A- Yeah... it's possible. Because, with the orchestras and people and, there is always political intrigues going on and, uh, so, you know... An orchestra is a, a microcosm of the world and, there is always people up to no good and there is always people, you know, politicking for, for, sort of, what I would think were, were, what would you say? ... Causes that lacked integrity and, things like that. And, it's very easy to let that distract you from the purpose you have at that particular time which is [to] go out and play well. Also, I have been involved in some of the orchestral politics, being president of the committee and,

being on the board and things like that and, often, you're going to have people coming up, telling you about all the disasters and what's gone wrong and, how this is terrible and how that's terrible and how this needs to be fixed and what can I do about that. And, in a way, that trained me to be a little bit more ruthless about my preparation because, I found that it was getting to the stage that well, occasionally, I would go on stage and, I wasn't ready at all because, people had been chewing my ear off for about an hour. Right now...

Q- So what do you do now?

A- Well, I just got, I just got a little bit better at saying: "Well, you know, well, we'll see what we can do tomorrow, I have to go and warm up now". And, in a way, that means, it's just clarified it in my mind but, this is the most important thing once I get to the concert hall is to do these things so that when I get on the stage, I know I'm going to play well because, if you're going to have any political effectiveness, you have to play well. People have got to respect you as a player. And also, now, with conducting too, that, in a sense, I have to play much better than I've ever played before because, your playing has, in a way, gotta [sic] be beyond question. Because, people are gonna say well, he doesn't play the [instrument] so well, you know, how does he expect to be a conductor?

Q- Uh, uh.

A- No, I have, I mean, I ... there's no problem there. But, you just have to be aware of it, you know, you really have to play here all the time [showing the top] instead of just there [showing the middle].

Q- Yeah, right. But, uh, let's go back to these things that would or have in the past upset you; so you've learned to deal with them, with the outside world. Like, you've learned to tell the people: "Sorry, but I have to go warm up now". But what about your inner thoughts, what about your, putting yourself back to the warm up? If you've just heard a bad news or, a disaster or something? Or does it not affect the way you practice? The moment you go back to practice that, your thoughts are all there, where they should be? How do you keep your mind from running away back to the problems you've just heard about that sort of thing?

A- I'm not sure I do. I think I probably don't. Uh, it's so... this, this warm up on the [instrument] is a very physical sort of thing in that, in a way, you don't need all that much mental application for it. It's like uh, it's like doing a series of stretches or something. When you know them really well, you just do them. Uhm, which means, in one way, you might [be] free to travel around and do other things uh, so, at first, that probably happens but the very act of going through the stretching and, tends to quieten everything down so that by the time you get [end of cassette]

...

A- ... they're [your thoughts] wide at the beginning, and once it gets to the end, which is where you're going, it's very narrow and, quite uh, specific.

Q- Great.

A- Well, I do remember once, I went through, maybe six years ago, I just found that when I was going out for concerts, I was very nervy. Not nervous, but nervy. Just jumpy, jumpy but, even if there was nothing to be nervous about, I was jumpy. And this happened for, well, maybe, a couple of months. And it, and I didn't know what to do about it; now, I know very clearly but, it happened because I was running around like a lunatic, doing far too much and, not getting enough sleep and, just generally, not living properly. But, one night, I thought: "What can I do about this? I'm going down and lie in a dark room for 15 minutes, breathing properly". And, I did. And, I went on stage and it was completely different. I felt great. I just felt great; I felt normal... [und] No problems. So, in a way, there, it was very clear, I mean, I didn't go and lie down in a room for 15 minutes before every concerts but, it just made it very clear that, what you've got to do is be settled and quiet and relaxed if you're going to go out and play well. I mean, it's so obvious that, it's hard to believe that you would ever...

Q- Remind yourself of that, oder [German expression meaning "Or what?"], if it gets critical?

A- But it was that one time I did it and the difference was so incredible.

Q- But where did you get the idea? It's a great idea.

A- Äh, because I do, books about yoga and things. You know, I just read things.

Q- You mentioned before, about doing a bit of yoga.

A- Yes.

Q- I forget exactly where it was but, where and how and how often and?

A- Uh, well, I just, let's see what happened? I think that I've always had a, I've always just been interested in things, anything, you know. I, it's interesting because I think back to, when I was a student at the conservatorium like, when I was between 18 and 22 and I think, well, you know, it was just a run around playing all the time, staying out late and, generally, just kind of crazy and, having a good time. But then, I, I, I, every now and again, I bump into this book on transcendental meditation that three of my friends had given me so, I think: "Well, I must have been interested in things like that even then". And I can't remember it. Well, I, I think I was just always been [sic] slightly aware of these things or slightly interested, fascinated. And uh, I just bought a book about yoga 10 to 11 years ago and it was very simple; one of these television things and uh, and I just tried it. I use to try

it with my girlfriend, we both did it and, it seemed to be good but, you know, I never had the discipline to keep doing it. But, always wanted to.

Q- Yeah.

A- I mean, I always had this picture of the sort of life I wanted; [it] was one that was quiet and, you know, where I always felt fantastic and, you know, just: "I'll have birds, I'll have trees", all that sort of stuff. And, the only way I could see that happening was if I did an hour's yoga every day. It was just like the picture we had two things absolutely in tandem. Of course, I did... I had some experience of it cause I've tried it and, I thought: "This is really fantastic, it makes you feel [und] doesn't it". But I've never had the discipline to do it all the time but I, but I do it when I think I need it. Like, if I feel I'm bad and I feel I'm getting off the tracks, I'll try to do it for a few weeks. Just to get everything... like, I went through a period of a couple of months where I did from five o'clock to six o'clock in the afternoon, everyday, an hour's yoga. And it's probably the best I've ever been in my life. Because, the fact that you can, for an hour, every afternoon, from five to six, stop and do yoga; the yoga is fantastic but, what's really fantastic, is that you have the discipline to just stop for an hour. And, they go together, I mean, one, you know...

Q- And, why do you not do that now? Or, do you go back to that when you feel a need?

A- Well, it's just the discipline thing, isn't it. It's like, as I told a friend the other day, I mean, what is it that happens in your mind that stops you from doing the things that you know are good for you. You know, they're good for you but, somehow, they take effort. And uh, I don't know.

Q- But still, they give you a certain security, because you know that, if you need them, you can go back...

A- It's there, yeah, it's almost, yeah, it's almost like I think I've got this secret thing I can do if I want to do it.

Q- You've always got your dark room where you can go spend 15 minutes if worst comes to worst.

A- And I do it, I mean. Yeah. And I go through phases where I, I do it, you know. I definitely do it. But, once you have an experience with it, you can sort of do it for a few minutes, you know. You can go into a room and, well, it's not yoga but, you just sit and breathe and close your eyes and, just, calm down.

Q- Uh, uh. Unforeseen things that happen that affect your playing? O.K. We've gone through that, I think. What you do about them? You go back to the music?

A- [nodding]

Q- What about if unforeseen things happen during the performance?

A- Uhm. It's very rare. Usually if unforeseen things happen during the performance, it's O.K. because, it's like, an element of drama which, it's almost good, it's almost uh, it distracts you. Like, uh, as I was saying to a friend the other day, uh, if you're called in to a concert at the last minute because someone is sick, it's great. Like, I just had it, I always hope it's going to happen because I enjoy it. Because it's a challenge, it's real, it's exciting. It's like, wow, you know, something terrible could happen. But, something terrible could happen but, you don't have anything to lose. Because, you're coming at the last minute, you haven't done the rehearsals, if you play really well, everyone says: "Fantastic". And, if you don't play your very best, everyone will say: "Well, you had no rehearsals, I mean, what can you do, you know; you did a great job anyway". So, it's like, you get all the thrill and all the excitement without any risk.

Q- Uh, uh. To yourself.

A- Yeah, there's a risk to the music so, but not really to yourself. So,

Q- And that's what it comes down to, I think you were saying. Even like, if you played badly, correct me if I'm wrong.

A- Yeah.

Q- If you played badly, you could even explain it to yourself.

A- Ah, yes, yes. You could expl... you could, you could rationalise it quite easily. Because, you think, well, you know, I was called at the last minute; I wasn't prepared and, and uh, you don't have to feel bad. I mean, you wish you'd played perfectly but, it's not like you have to suffer. But, as for other things, other unforeseen things in the performance uh, it depends what sort of things, like, sometimes conductors can get a bit haywired and, and in a way, that's quite exciting too, you know. Because, it's exciting to think that maybe, like occasionally, the conductor will do something really silly and, myself and the first trumpet, because we play you know, we're the loudest instruments and, and, we'll sort of almost just together, do something or, which, in a sense, holds the orchestra together. I mean, it's quite exciting. I mean, it's not as bad as it sounds. It happens maybe, once every three or four years; a conductor will do something that silly that it gets to that point but... I remember once in a concert four or five years ago, the conductor did something, I mean, he just really made a huge mistake and the orchestra really got out. You know, the sections, they just went together because he'd done something so ridiculous that people were just utterly confused. And we, just, at the next spot [a] couple of bars later, we just said: "O.K. now! Bang." We played and everyone just comes together and, that's something like, that's quite exciting, I mean, you don't want it to happen but if it does happen, in a sense, it's ... again, it frees you to play even better because it's like you don't,

you're not thinking about yourself at all, it's a distraction; you can't think about yourself when these things are happening around you.

Q- This is a question probably due to my ignorance but, like you say, if you don't play in the first two movements or something and you have to sit there, and what's going on, what's going on with you all this time.

A- Yeah. That's difficult.

Q- Do you stay with the piece note for note or do you wander off?

A- What I often do now actually, at first, I didn't think this was a good thing. I, I'd often just sit and follow the trumpet player because, usually, the trumpet player is playing all the time. And because I'm sitting next to him, I can just sit and look at his part and so, what I often do now is just simply sit and, it's almost like I'm playing with him. And sometimes I even find myself breathing you know. And, the points and, he doesn't seem to mind. I mean, it's obviously, it's not obvious, like, I just sit there and.... That's what I generally do now is I just basically play his part with him. And uh, and uh, you know, I'm just aware of the, I tend not to just sit back and daydream; I do stay with the piece and with the orchestra. I mean, I watch the conductor, I just listen, I follow the trumpet part and I watch, in a sense also, conducting has changed that a little bit too because, I'm even more aware of everything that's happening around me now.

Q- Right, right.

A- And I do find that I just hear more than I used to hear just because I want to. And uh, so, yeah, I stay with the piece; I tend not to lay back and sort of think of what I should had done yesterday, what's coming tomorrow or you know, things like that. I do stay as much as possible with the performance.

Q- But would you find that uh, let's say, like, the concert's going very badly, like then, let's say you're playing with the trumpet player and he's having an awful day and, he's making all kinds of mistakes. Like, does it affect you then, or...?

A- Yeah, uhm. It would and I'm not sure exactly how. it wouldn't tend to make me play badly.

Q- No? It wouldn't make you nervous? Or, "Oh, my God, what's going on?", or...?

A- No, no. I feel a bit more detached from it than that. It wouldn't make me nervous if someone else was playing badly; it might make me angry but that's not necessarily gonna [sic] make me play badly. It might make me play better; it depends how angry I am. If I'm really angry, I'll probably play, not my best. Uhm. But I went through, yes, I've been through a variety of stages where players around me have been playing badly and it ju... it has a funny effect; sometimes, it makes you feel that you play much better because, in a

way, you sort of think, even if I play badly, it's gonna [sic] be much better than what's happening around me. This is just for short periods of time where players might be having problems, particular problems. Uhm, but, in a way, my problem is slightly different in that the first trumpet player in my orchestra is absolutely magnificent. So that, my problem, it's not really a problem actually, we work very well together and it goes, it's all per... it's all very good. But, my problem, if any problem is, just making sure I play as well as he does. Uhm, so, it would be one ... once every two years that I might sit down there and think they're just having, they're not having a good night. So, it's not really a problem; I don't have to grab away...

Q- This was just my way of asking asking a question but I mean, you know, like, would what you are hearing and experiencing have an effect on your playing? Generally, I guess, would have been a better question. I didn't mean to imply that your trumpet player isn't good or something...

A- Oh, no, no, no, I understand that, no. Yeah, well, sorry, did I answer the question?

Q- Yeah, I think so.

A- Right.

Q- In terms of a specific [situation] but I think I get the way you're feeling. Do you have a very best performance or, can you think of a, of a performance in the last while that was particularly good?

A- Uh,... I'd be able to think of, yeah, a couple.

Q- We can, I, we're gonna make a little pause O.K.? [pause]

A- Yeah well, I'm not actually [und]. Uhm. Yeah, I can't think of the exact time or day. Actually, no, it might about a year ago, for a live radio broadcast, I played it; the piece for [instrument] in a concert; solo piece for [instrument] and uh, it just was... It's a piece I really like very much and it just, was all happening like there were no, it was almost like I wasn't aware of the instrument. It was just, I was just playing music and, it was all happening and uh.

Q- Yeah, right.

A- Uh, flexible and uh, you know; it [was] just like I was singing through the instrument, it just all came out. It's a very difficult piece and yet, it was just, all came out...

Q- Can you uhm, like, sort of set yourself back and, think about it as vividly as you can? Like, the way you felt that day, the way, you know what happened and, and, and, we're trying to, yeah, just the general feeling of the day. Was there anything different? Did you follow your normal routine? Did you...

A- Uh, uh. I think, yes, I think one of the differences was that it was the very first time I played that year after the holidays. It was, yes, it was like I was telling a friend about having done a concerto straight after the holidays. This was the concert before the holidays were even finished where, I was very fresh; you know, I'd had a couple of weeks when I didn't play much and then, I practiced and, so, I came back and we, we did a concert where we played some things together and then, we played a piece each with piano and, it was a live broadcast all over [country]. And uh, so, I think I just felt physically, very fresh. Mentally, very fresh and, uh, that's about the only really striking thing; the only other thing I remember quite clearly is, that the other two people played their solos before me so, it was a trio. Of horn, trumpet and [instrument]. We played trios together, we'd play one trio, then one person would play a piece with piano and, uh... because it's confidential, it's O.K. Uhm. But, the other two players are fantastic players with their instruments; really quite fantastic and, and, they're a real challenge to play as well as but, there are things about their playing musically that I find frustrating. It's like it's not nearly as good as the way they play their instruments. And they both played their solo pieces before me and I was sitting, listening and, I felt physically frustrated at the way they played the music. And uh, for some reason, that released, whatever, musical energy I had so that it was almost like I was so angry that, I wasn't even thinking about the instrument or me, or anything. I just thought, just thinking about the music and I just played the music and uh, that's about all I remember because, in a way, I should have been very nervous because we hadn't played for a long time. Uh, it was a live national radio broadcast but, I wasn't. Because although it was, just feeling a little bit angry but, the music having been treated badly, or, not as well as it should have.

Q- What, did it start already before the concert? Like, what were your thoughts before the concert even started? Were you nervous that day? Or were you...

A- Ah, yeah, I was nervous. No more than usual though, no less than usual just sort of average. But, because I felt very physically and mentally fresh, it's almost like then, the nerves stay very much in proportion. I think as, I think fatigue is a big element in nerves getting out of control. You, if you, if you're mentally tired, you don't have just, the reservoir of mental energy to just, keep nerves naturally in shape. It's like the yoga thing with the life force; but they say, you have to do yoga to build a reservoir of life force; I think it's true, I mean, I don't know what it is, where it comes from but it's true, that you do need to do that. And, if you deplete your reservoir of life force or what nervous energy, I'd rather say nervous energy, you deplete your reservoir of nervous energy, then nerves, just, can run

through a range; they can do whatever they like. And I think I had a big reservoir of nervous energy so, my nerves were completely sublimated to the musical objectives.

Q- O.K., so you're walking out on stage, in that particular concert, what are you thinking? Where's your mind?

A- I think my mind was probably, because I was angry with that, the other thing, so I think my mind was very much: "I can do this really well". I mean, it sounds horribly arrogant and you can never... you can never quote me but I guess I was thinking: "I can do this better than you guys can even though you're such wonderful players... doesn't necessarily mean that you can play the music the way it should be played". I think that's what, and

Q- So, in a way, you were gonna go out and show them?

A- Ah.... Yes.... Not so quite like that. No, I know what it was. It was, I was excited because I knew I could play the music better than they did. And that made me excited not because it made me better but because, people were gonna [sic] enjoy it more. I knew they would.

Q- Uh, uh. Great.

A- And whether they did or not, I'm not sure. But, I think they did and I, knew they would, you know. It's just one of those things you just have and, you just know it's going to be, and it is.

Q- And then, you start to play. And then, there is a period when you have a pause or something, or the piano goes on without you or... What are thinking then?

A- Yeah, good question. Uh, usually, I'd do silly things like, you know, "Well, it's going ok so far and stuff like that. Really very bad...

Q- So, take you out of them yeah, almost uh?

A- Yes, well. Yeah, that's what often happens to me. I mean, as much as possible, I, I don't. But, I mean, it does happen. Inevitably you sort of think: "Oh, well, you know, it's going pretty well so far". Something like that you know. In a way, it's almost good to, to crack a note or do something bad because, for some reason with me, that completes my concentration; from then on I have no problem concentrating. In a way, playing really well is more dangerous than having made a mistake because, for me, when I make a mistake, then, my concentration is total. Cause, I tend not to think "I'm playing badly"; I would only think about playing if something had happened. If I'm playing really well and it's going really well, I'm primed to think "Ah, it's going really well" which is dangerous because, it's a distraction.

Q- Right, right. But, this particular time, you didn't; you were just on a high and...

A- Uhm... I'm not sure, I really can't remember, I can't say [und]. I think probably though, when I have played very well, it's, it's like the whole thing is of one piece, that you start and, you're there one hundred percent, right from the beginning to the end and, and you, if... and you just sit down. You know, you take your breath and you sit down; it's not like you're happy or you're unhappy or anything, it just happened, the way it should happen.

Q- It's interesting that you mentioned before uh, that you physically and mentally felt good because, that's the next question: I'm asking you to assign a number from 0 to 10, 0 being, not prepared at all, 10 being 100% prepared. And how you felt that day, for this performance, physically, and then technically and then, mentally.

A- Right.

Q- In the three different ways.

A- Right, physically. Physically, I'd say probably nine. With the [instrument], technically and physically, it sort of cross[es] over a little bit. But when you say physical, I'll assume you mean just general body health.

Q- Yeah, yeah...

A- O.K. so, physical would be nine; technical would be less than nine because I had been on holidays and, you know, in many ways I shouldn't have been playing my best. So, I'd say technically, eight. And mentally, again, that's very difficult because it depends what the criteria are because, in some ways, I was distracted because of the thing about the way other people are playing and that, you know, I didn't like they did that and, you know, it was boring and... But, in one way, I suppose, the main feeling was that when I got up to go out, I thought, "Well, actually, I can do this, you know. I've got something to say here and people are going to enjoy this". So I suppose, in that sense, the mentally would be high, would be nine or ten as well. So, I'd say probably, physically nine, technically, eight and mentally, nine.

Q- Thank you. And now, we do a similar thing with a performance where things didn't go so well.

A- Yeah...

Q- You can think of a performance quite clearly, where things didn't go the way you would have liked them to, for some general frame of mind at the time or something that happened or, anything.... Shall I make a little pause for a minute?

A- No, no. I can think of one, I can think of one quite clearly. Uhm, I'd been at a, at a big conference, a [instrument] conference and, I played solo pieces with piano and it had gone really well. It was in another city [und], about ten-twelve hours' drive and uhm, my wife was with me; we weren't married then. And the concert had gone really well; it was, you know,

I had been sweating on it because it was a big deal. The concert had gone really well; I played really well, I was in good form. And then, we drove back, overnight, to [city], and I had to do one rehearsal in the morning, and the concert at night. So, I got to the rehearsal in the morning and it was [piece] which is a very difficult thing for the [instrument] but, I was in good form and I was confident and everything was, like I played well and, the rehearsal went pretty well, no problems. And, in the afternoon, I thought: "What I need to do is go home and have a sleep, like a rest, for an hour and a half", just to sleep, just relaxed probably, just ready and the concert will be good too. But, for some reason, I can't remember the details, [spouse] and I started having a big sort of conversation strike argument strike fight about oh, I can't remember now and, all I remember is getting more and more stressed out, not about the fight or the argument but just, that I had to have a sleep. And we just couldn't keep arguing because I had to have a sleep. But, we did and uh, and I didn't really have a sleep and, comes the concert and, it, it didn't go, would be, well it would be the weakest I've ever played. It wasn't bad still, it wasn't bad but, it was, you know, there were two or three notes that weren't really very good and, and I was angry; I mean, I feel [sic] angry because I knew I had to have a rest. I never, very rarely sleep on the day of the concert but I knew I had to this day. And, the problem, I think the mental stress was very much that I hadn't done what I knew I should have done. Which was to have a rest. And uh, so I remember that quite clearly basically, I just got up there and I was nervy and jumpy because I hadn't had a sleep and, we'd been arguing all the time so it was just...

Q- Uh, uh. And, and uh, was your routine still, the routine you would have liked to follow like, your

A- Directly before the concert?

Q- five minutes... Yes.

A- It would have been close, I can't remember exactly but, it would have been close.

Q- Did you have an intimation then, that it wasn't going to go quite as well?

A- That something would go wrong?

Q- ...or did you feel down, or, were you still thinking about the argument or...

A- Probably was, yes, probably was; I would have been still thinking about it; I would have been feeling angry that I hadn't had this sleep because I knew I wanted it so, uhm...

Probably, the problem was not just that I didn't have the sleep, it was because I felt angry that I hadn't had a ...

Q- And you're walking out on stage and what are you thinking to yourself?

A- Well, this particular solo is always very precarious, I mean, you can often go out thinking, you can often go out feeling not 100% prepared but, it goes well once you get to it. You just blow, I mean, you play and it happens. But this time, I mean, I felt probably just as insecure as I normally would; not, when I say, as insecure, the, the degree of insecurity that I would normally experience, except, because I was stressed out and I was tired and I hadn't had a rest, I didn't have the nervous energy to combat it so much. I think probably my nerves got a little more out of control than they normally would. Plus, I was just generally, physically tired and, and, it just didn't go as well. I didn't have the resili... I didn't have the flexibility or the resilience to produce my best.

Q- What are you thinking when you played, and it's, you know already that it's not going as you would like it to go?

A- Uh...

Q- And what are you thinking?

A- As, as I'm playing?

Q- Like, between the pauses or so.

A- Yeah.

Q- Before the times; like, between the times when you have to play? Because, I assume that you play and then, the orchestra goes on without you and then, you play and then...

A- Well, in this particular solo, it doesn't happen quite like that. You just.... it's, it's all of one piece. But, while you're doing it, it's quite long. Uh, well, you do think: "oh dear". But, you're playing; I mean, you're concentrating and as you go on then, it's... It's very difficult; what happens when you're playing something and you're not happy with what you're doing... I think you just say: "I think I'll go and"... It's fairly abstract in a way.

Q- So, if, if I understand right, it's almost more a feeling than a conscious thought; you're still concentrating on the music but you're sort of going down, or what?

A- Yeah, uh. The thing about playing a brass instrument is that when something goes wrong, it's very loud inside your head. Because a lot of the sound is formed inside your mouth so that, when something goes wrong, it's very close to your brain. So that it's very loud, I mean, it's almost like a bang. If you, if you crack a loud note, it's almost like an explosion in your head. Uhm, so that it's very, can be, it's almost a little bit physically distressing some times if something happens. Depends what sort of a mistake it is. But uh, Yeah... It's like, it's like you suddenly just go flat and, you keep playing and, you play hopefully well but, it's almost like there's a, it's almost like a mental release in a way, if you make a mistake you sort of go: "Ah...". It's almost like you're relaxing and sometimes, it's a good thing; because, you sort of... there's this feeling of release and, then, you just play

well for the rest of the time. Because, in a sense, you've stopped caring; you haven't stopped trying to play well but, you've stopped caring about yourself because, you've already made a mistake.

Q- Uh, uh.

A- Or something is already less than perfect. So, you've really, in a way, it's healthy because you stop thinking about yourself then; because, there's no point, you've already coughed it up. So then, you just play. So that it often happens that you then play very well.

Q- Can you assign a number from 0 to 10 to describe how well prepared you felt you were for this performance, physically.

A- Alright, physically, I'd say, five. Technically, I'd say nine and a half, if that's legal. Is that legal?

Q- Yes, that's very legal.

A- nine and a half's legal?

Q- Yes, uh, uhm.

A- And mentally, I'd say, five. Also.

Q- And, the thing that made the difference between this best performance that we talked about before, one of the very best, and this, less-than-best, because it wasn't bad, it was less-than-best?

A- What was the difference?

Q- Uh, uh.

A- Well, the difference was just uh, the general physical feeling. The feeling of fatigue and, also, the mental stress that the fatigue produced combined with, with, with stressful personal relationship, yeah.

Q- What is the ideal mental state for a performance?

A- Relaxed, I'd say, well, relaxed concentration, it's easy to say; relaxed concentration, I think, you need to feel secure, uh, you have to feel obviously, confident that you can do it. Uhm, certainly, you need to feel communication with the audience, for me anyway. Which is not something I feel very often in, in an orchestra because you're a long way away from the audience. But it's something I do feel when I play solos and I like that; you know, that tends to make me play better when I have communication with the audience. Uh, I'd definitely say that the physical, physical well-being is very important and, mentally, well, definitely, the feeling that you prepared well, that you've done everything reasonably possible to, ensure a good performance.

Q- Uh, uh.

A- Then, if you feel physically well, combination of those two things will, should produce a good performance, yeah.

Q- Where do you want your thoughts to be focused for this ideal performance?

A- On the music. Just the music; as much as possible, all the time the music, the music. Often, you find, if you can do that, you really stop being nervous.

Q- What is it that makes you excellent?

A- Makes me?... Aye, aye, aye...

Q- Or, put another way; what is it that drives you to excel?

A- Ah, I would have thought they were two different things.

Q- O.k.; tell me about both.

A- Well, give me the first one again? What makes me excellent?

Q- Yes.

A- Well, that suits me, let's just assume that that's the case uh.... Well, that's really quite a difficult question. Uhm. I'd say, preparedness to do what's necessary when it's necessary. Like, knowing, at which point something has to be done now and can't be put off any more. Uh, pride in being able to do something well and, handle pressure; pride in consistency rather than a one of slash performance. Uhm, a general, a general desire to improve myself, just a general drive to be better than I am. Probably, then, the sensation that I do get better all the time; that feeling that I do get better all the time actually encourages the belief that I can be excellent. So, it's uh, that's, the positive results tend to feed the general, the general desire.

Q- Uh, uh.

A- And then, the other question was,

Q- What drives you to excel?

A- ...what drives to excel. Probably, a general feeling that, I'm not as good as other people so, you have to prove it that you are. I'd say that's about it.

Q- Are you competitive?

A- ...it varies; selected areas, yes. I'd say generally, I'd say generally, yes [und]

Q- Generally so, like, not just in music but, in, in sports or games or other things? Like, just a general attitude or?

A- Yeah, a general attitude, I mean, generally, when I play things, I play them quite well so that, in a way, I don't care all that much because, I generally play them quite well and. So that I don't mind if I lose because, I generally win. So, it's O.K., it's like a change [laughs].

Q- That's pretty good [und]

A- That's really, that's gonna [sic] sound pretty bad on that tape. Anyone listening to that is going to say: "What a dink".

Q- No, no. That's good. Do you think that your music teacher had a role to play, and if so, what role did he play, in this level of excellence in terms of mental readiness to excel; in terms of learning to control yourself and, learning to handle nervousness or?

A- Uh, I don't think my teachers played much of a part in that. Except, one time, my last [instrument] teacher just said to me, when I said I was very nervous before I had to go to a competition or something, when I was about 18. He said: "What you gotta [sic] do son, is you gotta [sic] sit in a chair and you just flop". It's a very unsophisticated sort of guy, very lovely, very good teacher but, not a, no intellectual theorist or anything, and he said: "Son, what you do is you flop in a chair, you let all your muscles go limp, and you just breathe in and out". And the funny thing is that, at the time I thought: "What a crackpot idea".... [laughs] No, I remember quite vividly thinking: "He's cracked". And yet, now of course, it seems: "Of course, what else could you do". Very strange that. Actually, I'd forgotten all about it until you asked. Yeah. So that was...

Q- But, generally, there was no part of

A- No, I don't think so.

Q- ... your music training that involved any part of preparation or?

A- No, I don't think so.

Q- Did it come as a shock to you that you'd be nervous before a performance, the first time it happened or? You don't remember?

A- Uhm. The very first, actually, the very first time I performed the [instrument] in public was, I'd been playing for about three months, and my music ... the teacher of my music class, which was also the conductor of the band, said: "You're gonna [sic] play in class". So, I had to play the [instrument] to my classmates; they were not performers, they were just my class at school who were doing music. And he made me come out and play [und] tune and, I was witlessly terrified. I mean, he literally had to push me into the room, I was so terrified. Uhm, but I think I sort of got through it. Just, I remember quite clearly him saying: "O.K. do it again now". And, it was like snap. I thought: "pfuh...". So, I did it again. And, I coughed it up the second time, because I was too confident. I actually thought: "Eh, this is, I can actually do this... Now let's do it again". And the second time I made a mistake.

Q- That's funny.

A- But then, I'd only been playing three months, so.

Q- So, where, where did your help in attaining this level of excellence come from if not from your teachers?

A- Ah, so you're talking specifically this excel... you, the...

Q- No, in terms of mental readiness to excel; in terms of concentration or learning how to handle nervousness because you say, very little came from your teachers.

A- I think, I think it just... thinking about it myself and, just being receptive to ideas that you encountered, I mean, I can't be more specific than that; just...

Q- You said something that I found interesting when we were talking before a little bit, in that you said uh, that generally, you wouldn't talk about your nervousness because you think that's the last thing your colleagues want to hear. Does that mean that you hardly ever talk about things like that with your colleagues or?

A- Yeah.

Q- So you wouldn't get help from them in terms of advice or, how they did it or, how they handled it when they had similar problems or, such things like that? It's not?

A- Well, I don't know if it happens in other places but, it would never happen for me, you know, with... I, it's, it would be very unusual for a professional colleague to say to his colleagues: "listen, I'm witlessly scared, what can I do about it?". No, it, it, I'm sure it happens but, I wouldn't do it. And I can't imagine too many of my colleagues doing it either. It's almost like, it's a private battle and, if somebody is having a big problem, they have to deal with it. Because, in, it's very [und] to think about what exactly it is; everybody is nervous so, I don't want to hear you telling me you're nervous cause, I'm nervous.

Q- Uh, uhm.

A- I've got enough trouble with my own... just your problem. Even if I'm sympathetic I mean, I am sympathetic. If someone say, would come to me and say: "Listen, I'm really nervous, what can I do about it", I mean, I'd help them. But, it never happens because I think, everyone just knows that it's a private problem. And also, people have pride to the extent that they just don't want to admit it anyway. I mean, if I'm, if people... I actually have no problem admitting I'm nervous. People say to me: "Do you sti...do you get nervous playing in the orchestra", and I say: "Yeah, of course. What do you think I am". I mean, they say: "AH, you don't sound nervous"... Well, shit, I feel nervous. Uhm. And, they think that, people often think that's quite unusual, I think. I, maybe I'm the sort of person that people feel relaxed enough to ask but, when I say: "Oh, yeah, sure", they seem quite shocked.

Q- That doesn't sound very nervous though, if you answer like that.

A- It doesn't sound like I'm nervous?

Q- "Oh yeah, sure, I'm very nervous"... [imitating the very casual tone in which it was said]

A- Well, no, no, no but, they ask afterwards, once it's sort of gone well and I can say: "This is O.K.". But also, I've got, also, I've got the... there's a vested interest in saying you're nervous because it's like whatever happened was better because you were nervous. If you say: "Oh, no, I felt great, I was fine, I had a ball" People are gonna [sic] say: "Oh, well, it's no big deal, you played well but"... if you say you're nervous, it's like it was even better.

Q- What would you recommend to a very talented young musician in terms of mental preparation?

A- Yeah, specifically... The best mental preparation is to practice so you know you can play well. Knowing you can do it is the fundamental, that's, it's possible to know you can do it and still have problems. But, if you do know you can do it, that's the foundation that everything else is built upon. If you don't know you can do it, every other mental exercise you do is actually being built on poor foundations. Because, you know, in a way, it's, it's really a fabrication; you have to now you can do it before you can realistically do anything else so, actually, simply practicing, is, is the best mental preparation because, it's... if you've played something 500 times, and you played it well 498, any realistic assessment is going to be that the 501st time, it's probably gonna [sic] be good too and that gives you... and there's this confidence. But, apart from that, I mean, the technique thing like, what to do in particular situations: preparing for events, making sure that you are prepared, that you're not shocked by the environment for an important concert. I mean, if you're playing an important concert somewhere you haven't played before, you must go there first and, so you know what it looks like and feels like, imagine yourself going out and playing in the concert. I mean, I think having some mental picture is important and I do, actually, yeah, I do suggest that to my... I do get them to do the walk-out-the-door routine. They think it's a bit silly but that's alright; it's good for them to feel silly because, in a way, it distracts them from themselves.

Q- It's interesting, yeah, yeah.

A- Cause they... it means they have a little sense of humour about it; that when they do come to the day, they'll do it and they'll focus but also, sub-consciously, there might a little giggle [und] and say: "Oh, you know".

Q- What about your recommendations about planning or organising practice time?

A- I'd, say, for players of the [instrument], I mean, I tell them to, to read as much as possible some... running books, which actually talk about over-training and things like that because for, for students that are really keen, that can be a big problem. Cause actually, they're ludicrously over-training themselves so that, they never play anywhere near their

best because they're practically physically exhausted all the time and their playing apparatus is here you know, on their face. And uh, that's something that's very hard to get across to young kids because, I mean, with myself, I discovered it over years of thinking about it and, it all seems very clear to me but, to actually then, try and deliver it to somebody else is very complex and, they tend, they tend to think you're being a bit excessive actually, I think. But, I've convinced a few people of it you know, just that they simply have to gauge their progression and the amount of practice in exactly the same way that a runner would prepare over a long period of time; that you have heavy days, you have easy days; you have occasionally, a day where you play for five minutes or 10 minutes or, for a runner they would go for a two kilometre jog, you know. Because, you have to have days where your body can recuperate. Because, say, with a [instrument], you're putting an enormous amount of stress and pressure on, on very fine muscles in your face; they have to have time to recover so that they, they have the flexibility to play well. Uhm, that's about it I think.

Q- And what, I'm going just to te... give you some, some word or expression, and I'd like you to rate, or assign a numerical rating from 0 to 10, to describe the importance of these mental readiness skills I like to call them, in order to excel as a musician. So, the relative importance, from 0 to 10.

A- Uh, uhm.

Q- Of commitment.

A- ... nine, I think.

Q- Focusing.

A- ... Nine

Q- Concentration.

A- Nine, nine.

Q- Re-focusing.

A- Refocusing..?

Q- ... which I define as the ability to come back to a focus of attention.

A- To take a pause and then, re-???

Q- Or, to be distracted, and to find your way back.

A- Oh, yeah, yeah, I think, I think I got. Well, in a sense, maybe, that's even more important, so let's say, 10.

Q- Mental imagery.

A- Yeah, ... well, it's very important, I'd say eight.

Q- Mental preparation for practice.

A- Eight.

Q- Goal setting.

A- I think, seven, I think it's a little less important in music.

Q- Simulation training.

A- Eight. Eight, yeah.

Q- Mental preparation for performing, performance.

A- Nine.

Q- Positive performance evaluation.

A- ... Well, yes, nine.

Q- Self-esteem.

A- pfu... ten.

Q- Great. Just one more quick thing, and it's, we go through these same things again and I would like to have your numerical rating, from zero to ten, the extent to which you consider that you possess those mental readiness skills. Commitment.

A- Eight.

Q- Focusing.

A- Eight.

Q- Re-focusing.

A- Eight.

Q- Mental imagery.

A- Nine.

Q- Mental preparation for practice.

A- SSS... six.

Q- Goal setting.

A- Seven.

Q- Simulation training.

A- Uh,,, nine.

Q- Mental preparation for performance.

A- Eight.

Q- Positive performance evaluation.

A- Eight.

Q- Self-esteem.

A- ...eight.

Q- Thank you very much. Any closing comments, ideas, things that I missed?

A- Oh, God, uhm... No, uh, no, except that, I just think that probably, you could... probably one of the fundamental thing is that people have to see the whole process of being a musician as a, as a, as a developmental thing in that you have to sort of be very clearly aware that where you are now is just a stage in the process of where you can go to and that, ... what am I making... and that it's possible to continue developing and that you shouldn't burden yourself with things that happened before; select the really best things to support and encourage you and learn as much as you can from the negative things but, it's always just a process like, with myself, I can see it's very much a process; my belief in my ability to play well has improved enormously over the last 10 years. Uh, by just gradually refining what I do and working to reveal more of my potential. And I think that can be the same for everybody and that it's, that in a sense, what... I know what I'm trying to say: what you should do is very much, try to enjoy the process of developing rather than too much focusing on particular events. Events are important milestones but, in music, you have so many events, every concert is an event if you're a professional musician, that there's no point in focusing on every event exclusively; you should really focus on the developmental line and see the big picture. And that way also, that takes a little bit of pressure off in that you can feel a little more relaxed, that you're working towards a long goal which is to play consistently well and always to play over a long period of time, a little bit better. So...

Q- That's great.

A- I think that's a good value that...

Q- No, I think I know what you mean. I think you're ready to write a book. [laughs]..

You're great.

A- No, I hope I didn't prat on too much. That, is that a C-90 is it?

[end of cassette]

APPENDIX C:
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

After a short introduction and presentation of the demographics of the participants, the first section, "essence of excellence", expanded on Orlick's first component of excellence (1989): commitment. Musicians interviewed were highly committed to their musical pursuits. They had decided very young to make music a career and they had oriented all their energies into achieving their goals.

These goals were non-materialistic in nature and pertained to self-growth, to the music itself and/or to expressing or communicating through the music; they were believed to be determining in the musicians' success and level of excellence.

Musicians recognized self-esteem as an absolute prerequisite to excelling in music. They felt that you could not function without it. This point of view did not translate into a strong sense of self with most musicians experiencing a lack of self confidence at times. Two possible explanations for the apparent dichotomy were proposed: a simple misunderstanding or the fact that musicians might be too dedicated to their music to the point of foregoing any other activities and channelling all of their sense of worth into their performance.

Some of the musicians interviewed proposed a very interesting concept: self-effacement. While they said they preferred it to self-esteem, it was believed by the researcher that the two terms were not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, a very strong sense of self was seen to be necessary in order to forget one self and concentrate on the music.

One of the most striking components in the musician's mental readiness to perform was their enjoyment of the music: of practicing, of playing, or of listening to music. A great majority of them said that their enjoyment of music had increased over the years.

The final component of the essence of excellence was a common perspective that elite musicians seemed to carry into their endeavours: looking for opportunities for self-growth, keeping track of the big picture, thinking positive and feeling in control of their lives.

In the section on practicing, it was again clear that musicians are committed to and love music. Musicians did not feel that they needed mental preparation for practice because they looked forward to practicing and did so without preparation most of the time.

Goals for practicing were divided into three categories: the next concert or performance, technical exercises to stay on top of their form and practicing for their own enjoyment, choosing pieces they liked and preparing them.

The organisation of their practice session was looked at briefly; of particular interest was the musicians' use of simulation training. Simulations in the form of school concerts (as a youth) or house concerts later were an integral part of the musicians' preparation. Use of visualization to re-create realistic concert conditions in practice was also discussed.

The section on mental readiness to perform presented the musicians' ideal performance state. It was seen that while musicians knew exactly what their ideal focus and their ideal mental state was going in to a concert, they only followed general guidelines in organizing their time on the day of a performance; at the concert hall, their preparation again followed only general guidelines.

Musicians wanted to be focused on the music and on the "here and now" for a performance, not on themselves and not on technical details of the piece. They generally

said that they did not mentally prepare for a performance unless they really felt a need to (e.g., because of specific problems or tiredness).

All musicians had (or had had) problems with achieving their ideal activation level. They had very occasionally not felt activated enough, but found that when it happened, the music was usually enough to "re-activate" them.

Problems of nervousness or anxiety were a major concern for the musicians interviewed. These problems were usually caused by having the wrong focus, not being well prepared, lacking self confidence and being physically or mentally tired. Things that they found helpful in combating it included: being well prepared, concentrating on the right things (the music), performing often or, as was the case for two musicians who suffered from performance anxiety, building up a solid repertoire gradually as a youth and building on successes. Self-talk or rationalisation was also seen to be helpful.

Sources of influence that had contributed to the musicians level of mental readiness to perform were first and foremost, their family backgrounds. Other sources included teachers, colleagues and their own students.

Finally, a list of mental skills or qualities required to excel in music was presented. Musicians tended to view concentration or focus as a prerequisite to excellence, but they considered it more a mental state than a "skill".

The ability to refocus or find the ideal focus when it was lost was almost an everyday necessity. They could not imagine functioning without it. Ways of refocusing were centered around the music itself; musicians were not really aware of how they refocused but there were indications that they made effective use of cue words.

Musicians interviewed had very vivid imagery skills and made effective use of them to memorize a piece, to develop a personal interpretation of the music, to mentally practice and to review goals and dreams. The quality of the imagery was very high with "seeing" and "feeling" being most often used to describe the visualization experience. Musicians also reported "hearing" the music internally.

Constructive evaluation was also considered very important by the musicians interviewed. They felt that one must find out what went wrong, what was good and what could be made better. Again, recognizing the necessity or the desirability of it did not translate into a systematic evaluation routine for the musicians interviewed.

Three other skills or qualities were added to Orlick's list of mental readiness skills: Spontaneity, creativity and flexibility.

Musicians felt very strongly that creativity was that special quality that made a performer excellent over the hundreds of instrumentalists who might play even better than themselves technically. Creativity was described as the process by which musicians took a piece of music and internalised it, living with it for days or even months and made it into a personal expression of the emotions and feelings the music produced.

Spontaneity was described as the ability or openness that allowed creativity of the moment (or inspiration or improvisation) to be expressed. Musicians would rather compromise on technical perfection than lose their spontaneity through over-repetition or automatization.

Flexibility, like spontaneity, was presented as open-mindedness. Musicians felt that it was important to be able to soak in the atmosphere of a concert and to react to their surroundings; this was the only way music could become the communication between performer and audience that performers long for.

Four of the musicians interviewed had, for various reasons, taken a step back from pursuing excellence with their instruments. Three of them were still committed to music albeit in a different form (teaching or conducting). A fourth musician had given up all hopes of a solo career years before because of serious problems in dealing with stress and anxiety. While his views could only be considered extreme in many instances, it was believed that his "case" would make an important contribution in presenting what can and does go wrong when talented young musicians are misdirected.