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Personality in making music

How does your personality affect your practicing
process and performing?

Skriftlig reflektion inom självständigt arbete

Till dokumentationen hör även följande inspelning: **xxx**

Summary

Personality psychology is one of the most popular ranges of psychology today. There're many different theories about how personality influences your thinking and behavior. The general thought among psychologists today is that personality is something that arises from within and stays somewhat similar throughout life – although some dimensions of personality can also change and develop. Genetics, environment and personal experiences each have an influence on your personality and its development. For musicians, personality affects for example what kind of colleague you are and how you like to work. It even has an impact on your stage charisma. Even so, perhaps one of the biggest things that tells about a musician's personality is the reason why they've chosen music as a career. This reflection is about the different aspects of your personality and what kind of role they play in your practicing process, and in what way is your performance influenced by your personality, based on psychological research and my experiences with Sibelius Violin Concerto. Since personality also has a big impact on many other aspects in life, it's definitely one aspect that shapes your performances and your career. Learning about your personality can help you to better understand yourself and your preferred working habits, and you can even learn to use this information for improving yourself as a colleague and a musician.

Keywords: Personality, Psychology, Jean Sibelius, Violin Concerto Op. 47

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1 Introduction

1.1 What is personality?

Personality psychology is one of the most popular ranges of psychology today. There're many psychological studies and different theories about how personality is formed, how it affects your thoughts and behavior and how it changes throughout life. Some theories focus on the personality differences and similarities between people, some are about personality development.

Today among psychologists the general thought is that personality is something that arises from within and it's what makes us behave, react and think the way we do. It's a combination of our genetics, environment and personal experiences. Personality has a big impact on our relationships, careers and often how we choose our education.

Knowing about personality psychology can help to predict how someone would think or act in a certain situation. Learning about your own personality can help you to gain a better understanding on yourself, your thoughts and your preferred actions in different situations. Psychologists today are not only interested in common human personal traits, but also personality disorders. This leads them to better being able to help the people suffering from those, with the problems they might be facing at school, work or in relationships.

1.1.1 Personality traits

Many of the most popular personality theories are based on the idea of having a certain number of traits that make up a personality. The suggested amount of these traits has varied a lot between different theories: one of the first modern trait theorists Gordon Allport suggested that an individual has more than 4000 personality traits, which he categorized into three groups, while psychologist Hans Eysenck thought there're only three universal personality traits. Psychologist Raymond Cattell in turn suggested that there're 16 key personality traits.

Both Eysenck's and Cattell's theories have later been criticized; Eysenck's for being too low on the number of different traits, Cattell's for focusing on too many. Researcher are still arguing about the exact number of human personality traits, but perhaps now the most popular theory, often called the "Big Five" theory, describes five different traits.

While the trait theories in modern psychology are very popular, they've also been criticized. Perhaps the main problem with these theories is that personality traits don't necessarily

correlate with behavior; a person might not act the same way in different situations. Also, trait theories don't look how personality develops or changes over time.

1.1.2 Cardinal, central and secondary traits

Psychologist Gordon Allport, who suggested there to be more than 4000 human personality traits, categorized them into three levels: cardinal traits, central traits and secondary traits. Cardinal traits, being highest in the hierarchy, are the most dominant ones. They're often such a big part of a person's character that these traits are what that person becomes to be known for; for example, you might be known for your intelligence or altruism. While these traits are the most dominant, they're also the rarest. Most people don't have only one trait that would describe their whole character in such a clear way, but multiple traits that form their personality.

Central traits, according to Allport, are more common. They make as a foundation for most people's personality. Central traits are the terms you would probably use to describe someone – those could be terms such as kind, honest, loyal, shy, or selfish. Allport believed these traits are found to a certain degree in every person. Secondary traits, lowest in the hierarchy, are traits that only appear in some situations. For example, a normally very kind person might act rude when facing a lot of stress, or a confident person might still get anxious when performing.

1.1.3 The "big five" theory

One of the most popular trait personality theories at the moment is based on having five basic dimensions of personality; those are often called the "big five" personality traits. Those traits are extraversion, openness, neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness. These five personality traits have found to remain so what similar after reaching adulthood – all of them are also found in different cultures. Researchers have found that both biological and environmental factors have an influence on one's personality.

Based on the theory, a person is either high or low in each of these traits. For example, someone high on extraversion is often sociable and talkative, while someone low in extraversion often needs more alone time and might be quieter and draw less attention to themselves in big groups. In real life there is no such thing as extreme extraversion or introversion, but people go somewhere in between the two extremes.

Since these five traits are all important factors of shaping one's personality, they all play a role in a person's working habits and choosing between different learning techniques. For musicians this, for the most part, means different forms of practicing.

1.2 Musicians and personality

In concerts you sometimes observe a musician with an unbelievable stage charisma – or working with a new chamber music group there’s someone who’s incredible easy to work with. You hear about people who’ve practiced eight hours a day through all their student years with an amazing self-discipline. Personality plays a big role in all these situations. It affects what kind of colleague you are, what kind of career you choose for yourself, how you like to work, among many other things. Of course, a musician’s personality doesn’t always show to the public or even to the people they work with, but it always plays a role on how you experience these things.

A musician often has a quite clear reason why he/she has chosen this career – this is perhaps one of the most important things that tells about personality. You might’ve always kept playing because it causes you joy, and later it became your career. You might’ve kept on practicing to be able to make other people experience that joy. Perhaps you’ve always been curious of all the opportunities it brings you – the possibilities to visit new places and always meet new people.

Especially if music is something you’re really passionate about, the style of the piece you’re working on can significantly affect your practicing process. For example, practicing something that doesn’t have a lot of emotional content, compared to something that’s full of such strong emotions you can feel them yourself when you play the piece, can be a completely different experience.

1.2.1 How do the ”big five” traits affect your practicing and performing?

Extraversion

People high in extraversion get energy from social situations. They are often more outgoing and usually don’t have trouble verbally expressing themselves. They also don’t mind being the center of attention. People low in extraversion (or introverted) on the other hand, gains energy from spending time alone. They dislike being the center of attention. Although they need their alone time to recharge, they often still enjoy people’s company to a certain amount just as much as more extraverted people.

Extraverted and introverted people might often have different preferences on their learning techniques. While extraverted people often like to brainstorm and discuss their ideas with other people, introverts are usually more keen on working by themselves, since they often have a very rich inner world.

While performing, these characteristics might not play as big of a role as other personality traits. Even though introverted people might not like being the center of attention, they can possibly still enjoy performing extremely much, depending on their other characteristics. On the other hand, extraverted people who usually like the attention, can still suffer from extreme performance anxiety.

Openness

People high in openness possess characteristics such as creativity and imagination. They are curious about new things to try and are often very good at thinking outside the box. On the other hand, they might have a hard time focusing on one thing for a longer period, since they can get easily distracted by new ideas. People low in openness often find more comfort in traditions and routines.

Since practicing requires a high amount of self-discipline, people who're low in openness might have it easier to create a good practicing routine and sticking to it. People high in openness often dislike following strict schedules, but they are often more creative thinkers. They can still be very productive, as long as they find the motivation to focus their attention on finding effective ways to practice.

On stage people who're low in openness might have trouble trying things in the moment and reacting what others are doing, if it differs a lot on what they're used to. People high in openness can be more curious to try out new things even in concerts. Even so, other factors like performance anxiety and a person's shyness might be equally important when it comes to being brave and creative on stage.

Neuroticism

This trait includes characteristics such as anxiousness, emotional instability and high amounts of self-doubt. People high in neuroticism tend to easily worry about insignificant things. They experience a lot of stress and take longer time to recover from stressful situations. People low in this trait are better at handling stress and are more emotionally stable.

This trait might have a correlation to performance anxiety. People low in neuroticism might experience less performance anxiety than the people high in this trait. Of course, there're also many other factors that influences that, but people low in neuroticism might have more ways to handle it.

To be high in this trait probably affects many areas in a person's life, naturally in a musician's case practicing and performing being one of them. To be able to stick to a practicing routine and stay motivated, you need some amount of emotional stability, although some other characteristics might be able to compensate for this; for example, an emotionally

instable person who's also highly creative and insightful might be able to turn that instability into creating music.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness features dimensions such as goal-minded behavior, also being organized and detail-oriented. People high in this trait finish their tasks in time, they like being well prepared and enjoy having a schedule for important things. They might also be prone to perfectionism. People low in this trait tend to procrastinate, since they dislike schedules and structure. They might also fail to complete important tasks on time. They don't usually plan ahead and might not think how their behavior affects others.

Since people high in conscientiousness are naturally very organized, planning and being well prepared for concerts comes easy for them. They have a lot of the characteristics that make a person a good colleague. On the other hand, they might suffer more than people low in this trait, if they for some reason can't be as well prepared as they would like.

Agreeableness

People high in this trait are very considerate and care deeply about others. They are empathetic and cooperative and enjoy helping others. People low in this trait tend to be more competitive and have little interest in other people. They can even be manipulative in order to get what they want.

Even though the ability of being highly empathetic makes people high in this trait a great colleague, it might get in the way of their own work. They probably wouldn't feel comfortable focusing on their own practicing if there's someone who needs their time or help. Their considerate nature might cause them to have more distractions from their own goal.

1.3 Learning styles

As much as in many other careers, a musician is constantly expected to learn new things – new repertoire, new ways of playing – an ongoing learning process is a part of the profession. Because of this, it's useful to find the learning techniques that suit you the best. Knowing your favorite learning style is not necessary to become a great musician, of course, but it can be a big help trying to find missing motivation or a more compelling practicing routine.

1.3.1 Carl Jung's theory

Psychologist Carl Jung (1875-1961) developed a personality theory based on four basic psychological functions: extraversion – introversion, sensation – intuition, thinking – feeling and judging – perceiving. This theory later led on to the development of the Meyers-Briggs – personality type indicator. Carl Jung's theory can also be used with assessing different learning styles. There's little research showing that one learning style would make better results than another – the effects of knowing your preferred learning style has probably more to do with finding motivation and ways of working that are as pleasant for you as possible. A person's preferred learning style is usually a combination of some of these dimensions, rather than only one of them.

1.3.2 Extraverted vs. introverted learning

Extraverted learners are very much social learners. They prefer working in a group setting. They often get their ideas by working with other people or other outside sources, and they like to discuss these ideas with someone. They also enjoy and learn by teaching others.

Introverted learners like to work by themselves. Their rich inner minds help them with problem solving, so they often prefer solitude while learning. When studying a new skill, they often prefer to observe others and gather enough information before trying it out themselves.

1.3.3 Sensing vs. intuitive learning

Sensing as a psychological function means being well in touch with the physical world. Sensors are focused on the present moment and are often practical and consistent. They use the information they gain from experience and the outside world.

Intuitive people focus on the possibilities and future outcomes. Intuitive learners like to spend time daydreaming and often prefer having a free schedule for learning to be able to learn by moments of inspiration, rather than working continuously. They usually focus on the big picture over small details.

1.3.4 Thinking vs. feeling learning

Thinking learners rely on facts, as well as their own principles and values. To learn efficiently, they often need a reason to do so. They're analytical and often want to study every last bit of a subject they choose to learn about. They prefer their working environment to be well structured and work well with other people who base their thoughts on logic and facts. Feeling learners need a harmonious working environment to be able to learn effectively. They value other people's feelings as well as their own. They strive to find connections between the new information and real human conditions; they're also quick to relate this information to their own personal experience. They also enjoy teaching and learning things that can help others, but on the other hand prefer learning about things they care about.

1.3.5 Judging vs. perceiving learning

Judging learners prefer to know exactly what's expected from them. They can plan their learning process very efficiently and follow through that plan. They need order and a structured enough environment to learn effectively. They dislike improvising and surprises concerning their learning process. Judging learners might sometimes make a decision before having all the essential information, since they very much dislike leaving things open or unfinished.

Perceiving learners are quick to adapt to new information and circumstances. They like improvising, a variable learning process and often prefer a less conservative learning style. While judging learners can be very strict in their decisions, perceiving learners often want to gather all the information possible before deciding on something – this might cause them to delay or avoid making final decisions.

2 Sibelius Violin Concerto op. 47 – Practicing and performing process

2.1 About Jean Sibelius

Jean Sibelius (Johan Christian Julius Sibelius) is perhaps the most known Finnish composer. He was born in 1865 in Hämeenlinna into a Swedish speaking family but became bilingual studying in one of the first Finnish speaking schools. Sibelius wasn't born into a family

of musicians, but he was interested in music from a very young age. He started his piano studies at the age of seven with his aunt Julia. Even then Sibelius preferred improvisation over technical practices (Murto­mäki, 1997). He composed his first piece, *Water Droplets* for violin and cello, when he was around 15 years old.

He began his violin studies at the age of 16 with a local military conductor. By his own words, he was immediately taken away by the instrument. It became his dream to become a violin virtuoso (Murto­mäki, 1997). With playing the violin, he also got to know more of the romantic chamber music literature. By this time, he mostly used the piano for composing, as it by his own words “doesn’t sing” like the violin does. He had a trio together with his siblings Linda and Christian, who played the cello and the piano, and also this inspired him to compose. During the years 1880-1885 he had already composed around 15 pieces: piano music and some chamber music works.

Sibelius was always very nature-oriented. Already at a young age he used to spend summers at his grandmother’s and aunt Eveliina’s place in Loviisa. He enjoyed living by the sea and he always felt freer there than in Hämeenlinna. He also spent a lot of time walking in forests, and as a highly imaginative person, he always thought nature was a very mystical and poetic place.

2.1.1 Studies

In 1885 Sibelius started his law studies in Helsinki. He also started in a music school, and within a year he quit his studies at the university and focused on the music. He studied the theoretical subjects with the music school’s head master Martin Wegelius. His focus was at first still on the violin, but in time he had to admit that he would never become a virtuoso as he wanted, mostly due his late start with the instrument. So, composing took over.

His progress was fast, and already from his early composing years he was called a musical genius. Although Wegelius’ teaching focused more on doing small exercises, Sibelius composed a number of pieces in secret on his own time. During his time in Helsinki he composed nearly a hundred pieces, including songs and chamber music. In Helsinki he also got to know people who had a big impact on his life also later on - including the family Järnefelt, one of the siblings being Aino Järnefelt, who Sibelius would later marry. He also got to know a world-known pianist-composer Ferruccio Busoni – him, Sibelius, Paul and Armas Järnefelt together made a tight group of friends (Murto­mäki, 1997).

After four years in Helsinki, Sibelius went to study in Berlin. There he studied with Albert Becker – although his very theoretical teaching methods didn’t really catch Sibelius’ interest (Sirén, sibelius.fi). Therefore, in Berlin he was mostly inspired by all the concerts he went to; he heard Beethoven’s symphonies and even his late string quartets, and hearing *Don Juan* by

Strauss and Aino-symphony by Kajanus also conducted by him, Sibelius perhaps got the push for writing symphonic poems. After Berlin he went back to Finland for a holiday and got engaged with Aino Järnefelt, before moving to Vienna in 1890. Sibelius really enjoyed the atmosphere there and got to study with known teachers Karl Goldmark and Robert Fuchs.

Until moving to Vienna, Sibelius had mostly composed chamber music, but there he started working more with orchestral scores. He also became very interested in everything that had to do with Finland and Finnish language. Sibelius got to know *Kalevala*, in which he has later based a lot of his pieces on – including a symphonic poem *Kullervo*. The premiere in 1892 in Finland was a great success; it has later been described as one of the key moments in the development of Finnish music.

2.1.2 From a Finnish to an international composer

In 1892 Sibelius got married to Aino Järnefelt. They later had six daughters, one of which died soon after her birth. On their honeymoon they went to visit the places where *Kalevala* was born, and there Sibelius wrote down traditional Finnish poems. After this he came on to write many pieces based on those poems and *Kalevala* in general: *Karelia Suite* and *Lemminkäinen Suite* for example. He even worked on an opera based on *Kalevala*, but because he thought of Wagner's operas as superior to any other operas, he gave that up and used his material on the *Lemminkäinen Suite* (Murtomäki, 1997).

During these years, Sibelius was seen as a quite national composer. He became a kind of symbol for the fight for independence in Finland – in 1899 *Finlandia* was also composed. After his first symphony, Sibelius turned from a quite romantically oriented style towards a more classical one – perhaps partly for living in Italy with his family 1900-1901. The violin concerto is also an example of this period in Sibelius' composing. In 1904 Sibelius had had enough of Helsinki – all its temptations and long nights in restaurants (Sirén, sibelius.fi). With his family he had a house built, and they moved to Ainola later that year. This time he had also made a steady reputation around Europe. Throughout his career until his seventh symphony, he would conduct his own works and take care of the premiers, in Finland and all-around Europe.

2.1.3 Years of change and quiet Ainola

In 1908 Sibelius had a tumor in his throat removed, and he completely stopped using alcohol and cigarettes for seven years. This being quite a big change for him, it's probably no coincidence that he composed some of his darkest and most difficult works, seen from an audience perspective, during these years (Murtomäki, 1997). Because of this, his reputation and popularity in Finland got a big hit. During the World War I 1914-1918 Sibelius and his

family – compared to their previous lifestyle – suffered from poverty. To support their well-being, he had to compose a lot of small pieces – songs, piano pieces and small works for violin and piano. Even so, this didn't affect the quality of his works – many of these small pieces are played a lot even today.

Finland declared its independence in 1917, but it was followed by a Civil War in 1918. Sibelius's life was never threatened, but with his family they moved to Helsinki for better safety. During these years Sibelius was also slightly struggling with his changing style in composing; for example, his fifth symphony took him five years to complete. Writing his sixth and seventh symphony in 1923 and 1924, he felt he could no longer work as efficiently as he used to (Murtomäki, 1997). He also got even more self-critical. His latest works are maybe his most advanced ones, but after his last symphonies and symphonic poem *Tapiola* in 1926 he only composed a few small pieces for violin and piano in 1929. He continued working on his eighth symphony until 1943, but at the end of 1940's Sibelius burned it in Ainola along with many more of his pieces.

During his last years, Sibelius enjoyed a reputation of a very successful composer. He got a great deal of acknowledgements from important people around the world. Sibelius died in 1957 at the age of 91 and was buried in Ainola. His home opened as a museum later. His music has made a very big influence in Finland and in Finnish music's development until this day.

2.2 Technical ground work

There's a lot of basic work needed while practicing Sibelius' Concerto, as in almost any other piece. At the time it was composed, it was often referred to as a virtuoso piece, which suits the concerto quite well. Of course, the virtuosity aspect is only one part of this musically very rich concerto.

Each of the movements have their own difficulties. In the first movement there're a lot of tricky double-stops that demand some attention while practicing. Intonation throughout the movement is quite tricky as well – there're a lot of diminished chords combined with difficult grips in the left hand. Especially in the first movement it's also demanding getting out everything that it says in the score – Sibelius has written what he wants very specifically. Doing all the little crescendos and diminuendos and making a difference between all the accents and tenuto-lines while trying to make the piece sound like your own creates a challenge to the soloist.

The second movement is in a way simpler for the soloist. The difficulties in that movement are mostly musical, as well as getting out a sound that matches the emotion of the movement and speaks to the audience. Since this movement doesn't have the same level of virtuosity as

the two other movements, the soloist has to bring out something else that makes the music alive. The whole movement is somehow just one long thought, and it's a lot the soloist's responsibility to make that clear for the audience.

The third movement is the most virtuosic of the three. Also, being very musically simple, the emphasis is mostly in the technical skills of the soloist. The rhythmical character of the movement doesn't give that much room for interpretation, but it has its non-serious characters that the other two movements don't, and it's mostly up to the soloist to bring those out.

Looking past all the technical difficulties, perhaps the most important thing in this concerto is to find a way to make it personal. There's so much emotion written in the music; the soloist needs to find it, and more importantly, bring it out so that it also reaches the audience.

2.3 How to tell a story to the audience

As well as in many other pieces, this concerto has so many opportunities for the soloist to find and create feelings within the music that the audience can relate to. This is also where your personality plays a big role. If you can relate to or at least understand the feeling that's written in the music, it's easier to also make the audience believe in the story you're telling. This is of course a very personal matter – there's no right way to feel and understand the music. The important part is to believe in the feelings you're creating within the music.

There're people who're very much in touch with their emotions – but nearly not everybody is. But this is again a skill you can work on if you decide to; everybody feels deep emotions – it's only a matter of personality how natural it is for you to recognize or to communicate them. Of course, not everybody feels the importance of finding so much feeling in the music they're making, the music itself can often be enough.

2.4 How to get in touch with the right feelings?

Especially if you feel your personality connects with the music, it can make a big difference if you feel like yourself when you're practicing or performing the piece. It's important to feel in touch with the part of yourself that you need in the music. For example, if you're an introverted person, you might find it helpful to withdraw from other people for a while to connect with that side of yourself. This might also have to do with the time of day; some people find it impossible to feel like themselves early in the morning for example.

With different music, you need different kinds of energy. For example, working with a virtuoso piece you might need to find an enthusiastic and proud attitude. Your personality probably also correlates better with some pieces than others, or you might feel the connection

to a different part of yourself. In the Sibelius Concerto I find the two first movements to connect with somewhat similar parts of my personality – the third movement needing a completely different mindset.

To evoke the right feelings, it might also help to know about the composer and his/her personality and about the historical time when the piece was written. For example, I found it inspiring to know what was happening in Sibelius' life at the time when he was composing the concerto. Especially if you feel a strong personal connection with the piece, finding similarities between your and the composer's personality can help to increase confidence for your interpretation.

2.4.1 How does your personality influence this?

The technique on how you get in touch with the music can be very different for people with different personalities. Working with the Sibelius Concerto for example can be a very different experience for an introverted and an extroverted person. As an introverted person, I need to be connected to that side of my personality, especially for the first and second movement. Spending not enough time alone before playing makes me unable to access my inner world and imagination, both of which I very much need in those movements. Extroverted people might prefer a different approach – they might also want to reach out to certain parts of their personality, but they might not need the time alone to be able do that.

Other aspects of your personality also influence your techniques for connecting with the music. Using Carl Jung's theory as an example of different personality dimensions, intuitive and sensing people for example might have a very different idea on the Sibelius concerto. Especially in this concerto, I believe I'm using my intuitive side very much to understand the music, since I feel the music connects with that side of my personality. To me the music especially in the first movement feels like a mind-flow, since it doesn't really have any clear direction or reaching point. As a personality trait, intuition makes you focus more on the possibilities rather than the existing world. Since I see that also in Sibelius concerto, I'm able to use my own experiences and functions and that way get a clearer idea of the music – which makes it easier also for the audience to understand.

Of course, the intuitive vision of the movement is only one way of understanding the music. A sensing person might feel about it very differently. An intuitive person might also have a bigger need to find hidden meanings from the music they're playing – sensing people might not feel the need to do that, as they possibly find other aspects of the music more important.

In general, if you feel a personal connection to the piece, the main thing is to feel like yourself while practicing and especially while performing the piece. If you don't think your personality correlates with the piece, it's still important that you learn to understand the feelings involved to the music.

3 Personality on stage

Personality has an impact on how your performance will be received. The goal is often to bring something of yourself to the music and to the stage, and to make a performance that's reachable to the audience. Although, you often can't draw a conclusion from someone's personality to their ability to make a convincing performance or their stage charisma. For example, introverted people often don't like being in the spotlight on other occasions, but they can still make an excellent performer, depending on their other qualities. This also applies to extroverted people; being charismatic in an everyday life for example doesn't necessarily make you charismatic on stage.

You can often spot a charismatic performer easily – it's harder to put your finger on what makes such a strong stage charisma. Usually you recognize a charismatic performer from the moment they walk on stage. It's perhaps something to do with high amounts of intensity and honesty, often also some kind of emotional intelligence. Many believe that stage charisma is a quality you possess from a very young age. Although, even for those who naturally have this quality, it takes time to fully develop. As charisma in everyday life, stage charisma is also something you can, at least to a certain point, learn and develop.

Your performance can also be influenced by how personally connected you feel to the music. It might not come across to the audience whether or not you feel a personal relation to the piece, but it can affect for example your confidence on stage or how much emotions you can get out of the piece. Although, even if there seems to be no correlation between the piece and your personality, you can still make a very convincing performance. A good musician also has to be able to be a good actor. In this case it helps if you have great emotional intelligence; you can still learn to see and understand the feelings written in the music, even if they don't feel your own.

3.1 Performance anxiety

Performance anxiety is one form of social anxiety. Although being a psychological phenomenon, it also includes physical symptoms. Even the most experienced performers can suffer from performance anxiety and it can even affect your quality of life, especially as a musician. Since performing is such a big part of your life, it can feel paralyzing to regularly experience such anxiety – especially while doing what you love. Even so, performance anxiety is something you can learn to cope with. Since being so common in the music world, it's easy to find support and many different techniques to help you to deal with it.

3.1.1 Does personality affect experiencing performance anxiety?

It's often believed that introversion and shyness are a somewhat similar phenomenon. Although, despite of all the similarities, shyness, being a symptom of social anxiety, has nothing to do with introversion. Since extraverted people are more comfortable being in the spotlight, opposed to introverts who would rather not draw attention to themselves, it's easy to draw the conclusion that introverted people also suffer more from performance anxiety. Extraverted people can also suffer from shyness – as much as they can suffer from performance anxiety.

The amount of performance anxiety you experience can also come from how close personal connection you feel with the piece. If you feel a strong personal relation to the piece, it can make you feel more vulnerable on stage. On the other hand, feeling this connection often leads to a deep understanding of the music, and that can make you feel more confident on stage and reduce the amount of anxiety you experience.

There're studies that indicate that social anxiety runs in a family – although, it's not certain how much of it is genetic and what's learned behavior. Even so, there're personality traits that might be triggers for social anxiety; for example, low self-esteem and negative self-talk can cause social anxiety if being too much in control. Since these traits are something you can develop, you can also find techniques that'll help you to live with performance anxiety.

4 Conclusion

Especially if you've been struggling with your practicing or suffered from for example performance anxiety, it can be really good to get a new perspective on these things. Reading psychological research about personality can help you to improve for example your practicing habits or stage presence. What's most important, it can help you realize you're not alone with

your problems; everybody has their own struggles when it comes to learning, shaping your interpretation or feeling comfortable on stage.

Including psychology to my practicing process with the Sibelius Violin Concerto gave me a lot of aspects I hadn't thought about before. For example, learning about different leaning styles helped me realize my own preferred one. After struggling with some of the advices I've gotten from teachers and colleagues, it's been soothing to realize how differently people can work, and that some general advices simply don't apply for everybody.

I also believe it has helped me a lot to learn about the scientific aspects of performance anxiety. Since it plays such a big role probably for most musicians you hear a lot about its influences on performance and negative impacts on your life, but it's still easy to feel lonely when struggling with it. Understanding the psychology behind it helped me realize how common and normal it is.

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