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Cognitively Generated Emotion Through Alexandrian Inhibition: Annotated Bibliography

Cognitively Generated Emotion through Alexandrian Inhibition

Annotated Bibliography

Note: AT refers to The Alexander Technique, PA refers to performance anxiety, and CBT refers to cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Alcantara, Pedro De. *The Alexander Technique: A Skill for life*. Ramsbury, UK: The Crowood Press Ltd, 1999.

In chapter 5, “Emotions,” Alcantara addresses the importance and necessity of applying Alexandrian inhibition to rational, emotional reactions free from the limitations of direct application to performance anxiety. He stresses that the connection of mind and body, the direct relationship of emotion and physical feeling, shapes our rational analysis of what we observe or experience. Further, he distinguishes the effects of rational and irrational thought processes and their relation to choice. Once these can be distinguished reliably, they pave the way to the ability to reason based on feeling. Ultimately, he credits Alexandrian Inhibition as a means to free oneself from automatic or habitual reactions and change the intensity, quality, and expression of emotions based on the acknowledgment of our inevitable adherence to irrational beliefs, not as a means to repression. This quasi-philosophical approach to emotional inhibition lends a foundational understanding of the importance of controlling emotions in any situation.

Conable, Barbara. "What To Do About Performance Anxiety." Andover Educators. Published 2016. <http://bodymap.org/main/?p=206>.

Barbara Conable is a nationally recognized Andover Educator and author of many different resources relating to AT and music. In this article, she explains the four different kinds of PA and the unique response each need. Conable reinforces the specificity of how you respond to different kinds of PA disclaiming that "mixing responses guarantees failure." After defining each PA, she explains their effect on performance and how you should respond. She goes into great length on the fourth PA, debilitating fear, terror, dread, and panic. Conable identifies the pressures of classical performance, the isolation many young performers experience, job loss, scorn from peers, competitive environments, a disconnect from the audience, infrequent performance etc. contextually. The acronym FEAR articulates her remedy (Feel the fear, Embody the fear, Arrive, and Relate). This article is valuable for its purely AT or Andover perspective, and it's a close relation to psychoanalytic evaluation within the frame of social understanding.

Jones, Marc V. "Emotion Regulation and Performance." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sport and Performance Psychology*, edited by Shane M. Murphy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

In Jones' essay, he relates emotion and cognition as it applies to sports performance. The concepts discussed transfer seamlessly to music performance. He first discusses understanding emotion and how, in Lazarus's Cognitive-motivational-relational theory,

emotion occurs as a response to the process of person-environment relationship and how motivation, appraisal, and coping are central to said process. He lists every emotion and what they mean concerning the situation or environment. For example, anxiety is related to facing an uncertain, existential threat. Jones then proceeds to discuss the facilitative and debilitating connections between emotions and physical functioning and emotions and cognitive functioning. Most importantly, Jones writes about antecedent-focused emotion regulation (before emotion occurs) and response-focused emotion regulation. Situation selection and modification, attention deployment, goal setting, self-talk, and imagery all lie in antecedent-focused emotion regulation. Relaxation and reappraisal are response-focused emotion regulation. These concepts are important for strategizing cognitive mechanisms at varying times surrounding the stress of performance and how effective they are with their employment.

Kleinman, Judith and Peter Buckoke. "Performance Anxiety." In *The Alexander Technique for Musicians*, 239-253. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013.

Kleinman and Buckoke introduce The Alexander Technique in this book in a very straightforward and applicable way for musicians. Concerning performance anxiety and cognitive-emotional inhibition, this book does well to introduce the idea of Inhibition (as it relates to psychophysical processes) as well as a positive, effortless, non-doing approach to Direction as a means to re-establish expansion and ease. The chapter dedicated to performance anxiety takes an AT approach to specific physical/emotional reactions to the stress of performance and offers Directional phrases and mindful focus on

said reactions. The chapter, “Performance Anxiety,” is organized in a cause-effect-fix structure that exemplifies the applicable nature of the book.

Madden, Cathy. *Integrative Alexander Technique Practice for Performing Artists: Onstage Synergy*. Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2014.

Chapter 21, “The Journey of Performing: Stage Readiness (No More Stage Fright!),” Madden, with her quirky tone, eases the stress of stage fright and offers a variety of AT methods of alleviating PA. Most of her techniques are akin to visualization and self-talk. She first recognizes that being on stage is safe and introduces easier coping mechanisms, including exposure (the comfort found in “successfully experiencing coordination as serving excitement and improving quality”), and perspective (her example included a foreign student equating the uneasy feeling in her stomach with butterflies). She goes on to discuss psychophysically phrased active verbs and creating constructive plans to replace old cycles. She frames the constructive plan through this template: wanting, recognizing, deciding, gathering information, creating a plan, deciding again, asking and experimenting. She also introduces how to silence internal critical voices (psychophysical interference) by visualizing their removal, called ‘bracketing.’ Bracketing allows the performer to remove the psychophysical pattern the critic causes, giving them the freedom to devise a new plan. This AT approach is largely geared toward focusing on the psychological root of anxiety and does not address the inhibition of residual physical effects that may still occur.

Nesmith, David. "Ease Performance Anxiety Naturally." Andover Educators. Published 2000.

<http://bodymap.org/main/?p=265>.

Nesmith concisely explains his dual-step approach to PA. First, he recommends noticing the feelings of PA "as non-judgmentally as possible." He then proceeds to explain how to open awareness multi-sensorially and ground yourself by noticing things around you extra musically. This approach aligns with Sussman et al's, "Emotional Distractors Can Enhance Attention." By using peripheral vision, Nesmith argues that you will expand your awareness and counteract mental and physical contracting that occur under pressure (narrowing of vision, muscle tension, shallow breathing, etc.). By practicing multi-sensory attention expansion, Sussman, et al's mild acoustic distraction also applies to Nesmith's theory. He also provides alternative strategies of preparing and practicing to work through PA, such as exposing yourself to pseudo-performance experiences, and Constantin Stanislavski's circles of attention, which includes organizing the facets of performance into three circles (one with you and your music, one with your colleagues on stage, and one containing the audience) to free your energy for making music. While this does not apply inhibition directly, Nesmith is utilizing AT directional thinking and psychological restructuring of emotional perception to reduce PA.

Perdomo-Guevara, Elsa. "Is Music Performance Anxiety Just an Individual Problem? Exploring the Impact of Musical Environments on Performers' Approaches to Performance and Emotions." *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind & Brain* 24, no. 1 (March 2014): 66–74.

This article puts the problem of performance anxiety into the sociological genre-based cultural environment of music. This was a study done through an online questionnaire addressing professionals and amateurs of various genres of music and countries/cultures. They collected contextual information (demographic and music background), emotions and cognitions they experience in daily life, practice, and performance. In regards to the context of PA in classical musicians, they found that classical performers were more self-oriented and less people-oriented and reported more negative performance-related emotions as opposed to the opposite findings in non-classical musicians. Classical musicians were more achievement-oriented and fitness-focused, which means that the approach to alleviating PA and mediating emotions will differ according to which musical genre environment that a performer belongs.

Powell, Samuel M. "Emotion and Cognition." In *The Impassioned Life: Reason and Emotion in the Christian Tradition*, 297-340. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2016.

Powell applies the scientific analysis of emotion and cognition to Christianity in this chapter. While trying to determine the status of the image of God in relation to our emotion, he uncovers a lot of truths about the highly integrated nature of emotion and cognition. In his terms, he relates cognition to our sense of attention, memory, and judgment and how those directly work with emotion. He recognizes emotion is subjective due to the need for our reappraisal or rational rethinking of a situation and how that differs for every person. Most interestingly, in regards to anxiety, which he refers to as elevated fear, he exposes the difference in attention bias and anxiety afflicted brain's

response to emotional stimuli. Those with anxiety have less control over their prefrontal cortex, which employs executive control mechanisms to process negative emotions.

Understanding how the brain uses automatic responses in cognition relative to emotion provides context for psychological obstacles that a performer with performance anxiety experiences.

Sussman, Tamara J., Wendy Heller, Gregory A. Miller, and Aprajita Mohanty. "Emotional Distractors Can Enhance Attention." *Psychological Science* 24, no. 11 (2013): 2322-328.

This article supports AT's philosophy of attentional expansion. They found that high arousal negative distractors caused poorer task-relevant attention compared to positive and neutral distractors, but low arousal negative distractors were consistent with better task-relevant performance than positive or neutral distractors. Arousal is a key part of emotion generation, and the findings display that, only under certain conditions, emotional distractors, like a mild acoustic distraction, would enhance attentional performance by broadening the performer's attentional scope. This coincides with the mindful approach to AT to avoid attentional contraction but uses the peripheral senses to expand awareness.

Valentine, Elizabeth. "The Fear of Performance." In *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*, edited by John Rink, 168-81. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

In this essay, Valentine introduces a variety of symptoms, causes, and an extensive introductory list of cures. There is a vague introduction to The Alexander Technique, but nothing that offers applicable insight to performance anxiety. Valentine organizes the variety of symptoms into three categories: physiological, behavioral, and mental. This is problematic in that the physiological and behavioral symptoms seem to overlap.

Shaking, trembling, and stiffness, listed as behavioral, symptoms are automatic physiological responses to emotions. On the other hand, Valentine offers varying levels of detriment to the amount of anxiety experienced and how to approach each accordingly.

These include reactive (due to inadequate preparation), maladaptive (uncontrolled anxiety that causes catastrophic decline), and adaptive (beneficial amount of anxiety for a lively performance) anxiety, providing context about performers' anxiety and how to approach it appropriately.

—., David F. P. Fitzgerald, Tessa L. Gorton, Jennifer A. Hudson, and Elizabeth R. C. Symonds.

“The Effect of Lessons in the Alexander Technique on Music Performance in High and Low-Stress Situations.” *Psychology of Music* 23, no. 2 (October 1995): 129-141.

This psychological study puts the efficacy of AT to test by experimenting with a group of college music students under varying levels of stress. They evaluated physiological responses to pressure as well as the quality of performance. Some of the students (the experimental group) were randomly selected to participate in AT lessons. They found that the experimental group showed signs of improvement in every category (music and technical quality, heart-rate variance, peak flow (air expulsion), height, misuse, and self-

rated anxiety, and positive attitude to performance) under low-stress and only an improvement in heart-rate variance under high-stress. Being as the subject size was small and the experimental group only experienced a small number (15) of AT lessons, the findings were not as in-depth as is warranted for unrefuted results. This study does give insight into the positive effects of AT as a means of managing PA and supports further study into AT as a supplement to performance.

Wilson, Glenn D., and David Roland. "Performance Anxiety." In *The Science & Psychology of Music Performance: Creative Strategies for Teaching and Learning*, edited by Richard Parncutt and Gary McPherson, 49-58. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

This essay provides a survey-like perspective of performance anxiety, the models that describe optimal arousal (including the Yerkes-Dodson Model and Hardy and Parfitt catastrophe model) and treatment approaches (drugs, psychoanalysis, behavioral therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, hypnotherapy, and AT). Wilson and Roland note that cognitive-behavioral therapy is the most effective and the essay delves deeper into individual strategies. These include viewing anxiety as a positive, positive self-talk, mental rehearsal and imagery, goal setting, relaxation, pre-performance routines, anxiety hierarchies, supportive lifestyles, and flow state. The optimal control condition was found to be a combination of cognitive therapy and cue-controlled relaxation training. Wilson and Roland offer a short side-by-side comparison of the effects of AT and CBT, referencing the studying done by Valentine et al. They conclude that AT is not as effective as a postural and PA solution as AT proponents believe, but it would be useful to compare

AT to cognitive therapy. While this challenges the efficacy of AT by itself, it supports the role CBT plays when placed alongside AT.