

Kenny, Dianna T. (2011). *The Psychology of Music Performance Anxiety*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press. 365 pages. RRP \$66.95. ISBN: 9780199586141

Anxiety can be thought of as a ubiquitous aspect of music performance, experienced by most, if not all, persons of all ages and all backgrounds across multiple performance contexts. Attempts to understand the development and treatment of music performance anxiety are as diverse and complex as the phenomena itself. Until Kenny's book, however, there was no single resource to which the interested performer or practitioner could turn to shed light. Kenny breaks new ground by writing the first book to singlehandedly bring together the diversity of the causes, symptoms, and treatment of music performance anxiety in one volume.

There are multiple strengths in this book. First, the core construct of anxiety is considered through multiple philosophical, psychological, biological and environmental perspectives in terms of their contribution to enhancing our understanding of music performance anxiety, either as one phenomena with individual differences in degree of severity, or alternatively discrete subtypes that require different treatment approaches. Indeed, Kenny offers a new, comprehensive definition of music performance anxiety which is unmatched in the literature to date. Second, detailed clinical examples are presented from interviews with musicians and linked back to the key theories and phenomenological concepts, which aids the reader understanding the lived experience of this anxiety. Third, the essential literature on performance, and performance psychology is reviewed, in particular, strategies for attaining peak and optimal performance. Finally, throughout the book Kenny's analysis is critical and constructive, as she articulates many areas for future research to purposefully advance our understanding of this condition.

In this book Kenny offers a new perspective on working with music performance anxiety based on attachment theory which should be of particular interest to Music Therapists, in particular, psycho-dynamically oriented therapists. For better or worse, the current generation of psychologists have largely been exposed to a heavy dose of the dominant cognitive-behavioural perspective in their training. Alternatively, Kenny's thesis is that music performance anxiety, at it's most extreme, is a disorder of the self. This precedes a lengthy discussion of attachment theory and the use of attachment-based psychotherapy for its resolution. According to this perspective, early relationships with parents affect and direct behaviour, beliefs, emotions and

relationships throughout life. In regards to music performance, Kenny's perspective highlights the significant role of key attachment figures in developing a positive or negative relationship to the act of performance. As the key attachment figure in the therapeutic dyad, the Music Therapist is potentially in a strong position to ameliorate that vulnerability and to assist their client in achieving a successful performance which captures the transformative elements of music making for mental health and wellbeing.

The strength of the book is the presentation of the diversity and complexity of knowledge on music performance anxiety, but this is also a challenge. The book is not a resource that can be used by the lay musician, or even most counselors and psychotherapists, as a quick "how-to" reference manual to help their clients manage music performance anxiety. However, there is a paucity of such literature. Kenny's book contains references to many treatment studies, which is a good starting point for further investigation and research.

On balance, this book contains a wealth of information that may assist Music Therapists to understand music performance anxiety and how it can adversely affect the task of client performance. Packed within this dense volume are the keys that therapists can use to help transform a vulnerable client's negative experience of music performance from an anxiety-provoking assault to their self in a highly competitive, judgmental context, to a positive experience that "adds value to the quality of life lived whilst doing it" (Woody & McPherson, 2010, p. 404).

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Woody, R. H., & McPherson, G. E. (2010). Emotion and motivation in the lives of performers. In P. N. Juslin & J. Sloboda (Eds.), *Handbook of music and emotion* (pp. 401-424). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.