



Adopting the
Growth Mindset
as Musicians

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Introduction

Why do some students fail while others succeed?

This simple question has many possible factors that play a part in why some students are successful while others fail. Past research has looked at IQ, effort, family background, genetics, environment, nutrition, early childhood playtime, and numerous other factors, but nothing has been definitive. If we cannot get to the answer to this question then how do we answer other questions like:

What is the key factor or factors in success?

How can I ensure that I am among the successful?

How do I help my students succeed?

These are the same questions that Dr. Carol S. Dweck was determined to answer. Dr. Dweck is a professor at Stanford University and through her research she discovered the power of people's mindsets. This led to the creation of the concept of the growth mindset. Her work has been influential among education development and business leaders around the world. Dr. Dweck's research explores how different mindsets can greatly impact an individual, ultimately leading to success or failure in any area of life.

Success is defined by each and every person differently. This document will discuss different ways to improve tasks which will allow you to create our own version of success. These concepts are specifically applied to music but can be applied to any field.

Mindsets

Dr. Dweck's research was born out of searching for why some students fail and others do not. Her findings discredited the ideas that in general people are born talented, smart, or skilled but instead, she determined that one's mindset has the biggest impact on one's abilities. This is because the amount of effort put forth is determined by an individual's mindset.

Mindset: a self-perception or set of attitudes that one holds about themselves.

During her research, Dr. Dweck found students had one of two mindsets. They either had a growth mindset or a fixed mindset. Individuals with a growth mindset believe they can improve their skills and abilities through effort. These individuals believe fundamentally that their talents can be developed and refined. Individuals with a fixed

mindset believe that their skills and abilities are very hard or impossible to change. They believe that their skills are innate.

Growth Mindset

Belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your effort.

Fixed Mindset

Belief that you are born with given abilities, talents, or skills that are mostly unchanging.

Let's break that down to what traits each mindset has.

Growth Mindset

- Worry less about "looking" successful.
- Tend to achieve more.
- Are open to trying new things.
- More likely to persevere after failure or a setback.
- Have a better ability to identify their own strengths and weaknesses.

Fixed Mindset

- Not willing to try things they believe they won't be the best at.
- Give up easily.
- Don't like to be challenged.
- More likely to quit.
- Effort is perceived as a bad thing.

As you examine these traits, think of individuals that fit into one of these two mindset. Maybe you find yourself fitting into one of these mindsets more easily than the other. Look at the statements on the next page and mark your answers. Statements 1-4 are from Dr. Dweck's book, *Mindset the New Psychology of Success* (2006), and I have adopted statements 5-8 in order to apply to music.

1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.
 Agree Mostly Agree Mostly Disagree Disagree
2. You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.
 Agree Mostly Agree Mostly Disagree Disagree
3. No matter how much intelligence you can have, you can always change it quite a bit.
 Agree Mostly Agree Mostly Disagree Disagree
4. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.
 Agree Mostly Agree Mostly Disagree Disagree
5. Your musical talent is something already established that you can't change very much.
 Agree Mostly Agree Mostly Disagree Disagree
6. You can improve or learn new things, but you can't really change how talented you are.
 Agree Mostly Agree Mostly Disagree Disagree
7. No matter how much talent or ability you can have, you can always change it quite a bit.
 Agree Mostly Agree Mostly Disagree Disagree
8. You can always substantially change how talented you are.
 Agree Mostly Agree Mostly Disagree Disagree

Statements 1, 2, 5, and 6 are all fixed mindset questions whereas statements 3, 4, 7, and 8 are growth mindset statements. Which statements did you agree with? Did your answers change when the statement was about musical talent instead of intelligence? This can be done with any ability or personal qualities. Take a moment and insert different abilities or personality traits such as shy, confident, athletic, and so on. Do your answers change?

If your answers change you have a combination of a fixed and growth mindset that is often referred to as a mixed mindset. Your beliefs about intelligence could be fixed but you might have a growth mindset about musical talent. This is actually very common, but there are several different kinds so let's look at some examples.

Example #1: Dancing and horn playing.

Michael has a growth mindset about horn playing. He believes that the time he spends in the practice room makes him better. Almost any problem can be solved with time and effort. Michael feels that he can see

and acknowledge these changes, but he also feels that he will never be coordinated enough to dance properly. Effort might make him marginally better but not substantially. Michael has a fixed mindset about his dancing abilities.

Example #2: Horn playing and piano playing.

Michael also has to take a piano proficiency class for his music degree. This class is a great challenge for him. He is assigned a difficult piece that is required for the midterm. Michael practices but believes that it will not help very much as he is fundamentally bad at piano. He has a growth mindset about his horn playing but a fixed mindset about piano playing.

Example #3: High horn playing and low horn playing.

Michael has always been a hard worker when it comes to learning to play the horn. But he struggles in his low register and feels that no matter how much he practices it will never be as good as his upper range. Michael has a growth mindset about horn playing but a fixed mindset about being able to play in the low register of the horn.

All three of these examples shows how an individual can have a mixed mindset. The first example is a mixed mindset about very different abilities. This is very common as the majority of people feel that they have something they cannot do. The second example is a mixed mindset with one ability, to play music, but on different instruments. The last example is of the smallest skill of playing the horn. Having a mixed mindset within a narrow field can create the largest problems.

For an individual trying to make a career in music, the ability to dance is not a requirement. Michael could go his whole life without it becoming a problem. However, the fact that Michael is trying to make a career as a horn player but believes his low range will never get better can create a lot of problems.¹

Any musician can have mixed mindset about their skills within their instrument. Example #3 discusses it with range but an individual can have a fixed mindset with any ability such as pitch, articulation, tonguing, technique, lyrical playing and so on.

Growth Mindset

A growth mindset is built on the belief that skills and abilities can be improved through effort. How does having a growth mindset impact your ability to be successful?

¹ Yes there are horn players all over the world that have made careers out of becoming a specialist in one register of the horn but they are far and few between. They might have specialized in one register but can play all registers of the horn with proficiency.

The mindset you have can greatly impact every area of your life because it “profoundly affects the way you lead your life” as Dr. Dweck states. If you adopt a growth mindset everything is possible with effort which dramatically changes how you approach things.

Michael may approach his practice differently because he has a fixed mindset in the low register of the horn. He probably will not spend a lot of time practicing that range, avoiding opportunities that require it, and skip auditions for low horn. While this example is extreme it shows us how it can profoundly impact your life. With a growth mindset, Michael could invest time into his low range, make it a focus during his lessons, and maybe even take low horn auditions or parts to challenge himself.

One of the greatest benefits of the growth mindset is the passion for learning that it ignites. This mindset makes everything doable and exciting at the possibility for growth. It also takes away some self-doubt and fear. An individual with a fixed mindset believes abilities are unchangeable and need to be proven. They believe that these abilities are fundamental to who they are. With a growth mindset, any ability can be changed. They do not need to need to be proven for their own self-worth.

Dr. Dweck gives an example in her book, *Mindset the New Psychology of Success*, of a student in a Spanish class. It is the first several weeks of the class and the professor calls on the student to speak. The student has a fixed mindset which enhances her nerves; she is fearful of looking stupid in front of the class. She stumbles through speaking, eager just to move on. If the student had a growth mindset she would be more eager to learn with less fear of being wrong. She is new to Spanish and being corrected will lead to learning and growth within this new language.

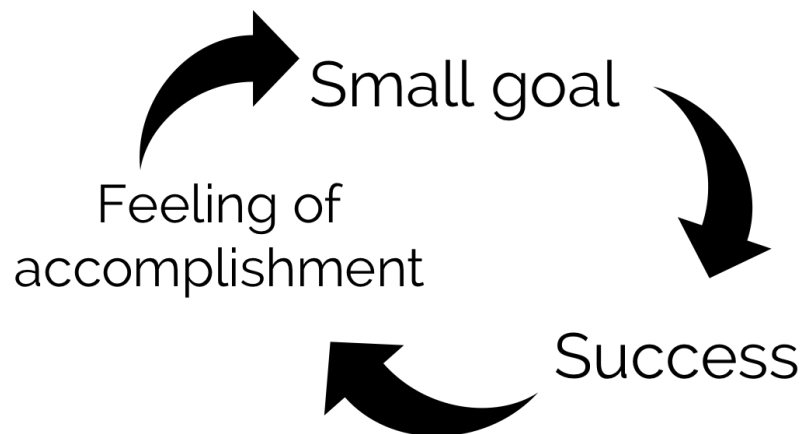
This is not to say that every person with a growth mindset is completely without fear. Instead, he or she changes the way his or her brains perceive the situation. The student is not expected to be perfect in this scenario. She is not being graded by the professor at this moment, but instead is interacting in class to learn. A student with a growth mindset knows that participating in class will help learn Spanish. He or she worries less about looking stupid because the energy is not about proving their intelligence.

Imagine how a student would act in a private music lesson with the fear of being wrong and not wanting to be corrected. Maybe you have even had some of those students; I have. One of my students even stated during a lesson that “it is too late for me to learn scales.” Some students are resistant to try new approaches or to acknowledge problems. These students make far less progress than eager, growth-minded students. They leave lessons frustrated instead of excited and inspired with new ideas to try.

Take a moment and think about your most successful lessons as a student or teacher. Was your mindset in a growth state? Were you eager to try and learn anything that was instructed or were you closed off and determined that your incorrect hand placement was not causing any problems?

Your most successful lessons were most likely when you had a growth mindset. Musicians are dependant on the fact that abilities can be changed. Time in the practice room, lessons, and performances allow musicians to learn and perfect their skills through trial and error of different techniques. Growth mindset musicians are more likely to persevere, find enjoyment in the journey, and have a career.

For musicians and people working in other fields having a growth mindset, is not only helpful but critical to success. The growth mindset continues the love of learning that we are all born with. Accomplishing goals no matter the size and feeling successful can be addicting. This is why the video game industry is so successful. Kids can sit for hours playing a single game because the game sets small goals for them to achieve. Once a goal is met the player has a feeling of accomplishment and he or she wants to move onto the next goal in order to achieve the same feeling. This creates a cycle that can continue for hours and days on end as it is truly addictive.



Video games start out with simple and easy goals but increase in difficulty. Eventually, a player will hit a harder level that they struggle with. They will play it over and over again until they pass it. The feeling of accomplishment is even greater when the player struggled on the level for 40 tries before finally completing it.

This pattern occurs outside of video games too. On YouTube, there is a video of a father trying to learn gymnastic skills that his daughter is teaching him. The daughter begins by teaching him basic handstand before continuing to more complicated skills. The video shows him struggling at various points but completing them one at a time. The father struggles the most with the backflip as he tries again and again before finally is able to do it. It ends in a huge celebration from dad and daughter. The daughter started teaching him an easier skill which he was able to accomplish; after the first skill, each success felt exciting and more thrilling. The backflip was the biggest accomplishment because he had so many failed attempts.

Learning is second nature to us and we are all born with the love and need to learn. Observe small children learning to walk or playing with a toy. They learn by trying and trying again until almost suddenly they can do the task they desire. A growth mindset continues the love of learning by knowing that failure is not the end. The father did not give up when he was unable to do a backflip on the first try. He took direction from his daughter and learned from his attempts until he was able to complete the backflip.

The growth mindset puts everything within reach. In my undergraduate degree at Arizona State University, I was a member of the ballroom dance team and attended dance classes multiple nights a week. The first week of every semester new students came to the studio to begin learning how to dance. At the end of the week, after about four hours of class, they were dancing with one another to cha-cha and East Coast swing, rotating partners, and enjoying the fruits of their efforts. These students learned at incredible speeds because the professor taught with the growth mindset knowing that every person in the room could and would learn to dance by the end of the first week. He challenged and pushed them to learn a new skill and they were able to accomplish this goal.

The growth mindset eliminates the need to be the best; it supports learning for the sake of learning and finding delight in it. Individuals with fixed mindsets often learn to pass a test when necessary. They blindly memorize information only to forget it after the test is complete and they sit passively in classes not engaging with the material or the professor. Learning with a growth mindset is learning to retain the information for future use. These individuals find themes within the material to create a deeper understanding of the subject area.

Musicians learn from peers, teachers, books, videos, podcasts, and so on with the goal of becoming a better musician. Growth-minded musicians are open to new ideas and try them fully, engage with the opportunities that are presented to them, and seek learning opportunities. The love for learning is sparked with the growth mindset but not everything is mastered in a short period of time. It takes time to fully understand a concept or be able to perform skills with ease.

With my students, I describe learning with a growth mindset as if you are like looking for something in your home. Some people look around in obvious spots for a few minutes before giving up; this is the fixed mindset. But if you lost something really important, you would spend all day meticulously going through every inch of your home searching for it: this is the growth mindset. At the end of the day you could say that it is truly not in the home or at least it is not in the many places that you looked. This concept can be applied to learning new skills or habits. If you half try something you will never know if it really did or did not work for you. Instead, if you invested weeks embracing the new concept you could definitively determine that it was or was not successful for you.

Self-help is a subject area that one could spend a lifetime learning about and it continues to grow in popularity. Best-selling books like *Make Your Bed* by William H.

McRaven, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey, and *You are a Badass* by Jen Sincero are among the top sellers. They all discuss ways to improve your life through relatively simple means such as making your bed, waking up earlier, becoming more mindful, observing and changing your habits. Each of these best-sellers relies on the growth mindset. The concept is not discussed directly in most of these books; instead, it is up to the reader to infer from these sources. These authors depend on the fact that each reader believes that his or her skills or traits can be improved upon. If you are purchasing one of these books you most likely believe that your habits or basic qualities can be changed through effort. It is also imperative that you commit to your new habit in the way that you would look for the lost important item. You must exhaustively try the new skills and ideas presented in the books in order for them to be successful.

Unfortunately, our society does not always cultivate a growth mindset environment like the dance studio at Arizona State University. In classrooms all over the world, students sit in silence when their professor poses a difficult question. Many students have thoughts on the answer but do not speak up out of fear of being wrong. Young musicians practice and perform with the goal of playing everything correctly instead of being musical, impacting an audience, and celebrating the music and their abilities. How to develop a growth mindset in your students and classrooms will be discussed later in the section *Change*.

Fixed Mindset

Individuals with fixed mindsets see effort as failure. They could be the students who brag about their lack of studying or the minimal amount of work they put forth in order to get a passing grade. This is because studying means you are not intelligent or not as intelligent as someone who studied less. Spending additional time understanding the material or preparing for an exam is a weakness, not a strength, in their minds. Dr. Dweck refers to this as low-effort syndrome.

Some of the heroes of various fields are upheld as god-like figures, which often leads us to forget the hard trying years that led to their success. Michael Phelps, Yo-Yo Ma, Picasso, J.K. Rowling, and Michael Jordan are all viewed as having spectacular talent, but they too spent hours upon hours practicing and training. Michael Jordan did not start out as the star basketball player. After he was cut from his high school basketball team he spent endless hours working on his game often until after midnight. He is now revered as one of the greatest players of all time. It was his passion and effort that brought him to his success, not his talent alone. J.K. Rowling's story is just as enticing. She was a poor, single-working mom, and yet she wrote one of the most popular book series, *Harry Potter*, in coffee shops for years. She was turned down by ten publishers before selling her story to Scholastic. Rowling's perseverance and effort brought her her own success. There are

thousands if not millions of these types of stories but they all have the same principle that they believed in the power of effort.

With a fixed mindset being talented is like winning the lottery. You are set up for life because you were born with the gift. Most people think of child prodigies being born with their skills but actually these children possess skills beyond their talent which aid to their early success. These children have never known what it is like to not try and they are enthralled by learning. Child prodigies can dance, golf, sing, or play an instrument for hours taking direction and striving to be better. They train their minds to have intense focus and become extremely observant. They have practiced their craft but also invested time in what will bring them success. Mozart was a child prodigy but he spent hours upon hours with his father and sister at the piano. He started touring Europe as a performer at the age of six. Was he talented? Yes, but he also worked extremely hard at his talent. His efforts went beyond playing the piano or composing music but included his ability to focus intently as a very young child.

Another commonality of the success stories like J.K. Rowling, Michael Jordan, and child prodigies is their drive to succeed. They were driven at the thought of getting better and having success, not necessarily with the idea of becoming the best. Dr. Dweck states in *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* that “it’s ironic: the top is where the fixed-mindsets people hunger to be, but it’s where many growth-minded people arrive as a by-product of their enthusiasm for what they do.”

Why is this?

With a fixed mindset, the outcome is most important because the ego is reliant on the skills they possess. Fixed mindset individuals can avoid challenges that would improve their abilities due to the fear of failure. While growth mindset individuals do not have view failure as a risk.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to be the best but there is also nothing wrong with being successful. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Jean sells jewelry for a direct sales company and she is a successful representative in her region as well as nationally. A few months ago she met with Robert who asked her “How are you going to be the best? What makes you better than everyone else?” She was stunned by the question. He did not ask her how she wanted to be her best, or what her goals were, but rather he focused on how she was going to be better than everyone else. Jean’s goals do not include being the best in the company. Her goals are to be successful and to continue to enjoy her job. She wants to continue to grow, make more money, and be more effective, but her goal is not to be the top salesperson. Maybe one day Jean will end up at the top of the company because of her hard work but that is not necessarily her intention. Robert was equally as surprised to Jean’s answer; why would you not want to have the goal of being #1?

A growth mindset allows you to set your own goals and be proud of those accomplishments. This can help people to stop comparing themselves to others. An individual with a fixed mindset can become constantly discouraged by other accomplishments even when he or she meets his or her own goals. He or she might say things like “I can now play in my low range in tune at any dynamic but Brian has been able to do that for years.” He or she had to work for this skill when Brian did not have to. The effort seems like a failure because they should have just been able to do it.

Not everyone with a fixed mindset has all of the same beliefs. In the chart on page 2 there are traits listed that many fixed mindset individuals possess. But this chart is not one size fits all. You can have a fixed mindset but not necessarily have all of the traits. It is like having symptoms for an illness; you do not have to have all of them to be diagnosed.

You may have thought all musicians practice to some degree so all must have a growth mindset because practice equals effort. An individual can still have a fixed mindset and be an avid practicer but still feel the need to prove his or her talent, be unwilling to take criticism, and give up easily at a challenge. Dr. Dweck states “the fixed mindset stands in the way of development and change.” (*Mindset*, 50). Remember back to Michael who was a growth-minded horn player but had a fixed mindset about his low range. His aversion to that range will stand his way of growth as a horn player. Musicians and practice will be talked about in depth in the section *Practice*.

A devastating trait of the fixed mindset are individuals who are constantly looking for a short cut. In music, it could be switching equipment in hopes that a different mouthpiece will fix articulation or a new instrument will help create a better sound. They often look for the “answer” as if there is an answer that will make them a talented musician. They hope that in learning certain exercises, etudes, excerpts, and solos in a specific order and practicing for 10,000 hours that they will suddenly be successful. Fixed mindset individuals look for the answer in the perfect book, video, teacher, and so on. They often become frustrated and quickly move on to the next hope of “the answer.”

Having a fixed mindset stunts potential and dramatically shapes their actions. These individuals avoid effort and instead want to prove their abilities because their abilities are apart of their self-worth.

How did we get our mindset?

Our mindset are like many personality traits that are learned from others. Most individuals have a mindset similar of the people closest to them. This often means family members are the biggest influences. The way our families talk and praise often leads to our own mindset. How people praise one another is one of the notable influences to passing on a mindset. Individuals with a growth mindset praise the effort or process while fixed mindsets praise the ability.

Let's take a look at the example of Beth, who is a young student who got an A on her most recent spelling test.

A growth mindset praises their studying and effort.

“Great job Beth, you studied really hard for this test and your hard work paid off!”

A fixed mindset praises their intelligence.

“Beth you are so smart, you got an A!”

With this example, Beth could be influenced by a growth mindset knowing that her hard work paid off and she will be successful in the future with effort. If she becomes influenced with a fixed mindset she might fear that she will not be considered intelligent if she has to put forth effort on a more challenging unit.

Praising an ability or skill can lead to a fixed mindset. As mentioned before, individuals with a fixed mindset have a tendency to give up more quickly when faced with challenge or failure. This can be seen in a study that Dr. Dweck did with students and challenging math problems. In the figure below you can see that students who were praised for their effort solved more problems than students who were praised for their intelligence.

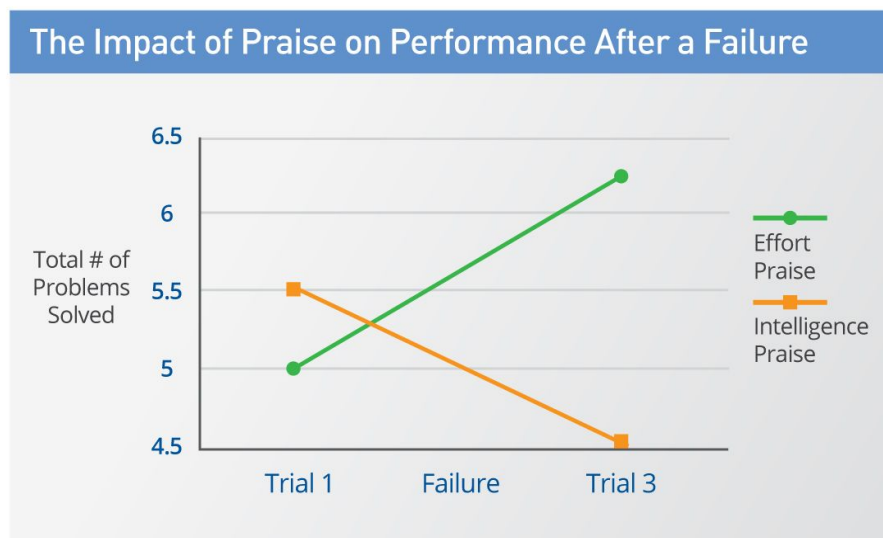


Figure: Mueller, Claudia M., Dweck, Carol S. “The Impact of Praise and Feedback.” 1998. <https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/Teacher-Practices²>

² This study has not been replicated. By changing the way in which we praise may not dramatically affect students to the degree this chart demonstrates. But if there is hope that it can produce this dramatic change it is worth adjusting the manner in which we praise.

It is shocking that nothing more than how a teacher praised a student impacted how many problems they solved. Students who were praised for their intelligence might have given up because they did not want to fail the teacher or had become fearful that they would be labeled as not intelligent once the problems became challenging.

In the classroom, it is important for teachers and professors to be cognizant of how they are praising. As a teacher, are you applauding the effort or the skill? Are you stating that their effort alone has made them successful?

Some examples of praise in an individual lesson in a growth mindset are:

I can really hear you practiced this week.

Your hard work paid off in this section.

This is sounding better than last week.

These statements do not acknowledge a student's talent but rather the effort that went into what they are learning. The last statement "this is sounding better than last week" is an important phrase I use often. This states that the student has put more time more effort and that it has shown. As a student, it can sometimes be difficult to hear the changes that happen slowly over long periods of time, but a teacher with a weekly lesson has the advantage of a more holistic view. A teacher can hear and acknowledge practice that went into a passage or piece which supports a growth mindset.

Creating a growth mindset in a larger group is equally important. This means creating a space where students are not afraid to fail and in which effort is praised. At a small university one professor created a growth mindset atmosphere by presenting the best practicer award every month. This praised students for their efforts in the practice room; it could be awarded to any age or ability. A novice freshman or a senior can just as easily win the award.

Almost everyone can be encouraged in an opposite mindset at least for a brief time. Most individuals adopt a mindset of their environment as we adapt to our surroundings. If you are a person who only eats junk food but you attend a party with people that have the highest concern for what they eat, you may not shout from the rooftops that you ate fast food on the way over. If you continue to spend a great deal of time with this group of people you might even start to change some of your habits.

If you believe your musical talent is fixed but attend a studio that praises and encourages the growth mindset you may begin to adopt a growth mindset over time. This is a good thing when the environment encourages a growth mindset. But what about an environment that encourages a fixed mindset?

Once you are self-aware of your mindset you will identify your areas of weakness. The moments in which you are more prone to having a fixed mindset will become more apparent. Becoming more self-aware will allow you to remain steadfast in your mindset.

If you believe in the growth mindset but are assigned to a class where the professor only calls on students who received an A on the last exam it might be difficult to retain a growth mindset. Retaining your growth mindset is even more important for classes like this. You will be able to praise yourself for your hard work and the success that you are seeing even if the professor does not.

Failure

Failure is a part of life. If you embrace it early on with a growth mindset, failure is not debilitating. Let's take a look at how different mindsets view failure.

John has a fixed mindset and was raised by parents with similarly fixed mindsets. They have praised him for his skills, abilities, and intelligence since he was little. John is a violin player who began when he was four. As a teenager he was very successful in music. He won many competitions, made all-state orchestra, and participated in honor groups. John then went to a large university for music and was shocked to find that he was placed in the lowest orchestra on the last violin stand. These results were devastating; he believed he had failed and no longer considered himself talented. This one orchestra audition and seating had him questioning if he wanted to quit and pursue another career before he had even started.

What do you think of this situation?

If this situation sounds devastating then you most likely have a fixed mindset. But if you read this scenario and thought about practice and patience you have a growth mindset. The student is just beginning his degree and has many more years of practice and auditions to learn and grow. If he quits no one will ever know his potential.

For many years, John succeeded in playing the violin and he had parents who praised his abilities which created a fixed mindset. From here he can make a choice to use this failure to fuel his practice and devotion before the next audition. Or he can make a rash decision to quit and find another career.

Failure and setbacks are a natural part of life. They allow us to learn from our mistakes, encourage us to plan and prioritize, and develop better ways of doing things. For this example, John can take the information he learned from this audition to change how he prepares and practices, making him better and stronger for the next audition.

With a fixed mindset, failure is often personal because self-worth is dependant on ability. It turns a situation from "I failed" to "I am a failure." John thought about quitting violin after years of practice and love of music because of one failure. This audition did not kick him out of school or put him on probation. It just simply meant he was a younger more naive player who needed time and effort to become a better musician.

Another example is Katie who is a senior in college. She is a good flute player who practices diligently and her hard work has paid off over the years. Katie also had a placement audition and she prepared to the best of her ability, but a younger student

placed above her. She, too, was devastated, but Katie handled her disappointment in a different way from John. She was angry at the situation and started to blame things out of her control. Katie claimed that she could not have practiced more or played better. The other student just should not have out placed her. Over the next few days, her anger subsided and she started asking for suggestions from professors and peers. While this seemed like a growth mindset activity she was not really looking for practice suggestions but rather why the younger student had placed above her. Multiple people suggested that she record herself often especially leading into an audition. Katie kept looking for other solutions as she was unwilling to record herself. She wanted a definitive answer as to why she did not get the seat assignment she wanted and thought she deserved. But there was no definitive answer in this situation. On that day the other student simply played the excerpts better. The younger player could have been more in tune on one piece and more convincing on the other piece, thus leading the committee to place the younger student above her. Katie had a fixed mindset about this audition and the outcome, and even though she was seeking out help she was unwilling to use their advice. Katie was looking to blame something specific in her playing or the audition process itself.

Katie and many others often blame a situation when they fail or create excuses. This is a protection for their abilities and their egos. They are able to protect their talent or skill by blaming something beyond their control for the reason why they failed or did not perform the way they were expecting. You can think of examples outside of music that this applies to such as sports, academics, jobs, interviews, dates, and so on. Individuals might say: I did not sleep well, I was too busy leading up to the event, I did not get a proper warm up, or the lights were too bright. The reasons may sound ridiculous and trivial but these people are searching for something else to take the fall for their failure. Every situation has elements beyond our control that impact performance.

Individuals with a growth mindset take those outside elements to be better prepared in the future. For example, if there was too much traffic on the way to an audition and it limited your warm-up time, in the future you will make sure to leave earlier for an audition or get a hotel closer to the location. If you were too busy and did not properly prepare you will take time off of work or make sure you properly manage your time. Growth mindset individuals use failure to allow them to see their weaknesses and to improve upon them.

When I applied for an adjunct professor position, I came to a stop on the highway; a huge accident stood in between me and my interview. I had left in plenty of time to ensure I was at the university and had time for a proper warm up before for my rehearsal with a pianist but the accident left me sitting at a stop for 50 minutes. I was forced to warm up in the car and arrived late to the rehearsal. All of this could have been avoided if I had looked at a traffic report and chosen another route. While my interview and performance were greatly impacted I did not blame the accident. I learned that I needed

to have greater mental control to not allow an event prior impact the rest of my day. I also learned that I need to always check the traffic and to leave with even more time than I think necessary. I returned to the city several other times for performances and because of that one occurrence I always made sure I left with additional time.

Individuals with a fixed mindset may even self-sabotage an event like an audition. If you have an important audition you may not prepare as much as you should or work hard for weeks on end and not practice at all days leading up to it. This allows for a great excuse "I did not have a chance to prepare as I would have liked." It is heartbreaking and terrifying to find that you gave it your all and it was not enough. With an excuse, a fixed mindset individual is able to ease that blow because he or she did not give it total effort. Wondering if he or she could have won is better than knowing that he or she failed.

It is easy to assess John and Katie's situations or the self-sabotaging musician because as a reader you are removed from the situation. It seems shocking to do something so rash but can you think of an individual who has done it? I can think of many, including myself on a few occasions. As an outsider, you do not have any emotional investment as they do. John and Katie will spend a semester or year with the results of the placement auditions as they play in those ensembles. Having a growth mindset is not to say that failure is not disappointing but it does impact how you deal with it. If Katie chooses to remain upset and angry through every rehearsal of the semester she will probably learn less, frustrate her section, and overall not enjoy something she once loved. If she adopts a growth mindset she can spend the semester challenging herself to be a better player in every aspect which means being engaged in rehearsals. Pushing herself to be a better musician will most likely result in a better audition next time. Having a growth mindset may not take away the sting of results from the audition but it allows Katie to move on and not live with the anger.

Perseverance

"#1 ingredient in creative achievement is perseverance and resilience produced by the growth mindset." -Dr. Dweck

Perseverance is a critical element in anything you do but it is particularly important in music. Musicians will take hundreds or thousands of auditions throughout their careers. Not every audition will be successful. Most will be unsuccessful.

Musicians rely on the ability to recover from failure. Without perseverance, musicians would quit early in their careers. Dr. John Ericson, professor of horn at Arizona State University, tells his students that he took 25 professional auditions before winning a

position with Nashville Symphony. This required an enormous amount of perseverance to take 25 auditions and still believe that his hard work would pay off.

Musicians use ‘failing’ experiences to learn. This ability is what makes them successful. It streamlines learning from real-world experiences and creates drive and motivation. Musicians return home to the practice rooms to assess what went right and what did not, how they can change their process, the approach, and hopefully the outcome.

At times there will be moments in which even the most growth minded musicians will be become disappointed, discouraged, or question their career choice. It is the ability to come back from moments of failure and to use them as fuel to be better students that brings them closer to creative achievement. This concept is referred to as “grit” by researcher Angela Lee Duckworth. Musicians who are able to rebound from failure faster and use it as fuel are more likely to be successful. This concept perfectly connects with the growth mindset as growth-minded individuals use these failing experiences to learn from.

Change

Changing is often a difficult process. Most people want instant change; this is observed in advertisements, where products are revered for how fast they work. As a society we want to be healthy now, have better sleeping habits now, better eating habits now, become more mindful now, better teachers, students, and people all right now. Meaningful change takes time and effort because you must change both habits and the way you think. You have to rewire your brain to want something different than you have in the past and that does not happen overnight. Instead of jumping straight into changing a habit or lifestyle, first observe yourself and those around you.

If you have a tendency to overspend but want to save money you might decide that you are not going to purchase anything unnecessary for the next 3 months. But how do you define unnecessary? Does your close circle of family and friends spend often? Are there times when you are more prone to those purchases? Does buying things make you feel better so you tend to buy them when you have had a rough day or week? Identifying where your trouble lies will make it easier to cope when you want to purchase something you do not need. Observing these tendencies will give you greater insight into how you work. Then you can create a plan to help overcome the moments of weakness.

Think about your mindset. When do you think you have a growth mindset? In what areas do you have a growth mindset and which are fixed? With a growth mindset would you have less stress or find things more enjoyable? Do you find that your friends, peers, and mentors have growth or fixed mindsets?

Observe what you and others say around you. When you find yourself falling into a fixed mindset consciously, acknowledge it without judgment and redirect your brain to think actively in a growth mindset.

After a few weeks of observation, you can draw conclusions to the questions above. Identify one area in which you have a fixed mindset and start there. Adding manageable areas makes it easier to create lasting change when adjusting your mindsets. Changing your mindset could include taking more risks or opportunities that you may not have before.

Acknowledging praise with a growth mindset is another way to consciously engage. Even when someone praises you in a fixed mindset manner you can respond with a growth mindset.

Praiser: "Great performance! You are very talented."

Your response: "Thank you. I put a lot of effort into this recital and it really paid off." Be patient with yourself while trying to change fixed mindset areas. As I said before, change is not always easy or as fast as we would like. Constant effort to become more aware and growth minded will pay off.

For the Doubters, Haters, and Non-Believers

While not every swimmer who spends the same amount of hours training in the pool will be Michael Phelps, but I can assure you that he or she will get much closer than he or she would without training. They will have their own success because the growth mindset is about reaching your own personal potential.

Millennials are forever blamed for receiving a medal for everything. Any child that participated in an activity no matter how well they did they were given a medal. Some critics view the growth mindset as receiving a medal for trying. The growth mindset is about living up to your full potential and making notable strides through effort. Not every musician will be the next Yo-yo Ma, Sarah Willis, Joshua Bell, Joyce DiDonato, or Michael Tilson Thomas but they can have their own success with a growth mindset.

Critics look at the growth mindset as individuals who only see the positive and lack the ability to accurately assess their strengths and weaknesses. Dr. Dweck's research shows that individuals with a growth mindset do the exact opposite. People with a growth mindset can more accurately self assess than those with a fixed mindset. Your abilities do not define your worth with a growth mindset. By acknowledging a weak area you are merely pointing out where you need to invest more effort. This takes the emotion out of the assessment. It is not upsetting or debilitating to locate areas that need improvement. Individuals with a fixed mindset often ignore or do not assess areas of weakness and over exaggerate areas of strength as a way to compensate.

Professor Steven D. Davis handed out a list of skills to the Wind Symphony at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and asked each member of the ensemble to rank each skill on a scale from 1-10. He then urged everyone to take the skills they felt are at a 7 or 8 and make them 10's and to improve the skills that are 5 and below until they were 8's. This process is dependent on the ability to correctly assess each skill. Those with a growth

mindset know that taking the skills that are below a 5 will incorporate hard work and practice to make them better. The skills that are already successful will need hard work that is more detailed to elevate their number.

Productive Practice

Not all effort is created equally.

So far we have discussed effort as a defining point of the growth mindset. But not all effort is created equally. This seems like a simple concept but is often forgotten and overlooked. How we put effort into our skills greatly affects the outcome. It is not just about the effort but how the effort is used.

For example, if you want to lose weight you may think I need to eat better and exercise more. But simply going to the gym does not count as exercise. Instead, going to the gym with a plan and working hard is when you will actually see results.

Going to the gym and avoiding working out will not lead to any weight loss but could also lead you to become frustrated that you are not seeing any results. Thoughts might include “I have spent 10 hours at the gym for the last 8 weeks and I do not see any progress.” This can even encourage a fixed mindset. “I believed that effort will make me better but my efforts at the gym have done nothing, maybe not everything can be changed with me.”

This is discouraging to think that someone is not using their time correctly and is therefore actively becoming frustrated. Maybe he or she will quit and never return to the gym again. You can think of hundreds of examples like this: for example, you pick up books from the library to read and create a project, and yet they sit on your desk untouched for weeks before having to be returned. Picking up the books is a step to creating the project but not working on it will never produce results.

The same problem exists in music. I had students come to their weekly lesson frustrated and discouraged. “Professor Deuvall, I practiced but it does not sound any better.” Over the next hour of the lesson, I would find that yes they may have practiced. They spent plenty of time in the practice room but nothing was effective. They played but in general their playing did not result in a better sound or understanding of the piece.

Practicing is not just punching the time clock. Being in a practice room with your instrument out does not lead to change, just like looking at workouts does not lead to change unless you actually do them.

Practicing should produce change and not just any change but massive change. The podcast *The Life Coach School* by Brooke Castillo talks about two types of action that I feel perfectly applies to my frustrated students who practiced but did not see any

change. Castillo describes passive action and massive action; one feels productive while the other creates lasting change.

Passive Action

Busy work
Mindless

Massive Action

Challenging
Creates real lasting change

Passive action in the practice room can look like playing the same passage over and over again, blindly running through things, allowing yourself to play with incorrect time, sound, articulation, pitch, etc. A student using passive action might be getting a little better over time but not substantially.

Massive action in the practice room challenges you. It is more than playing and stopping at a mistake, playing it correctly, and moving on. It is about identifying why you missed that in the first place, learning how to play things correctly, and challenging yourself to strive for better sound, pitch, articulation, or phrasing.

Let's look at an example of an excerpt.

Pavane for the Dead Princess by Maurice Ravel
Horn 1 in G m. 1-11

Corns simples en Sol

1^{er} Cor. *pp* *SOLO*

2^d Cor. *pp*

p *pp expressif*

pp *mf*

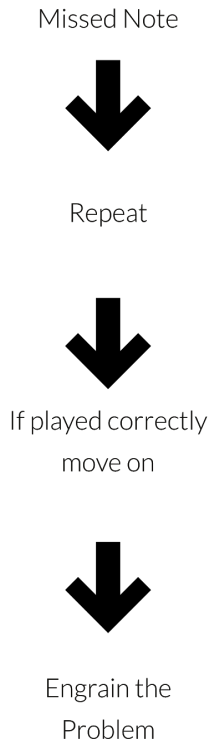
pp *mf*

With this excerpt students using passive action practice may play it through a few times, fix a mistake or two, and probably move on. This excerpt is deceptively challenging. It is not technical, does not contain awkward jumps, or pose any major challenge but for this excerpt to be intoxicating, it will need a lot of work. The horn player has to have a floating quality to their sound, it needs to be as smooth as glass, sound uninterrupted, and have a soft quality but still heard over the orchestra.

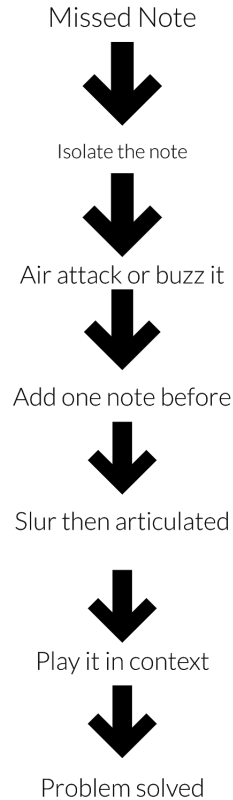
Massive action for this excerpt would mean playing it phrase by phrase, ensuring all of the goals listed above are met and figuring out exactly how and why you falter.

Passive action has significantly fewer steps than massive action. For example, if you miss the E in the third measure here is what passive and massive action look like.

Passive Action



Massive Action



When using massive action you would stop and assess why you chipped it. Was it from above or below? Did you hear the interval? What is your tongue placement? Was your airspeed too fast or too slow? If you do not know all of the answers to these questions, start somewhere and get to work trying to find the problem and the solution.

By air attacking or buzzing the note you will find what it feels like to place it correctly. Changing the articulation will help understand how your air is working before putting it back in context.

The key is learning exactly why the problem occurred in the first place and fixing it. Passive action is like putting a bandaid on it and hoping it does not reappear again. Using massive action in this process may seem overwhelming for one note on one excerpt that started out relatively simple. Massive action practice will lead to more permanent solutions. Not everything can be learned or corrected in one session but spending 5 minutes now troubleshooting for a solution is more productive than continuing to miss it and going back and correcting it. With just correcting it over and over again you are reinforcing the mistake which makes the odds of you chipping it in performance or an audition much higher.

When you find the solution mark it in your music! Do not rely on your memory. Instead, make a quick note to remind yourself the next time you play it. My music is

marked over by the time I have a recital or play an audition. The audience will never see that you marked your music, but they will notice when you chip a note badly.

Musicians want and need to create lasting change, which is hard work. After several weeks of teaching a new student, she told me “I think I’m starting to get it, practice should not be easy. I leave our lessons feeling mentally tired and worked but when I practice alone I’m not challenging myself so I’m not tired at the end of a session.”

As we have seen so far a fixed mindset can show itself in many forms. A musician I once met told me that people who mark their music are not as talented. This shocked me. He continued to tell me that he did not mark his music because he felt it made him look like he needed help. A growth mindset musician wants any help he or she can get because it is not a weakness; he or she is learning from past mistakes in order to not make them again.

Learning *Pavane for the Dead Princess* or anything else is reliant on the growth mindset and that you believe that you can play it with a floating sound above the orchestra. If you fundamentally believe that your sound is too harsh you will probably avoid practicing it or give up.

Insanity has been popularly defined as “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” Musicians using passive action often fall into this trap. With this excerpt, I listed some different approaches to fixing a chipped E. Learning ways to approach a problem is critical in becoming a better musician. But if you do not know where to start, here is a quick list of different approaches that you can apply to anything.

- Play it slowly!
 - Or faster (if it is especially slow music)
- Buzz it
- Air Attack it
- Change the articulations
 - Slur it all
 - Tongue it all
 - Legato, marcato, etc.
- Change the dynamic
- Take small bites
 - 1,2,3 notes at a time
 - 1 measure at a time
 - Add slowly in each direction from here
- Take out the small notes or extended techniques
- Transpose it to another key
- Play it down or up the octave
- Sing it!

- Play the phrase on one note
- Watch your fingers

Keep this list handy or create your own. Everyone gets stuck at some point while in the practice room. When your practice is not sounding like you want but you do not know what to do to make it sound better, take out this list and start trying things until you have found something that is helping.

Playing a piece through in its entirety is necessary and important to understand the flow and endurance of a work. This should be incorporated towards a performance date but be mindful that you are still mentally engaged throughout so you are not blindly running it through with passive action.

Practicing with the Growth Mindset

Massive action practice within a growth mindset is essential to getting better. This section is devoted to understanding how to use the growth mindset in your practice to allow for massive action and to make the art of getting better even more intoxicating.

Dr. Dweck went to a school in Chicago to see how the growth mindset could transform the way we approach education. At this school, students received the grade 'not yet' when they had failed an assignment or test. They completed removed failing letters and percentages on students papers. Instead, the students were expected to relearn the concept and do the assignment again. The growth mindset was encouraged because classrooms were rooted in the belief that through more time and effort they could understand the concept and receive a passing grade. This simple phrase transformed the way these students looked at learning as it made a failure (a bad grade) impermanent. This can easily be applied to music as well.

I cannot play in tune in my low register.

This phrase sounds final; you will never be able to play in tune in the low register.

I cannot play in tune in my low register, yet.

This phrase implied that you will be able to play in tune in the low register. Maybe not today but someday with hard work.

The added word "yet" implies that in the future you will be able to accomplish this task. This can drastically change how to look at something you are practicing. Instead of wanting an instant fix adding the word yet allows students to have faith in the process that their efforts will pay off. This can help students become less frustrated in their practice. There is no expectation for everything to be perfect immediately.

In the section *How We Get Our Mindset*, we discussed praise from others. But it is even more important to talk about self-praise. Similar to how we praise others, it is critical that we support the growth mindset and that we applaud the process. With the added word “yet” we acknowledge that through work we will be able to do the skill or task that is out of reach now.

As musicians, the concept of perfection is often the goal. A perfect performance, audition, or lesson keeps us working hard but it can also be harmful. Perfection is not possible at any level. There will always be ways to improve, which keeps musicians learning and working until the very last day of their careers. When a student becomes consumed with the idea of perfection he or she can develop a fear of making mistakes. Having a perfect performance becomes more important than sharing a musical story. It can strip a performance of its beauty for the hopes of robotic perfection. Michael Stern, conductor of the Kansas City Symphony, during rehearsals with the University of Missouri-Kansas City orchestra, said frequently “never make a mistake out of fear.” When musicians live in fear they use bad technique, which leads to many more mistakes. The fixed mindset thrives on fear. Like we have already discussed, fear allows musicians to half try. At the end of the day, you have an excuse to say I did not give it my all. I did not succeed but I only failed because I did not try.

Fear does not have to control the way musicians perform or practice. By using self-praise to acknowledge the progress that is happening you are actively supporting a growth mindset, which does not live in fear of failure. In my master’s degree Dr. Michael Walker, Assistant Professor of Horn at the University of New Mexico, would have his students say something 100% positive after every performance. Even if a student missed every note he or she would state something 100% positive. This taught the ability to look for successes even when a performance did not go well. This can be applied to your personal practice as well. I would perform what I had just concluded working on in every practice session and then state something 100% positive about my performance and the work I had put in.

After a session of practicing *Pavane for the Dead Princess*, a statement could be “I placed the E with the correct articulation because I invested effort into isolating that note in my practice.”

In lessons I have my students do a similar activity. They state something 100% positive as well as a goal-oriented practice item. By stating a practice area that they intend to work on reinforces the idea that this too will become better with practice. After time finding areas that went well and the areas that need more attention becomes second nature.

Goals

Goals are a way to track and provide motivation for your effort within the growth mindset. Individuals who write down their goals achieve much more than individuals that do not. Like change, we often want to see instant results. It is important to break down your goals into manageable and doable steps. Similar to the video game loop we discussed before, by creating small attainable goals that lead one large goal you will be more motivated and encouraged to keep working.

It is important that your goals contain several elements. They should be SMART.

SMART is an acronym for:

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Realistic

Time-bound

Creating SMART goals allow an individual to create a larger realistic picture of the growth they aspire to make. Growth is not often linear. Instead of running directly to a finish line, you might take steps backward and sideways away from the finish line. Making goals that are SMART allows people to focus on short manageable steps instead of a large overwhelming task.

I have my students make SMART goals every semester. The continual review of goals allows them to see the progress they are making as well as give them new focus items. It is important to have large overarching goals as well as small weekly and daily goals.

Sticky Note Practice Logs

As mentioned in the *Productive Practice* section, writing things down can be extremely helpful, but most musicians do not keep a practice log. Many start but stop because it takes too much time. They have the best intentions but if they are anything like me they use every moment of their given amount of time to just practice. This leaves zero time to write down notes from an hour of practice.

I decided the notes did not have to be as extensive as I thought and I started using sticky notes instead. I eliminated the need for a specific notebook and I could write two notes for this specific excerpt then stick it directly on the page so when I return to that music my notes are right where I need them. I also began to write after each thing I practiced instead of waiting until the very end of my practice session to write. It is a simple concept but it changed everything.

It is important that all of the action items are SMART. They may not always be attainable in one session but were manageable. Each item on the list should require massive action and be detailed. This could be as specific as a single note, articulation,

pitch, and so on. Items may continue through many sessions but they are specific to the music you are working on. When my goals are already written down I do not waste any time trying to figure out what I need to do and can immediately start with massive action. You can see examples of sticky notes in action in the *Music* section.

I encourage my students to record themselves in every practice session. Music is a performance art that sounds different than we often perceive. It is important to hear what the audience hears on a regular basis. With sticky note practice logs musicians can record at the end of a session or when you conclude working on something specific. Take a quick listen and jot some notes to help align your goals for the next time. While quickly jotting down a few notes, activate your growth mindset and praise yourself for the effort that you have put forth. It can be as simple as saying aloud or silently that your effort to make this low section in tune is getting better or that the f# has the tone quality of the rest of the phrase.

It is easy to skip recording. Students feel that they heard what did wrong and do not want to record or listen. A recording reveals problem areas of which musicians were unaware and problematic sections that are not a concern. I record myself and my students using my phone. You do not have to own fancy or expensive equipment just something to listen back.

Motivation

As much as we would like no one can give you motivation, as it is deeply personal. Teachers, books, videos, and many other sources can inspire an individual but not provide motivation. They can provide extrinsic incentives such as grades but without the internal drive, these tools can lead to passive learning which does not create real change.

“You are never **always** going to feel like it” was the opening statement to the TED talk *How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over* by Mel Robbins. This TED talk is about motivation and being disciplined to put forth effort even on the days you do not feel like it. You will create more success when you work diligently towards a goal. Success is not created by only working on the days you feel motivated.

The core belief of the growth mindset is that effort in the form of massive action will create growth. This is what can keep an individual working even on the days when they would rather do anything else.

Tracking your practice is a great way to provide external incentives. It does not have to be a time draining activity; it could look like a simple note in your planner or phone calendar, stickers, or a chart that you carry in your folder with your music.

If you have many things to practice in a week or lots of excerpts for an audition it is critical that you do not forget any of them. Below is a sample of a chart that was created for an audition with many excerpts. You can create one by hand, print one, or use a digital

verison. Your own tracking log can be for any amount of time from a few days, a week, or longer periods of time like this one.

Writing things down so you can visually see your progress helps keep you on track and provide extrinsic motivation to keep working!

	5/16	5/17	5/18	5/19	5/20	5/21	5/22	5/23	5/24	5/25	5/26	5/27	5/28	5/29	5/30	5/31	6/1	6/2	6/3	6/4	6/5	6/6	
Mozart																							
Beethoven 9																							
Brahms Tragic																							
Haydn 31																							
Mahler 1																							
Mahler 3																							
Mendelssohn 3																							
Shosty 5																							
Strauss VII																							
Strauss VIII																							
Weber Der Freis																							
Beethoven 3																							
Beethoven 8																							
Tchaik 4																							

Rest

Effort has been a key subject in this document and to the growth mindset. Rest is equally as important because without rest our brains do not recover properly, we learn more slowly, become burnt out, and exhausted. It is critical that taking care of yourself is just as important as the effort you put forth. Eating well, exercising, sleeping, spending time with the people you love, and having de-stress activities are key to having the energy to for massive action effort. This will help your ability to have your own internal motivation as well.

Music

This section dives into how the growth mindset with massive action applies to music. The music of this section will include etudes, excerpts, and solos.

Warm Up Routine

Your warm-up routine should provide the time to become mentally engaged, physically warm, ready to work, and provide a return to fundamentals. The muscles musicians use are relatively small and only take a few minutes to become physically warm. Most musicians warm up for longer than 2-3 minutes because a warm-up should realign your playing that supports your goals. This is a time when should be mentally engaged just like your practice.

A warm-up routine should consist of two parts. The first should ensure that you have played all ranges of your instrument, all dynamic levels, variations of articulation, and the harmonic series. This is a chance to realign your playing and focus on the fundamental building blocks of your sound to begin your practice session. Exercises should not be plowed through blindly, ignoring bad sound, poor air use, missed/chipped notes, or bad intonation, but instead should engage with each element to produce your ideal sound.

The second part is what I refer to as growth items. A growth item is something you wish to improve upon, such as trills, double tonguing, minor scales, extreme range, or dynamic. You can have one to three growth items and they are normally related to music that you are working on. For example, if you are playing Mozart Horn Concerto No. 2 but struggle with trills that could be a growth item. By tacking growth items onto the end of your warm-up routine you can ensure they are played daily. These items should not overwhelm your practice but instead should take five to ten minutes. With the growth mindset, skills can be improved upon. Consistent effort will produce lasting change even with five minutes a day working on a difficult skill.

Before you begin your warm-up routine it is first important that you are mentally ready to start. This is a simple checklist to follow when beginning your session:

- Mentally engaged.
 - All the materials that are needed are out. Tuner/metronome, pencil, sticky notes, water, and music.
 - Purchase a tuner/metronome that is not your phone and carry it in your case. They are relatively inexpensive and you should be using it frequently.
 - Your phone is on airplane mode and **tucked away**. It will be taken out later for recordings.
 - When a phone is even out but unused it can lead to less productivity and focus.

- Take a few deep breaths while getting out your horn.
- Light stretching before beginning any notes.
 - Shoulder rolls
 - Stretching back

Below you can fill out both parts of your warm up and list the goals that you have for each exercise. These goals can change and you can swap out your growth items over time. You can add more exercises to the warm-up if needed but try and only have a few growth items at a time. It is better to invest more time and energy into a few goals and see improvement than have too many with little progress.

Warm up:

exercise	goal

Growth:

exercise	goal

After your warm up you should be mentally and physically ready to dive into other music. In this section, there will be examples of tempo tapping, background information, objectives, practice items, and growth mindset oriented questions. Each piece of music has practice items that are mistakes common to young musicians. As you practice you will hear and find your own problems as well. When you identify a problem area use your growth mindset clinically to dive into the problem. Identifying a problem is the first step to solving it. If you are stuck refer to the problem solving list on page 22-23. Keep your

growth mindset engaged to not become overwhelmed or discouraged as you work on one thing at a time. Use your sticky notes keep your practice focused and create massive action that will lead to lasting change.

Etudes

Sixty Selected Studies for French Horn by C. Kopprasch

Nr. 4 Allegro (in E^{und} and E^b)

The image shows the musical score for 'Nr. 4 Allegro' by C. Kopprasch. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a common time signature (C), and a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). Below the first staff, the instruction *sempre stacc.* (always staccato) is written. The music is a continuous eighth-note pattern. The second staff continues the pattern. The third staff features a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and a repeat sign. The fourth staff continues the pattern. The fifth staff ends with a dynamic marking of *p* and a final cadence.

Growth Mindset

What are your goals for this etude?

Goal tempo ♩ =

Focus on one goal at a time before adding in another.

My goals for this etude are:

Even sound in all ranges

Consistent staccato

Technical dexterity

- ❑ Large dynamic range
- ❑ Transposition practice
- ❑ Goal tempo $J = 120$

Practice Items:

- Uniformity is often the largest challenge of this etude. Make sure to slur phrases or sections of this etude to understand what your air has to do in order to accomplish a uniform sound.
 - Experiment with different tongue placement to achieve the staccato you desire in all ranges. It will probably move depending on the range you are in.
- Speed is often the first thing that young musicians wish to improve. Resist the urge to speed up this etude until you have your desired sound and articulation.
- Practice with your metronome to ensure that your tempo is steady throughout.
 - Record with and without your metronome and notice any fluctuations.
- Play phrases or sections on one note (choose a note in the middle of your range) to exaggerate the dynamic contrast.
 - Is it more or less difficult playing it on one note?
 - What measures compositionally help with dynamic contrast as the etude rises and falls?
 - Which ones do you have to overcome?
- Transpose all or some of the etude.
 - Discover what elements are more or less challenging.

As you can see by diving into small elements of this etude and by learning to ask yourself these critical questions you become your own best teacher and an investigator to understanding your own challenges and strengths. At the end of your practice session fill out your sticky note for your goals for next time. Remember that these goals should be stepping stones to larger ones. Not all goals can be accomplished in one session and it is normal to continue the same goals over multiple sessions.

An example might look like this for the Kopprasch Etude:

$\text{♩} = 80$

Even sound descending into the lower octave of the last measure

Clean articulation on the F side of the horn

First several notes of measure 1, 2, and 3

Hear the jump- beginning of line 3

Record yourself, use the growth mindset to applaud your accomplishments, effort, and write new goals for when you return to this etude. The next sticky note may look like this:

$\text{♩} = 88$, start at $\text{♩} = 72$

Slur the descending line in the last two measures

Clear articulation on F side measure 1

Practice on B \flat side (the whole etude)

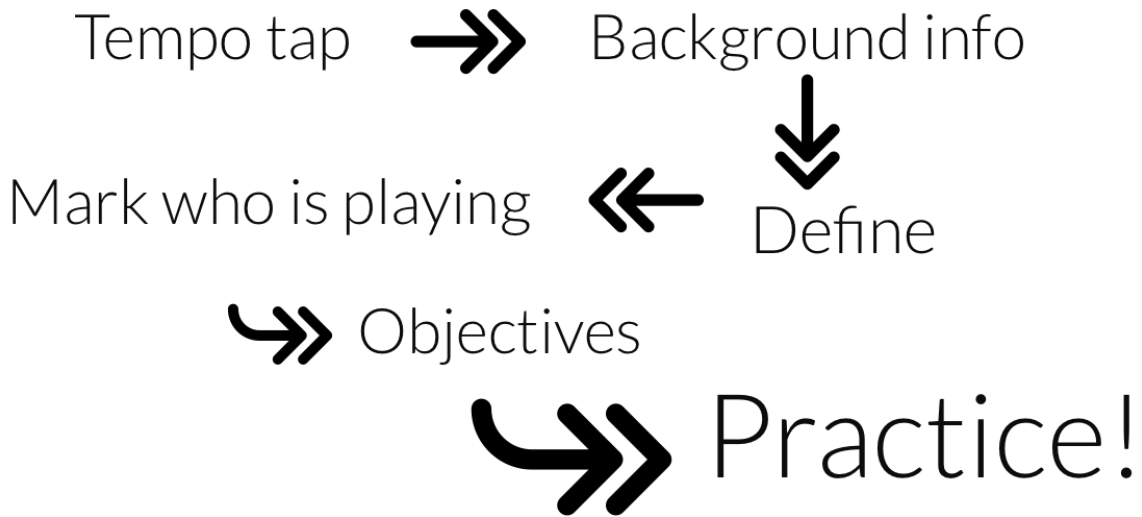
Consistency of jump- beginning of line 3

As you can see some goals stayed between each session or altered slightly. In the first session, clean articulation was needed in the beginning measures. After the practice session, the articulation still needs to be addressed in the first measure but the others improved.

Excerpts

Excerpts are primarily used for auditions to show a committee your musical abilities and that you fundamentally understand the music. Playing with control and expressively are important elements to winning an audition.

Prior to playing an excerpt, it is necessary to listen to several recordings and mark down their tempos. This process is called tempo taping. After tempo taping 3 to 5 orchestra recordings find a tempo you prefer (this should be around the average tempo). Next, find some basic background information on the work. When was it written, for any specific occasion, is it programmatic, and so on? Do not get bogged down in this step; it should not take much more than five minutes to find the necessary information. Knowing some background details about a work can dramatically change your approach. Define any words on the excerpt that you do not know. Mark which instruments are playing during this excerpt. Is this a solo, duet, chamber, or tutti moment? Lastly create objectives for the excerpt that you want to portray to the committee. These objectives can serve as goals for how you want to sound. If you connect better with colors or setting a scene those are also approaches you may take. This process will give you a deeper understanding of the the excerpts that, along with hard work, will set you up for success.



Below are common excerpts as examples for practice items, exercises, and growth mindset practice.

Symphony No. 9, Op. 125 mvt III by Ludwig Beethoven
 Horn 4 in E ♭

- Tempo Tap
- Chicago ♩ = 75
- Cleveland ♩ = 92
- London ♩ = 104
- Chamber Orchestra of Europe ♩ = 104

Background information

- Beethoven lived 1770-1827.
- Symphony No. 9 was written in 1824.
 - Symphony No. 8 was written in 1812.
- Words in the chorus in movement IV are based on poem “Ode to Joy” by Friedrich Schiller.
 - Text is a symbol of brotherhood, hope, and joy.
- One of the first examples of a major composer using voices for a symphonic composition.
 - Four soloists (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) and choir.
- Four horns are used.

This background information describes the innovation that Beethoven was known for. 4th horns normally do not have solos and this solo provides a beautiful simplicity. This shaped my objectives that are listed below.

Objectives:

Brotherhood

Simplicity


Chamber

Scene:

A shy girl enters the ballroom afraid to dance. Her courage grows as she joins the crowd. Finally, she bursts into the center of the dance floor showing her simplistic beauty for everyone who surrounds.

Practice Items:

- This excerpt is comprised of three parts.
 - The pick up to the Adagio- m. 89 the horn plays a supportive role. This section is like a woodwind quintet. It is delicate and the horn provides support for the action happening in the winds.
 - M. 90-95 the horn has the countermelody with the winds.
 - M. 96 the horn is the soloist. The orchestra is silent while the horn plays this measure.
 - Because of these three different roles it is important that the committee can hear the distinct changes.
- Pitch in the opening bars can be tricky in this range of the horn. Practice with a drone and tuner to learn your tendencies.
 - Mark your part to ensure perfect intervals that do not scoop into notes.
 - Air attack these notes to find where you naturally place them and adjust accordingly.

- The opening bars have music that covers the break range. For most horn players this requires shifting.
 - Experiment with no shifts and shifting in different locations to find what works best for you.
- Practice with a metronome on  to internalize the pulse. This is especially important in the beginning of this excerpt.
- The scale is the horn's time to shine. Think of the horn as a dramatic opera singer. Take liberties and experiment with different slurs.
 - Common slurs are:



- Ensure that each note tapers properly to avoid clipped sounding notes.
 - Watch in m. 90 that the pedal F is not clipped to ensure a solid leap to the F in the staff.

Growth Mindset:

- What are your goals for this excerpt?
 - What will be the biggest roadblock?
 - What steps will you take to overcome it?
- Is there a skill you should add to the growth area at the end of your warm up routine?
- Within this excerpt what strengths do you showcase?
- Record yourself
- What is something 100% positive about what you played?
 - How did your effort help that to come to fruition?
- Fill out your sticky note with your goal-oriented massive action items for your next practice session.
 - Remember your sticky only needs to make sense to you.

Sticky note:

Smooth opening

Slurred then lightly tongued

Pitch m. 84- octave (written) G's

Connect (written) G to E (m. 84-85)

Slurred then tongued

Sing through countermelody starting m. 90

One note version

As you can see each item on the sticky note is very specific and they could be resolved today or may take more. You may not need to write this much to remind yourself of your action items.

Symphony No. 1, Op. 68 mvt II by Johannes Brahms

Horn 1 in E

Tempo Tap

Chicago $\text{♩} = 46$

Cleveland $\text{♩} = 42$

Houston $\text{♩} = 38$

Vienna $\text{♩} = 32$

Determine what tempo that lies within these ranges feels most comfortable to you. My tempo is $\text{♩} = 44$.

Background information:

- Brahms lived 1833-1897.
- Written 1855-1876
- Premiered in 1876 in Karlsruhe, Southern Germany.
- Referred to as Beethoven's 10th by music critic Hans von Bülow.
- Brahms was a perfectionist and insecure. There was a lot of pressure for Brahms to be the next "Beethoven." He was haunted by this pressure and fear of plagiarism.

This background gives a lot of detail into the fear that plagued Brahms and the attention to detail he gave his music especially his first symphony. This attention to detail is necessary when practicing the excerpt.


Objectives:

Love

Passion

Hope

Practice Items:

-  is one of the largest problems as many horn players turn this rhythm into a triplet.
 - To avoid this practice the excerpt with sixteenths. Apply this to the rest of the measures with the dotted eighth-sixteenth rhythm.



- Repeat the measures with the written rhythm and this practice rhythm to hear and feel exactly where the sixteenth should be placed. This will often feel very late.
- Thinking of the G in the second measure as a pick up to the third can help with the placement as well.
- Pitch in this excerpt is extremely easy to hear so it is imperative that the intervals are exact. Use a drone and play each phrase ensuring that the intervals land in tune and do not scoop to find the correct pitch.
 - Mark your music with arrows to anticipate the intervals.
- The beginning of this excerpt is a duet with the first violin. The horn contributes to the sound here but in m. 101, the horn is a soloist while the violin plays a counter melody.
 - When the horn becomes a soloist it can be louder and more expressive than the opening statement of this melody.
- Be careful to play the *f* in measure 98 with grace and weight, not accented.
- Smooth slurs in this excerpt give it a floating quality. Imitate how a string player would perform them to match the violin.
 - Mentally imagine spinning your air to drive through the phrases. This forward direction will result in it smoother effortless slurs.

Growth Mindset

- What progress did you make?
- What are the biggest concerns with this excerpt?
- Is there anything that needs to become a growth area to incorporate into the end of your warm-up routine?
- Record yourself
 - What realizations do you have?
 - Problems you were unaware of?
 - Concerns that are not as large as you anticipated?

- State something 100% positive about your run through of this excerpt.
- Fill out your sticky note with your goals for next time.

Sticky note may look like:

Rhythm alteration- two before F
Pitch in large leaps- m. 98 and last line
 With drone and tuner
Spin air for smooth slurs in m. 95-96
 Effortless floating sound

Symphony No. 5, Op. 47 mvt I by Shostakovich
Horn 1 in F

The image shows a musical score for Horn 1 in F, measures 16 through 21. The score is written on four staves. The first staff (treble clef) starts with measure 16, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The second staff (bass clef) starts with measure 18, marked with a poco animando tempo. The third staff (bass clef) starts with measure 19, marked with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The fourth staff (treble clef) starts with measure 20, marked with a forte (f) dynamic, and ends with measure 21, marked with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Tempo Tap

Chicago $\text{♩} = 122$

Cleveland $\text{♩} = 112$

National Symphony $\text{♩} = 126$

New York $\text{♩} = 112$

Background Information:

- Shostakovich lived 1906-1975.
- Symphony No. 5 was written in 1937.
- Premiere was a huge success.
- Shostakovich was under pressure to adopt classical models.
 - Heroic classicism was a prime characteristic of Socialist Realism
- Shostakovich was forced to comply.
 - His family and friends were arrested and disappeared.
- Some inspiration came from a poem that deals with rebirth.
- Made many revisions to this symphony out of fear of it not complying with the Socialist Realism.

Your background information does not have to be a research paper. Quickly write down some interesting bullet points. With Symphony No. 5 Shostakovich was under a great deal of pressure. This can be put into the objectives for this particular excerpt as a militaristic need to comply.

Objectives:

Militaristic

Overpowering

Ominous

Practice items

- Pitch, sound, dynamic
 - Each one of these elements are challenging by themselves in this register but combining them makes it exceptionally challenging.
 - Isolate these elements individually and take the excerpt out of time only moving onto the next note when you are satisfied with how it sounds.
 - Play the first phrase with the sound you wish to have at a comfortable volume.
 - Next, play it at the dynamic volume you wish to perform it with. This will most likely be louder than the first time you played it.
 - Then turn on a drone and/or tuner to ensure correct pitch. If the dynamic drops in order for this to be accurate that is ok.
 - You will discover different notes that do not speak the same way or you have to manipulate.
 - Experiment with different air, jaw positions, hand positions, and practice techniques from page 22-23.
 - Do this phrase by phrase ensuring each note is placed and sounds the way you would like.
 - At times you might have to experiment and only focus on one element at a time. Keep working until everything sounds the way you would like.
- This excerpt also has a wide range. Do you need to shift somewhere?
 - With the dynamic change and register shift I normally reset on the D# before rehearsal #19.
- Play this excerpt up the octave to feel the phrase shape and transfer that to the lower octave.
- The final phrase is overpowering and dramatic. This can lead to cracking the B ♭ . To help avoid that use the crescendo to lead to the B ♭ instead of through it. Because of the range, it will sound like the loudest note in the phrase without much effort.
- Envision your sound like bricks of sound with a clear beginning and end to the sound.

Growth Mindset

This excerpt can be challenging and frustrating. It is important to acknowledge the small wins. Practice this excerpt with a recording (an American orchestra for pitch). Strive to fit within the sound, not overpower it. Record yourself individually; do you share the character of the whole horn section in this militaristic moment?

While filling out your sticky note be specific. Is there any note or notes that you wish to focus on in the next session? Do not list the whole excerpt, which ones are the worst or bother you the most? Are you still working on this excerpt to sound consistent at a *mp* dynamic? Awesome! Avoid the temptation to suddenly boost up the dynamic to *f*. What progress have you made in this session? Even if it is one note that is one less note you will have to focus on in the future!

Remember the growth mindset is built on the belief that effort will pay off. The effort that you put forth in this session and the achievements you have made bring you one step closer towards your larger goals.

Till Eulenspiegel Op. 28 by Richard Strauss
Horn 1 in F

The musical score for Horn 1 in F consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a 5-measure rest, followed by a 6/8 time signature and a tempo marking of 'Gemächlich.' with a note equal to a quarter note in 4/8 time. The music starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and gradually becomes 'allmählich lebhafter'. The second staff is marked 'Volles Zeitmass. (sehr lebhaft)' and features a crescendo (*cresc.*) leading to a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The third staff continues with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and concludes with a first ending marked '1 8'.

This excerpt accelerates, making it hard to tempo tap. Do your best and find the ending tempo. Listening to different recordings will give you an idea of how it should go.

Background

- Richard Strauss lived 1864-1949.
- *Till Eulenspiegel* was written from 1894-1895.
- Written after *Don Juan* (1888), *Death and Transfiguration* (1889) tone poems
 - Before *Don Quixote* (1897), *Ein Heldenleben* (1898), *Alpine Symphony* (1915)
- Programmatic
 - The story dates back to the early 1500's in Germany
 - Main character: Till is a jokester that finds himself in tricky situations.
 - The 1st theme of Till is played by the horn here.
 - Jumping from rooftop to rooftop peeing on the people below.
- Father, Franz Strauss, was a horn player. Franz hated Romantic music such as Wagner while Richard Strauss embraced it.
- Later adapted to ballet.

This information sets the scene for the music. The character should be light and joking as it begins the opening to a great tale. *Till Eulenspiegel* was written at the height of the Romantic period and Strauss had written other tone poems before. Strauss's horn writing is bold and heroic in many of his works and is written idiomatically for the horn which can be attributed to growing up around his father who was a great horn player of Bavarian Court Opera.

Objectives:

Teasing

Playful

Suspenseful

Practice items

- Strauss has created several traps for the horn player. The largest trap is the rhythm.
 - Begin by playing the second part of the call slowly with a metronome. The second call should not speed up so this is why we practice this one with the metronome. Then gradually increase the tempo.
 - Once you feel comfortable with the rhythm of the second call return to the first part. Begin slowly and feel as if the tempo is slowly rolling down the hill. It is not suddenly faster at any point but should end at the tempo you wish the second call to be.
- There are several different articulations including staccato and accents. Decide what these will sound like.
 - Play this on middle line G and emphasize the differences in articulation.
 - Practice on the Bb and F side of the horn. Experiment with different fingerings to ensure clarity.
- A large range is required for this excerpt.
 - Do you need to shift to create a strong high A and low C?
 - If you do need to shift experiment with several different shift points to find the one that is most beneficial.
 - You can start by isolating the last three notes one at a time and continually adding notes that precede it.
 - Practice centering each note ensuring that they are in tune and have a clear attack with no scoop.
 - Transpose this excerpt to a lower key to overtrain.
 - Below is an exercise adapted from Practice Routine no. 1 exercise no. 6 by William Vacchiano.

The image shows a musical score with six staves. Each staff starts with a measure number: 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, and 21. The music is written in treble clef. The key signatures and time signatures vary across the staves. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'. There are also some slurs and ties in the music.

Growth Mindset

Rome was not built in a day so do not try to fix everything all at once. Avoid spending more than 30 minutes on an excerpt in one sitting. At the end of working on this excerpt record yourself and think through the following questions:

What did I accomplish in this time?

What are my goals to accomplish next time?

What is my biggest strength in this excerpt?

What is my biggest weakness in this excerpt?

What am I going to do to combat this problem?

I want this excerpt to show the committee my ability to _____

Something 100% positive about your recording

Fill out your sticky note or log

With the growth mindset, progress is easier to see and more fulfilling to acknowledge. There is no expectation for this excerpt to be perfect today but making small but steady steps to the overall goal of how you want this excerpt to sound.

Symphony No. 4, Op. 36 mvt. I by Tchaikovsky
Horn 1 in F

Andante sostenuto.

The musical score for Horn 1 in F, measures 1-4, is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked **Andante sostenuto.** The first measure starts with a fortissimo (**ff**) dynamic and contains a triplet of eighth notes. The second measure continues the triplet. The third measure has a mezzo-forte (**mf**) dynamic and a quarter note. The fourth measure has a piano (**p**) dynamic and a half note. The score includes various articulations and slurs.

Horn 2 in F

Andante sostenuto.

The musical score for Horn 2 in F, measures 1-4, is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked **Andante sostenuto.** The first measure starts with a mezzo-forte (**mf**) dynamic and contains a triplet of eighth notes. The second measure continues the triplet. The third measure has a fortissimo (**f**) dynamic and a quarter note. The fourth measure has a mezzo-forte (**mf**) dynamic and a half note. The score includes various articulations and slurs.

Moderato con anima.

The musical score for Horn 2 in F, measures 5-8, is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked **Moderato con anima.** The first measure starts with a piano (**p**) dynamic and contains a quintuplet of eighth notes. The second measure continues the quintuplet. The third measure has a piano (**p**) dynamic and a quarter note. The fourth measure has a piano (**p**) dynamic and a half note. The score includes various articulations and slurs.

Tempo Tap:

San Francisco $J = 50$

Chicago $J = 70$

Boston $J = 62$

Background Information:

- Tchaikovsky lived 1840-1893.
- Symphony No. 4 was written 1877-1878.
- Dedicated to Nadezhda von Meck.
 - “To my best friend”
 - This symbolized their artistic partnership.
 - Not a symbol of gratitude.
- Mvt I is referred to as the “fate” movement.
 - “The introduction to the first movement is the kernel, the quintessence, the chief thought of the whole symphony.” -Tchaikovsky
- Written after he attempted suicide and after his divorce.
- Cyclic symphony- recurring main theme.

This background information paints a time in Tchaikovsky’s life that was challenging. The opening played by the horns and bassoons sets up the whole symphony.

Objectives:

Militaristic

Dark

Menacing

Practice Items

- Similar to the Shostakovich this has a militaristic style. It requires a full *ff* sound that is round and not overbearing.
- Articulation is key in this excerpt. Begin by playing at a comfortable dynamic and at a slower tempo and gradually increase both. If your clarity starts to diminish assess why.
 - Some horn players triple tongue the triplet. Experiment with both.
 - In the second horn part, it may be clearer to play it on the B \flat side of the horn. If you choose to do this watch that the pitch does not rise or have a pinched sound quality to it.
 - Use longer articulation to make it sound more connected and forward leading.

- This excerpt only contains one accent on the G in the beginning of the second line. Use this accent as a weight to emphasize the downbeat and ensure that it is played with its full rhythmic value.
- The end of the excerpt has clear dynamic changes. Record yourself to see if you can hear a clear change.
 - Make sure when you are changing the dynamic that your sound or pitch does not change with it.
 - Be conscious that your pitch does not sag on the last notes with a *p* dynamic.

Growth Mindset

- If you are practicing both parts what modifications do you make for the different ranges? Become observant of the air that you are using in each.
- Does your hand placement change when playing the excerpt in the different octaves?
- After recording what is something 100% positive about what you played?
- What is your goal oriented action item?
 - Could it be the scale downward in the second line that needs to become stronger as you descend to not lose the intensity?
- Make sure to mark your music for what you learned and fill out your next sessions goals.

Solos

Approaching solos is a very different process than excerpts or etudes. Solos give freedom to the soloist to express how he or she feels the music. The soloist can interpret the music how he or she desires in order to share it convincingly with the audience. Tempo tapping is not necessarily required for most solos. You should listen to several recordings if they are available to understand how the horn and other instruments fit together. Determine what the climax of the work/movement is for you. Dive into the music to create an understanding exactly what the composer has written. These are critical developing a creative performance that reflects the music artistically.

Horn Concerto No. 3 mvt I Exposition -Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Horn in E \flat

CONCERTO No. 3

HORN IN E \flat

W.A. MOZART, K. 447
Transcribed by ROBERT G. PATTERSON

Allegro

27

32

41

47

56

62

68

15

Tempo Tap: Most recordings perform this horn concerto at $\text{♩}=112-120$. Determine the tempo you desire to take based on the mood you would like to portray and what speed the sixteenth note runs sound clear and even.

Background information:

- Mozart lived 1756-1791.
- Horn Concerto No. 3 was written from 1784-1787.
 - His second composed horn concerto.
- Written for friend and horn player, Joseph Leutgeb.
 - Made joking remarks for Leutgeb in the original manuscript.
- One of the great opera composers of the classical period.

This concerto, as well as his others, were written for a specific horn player, Leutgeb. It was light music made more enjoyable for his close friend that he knew since childhood. Does that change the way you approach this music?

What are you performing this solo for? The exposition is commonly used for auditions. Your objectives and the way you approach the piece may change if you are playing it on a recital/jury or for an audition.

Objectives:

Playful

Happiness

Freedom

Scene:

A ballerina dances lightly around the stage showing off little stylistic flourishes. She is completely absorbed in her world enjoying every moment of her dance.

Practice Items:

- Time, time, time
 - It is easy to rush and drag even by the slightest in Mozart's concertos. If it is being played or an audition your time is more exposed without a pianist or orchestra. It is direly important that a steady tempo is kept.
 - Always keep your metronome on while working on this exposition. Record yourself with and without the metronome to hear your tendencies.
 - As you progress with this exposition switch the pulse to every half bar then every bar to ensure a free-flowing feeling.

- Mozart's music was written in the classical era which is known for a gallant style, which is characterized by simplicity.
 - It should have a light playful character.
 - This can be established by light articulation and a combination of slurs. The music above does not have many articulation markings. Most articulations have been added by publishers in other published versions of this work. Find a combination of slurs and articulations that help show a playful classical style. One of the most common articulation patterns is slur two tongue two.
- The technical sections need to have the same character as the rest of the work. Play these slowly at first and increase the tempo. Ensure to mark where you left off in terms of tempo for the next session. Do not increase the tempo if it is out of character.
- Mozart was famous for operas during the classical period. This work has lots of hidden drama such as the chromatic D# on the downbeat of the second line. Find the details that showcases this drama.

Growth Mindset:

- How does learning some of the background information change the way you approach this music?
- What prior studies can you apply to this music?
- What is our overall goal with the exposition to this concerto?
- What skills will require the greatest amount of effort?
- What excites you about this music?
- Record a phrase or multiple phrases.
 - What are your goal items for next time?
 - Did you hear a problem that will repeat throughout this movement?

Conclusion

This document is the tip of the iceberg but I hope that has made you think deeply about the way you think and approach music as well as all areas of your life. The growth mindset has shaped the way I approach music and the manner in which I teach my students. As you saw in the *Music* section, music and the many different skills required are broken into small doable steps. With effort these small steps create the cycle discussed in the section, *Growth Mindset*. A musician with a growth mindset has the ability to control their actions that lead to success or failure. Music is not always easy but the fundamental belief that effort can lead to success is what keeps musicians working hard in a productive manner. Having a growth mindset ignites a drive for continual learning and growth. Implementing a growth mindset into classrooms in which you teach and your own

personal practice will help developing or established musicians see more success and less frustration over time. Happy practicing!

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