

# **BEYOND STAGE FRIGHT**

Addressing Music Performance Anxiety in Jazz Students

Presenters: Thomas Johnson, Ph.D., HSPP  
and John Britton, M.S., MT-BC



# Defining the Experience: MPA as a Multi-Dimensional Response

Musical Performance Anxiety (MPA): *An intense fear or apprehension associated with performing music.*

## Somatic Response

### Physical Reactions



Racing Heart



Sweaty Palms



Trembling

## Cognitive Response

### Thoughts & Emotions



Fear of Failure



Negative Self-Talk



Catastrophic Thinking

## Behavioral Response

### Actions & Avoidance



Avoiding Performances



Excessive Rehearsal



Fidgeting, Pacing

MPA is a Multi-Dimensional Response

It affects:



Body



Mind



Behavior

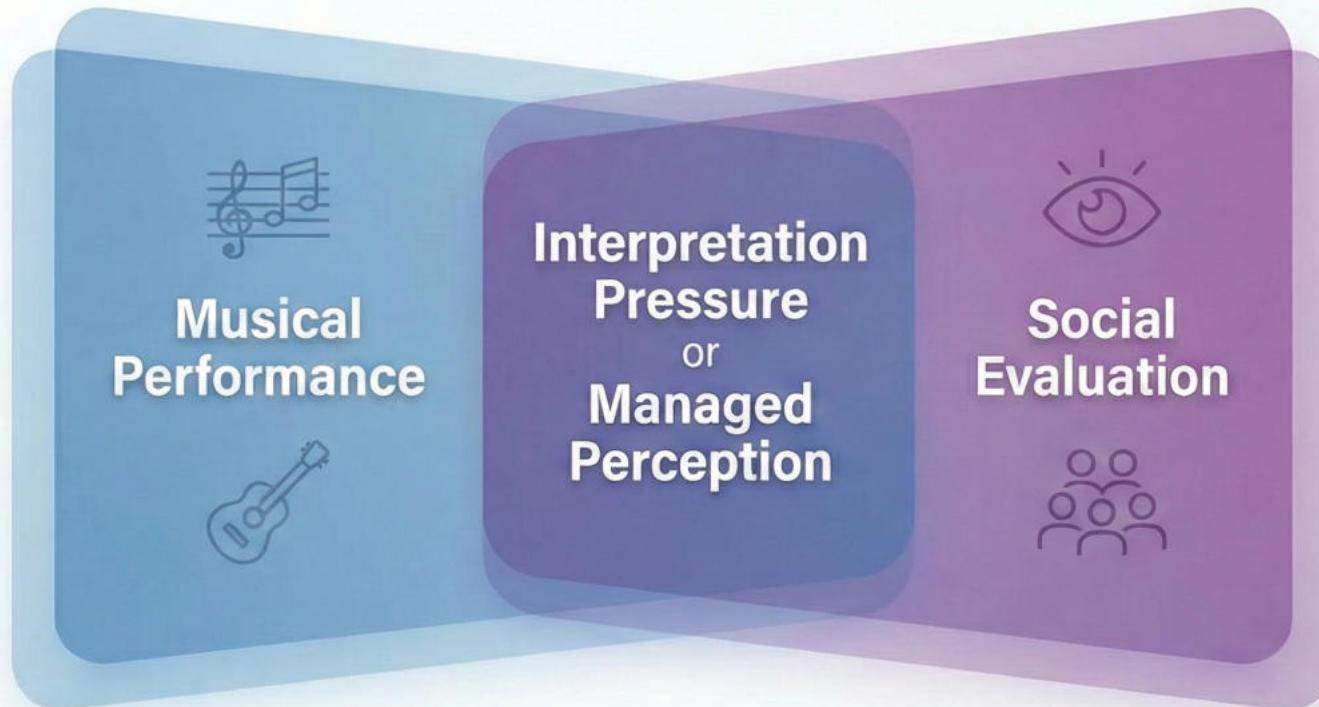


# The Double Exposure Effect

Performance anxiety increases when musicians must manage both execution and interpretation at the same time.

## INDICATORS

- ↑ Cognitive Load
- ↑ Self-Monitoring
- ↓ Presence

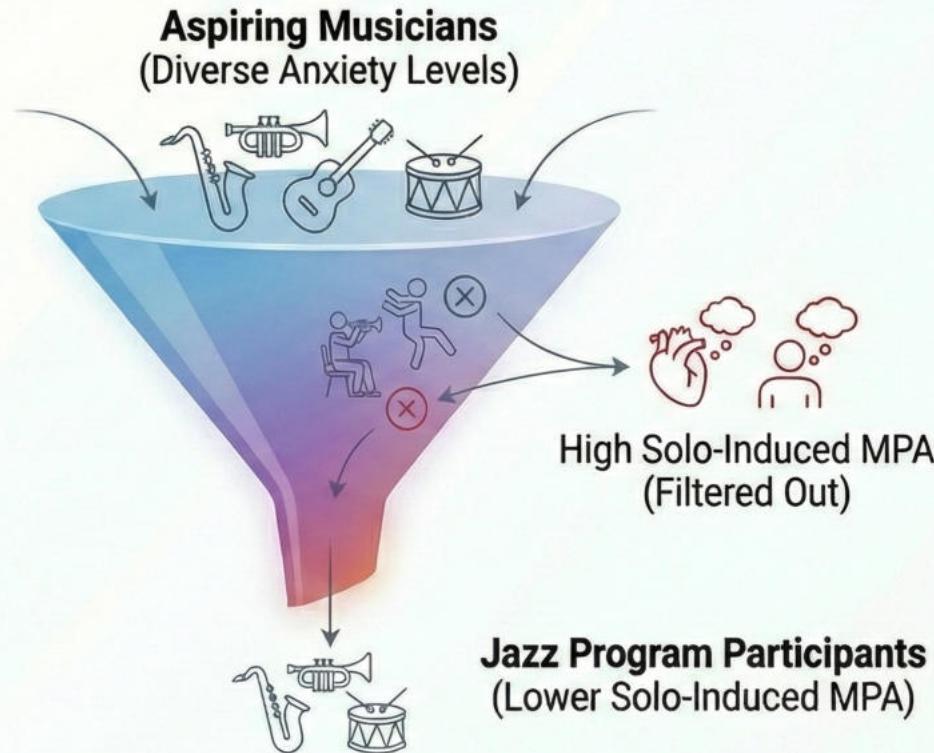


Some students perform music while also managing how they are perceived.



# The Selection Hypothesis: 'Survival of the Chillest'

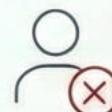
Students with high solo-induced anxiety may filter themselves out of jazz tracks early.



## Hypothesized Mechanisms:



**The Filtering Process:** High solo anxiety may contribute to earlier attrition, potentially occurring pre-college.



**Self-Selection:** Students may preemptively select tracks with lower perceived solo demands.



**Survivorship Bias:** Observed populations might only represent those who "survived" the filter, potentially masking original anxiety prevalence.

Idea: The "chill" vibe of a jazz program may be a result of prior selection, not inherent low anxiety.



# COPING WITH MPA FRAMEWORK: ACCEPTANCE VS. CHANGE

## ACCEPTANCE STRATEGIES

-  Cultivating Non-Judgmental Awareness (e.g., Mindfulness)
-  Reframing Relationship with Anxiety (e.g., ACT)
-  Physiological & Emotional Regulation

## CHANGE STRATEGIES

-  Building Competence & Confidence
-  Aligning Actions with Values & Goals
-  Creating Supportive Environments



# CONCLUSION: ADDRESSING THE REALITY OF JAZZ MPA



## 1. THE INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

- **The Experience:** Body, Thoughts, and Behavior cycle.
- **The Approach:** Balancing “Changes” and Acceptance.



## 2. MPA IN THE JAZZ SETTING

- **A Tangible Reality:** Professional reality, regardless of talent.
- **The Ensemble Oversight:** Often more common in ensembles.
- **Influencing Factors:** Environmental context and identity (e.g., “Double Exposure”).



## 3. THE EDUCATOR'S ROLE

- **Normalize the Experience:** Acknowledge MPA to reduce stigma.
- **Preserving Participation:** Ensure continued musical engagement.