



## Exploring musicians' performance experiences using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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## Overview

- My experiences using IPA
- IPA for *Music and Shape*?
- Pros and cons



## The Phenomenology of Performance



## Background

- Much research has explored musicians' practice activities
- Comparatively little is understood about musicians' experiences with performance
- What exists often based largely upon anecdotal and personal experience



## Research questions

- The musical, physical, and mental activities and behaviours carried out by musicians when preparing for performances, together with their thoughts and perceptions associated with those activities.
- Musicians' thoughts and perceptions during performances and the impact their evaluation of those thoughts and perceptions has on their subsequent musical activities. In particular, those characteristics and qualities present in musicians during *successful* performances contrasted against *less successful* performances were investigated.



## Methods – Participants

	Experienced	Less-experienced
Pianists	6 (41.0)	8 (20.9)
Strings	2 (47.5)	6 (22.3)
Vocalists	3 (51.7)	4 (20.8)

## Methods – Data collection



- Semi-structured interviews
- Topic guide
- Pilot interviews

## Methods – Procedure



- Purposive sampling via faculty heads
- Durations ranged from 40 to 95 minutes
- Digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Question to prevent researcher-bias
- Transcripts returned to participants for verification of content accuracy

## Methods – Analysis



- Goal of investigation to establish contextualised perspective of musicians' subjective experiences with performance
- Hence IPA!

## Methods – Analysis



- Points of interest identified
- Points of interest labelled and grouped into categories and themes
- Themes grouped together into general dimensions
- Summary tables for individuals and groups
- Grouping discussed with other researchers
- Frequency counts were calculated based on the number of citations for each theme in order to identify themes of greater importance or concern for the participants

## Results



### Preparing for performance

- Types of activities, linked to areas of concern
- Reasons for engaging in those activities (thoughts and perceptions)
- Where these were learned or developed from

## Results



### Experiencing performance

- Perceptions arising from/associated with events
- Responses (and reasons) to events
  - Impact of perceptions upon subsequent activities
- Highlighted central role of perception within musicians' performance experiences

## Pros and cons of IPA



### Pros

- Comprehensive body of data
- Rich in breadth and depth
- Participant-led, uncovered novel areas

### Cons

- Subjectivity of responses requires further validation
- Did responses accurately reflect behaviour?
- Inability to conclude causation

## IPA for Music and Shape



## Suitability of IPA



- Allow researchers to explore, flexibly and in detail, musicians' understanding of shape
- Ways in which musicians feel shape influences or directs their practice behaviours and performing.
- Could provide conceptual understanding of shape and the 'whys' and influences behind it, as perceived by musicians

## IPA within project



### Pros

- Provides insight into "life world", subjective experiences
- Specific guidelines allow identification and integration of themes
- Use of un/semi-structured interviews can reveal unexpected observations

## IPA within project



### Cons

- Can be very subjective, particularly given its double hermeneutic process
- Relies on people being able to verbalise experiences
- Inability to draw causation

Thank you!

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