How Body Movement Aids Expressivity and Accuracy in String Players

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Movement and musical performance are inextricably linked. Musicians use movement to create sound, and as a tool to express emotion to their audience. Previous research has indicated that differences in body movement affect both audience perception of performance, and objective differences in sound. However, few studies address performers' opinions on the utility of body movement when performing, as well as how the effect of movement can be seen in string players.

Here, we explore the effect of body movement on self-expression and note accuracy in collegiate string players. Movement and musical performance are inextricably linked. Musicians use movement to create sound, and as a tool to express emotion to their audience. Previous research has indicated that differences in body movement affect both audience perception of performance, and objective differences in sound. However, few studies address performers' opinions on the utility of body movement when performing, as well as how the effect of movement can be seen in string players.

Results

How do players experience playing with movement vs. playing still?

**Results (cont.).**

*How do you typically use your body when playing/practicing?*

- 60% of participants reported using body movement to aid in expressivity
- 50% of participants reported using body movement to aid in keeping tempo (accuracy)

Summary

Playing without movement is an overall negative experience

- Participants overall found playing without movement to be more difficult and dislikable than playing with movement
- Participants report less about playing with movement because it is something they do naturally, with 40% of participants reporting playing with movement as “typical”

Movement aids in accuracy for difficult music

- Data suggest that movement has a greater impact on accuracy when a piece is more difficult
- Lack of practice effect: Participants played less accurately in the no movement condition after already playing Etude 1 in the movement condition
- In the exit interview, 50% players reported that they typically use movement to keep tempo, which could explain the difference between Etude 1 and 2

Players instinctively use their bodies to aid in expression and accuracy

- Playing using movement is natural for string players
- Participants self-report that movement aids in expression and communication, and aspects of accuracy like tempo and function.
- Players naturally use movement as a tool to play better

References & Acknowledgements

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