

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

If you're starting this Program, it's likely that you're carrying unrecognized PTSD from past traumatic stage experiences. The fear of rejection, anxiety that can escalate into panic, and the trauma cycle triggered by countless exams, concerts, gigs, or competitions have deeply impacted you. It's important to acknowledge this pain and show yourself compassion for what you've endured.

But now, you're standing at a crossroads. One path is filled with rising anxiety—*the fear of not knowing when this trauma will end or how to stop it*, making every upcoming performance feel like endless torment.

However, there's another path ahead. On this path, you might still feel anxious or overwhelmed, but now you understand that *this discomfort is part of the healing process*. This journey leads toward resolving your trauma and transforming it into something empowering—even exciting.

Every step you take, every audition you face, every wave of anxiety you experience is guiding you toward freedom. It's okay to take it slow. If performing feels impossible today, step back and try again tomorrow. I promise, by your third attempt, the anxiety will start to ease, and you'll feel lighter and more at ease approaching public performances.

*The Performance Practice Mine Method offers a clear way forward—
a path that leads to healing and the end of this traumatic cycle.*

UNPERFORMANCE STAGE

We refer to this stage of performance practice as UnPerformance, reflecting the idea that once you discover your deeper why—your authentic inner truth behind performing—the need to “perform” for others gradually dissolves.

At this point, playing arises from genuine pleasure and enjoyment rather than from the pressure to prove something to others or to yourself. This authentic motivation strengthens inner security and brings a calmer, more relaxed mental state while playing.

Why We Perform on Stage

As mentioned before, rethinking the idea of performing on stage is crucial for developing natural motivation, inspiration, and the desire to perform.

To clarify this inner motivation, it may be helpful to consider why we need the stage.

1. Human connection and intimacy.

An audience turns art into a living conversation. On stage, listeners’ attention, silence, and energy shape how we feel the Higher Mind and how we follow her.

If, during Step 3, you practiced while imagining yourself performing in a concert hall, supported by the audience’s full attention to your Higher Mind, you may have already felt a shift in the quality of your listening, even though it existed only in imagination. On stage, this effect becomes far stronger. When the audience joins your listening state, the connection to the Higher Mind intensifies, and the entire improvisational and creative process becomes unique, focused, deeply intimate and alive.

Live audiences generate an energy that cannot be recreated in rehearsal or recording. This energy lifts us into a state of greater intensity, emotion, risk, and playfulness, opening access to higher frequencies of channeling and vibration.

It is a truly unforgettable experience, one that cannot be compared to any other, even the most exciting moments in life.

2. Art comes alive in the moment

Even though we perform music that has already been written, music is meant to exist in real time. When a genuine connection with the audience is present, playing stops being something to evaluate or a way to prove worth. It becomes a living act of creation, improvised in the moment.

In this state, the music feels alive, unique, and unrepeatable. Each appearance on stage becomes a special event, shaped by the specific conditions of that time, place, instrument, atmosphere, and shared attention to music and the Higher Mind.

The ultimate goal is to achieve a creative “in the Zone” state at the end of completion of each Step of your performance practice mine.

If the goal of the previous learning stage was overcoming a fear of mistakes, then the aim of this stage is

- maintaining a connection to ***the state of listening*** across different performance settings – whether recording, playing for family and friends, or performing on stage with various pianos and in diverse venues

In essence, the performance practice stage is about training the “muscle” of letting go — releasing the anxious grip of the ego. That’s all. Each time, the challenge grows as the pressure and importance of the performance increases.

At home, or even in front of a camera, it may feel easy to let go and truly listen. But raise the stakes — play in front of family, students, or friends, or in an unfamiliar space where the instrument feels different under your fingers — and suddenly the ego’s anxiety creeps in, blocking your freedom of expression.

As you become more comfortable playing in a state of artistry, concerns about memory slips, technical mistakes, or imperfections gradually begin to lose their influence. When a mistake does occur—which is a natural part of performing—it is far less likely to pull you out of your zone or affect the flow of the music that follows.

In Volume I, we explored how the pursuit of perfection can become a trap—how we begin trying to recreate our best moments exactly as they were. During this performance practice stage, this tendency often becomes even stronger. Many pianists have experienced the feeling of playing one particularly beautiful take during a recording or home rehearsal, only to become afraid of losing it.

*The more we try to recreate that exact experience, the more easily tension begins to replace freedom.
Creativity narrows, listening becomes more difficult, and the music loses its natural flow.*

When a special moment arises, appreciate it, then allow it to pass. Trust that another one will come —not as a repetition of the previous one, but as a new experience, equally alive and equally meaningful.

This is closely connected to the Trust Challenge. The more we let go of the need to control every moment, the more easily we can listen to and follow our Higher Mind.

THE PERFORMANCE PRACTICE MINE AND IT'S STEPS

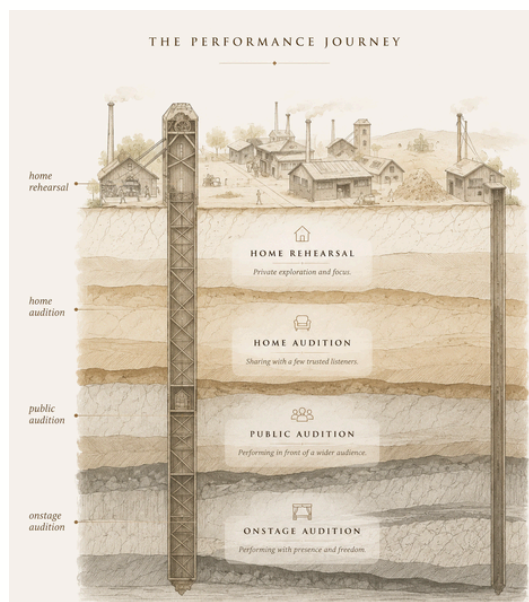
You can probably recall that dreadful and powerless feeling before your next performance. As if you have to jump down the dark mine cave and pray hard to survive. This feeling reflects your internal state based on what's been missing in your practice.

Precisely put, it's about what hasn't been happening.

Imagine that after completing the learning stage you are standing at the mine's edge, peering into the vast darkness below, knowing that the mine's bottom lies the day of your performance. Naturally, the prospect of reaching that bottom with a single jump into the unknown induces dizziness and fear.

This scenario typically unfolds without a well-structured performance practice plan. Closing your eyes, trying to ignore the impossibility of landing at the bottom without some magical ability to fly, you take the leap, compelled to do so. The descent feels like a failure—shame, guilt, and a painful impact, both physically and emotionally.

On the contrary, when you have a clear roadmap for achieving your goal, you establish those Steps that enable a safe and confident descent into the mine. Even though the performance practice mine has 4 Steps, realistically, we often count ourselves fortunate to have only two — a few playthroughs in a practice room (home rehearsal) and perhaps a couple of anxious ones in front of a small audience (public audition).



STEPS OF THE PERFORMANCE PRACTICE MINE

Step #1 <i>Home Rehearsal</i>
Play-through (10x) Crystalize your own interpretation (discover your own nuances of dynamics, voicing, phrasing, and timing). Play without pauses.
Three days, making 10 play-throughs. Outfit, Shoes, Lighting, Time Variations. Record audio or video of your performance.
Step #2 <i>Home Audition</i>
Playthrough (3x) Perform for one person
Playthrough (3x) Perform for a small group
Playthrough (1x) Perform for family, neighbors, friends, students, or livestream (YT/FB/IG)
Step #3 <i>Public Audition</i>
Perform in different venues for one person Play at friends' homes, classrooms, piano showrooms
Perform in different venues for a small group Perform at libraries, churches, restaurants, street pianos, airports, malls
Step #4 <i>Onstage Audition</i>
Public Performances Home concerts, golf clubs, libraries, churches, piano showrooms, music festivals
Enroll in Professional Opportunities Join music festivals, associations, summer piano schools, masterclasses

Creativity

The ultimate aim at each Step of the The Performance Practice Mine is to reach Creativity (“in the Zone”) state by ***remaining in the state of listening to your Higher-Mind, no matter how scared and insecure you feel***. Only when you've mastered this state can you confidently advance to the next level.

Picture it like this—every Step represents a deeper level of your subconscious. True experience of Creativity unfolds only at the bottom of that level. Akin to gold that is mined underground.

The good news, as you dive deeper:

- the journey to Creativity becomes more transcendent, mystical and fulfilling
- with each new Step completion, your inner sensations and muscle memory grow stronger and more solid
- each Step serves as a revealing journey, bringing to light any hidden mistakes—those unforeseen 'weeds' that might sprout during crucial performances

The challenge is that to attain the Creativity state, you must take more Steps down (repetitions), and the initial ones won't be a walk in the park (shaky hands, a foggy mind, loss of focus, mistakes, and discouraging thoughts).

But don't overthink it, just keep going!

It might require covering 20-50 meters (playthroughs) to reach that depth, and the initial steps down might push you out of your comfort zone. Yet, with each repetition, the descent becomes smoother, making the achievement of Creativity more reachable. When you finally embrace a state of freedom, enjoyment, transcendence, and fulfillment, you'll realize that the entire descent, filled with fears, discouragement, and patience, was undoubtedly worth it.

Trained Muscles

Exercising your hands following the Warm-up exercises, as well as having plenty of electrolytes in water, is absolutely essential when practicing at this stage. This will bring a much needed sensation of security, safety and control to your technique, allowing you to let go of compulsive tension and reach desirable easiness, simplicity and freedom in your performance.

- during Home Rehearsal, you might video record yourself, completing 10 playthroughs
- in the Home Audition, create a list of 3-4 individuals, such as close family members, students, or friends, and schedule video calls to perform for each other, playing at least three times in a row at every meeting
- for the Public Audition, select two piano showrooms and play your pieces at least three times consecutively
- finally, for the Onstage Audition, create a list of 5-20 individuals, such as close family members, students, friends, and neighbors, and organize a home concert. Repeat the event three times

It's essential to play the piece at least **three consecutive times** during each stage, as detailed in the Performance Cycle section below.

To know when it's time to move on to the next staircase challenge, always rely on the same feeling: a **sense of boredom or fading interest**, as if the current challenge no longer excites you. This is a clear sign you're ready to progress. If you move on too soon, before reaching this natural point, you'll likely feel pressure, insecurity, and anxiety.

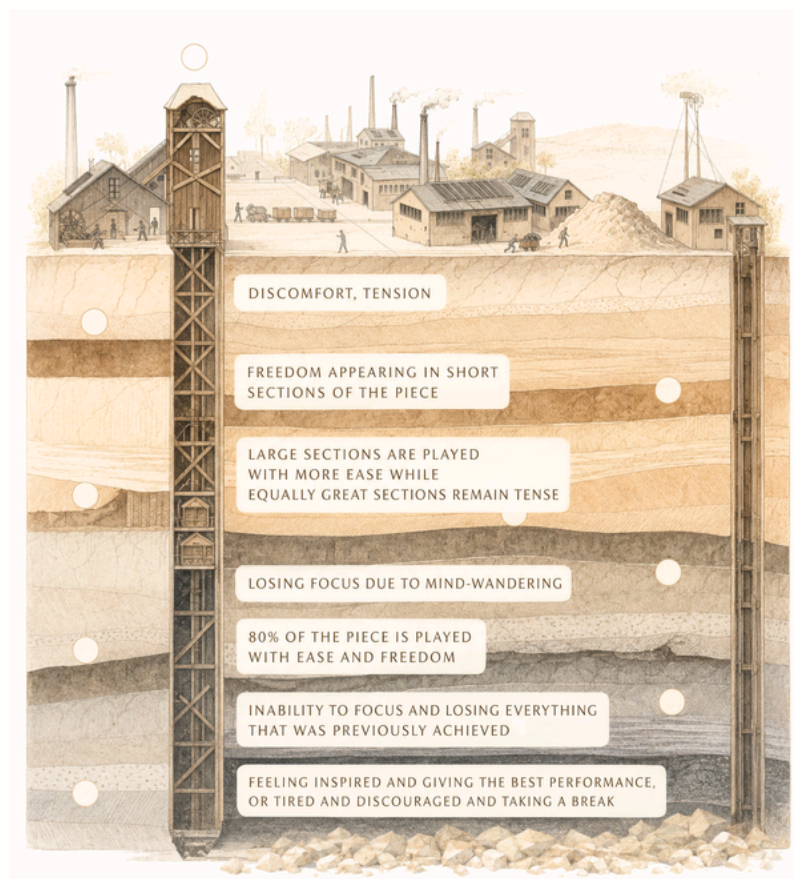
The further you progress through the Performance Practice Mine, the more secure you'll feel.

You'll develop the ability to sustain the "Listening" state of mind and play "in the Zone" for longer periods during your performance. And if you momentarily lose this state, you'll be able to return to it more quickly and effortlessly each time.

PERFORMANCE CYCLE

As mentioned above, each new Step (recording yourself, playing in front of a few people, and eventually performing in different venues) comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

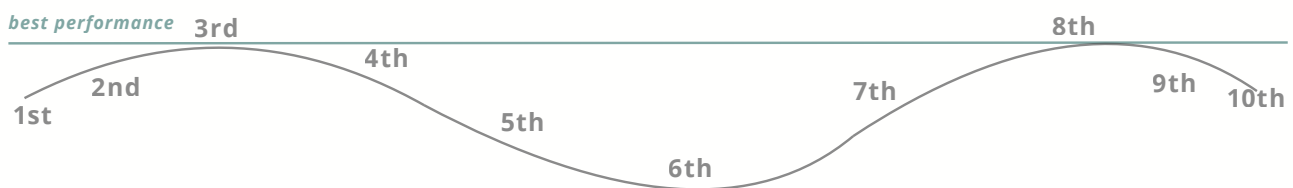
Within each Step there are Substeps where you approximately go through this scenario:



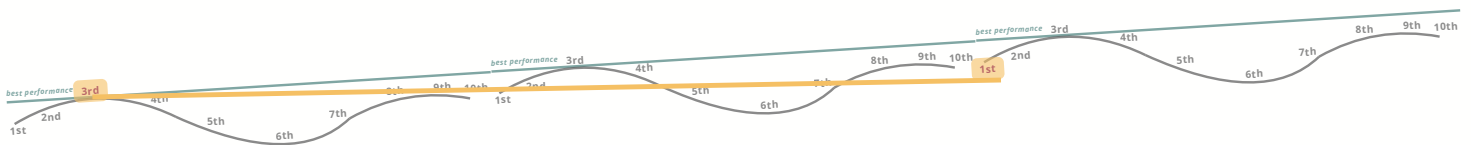
When following and completing the following 10-repetition routine diligently you can expect to have an amazing performance that would satisfy your needs of recognition, achievement, inspiration, purpose, liberation and simplicity. This, ultimately, will heal your traumas and inspire you to help and comfort other pianists who suffered just like you had.

Understanding your personal cycle of ups and downs within a 10-repetition routine can be beneficial during any stage of performance practice, whether it's a home rehearsal, home or public audition, or an on-stage performance. This pattern provides a sense of security, allowing you to *predict* the outcome of each repetition, preventing you from becoming stuck in disappointment if your expectations don't align with reality.

Below is an example of my own consistent pattern that I've observed over time.



Your performance pattern will always follow the same trajectory, meaning that your first time playing on stage (often your only chance) won't be the best version of what you're truly capable of. However, with a structured performance practice routine (home rehearsal, home, public and onstage auditions), each step builds upon the last, allowing you to continually elevate your playing. Over time, what once felt like your best (3rd) performance in a home rehearsal naturally becomes your "worst" 1st one on stage - raising your overall standard with each cycle.



Whatever your pattern of dynamics may be, the most important thing to remember is this: low-quality playthroughs are not setbacks — they're part of the process. Expect them. Welcome them.

And when you do have a breakthrough moment — your best playthrough yet — you won't feel the pressure to hold onto it or repeat it perfectly. You'll trust that even more of those moments are on their way in the days to come.

STEP 1 HOME REHEARSAL

VIDEO RECORDING STAGE

This stage can feel both intimidating and challenging. You may experience moments of frozen or overwhelming fear, together with a strong reluctance to begin recording yourself.

I recommend allowing three days for the recording process.

On the first day, devote most of your time to preparing the recording environment. Choose your outfit, adjust the lighting, and find the most suitable camera angle. The remainder of the day may feel challenging as you gather your thoughts and energy while playing for the first time in front of the camera.

Performing for a camera often feels more demanding than performing for a live audience. Without the natural exchange of energy between performer and audience, the experience may feel less engaging and more emotionally distant.

On the second day, some anxiety may still be present, and you may begin to wonder whether playing freely and creatively in front of the camera will ever feel natural.

Play through each piece at least three times. Gradually, you will become more familiar with the environment and the presence of the camera, allowing yourself to enter a creative state while playing.

By the third day, you may find the process becoming easier. With the confidence gained from the previous days and a number of successful recordings behind you, allow yourself to play through each piece freely at least three times.

This marks the completion of the first Step of performance practice—Home Rehearsal. Congratulations!

STEP 2 HOME AUDITION

AUDIENCE PERFORMANCE

When performing in front of people, keep in mind that the first time will always feel unpleasant, with a frozen state of mind, cold stiff hands, and perhaps an upset stomach.

However, the second time you play the same piece, you'll experience a burst of energy and inspiration. Your energy will be fueled by the audience's energy, creating an explosion-like effect. I often liken this experience to the Big Bang, where initially, all matter compresses into a small, tight, heavy, dark state, and then, boom, a burst of energy causes everything to explode in a big way.

Moreover, when playing the third time consecutively, you experience a 'sober' effect, as cleverly named by one of my fellow students. It's a sensation of being more in your head, feeling less 'high' from the initial playthroughs in front of the audience. During this phase, you might feel more stable and secure in your focus, achieving a better control in your playing and a deeper channeling state.

That's why it's crucial not to stop after the very first time but to persist and experience a breakthrough in your performance. This process establishes trust and knowledge that the anxious state is temporary and lasts only for the first time. By the end of the third playthrough, you find yourself even more fueled with energy, playing bigger, with greater inspiration, and a clearer focus.

When selecting your audience at this stage, approach it with both intuition and care.

Make a list of potential listeners, arranged by the level of emotional challenge they present—starting with those you feel most at ease with. Gradually increase the difficulty as your confidence grows.

For instance, you might begin by playing for your students, then for close friends, followed by family, and only later for your teachers. This progressive approach allows you to build resilience steadily, rather than leaping straight into the most intimidating situation.

STEPS 3-4

PUBLIC AND ONSTAGE AUDITIONS

AUDIENCE PERFORMANCE

In the Public Audition stage, it's highly beneficial to have a rehearsal away from the audience beforehand. A dress rehearsal can significantly reduce the additional challenges you face on stage. During this stage, you're navigating two major hurdles: the anxiety of performing for an unfamiliar audience in a new environment (venue and acoustics) and the unfamiliar sensations of playing on a different piano. Each instrument has unique mechanics and responsiveness, which can feel drastically different from the piano you practiced on.

This final pressure—adapting to a new piano—can be alleviated by simply running through a few pieces of your repertoire before the performance. Playing through the music once helps your body and mind adjust to the initial shock of the new touch and sound. Remarkably, the adjustment happens quickly, as long as you remain centered and focused on your familiar techniques and intentions. In a way, it's as though the piano begins to respond to your inner will once you settle into the moment.

That first experience with a new piano can feel overwhelming—expect to temporarily lose your sense of key, register, notes, or even the time signature. The sound may be drastically different, especially with the new hall acoustics, creating a disorienting effect. It's normal to feel thrown off initially, but this is all part of the process. Accept the chaos of those first ten minutes as necessary, knowing that you'll adapt soon after.

Once you've completed this rehearsal, the burden of the unknown piano is lifted, leaving you free to focus on the audience and venue itself during the actual performance.