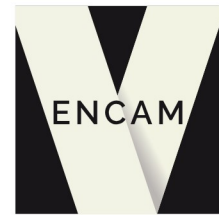




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Between statistics and experiences: Women and Music Performance Anxiety in Western classical music

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ABSTRACT

RESEARCH QUESTION/PROBLEM

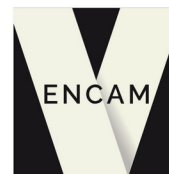
Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) is widely investigated and is often associated with individual factors such as personality traits, cognitive patterns, and individual predispositions (Valentine, 2002). A recurring finding in this body of research is the report of higher levels of MPA among women compared to men (Dempsey & Comeau, 2019; Fernholz et al., 2019; Iusca & Dafinoiu, 2012; Papageorgi, 2022; Thomas & Nettelbeck, 2014). Although this pattern has been consistently reported across different samples and contexts, the interpretations offered to explain these differences often prioritize dispositional perspectives, while paying comparatively less attention to the sociocultural dimensions that shape musical practice and performance experiences.

This gap becomes particularly relevant in the context of Western classical music, whose traditions, historically shaped by patriarchal gender hierarchies, contribute to the differential configuration of women's performative trajectories (Rosário & Cunha, 2022; Santos, 2019). In this context, although statistical gender disparities in MPA levels are widely reported in the literature, the field has devoted comparatively little attention to understanding how these differences are experienced and interpreted by musicians in their practice and performance contexts.

OBJECTIVES

This study critically examines the relationship between gender and MPA, integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence to expand the understanding of how sociocultural





contexts and situated performance experiences may influence how female musicians experience and make meaning of MPA.

METHOD

The study integrates data from two empirical stages. The first consists of a quantitative survey conducted with 123 undergraduate music students from a Brazilian higher education institution, representing different specializations (instrumental and vocal), in which levels of Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) and their variations in relation to gender were analyzed. The second stage involves a qualitative investigation with a phenomenological approach, based on semi-structured interviews with six female flutists. The sample was selected to ensure relative homogeneity of performative experiences and to account for the embodied dimensions specific to wind performance, enabling an in-depth and contextually grounded analysis guided by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

RESULTS

The quantitative data corroborate the widely reported trend in the literature of higher levels of Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) among women. The interview analysis reveals narratives that link experiences of anxiety to performance expectations, processes of social comparison, evaluative judgment, and institutional dynamics present in Western classical music contexts. By integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, the study contributes to interpreting the gender differences observed in MPA in light of situated performance experiences and the interactional dynamics that characterize musical environments.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings suggest that the higher levels of Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) observed among women can be better understood when situated within the social and cultural contexts that structure performance experiences in Western classical music. By emphasizing the dynamics of exposure and interaction that permeate musical practice, the study highlights how women experience and interpret anxiety in performance contexts. Furthermore, it points to the limitations of approaches that treat gender exclusively in binary terms, indicating the need for future research that considers the diversity of identities and experiences in the study of MPA.

KEYWORDS

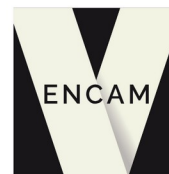
music performance anxiety; music cognition; women musicians;

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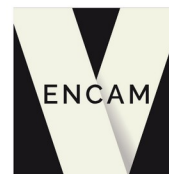
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Entre estatísticas e experiências: mulheres e Ansiedade de Performance Musical na música de concerto

RESUMO

PROBLEMA/QUESTÃO

A Ansiedade de Performance Musical (APM) é amplamente investigada e frequentemente associada a fatores individuais, como traços de personalidade, padrões cognitivos e predisposições individuais (Valentine, 2002). Um achado recorrente nesses estudos é a indicação de níveis mais elevados de APM entre mulheres quando comparadas a homens (Dempsey & Comeau, 2019; Fernholz *et al.*, 2019; Iusca & Dafinoiu, 2012; Papageorgi, 2022; Thomas & Nettelbeck, 2014). Embora esse padrão seja consistentemente reportado em diferentes contextos, as interpretações oferecidas para essa diferença tendem, em muitos casos, a privilegiar perspectivas disposicionais, com menor atenção às dimensões socioculturais que atravessam as experiências de prática e performance musicais. Essa lacuna torna-se particularmente relevante no contexto da música ocidental de concerto, cujas tradições, historicamente moldadas por hierarquias patriarcais de gênero, contribuem para a configuração diferenciada das trajetórias performativas de mulheres (Rosário & Cunha, 2022; Santos, 2019). Nesse cenário, embora disparidades estatísticas de gênero nos níveis de APM sejam amplamente reportadas na literatura, o campo ainda dedica pouca atenção a compreender como essas diferenças são vivenciadas e interpretadas por musicistas em suas experiências de prática e performance.

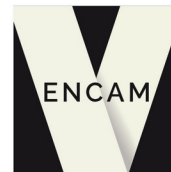
OBJETIVOS

O estudo discute criticamente a relação entre gênero e APM, integrando evidências quantitativas e qualitativas a fim de ampliar a compreensão de como contextos socioculturais e experiências situadas de performance podem influenciar como musicistas experimentam e atribuem significado à APM.

MÉTODO

O estudo articula dados de duas etapas. A primeira consiste em levantamento quantitativo com 123 estudantes de graduação em Música de uma instituição de ensino brasileira, provenientes de diferentes habilitações (instrumentos e canto), no qual foram analisados níveis de APM e suas variações em função do gênero. A segunda etapa consiste em investigação qualitativa de abordagem fenomenológica, baseada em entrevistas semiestruturadas com seis flautistas mulheres. A amostra foi selecionada com o objetivo de garantir relativa homogeneidade de experiências performativas e considerar as dimensões corporificadas específicas da performance em instrumentos de sopro, possibilitando uma análise aprofundada e contextualizada, orientada pela Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).





RESULTADOS

Os dados quantitativos corroboram a tendência amplamente reportada na literatura de níveis mais elevados de APM entre mulheres. A análise das entrevistas evidencia narrativas que associam a experiência da ansiedade a expectativas de desempenho, processos de comparação social, julgamento avaliativo e dinâmicas institucionais presentes nos contextos da música de concerto. Ao articular evidências quantitativas e qualitativas, o estudo contribui para interpretar as diferenças de gênero observadas na APM a partir das experiências situadas de performance e das interações que caracterizam os contextos musicais.

CONCLUSÕES

Os resultados sugerem que níveis mais elevados de APM observados em mulheres podem ser melhor compreendidos quando situados nos contextos socioculturais que estruturam as experiências de performance na música de concerto. Ao enfatizar as dinâmicas de exposição e interação que atravessam a prática musical, o estudo evidencia como mulheres experimentam e interpretam a ansiedade em contextos performativos. Ademais, aponta para os limites das abordagens que tratam o gênero exclusivamente em termos binários, indicando a necessidade de futuras investigações que considerem a diversidade de identidades e experiências no estudo da APM.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

ansiedade na performance; cognição musical; mulheres musicistas; performance musical; análise fenomenológica interpretativa.

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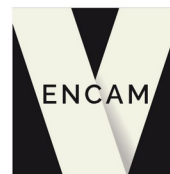
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