

# DANIEL MOULT

C O N C E R T O R G A N I S T | O R G A N T U T O R

## **Performance Psychology: A brief summary** *RSCM Organists' Courses: 2005 and 2008,* *Organists' Review, 2008*

### *1. Be musically prepared*

There's no substitute for 100% secure preparation! This includes fingering and pedalling markings and an inner sense that, all things being equal, we could deliver a totally secure and musical performance. Consider Murphy's Law!...

### *2. Healthy mind = healthy body*

American studies show that exercise really does calm performers! Good sleep and some moderate intensity exercise leading up to a potentially stressful situation is excellent preparation...

### *3. Be physically prepared*

Build in P.M.R (progressive muscle relaxation) and Deep Breathing into your pre-performance ritual - even if you think you won't need it!

### *4. Rehearse the occasion*

What potentially scares you (the offertory hymn? going from final hymn to voluntary?) ensure that you've already visited the occasion in your mind: practice as if you're really in that situation. you should feel the adrenaline if you're practicing this successfully!

### *5. Visualise the occasion*

Sit somewhere quiet and undisturbed and picture the occasion in exact detail. You're the cameraman! If you revert to panic or loose control, stop, rewind and re-record! You want an imaginary video of you in 100% control, on top form. It helps if you can experience the room when you practice this - could you do this undisturbed in your venue?

### *6. Record yourself - regularly!*

For musical as well as psychological feedback! Don't stop when you record yourself on

minidisc or cassette. repeat, repeat, repeat the process. Are you starting to enjoy the music and worry less about your ego if there is a small slip or inconsistency? Good psychological practice - if done routinely!

### *7. Use points and/or cards*

Give yourself a 95 or 90% etc score to achieve. whenever anything is not perfect and frustrates you, say "minus 1%"... You stop point scoring and end up focusing on the music - this should stop the "vicious circle" effect! Use cards with your score on and list 3 adjectives which describe your ideal performance qualities: "lyrical / strong / stylish / solid" etc etc. place the cards in breadbin / behind the coffee jar etc

### *8. Challenge your thinking errors*

Are you using "black & white thinking" / "mental filtering" / "emotional reasoning"? It's vitally important that we practice "good psychology" - feeling confident when we practice and banishing negative thoughts immediately, replacing them with positive thoughts.

### *9. Experiment...*

with these suggestions - some may work for you, some not - but never accept defeat!

### *10. Practice*

Whichever ideas work for you - this can become as part of your routine as pedal exercises or learning Sunday's hymns!...

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## **Further reading**

Musical Excellence ed. Williamon, Aaron (O.U.P, 2004)

Keeping your nerve Jones, Kate (Faber Music, 2000)

The Inner Game of Music Green, Barry and Gallwey, W Timothy (Random House 1986) {also now a dvd!}

Golf is not a game of perfect Dr Bob Rotella (Pocket Books, 2004)