

Using the musical score to perform: A study with Spanish flute students

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Musical scores constitute a key element in the development of expertise in musicians from western tonal traditions, since they act as a mediator between the performer and the music itself. Our aim was to study the role of musical scores in instrumental performance practice by analysing the process of learning a new piece of music, as well as the frequency of activities related to that score, taking account of situations when studying alone and with a teacher. Sixteen flute students at two different education levels from conservatoires in Madrid participated in an individual semi-structured interview and completed a rating-scale questionnaire. Categorical analysis from interview data revealed differences between levels in relation to the activities they stated that they engaged in when learning new pieces. Results from the questionnaires showed that although students at both levels worked on playing the musical score correctly, higher-level students seemed to pay special attention to artistic issues. The findings are discussed in relation to previous research, as well as their implications for education.

Introduction

Learning goals and strategies in instrumental performance practice: a brief overview

There has been considerable research interest in recent years in the development of expertise in musicians and the contribution that instrumental practice makes to this (for reviews see Barry & Hallam, 2002; Jørgensen, 2004; Jørgensen & Hallam, 2009). One focus of this kind of research has been the quality of practice and the types of practising strategies that learners adopt. For example, Jørgensen (2004) has proposed four strategy types, i.e. planning strategies; strategies for the conduct (execution) of practice; strategies to evaluate practice; and meta-strategies. A similar conception is that of practice as self-regulated learning (McPherson & Zimmerman, 2002), where the learner is recommended to engage in forethought, performance/volitional control, and self reflection. Accumulated

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