The Practice of Practice

Jonathan Harnum

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by Jonathan Harnum

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for Michelle

With sincere thanks to
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Dedication

To the Memory and Vision of Music Education Pioneer Bennett Reimer

It is how music is connected to life that makes it so important for people. To understand music is to understand its intimate connections to all of human experience. To experience music is to experience how we as individuals are connected to all other humans in our communities and all other communities in the world and in history. Music is all-encompassing.

Bennett Reimer (1932-2013)
A Philosophy of Music Education, p. 60

Part One

What's Goin' On?

What Practice Is, What It Does to You, & Why It Matters

Learning without thought is labor lost;
thought without learning is perilous.

Confucius (551-487 BC)

Pick-Up Notes

Names have power. Definitions of what practice is (and isn't) can either lift you up or hamstring you. According to every professional musician I've spoken with, practice is a lot more than sitting in a room alone, working on technique.

Practice does some cool things to the brain, too. Knowing what the brain requires for solid, long-term learning will help you get better at music, or anything else.

Chapter 1

The Chicken or the Embryo

The sweat of hard work is not to be displayed. It is much more graceful to appear favored by the gods.[1]

Maxine Hong Kingston, author (b. 1940)

Zing-Yang Kuo rubbed warm Vaseline over a clutch of fertilized chicken eggs. He was conducting research that examined the role genetic memory—or instinct—played in the pecking behavior of chickens. You could say Zing-Yang Kuo was investigating a young chick's "talent" for pecking.

Kuo was a developmental psychologist active in the first half of the 20th century who investigated the role of nature-versus-nurture in animal behaviors. Kuo believed that labeling behaviors as instinctive or genetic blinded us to the developmental realities that he suspected lay behind those behaviors. In the early 1920s when Kuo published his research, many believed the distinctive pecking behavior of newly hatched chickens was an instinct, a behavior encoded in chickeny genetics. Zing-Yang Kuo discovered that a chick's ability to peck is a result of a much more interesting process, one that smudges the line between nature and nurture.

As the petroleum jelly soaked into the egg shells, the shell became translucent. Kuo carefully watched the golden yolks develop into embryos. After a few days of development, the tiny proto-hearts of the chicks began to beat. Soon, the yolk was consumed by the growing chick, and each delicate crèche now contained a tightly compacted future chicken.

[1]Hong Kingston, 1976, p. 64

Each chick was packed so snugly in its shell that its neck was stretched downward until its head rested directly over its tiny thumping heart.

Kuo observed something interesting about the position of the embryo's head. The motion of the rhythmically pulsing heart caused the developing chick's head and neck to move in a way that "precisely mimics"[2] the characteristic pecking motion chicks use when feeding. The pecking motion is *not* encoded in the genetic code. Instead, the chicks practice the pecking behavior thousands of times inside the egg before hatching.

The kind of practice chicks are doing inside the egg is certainly *not* deliberate practice. Call it "circumstantial practice." It's kind of like practice that happens because of where you grow up. Indian classical vocalist Prasad Upasani said, "We have a word for it called *samskar*, which basically translates to 'unconscious influence.' Basically you develop an ear for music. It definitely helps to be exposed to a lot of music at an early age."

Prasad Upasani is an accomplished vocalist in the Hindustani classical musical tradition of northern India. One of Prasad's earliest memories was waking to hear his father's singing practice early in the morning. Sometimes young Prasad would toddle in and sing some of his favorite melodies with his father. He spoke fondly of those early-morning sessions with his dad. Researchers have found that many professional musicians' early experiences with practice were pleasant or fun.[3] It stands to reason that if practice is pleasant or fun early on, we'll want to do more of it. A good thing to remember if you're a beginner of any age, or a parent.

Some practice takes place because of where we happen to be. You can see *Samskar* in the biographies of lots of accomplished people, including Sona Jobarteh, the only female kora virtuoso in the world. She grew up in the rich sonic environment of a Griot family in Gambia, West Africa. The

[2] Firestein, 2012.

[3] Sosniak, 2006.

Griot tradition is a venerable one, going back over 700 years. Griots were musicians and dancers who traveled throughout the Mali empire bringing news, diplomacy, and ceremonial services to commoners and royalty alike. Ms. Jobarteh first began to learn kora at age four from her brother, Tunde Jegede.

Or consider master tuba player and teacher Rex Martin. Both of Rex's older brothers played tuba, so Rex's auditory cortex was exposed to the sound of the tuba before he was even born. Neuroscience tells us that when the brain hears a new sound, it gets to work processing that sound until it recognizes the input, helping us attend to the sound more closely. Rex's young brain received tuba listening practice very early in his development. There is some pretty solid scientific evidence that babies in the womb can learn songs and sounds, one of the most important sounds being mommy's voice.[4]

The *samskar*, or unconscious early experiences of Prasad, Sona, and Rex are similar to the chick practicing its pecking behavior inside the egg. Unconscious influences like these are one source of the pernicious notion of "natural" talent, the idea that you're either born with musical ability or you're not. There is a great deal of lively, sometimes heated debate as to whether natural musical ability exists.[5]

For our purposes, natural musical ability is a can of worms best left alone, because the answer to the question, fascinating though it might be, has nothing to do with getting better. Whatever gifts have been given or withheld from you, practice is still the *only* way to get better at anything: music, chess, sports, programming, parenting.... Anything.

The good news is that beneficial circumstances like a rich musical environment aren't crucial to getting really good at something. Lots of great musicians—including several I talked to about practice for this book—didn't have the benefit of a rich musical childhood. Although it certainly helps, no matter how musically blessed someone may be by circumstance,

[4]Trainor, 2005; Chang & Merzenich, 2003; Hepper, 1991; Parncutt, 1993.
[5]E.g., the scholarly smackdown between Gagné, 2013 and Ericsson, 2013.

practice is *still* the only way to get better.

If you want to get better, you simply *have* to practice. There's no way around it. Even though Prasad, Sona, and Rex all had beneficial early experiences with music, each has had to spend thousands of hours in practice to acquire their musical prowess. Rex told me, "If people could've lived my life and all the hours I've spent practicing the tuba alone in some little room someplace, they probably wouldn't label me as being particularly talented."[6]

And yet, Rex Martin is supremely talented, veteran of thousands of professional recordings and performances around the world alongside other world class artists, some of whom might surprise you. Chicago Symphony? New York Philharmonic? Luciano Pavorotti? Rex is a master of classical tuba, so these credits are impressive, but not surprising. Rex has also played with Grammy Award winners like R&B pioneers Earth, Wind & Fire, the father of Soul, Ray Charles, and legendary Jazz vocalist Sarah Vaughn.

To see talent as a gift of natural ability instead of perceiving the long hours of practice that creates talent is nothing new. Michelangelo said, "If people knew how hard I had to work to gain my mastery, it would not seem so wonderful at all."

Rex, Sona, and Prasad are talented because they have practiced, and because they *continue* to practice. Diligently. Rex said, "There is no such thing as maintenance. If you're not trying to get better, you're getting worse."

And here's the thing: practice is *not* just sitting in a room, playing scales and repeating passages. *Samskar* is just one of the semi-hidden ways people get better at music. There are many others. I'll show you more in the coming pages.

Musical ability doesn't come from either the chicken *or* the embryo, it's the chicken *and* the embryo. Talent isn't some mysterious natural ability. Talent is practice in disguise.

And practice is more than you think.

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[6]All quotations from musicians in this book—unless otherwise noted—are taken from my interview with the artist.

Chapter 2

Spinning Wheel, Got to Go Round

We must not allow other people's limited perceptions to define us.

Virginia Satir, psychotherapist (1916-1988)

Chicago singer-songwriter Nicholas Barron looks like Vince Vaughn, has a voice as big as John Lee Hooker's, and writes and performs in a style all his own. Barron often opens for the legendary bluesman Buddy Guy at his eponymous Chicago blues club. Nicholas plays all over Chicago. Under it, too. As a younger man he spent his days playing in Chicago's south-side subway stations. Nicholas was one of the first professional musicians I talked with about music practice, and one of the first things he said was, "I never practice."

Barron's direct, unequivocal statement puzzled me. Because he performs with such skill and sings so powerfully, I was sure his ability *had* to be a result of many years of practice. His statement that he *never* practiced went against everything the research and popular writing on practice had been telling me. I remember thinking, "What the heck is going on here?"

Nicholas agreed to sit down for a more formal interview, one designed to answer three questions about practice: What is practice according to musicians from diverse genres? What do these musicians actually *do* to get better? And how did they learn how to practice? Over twenty professional musicians from different genres have shared their thoughts about practice with me. Some of these musicians are among the best in the world at what they do.

When I spoke with Nicholas, I'd just spent more than three years poring over research on music practice, reading hundreds of peer-reviewed studies and dozens of popular books on practice, all of which pointed to *deliberate practice* as the holy grail of learning, musical or otherwise. Much of the research—and especially writings for the general public—included the oft-quoted 10,000-hour rule, the notion that it takes at least that many hours of deliberate practice to achieve mastery in any field.

That definition—deliberate practice, and the 10,000-hour rule that goes along with it—came from a 1993 research paper by Anders Ericsson, Ralf Krampe, and Clemens Tesch-Römer, in which they presented data from four different studies of experts in various fields, including music.

Even if it's true, the 10,000-hour benchmark is a red herring for several reasons. First, the only practice that is vitally important is the practice you're doing *right now.* Forget about accumulating 10,000 hours and focus instead on today's learning challenge. Experts who accumulated 10,000 hours of practice weren't trying to accumulate those hours; their focus was elsewhere, on the task at hand.

Another reason the 10,000-hour rule of deliberate practice is misleading has to do with definitions. Musicians in that 1993 study were all Western European classical musicians. Clearly, Nicholas Barron, who said he never practices, *has* to be using a different definition of practice, because he's an excellent musician. So what does practice mean for Nicholas Barron, and what does he do to get better? His approach to practice is covered later in the book. It's pretty cool.

Erin McKeown is another musician who isn't all that interested in the word "practice." In fact, she found practice "really hard to talk about." The night before our interview, Erin said she was chatting with a friend about practice and said they spoke about how "there is a sort of identity attached to whether you practice or not."

Erin characterized it as a "sort of myth: the more you

know about music somehow the less passionate you are, the less *real* your music becomes, which I think is a part of that identity. We don't want to practice because we don't want to ruin it."

That sentiment seemed to run deep with Erin, because she often avoided the word "practice" itself, and would instead say things like, "spend time with my instrument." Erin echoed Nicholas Barron's sentiment when she said, "My experience with my instruments was not about practice for a long time. For many, many, many years, I did not practice."

Another puzzling statement. Erin is a professional touring musician, veteran of thousands upon thousands of performances, and she has critically acclaimed albums under her belt. What did Erin do to get so good? You'll learn about her approach later in the book, too. It's pretty cool, too.

I began to suspect that a better question than "how do great musicians practice" is "how do musicians get better?" Omitting the "P-word" avoids some of the baggage that seems to be associated with the word "practice."

Definitions of practice matter. All of the research published on music practice in English—and I do mean *all* of it—focuses exclusively on Western classical music practice. Some researchers have touched peripherally on other kinds of music practice, like the important work investigating learning in popular music by Lucy Green, or Paul Berliner's thorough study of jazz musicians, or Patricia Shehan Campbell's examination of music teaching and learning in non-Western traditions.[1] But even in these studies, the details of *exactly* how these musicians practice wasn't the focus.

At the moment, there are no studies I'm aware of that specifically examine how jazz musicians practice, no study on how punk rock musicians get better, no study on how singer-songwriters like Nicholas Barron and Erin McKeown practice. Nor are there studies that examine how Indian

[1]Berliner, 1994; Green, 2002, 2008; Shehan Campbell, 1991.

classical musicians practice, or didgeridoo players, or hip-hop artists, or DJs.... Nothing. Zip. Zilch. Nada.

Now, don't get me wrong. Music practice research done so far is a valuable resource. But limiting our exploration of practice to Western classical music is like assuming that all plants will grow in any climate. That's crazy talk. What grows and thrives in one climate will shrivel and die in another. We need to expand our understanding of how people get better to *all* kinds of music-making. Why not? Mark Twain said it like this:

> Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views...cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.[2]

I've conducted interviews with dozens of professional musicians from all across the musical map, many of them world-class performers: singer-songwriters, jazz musicians, African djembe masters, Indian classical musicians, Western classical musicians, and musicians from other traditions, too. *Every single one* of these musicians listed a slew of activities they consider to be practice that aren't usually recognized as practice. I'm going to show them to you.

No book can give you all the answers, but I hope this book helps you think about practice in a broader way, beyond the walls of the "typical" practice room. In this book you'll find specific strategies, techniques, and mindsets that any musician needs to get better whether you play rock or Bach.

To help understand the many ways people get better at music, I've used a metaphor to organize music practice into six simple categories. Think of practice as a colorful, six-bladed pinwheel in motion. Trying to see the boundary between the pinwheel blades while the pinwheel spins is like trying to understand everything about practice at once. It's impossible

[2]Twain, 1869, p. 650.

to see anything clearly as the pinwheel spins: edges and colors blur together, and it's difficult to know what's what.

But if you stop the pinwheel, you can see it more clearly. You can count the blades, see their shape and color; you can see where one color stops and the next begins; you can see how it spins on its axle. Music practice is like that six-bladed pinwheel. We're going to stop the practice pinwheel to get a better look at how practice works. As we do, keep in mind the advice of martial arts master Bruce Lee, who said, "Absorb what is useful; discard what is not; add what is uniquely your own."

Each "blade" of the practice pinwheel is a book section:

1) **What**: When you know what something is, you have power over it. This section covers what practice is, how practice changes the brain, and how you can harness the nature of those changes to help you get better.
2) **Why**: Without motivation, there would be no reason to get better. This section covers motivation and explores how your beliefs affect not only your motivation to learn, but how you practice as well.
3) **Who**: Many people will have an impact on your practice, most especially your own Self. Your attitudes and behaviors and beliefs profoundly affect how you get better. There are others who can help or hinder, too, like parents, teachers, and peers.
4) **When**: Time and practice. How much should you practice? When during the day is best? What's the minimum you can get away with? How little is too little? Can you practice too much? How does music practice develop from beginner to expert?
5) **Where**: Covers the places of practice. A short section covering the practice space itself, including what makes one good or bad. This section also takes a look at how context can affect your practice.
6) **How**: What do you actually *do* to get better? What works best? This is the aspect of practice everyone wants to know, and it's the longest section of the book.

So What *Is* Practice?

Most of us have a stereotype of practice in our head: some hapless classical musician, sitting in a windowless room repeating things over and over. Sheet music is usually involved. Our stereotype of practice often includes scales, and exercises, and tons of repetition, and a general idea that practice isn't fun at all. Sure, all those things *can* be practice, but as you'll discover, many great musicians do *none* of those things.

The idea that practice isn't fun is explicitly stated in one of the most broadly adopted descriptions of practice, *deliberate practice*, which claims that practice "is not inherently unenjoyable."[3] I don't believe that's true, and I'm not alone.[4] Every professional musician I've spoken with said that practice is quite enjoyable. For some, including yours truly, practice is necessary for mental well-being. Sure, practice can be challenging and frustrating and effortful, but at the same time it's engaging, and often a lot of fun. Jazz trumpeter Don Cherry summed it up best when he said, "There is nothing more serious than having fun."

There are other activities that increase one's musical ability, not just practice time alone in a room. I believe anything that increases your musical ability is practice, and I'm not alone there, either. Here are just a few activities highly accomplished professional musicians consider to be practice, not in any particular order:

- ◊ Listening
- ◊ Performing
- ◊ Watching others perform
- ◊ Playing informally
- ◊ Improvising
- ◊ Teaching
- ◊ Composing
- ◊ Group rehearsal

[3]Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993, p. 368.

[4]E.g., Hodgkin (1985) who wrote, "enjoyable practice does not have to be lacking in rigor" (p. 45); and "play is there at the beginning, and it remains central" (p. 52).

Over the course of the next couple hundred pages, I'll show you these and more strategies that musicians use to get better. Good practice is a lot more than you think. It can also be a lot of fun.

Strategy vs. Technique

Knowing the difference between a strategy and a technique is important for getting the most out of this book. The two are interrelated. A strategy is a learning approach that anyone of any skill level can adopt. Technique is the skill necessary to use the strategy well. Here's a simple example.

When great musicians practice, they go slowly enough that errors are avoided. When an error does crop up, expert practicers fix those errors immediately. That's the strategy: fixing a mistake immediately. Anybody can do it, and anybody who adopts that strategy will get better faster than those who don't.

The *technique* necessary for the strategy of fixing errors immediately is based on your ability to actually *perceive* the error, a common difficulty for beginners. Skill at perceiving errors will help you get the most out of the strategy of fixing mistakes immediately. Throughout the book I'll call your attention to lots of strategies, as well as the techniques you need to squeeze the most juice out of a strategy and make it really work for you.

Understanding how the brain learns and what long-term music practice does to the old gray matter in your noggin will also help you practice smarter. Knowing some of the neural mechanisms of learning has certainly affected my own approach to practice, and I bet they'll have a positive impact on your practice, too. They're covered in the following chapters.

But First: Extensions

In music theory, extensions are chord tones added to basic chords that give the chord more color and often a greater sense of forward motion. In education, extensions are activities or exercises that can be done in addition to the main lesson. In this book, extensions are links to more information: videos, websites, recordings, books, and anything else that connects to the chapter's theme. The more ways you can connect to an idea, the better that idea and information will stick in your head, and the more useful it will be. These extensions have been carefully chosen to help with that process.

With a smart phone or tablet and a QR reader, you can see, hear, and read more. *Scan* is a good QR reader. It's free online at https://scan.me/download. Once it's on your device, fire up the app, focus on one of the codes below, and off you go. If you don't have a smart phone, enter the Web address into a browser. If you're reading this on a Web-connected device, click on the HTML links to access the extra information.

Extensions

I'm Not Superman

One of Nicholas Barron's many excellent tunes. He also uses mouth percussion as he plays. On the Web: http://bit.ly/1sORoI2.

That's Just What Happened

Erin McKeown sings and plays piano and guitar on her tune that evokes *St. James Infirmary* before it gets lively. On the Web at http://bit.ly/1hZPSxA. Hear Erin's interview on practice at http://bit.ly/1hZTIqz.

Chapter 8

Go with the Flow

Motivation is temporary. Inspiration is permanent.

Kelly Slater, surfer (b. 1972)

Leo Kottke is both a fingerstyle guitar wizard and a hilarious storyteller. He really gets into his playing. Kottke tells a story about how he used to play with his eyes closed, leaned over to the side, "getting off," as he called it. In one early performance, he opened his eyes to find that he'd drooled all over his 12th fret. Not *had* drooled but *was drooling*, since he was still connected to the guitar by a glistening skein of spittle. During a television interview, Kottke was asked what he thought about when he performed. He said,

> My brain becomes a vacuum up there. That's the nice thing about it. I can completely get away from myself and anything else when I'm playing. It's unfortunate those times when you discover you've gone too far and you can't use your mind to bring yourself back, but when it does work, it's very nice.[1]

Kottke is talking about a *flow state*, a term coined and extensively researched by the influential psychologist with the tongue-busting name of Mihály Csíkszentmihályi (mee-hy cheek-sent-mə-hy-ee). A flow state can be a profound, life-altering experience. It was just such a profound flow state that set my own motivation to practice on fire after I got my first taste of a deep flow state. Csíkszentmihályi said a flow state is

> being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the

[1]From a 1983 interview: http://is.gd/gacepa.

> previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost.

In the first deep musical flow state I experienced, time ceased to exist, as did language or concepts, and everything else, including my sense of self. I have no idea what it sounded like, because "I" was somewhere else. There was no "I" involved in the experience. Whatever it sounded like, folks seemed to like it, but that didn't really matter. The sensation was transcendent in every sense of the word. It was a mystical, deeply spiritual experience; that's the only way I know to describe it. Well, I guess drool-inducing might be another. Or ecstatic.

It's no coincidence that the word *ecstatic* is derived from the Greek *ekstatikos*, meaning to stand outside oneself. That first flow experience—and several similar ones since then—are what set me on my quest to better understand practice in general and music education in particular. I wanted to dive deeper into that flow state if I could. The flow state has often been described like a drug, but with none of the annoying side-effects like hangovers, poor health, or incarceration.

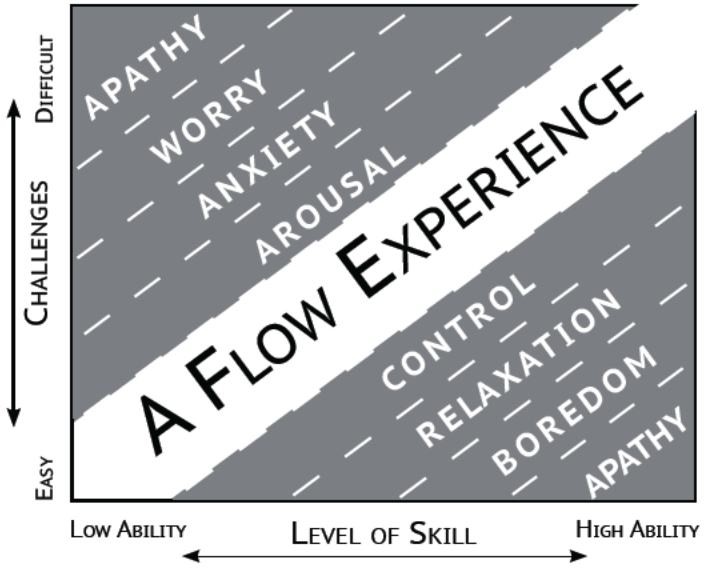
You've probably experienced a flow state before. It doesn't have to be music, it could be anything: washing dishes, writing, running, reading, anything, really. The task has to be aligned perfectly with your abilities. More on that in a second. Here's how the great Leonard Bernstein described a flow state:

> When I know it's been a really good performance, it's one in which I have the feeling that I've written the piece, standing there, and when it's over, I don't know where I'm standing.[2]

Leo Kottke, Leonard Bernstein: these are men of note, if you'll pardon the pun. You don't have to be a world-class performer to experience flow, you just have to be in a musical situation in which your ability is closely matched by the challenge. Whatever your level, achieving a flow state is a

[2] *Here's the Thing* podcast, 12/24/12. On the Web: http://bit.ly/1p9bL2z.

tricky balancing act. Consider the following diagram.[3]



The sweet spot—known as a "flow channel"—happens when your abilities are perfectly matched with the challenges of the task. The better your skills become, the more challenging the task needs to be for you to enter the flow state. The dotted lines indicate that boundaries are not fixed, but fluid. Other emotions surround that flow state.

Regardless of education, culture, or the task, there are seven basic traits people describe when they're in a flow state:

1) You're completely involved in the task, focused and concentrating.
2) You feel a sense of ecstasy, or being outside everyday reality.
3) Inner clarity: you know what you need to do and how well you're doing it.
4) Knowing that your skills are perfect for the task.

[3]Synthesis of Csíkszentmihályi, 1995 & 1997.

5) A sense of serenity, and a feeling of expanding beyond the boundaries of the self.
6) Timelessness. Completely focused on the present. Hours slip past effortlessly.
7) Intrinsic motivation. The activity producing the flow state becomes its own reward.

Flow doesn't happen in practice, or at least not usually. Flow is actually the antithesis of good practice. Conscious attention to detail is *essential* for practice, and that's not possible in the flow state.

The zone just above the flow state is where practice and improvement happens, in the "arousal" and maybe a little into the "anxiety" zones. The arousal state happens when the challenge you face pushes your abilities to the edge of failure. You're concentrating fiercely, but you're still getting it done, with few or no mistakes. When you stray into the "anxiety" zone, you're probably pushing it a little too hard. You want to be relaxed when you play, and practicing while worried or anxious won't help you achieve that relaxation.

When you begin to get frustrated or angry or you're making lots of mistakes, you've drifted into the zones where the challenge is more difficult than your skills can handle.

Of course, none of these states are fixed, shown by the dashed lines. As I go through a practice session on trumpet, I get more and more tired, and towards the end of a long session, I'm physically incapable of something I could have easily played two hours earlier. The dynamic dance between ability and challenge is just one reason why it's a good idea to "check in" on your emotional state as you practice.

Stephane Wrembel, a virtuoso guitarist who has composed and played music for two Woody Allen films, told me, "Practice and playing music has to be like a religious experience. It has to be your religion, you know; it has to be your trance. You get something from a devotion to it and digging deeper into yourself and the nature of reality."

Achieving a flow state is a powerful motivator to continue to put in the practice time. Getting better is a self-perpetuating cycle. Rex Martin described it by saying, it's

> like a drug. You just keep getting rewarded. You know, the more you practice, the better you get and the better you get the better you feel and the better you feel the more you want to keep doing it and it just keeps going.

You don't have to be a master musician to experience a musical flow state. One of the ways I like to visit the flow state in a practice session is simple enough that even a beginner can do it. The strategy is covered in Chapter 31, "Drone Power," in the last section of the book. If you're curious, check it out now.

Even though good practice is the opposite of flow, I like to begin and end a practice session by visiting this flow state if I can, even if only briefly, because it's a pleasant place to be and fuels my motivation to continue to improve. Drummer Allison Miller said "My goal every time I perform is to lose myself, to lose my ego and let the music just take me wherever it goes." She said, sometimes she'll go into a practice session with no other goal than that: to lose herself in the music. She said, "It's definitely what keeps me wanting to play." Every now and then, the best practice is play.

Extensions

Leo Kottke's Drool Story

Hear Kottke's guitar and storytelling skills in a clip from his documentary, *Home and Away*. On the Web: http://bit.ly/1i02wN2 (5:01)

Dr. Csíkszentmihályi on Flow

Dr. Csíkszentmihályi explains why flow is important to musicians and artists, and how to achieve it. On the Web: http://bit.ly/1o1T2bv

Get Better Faster

Talent means almost nothing when it comes to getting better at anything, especially music. Practice is everything. But exactly what *is* good practice? How does good practice create talent? And what in the world does a pinwheel have to do with practice?

This book covers essential practice strategies and mindsets you won't find in any other book. You'll learn the *What*, *Why*, *When*, *Where*, *Who*, and especially the *How* of great music practice. You'll learn what research tells us about practice, but more importantly, you'll learn how the best musicians in many genres of music *think* about practice, and you'll learn the strategies and techniques they use to improve. This book will help you get better faster, whether you play rock, Bach, or any other kind of music.

Whatever instrument you want to play, *The Practice of Practice* will help you become a more savvy musician, a more informed teacher, and a more effective parent of a young musician.

Don't practice longer, practice smarter.

Jonathan Harnum is a multi-instrumentalist with over 30 years of experience practicing, performing, and teaching music. Harnum earned a PhD in music education at Northwestern University, and is the author of five music-related books.

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