**Introduction**

In this day and age, many people believe they can multitask; we always want to accomplish many things at once. Musicians often try to multitask while practicing their instruments. They think about breathing, articulation, jaw movement, finger technique, and more. However, research has proven that multitasking is impossible and actually decreases our efficiency. Practicing with a “quiet mind” will lead to peak performance and avoid the detrimental effects of trying to concentrate on many things at once. Of course, the questions are: What constitutes a quiet mind, and how does one attain this mental state?

**Literature Review**

*Psycho-Cybernetics*

By Maxwell Maltz

- Psycho-Cybernetics: the subconscious is a goal-achieving mechanism steered by one’s conscious mind
- The conscious mind feeds mental pictures to the subconscious as goals which it works to achieve

A Diagram of How the Nervous System Automatically Functions, According to Maltz

- Identifies a Goal
- Begins Pursuing Goal
- Senses Provide Feedback
- Error Detected
- Corrects and Continues Towards the Goal
- Achieves the Goal

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*The Inner Game of Tennis*

By W. Timothy Gallwey

- Self 1 (conscious mind) vs. Self 2 (subconscious)
- Trust Self 2 and let the body complete the swing
- Only focus on the tennis ball

*Zen in the Art of Archery*

By Eugen Herrigel

- Never think about how to draw the bow
- Only focus on breathing

*Peace is Every Step*

By Thich Nhat Hanh

- Conscious breathing in everyday life
- Staying in the present

*The Organized Mind*

By Daniel J. Levitin

- Attention is most important mental resource
- Multitasking is the enemy of attention
- Use external organization systems to clear the mind of tasks

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*Further Discussion*

- Balancing teaching how to play an instrument vs. how to play music for a middle school band director
- Altering music education curriculum to encourage personal excellence on one’s primary instrument vs. learning pedagogy of other instruments

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**Quieting the Mind Using Connections in the Literature**

- **Musicians must possess a mental version of their goal sound**
  
  “For imagination sets the goal ‘picture’ which our automatic mechanism works on. We act, or fail to act, not because of ‘will,’ as is so commonly believed, but because of imagination” (Maltz, 31).

- **Musicians must think less about how to play the instrument**
  
  “Getting it together mentally involves…learning how to get the clearest possible picture of your desired outcome…” (Gallwey, 13).

- **Musicians must think less about how to play the instrument**
  
  “That’s just the trouble, you make an effort to think about it. Concentrate entirely on your breathing, as if you had nothing else to do!” (Herrigel, 40).

- **Multitasking is the enemy of a focused attentional system** (Levitin, 16).

- **The businessman…is thinking in the back of his mind of all the things he should accomplish today, or perhaps this week, and unconsciously trying mentally to accomplish them all at once. The habit is particularly insidious…** (Maltz, 89).

- **No one knows how many muscles are needed to hit a fast serve**, but if the conscious mind thinks it does and tries to control those muscles, it will inevitably use muscles that aren’t needed” (Gallwey, 27).

- **Of course, thinking is important, but quite a lot of our thinking is useless**” (Hanh, 11).

- **Musicians must let their bodies do the work**
  
  “…stop trying to ‘do it’ by strain and effort, picture to yourself the target you really want to hit, and ‘let’ your creative success mechanism take over” (Malit, 41).

- **Musicians must learn to stay in the present moment**
  
  “Mastery in ink painting is only attained when the hand, exercising perfect control over technique, executes what hovers before the mind’s eye at the same moment when the mind begins to form it…” (Herrigel, 104).

- **Musicians must learn to relax in order to focus**
  
  “…process of concentration by relaxing our bodies” (Herrigel, 90).

- **Focus is a result of a quiet mind**

**Conclusions**

- Sound created on one’s instrument is a direct result of aural imagination
- Focus only on the goal sound, and hear it as vividly and as accurately as possible in one’s mind
- Think in the moment and play in the moment
- Be aware of the physicality of playing, but do not focus on it

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**Corinth Lewis conducting the Hewitt-Trussville Middle School Band in Trussville, AL**

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