

Musical Instrument as A Tool for Physical Fitness and Good Health in Nigeria: Early To Adult Ages in Focus.

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Abstract: *A lot of people get into exercise and physical fitness syndrome without knowing the implication with the aim of keeping up with the 'Jones as it is in vogue, yet they do not want to be seen as social misfits- while exercise is rewarding too much of it without gradual preparation might be injurious to the body except one wants to develop muscles one does not need to engage in strenuous exercise. This paper looks into the hazards of exercise, wasteful and unproductive sport-related consumer expenditures; while subscribing to regular physical activities to prevent the onset of the degenerative cardiovascular diseases, it recommends the playing of a musical instrument rather than engaging in strenuous and hazardous exercise. Musical instrument playing is a productive more rewarding and satisfying physical activity sufficient for physical fitness and good health. It goes further to suggest some low risk physical exercises as a preamble to musical instrument playing using violin as an example.*

Introduction

Physical fitness is the capacity to meet successfully the present and potential physical challenges of life (Lamb 1978). Good health is simply physical well-being. Music is organized sounds, i.e. a combination of sound that is pleasing or not pleasing to the ear. Musical instrument is the device or mechanism used in organizing the variety of sounds. It could also be the human voice used in singing.

According to Lareau (2011), music practice, like other extracurricular activities, improves academic performance by encouraging kids to acquire some forms of cultural capital and by sending encouraging signals to teachers. Additionally, participating in an orchestra or band helps foster the growth of social skills and a sense of community. Very few people including musicians realize that musical instrument practice and playing is a physical exercise even a challenge. Frannis Horganis are known to develop muscles on the chest, arms, shoulder, back, waist, even firm stomach muscles, firm leg and feet muscles. Wind instrument playing like the flute, saxophonist, trumpeter, trombonist and bassoonist in addition, strengthen the muscles of the lungs and enlarge it to increase its capacity and enhance its proper function. All these exercise remove cholesterol from around the heart which otherwise could choke it, leading to heart stroke and in extreme cases death.

Last but not least, extracurricular activities take up time that is then unavailable for other activities that can be beneficial or destructive (Felfe et al., 2011). Of fact, other activities other than music can have a similar or even greater impact on some of these results. It would be interesting to know that music and musical instrument playing donot only enhance physical fitness and well-being but ever spiritual development. The Biblical David healed King Saul of psychosis through the playing of lyre, a string instrument (I Sam. 14:23). Indeed, music could be used to alleviate mental and psychological problems like psychosis neurosis and so on. It is a separate field in itself called music therapy. Now not the least of these reasons is the satisfaction and a sense of achievement gained from learning to play musical instruments. Music has been postulated to influence exercise performance through three main types of mechanisms: psychological, physiological, and psychophysiological.

Hazards of Exercise

While it is socially desirable to participate in some form of regular physical activity, there are however, some problems accompanying this generally acceptable endeavour. It is true that regular exercise has many health benefits. But exercise under certain condition can be harmful even deadly, even under normal conditions before one starts to jog. The first few days should be spent walking preparing the body for the impending strain/ stress. Many people are attracted to and participated in widely publicized cross-Country race like the Milo Marathon or Cycling race. Despite the fact that many individuals find exercise to be boring, music may make it enjoyable for everyone. According to research, those who listen to music while exercising or engaging in other physical activity perform better than those who do not. According to Terry, during a military band performance, participants in a 6-day bike race moved 8.5% faster (Terry, 2020). Many people now consider overtime music to be a significant aspect of their lives. The truth is that not many of the participants are totally prepared for the stress of such runs. They suffer severe damage to the legs, feet, heart exhaustion and heart stroke. In extreme cases, it may in unpredictable serious casualty. The bomb blast at Ikeja the other day force many people to run for their life. It was inevitably clear that most people were not prepared for such stress. Some of the people suffered bodily harm, heart stroke, exhaustion or even died. These and other exercise related injuries could be prevented by regular practice and playing of musical instruments which provide the capacity to meet the present and potential physical challenges successfully.

Short Related Consumption / Expenditure

The involvement of numerous previously inactive persons in exercise with rapid growth of sport and exercise industry, huge amount of consumers' money are spent on athletics, clothing, sports equipment, nutritional aids, and fitness programme. While much of the expenditure is for worthwhile purposes, the layman is bombarded with diverse advertising pressure to join fitness clubs, which have virtually nothing to offer, urging people to buy worthless fitness books and to purchase rather non-effective exercise equipment at cut-throat prices. Had this expenditure been for the of musical instrument and hiring of the service of music teachers. The consumers would be the better for it. While enjoying the benefits of physical fitness and mental well-being there is invaluable sense of achievement and unparalleled satisfaction derived from the playing of musical instrument. At any rate, in the spirit of democracy without superimposing one's personal view on others and thus be guilty of the same offence that one had accused others, if one so desires to depend some of one's funds on the former, one should not neglect the later.

Meeting Physical Challenges

According to Lambs, physical fitness is the ability to successfully navigate both current and future physical problems in life. This definition suggests that the physical fitness requirements of difference individuals will vary depending on the physical challenges they face ; a footballer for instance, faces a gruelling present challenges and much work regularly to improve and maintain his muscular strength, flexibility, anaerobic power and cardiovascular endurance, whereas people who lead a sedentary existence, erroneously some place the musicians on the same pedestal with the housewife who needs only enough strength to do simple domestic chores. At the first glance, musicians may be presumed to require little regular exercise. But considering the potential physical challenges the two categories of people might meet one's view would be instantly reversed-heart disease or high blood pressure. It is abundantly evident that participation in regular exercise makes one less prone to suffer early heart disease. To successfully meet the potential challenge of heart disease, regular participation in physical activity during the present is recommended long before the onset of the degenerative cardiovascular disease. Another potential physical challenges is chronic low back pain. However, the risk of low back pain is much less in those who engage in physical activity. Even when there is no evidence that present physical challenges require regular exercise, there is ample evidence that future challenges can be met more successfully if one begins a life long program of regular activity early in life and persist in it.

What a better way of achieving the above than to start early to learn to play a musical instrument and persist in it. This has far reaching result with added benefits of achievement, immeasurable satisfaction, of wealth and fame. There is no end in it. Each successive generation should be more physical fit, healthier than the one before. Imagine beginning this life-long programme of regular physical activity from the age of three or four and persist in it. Ideally, violin playing for instance, should begin at age of three or four.

Low risk exercise for musicians

Two lesson a week are sufficient at this age. Children learn by example and challenge. However, by te age of eight or nine they can grasp the mechanical analysis and explanation quite clearly. To prepare oneself properly for the challenge of playing the violin it is necessary not only to concentrate on the playing of instrument, but to cultivate an attitude of mind and heart, as well as certain habits of hygiene and general physical condition so that playing itself might be without impediment. Good health is a very necessary concomitant and cleanliness as well as certain exertion in sports and other activities alternating with rest, add to the general toning of muscle and blood circulation. Through violin playing demands infinite subtlety it also demands great resistance and strength. Obviously, good diet is very important. However, this must be left to individual in his infinite variety of metabolism and body chemistry. Nevertheless, a balance diet is recommended with plenty of fruits and vegetable, and minimum fried foods. It is well to avoid food made with refined flour and refined sugar which cigarettes and alcohol give with one hand and take away plus an additional discount with the other. It is also important never to ear too much an any time, especially prior to playing.

Low risk exercise for musicians (Violinist)

In the very first standing pose you can exercise nearly muscle in the body while remaining quite still. This form of exercise is one of the secrets of resilience and strength. One essential foundation of violin playing is good posture and you must first discover the most natural stance, which will early absorb and accommodate the various movement of the body in the playing of instrument. Posture though in itself seems a static situation, this is by no means the case. Not only is it the result of a continuous balance of opposing forces, but at the same time, it is imbued with pulse and rhythm, the pulse of the out heart and the rhythm of our breathing.

Breathing and Breathing exercise

In the beginning after God created the body of Adam, Bible says He breath into him the breath of life (Gen, 2:7), Breathing is basic to all activity and to all musical art that we should be conscious of it while practising. Breathing should be smooth and unforced. Even during the most intricate movement in playing the violin it should continue quietly. This requires certain amount of training and a high degree of coordination. To breath properly one has to have the ability to inhale and exhale evenly. Both inhalation an exhalation should be as long as possible and take the same amount of time:

Perhaps the best initial exercise is to sit on the ground with legs folded upon each other and hand (palm upward) resting on the knees. Spine straight, neck and shoulders relaxed. Chest free and held high and to begin breathing quietly. Inhalation and exhalation should be timed and attempt should be made to prolong each without getting out of breath.

Another exercise which greatly increase the control of the lung capacity is to place the right hand over the nose, blocking the right with the tip of the thumb, and left nostril just enough to allow a very thin column of air to enter (a) Inhale through the left nostril (b) exhale through the right by slightly releasing the thumb while closing the left nostril with the second finger exhale completely, (c) Inhale through the right nostril (d) exhale through the left.

The efficiency of this exercise is measured by the length of each inhalation and exhalation, by the narrowness of the aperture of air and by the silence of this air passage. In both inhalation and exhalation take 45 seconds each and you repeat the complete cycle ten times, you will have good control over your breathing.

Posture and Stretching exercises

The basic of a good posture is an upward stretching from the toes through the spine to the crown of the head, in which our muscles counteract the natural collapsing tendency of the joint under the force of gravity. This erect position is as much a sign of good health in violin playing as it is of vitality and good health in life. It is amazing that the principles of weight bearing and weight transfer exist in violin playing as in gymnastics though, here it is not noticeable. Lot differentiate between weight transference and weight bearing. In weight bearing the focus is directed toward the parts, which are to receive weight, and to the rest of the body. While weight is being maintained on a specific part. In weight transference the stress is on what happens to weight being removed from one part arriving on another, how the body moves between two points of support, whereas weight bearing is stillness, transference and it involved locomotion.

Although, there is correction, in locomotion, it is on travelling getting from place to place while transference is the transitional movement between two weight bearing positions by rocking, rolling, step like action of foot. Menuhin (1971) subtly applied this principle while attempting to describe "maximum vertical stretch". the violinists weight should fall slightly more on the balls of the feet than on the heels. This forward balance allows for greater mobility and lightness and enhance the playing position.

The arches of the feet should be raised by rolling slightly onto the outside edge of the feet keeping the toes relaxed.

1. This raised position of the arches should be retained when the feet are returned to their normal position by an inward pressure from the ankles.
2. The knees are pushed back.
3. Maintain the separation of the thighs, while the buttocks are tensed and thrust forward.
4. The stomach pulled in
5. The chest pushed forward and upward diagonally.
6. Only shoulders maintained at their horizontal which are completely relaxed and falling arms, hand and fingers hanging loosely almost parallel to the spine, the rest of the body stretching as if the head was trying to touch the ceiling, and the toes, ball of foot and heels to push the ground away.
7. Head pulled back lengthening the neck.
8. These adjustments, in defiance of gravity, should be done.

On an inhalation, the chest reaches its further expansion. The level of the chest should not drop on exhalation, for it is against this ballooning fullness that we let the back and shoulder relax, allowing them to move easily forward. Having held this position for a few moments, allow the body to sag and slump. Alternate several times between the upright and the relaxed posture. This will help you to capture the feeling of the various opposing directions of muscular activity. When you finally retain the erect posture, you can relax the muscles to a certain extent without losing the correct stance. The correct muscle-tone will allow you to retain this stance without strain.

One should not haste to add that the above are just few of the low risk exercises that could be undertaken as preambles to the instrument practice itself. The actual playing of the instrument is a highly rewarding exercise.

Health Benefits of Playing an Instrument

Deep Breathing – Most of the time our breathing is very shallow, but activities like singing or playing a wind instrument require deep breathing from the diaphragm. This strengthens your lungs and respiratory system. Playing the harmonica can even help with pulmonary disease!

Immune Response – When we master an instrument, we frequently get the urge to compose our own music. Making music "enhances the immune response, which enables us to fight viruses," according to a Live Science article.

Stress Relief – Playing music directs your attention and energy toward a constructive endeavor, which can reduce stress. Your blood pressure and heart rate can decrease to a healthy level thanks to those lower stress levels.

Fine Hearing By teaching you to separate sounds as they happen, learning music improves your hearing abilities. In noisy environments, studies have even revealed that musicians are more adept at identifying certain voices and noises.

Exercise – Naturally, learning an instrument results in more physical activity. You use your arm and back muscles to play and/or hold up your instrument whether you're playing the piano, guitar, strings, or a wind instrument. Additionally, playing the drums allows you to perform some cardio!

Posture – Your posture will be corrected throughout classes by a qualified music teacher. You can use this to help you develop the habit of sitting up straight and aligning yourself correctly even when you aren't playing. These are all excellent methods for reducing neck and back discomfort.

Recommendation

1. Do not go into strenuous exercise without gradual and adequate preparation for it.
2. Be clear about your reason for exercising, is it for the purpose of body building or merely for physical fitness and good health?
3. If it is for the later choose simple exercise.
4. Be regular at it.
5. Make a life long undertaking.
6. It is advisable to learn to play a musical instrument so that apart from enjoying the benefit of physical exercise you would also have great pleasure and satisfaction of self-realization and achievement.

Conclusion

This paper was not intended to downgrade physical exercises and the writer hopes this was made abundantly clear. What it is against is unnecessary strenuous unproductive hazardous high consumer expenditure types. It solicits low risk, low expenditure as productive types which will give one high sense of achievement and satisfaction as added value to the physical fitness and good health any other exercise promised. This is readily available to those who opt to play musical instrument.

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