



# CONQUER THE STAGE



JAN. 12  
2:00PM

## OVERCOMING PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

WITH VIOLINIST  
**AIJA REKE**





# About me

## My name is Aija Reke

I am a teacher at

- ▷ Boston Music Project
- ▷ Brookline Public Schools
- ▷ Private studio
- ▷ Taught a Zoom masterclass for 200 participants in 2021
- ▷ DMA candidate at Boston University CFA

More: [www.aijareke.com](http://www.aijareke.com)





## **Recordings:**

- ▷ **Spice Classics**
- ▷ **Albany Records**

## **Performances:**

- ▷ **Performed in 14 countries**
- ▷ **Performed as soloist for 1500 people audience**

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## Symptoms of stage fright

- **Shaky hands and feet**
- **Weakness**
- **Nausea**
- **Sweaty or cold palms**
- **Dry throat**





## **Feelings on stage**

**When we have stage fright we feel like we temporarily “leave our body” and lose control of it.**



# Stage fright and shame

The worst is to feel ashamed of the stage fright.

Instead of being ashamed of it, we need to accept it as a normal occurrence and work with stage anxiety strategies.



# At the moment of the stage fright

Focus on the things you can control:

1. **Your breath**
2. **Posture**
3. **Mindset**





## **Practice walking on the stage**

- Performance starts with you walking on the stage**
- With confident steps enter the stage**
- Smile and confidently bow to the public**
- Use tuning to relax your stiff muscles**
- Before you start playing, deeply breathe in and out 5 times**
- The first note is always an exhale - that will relax your muscles**

## **Dialog and self talk after performance/audition**

- 1. Was it your best performance?**
- 2. If yes, how did you achieve it?**
- 3. If not, what could you do better next time?**



## **Anxiety coping through breathwork and movement**

- Box breathing**
- Power move**
- Bounce in place - shake out all anxiety from your body**





# Create a pre-performance ritual

- ◉ Focus on breathing and do a breathing exercise
- ◉ Practice your confident posture
- ◉ Create positive affirmations
- ◉ Close your eyes and think about 3 things you are grateful for
- ◉ Remember, why you play the violin
- ◉ Remember, this is not the only chance of you performing
- ◉ Think that you already finished your performance
- ◉ Wear a necklace or an “amulet”
- ◉ Don’t talk to other nervous performers

## **How to practice stage fright**

- **Record yourself**
- **Play for your family and friends**
- **Raise your heart rate by running or walking up and down the stairs and then try playing**
- **Try to imitate performance situation by playing your piece without a warm up**
- **Practice in uncomfortable conditions - cold, hot room, uncomfortable outfits, ect.**

**Instead of trying to play perfectly, try playing the best possible version of your piece.**





# **Perfect performance doesn't exist**

**If you make a mistake while performing, try to think forward. If you focus on the mistake, you might attract more mistakes**

**“Poker face” - don't show with your face, when you make a mistake**

**Trust your muscle (finger) “memory”, which is why we practice a lot**



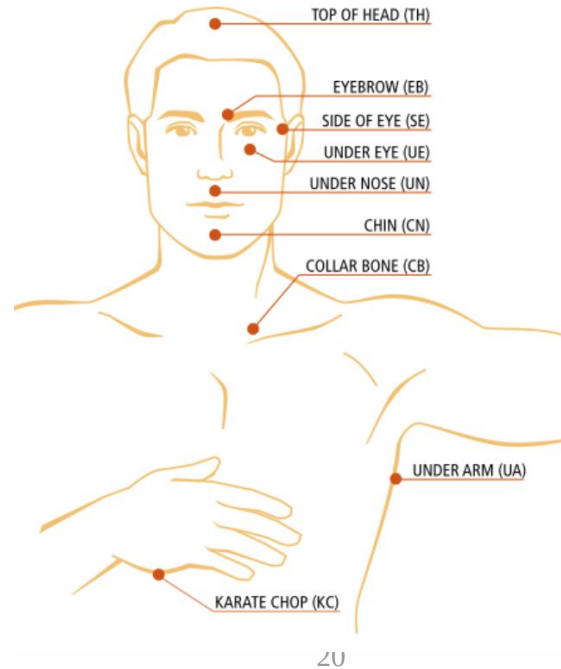
# EFT - Tapping

## Emotional Freedom Technique

- Meditation and affirmation method by lightly tapping at meridian points
- Helps to release stress, tension and anxiety



# Meridian points





## **In case of panic**

- 1. Look at and observe your surroundings**
- 2. Touch and feel an object (your instrument)**
- 3. Feel your breath**
- 4. Feel fragrances and smells in the air**



***Pianist Daniel Barenboim jokingly said that at the beginning of his career he started as a violinist.***

***When he saw at the age of four that the piano has three legs to hold itself, he transferred to piano and never looked back.***



## Why we are afraid to drop our instrument

- ❑ **Stiff posture**
- ❑ **Tension in shoulders, neck and pressing down the chin**
- ❑ **Use of tense technique**



# What to do?

- ❑ **Try to shift the weight from one foot to another during the performance (figure 8 by Bayla Keyes)**
- ❑ **Feel the weight in your feet - like a tree with roots**
- ❑ **Instead of pressing down the chin and tightening shoulders, try to lift up your chin, move your instrument slightly and move your head.**

## Exercise

- ❑ **Place your instrument on shoulder. First time ask your mom, brother, sister to help you.**
- ❑ **Hold your instrument only with chin and shoulder and try placing both hands on your head and exhale and say “Ahhh”.**
- ❑ **Try to bend forward**
- ❑ **Swing your hands**



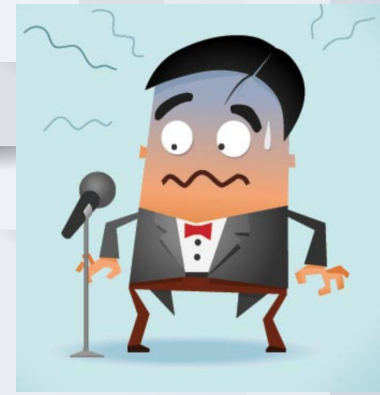


## **The support of the mentor**

**One unthoughtful and mean comment of a teacher or mentor can leave everlasting detrimental effect for a student sometimes for the duration of the whole career.**

**Try to only give constructive criticism.**

**Never put down student's performance, but find the right words and strategies to improve student's playing without hurting student's feelings.**



## **For educators**

**It is extremely important in our lessons to have supportive atmosphere and openly discuss the topic of the stage fright.**

**Make the student feel that any outcome of their performance as long as they practice and try their best will be sufficient.**

**The more confidence you build in your student, the better will be the outcome of the performance.**



## **For teachers and mentors**

- **Listen to your students carefully (with empathy) and be emotionally present**
- **Don't compare your students with each other**
- **Be careful with your comments about the performance of the student as it can reflect in their feelings of overall confidence and feelings of self worth**
- **Create an emotionally safe, welcoming and present environment at your teaching studio.**

## Shaky bow

- ❑ The vertical pressure of the bow is too strong
- ❑ Tension in right hand, especially thumb
- ❑ Tight elbow, but too loose wrist



### What to do?

- ❑ Balance out the feeling of all fingers in the right hand and relax thumb, move your index finger further forward (“big hand” - by Bayla Keyes)
- ❑ Distract your attention from the bow motion and instead focus on the freedom of your armpit

## **Shaky bow solutions**

- Wavy bow**
- Focus on your armpit**
- The feeling is the same as string crossing, but stay on one string**

## **Diet and herbal tea**

### **Tea:**


- Chamomile**
- Mint**
- Reduce or replace the coffee with green tea (use decaf)**
  
- Bananas contain natural beta blockers**
- Dark chocolate gives extra energy without the danger of the sugar crash.**






# Physical and mental well being - A cure for the stage fright

- High quality sleep
- Arrive to performance venue early, add buffer time for traffic
- Comfortable outfit and shoes
- Take layers with you to adapt to the temperature of the venue
- Put your phone on “don’t disturb” mode and silence your notifications
- Take extra strings with you (takes away the anxiety of “what if my string breaks”)



*Exercises that can support understanding body and  
mind systems to prevent and eliminate stage fright*

*Yoga  
Breathing exercises  
Walking  
Wim Hof Method  
Meditation  
Alexander Technique  
Tai Chi*





**Stage fright is highly related to unresolved emotional issues in life and sometimes associates with unresolved emotional trauma.**

**The more confident you feel in life, the more confident you will feel on the stage.**

**Don't be afraid to ask support and help to your private teacher, trusted mentor, family member, friend or a therapist/coach.**







**Essential oils:  
aromatherapy against  
stage fright**



# Which oils to use?

Chamomile, lavender, peppermint, ylang ylang, frankincense







## **Life practices to build performance muscle**

**Get out of your comfort zone:**

- **Take cold shower or contrast shower**
- **Speak out your opinion**
- **Attend acting classes**
- **Tell a speech in front of people**
- **Recite a poem in front of your family**







*Consistency was another way to tamp down terror.  
Frank Shorter (US Olympic Gold medalist)*

*On good days and bad days, you always show up.  
Alexi Pappas (filmmaker)*



# Thank you!

More questions?



You can find me

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- ❑ [www.aijareke.com](http://www.aijareke.com)
- ❑ @aijarekeviolinist
- ❑ Facebook: Aija Reke violinist





## Recommended books

- ❑ Kato Havas “Stage Fright”
- ❑ Casey McGrath, Karin S. Hendricks, Tawnya D. Smith  
“Performance Anxiety Strategies: A Musician’s Guide  
to Managing Stage Fright”

