

To Understand or To Feel? An Approach of Mindfulness Towards Music Appreciation

Abstract

This study examined if mindfulness could enhance music appreciation. Self-judgement on one's lack of understanding of the music is one of the most common obstacles in modern-day classical music appreciation. Previous research found that state mindfulness, which increases attention to the present and promotes non-judgemental attitudes towards oneself, was able to increase various aspects in music appreciation except for negative emotional experiences. The present study used body scanning and thoughts and emotions scanning to increase state mindfulness. 154 participants were recruited and randomly assigned to listen to an audio recording of a 6.5-minute body scanning exercise, a 6.5-minute thoughts and emotions scanning exercise, a 6-minute pre-concert talk, or to a control group with no interventions. The participants were then presented with a piece of atonal music that was unpleasant and less approachable to most audiences. Results showed that there was a significant increase in body state mindfulness in the combination of both mindfulness-based interventions, while body scanning and the pre-concert talk each enhanced cognitive fluency significantly. The increase in body state mindfulness mediated the effects of the scanning exercises on negative emotionality, sadness, and cognitive stimulation. The increase in cognitive fluency mediated the effects of the pre-concert talk and body scan on various aspects in aesthetic reception and emotions, as well as the passage of time judgment and anticipation of the music's ending.

Keywords: mindfulness, body scan exercise, classical music, cognitive fluency, music appreciation