



The Inner Game of Music

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By the best-selling co-author of "Inner Tennis," here's a book designed to help musicians overcome obstacles, help improve concentration, and reduce nervousness, allowing them to reach new levels of performing excellence and musical artistry.

The Inner Game of Music Details

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Tony Ren says

My vocal teacher recommended this to me. I thought it was alright. The techniques and tips the book covers are things that may marginally improve your abilities. But it in no way can substitute a real teacher.

A common theme in the book is to: try this, now try that, and notice if it feels and sounds different. For example, the author would suggest try playing a passage as loud as you comfortably can, then as soft as you comfortably can, and suggest you to try and find a middle level in between. I mean, that kind of generic advice might be good for the first step, but doesn't really offer anything substantially useful for going beyond that level of mastery.

I feel like this book addresses and is helpful to certain students of music struggling with the specific problems covered in the book. Which are: not trusting own abilities, muscle tension, balancing awareness and focus, and inefficient practice habits.

Overall I think it would help most students. But you should skim through parts that you feel are irrelevant

Lauren says

I actually did not even finish this book. I was recommended to it by my piano teacher, hoping that it would help me with some of my performance anxiety. However, I found it completely unhelpful. I found myself falling to sleep while reading it when it wasn't even bedtime.

To keep it short and sweet, I found the analogies and connections from sports to music a little far fetched, and it didn't keep me interested. There was too many mathematical equations as to how this plus that would equal doodlysquat. I wanted to be inspired and reassured about my performance anxiety, not lulled to sleep.

This is a completely personal opinion, though. Everyone learns and appreciates things differently.

Erik Dabel says

Great book. Every musician, every music student, and specifically every music teacher, should not only read it, but own it for future references.

There are so many great tips and ideas, and ways to both play music and teach it that get better long term results. Some of which I have already implanted in my own playing and teaching, some of which I am simply waiting for the opportunity to do so.

That being said, there are also several sections that seem like a bit of overkill to me. We must remember to not get wrapped up in gimmicks and technical ideas, but that music often just needs to be completely free in order to survive and flourish.

This book is a mix of both, but it's still important to have the complete idea of the "Inner Game" technique in order to know when to use it, and when to simply let go.

Musicians: Go out right now and buy this book. Don't borrow it, don't check it out from the library. You need to own it, mark it up, put bookmarks in it, know it all. Do it.

Sarah says

Helped me learn how to deal with my stage anxiety and helped me to focus better while performing

Hope F. says

The Inner Game of Music deals with the inner struggles of nervousness, self-doubt- and the fear of performing in front of others. This book takes the theory of "natural learning"--which Tim Gallwey developed for sports such as golf and tennis--and applies it to music. The book is helpful if you are struggling with self confidence issues when performing, which is why I personally decided to read it. The book is also designed to give new insights on how to truly appreciate music as a whole, and how to understand the process of composing it and performing it. Green also gives exercises and demonstrations that can help improve technique in any aspects of music. In my personal experience, I have always struggled with performance anxiety, and I've always wanted to understand and connect to music as much as I can. This book has really helped me overcome my anxieties of performing in front of others, and I have learned a lot from it.

Charles says

I bought this book years ago but decided to re-read it and see what tips I can gain for playing piano.

Amalie Simper says

This was a re read from my college days in piano performance degrees. It was such a great reprise to see how I have grown as a musician over the years. It explains the idea that a person has two sides to their personality self 1. The self conscious doubting side and self 2. The letting it go, emotion filled side. He gives 4 different ways to work on awareness, several ideas that discuss will power and trust in your playing. It discusses working on your individual instrument, working in ensembles, and improvisation. I did appreciate the memories of the sound recording devices of the 80's.

Marshall says

The book provides a comprehensive analysis on what helps / hinders our musical growth. As a musician early on in the development, I find some advices extremely valuable.

The concept of "self 1 and self 2" lays the foundation for most discussions: every musician involves two "self" in terms of performance - Self 1 is logical, judgmental, and self-conscious, Self 2 is spontaneous, natural. We should apply techniques to be aware about self 2. Our goal is to let self 2 express the most, and reframe the impact of self 1.

Another concept reveals three aspects of training - will, trust, and awareness. There are many tips on how to increase will (set clear goals), trust (build up confidence and focus) and awareness (connect with emotions and memory).

It's a book worth re-read as I continue on music practice.

Some great quotes:

Thinking is natural, and thoughts are likely to be present in every aspect of our lives: sometimes we pay attention to our thoughts, and sometimes we ignore them and change the subject. Self 1 includes not only our own thoughts, but also whatever we have picked up from our teacher's instructions, the hints our friends give us, our parents' hopes and desires, and our own urge to fulfill or reject those expectations. It includes everything we "think" we should be doing or worrying about.

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 18). . Kindle Edition.

The challenge of the Inner Game is for you to bypass the critical interference of Self 1 and unleash the natural power and grace of Self 2.

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 24). . Kindle Edition.

Our musical challenge is to imagine that we always have a second chance—to give ourselves permission to fail.

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 33). . Kindle Edition.

The body's kinesthetic sense is an important part of musicianship. Dancing, singing, foot tapping, and "conducting along with the record" are other ways to engage the body with the music.

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 59). . Kindle Edition.

The body, like a computer, remembers its instructions when it has been properly programmed. But like even the most sophisticated computer, it needs to be programmed "a bit at a time."

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 67). . Kindle Edition.

Trust isn't the kind of thing you exactly learn—you either trust or you don't. And when you feel you can't trust, you can't let go. So why is it sometimes so difficult to trust? I've found that there are often obstacles between us and our capacity to trust, and in order to overcome them, we first need to know what they are and

how they work.

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 78). . Kindle Edition.

The secret of getting past your worries about how you'll appear to others is to give yourself the character and emotions of the music. You become the music, not yourself.

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 80). . Kindle Edition.

Leonard Bernstein once said: “The only way I have of knowing I’ve done a really remarkable performance is when I lose my ego completely and become the composer. I have the feeling that I’m creating the piece, writing the piece on stage, just click, click, click, making it up as I go, along with those hundred people who are also making it up with me.”

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 81). . Kindle Edition.

Boredom is what I feel when I don’t feel sufficiently challenged by what I’m doing. But I can always choose to find challenge in what would otherwise seem boring circumstances.

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 123). . Kindle Edition.

One major element in “letting go” is our vulnerability. Much of the excitement in playing live music comes from not knowing what will happen in each performance.

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 123). . Kindle Edition.

“It is in this whole process of meeting and solving problems that life has its meaning.... Problems call forth our courage and our wisdom; indeed they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only because of problems that we grow.... It is for this reason that wise people learn not to dread but actually welcome problems.”

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 127). . Kindle Edition.

The conductor George Szell remarked, “In music one must think with the heart and feel with the brain.”

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 176). . Kindle Edition.

Those who feel unhappy often attribute their problems to a loss of personal identity or to boredom.

Green, Barry (2012-03-11). The Inner Game of Music (p. 190). . Kindle Edition.

Lyn says

As a music teacher I dived into this book with enthusiasm. There are some useful exercises and tips for overcoming nervousness as a performer, directing your focus and using practice time more effectively. I learned quite a bit but ultimately felt a bit let down; or perhaps it is just that there is no real alternative to just getting on and doing lots and lots of practising!

Hannah King says

The Inner Game of Music was a very helpful book for people who have performance anxiety. Since reading it, I've learned a lot from the book and have grown more confident in my music skills. It explains different methods of how to cope with performance anxiety, and how to be a better musician. For example, the book portrays different stories of different people who struggle with performance anxiety, and how people got over it, from thinking it's okay to mess up to even taking deep breathes and clearing your mind. The book also gives you examples to play or sing on, and lets you look at music in a different spectrum. Even though there might be some stories, this isn't a storybook, it's an informational book on how to cope with your fears. So I wouldn't give this book to a little child, or a starting musician, it might panic them into not playing the instrument. The book would be more for people who have been playing for quite some time, and struggle with performance anxiety. The things you should not look forward to the book is a simple, and open message, there's many messages and different techniques, which made the book kind of confusing of which method would be better, yet it was balanced out by directions and the examples. The introduction was also sloppy, first trying to put in three little stories, but also explaining that their's other books for help with people that the Author wrote, and even though it one of the most informational books, it is outdated a little in information. Yet, I liked the way all the methods taught in all different manors, and how it had examples showing that the methods work. Overall, the book it a good story for someone who struggles with music-based things, and just performance anxiety in general, and would be one of the still most used book to this day.

Josiah Aston says

Self 2 freedom from self 1 discipline

I really enjoyed this book and its discussion of self 1, with all of its doubts and fears, and self 2, the uninhibited part of us that we need to allow to take over in difficult situations. Intuition is key, and we can enjoy and create much more fluidly if we allow ourselves to follow those deeper feelings without letting logic destroy the moment. Nevertheless, I felt the book was mostly appropriate for professional musicians, and not so much amateurs or beginners. The terminology was often beyond what I would expect a beginner to understand, and many beginners are often unable to let self 2 take over because they have never brought themselves to a level of self 1 discipline to learn the piece thoroughly enough that they can allow self 2 to emerge. Perhaps this book will help them though.

Marijke says

This was accidentally given to me by my viola instructor after being recommended as a way to improve my performing skills. However, while many of the concepts the book gives are excellent, I found the writing patronising and long-winded. While it is sometimes useful to have the 'Inner Game' techniques spelled out in musical concepts, I have found that 'the Inner Game of Tennis', which I am currently reading, is generally more useful in spelling out concepts. Many of the exercises in 'the Inner Game of Music' seem to dumb down the concepts presented rather than promote them. I think almost all readers of this book are experienced musicians looking to up their game and tapping exercises were both pointless and hindered reading the book

in public.

If you're looking for similar concepts I would highly recommend reading 'the Inner Game of Tennis'. It presents the same concepts but in a more concise manner that does not assume the reader is clueless. The tennis metaphors are not a hindrance and the book is considerably shorter!

Kit Warren says

This book has some useful information but is definitely entirely for classical players, despite the writer's attempts to make it universal. Its connections to the ideas of 'Inner Game' feel super forced and far better suited to sports as it was originally intended for. The most laborious part of this book is that the writer uses incredibly boring examples of his techniques working again and again which all read exactly like this: "Julie was having issues with her bowing technique, but then I told her this. Before my eyes, she became the best thing ever, we were shocked!". I'd believe he was making them all up if they weren't so boring. He is always 'shocked' by the fact that everything he says works brilliantly for everyone he's ever known. It's like Cake Boss but without the fun or the cake. 2/5

Tyrone Steele says

This is an astounding work related to breaking down the walls that prevent us from executing a relaxed and enjoyable performance. I recommend this for all musicians, but is applicable to nearly any type of performance.

Stefan Kanev says

It's a bit tricky to rate this book. It appears that it has some very sound advice for musicians, but since I'm not a real musician, I cannot tell whether this is true or not. Anyhow.

I learned about the Inner Game from a friend of mine and I've been wanting to read more about it for a while. I was not that interested in The Inner Game of Tennis, since I don't play tennis. I'm trying to pick up music lately and it seemed like a great way to get introduced to those ideas.

The gist of it is creating a distinction between Self 1 (your inner chatter) and Self 2 (your intuitive/reactive self). You should try to silence Self 1 as much as possible and focus on Self 2. A good example is working on dynamics in a musical piece - instead of trying to play evenly, you should just be aware of how loud or soft you play. In this particular example, you create a better feedback loop between what you're doing and what you're hearing, which is purported to be more effective than focusing on trying.

The book is full of exercises and applications of the Inner Game technique. I'm very eager to try some of them, but since they are geared towards proper musicians, I cannot really practice a lot of them.

Even if we put aside the whole Inner Game part, the book was full of interesting stories and thoughts about music - that alone made it worthwhile to read.

