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News from ASPAH Executive Committee

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear <<First Name>>,

This September issue of our bi-monthly newsletter includes articles about our upcoming webinar on actors' health and our previous webinar on performance anxiety, as well as a submission from an ASPAH member, Rachael Martin, about the use of Guided Imagery and Music to enhance confidence in music performance.

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If you are a member and have an event, article or any news you would like to share through the ASPAH newsletter, please send your content through to [media@aspah.org.au](mailto:media@aspah.org.au) by October 31st to be considered for publication in the next issue.

Keep healthy and well!

Camilla

#### **IN THIS NEWSLETTER**

1. Remembering Paulette Mifsud 1964 - 2016
2. What to Expect in Our Upcoming Webinar
3. Report: Dr Shona Erskine Reframing Performance Anxiety
4. Enhancing Confident Music Performance with Guided Imagery and Music (by Rachael Martin)
5. Latest MPPA Research Titles

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## **Obituary for Paulette Mifsud 19/2/1964 - 2/8/2016**

In her 30 years working as a psychologist, Paulette worked with numerous athletes ranging from club to elite level athletes. In addition to consulting with athletes, Paulette used her mental skills training to assist performing artists.

Paulette was born in Malta and came to Australia when she was 7 years old, growing up in Mooroolbark, Victoria. When she was young she wanted to be either a ballet dancer, or drama teacher, or PE teacher – so she had always been balancing interests between performing arts and sports. But while subsequent health issues prevented her from a career as either a performing artist or PE teacher, she learnt about psychology that so strongly supported her growing interest and compassion for people. She was very dedicated to her studies, securing a Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) at Monash University (1985), a Graduate Diploma in Child and Adolescent Psychology at the University of Melbourne (1987), and a Masters of

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## "Readiness to Return: Psychosocial Factors and Injury Recovery".

Paulette faced many challenges during her life. One was choosing a career in sport psychology, which back in the early 80s was still a mostly male profession. But Paulette appeared to thrive on challenges. Her response to the cancer diagnosis last year was no different and highlighted just how Paulette approached life. According to her husband, Martin, her GP actually questioned if she understood what he had just said about her diagnosis, as her response wasn't the tears he was expecting. Rather it was a simple acknowledgement of the fact before she went straight into formulating a plan of action!

For all those who knew her, Paulette was always a very determined person and always willing to help others. She always strove to do things better and this continued until she was admitted for the last time into hospital. Paulette's positivity and optimism never wavered throughout, even after the second relapse.

She had a real passion for the performing arts and it showed in her energy and enthusiasm. I first met her, in 2010, when she contacted me from Melbourne, to fly up to Sydney just for a day to meet a guest (Prof Julia Buckroyd) I was hosting from the UK for an ASPAAH seminar in Sydney on psychological wellbeing of performing artists. When she heard about ASPAAH she immediately signed up as a member and by the end of 2010, she was on the Executive Committee, keen to offer her skills and energy for whatever would help the cause! She was an active participant on the Committee from 2010 to 2012.

In the performing arts, she worked with major organisations such as the Australian Ballet Company, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Opera. Paulette also lectured in Mental Skills and Sport/Performance Psychology at various universities, including the University of Melbourne, Monash University, Victoria University, Ballarat University and Deakin University. Many of the athletes she supported medaled at major competitions such as the Olympics, Commonwealth Games and world championships. Amongst other organisations, Paulette worked with the Victorian Institute of Sport, Gymnastics Victoria and Sports Medicine Clinics of Victoria.

Paulette also lectured at Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School for a number of years and continued to lecture first year Performance Psychology at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), University of Melbourne. Although Paulette had to give up most of her work after the chemotherapy last year due to the tiredness,

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week to recover and organise the next lecture!

Her private consultancy practice, Mental Potential, began in 1986. As a psychologist, she made use of diagnostic tools, counselling techniques, CBT, and Positive Psychology. Her main areas of focus were performance enhancement, injury prevention, rehabilitation, and return to performance, personal development, and career management. Her clientele was primarily sport and performing arts personnel. She worked across more than 50 sports and the performing artists she worked with also came from various fields including dance, music, and theatre.

One of her last projects to come to fruition was "The Amphitheatre" – a growing community of those actively seeking or offering wellbeing support across the performing arts and elite sports sectors. She wrote on its Facebook page:

*Historically the Amphitheatre was an open place, a public venue where athletic meetings were held, where performances were given, and philosophers discussed the important issues of the day. Overall it was and still is, a meeting place where shared experience whether it be athletic, artistic or educational can be discussed and support and friendships fostered. This group and page is a virtual amphitheatre. A place where shared aspirations towards peak performance and wellbeing can be communicated and resources developed. A place where performing artists and athletes can voice their opinions and refine strategies to help them become more resilient and live their passion with pride.*

Aside from the Facebook page, there have been one or two Melbourne-based gatherings. Currently ASPAH and others who valued Paulette's commitment to the psychological wellbeing of performing artists are exploring ways to continue her legacy.

Paulette's passion and commitment to performing artists' health and wellbeing will live on, and we are grateful for having known her.

## **UPCOMING WEBINAR: WHAT TO EXPECT**

**Wednesday, September 21st, 7pm – 8pm EST**

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## **"The price of love: What are the wellbeing costs of pursuing an acting career" with Dr Mark Seton**

**We love to watch actors onstage or screen being vulnerable and taking risks – enacting and experiencing the traumas of life – but we don't consider the physical, emotional and personal impact on actors, their families and friends. Psychological or emotional injury, especially, is not as apparent as a dancer's or musician's injury.**

**Performing arts medicine has emerged as a specialization over the past 33 years. A group of physicians involved individually with the medical care of musicians and dancers established the Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA) in the USA in 1988. The impetus for this organisation arose earlier in 1983 at the first Symposium on the Medical Problems of Musicians in Aspen, Colorado. Subsequently, PAMA founded a scientific journal, Medical Problems of Performing Artists (MPPA), in 1986. Although it was initially a medical organization limited to physicians, PAMA grew to include all types of health professionals, as well as performers, educators, and administrators in both music and dance genres. However, it's taken a lot longer for acting, as a performing art, to attract an equivalent amount of attention in comparison to music and dance.**

**As a consequence, actors continue to suffer in silence in spite of the psychological and sometimes physical injuries that occur in training and in the workplace. And their silence also means that their circumstances of wellbeing can be difficult to track and analyse in order to find better ways of enabling them to have healthy and enduring careers.**

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**Anecdotal evidence has existed for some time about the sacrifices, risks, heartaches and even self-destructiveness of being an actor. Often this is exacerbated by public and media speculation about whether or not actors come to the profession already a 'little bit mad'. And while the question remains anecdotal it can also be more easily dismissed and forgotten.**

**In 2013, in collaboration between The University of Sydney and the Equity Foundation (the professional development unit of the actors' industrial union, known as Equity), a national online survey of actors' health and wellbeing was launched for all Equity members. 782 professionally employed actors completed the survey. This study, published in 2015, establishes a set of data that will enable researchers and Equity to identify key areas in which actors' wellbeing is both threatened and enhanced through their vocation. By using what are called 'validated' surveys – surveys that have been used before and which have established population-wide norms – we will be able to see how actors' wellbeing diverges from that of other surveyed populations.**

**In my upcoming webinar for ASPAH, I'll be presenting a sample of findings that allow us to identify important gaps in the promotion and education of physical and mental wellbeing for actors. As with musicians and dancers, seeking work as a performing artist isn't simply a job, it's a lifestyle commitment. So, I'll be reporting on both quantitative aspects of actors' lives – where do they tend to live, how much**

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**income do they make from acting, what do they make from other jobs, did they get training, did the training help them prepare for the challenges of the profession, how much alcohol do they drink, what drugs might they take, are they prone to anxiety, depression or stress – AND qualitative aspects – what kinds of warm-ups and cool-downs do actors find helpful, how does the stress of performing impact them physically and psychologically, how does the uncertainty of the performance lifestyle affect their relationships, what kinds of intense performances are hard to 'shake off' or 'let go of'?**

**Now that we have actual data on actors' health and wellbeing strengths and weaknesses, it becomes possible to identify what kinds of skills may provide better resilience for actors. Aside from my own coaching practice in Resilient Vulnerability © offered through Sense Connexion, I teach foundational skills in actors' health and wellbeing at several tertiary institutions, as well as offer workshops to organisations who wish to use the skills I offer in my Resilient Vulnerability © program. I'll be sharing a few tips on improving resilience in the webinar as well.**

**If you'd like to know more about my program, you can contact me at [mark@senseconnexion.com](mailto:mark@senseconnexion.com)**

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**Register For the Webinar Now!**

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**Dr Shona Erskine**

**Reframing Performance Anxiety Within an  
Artist's Practice**

On July 25th we were fortunate to deliver the second instalment of ASPAH's webinar series led by Dr Shona Erskine who discussed reframing performance anxiety within an artist's practice. Shona gave a highly practical and insightful depiction of how, from her perspective as a practicing psychologist and in her role as a lecturer at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, she is able to address performance anxiety with dance students. The webinar afforded many opportunities for discussion

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performance anxiety. The applied approaches Shona described involved working with students to recognise and reframe performance anxiety, in order to manage the effects that it can have on performance.

Shona concluded by providing examples of the feedback from the students in response to the performance anxiety work highlighting the varied responses of the students to the training and the need to continually review the activities with the students. If you haven't attended a webinar yet be sure to register for [Dr Mark Seton's webinar](#) in September! (Read more above)

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## ENHANCING CONFIDENT MUSIC PERFORMANCE WITH GUIDED IMAGERY & MUSIC

Rachael Martin A.MusA

M.Mus (Music Therapy), PGDip Guided Imagery & Music,  
PGDip Music Therapy, B.Mus

"If only I could play as well in front of others as I do when I'm practicing" .. a thought common to many musicians - amateurs and professionals alike. Have you imagined what it would be like to play well, without nerves? Or re-lived a bad performance experience in your mind's eye? You have been tapping into your innate ability to image!

Imagery is an amazing tool with which to address the difficulties of performing, including:

- the physiological effects of anxiety (i.e., increased heart rate and breathing, sweating, shaking/trembling, 'butterflies' in the stomach feelings),
- the psychological effects of anxiety (i.e., negative thoughts about the experience and one's ability, decreased focus and concentration, and emotional responses), and
- the behavioural effects of anxiety (i.e., avoidance of performance situations, and using particular foods/ drinks/ substances to cope).

While practicing performing can be helpful, it will only help to decrease anxiety if the experiences are positive. To create positive performance experiences, performers need to address each of these areas that form a self-defeating cycle. These three areas can be explored through imagined scenarios first to bring about desired changes in real life.

One of the five music therapy models recognised worldwide, the therapeutic method of Guided Imagery & Music (Bonny Method) combines relaxation and imagery techniques with the known benefits of music therapy, in a music psychotherapy setting. The method has been researched with music performance anxiety by the author (<http://www.musicandimagery.org.au/video-anxiety-resolution.html>) showing increases in performance confidence, enjoyment, and coping for the participants.

In Guided Imagery & Music sessions, people are taught how to create a state of relaxation through mindful breathing and the use of various relaxation and centring exercises. They learn to become aware of where tension is held in their bodies, and to release the tension – either through physical or imagined means (e.g., imagining your muscles being warmed by a ball of light).

Once in a relaxed state, imagery can assist in exploring or uncovering negative thoughts and feelings. Specifically selected recorded music (generally of a 'classical' genre, matched to the mood and energy at the time) is played to sustain a series of spontaneously unfolding images that the performer relays to the therapist. This allows performers to develop and express images that reflect both their current feelings about performing and how they would like performing to be.

These images can provide new perspectives and opportunities for mental rehearsal. They produce physiological responses that are embodied and then can be drawn on in practice and performance situations to aid physical and mental control. Through mentally rehearsing new positive thoughts and actions, performers can experience increased performance quality and confidence without having to "try harder", while re-connecting to their enjoyment of playing music.

Working with a qualified Guided Imagery & Music therapist allows the process to be tailored to the individual. Below are two examples of simple introductory exercises that can be easily incorporated into home practice:

Relaxation: Find your favourite way to enter a state of relaxation (whether that be through mindful breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or simply scanning the body), by releasing areas of tension. Then pair this relaxation with listening to a quiet, slow piece of music and practice daily to enable entering a relaxed state quickly.

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Visualisation: Remember a positive performance experience and imagine it in as much detail as possible. Include all your senses, e.g., visual images, sounds, and feelings in your body and spend a few minutes imagining this performance after practicing relaxation. After a couple of weeks, see if you can enter a relaxed state quickly by thinking of this image.

Rachael has a private practice in Melbourne working with performers and is available for in-person and skype consultations. She can be contacted at [info@musicalkeys.com.au](mailto:info@musicalkeys.com.au).

Further reading: a case study from Rachael's thesis can be read in "Guided Imagery and Music and Music Imagery methods for Individual and Group Therapy" chapter 9, (2015). Jessica Kingsley Publishers (available online)

Martin, R. (2007). The effect of a series of Guided Music Imaging sessions on music performance anxiety. Unpublished Master of Music Thesis, University of Melbourne.

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## ***MEDICAL PROBLEMS OF PERFORMING ARTISTS***

### **LATEST RESEARCH TITLES!**

**Access to the MPPA database is included in an ASPAH membership - click the above JOIN ASPAH NOW button to read this latest research in performing arts healthcare.**

[Effects of Physical Symptoms on Muscle Activity Levels in Skilled Violinists](#)

*J. Matt McCrary, Mark Halaki, Bronwen J. Ackermann*

[Motor Imagery Practice for Enhancing Elite Performance Among Professional Dancers: A Pilot Study](#)

*Amit Abraham, Ayelet Dunsky, Ruth Dickstein*

[Visual Complaints and Eye Problems in Orchestral Musicians](#)

*Henny J.M. Beckers, Marina A.W. van Kooten-Noordzij, Ronald M.P.C. de Crom, Jan S.A.G. Schouten, Carroll A.B. Webers*

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Assessment of Maximum Aerobic Capacity and Anaerobic Threshold of Elite Ballet Dancers

*Matthew A. Wyon, Nick Allen, Ross Cloak, Sarah Beck, Paul Davies, Frances Clarke*

Playing-Related Health Problems Among Instrumental Music Students at a University in Malaysia

*Karen Lonsdale, Ong Kuan Boon*

Differentials in Turnout Among Professional Classical Ballet Dancers

*Isobel Washington, Susan Mayes, Charlotte Ganderton, Tania Pizzari*

Trust, Satisfaction, and Confidence in Health Care Providers Among Student and Professional Dancers in France

*Stephanie Alimena, Mary E. Air*

Postural Stability Assessment of University Marching Musicians Using Force Platform Measures

*Trevor D. Magnotti, Danielle McElhiney, Jeffrey A. Russell*

Contribution of Glottic Insufficiency to Perceived Breathiness in Classically Trained Singers

*Ellen Graham, Vrushali Angadi, Joanna Sloggy, Joseph Stemple*

In the September Issue [Editorial]

*Donna Krasnow*

YOU CAN NOW JOIN ASPAH ANY TIME OF YEAR!  
WITH OUR NEW ROLLING RENEWALS YOUR MEMBERSHIP WILL BE  
ACTIVE FOR A FULL 12 MONTHS NO MATTER WHEN YOU SIGN UP -  
THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO BECOME A MEMBER AND ENJOY  
THE BENEFITS WHILE SUPPORTING PERFORMING ARTS HEALTHCARE.

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**JOIN ASPAH NOW!**

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