

The Inner Game of Music

Tennis professional Timothy Gallwey developed a method of mental exercises, known as the inner game, as a result of his observing how the best coaches worked, how his coaching style sometimes helped or hindered those he taught, and how his thought processes affected his tennis play. Awareness of this mental interference led Gallwey to question his teaching, and he discovered strategies that the best coaches and tournament players used.

The method of the inner game is based on teaching a student to do what comes naturally, and how to avoid references to specific pitfalls and habits acquired from primary school and beyond. In this sense the method is not a new technique, but follows naturally from what is the best, most natural, easiest, and most graceful way to play.

Tim Gallwey wrote *The Inner Game of Tennis* to express insights, and the success of this first book led to books on skiing and golf. While the method is not a technique, it is a natural approach codified that consists of a number of mental exercises and techniques of control that can improve playing music, golf, or whatever.

As principal bassist of the Cincinnati Symphony for the past 24 years, university professor, and parent of young musicians, I developed this method as the most natural and effective way for teacher and student, conductor and ensemble to work together. It suggests a style of rehearsal and performance that involves everyone in the ensemble and allows the conductor and musicians to recreate a composer's score efficiently and effectively. This way no one will be plagued by boredom, pressure to achieve results, intimidation, confusion, or the mechanical reading of rhythms and notes the emphasis is entirely on the music.

I have played under conductors who run rehearsals that are consistent with the approach, but who have never heard of the method. These conductors are among the best in the business, and we should follow their example because they have discovered what is most natural and works best. Without formulating their discoveries in this particular way, they too have been using the method. We can all take greater advantage of these natural and inherently successful styles of rehearsal. Using a structured and codified approach to fine tune a rehearsal, as if the rehearsal itself were an instrument, is the secret of playing with ensembles.