Ruth Tickle
Student ID: 2316939
Module Six: BMPF7329D
Word Count: 13047

Index of Contents

Project Proposal 4
Literature Review 10
Methodology and Methods 15
Findings 18
Conclusion 33
References 41
Appendices 49

Question-

Is it beneficial or desirable for school aged singing students to be able to read musical notation, and understand music theory? If it is useful to read music to what extent and at what level is it beneficial or essential?

Project Proposal

Context

I currently have around 40 school aged singing students. I also teach violin to 8 school aged students. I teach my students in a school setting and also from my studio at home.
During my 25 years of vocal teaching, I have observed that some voice students are very keen to learn to read music and understand music theory as they feel it may aid their singing lessons and vocal and musical development. Others, however, prefer to learn songs in an auditory fashion and show little or no interest in learning to read notation. While still others refuse to learn any notation skills at all.

A recent discussion with music teaching colleagues, berated singing pupils general lack of theory and note reading knowledge. This discussion developed my interest in this area. To this point I had always endeavoured to include music theory and note reading in my singing lessons. However, if a pupil was disinterested, I simply adapted my lessons and allowed them to learn by listening instead of reading.
However, the discussion with my colleagues made me question my adaptability with pupils. I started to consider if I should make theory a mandatory part of every singing lesson? I then pondered if this blanket approach would be detrimental to some students and their development as a singer or general enjoyment of lessons.
I found there was some literature and studies available on the topic such as those by Gordon (1958), Arthurs & Petrini (2023) and Hodges & Nolker (2011). However, there are visible gaps in the current literature. Much of it is now outdated, some group singers in with instrumentalists and some of it is not specially about school aged pupils. Therefore, I felt a deeper study into this area would be of benefit, not only my own teaching practice, but also that of other singing teachers and music educators.

Justification

This study will be immensely relevant to my singing teaching practice. Of my 40 singing students some are able note readers, whilst others have little to no knowledge of music notation or general music theory. In contrast, I also have 8 violin pupils all of whom can read music to some degree, and are taught to do so from almost their first lesson.
Many of my singing pupils say that they are able to learn songs by ear and can interpretate the music well by listening to it and studying the text. Therefore, the relevance of music notation to them seems little to none. Some pupils have also questioned the relevance by

saying they are unable to play any instruments so being able to read music would not even allow them to learn a song by playing it first, therefore learning by ear is more relevant and a better use of their lesson time.
However, I also see that pupils who do not read music can be slower to learn a new song, and have no ability to do so without the help of others. They rely on my note reading skills to teach them in lesson, or the work of another singer who has recorded the song for them to listen too.
Therefore, I feel my study could bring some clarity on how insistent, or not, I should be with pupils on this matter.

Intended Impact

The outcomes would benefit all my current pupils, those I teach in the future, and potentially those of other music educators.
Depending on the outcomes of this study I may need to consider changing my approach to the singing lessons I teach. I may need to include some level of music theory learning each week, or perhaps remove any notation learning from my lessons. However, the study may also indicate that my current method of being pedagogically adaptive is validated. My overall aim would be to teach each pupil in the best way that will allow them to become a well-rounded, self-sufficient, singer and musician.

Outlined Intention for the Project

My Literature review will aim to: -

- Set the scene of why in the Western world we use music notation and theory, and how our stave notation came about.
- What, if any, helpful research has already been undertaken concerning singing students and their ability to read music or not.
- Recognise any gaps/disagreements/controversy in the current literature.

My research will work within a multi layered framework as I feel this will add depth of data. Firstly, a questionnaire to my school aged pupils. I will send this to all 40 of my singing pupils, but I expect around 25-30 will actually take part. I would seek to gain basic information such as how long they had been attending singing lessons, what level or grade are they currently working towards. Topic related questions such as can you read music, if so to what level, can you identify basic musical instructions on the music. A section where I ask if they feel their ability to read or not read music is a hinderance or benefit. I would aim

to ask some open-ended questions where the answers must be explained by the pupil, for example some yes/no questions and some that involve a scale of 1-5.

I will also send a questionnaire to other singing and music teachers in my local community. Here I will gather basic information such as how long they have been teaching singing or an instrument, and how many school aged pupils they currently teach. I would then move onto topic related questions enquiring how many of their school aged pupils can read notation and musical instructions, aiming to also establish to what level and competency. I will also seek to obtain their views on the benefts for school aged singing pupils to be able to read music from the start of their lessons or only when they reach a certain level, or if it is of no benefit at all.
I may also question past pupils who have gone on to study music further about their experience of needing music reading skills in higher music education.

When this initial data is collected and analysed, I will move onto the next phase of the study. Here I will select a number of my pupils to interview about their questionnaire answers. This sample of pupils would contain those who can read music proficiently, some who only have basic skills and those who cannot read at all. Questions asked in interviews, would link back directly to the participants questionnaire answers. If, for example, a participant mentioned in the questionnaire they were not interested in learning to read music, I would seek to ask them further about this during the interview to gain further information and clarification. I may also ask general questions to establish if they feel their music reading skills enhance their vocal studies, or if the lack of hinders their studies. I may also decide to interview some singing teaching colleagues if I feel further data collected from them will be benifical for conclusions.

After all data is collected, I will analyse and produce a written report on my findings. This will be made available to all participants upon their request.

My research will involve mixed methods as both quantitative and qualitive data will be collected. The interviews would also involve qualitative thematic analysis. As my interviewees' will be selected via the questionnaire data, there will also be an element of sequential explanatory design (Creswell, Ivankova & Stick, 2006) which will allow me to work within mixed methods to find my results from within the collected data.

Ethics and Insider Research Considerations

I will ensure that my research is always conducted in an ethical manner. This will include working within the safeguarding requirements of the school I teach at and ensuring all parents of participants have read and signed a consent form. My pupils should be reminded that if they take partake in my research, it will be without gain for themselves, and if they choose not to or to withdraw, they will not be penalised in anyway.

I will aim to word my questions carefully, remembering my intention is not to make those who do not read music feel belittled or less of a singer than those who do.

During this research I will play a dual role, as teacher and researcher and this will potentially cause issues to arise (Bukamal 2022). As I have worked with many of my pupils for a considerable amount of time, I will bring preconceived ideas of their abilities to this research which I must be aware of. I must be aware that my pupils may try to answer my questions in a way which may please me, therefore my questions must be phrased correctly to help avoid this. As I will still actively be teaching these pupils, I need to be aware of my position of "power" over them as a teacher. This may be particularly prevalent with my school pupils, where there may be a more formal teacher/pupil relationship, than with my private pupils who outside of an academic setting may see our relationship as less formal. I should also be mindful that some of my participants are only young, aged around 5 years old, and that it would be very easy to "help" them answer my questions by putting words in their mouths (for example finishing sentences for them) or leading them towards an answer that they may not have given on their own.

With regards' to working with other singing and music teachers, I must remember many are my school colleagues, and in my wider musical community. Therefore, I must ensure that my work is clearly explained to all and that anonymity of pupils and colleagues is ensured. The results of my research must be available to all who request it.

I will endeavour to test my mitigation strategies by drawing on some of Bukamal's (2022) approaches. Bukamal suggests the insider researcher should show contextual awareness. This means I should have an ongoing awareness of my position as my participants singing teacher, or music teaching colleague and question how this may affect the questions I ask or how I perceive the answers given. Bukamal also suggests continuous reflection, questioning myself on my own thoughts and perceptions and actively examining each question asked and how each answer is analysed.

Furthermore, I must ensure I build my credibility as a researcher by examining my approachableness and rapport with my participants. I must not ask leading questions or finish sentences for them, and the content of my questions must give consideration to the participants age and ability to answer a question for example.

Individual Learning Outcomes: -

1. To clarify how to best teach school aged singers so that they can become self-sufficient learners.
2. To have evidence to support my current approach to teaching note reading and theory in lessons, or indeed to support not teaching it at all to some pupils.
3. To understand other views and opinions on what can be a controversial topic.
4. To better understand the origins of music notation and aural learning, and its usefulness to singers.
5. To be able to share my knowledge with other music educators.

Timeline: -

Jan/Feb/March 2026:	Topic selection Forming question Gaining ethical approval Basic research of literature already available on topic
March/April 2026:	Project proposal Design of project Forming consent form and participant information Sending information to participants and receiving and sorting their reply's Writing and researching literature review
May/June/July 2026:	Undertaking questionnaires and interviews with participants. Collecting data
August 2026:	Analysing and making data presentable Writing conclusion
September 2026:	Draft of Module 6 to be submitted. Changes needed to be implemented

October 2026:	Final work to be handed in
	Work on presentation PowerPoint/speech
	Presentation completed

Literature Review

Context

My Literature review will be conducted as a narrative review. I have chosen this method as I feel its flexible nature best fits my research design. As I only have a limited word count available, a narrative review will allow me to summarize currently available research and identify gaps or conflicts that exist in a concise, yet informative manner.

Introduction

Over my years as a singing teacher, I have noted that there is some contention around the subject of singer's ability to read musical notation and understand the theory of music. Many notable musicians, singers, composers and researchers, will state that it is imperative for singers to read music, others will conclude that it is desirable but not necessary, and others still that is it not a requirement at all (Arthurs & Petrini, 2024, Arthurs et al, 2023: Gordon, 1958: Sloboda, 1978). Many articles are available online stating that notable singers, composers and musicians such as Pavarotti, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, The Beatles, Elvis Presley and currently popular Taylor Swift, were or are unable to proficiently read musical notation (Classic FM, 2021: The Music Studio, 2026: Deseret News, 1997).

My own teaching experience has demonstrated that some singing pupils are very keen to learn to read notation, others already can read music as they play an instrument or learn in school music lessons, and others see no need to read music as they can learn in an auditory fashion.

I have always been keen to include some elements of note reading and theory in my lessons but started to question if this should be a requirement of my lessons or if it should vary according to the pupil and their needs, wants and abilities.

A brief history of musical notation – around the world and in musical genres

In Western cultures notation reading has long been established. Pope Gregory was instrumental in systemizing melodies for the mass to be sung to in the 6th and 7th centuries (Walker, 2019). These melodies were learnt in an oral fashion, and from this point on song became a more important part of Christian and Jewish worship. By the 9th century, indications of a higher or lower pitch were marked next to the song text for the performer to

follow in order to make song learning more accurate (Broude, 2012). This was followed by the introduction of a staff where each line represented a specific pitch. However, this system had many pitfalls in accuracy and often slowed down song learning (Reisenweaver, 2012). Guido a'Arezzo, an Italian Benedictine monk and music scholar, invented his staff notation system around 1025-1030 AD. He took elements of the basic notation used by those who came before him and reshaped them into the staff notation that we still use today. He was said to have spent much time working on this notation in order to help singers, so that any person may be able to learn a chant. He was even thought to have said that learning a song in an oral manner was childish and staff reading much preferable (Kim, 2021: Reisenweaver, 2012, Strayer, 2013). In subsequent years, Guido a'Arezzo's staff was refined and other musical instructions, such a dynamics and tempo, were also added (Pace, 2009). Much of the world now uses this version of musical notation, and it has many advantages. It ensures that the music the composer has written is accurately performed by singers and musicians and accessible to future performers. (Killick, 2020).

Some countries or areas of the world, use a combination of western music notation alongside their own systems. In Asia, for example, students may learn the western notation system alongside the Jianpu, numbered system of notation (Boler, 2020). Whilst in India the Sargam system of notation is used (Mammen et al, 2016) and in African traditional music aural passing of the tunes is used, alongside the Time Unit Box System of musical notation (Knight, 1971). Whilst all these notation systems differ, they all have one aim in common, to allow musicians and singers to be able to accurately learn and perform music, and to preserve music for future generations (Bent, 2026). It is widely expected that professional classical musicians will be able to proficiently read music. In fact, an orchestral player or studio session musician who could not read complex musical scores or follow the conductors' musical instructions would be at a huge disadvantage (Arthurs & Petrini, 2023). It would be impossible, for example, for most musicians or singers to learn a complex oratorio, opera or symphony by simply listening to it and memorising, notation skills are required here (Holland, 2026).

A brief history of auditory learning of music

The aural learning of song is a foundation of human nature (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018) and preceded all notation methods. Malloch and Trevarthen (2018) make a fundamental statement here which feeds well into my research question. Does the fact that aural learning of songs came well before any notation, somehow weave into our genetics and biology and what we would naturally be drawn to do as a human. Could this be why many singing

students simply don't feel the need to learn to read music? This argument does not sit well alongside Guido a'Arezzo's feelings that learning song in an aural manner is childish, if Guido a'Arezzo had lived in modern times given all our medical knowledge would he have still made that statement? (Kim, 2021: Reisenweaver, 2012, Strayer, 2013).

Neuroscience has shown that our brains contain a blueprint that is designed to learn music through listening (AncestryDNA, 2026. Erdtsieck, 2026). Studies have shown that from around 25-27 weeks of pregnancy, the unborn baby can hear and recognise a melody that is played to them frequently, and that they still remember this tune after they are born (Abrams et al, 2000).

Early music, such as religious chants or hymns, were learned through listening and imitation (Mohn, 2022). For example, the book of Psalms in the Bible contains religious songs that would have been sung and passed on in the oral tradition. Some Psalms contain musical directions, giving instructions on the octave to be used for example, but we have no record of the tunes that they were sung too due to the lack of notation at this time meaning we have lost this music and its history completely. (Potts, 2023: Brooks, 2022).

Folk song traditions in Europe evolved over the centuries but is more traceable from about the 17th century (Cooley, 2013). Although by this point music notation was widely in use, folk music was traditionally passed on in an aural fashion. This made the music assessable to all parts of society, even those who could not read or write (Coren, 2024). Folk music today in parts of the world such as Africa, is still passed on in an aural manner (Akrofi, 2002). This continues to make folk music accessible to all. However, it also means that some of this historic music has been lost as we have no notated record of it.

Within the popular or folk song genre, reading music is often considered as less essential and auditory learning is sometimes preferred as it arguably allows more creativity (2002: Priest, 2008). Green (2002) argues that aural skills should always take priority in a popular musician's learning because aural skills enhance popular music making in a way that notation cannot. She argues that reading notation does not always sit well alongside musical creativity, and it leaves little room for the improvising skills that popular musicians often rely on. Priest (2008), supports Green's argument and states that our instrumental teaching methods of reading notation from early on in lessons, has made music students reliant on notation. He believes this is detrimental as playing by ear can achieve higher levels of musicality and deepen aural skills. Whilst, both papers were centred around musicians, rather than singers specifically, their argument surely bears weight for singers also.

The question arises, does a singers need to be able to read music rest on the genre they wish to sing? Certainly, this should be taken into consideration, but what if pop or folk music need to be written down for future performances and historical posterity? Does the singer then have to rely on another musician who does have note reading skills to notate? These are questions I hope to address as I develop my research in this area.

As can be seen the history of notation and aural learning both have strong arguments that their way is correct, most accurate, most educational, most musical and intelligible. This highlights the need of this research to seek to bridge this gap and help music educators understand the full picture for school aged singing students.

How will my research sit in amongst what has already been published?

There is much literature and research around the history and importance of reading music. However, much of this centre's around musicians rather than singers. Some give a passing comment to sight singing for example but then comment further work in this area is needed (Gudmundsdottir, 2009).

In his article 'Why Johnny can't read music' (1958), Gordon concludes that he wants to bring attention to the issue of singers not reading music. He claims that music educators often neglect this area, and that it must be addressed and discussed. However, his call has largely gone unheard to this point, and there is still a gap in research that needs to be addressed. Why does the gap of sixty plus years exist since Gordon's paper? Why has no one taken up the mantle of Gordon's work? Does the fault lie with singing teachers? Do they not recognise the need for clarity on a singer's need for notational understanding verses the need for enhanced aural skills? Are singing teachers educated well enough to even give this matter any thought? Singing teachers are not required to have a teaching qualification and formal training. Does this hinder how their ability to question how they teach? Is teaching via auditory skills simply the easy way out for a teacher who has limited note reading skills themselves? Or does the fault lie with music education as a whole rather than just the singing teachers? As Priest (2008) notes, have we made students too reliant on notation skills and thus removed any sense of creativity? Would most singing or music teachers know how to teach a pupil who wanted to improvise for example rather than read notation? Or is the gap caused by cultural issues? Do countries that use aural music learning over notation question if their students' skills could be enhanced by notation learning, and vice versa do

countries who predominately use notation question if they music students would benefit from learning more aural skills?

Furthermore, much of the research that has been undertaken in more recent years, such as Arthurs and Petrini (2023) for example, has only involved small samples of adult participants (66 in this instance), rather than school aged children which is where my focus rests. FThus, my research will further enhance what has already been done, by turning the focus to school aged singing students which is where much of the early teaching of notational learning, or aural learning skills begin.

Methodology and Methods

After looking at the currently available research on my topic, it became clear that a mixed method approach would best suit by research. This would allow me to collect numerical data, such as the participants age and years they had been taking or teaching singing or instrumental lessons. But would also allow me to ask qualitative questions such as if they played an instrument or what genre of song they were involved in to gain the full picture. Also, the later interviews would need to collect data such as to what level the participant could read music or what their views on its necessity were.

For the first part of my research, I will use my singing pupils of school age as participants. I have around 40 pupils in this age category. However, I have decided to only approach 36 of them to take part. This decision was taken as some pupils are currently busy with singing/educational exam commitments, meaning I am only seeing them for singing lessons sporadically. I would anticipate that around 20-30 students would agree to take part, I feel this is a manageable number to work with, within my time constraints, but will also give me a reasonable amount of data to work with.

My student participants will first be asked to fill in a questionnaire which would contain 10-15 questions as a maximum. These questions would be aimed at gaining basic information of the participant and then moving onto their notation reading abilities. I will word these questions carefully to gain maximum information, being aware that some participants are only 5 years old, and that I do not want to create a stigma that all good singers must read music. I will then analyse the data and choose a selection of student questionnaire participants to interview in a semi-structured manner. I will ensure that some of these participants are able to read music, and some are not able. I will ask questions around how/when they learnt to read music, if they see it as a benefit, what their views are on singers reading music, why they have chosen not to read music etc. I would expect these interviews to be around 10-15 minutes long. All interviews will be undertaken in usual singing lesson time, unless parents have specified they would prefer otherwise. They will take place in either my home singing studio, or in my school teaching room (where I will ensure I work within the schools safeguarding policy).

I will analyse the interview data using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). I will work within their six-phase framework to ensure my data is collected, used and analysed correctly.

Familiarisation – I will ensure I am familiar with the data collected by listening to the interviews multiple times and reading the interview transcripts.

Coding – I will look through the raw data collected to find ways to structure my findings.

Themes – I will search for themes that arise in multiple interviews in order to further develop them and draw conclusions. I plan to print out the raw data so I can visually highlight themes as they arise.

Reviewing themes – I will ensure I have firm themes that sit within my data collection and will lead to relevant findings and a conclusion. This may mean that themes are disregarded.

Defining and naming – I will ensure I am withing within my research question and that my themes are clearly defined by constantly referring them back to my question.

Writing the report – All the themes will be collected and put together in a way that allows the reader to understand the conclusion that has been reached.

I may also use some quantitative methods to find the mean or mode or percentages of my data collected.

Using these methods, I will be able to determine how many of my pupils are able to read music, how many cannot, and what benefits/disadvantages both stances bring.

I must be aware that I am using my own singing pupils in this research, therefore I will be an insider researcher. Thus, I will potentially have preconceived ideas about participants and how I think they feel, act or answer questions. I must also be aware that participants may feel the need to answer in a particular way to please me.

I will strive to remain unbiased in my data collection and will consider carefully which participants to interview, making sure I use the data collected from my questionnaire rather than my ideas on who I should approach.

I also aim to send a questionnaire to some singing/music teachers who currently work with school aged pupils to understand their opinions and reflections on my topic.

In this instance I need to be aware I am working with my colleagues and so must maintain an ethical relationship with them.

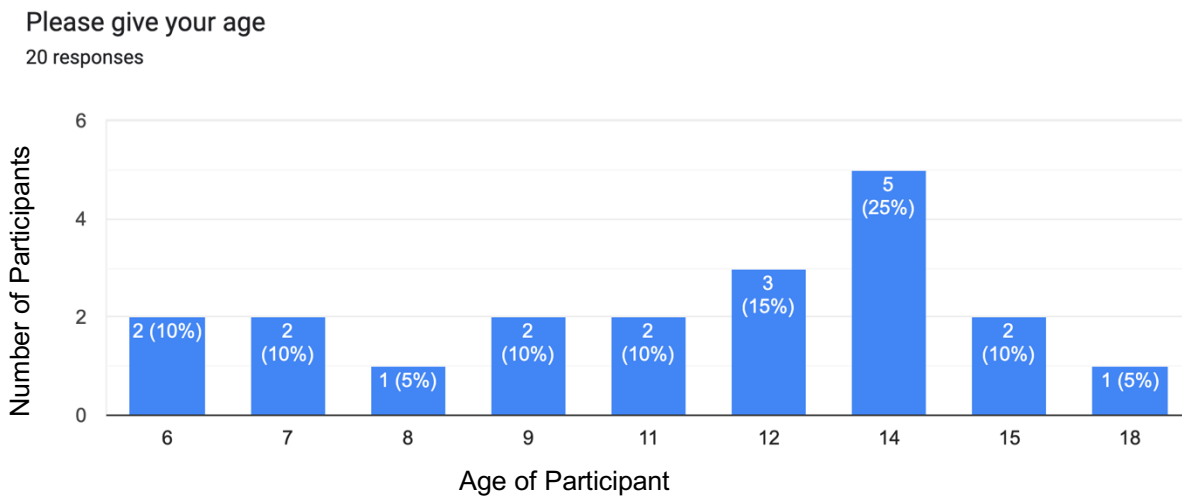
Also, if time allows, I would like to questionnaire some past pupils who have gone on to study music and drama at university to ask their opinions if they have needed notation skills at a higher level of music education.

Findings

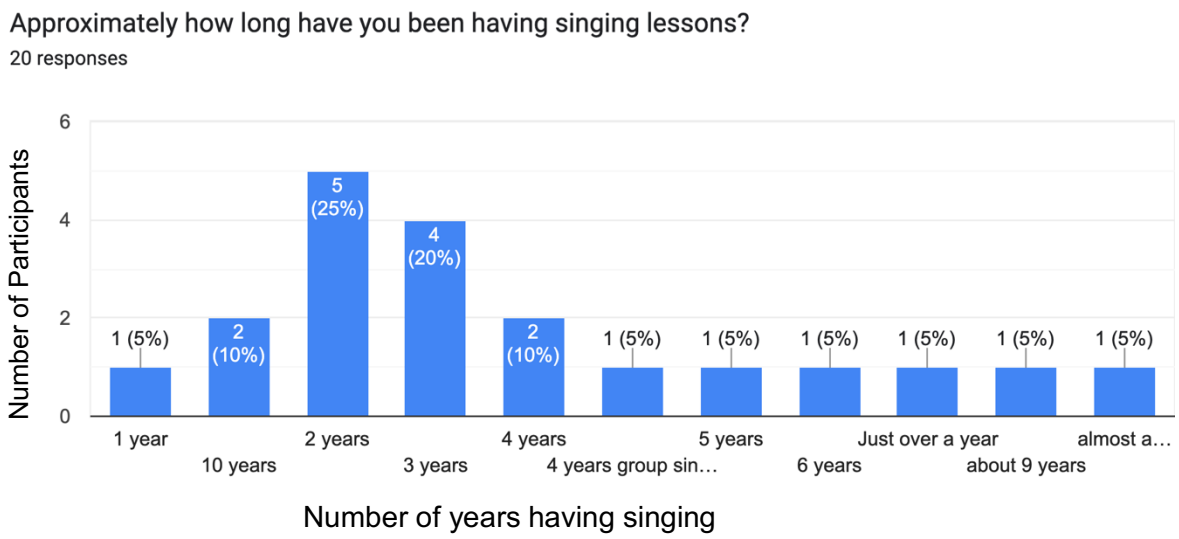
Pupil Questionnaire

Note: All questionaries can be found in Appendix 1

37 pupils' parents were approached to give consent to the questionnaire. Of these 20 gave consent and proceeded to take the questionnaire. Participants were aged between 6 and 18 years old, with the average age being 11.4 years old. Whilst this was an excellent range of ages represented; I had been hopful that more of my 36 pupils would have taken part to increase the depth of data making the research more creditable.



Some of these 20 participants had only been taking singing lessons for around a year, whilst one had been having lessons for 10 years. This range of singing experience was excellent for data collection purposes.



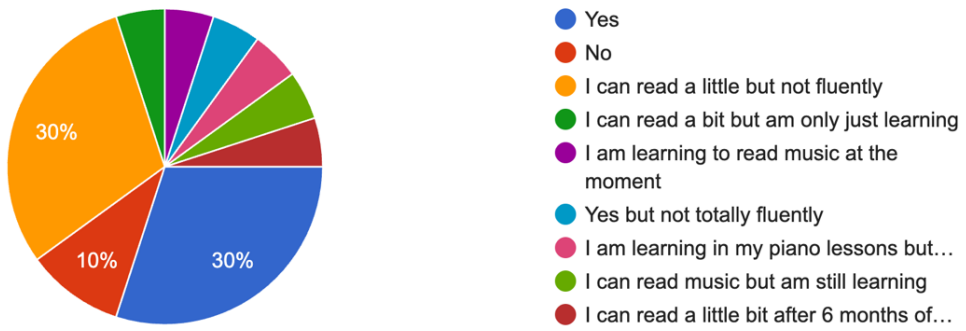
Of the 20 participants, 19 of them noted that they either had in the past, or currently still were receiving instrumental lessons alongside their singing lessons. This meant only 1 participant had received no musical training other than their singing lesson.

I wanted to establish where pupils who could read notation had gained this skill. Here, an overwhelming theme was established as 94.4% of those questioned, said they had learnt to read music via another instrumental lesson, rather than in their singing lessons. This is a stark finding that ties well into Gordon's (1968) findings that a large percentage of singers cannot read music and are not routinely taught this skill in their singing lessons. It is clear from this data that the structure of most singing lessons is not centred around teaching the pupil to read notation, but rather around an aural fashion of learning. Do singing teachers rely on the fact that most singing pupils also play a musical instrument where they are taught routinely to read notation? Or do singing teachers simply disregard the pupil's ability to read notation and focus on the aural learning skills?

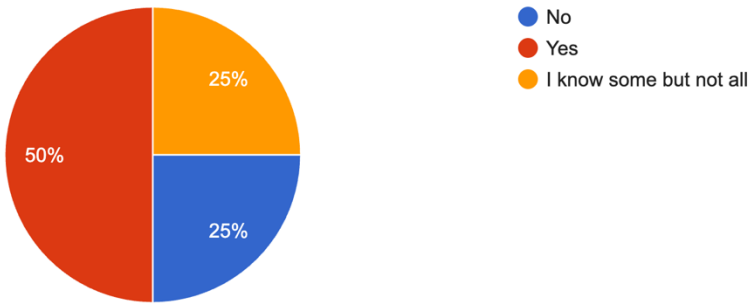
6 participants reported being able to read music proficiently. 12 claimed they could read some notation but not fluently, some adding that this was because they were only just starting to learn to read notation. Only 2 participants stated that they could read no musical notation. This data surprised me; I had assumed that a higher number of my students had no note reading abilities.

To delve further into the participants note reading abilities I asked participants if they were able to understand musical instructions such as P (soft), F (loud), Allegro (lively tempo). Here 25% stated they were unable to do so, with 50% claiming they could read them and 25% stating they could understand some instructions.

Are you able to read music?
20 responses



Are you able to understand instructions on the music such as P, F, Allegro etc
20 responses



Those who could read music were then questioned whether they thought this was an important skill for singers to have, or if only instrumentalists needed to read music? 18 participants answered this question, 8 stated that singers should always be able to read music, 3 stated that reading music was helpful for a singer but not essential. 3 thought that reading music was not important for a singer and on a similar theme 4 thought reading music was not important as singers can learn by listening. One participant who answered that reading music was not needed for singers, interestingly added to their answer that singers don't need to read music as the pianist (or music teacher) who is helping or playing for them can read the music for them. This theme also arose in some of the later interviews and was explored further.

2 participants added that the need for reading music may change depending on your song genre, and this was developed further in the next questionnaire question and via my later interviews. Here 10 participants thought that all song genres required note reading skills. 2 thought it was useful for all genres but not essential. Interestingly 3 specifically stated that reading skills would be needed in opera or classical music but not for other genres and another followed this thread saying note reading was not needed for learning a pop song. 1 participant thought no song genres required note reading skills and one was unsure.

However, despite 10 of 18 participants stating that all song genres required note reading skills, the answers to the next question showed an inconsistency in my data. I asked participants to explain to me how they would learn an unknown song. Only 7 participants answered that reading notes would play any part in their learning. 6 said they only used recordings to learn aurally, 5 said they would need help from a teacher in lesson then at home use recordings. I found it a very interesting that from 18 participants who stated they could read music to some level, only 7 would use that skill to learn a new song. It potentially shows a gap in the students understanding that their ability to read notation may be useful to

them in their singing. Maybe this is a gap that the singing teacher needs to bridge by showing the pupil how to sight read or getting them to learn sing from the score when learning a new song rather than letting them listen to it first. This was a point that one of the university age participants mentioned in their later questionnaire, that school aged pupils should be taught to read a score. Or maybe singing teachers can conclude from this finding, that even if they teach their pupils to read notation, it is seen by most singing students to be of little value in their vocal progression and learning? This finding may relate well with McPherson and Renwicks (2011) paper on self-regulation in music lessons. In this paper McPherson and Renwick explain how music students self-regulate their learning. If a singer learns a new song by ear rather than by reading the notation, then the students shifts away from visual decoding to auditory tracking. This auditory self-regulation allows the student to make a mental map of the song they are learning, and to learn by physical perceptions such as the sensation of needing to take a deeper breath in a particular phrase, or the sensation needed to reach a high note. Maybe this implies that a singer who does not read notation must work harder in regards to their self-regulation and develop stronger links to their physicality, than a singer who simply reads the notes on the page. Once the auditory track of a new song becomes a habit, the singer may not even consider reading the notation.
This is an interesting finding that could be further developed into further research.

12 participants stated that they felt a singer who could read music was at an advantage to those who could not.1 stated they thought it was only a slight advantage, 4 said it was no advantage and one noted that although they could read music, they felt this was not a skill required by a singer. It would be interesting in further research to develop thoughts on what advantage participants thought the note reading skill brought to their learning since so few of them listed it as a method to learn a new song.
The two participants who had stated they could not read any music, also offered some interesting data. One noted that they could not read music as no one had ever tried to teach them. However, it was something that they would like to learn as they did feel they were at a disadvantage to those singers who could read music. The other stated that no one had ever taught them to read music and it was not something that they were interested in learning. The answers for this particular participant was interesting, and this was further investigated via a later interview.

The final question asked if participants thought that there was a stage in a singer's learning where they must be able to read notation. Here 8 participants thought that a singer who was studying at university or a higher level should be able to read music, with a further 4 saying the skill was needed if studying GCSE or A-level music. 5 thought all singers should learn to

read music from the first singing lesson, 1 thought any singer taking a singing exam should read music and 1 said that any high school aged singers should read music as the songs at that level were more difficult. One participant stated they felt that there was no point in any singing students learning where they would need to read music. This matter was developed further in a later interview.

Pupil Interviews

Note: All transcribes can be found in Appendix 2

After analysing the questionnaires, I chose 6 participants to move to the interview stage. Of these, four had stated they were able to read music but not fluently, one had stated they were able to read music fluently and one was unable to read music notation. I felt this selection gave me the greatest opportunity to gather more data from all levels and abilities.

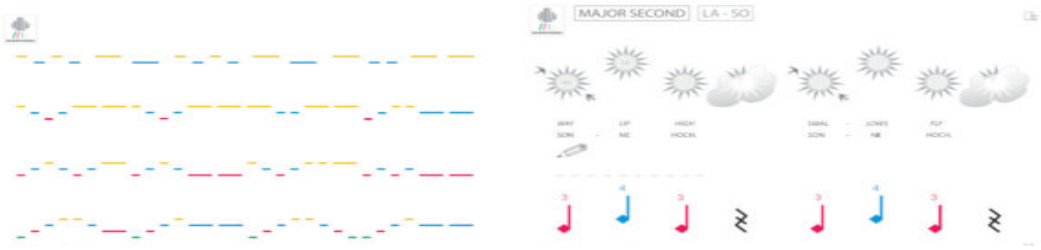
The interviews were semi structured, I had some pre-planned questions, but I let the participant lead the interview in whatever direction they wanted. The interviews varied in length. The shortest were around 3 minutes, the longest was 8 minutes.

Participant 1 could fluently read music. They were firmly of the view that all singers should learn to read music, because this skill would allow them to access higher level vocal achievements. This participant had just taken part in a prestigious youth choir course the week before, they noted that they felt they could not have taken part on this course without their note reading skills as sight reading was required throughout the week and before the course for song preparation. They stated that singers who cannot read music could still succeed by learning aurally, but that it would be to a much lower level. They felt that singers of all genres should be able to read music. A common theme started to arise here, as the participant mentioned that a singing teacher needed to read the music in order to teach a non-note reading pupil. When questioned further on this the participant said a singing teacher who could not read music would limit the pupils' abilities to learn. They said some learning could be done via tracks but that this learning method did have flaws.

Participant 2 noted that they could read some music but not fluently. They felt that if a singer was going to learn classical music (opera was specifically mentioned), that they would need to read music due to its complexities. They mentioned the need to understand when to come in at the correct place in the music, when a breath could be taken and phrasing and singing with an orchestra as reasons that a singer should be able to read music. However,

they went on to explain that in their opinion singers who studied pop or Reggae songs, could learn without the requirement of note reading. This participant went so far as to say that it may be preferable for singers (and singers who are also composers were mentioned) in these genres not to read any music as it may limit their creativity. This comment supported Priest's (2008) comments about students who learn notation from early on in their music lessons, perhaps having their musical creativity stifled by becoming overly dependent on the notation. This participant touched on the theme of a teacher or a creative helper being needed if a singer has composed a song that they are unable to notate themselves due to lack of skill in this area.

Participant 3 stated that they could not read music. Whilst they had grade 1 violin, they had learnt to play via Geza Szilyay's Colourstrings method (Colourstrings, 2026) rather than by traditional note reading. In the early stages of the Colourstrings method, note reading is achieved via colour and symbol coding notes that appear on a simple stave. At a later stage this would eventually turn into reading from the stave that is universally used. This participant had not progressed past grade 1 violin, and therefore could not read the universal stave notes. They could however, read some rhythms as they also took drum kit lessons.



Picture One - An example of Colourstrings violin music (Colourstrings, 2026)

This participant stated that their ADHD and Autism (which has been formally diagnosed and is not simply participant perceived) may affect their ability to read the music, but overall, they just had no desire to learn notation as they could learn their songs aurally. They mentioned if the singing teacher insisted they learn to read music they would, but this would not be their preference. Again, the theme of the singing teacher being able to read music in order to teach a none note reading pupil was mentioned. This participant was not overly keen to talk and found the interview process a little uncomfortable, so I didn't question them any further. This interview does however, bring up the matter of a student's perception of their own ability and limitations. This participant is well aware they have limitations in education and general life caused by their ADHD and Autism. However, would these limitations automatically follow over into reading musical notation, or could this simply be a presumption on the participants

part? It would be interesting to develop this further with this participant, to see if they actually could with the right teaching, successfully develop notation reading skills or if it was beyond their skill set. Literature clearly states that reading musical notation requires many parts of the brain to work together in order to translate the notation into producing a sound (Schlaug & Bangert, 2007). Reading notation also requires memory, concentration and visual perception, all of which a person with ADHD may be challenged with (Saville et al. ,2025). However, research has also shown that people with ADHD can successfully learn to read notation. Keith (2023) suggests colour coding notes may help. Wright, (2025) who states he is a music teacher who also has ADHD and dyslexia, suggests learning in small bite sized chunks in a sensory smart classroom may also aid such students. Raviotta's (2017) research also suggested that 85% of children that have ADHD also have mild dyslexia, which may often go undiagnosed.

This is a reminder to me as a teacher, not to limit what I teach a student by what they think they can or cannot achieve. However, in data collected later via the music teacher's questionnaire, 38.9% of teachers did report that they had students who were unable to read musical notation due to additional needs.

There clearly is further research needed here so singing teachers are able to more fully understand the limitations that any additional needs may, or may not, bring to a student's ability to read notation and how to best help them overcome this.

Participant 4 stated they could read some music, but not fluently. Much of this interview was centred around the participants struggles with dyslexia, which they were very keen to talk about. They explained how they had tried to learn the cello which required them to learn to read music notation. The cello teacher was informed about the pupil's dyslexia, however the participant stated that the teacher didn't seem to fully realise how this would affect their ability to read music. The participant explained that the notes and lines would move around on the page making it very hard for them to read the notes, and that for them learning aurally is much easier. When questioned about what the teacher could have done to aid their learning, the participant explained they would have preferred the cello teacher to play the notes and tunes so they could try to listen and learn in an aural fashion. The participant had also taken a few piano lessons. Here the teacher used a much more aural based approach to the learning which the participant noted was helpful. But even with this aural based approach the participant stated that they were still unable to successfully learn to read notation and soon stopped piano lessons. They explained that a yellow or blue sheet over

the music may have also helped them with note reading, but this was not explored in cello lessons.

All of this demonstrates the case for pedagogical adaptability in all music teaching. The cello teacher was intent on teaching notation in a traditional way which the participant could not cope with. The piano teacher adapted their lessons to allow the participant to learn in a more aural manner, and this gave the participant some success. However, as both instruments are ultimately heavily weighted towards notation reading in our culture, the participant did not continue with either lesson as they believed reading the notation was outside of their skills set. Research by Raviotta (2017) would challenge this participants' view on reading music notation, but perhaps too much damage had been done to this point for the participant too ever have the mindset to try to learn.

Another excellent case of pedagogical adaptability can be seen below in the teachers questionnaire, concerning a blind student.

When questioned on how they would learn a new song, this participant stated that it was easier for them not to have the sheet music in front of them. They found it easier to have the lyrics separately, as the notes and words get confused on the page and they find it overwhelming. This participant went on to mention that the experience with the cello teacher being so unaware of the issues dyslexia brought to note reading, has put them off ever wanting to learn to read music to a higher level and made her feel like a "dumb kid". Cello lessons were taken as a group class and when the other 2 pupils started to make progress, my participant wished the teacher had helped them more as they felt left behind. This participant stated that they felt they could always learn in singing lessons aurally, and that they did not see any reason why this would change, even if they progressed to a higher level. They explained they have now devised a method of removing song lyrics from the sheet music and highlighting them, which makes the learning process easier for them. Here it can clearly be seen that auditory learning is allowing this participant to succeed musically, where the notation reading requirement did not.

They were keen to impart that music lessons should be for all and a place where students can thrive, and thus it was so important that the music teacher understands and works with any disabilities and the impact that these may have on learning.

Participant 5 stated they could read some music but not fluently. They were in the early stages of learning the violin which included notation learning. Straight away in this interview

the theme of the singing teacher needing to read the music so the pupil didn't have to became apparent. When questioned on what would happen if the singing teacher couldn't read music, this participant thought that by using tracks and aural listening skills, they would still be able to teach successfully. This participant said they learn new songs by listening to pre-recorded tracks of their songs and that this works well for them. They did add however, that when they have progressed further with their note reading skills this may change the way they learn a new song, as they could use their notation skills to figure out parts of the tune they had forgotten. They mentioned that they had recently taken their grade 3 performance singing exam successfully and had not felt that their lack of note reading skills had hindered them at all to this point.

Participant 6 said they could read some music but not fluently. This participant mentioned that a singer who wanted to learn pop, jazz, rock, metal or musical theatre would not need to learn to read music as these songs were freer in style. Once again, this statement supports Green (2002) and Priests (2008) comments that musical notation may limit some music students. This participant did however feel that a singer who studied classical (opera and folk song was mentioned) music would need to read notation as this music is more complex and structured. They also mentioned that for singing exam songs, note reading was helpful in order to aid reading dynamic markings and getting the notes accurate. But they felt if they were learning the same song just for fun then they may not want or need to read the music, as their learning would not need to be so accurate. They mentioned that having some note reading skills did help them in their learning, but that ultimately you could learn just as well by learning aurally. They did add that at higher levels of singing (they mentioned grade 8) note reading would become more of a requirement.

University Pupils Questionnaire

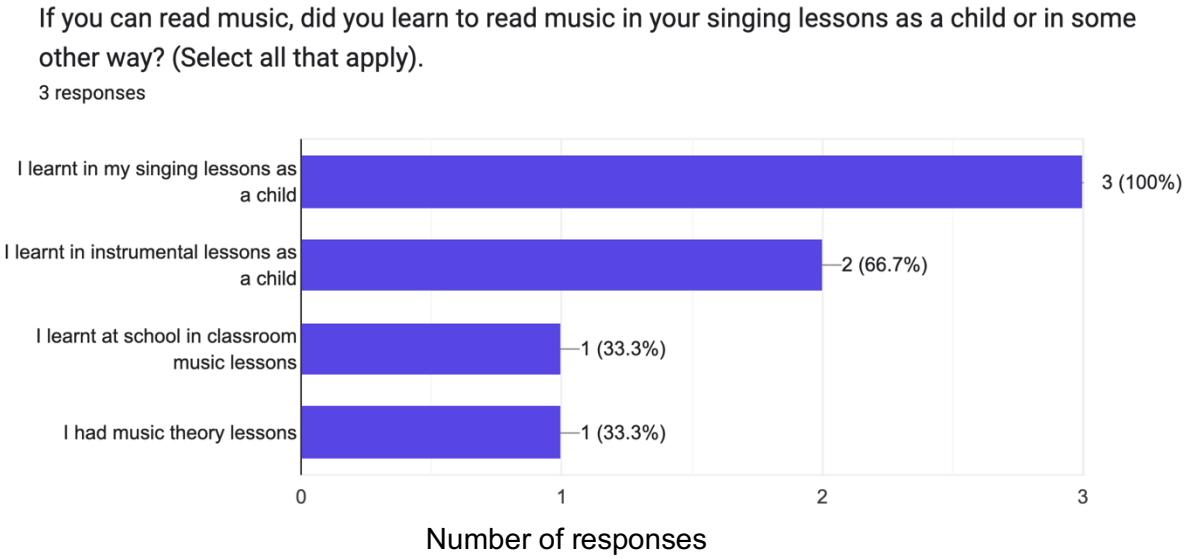
Note: All questionaries can be found in Appendix 3

Here I was keen to establish how participants who were studying music (singing) or drama (musical theatre) at university, would value notation reading skills.

3 participants were approached and all 3 gave consent to take part. I would have liked to further enhance this section by asking more university music and drama students to take part. More participants would have allowed a much richer data collection. However, I did not have access to any further students in this area.

Of the three participants two were aged 20 and one was 21. All 3 participants confirmed that they could read music.

The participants confirmed that they had been taught to read music via their singing lesson, school class music lessons, theory and instrumental lessons as a child. The fact that singing lessons were specially listed as the place notation reading was learnt was interesting, as the school aged participants had not supported this data and stated they had learnt in instrumental lessons. Does this imply that the move away from teaching notation is a very recent phenonium, as this slightly older generation of singers record being taught it in their singing lessons?



When asked if all singing students should learn to read music one participant stated it would depend on the genre the student was learning, the second said all students should learn to read music and the final participant agreed all should read music but added it may depend upon the genre being sung. When asked for further comments the 2 participants who were studying for a music degree, which were weighted towards classical singing and opera, noted the following: -

- Reading music was a required skill to be in the classical music industry;
- Reading notation would break down future barriers for students;
- It would increase musical confidence; and,
- Enable sight reading and ease of self-learning.

One of these participants mentioned that singing students would also benefit from regular music aural and score reading lessons. This comment implied that this was not a skill they had been taught as a school aged singer, but it had required this skill at university.

The participant who was taking a drama/musical theatre degree, noted that in their view only basic note reading skills were required and stated that the usefulness of notation reading did depend upon the genre of song being learnt.

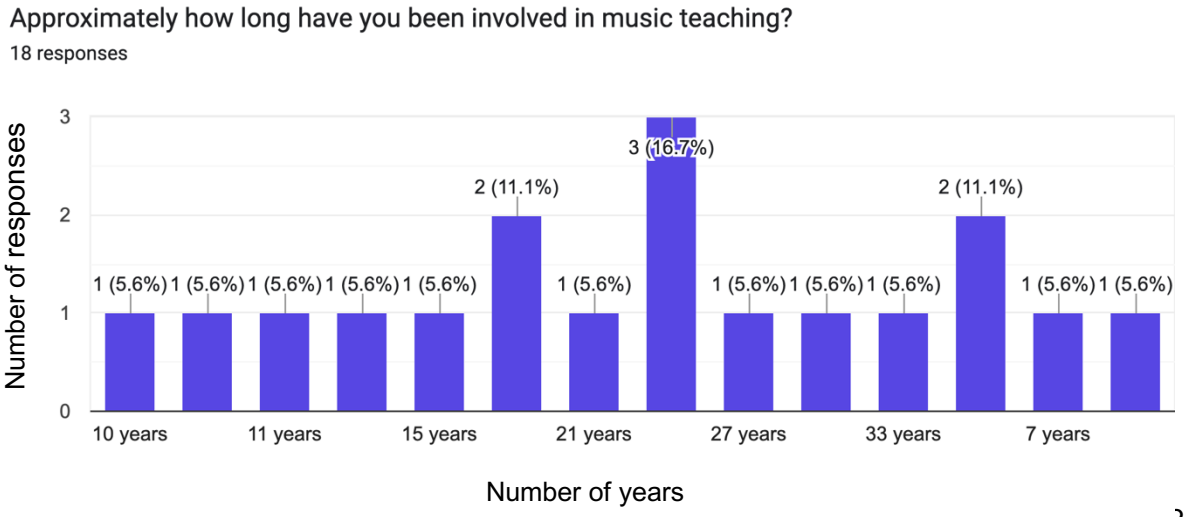
This was an interesting finding. It related back to my literature review findings that classical singers who are taking part in works such as opera or oratorios, must be able to read notation, as without this skill their learning would be hampered (Holland, 2026). Both participants who were studying the classical genre, felt that reading notation gave them the confidence and skills required of the demanding music they were being asked to perform. Whereas the musical theatre student's conclusion that only basic note reading skills were required, reflects back on Green and Priests (2002, 2008) conclusions, that in some genres note reading skills are unhelpful and limiting upon the performer.

Singing/Music teachers Questionnaire

Note: All questionaries can be found in Appendix 4

I asked all the singing/music teachers I was in touch with (potentially around 50 teachers) to take my questionnaire, I had 18 responses. I felt this was a successful response that allowed me to gather much data.

I asked all participants to state all ways they were involved in music education. Most taught in multiple disciplines, with 4 stating they were classroom teachers, 9 instrumental teachers, 13 singing teachers (of this number, 6 participants stated that they only taught singing), 1 drama teacher and 1 adult choir teacher. The participants had been teaching in their musical areas ranging between 7 and 33 years. This gave me an excellent range of experience to collect data from.



Participants who taught musical instruments were asked if they always taught their students to read notation. Of the 10 participants who answered the question 80% said they always did. 1 said they didn't automatically teach notation to their students, adding they would always encourage pupils to learn notation, but they prefer to work within the students' needs.

One classroom teacher explained that they were only able to teach notation to a basic level in their lessons. I found this data very interesting as I had presumed that all instrumental teachers would automatically teach their pupils to read notation from very early on. I found it hard to understand how in our notation-based culture, you could play an instrument to any level other than a basic beginner, without teaching the pupil to read notation. How for example could music exams be taken, or how could the child participate in an orchestra or group music making session? This area has potential for further research.

I then asked the singing teachers if they automatically taught their pupils to read music. Here 42.86% of the 14 replies, said no they did not automatically teach notation. 28.57% said they always taught it, with the remaining replies stating they taught music theory to some level but not full notation, or they would only teach it if the pupil specially asked or required the skill. I was not surprised by the statistic that only 28.57% of singing teachers automatically taught singing students to read music. This data supports the 94.4% of singing students who said that they had learnt to read musical notation in an instrumental lesson rather than their singing lessons. Again, this reflects Gordon's (1968) comment that singers are not routinely taught to read music in their singing lessons.

My next question asked participants to explain their response in more detail. 15 participants gave answers in this section. Themes arising ranged from: -

- learning to read music took the fun out of singing lessons (mentioned twice);
- there was not enough time in lessons and pupils preferred to work on their songs (mentioned 3 times);
- pupils resisted learning notation (mentioned twice);
- only the minim skills of notation are taught in order to fulfil sight singing purposes (mentioned twice);
- teachers would only teach notation if specially asked to (mentioned 3 times);
- other methods such has interval training or solfège were used in lessons instead of traditional notation (mentioned twice);
- Teachers were keen to work within the students' needs and requirements (mentioned 3 times);

- -Teachers were keen to teach notation as it aided song interpretation (mentioned once);
- Pupils were expected to access notation, and theory lessons separate to their singing lessons (mentioned twice); and,
- Notation must in included from a very early lesson stage for all pupils (mentioned once).

If you are a singing teacher, do you always teach your pupils to read music and understand music theory?
14 responses

Participants then went on to discuss if it was admissible for singing students to learn a new song by ear or if notation should be used. Here the following themes were discussed-

- Learning solely by ear can be slow and inaccurate (1 mention);
- The learning method would depend upon the pupils age (1 mention);
- Notation learning should be always available if the pupil wants to learn it (1 mention);
- Pupils should always eventually be able to learn songs via notation (7 mentions);
- How they learn a song would depend upon why the student is learning, the genre they sing and the individual student (6 mentions);
- They can justifiably learn aurally and via notation as they are both valid skills (3 mentions);
- Students should learn by notation, even if only using basic skills such as the shape of the music (mentioned once);
- Students should always be given the sheet music rather than a lyric sheet to learn off (mentioned twice); and,
- It is ok to sometimes learn just by ear as this is also a needed and valid skill for singers (9 mentions).

Participants then indicated whether they thought singing students should learn to read music from their first lesson, or only at a particular point of learning. Here 25% said it should be taught from the start, with 18.8% saying it would only be required when students reach a certain level. Other comments included basic singing technique should come first in lessons then notation and it would depend upon the pupils age and other skills such as solfege are preferable at the start of lessons.

I continued to ask participants if they did not think singers needed to be able to read music, why this was their view.

Themes here included-

- The genre of musical theatre does not require note reading skills (mentioned once);
- Creative people often struggle with the theory side of music (mentioned once);
- Learning to read notes in lessons stifles creativity and lesson enjoyment (mentioned twice);
- Pupils are either not interested in learning to read music or find it too difficult (mentioned four times);
- Pupils can learn to read music later, once they have a better understanding of singing and pitch (mentioned once);
- Singers may get away with not reading music but at some point, it could hinder their musical development (mentioned twice);
- Singers should always learn to read music, it's a language that must be taught (mentioned 3 times);
- All students are different and lessons should be adaptable (mentioned twice);
- Pupils may be too young to learn to read notation at the start of their lessons (mentioned once); and,
- Pupils can succeed in singing lessons without reading notation (mentioned once).

I was keen to understand how singing students with additional needs would add to my data. It had been my experience that singing pupils who had additional needs such as dyslexia or ADHD, for example, sometimes struggled to learn to read music or had no desire to learn. This had been covered in some depth via my student interviews; however, I was keen to understand if fellow music and singing teachers had the same experience as I had. My participants recorded that only 38.9% of them had taught a pupil who was unable to learn to read music due to an additional need. When asked for comments, 4 participants reflected that they had taught dyslexic pupils who struggled with notation but added that coloured acetate and learning by ear aided notation learning. This data supported Raviotta (2017)

Keith (2023) and Wright (2025) all of whom noted that reading notation may be more challenging for pupils with additional needs, but with the correct support not impossible 2 participants noted they had taught blind students who obviously were unable to read traditional notation. Here I found one response most interesting and encouraging,

"Student is blind. I self-taught braille sheet music, both reading and brailing. A lot of training courses, time spent with the RNIB braille sheet music dictionary and a Perkins brailler. As soon as student had understanding of and access to braille sheet music their rate of learning increased exponentially due to increased independence of learning, the ability to attend Youth Orchestra and reduced reliance on memory skills."

This participant teacher had obviously worked hard to accommodate their students' requirements and had been able to enhance the students' skills in a way that suited their abilities. This is an excellent example of a teacher working within a pedagogically adaptive practice.

57.1% of participants stated that they had experienced singing pupils who did not want to learn to read notation. When asked for further comment on how this affected the student the following themes emerged.

- 3 mentioned their students had managed well without reading notation. A further 2 added their pupils found notation learning boring and unnecessary;
- 1 mentioned that as most of their pupils had been learning pop music, notation reading had not been needed;
- 1 said that pupils not reading notation made learning at home between lessons hard;
- 1 participant noted that the increased pupil usage of phones, had changed the way pupils learnt songs. They all now had ready access to technology that could help them learn by ear; and,
- 1 said they had experienced issues with pupils listening to recordings of a singer, as often the singer's style was then learnt and mimicked by the pupil which caused some technical and style issues.

When questioned on if the genre sung (i.e. Pop, musical theatre, folk songs) made pupils less likely to want to read notation the following answers were given.

- 6 said yes, it did make a difference. If pupils were studying these genres rather than classical singing, they were less likely to want to or need to, read notation. One further noted that notated popular music is often "too accurate" and not a correct

representation of how the actual song should be sung. Once again this data supported Green (2002) and Priest's (2008) comments on notation reading being limiting in some genres; and,

- 4 said learning by notation and ear in all genres was required.

The questionnaire finished by asking for any final thoughts on the subject. These answers can be found in full in the appendix section. However, themes of teaching according to the students' abilities and wishes, always including some theory and notation in each lesson, the pit falls of learning by ear such as learning incorrect notes and mimicking another singer, and thinking of the singer's musical future and the benefits of notation were all mentioned.

Due to the in-depth data gathered from this teacher's questionnaire I decided it was not necessary to interview any teacher participants. I already had acquired the data I needed in depth, and the limitations of my study, in terms of time and volume, had to be considered.

Conclusion

As I conducted this research, I was surprised at the strength of emotions shown on the subject. Those who felt singing students should read music were passionate about their view and explained in depth that music notation is a language that all singers should learn to understand. One of my student participants was even heard to comment that whilst they were keen to take part in my research, they didn't really understand why I was looking into this, as all singers should read music, full stop! The same was true of the other side of the argument, with singing teachers noting that their pupils were creative beings and reading notation would limit this and lessen enjoyment.

There was, however, the common theme with a large percentage of my student participants, that a singing teacher should be able to read the music to successfully teach. I found this an interesting concept. Some participants were confident they didn't need to read music, but that their teacher must, otherwise their students learning could be hindered. For future research this would be an interesting area to develop more deeply as it raises several questions: -

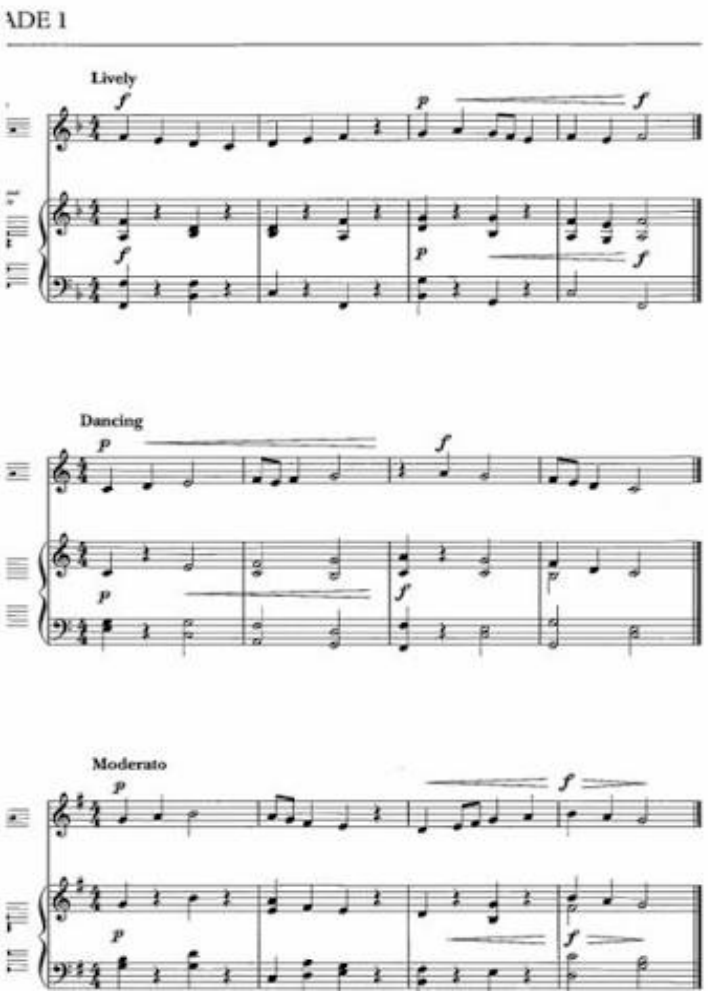
- If we have a generation of singing students that do not learn to read music notation how will this affect the singing teachers of the future?
- Would we be left with a new generation of singing teachers who were unable to fluently read music, and if so, what would be impact of that be upon singing lessons or the future of singing in general?

- As my data showed, 94.4% of participants said they had been taught to read notation via an instrumental lesson and not their singing lessons, and 42.8% of singing teachers do not automatically teach notation, then are current singing teachers putting the discipline of singing at long term risk?
- It is widely reported that classical music in general is in decline (Han, 2025. Albright, 2016). Is the decline of classical singing occurring because of the current generation of singing teachers' avoidance of teaching notation and thus limiting the next generation's ability to access these genres? Or is the decline caused by other factors such as musical elitism, the reduction of school music teaching or the cost of living (Jackson, 2024)?
- What could the possible implications of this notational gap be for singing students who wanted to go on and study classical or operatic genres, would they be at a disadvantage as they were unable to read scores as they never had the opportunity to learn?
- Or would the craft of Opera and other classical singing, be lost along the way as new generations of singers with no notation skills would be unable to access them?
- On the other side of the argument, would the lack of note reading skills create a new era for singers who don't feel encumbered by the rules of notation and are able to create a freer, perhaps more improvised style of singing?
- Would music degrees for singers have to move away from classical repertoire to centring around popular music and musical theatre?

There are many important, and perhaps urgent, questions to be asked and answered here, future research will be needed to draw conclusions.

Whilst I have been undertaking this research, I have also wondered if the question of notation reading should be limited to singers only or asked of the wider music community also? A recent discussion with colleagues centred around the fact that GCSE music no longer held the requirement that the student should be able to read any music notation. Many of my colleagues were confused why the GCSE had been adapted to allow non note reading pupils to successfully take the exam. Other colleagues were more of the mind that music qualifications should be available to all regardless of the student's notation reading abilities. The discussion concluded around the fact that only 4,635 students took A-level music in 2026 (Tormey, 2026) continuing the long-term trend of dropping numbers of participants. Since 2013/14 A-level music entries are recorded as falling by between 39-41%, a concerning statistic (UK Music, 2026). Is this decline because A-level music requires notation skills and thus excludes some students from being able to study it? Of course, it must be noted the above is an observation only. The decline in A-level music students will

be caused by a number of contributing factors, such as the curriculum's relevance to the current generation, schools lack of investment in music education, timetabling constates, the reduction of free school instrumental and singing lessons, and perhaps the pressure for students to study subjects that will lead to successful future careers (Whittaker, 2021). There has also been a similar discussion around the performance, or recorded singing exams, that were introduced over the Covid period and have since remained in use. In a face to face singing exam, the student would be required by most exam boards to partake in a sight singing test. Here the exam candidate would be given a short-notated extract, such as the one below, to look at and then be asked to sing it along with a piano accompaniment.

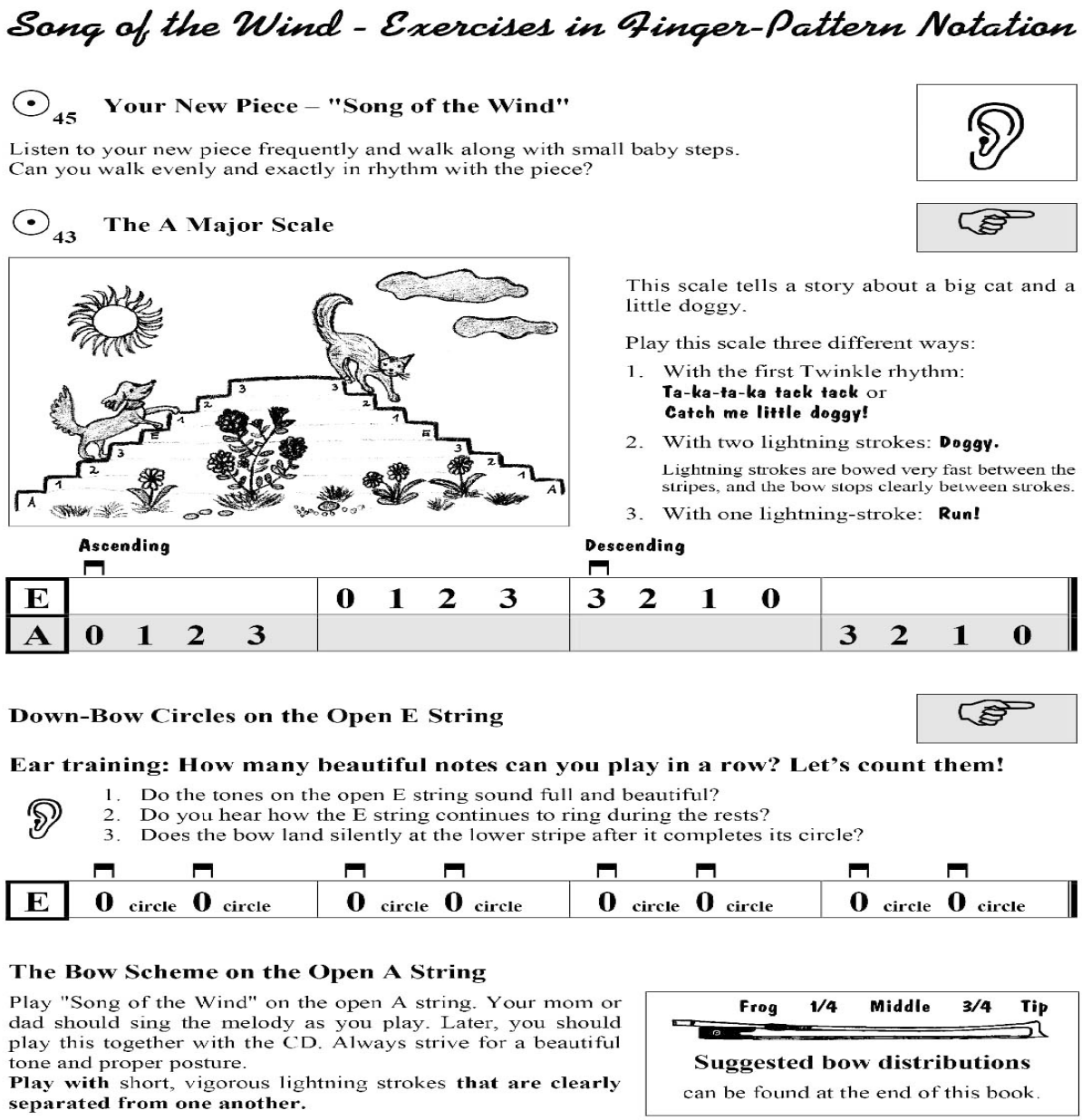


Picture Two– ABRSM Sight singing example
(Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, 2026).

This section of the exam required all candidates to have some degree of notation knowledge, even If only basic, to gain a pass. However, the performance or recorded exams have typically removed the sight singing section and replaced it by vocal exercises or an additional song. Whilst this has undoubtably delighted many singing exam students who did

not enjoy the sight singing element, it could again be stated that removing the sight singing has once again removed the need for singing students to read and learn any notation.

I was interested in the student participant that had been taught an instrument to grade 1 level but via the Colourstrings method of notation (Colourstrings, 2026). This was not the first time I had come across a pupil who had been taught notation in methods other than the traditional stave. I have also on occasion taught pupils who had learnt an instrument via the Suzuki method (British Suzuki, 2026).



Song of the Wind - Exercises in Finger-Pattern Notation

45 **Your New Piece – "Song of the Wind"**

Listen to your new piece frequently and walk along with small baby steps.
Can you walk evenly and exactly in rhythm with the piece?

43 **The A Major Scale**

This scale tells a story about a big cat and a little doggy.

Play this scale three different ways:

1. With the first Twinkle rhythm:
   Ta-ka-ta-ka tack tack or
   Catch me little doggy!
2. With two lightning strokes: **Doggy.**
   Lightning strokes are bowed very fast between the stripes, and the bow stops clearly between strokes.
3. With one lightning-stroke: **Run!**

	Ascending		Descending	
E		0 1 2 3	3 2 1 0	
A	0 1 2 3			3 2 1 0

Down-Bow Circles on the Open E String

Ear training: How many beautiful notes can you play in a row? Let's count them!

1. Do the tones on the open E string sound full and beautiful?
2. Do you hear how the E string continues to ring during the rests?
3. Does the bow land silently at the lower stripe after it completes its circle?

E	0 circle 0 circle	0 circle 0 circle	0 circle 0 circle	0 circle 0 circle

The Bow Scheme on the Open A String

Play "Song of the Wind" on the open A string. Your mom or dad should sing the melody as you play. Later, you should play this together with the CD. Always strive for a beautiful tone and proper posture.
Play with short, vigorous lightning strokes **that are clearly separated from one another.**

Frog 1/4 Middle 3/4 Tip

Suggested bow distributions
can be found at the end of this book.

34

Picture Three example of early Suzuki violin notation

(German Suzuki Association, 2026)

In this method students are taught to play an instrument (usually the violin) by ear and memorise music before they are introduced to notation. This is achieved via repetition and parental involvement at home. A student would normally learn in this manner for around 1-2 years, with the emphasis being placed on the student's technique being sound before notation is approached. Whilst these methods of learning are valuable (I use some Colourstrings methods in parts of my own teaching), a problem arises if the pupil does not pursue lessons in this method until they reach the traditional note reading element of the plan. Participant 3 had achieved grade 1 violin but then decided not to learn any longer. This leaft them with the skill to play an instrument, but not the ability to pick up a piece of music and learn it for themselves. This is concerning as surely the commonplace desire of a music teacher is to ensure their students can play self-sufficiently, (McPherson & Renwick, 2011) and are not reliant upon the teacher having to adapt the music notation in some way so they are able to play it. If the Colourstrings, or Suzuki methods are completed to the end then a well musically rounded student who is able to read notation will emerge, however if the course is not completed you are left with a student who is only partly able. I feel this would be an interesting area for further research. To perhaps find the percentage of those who start learning in such methods, compared to those who complete the course, and the percentage of those who drop out part way through.

I was particularly concerned about my interview with participant 4 who struggled with learn to read music notation due to their dyslexia. 38.9% of music teachers surveyed said they had taught a pupil who could not read music due to an additional need. It can be seen from my participants responses, such as that with a blind pupil noted above, that many teachers are able to adapt their teaching and work with the student to find the best way forward which may or may not include notation reading. These are the success stories, where the pupil is able to thrive and encouraged to learn in a way appropriate and comfortable for them, that will hopefully enhance their musical skills. However, my participants experience with their cello teacher sadly painted another picture, of a teacher unable to adapt their way of teaching to help a pupil progress and build on their skill set in a way that they are comfortable with. This experience left my pupil adamant that they would never want to learn theory or notation in a singing lesson. Whilst the pupil is now happily learning singing in an aural fashion and making great progress vocally, I am left wondering if ultimately their musical skills have been hampered due to this early experience. This has very much left the impression upon me that a singing teacher has a great responsibility to their pupils. Of course, they must be knowledgeable about the voice and have relevant experience and qualifications. But in my opinion, it needs to go further than this. They must get to know the pupil, including their additional needs and how this may impact on learning. They must

always be ready to adapt their teaching methods and styles to each pupil. My participant was keen to state that they felt music lessons should be available to all young people, regardless of any additional needs they have, no one should be left feeling like the “dumb kid”. Once again, I feel this would be an interesting area of future research to delve further into. Should singing teachers ensure they have training in areas such as additional needs? Who would provide this training and at what cost? As many singing teachers are not professionally trained teachers, is there a danger that their teaching skills are limited to one way or method only, and they do not have the teaching skills needed to adapt to each pupil? Should singing teachers be more regulated by authorities to ensure they have the correct skills to teach all pupils appropriately?
Pedagogically adaptive teaching is clearly required in all levels of singing teaching and highlighted so well by the unadaptable cello teacher who left their student feeling inadequate, compared with the outstandingly adaptive singing teacher with her blind student who then went on and achieved much musical success.

My research did have it limitations. For example, I would have liked to have engaged with university aged students who were involved in popular music degrees as their views would have been interesting when compared to that of Green and Priest (2002, 2008) and their arguments that we limit students by only teaching notation and not always aural skills in early stages of learning.

My participant numbers were reasonably low across all the layers, which limited the data collected. Therefore, in the future larger scale research may be required that is not limited to my singing students alone.

I also questioned at times in the participant interviews if I, as an insider researcher, was the best person to collect this data. Although I feel I did fulfil my quest to carefully consider who to ask to participate in the interviews based on the data collected in the questionnaire, I did feel at times I lead the interviews too much. I perhaps knew some information about the participant that I wanted them to mention, so I lead that in that direction which may have not been the direction the participant would have naturally taken the interview. This may have been mitigated by interviewing participants in small groups which may have encouraged them to talk more freely and share ideas together, thus inducing more discussion.

There would also have been multiple benefits of interviewing the music and singing teachers and university aged students, which alas my timetable constraints did not allow. Perhaps

these matters could be addressed in future research ideally without the sixty plus year gap since Gordons (1968) paper on why singers can't read music.

I do feel that the multi layered nature of my research (singing students, singing teachers, music teachers, university aged students) added real depth to the findings that no literature to this point on the subject has collected.

Is it beneficial or desirable for school aged singing students to be able to read musical notation, and understand music theory? If it is useful to read music to what extent and at what level is it beneficial or essential?
As I reach the end of my research and refer back to my question, I have been left with a clear conclusion. I started this research in the hope that I would be able to establish if I (and indeed other singing teachers) should be teaching all singing students to read notation or if this was not necessary. As I conclude, I am now aware that I must be adaptable with each pupil. There is no hard and fast rule here to be pertained too, every student is unique and therefore must be taught accordingly (Neathery, 2018). If a student is keen to learn to read notation, then the singing teacher should happily and diligently assist with this. If a pupil shows no interest in reading notation, then the lesson must be adapted accordingly. This may mean totally excluding notation learning, or it may mean some theory and notation are taught in more subtle manner. If a singing teacher has a pupil with additional needs, such as dyslexia or ADHD, then they must be fully adaptable to their students' learning requirements. This may mean teachers have to lay aside their preferred methods of teaching, to learn a new way that fits this pupil. This could result in a singing teacher needing to research and learn a new skill themselves to best teach this student, this was so clearly seen with the example of the blind student in my research. If a singing teacher has a pupil who wants to pursue music to a higher level, then they must do their best to help them understand the requirements of the course they have chosen and help them reach the level of musicality required for them to be successful. A singing teacher must always keep in mind their desire to pass on their knowledge and skills to the next generation of singers. This means singing teachers must be pedagogically ever adapting and evolving and ensuring they never become to set in their ways to see the individual pupil standing before them (Stafford, 2024).

Current singing teaching methods have developed a musical notation reading gap whether by design or accident, a fact that is clearly supported by my data. This gap needs to be addressed and discussed by the singing world as a whole. Are we happy to move away from notationally literate singers and thus risk limiting the genres they can access into the future?

Or are we content to teach aurally and encourage the musical freedom that Priest (2008) writes about?

References

Gordon, EB. (1958) 'Why Johnny Can't read Music'. Available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2307/3388888 (accessed 27th February 2026.)

Arthurs, Y. Petrini, K. (2023) 'Musicians' views on the role of reading music in learning, performance and understanding. Available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10298649221149110 (accessed 27th February 2026.)

Hodges, DA. Nolker, DB. (2011) 'The acquisition of music reading skills'. Available at https://books.google.im/books?hl=en&lr=&id=8-kVDAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA61&dq=do+singers+need+to+be+able+to+read+music&ots=3BX19s07pX&sig=Y60LQK6UpvrwTlHnCLDFqOIXDsA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=do%20singers%20need%20to%20be%20able%20to%20read%20music&f=false (accessed 27th February 2026).

Ivanjova, NV. Creswell, JW. Sticke, SL. (2006) 'Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: from theory to practice' Available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1525822X05282260 (accessed 3rd September 2026).

Bukamal, H. (2022) 'Deconstructing insider-outsider researcher positionality'. Available at https://nasenjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-8578.12426 (accessed 6th March 2026).

Classic FM (2021) '10 Legendary musicians who never learned to read music'. Available at https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/famous-musicians-who-cant-read-music/ (accessed 13th March 2026).

The Music Studio (2026) '7 Famous Musicians who can't read music'. Available at https://themusicstudio.ca/909-2/ (accessed 13th March 2026).

Deseret News (1997) 'Pavarotti confesses – he cannot read music'. Available at https://www.deseret.com/1997/7/21/19324656/pavarotti-confesses-he-cannot-read-music/ (accessed 30th March 2026).

Arthurs, Y. Petrini, K. (2023) 'Musicians' view on the role of reading music in learning, performance, and understanding'. Available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10298649221149110 (accessed 20th March 2026).

Sloboda, J. (1978) 'The psychology of reading music'. Available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/030573567862001 (accessed 20th March 2026).

Walker, R. (2019) 'Socio-cultural, acoustic, and environmental imperatives in the world of singing'. The Oxford Handbook of Singing, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Broude, R. (2012) 'Inventing Western music notation, inventing western music'. Available at https://www.proquest.com/openview/9261196f2cdcaa32face26853090c2a7/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=28725 (accessed 20th March 2026).

Reisenweaver, AJ. (2012) 'Guido of Arezzo and his influence on music learning' Available at file:///Users/ruthtickle/Downloads/MO_2012_Reisenweaver_Guido_rev_1_Volume_3_Number_1_Article_4%20(1).pdf (accessed 20th March 2026).

Kim, A. (2021) 'On musical notations' Available at file:///Users/ruthtickle/Downloads/on%20musical%20notations,%20andrei%20kim,%202020%20(1).pdf (accessed 20th March 2026).

Strayer, HR. (2013) 'From neumes to notes: The evolution of music notation'. Available at file:///Users/ruthtickle/Downloads/6x9_Strayer_From_Neumes_to_Notes__Final_Article_1.pdf (accessed 20th March 2026).

Pace, I. (2009) 'Notation, time and the performers relationship to the score in contemporary music'. Available at https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/5418/8/Notation_Time_and_the_Performer%27s_Relationship_to_the_Score.pdf (accessed 20th March 2026).

Killick, A. (2020) 'Global notation as a tool for cross-cultural and comparative music analysis. Analytical approaches to world music'. Available at https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/151037/3/Killick_AAWM_Vol_8_2.pdf (accessed 30th March 2026).

Boler, V. (2020) ‘How to read Chinese music’ Available at https://www.victoriaboler.com/blog/2015/11/12/owhthm5nhqe0eaplz9iha07y49g3d0 (accessed 30th March 2026).

Mammen, S. Krishnamurthi, I. Jalja Varma, A. Sujatha, G. (2016) ‘iSargam: music notation representation for India Carnatic music’. Available at https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s13636-016-0083-z (accessed 30th March 2026).

Knight, R. (1971) ‘Towards a notation and tablature for the Kora and its application to other systems’. Available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/30249953 (accessed 30th March 2026).

Bent, ID. (2026) ‘Musical Notation’. Available at https://www.britannica.com/art/musical-notation (accessed 30th March 2026).

Holland, S. (2026) ‘Music reading-who needs it?’. Available at https://www.e-musicmaestro.com/blog/22/music-reading-who-needs-it (accessed 3rd September 2026).

AncestryDNA Traits learning hub. (2026) ‘Playing music by ear’ Available at https://www.ancestry.com/c/traits-learning-hub/playing-music-by-ear (accessed 19th September 2026).

Erdtsieck, L. (2026) ‘Humans are born with a biological blueprint for music’. Available at https://neurosciencenews.com/biology-of-musicality-human-nature-30302/ (accessed 19th September 2026).

Malloch, S. Trevarthen, C. (2018) ‘The human nature of music’. Available at https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01680/full (accessed 31st March 2026).

Abrams, RM. Gerhardt, KJ. Huang, X. Peters, AJM. Langford, RG. (2000) ‘Musical experiences of the unborn baby’. Available at https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/76942068/jsvi.1999.260520211221-8770-1kcpxri-libre.pdf?1640090965=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DMusical_Experiences_of_the_Unborn_Baby.pdf&Expires=1774947853&Signature=Idb08AbJwPXX8-6bIlbO-jFKOCnwho8JJVohcvexBKWCnHTRGpaG3u3egllTfx~P51Ki-JFsFif07CspWfFAuwf~LiHaVTye6v3OP7sliWfEWnchB4damrlMOtgHlytIDPzUbQymNY0C~6

RCXsUdEEvDoKIuQyF-XYljZ3kW9QCUFgKH1Prkz4a1ylmcdxM-s0oLSJhujOpDl8pOng49UEmHyby8~dkb1CafwOiUmQzohKj1~nam5FiyjsbiL~hbMrH~f52ImNnfwbkel-R884~aN6Nziw3~B5cRf2oj1jpmRNkXRjf8JGoLTkR6JzE73COeVOwY3wqAomEkLf6yrg__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA (accessed 31st March 2026)

Mohn, E. (2022) 'Gregorian Chant'. Available at https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/music/gregorian-chant (accessed 31st March 2026).

Potts, D. (2023) 'The music of the Psalms'. Available at https://gladtidingsmagazine.org/the-music-of-the-psalms/#:~:text=Shout%20for%20joy%20in%20the,to%20reconstruct%20the%20ancient%20music. (accessed 31st March 2026).

Brooks, J. (2022) 'Psalms for the seasons, the Biblical music of Israel'. Available at https://www.associationcovenantpeople.org/psalms-for-the-seasons-the-biblical-music-of-israel/#:~:text=The%20Book%20of%20Psalms%20in,is%20written%20in%20RESPONSIVE%20FORMAT. (accessed 31st March 2026).

Cooley, TJ. (2013) 'Folk music in Eastern Europe'. The Cambridge History of World Music, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Coren, C. (2024) 'Folk Music'. Available at https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/music/folk-music (accessed 31st March 2026).
Akrofi, EA. (2002) 'The teaching of music in Africa'. *Prospects*, 32(4).

Green, L. (2002) 'How popular musicians learn: A way ahead for music education'. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292576399_How_Popular_Musicians_Learn_A_Way_Ahead_for_Music_Education (accessed 31st March 2026).

Priest, P. (2008) 'Playing by ear: its nature and application to instrumental learning'. Available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-music-education/article/playing-by-ear-its-nature-and-application-to-instrumental-learning/41CAB3DA831E2B2C1C1D26CCA9F5B3B8 (accessed 30th March 2026).

Gudmundsdottir, HR. (2009) 'Advances in music-reading research'. Available at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14613808.2010.504809?needAccess=true#d1e232 (accessed 30th March 2026).

Gordon, EB. (1958) 'Why Johnny can't read music'. Available at https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WHELF_UWTSD/1bmis16/cdi_crossref_primary_10_2307_3388888 (accessed 30th March 2026).

Arthurs,Y. Petrini, K (2023) 'Musicians views on the role of reading music in learning, performance, and understanding'. Available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/10298649221149110 (accessed 30th March 2026).

Braun, V. Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp77–101

McPherson, G. Renwick, J. (2011) 'Self-regulation and mastery of musical skills'. Available at https://books.google.im/books?hl=en&lr=&id=XfOYV0lwzGgC&oi=fnd&pg=PA234&dq=McPherson+%26+Renwick+(2011)+self-regulation+and+mastery+of+musical+skills&ots=4MFnJlIM6E&sig=QJTRErWlyZAKla3gVGIJicAzhE0&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=McPherson%20%26%20Renwick%20(2011)%20self-regulation%20and%20mastery%20of%20musical%20skills&f=false (accessed 19th September 2026).

Colourstrings (2026) 'The method'. Available at https://colourstrings.org/the-method/ (accessed 13th August 2026).

Schlaug, G. Bangert, M. (2007) 'Neural correlates of music and learning and understanding'. Available at file:///Users/ruthtickle/Downloads/Altenmuller_Rauscher-NeurosciencesinMusicPedagogy-RF.pdf (accessed 25th September 2026).

Saville, P. Kinney, C. Heiderschiet, A. Himmerich, H. (2025) 'Exploring the intersection of ADHD and music: A systematic review'. Available at https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11762814/ (accessed 25th September 2026).

Keith, G. (2023) 'Do people with ADHD have difficulty playing from sheet music?'. Available at https://successmusicstudio.com/do-people-with-adhd-have-difficulty-playing-from-sheet-music/ (accessed 25th September 2026).

Wright, M. (2025) 'So, I'm dyslexic and ADHD: How it reframes my music, teaching and research'. Available at https://mwrightmusic-education.com/2025/10/18/so-im-dyslexic-and-adhd-how-it-reframes-my-music-teaching-and-research/ (accessed 25th September 2026).

Raviotta, S. (2017) 'Practical learning strategies for musicians with specific learning disorder (dyslexia) and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Available at https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc984211/m1/1/ (accessed 25th September 2026).

Han, J. (2025) 'Why classical music is dying and how we can save it'. Available at https://medium.com/@newmusiccomposer/why-classical-music-is-dying-and-how-we-can-save-it-07c5f7e401c1 (accessed 19th September 2026).

Albright, C. (2016) 'Classical music is dying…and that's the best thing for classical music'. Available at https://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/29/opinions/classical-music-dying-and-being-reborn-opinion-albright (accessed 19th September 2026).

Jackson, DJ. (2024) 'Classical music isn't dead! But it's not flourishing either…' Available at https://presserfoundation.org/classical-music-isnt-dead-but-its-not-flourishing-either/ (accessed 26th September 2026).

British Suzuki (2026) 'How the Suzuki method works.' Available at https://www.britishsuzuki.org.uk/pages/suzuki-method (accessed 19th August 2026).

McPerson, GE. Renwick, JM (2011) 'Self-regulation and mastery of musical skills'. Available at https://books.google.im/books?hl=en&lr=&id=XfOYV0lwzGgC&oi=fnd&pg=PA234&dq=should+music+students+be+taught+to+play+self+suffietnly+&ots=4MFmGklLcG&sig=tUCNeLaAHmN7p2EEu5qQMA11kMs&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed 3rd September 2026).

Tormey, K. (2026) ‘A-level music could disappear after entries sink to a record low’. Available at https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/alevel-music-could-disappear-entries-record-low (accessed 3rd September 2026).

UK Music. (2026) ‘UK Music congratulates students picking up A-level, T-level, RSL, UAL diplomas and BTEC results’. Available at https://www.ukmusic.org/news/uk-music-congratulates-students-picking-up-a-level-t-level-and-btec-results/ (accessed 3rd September 2026).

Whittaker, A. (2021) ‘Teacher perceptions of A-level music: tension, dilemmas and decline’. Available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/british-journal-of-music-education/article/teacher-perceptions-of-alevel-music-tension-dilemmas-and-decline/12DB5CC97C59AB04F709A4BE95126D13 (accessed 25th September 2026).

Neathery, M. (2018) ‘Adaptive music lessons: How to support all learners’ Aavailable at https://www.resonatemt.com/music-blog/39voeljyxner10itsram2ziurp7fii (accessed 26th September 2026).

Stafford, L. (2024) ‘Adaptive teaching strategies for all’. Available at https://www.musicteachermagazine.co.uk/content/features/adaptive-teaching-strategies-for-all (accessed 26th September 2026).

Picture References

Colourstrings (2026) ‘The method’. Available at https://colourstrings.org/the-method/ (accessed 13th August 2026).

Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (2026) ‘Sight singing extract’. Acavilable at https://www.scribd.com/document/396726318/ABRSM-Sight-Singing-Grade-1-5 (accessed 3rd September 2026).

German Suzuki Association (2026) ‘Step by step’. Available at https://www.germansuzuki.com/en/topics/listen-and-look-inside/ (accessed 3rd September 2026)>

Appendices

Appendix One – Student questionnaire's

Please give your name	Please give your age	Approximately how long have you been having singing lessons?
P1	15	4 years
P2	11	3 years
P3	11	6 years
P4	14	4 years group singing lessons, 6 months individual lessons
P5	14	5 years
P6	9	3 years
P7	14	3 years
P8	9	4 years
P9	7	2 years
P10	18	10 years
P11	12	Just over a year
P12	6	1 year
P13	8	2 years
P14	12	2 years
P15	15	10 years
P16	7	3 years
P17	6	2 years
P18	14	almost a year
P19	12	about 9 years
P20	14	2 years

Do you play any other musical instruments now or in the past, or have music theory lessons?	**Are you able to read music?**
play guitar and have lessons	Yes
Played piano for a few years, violin lessons currently	I can read a little but not fluently
Theory lessons and used to play piano for about 3 years	Yes
Used to play piano for a year when younger. Tin whistle in school lessons	No
Piano lessons for a few months	I can read a little but not fluently
Piano lessons 2 years and play violin in school orchestra	I can read a little but not fluently
Played trumpet for 2 years and had some music theory lessons	Yes
Trumpet for 1 year, piano 3 years, whistle for 1 year	Yes
Violin lessons about 6 months, piano lessons for 6 months	I can read a little bit after 6 months of violin lessons
I had a few theory lessons and piano lessons a year	Yes but not totally fluently
I play piano had lessons for just over a year. Viola lessons for 2 years	Yes
harp lessons about 6 months and piano lessons 1 year	I am learning to read music at the moment
Piano lessons for 4 years	I can read music but am still learning
Piano lessons for nearly a year, violin lessons for 3 years, drum lessons 5 months	I can read a little but not fluently
no	I can read a little but not fluently

Piano lessons 1 year	I am learning in my piano lessons but can't read a lot yet
piano lessons almost a year	I can read a bit but am only just learning
Used to play cello 3 years and piano 4 years	I can read a little but not fluently
Piano 8 years, violin 9 years, harp 4 years	Yes
Drum lessons for 1 year, used to play violin to grade 1 standard	No

Are you able to understand instructions on the music such as P, F, Allegro etc	**If you can read music, did you learn in your singing lessons or some other way?**
Yes	I learnt via another instrument I play
I know some but not all	I learnt via another instrument I play;I learnt in my school music lessons;School Orchestra
Yes	I learnt in my singing lessons;I learnt via another instrument I play;I have music theory lessons;I learnt in my school music lessons
No	
No	I learnt via another instrument I play;I learnt in my school music lessons
Yes	I learnt via another instrument I play
Yes	I learnt in my singing lessons;I learnt via another instrument I play
Yes	I learnt via another instrument I play;I have music theory lessons
No	I learnt via another instrument I play;I learnt in my school music lessons
Yes	I learnt in my singing lessons;I learnt via another instrument I play;I sing in a catherdal choir where we do sight singing and theory
Yes	I learnt via another instrument I play
I know some but not all	I learnt via another instrument I play;I learnt in my school music lessons
No	I learnt in my singing lessons;I learnt via another instrument I play;I learnt in my school music lessons
I know some but not all	I learnt via another instrument I play
I know some but not all	I learnt in my school music lessons;Some at home with Mum

I know some but not all	I learnt via another instrument I play
No	I learnt in my singing lessons;I learnt via another instrument I play
Yes	I learnt via another instrument I play;I learnt in my school music lessons
Yes	I learnt via another instrument I play;I have music theory lessons

If you can read music, do you think it is important for singers to learn this skill? Or do you think only instrumentalist need to learn this as singers can learn songs in other ways?
I think in some ways reading music for a singer is important, but there are ways around it if you can't
I don't think its that important for singers to read music, because I learn by listening and looking at the words
It might depend on the song, but singers may need to read music to help with the beats and timing. It can help them to understand the song in general
I don't think its necessary but it could be a good skill to have
I think singers should be able to read the music
I think reading music is useful because it helps to be able to remember tunes and with dynamic instructions
You should learn to read music but you can also learn by listening.
I don't think it really matters if a singer can or can't read music
I think its good for singer to be able to read music but you may not need to be able to depending on what type of songs your learning
I think its really important for singers to read music, it can make you learn quicker than you could by just listening to a piece
I think singers should be able read music it will be helpful if you want to play another instrument
I think singers should be able to read the music so they can learn the tune
All instrumentalists should learn to read music but singers don't need to as much
It is good for them to read a bit so they can follow the music to help learn a new tune. However singers can also learn by listening and this is ok as well
I do not think reading the music is important beacuse the person playing the piano needs to know the notes and the singer needs to know the words
Yes becuase it makes it easier for singers to sing. It tells you the song tune

I think learning by listening is. more important than reading the notes, because it is easier to pick up. I had trouble learning to read music as I am dyslexic. The notes all jump around on the page and the music teacher didn't understand. The teacher should ask in the first lesson if the pupil has any difficulties and then should be able to work with the pupil to find the best way for them to learn how to read the music. Trying to read music made me stop the instruments i played in the past.
It is important for singers to read music

If you can read music, do you think all song genres require note reading skills? For example do only classical style songs need it? How about pop or musical theatre songs?
All genres should read music
Not sure
I think it would be helpful in all song styles
it could be good for all types of song
I think you could read it for all songs but could also manage without reading music
Useful for all song types
All types of song require note reading
if you were learning an opera song you might need to read the music but you don't need it for other songs
Its better to be able to read the music for all song styles, however some would need it less like pop and musical theatre. My view is that sometimes reading the music can limit your creativity as you have to follow the instructions on the music rather than thinking outside the box for yourself. I think this could be a disadvantage of reading music. Opera you would need to read music for example but maybe not in pop or music theatre where you are more free to perform.
I think all songs types need to be able to read the music
Some songs like pop you might be able to learn by just listening
You need to it for all types of songs
If singing opera you may need to read the notes but pop, rock, musical theatre you may not need to read it
Opera and classical music yes, more modern day music not really needed
I think it is a bit helpful in all songs to know a bit about the music
Singers should be able to read notes for all songs
I don't think you need to read music for any type of song because you can learn it by listening
all genres should read music

If you can read music how do you learn a new song?
I read the notes and words, think about how I would sing it and then listen to someone else singing it
I start to learn the song in lesson with my teacher playing the tune on the piano. At home I would listen to a recording.
I use the notes and recordings and read the words
I use recordings and my singing teacher would help me learn the tune
I use only recordings to learn a new song
I listen to a new song in lesson played by my teacher, use the sheet music to practice at home and sometimes I use a recording also
I read the notes and use another instrument to help me pick out the tune
I use only recordings to learn a new song
Help from my teacher in lessons and listening to recordings as well as looking at the music
I use only recordings to learn a new song
I would get someone to help me with the notes on the piano and listen to a recording
My teacher would help me in lesson by playing the piano and singing the tune to me. At home I look at the music to practice
I use only recordings to learn a new song
Read the notes and use a piano and have help in singing lesson
I use only recordings to learn a new song
I would listen to it and other people playing it, when I am super good at piano I will be able to play the notes myself
I learn through listening in lessons to my teacher and at home to recordings
I use only recordings to learn a new song

If you can read music as a singer do you feel you are at an advantage?
Yes
I can read music but don't use these skills as a singer
Yes
I don't think reading music will affect how well you can sing, so I don't think its an advantae
Yes
Maybe slightly, because you can learn by listening
Yes I think it makes singer easier for me and harder for those who don't read music, they might take longer to learn a song.
No
Yes, depending on what your singing. It could make your singing more accurate
Yes, because in a singing exam I would be able to do the sight singing, if you can't read music you would loose out on these marks
Yes
Yes
Yes because I could figure out a note if I needed to non music readers couldn't do this
Yes
No
Yes becuase they have pracised more
No
Yes

If you cannot read music, is this a decision you have made or is it because no one has ever taught you?
No one has ever taught me but I would like to learn
I would like to learn to read music better, I am happy learning to sing as I currently do
No one has ever taught me and I do not want to learn

If you cannot read music, can you tell me how you learn a new song?
I listen to a recording;My teacher helps me
I listen to a recording

If you cannot read music do you ever think that you are at a disadvantage compared to those singers who can?
Yes
Maybe
No because only the accompanist needs to read the music

Do you think there is a point in their learning where all singers should be able to read music? For example if you take grade a singing exam, if you want to study singing at university?
Definitely if you want to study singing at university, maybe it would be good for the higher grades but you may not need to at a lower grade
If you went to university to study singing you should be able to read music.
I think you should read music right from the start of singing lessons so you are ready to take an exam or whatever else is needed. If you don't read music you would find the sight singing in an exam very hard.
If going to uni you should be able to read music. I think it should be taught at the start of singing lessons
If you wanted to carry on to a level music or at uni. If its just fun you don't need to read music but if its more serious then you do.
I think singers should read music from the age when they can read
If you did gcse, a level, IB music or went to Uni to study singing you must be able to read the music
You should learn to read. music right from the first lesson so it can help you at all stages.
May if they went to uni they would need to read music or if you did a music test at high school.
Yes, it should be taught from the very first lessons.
If you were going to uni to study singing then you shouled read music, if you were singing for fun and didn't want to do a singing exam then it wouldn't matter if you didn't read music.
They should have to learn if they go to university to study singng
They should start learning if they do an exam
I think from gcse and a level it would be useful but not really needed before then.
If singing is a hobby for fun then note reading is not really needed but if you want to take it further to gcse etc then necessary
At high school you need to be able to read the notes to learn tricky songs
I think singers should learn from the start. It is hard to learn to read the notes when you are little.

I think if you want to study singing at gcse level or above you should be able to read the music.
If Peoplewant to do music at gcse, a level and uni should be able to read music
No

Appendix Two – Music/Singing teachers questionnaire's

I am happy with the above terms.	Please give your name	What kind of music teaching do you do? (Select all that apply)
Yes	P21	Singing teacher
Yes	P22	School classroom music teacher;Instrumental teacher;Singing teacher
Yes	P23	I lead an adult choir
Yes	P24	Instrumental teacher
Yes	P25	Instrumental teacher
Yes	P26	School classroom music teacher;Singing teacher
Yes	P27	Instrumental teacher;Singing teacher
Yes	P28	Singing teacher
Yes	P29	Singing teacher
Yes	P29	Singing teacher
Yes	P30	Singing teacher
Yes	P31	School classroom music teacher;Instrumental teacher
Yes	P32	Singing teacher
Yes	P33	Instrumental teacher;Singing teacher
Yes	P34	Singing teacher;Drama Teacher
Yes	P35	Instrumental teacher
Yes	P36	Instrumental teacher;Singing teacher
Yes	P37	School classroom music teacher;Instrumental teacher;Singing teacher

Approximately how long have you been involved in music teaching?
25 years
33
About 25 years
10 years full time
6 years
6 years
27 years
11 years
10 years
20 years
25 years
20 years
15 years
7 years
25 years
33 years
13 years
21 years

If you are an instrumental teacher, do you always teach your pupils to read music and understand music theory?
Yes
I
Yes
Yes
Yes
n/a
No
Yes
Not an instrumental teacher
Yes
Yes
No
Yes

Can you briefly explain your answer to the above question?
I'm not an instrumental teacher
I teach what is necessary for the student needs
I'm not an instrumental teacher
Reading music is central to students' independence and ability to learn the curriculum at home.
I don't think it's essential to being a musician, but the music I teach does require reading.
When teaching classes KS1 and KS2, we did the rhythmic notes reading with Orff instruments with some backing music. Sometimes I let them see if the pitch is going up or down on the board following the notes when singing.
I have a master's degree in Kodaly pedagogy which specialises in developing musicality through solfege. I teach all my students to sight sing this way.
-
N/A
I am a singing teacher.
not an instrumental teacher
All of my pupils are encouraged to read standard western notation at a level appropriate to their learning as it underpins many skills.
N/A
It's important to understand all the hows and whys of music to truly understand what you are playing
Not an instrumental teacher
I think it's essential to be able to read music and understand theory.
I try to work with what the student needs so, although, yes i would encourage it, it's not always best for the learner.
Being able to read and understand music notation and theory gives you the tools you need to progress quickly and to play with other musicians

If you are a singing teacher, do you always teach your pupils to read music and understand music theory?
Yes
I always use fully scored music and use correct terminology but it's in the context of the song not as stand alone theory
No
Yes
No
Only if they specifically ask for it
No
No
No
Yes
No
It depends on the pupil and their goals

Can you briefly explain your answer to the above question?
I do basic music theory with all young singers - under 16 ; adults, I encourage it but I often find that many are resistant.
As above
Several people resist reading music and say they can’t do it. Yet they can follow directions in terms of tempo and accents and gave a rough idea of pitch and duration of notes even without the labels for those co notes
When I did 1:1 singing teaching, I worked on their technique and performance rather than general reading notes and theory. They never booked a 1:1 singing lesson with me to go over singing with notes and reading.
See answer above
I think it erases the fun for most of my amateur students
Our singing lessons are short and that's what curricular music lessons are there for, in my opinion. However, some students who are extra interested and don't get what they need from their music teacher ask me for help
I do sometimes teach elements of those things to students who request it or really need it, but I don't have enough time to work on those things and teach singing technique.
My pupils have separate music reading and theory classes
I teach musical theatre, mostly in groups and generally it is for fun and confidence building. Those going on to further study at drama school would not need this as a requirement of entry- it is 100% audition based.
As above, to understand as much as the student can about the music they are learning. This helps with interpretation.
Yes, but not in every case and not in as much depth as instrumental teachers. I teach the minimum required for sight singing, treble clef only, relationships between notes, note values, dynamic markings, rests etc.
As above!

For example, if an adult beginner pupil just wanted to sing for fun, then I would probably teach them mainly by ear. I also teach young pupils, who can't read words by ear, but I teach them how to sight sing using interval training and hand signs.

Do you think all singing students need to read music, or is it ok for them to learn new songs by ear?
I think it can be useful if they read music as it definitely speeds the process up, but some people are remarkably efficient at learning by ear, so I don't think it's a need, rather a nice to have. I think it's probably most beneficial for people singing in choirs and ensembles and following harmony lines. Individual singers and songs - by ear isn't a concern for me.
Depends on student
It's just so slow and inaccurate to learn solely by ear. Even if only half the choir read mysic, the other half can learn faster
Yes, it might not be an individual teacher's first priority but it must be included at some point. I think that reading music is often brought in quite early in the process due to the pressures of the curriculum. Reading music is a skill that will make a student well rounded. Equally, aural skills and transcription will too.
I don't think it's essential, but both reading and learning by ear are valuable skills.
It is ok to learn it by ear unless you want to join a choir, I'd say. However, popular choirs won't use reading notes as well. It has to be choral, classical singing, I'd say. At the same time, when you have to go over some riffs and have to be quite precise in a popular song, it might help to visualise complex parts of the melody.
I think it if fine to learn by ear initially but I will always ensure they can follow the score and will ask them to 'read it' with me silently hearing the notes in their heads and following the dynamic directions in the score. Then I'll ask them (with the score closed) where the directions are any what difference they make to the piece. I will do that regularly until they have mastered the score.
It is ok for them to learn new songs by ear as long as they don't plan on becoming professional classical singers, where the system currently needs them to know how to read music
I think it depends on what they wish to achieve long term with music. If all they want is to pass performance exams or have fun singing, I think learning by ear is enough. But if they want to go further with it, being unable to read music makes them feel limited
I think it is essential if you want to be a professional and very beneficial to read music, especially to become more advanced, but for those who are doing it for fun, I don't mind just working with them by ear.

It depends on their age
I don't believe that all pupils NEED to learn to read music, as it's possible to access music-making via other routes, and therefore it is OK for them to learn by ear, but the skills associated with music reading should be available to all learners, whether they choose to use them or not.
I think it’s ok to learn songs by ear as that in itself is a skill. I think if they want a professional career as a singer or music Teacher etc then they should learn.
To begin with, to start the journey, sing by ear but as the student progresses, learning to read music can only be beneficial
I think at least they need to be aware of the musical shape and give sheet music rather than lyric sheets in almost every instance. However sometimes I allow them to learn entirely by ear.
Yes, all should be able to read music. It is a skill which not only develops their ability as a musician, but enables the student to learn the piece more quickly.
I think both skills are beneficial.
I think it depends on why they want to have singing lessons, but I think it is beneficial for most singers, especially young children to be taught to read and understand music notation

If you think singing students should be able to read music do you think this is necessary from the first lesson or maybe only when they reach the higher grades or a certain standard for example?
It's only needed when singing students reach a certain level
It's needed right from the start
Early on in the process to create a solid foundation but not so early it distracts from basic instrumental technique.
This would depend on the music and what they are aiming to do.
It's only needed when singing students reach a certain level
I think you should teach solfege and sight-singing from the start but not necessarily at the level of the songs learned at the beginning. As mentioned above I do teach them to be familiar with how scores work right from the start but I believe in building up the ear to hear the intervals before I expect them to read them accurately
Again, depends on the individual
It's only needed when singing students reach a certain level
It depends on their age
It's needed right from the start
Once established, it should be incorporated when it can
I don't think fully 'reading music' is required (understanding several different keys etc) but ideally a basic level is required from the start. Even if only to follow the 'ups and downs' and understand rests in order to take breaths on them
As soon as they are able to
It's needed right from the start
It's needed right from the start
If you don't think singing students need to read music, can you briefly explain why this is your view? For example, is it to do with the genre of song studied or the pupils views on reading music, or the ability to learn by ear?

Possibly a little of all three. I think everyone's learning methods are different.
Na
Yes, as a broader point - writing was invented for the transmission of information geographically and chronologically. One learns the Latin alphabet to then learn the written English language to then read poetry, philosophy, classics, etc. How can one truly understand and analyse and interpret/understand Neitzche, Brontë or Austen without being able to read? Likewise, how can one understand Prokofiev or Wagner?
Reading music opens up opportunities, but there are plenty of opportunities open to those who don't read music.
It will be easier for students to understand it later, once they've experienced singing melodies and the pitch. Once they've experienced that in their bodies. I would introduce the "new language" / signs to them while starting singing... but to read it, I'd connect it later.
I think it depends on the end goal. If the student wants to learn singing because it is a fun activity for them, because it helps them connect with their bodies, because they're in a band etc., my opinion is that they absolutely don't need to read music. Even if they love classical music, I don't think they need to learn reading if they are not interested in it (expect if they do not plan on joining a choir where reading is required, or become a professional OR expect if learning would develop certain skills that would help them. One of my students has trouble with pitch and is a painter, so she's very visual. Learning to understand the position of notes on the staff helped her to be more in tune)
For most school kids I've worked with, learning by ear was enough. Many are not interested in music theory or reading, and trying to get them to learn it in a singing lesson takes away from what they actually want to be learning at that moment: To sing. My experience shows me that imposing theory in this context could affect their motivation to engage with music, especially when so many believe reading music to be really difficult. However, I'm very supportive of those who ask me for help learning music theory and do my best to provide resources and support where possible. I don't think anyone should be impeded to learn something if they really want to
It assists with accurate interval work and intonation and underpins theoretical understanding. This doesn't mean they couldn't learn by ear, but I believe it's important that the ability to read

notation is there, at whatever level, from an early age and teachers shouldn't shy away from it as a language.
I feel Musical Theatre is very performance based and it attracts highly creative people who may struggle with the theory side. I wouldn’t like to stifle the creativity by insisting that they should do something out of their comfort zone / something they would not enjoy.
I think singers can get away without learning to read music but it is so beneficial that they can and may hinder their musical development if they don’t
I think learning to read music should start as soon as the pupil is able to. A 5 year old learning to read may not be appropriate from the first lesson for example.
I think it's beneficial, absolutely and I teach it wherever I can. I think the issue we have with singing is that it's mushc more accessible without being able to read.

If you don't think singing students need to read music, can you briefly explain why this is your view? For example, is it to do with the genre of song studied or the pupils views on reading music, or the ability to learn by ear?
Possibly a little of all three. I think everyone's learning methods are different.
Na
Yes, as a broader point - writing was invented for the transmission of information geographically and chronologically. One learns the Latin alphabet to then learn the written English language to then read poetry, philosophy, classics, etc. How can one truly understand and analyse and interpret/understand Neitzche, Brontë or Austen without being able to read? Likewise, how can one understand Prokofiev or Wagner?
Reading music opens up opportunities, but there are plenty of opportunities open to those who don't read music.
It will be easier for students to understand it later, once they've experienced singing melodies and the pitch. Once they've experienced that in their bodies. I would introduce the "new language" / signs to them while starting singing... but to read it, I'd connect it later.
I think it depends on the end goal. If the student wants to learn singing because it is a fun activity for them, because it helps them connect with their bodies, because they're in a band etc., my opinion is that they absolutely don't need to read music. Even if they love classical music, I don't think they need to learn reading if they are not interested in it (expect if they do not plan on joining a choir where reading is required, or become a professional OR expect if learning would develop certain skills that would help them. One of my students has trouble with pitch and is a painter, so she's very visual. Learning to understand the position of notes on the staff helped her to be more in tune)
For most school kids I've worked with, learning by ear was enough. Many are not interested in music theory or reading, and trying to get them to learn it in a singing lesson takes away from what they actually want to be learning at that moment: To sing. My experience shows me that imposing theory in this context could affect their motivation to engage with music, especially when so many believe reading music to be really difficult. However, I'm very supportive of those who ask me for help learning music theory and do my best to provide resources and support where possible. I don't think anyone should be impeded to learn something if they really want to

It assists with accurate interval work and intonation and underpins theoretical understanding. This doesn't mean they couldn't learn by ear, but I believe it's important that the ability to read notation is there, at whatever level, from an early age and teachers shouldn't shy away from it as a language.
I feel Musical Theatre is very performance based and it attracts highly creative people who may struggle with the theory side. I wouldn’t like to stifle the creativity by insisting that they should do something out of their comfort zone / something they would not enjoy.
I think singers can get away without learning to read music but it is so beneficial that they can and may hinder their musical development if they don’t
I think learning to read music should start as soon as the pupil is able to. A 5 year old learning to read may not be appropriate from the first lesson for example.
I think it's beneficial, absolutely and I teach it wherever I can. I think the issue we have with singing is that it's mushc more accessible without being able to read.

As a instrumental or singing teacher have you ever had a pupil that was unable to read music due to learning disabilities for example?
Yes
Yes
No
Yes
No
No
No
No
No
Yes
No
No
Yes
No
No
No
Yes
Yes

If you answered yes to the last question can you briefly explain if this pupil was an instrumentalist or singer, and how you overcame this pupil not being able to read music? Did it affect their long term learning and progress for example?
I've had a number of students who have had issues for various reasons, but most obviously was a student who was blind. I don't think it affected their long term learning at all - in fact, they picked up and remembered music almost immediately. Similarly, a severely dyslexic student for whom the notes and lines just 'swam about', could remember Melody and harmony lines from the first hearing and it definitely didn't hinder their progress. I do also think, on the flip side, what we might call elite level choral singers (college choirs, cathedral choirs etc.,) have an over reliance upon reading and sometimes this can hinder as much as help.
Singer - used sol-fa
Student is blind. I self taught braille sheet music, both reading and bailing. A lot of training courses, time spent with the RNIB braille sheet music dictionary and a Perkins brailler. As soon as student had understanding of and acess to braille sheet music her rate of learning increased exponentially due to increased independence of learning, the ability to attend Youth Orchestra and reduced reliance on memory skills.
Yes, I have had dyslexic students, and looking at music/words confused them. Those people did better to learn by ear.
This person was dyslexic and had other additional needs but still managed to gain a 2:1 music degree and now works in the industry, so they were not held back.
It's not a hard yes as they were able to to some extent, but it hindered their ability to access the music itself, which surely defeats the point. These were instrumental learners. It affected their progress in so much as they couldn't follow a 'traditional' route of Grades and Exams, but they could learn aurally and access what I was able to teach them that way. I also have a

singer with learning disabilities, which affects their ability to read music - this student would ultimately like to pursue GCSE music, so I'm currently exploring the options there.
I've had dyslexic students who have struggled to read, but using coloured acetate has helped once they were diagnosed

If you are a singing teacher, have you experienced school aged singing pupils that do not want to learn musical notation and theory?
Yes
Yes
No
Yes
No
Yes
Yes
No
No
Yes
No
Yes
Yes
No

If you answered yes to the last question, can you briefly explain how this pupils decision affected their learning as a singer?
It possibly makes it more difficult for them to be able to do independent learning away from their lesson, but again it depends upon the students and with so many recording methods available on phones and devices, perhaps these have taken away the need in the same way.
They want to sing and not learn the theory
They were fine without it. I had mostly pupils interested in popular music. Yes, if you want to do exams, it is again good to read melody and rhythm.
In my understanding, they just think it is boring and useless for singing
I think the most obvious effect is them essentially copying the original singer's way of singing, which can present its own set of problems
I have found generally that young musical theatre students are not keen to learn theory.
I don't think it did, they learnt well by ear.
I often teach it to them anyway, it's often previous experience of it or fear of it that puts them off. Once they get going, it becomes part of their lesson without them much noticing.
If you are a singing teacher do you find that students who like to sing pop, folk or musical theatre are less likely to want or need to read music than those who take a more classical route?
I don’t find it’s any different really, although with pop especially, sometimes seeing the music written down doesn’t help as it’s ’too accurate’ in some cases in that it has to be notated somehow but this isn’t a real representation of what the original singer was doing.
Yes

I think as long as the score is presented to them, if they choose to supplement that with listening to other performers in any genre that’s fine
Definitely.
Yes, but actually once they start making good progress they become much more interested in learning how to read and write it...by then its easier for them too as their ear has developed and things make sense to them. They come to it out of choice once they feel they are musicians rather than music students.
Yes indeed
I don't have enough experience teaching classical to be able to make an assertion on that
yes
NA
Yes
Not really.
Yes
Deep question. Pop singers imitate what they hear on the radio, folk singers traditionally learn by ear anyway, musical theatre singers usually also have the other interests in dance and drama and classical these days can be done without reading too - technology means access to recordings to learn by ear. I find that singers who play other instruments are more likely to pick up reading more quickly as they have to use it more. Whatever they're learning, I'll put the sheet music in front of them, so they're at least following it.
I probably don't have enough singing students to be able to comment properly on this.

Do you have any other comments or views on the need for school aged singing students to read music or not? Or anything else that may aid my research?
I think it's to be encouraged, and for me getting them doing a very small amount each lesson seems to work, but is it absolutely necessary - no.
Go with the needs of the student
I love that both my daughters read music so we can prepare things together to sing or play. One partner of one daughter doesn't read music and is astonished how we can just sit at a piano and sight sing things. It has certainly enriched my leisure life enormously
It's worth examining the knowledge gap that can emerge in the first year of conservatoire study. Music theory classes are often streamed by ability and, in my experience, singers are sometimes either not required to attend as part of their course or are placed in lower sets, depending on the institution. Unfortunately, this can feed a perception among some instrumentalists that singers put in "less effort," often because they are less reliant on notation. When singers make mistakes in rhythm or pitch, these are then frequently attributed to that perceived gap in theoretical knowledge, reinforcing the stereotype.
Learning is a means to an end - the method of learning will always affect what the student can do in the future and that is the judgement the student and teacher have to make.
I am happy to connect and discuss if you'd like.
Just that I wish Kodály was routinely taught in primary schools as it would make the lives of music teachers much easier. Both [redacted] and [redacted] wanted to do it (which is why they sent me to Hungary for 3 years to train). I think literacy is important in every sphere and musically illiteracy shouldn't be normalised. Everybody has a voice so learning to be musically literate through singing allows everyone to learn.
I think the biggest disadvantage of a singing student not reading music is unintentional mimicry of the singer they are using as a model to learn the song. They will sometimes try to copy their sound, and very often copy their vocal expression, instead of finding their own. Additionally, in contexts where the teacher needs to model the melodies (for example when teaching harmony parts for duets or bigger groups), that overloads the teacher's voice and risks fatiguing them. On the other hand, I feel like demanding all school-aged students to read music at a good level risks gatekeeping music making.

Some kids learn better by ear than visually. So notation for them is not very helpful. This is often tied to learning disabilities.
Depending on the context students may need to have reading skills at an early age (highly performative choirs), but it might be detrimental to spontaneity and vocal gesture to learn to read music too early.
The National Curriculum has changed considerably over the years in terms of it's guidance and 'expectations' regarding reading notation. I believe it is now currently part of the 'National Plan for Music' and it is my belief that it should be viewed in the same sphere as learning a language.
I think the most important thing about music is connection and enjoyment. If learning theory impinges on this then an alternative route should be found.
I had thought it would be really difficult but I have recently had success with teaching quite young students to start sight singing. So far so good. It is not my intention to progress them through theory grades, but just have an understanding how music works
I think all pupils should be encouraged to read music as soon as possible. Whilst the learning to read music might not be the most run element, it should not stop the teacher from introducing reading music as soon as practicable
I think reading music as a young singer has huge benefits. I think learning to read music opens up all the possibilities of understanding the elements of music even better e.g it surely sharpens the understanding of why a note is a certain length or how phrasing works and can improve their musicality. It helps the singer to better understand what the instrumentalists or accompanists they are singing with are having to do. At school age, it gives access to the 'traditional' route, as I've called it, of Graded exams, if they thrive off that. If interest in GSCE or A-Level music is pursued, then absolutely, it's required. Most young singers I know want to write their own songs and enjoy being able to take the first steps into writing it down so that they can see a melody as well as lyrics, and teach it to an instrumentalist.
I think that we need to do more musicianship training with students, and turn practical skills, like sight singing or reading music, more of a game. I think some students are put off by a more academic approach to reading music.

I am happy to be briefly audio interviewed on my above answers?
Yes
No
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes

Appendix Three – Past/University Students questionnaire's

I am happy with the above terms.	Please give your name	Approximately what age were you when you started singing lessons?
Yes	P38	8
Yes	P39	10
Yes	P40	6

What is your age now?	You have been selected to participate in this research as you are now studying singing in some capacity at either a University/Conservatoire or another higher education centre. Can you please give brief details of the course you are enrolled in for example what genre of song do you study, is your course singing alone?
20	BMus music specialising in classical singing. Taking a double credit module in singing, but takes wider modules on theory etc.
20	Vocal performance as a Classical Tenor. It involved a lot of theory Harmony and Aural Skills in 1st and 2nd year however this 3rd year is a lot more project based and always with a heavier weighing on Singing. Technical exams, recitals and Opera performances as well as chamber music
21	[redacted] BA (Hons) Acting

Are you able to read music notation?	If you can read music, did you learn to read music in your singing lessons as a child or in some other way? (Select all that apply).
Yes	I learnt in my singing lessons as a child;I learnt in instrumental lessons as a child;I learnt at school in classroom music lessons;I had music theory lessons
Yes	I learnt in my singing lessons as a child;I learnt in instrumental lessons as a child
Yes	I learnt in my singing lessons as a child

If you cannot read music, please tell me why.	**If you chose not to learn to read music in your childhood, do you now regret this decision?**

If you cannot read music can you briefly explain how, or if, you think this affects your learning now you are in some form of music higher education?

Do you think ideally all school aged singing pupils should learn to read music or does it depend upon certain factors?
I think they should all learn to read music;I think it depends upon the genre you sing
I think they should all learn to read music
I think it depends upon the genre you sing

Do you have any other thoughts on school aged singing pupils and if they should be able to read music? Or any other ideas of anything that could aid my research into this topic?
I think it breaks down barriers for them in the future learning how to read music, and increases their confidence in their music making, although this is genre dependent.
I think regardless of Genre, music reading is a huge benefit and a skill to have in the industry. Being able to sight read is a blessing and can help so much as time goes on. Possibly incorporating both Aural (audio) based training and score work together is vital!
I think it is relevant to learn basic reading of music such as length of notes and different key symbols on the sheet

If required would you be happy to be audio interviewed for me to gain further information from you for my research?
Yes
Yes
Yes

Appendix Four – Student Participant Interview Transcriptions

Participant 1

Participant = black

Me = red

Right, thank you for agreeing to being interviewed. When you took your questionnaire, you were quite sure that singers should be able to read music. Can you tell me a little bit more about why you think that?

I think singers should be able to read music because you can achieve lots of bigger achievements if you learn to read music. For example, I'm in National Youth Choir and it took a lot of practise. It took a lot of time to learn to read music and you have to take all those big steps from the first step you take.

Do you think you could have gone, you went last week on a course with the [redacted] Youth Choir, didn't you? Do you think you could have gone on that course without being able to read music?

No, because they just expect you to read that music before you get there. Like, I sight read it before I got there. Like, I could sing along to the tracks before I got there. It was amazing how good they were. They sounded so good in the end.

So you really think that, let's say I was a singer who could not read music, do you think I would get a place in the [redacted] Youth Choir or do you think that would be a stopper for it?

Not really, because if you learn to read music, you've got bigger opportunities in life. And if you don't read music, you've got the lower chance of not getting bigger opportunities.

So do you think singers need to read music in all situations? So, I don't know, let's say you were a people who wanted to learn pop songs or just musical theatre songs, do you think they need to be able to read the music as well?

Pretty much, but like if you can't read that music, your teacher could like just split it into sections and teach you bit by bit and it would be quite helpful.

And you think that would still be okay?

Yeah, if your teacher taught it bit by bit, I think that would be alright.

And do you think, well, I guess the problem with that is that the teacher then needs to know how to read the music, don't they?

Exactly.

So you come in this funny circle, don't you? Someone somewhere needs to be able to read music, otherwise a singer is going to become stuck. Do you think that's right? Is that what you're saying?

Yeah, that's pretty much what I'm saying. The teacher should know how to read music, but if not, they have to listen to like a million tracks.

Yeah, and that could maybe limit your ability to learn?

Yeah, and the people's ability. Because like the tracks, if you listen to them too often, they change what happened in that song.

So it's kind of hard to learn that song once you've listened to a million tracks. Okay, good. Do you have anything else to add then about reading music and singers or are you happy there?

I think I'm happy there.

Lovely. Thank you very much.

Participant 2

Participant = Black

Me = Red

Okay, so when you took the question there for me, you mentioned you didn't think it was necessary for singers to read music in all genres of song. Can you tell me a little bit more about why you think that?

Well, I think in certain areas of music it is really necessary to know, especially in classical music and music that might be really strategic and stuff like that, you know, to when you come in and especially if you have other like instruments, say if you're like singing and you have a backing of an orchestra, you want to know when you come in and things like that. But I think like in many things like more chilled sort of singing things like reggae in different genres like reggae and especially pop, you can just sort of take your own time with it and you don't really have to read music because lots of people in that are really good of like picking up music without reading it, if that makes sense, because lots of people like write their own music in that sort of way and people actually appreciate it more if you don't read music, if that makes sense, to sort of make the music your own, like interpret it yourself and stuff so you can add on your own augmentation and stuff and that's what like makes people distinct, if that makes sense.

Okay, so you said you could learn things like pop or reggae kind of by listening and it would make it a bit more free. So do you think then if I gave you a piece of opera to sing and I didn't let you read the notes at all, I only let you listen, do you think you would be at a disadvantage there or do you think you can learn that type of music by just listening to?

No I don't, I think with opera that's another one that's really structural, like you know you have to, you definitely know when to take, have to know when to take breaths, when to sing properly, know the right notes so you can take the right breathing takes to sing the whole phrase and stuff like that. So I think in especially things like opera and classical music you have to read notes, be able to read notes anyway so you know what you're doing.

Okay so you've just touched on it slightly there but you also mentioned in the questionnaire that reading music may hamper a singer's creativity, can you tell me a little bit more about why you think that or give me an example of when you think reading music might get in the way of a singersinging freely?

Well I think of course doing, reading music is good when you're just like singing and you're like performing other people's songs but it's mostly say if you want to create your own music, lots of people just fall in with like the boundaries of say if you have a minim there, oh I can't put say a quaver there, you know what I mean, so it sort of hampers with people's creativity in that regard and lots of, especially musicians who have thought outside the box with music such, well I'll say The Beatles, Michael Jackson, things like that, they weren't able to read music so they sort of put their own twist on it and they became quite famous from being different, so I think with creativity it sort of gives you a disadvantage because of course then you think, oh well I can't write it that way if it's meant to be this way, so you know what I mean.

Like following the rules of like harmony and counterpoint and all that kind of stuff. So how do you think it works then, let's say I'm a member of The Beatles and I've just in my head composed a song, how then does that person who can't read music write down for the rest of the band or the rest of the world their song for everyone else to perform?

Well I suppose it's put to music afterwards, but I suppose if it's all done like, if it's all done like say tapewise beforehand, I suppose they have someone to go through and then write it in for them, but they've sort of already like bent the rules so they sort of just have to write in that way anyway, but then that's different then because it then changes how music is perceived.

I think that's interesting because it kind of comes back to that someone somewhere needs to be able to read the music doesn't it, so even if you as a composer can't and you kind of play your composition, someone somewhere has to write it down for you and notate it, otherwise no one else will ever know, so it's kind of a funny circle that never comes to a conclusion. Right thank you very much for your thoughts, have you got anything else you'd like to say to me?

I don't think so, I don't think so.

Lovely, thank you so much.

Participant 3

Participant = black

Me = Red

So when you took your questionnaire, you told me that you don't read music and that you don't think reading music is something that you want to learn. Can you tell me a bit about why you said that?

Because, like, I think that, like, you don't need to learn music because unless you, like, do an instrument, like, instrument music, like, you're not really the one doing the music, so, like, you don't really need to learn music because, like, you're not the one playing music.

So how would you learn a new song then, if you're being taught to sing a particular song, how would you learn it?

I'd ask them to, like, play the tune on the instrument, and then, like, I'd, like, get the words and, like, sing along to it.

Okay. So you think the singing teacher has to be able to read music, but it doesn't matter If you don't.

Yes.

Okay. Now, you told me that you also played a lot of instruments, so you played the violin and you got your grade 1 on the violin, didn't you? Did you not read music on the violin?

Yes, but it was colour coded.

Right. So you, did you do Kodaly colour strings?

Yes.

Okay. So with that, you don't need the actual notes, do you? You've just got different colours and white numbers. Yes. Is that correct?

Yes.

So do you think that was good, or do you wish that you had been taught to read notes? You were fine with that?

Yes.

Okay. And you also play the drums, don't you?

Yes.

So, am I right then, in drums you don't have to read notes?

Well, I can't read them on the violin.

Okay. So you can maybe read a bit of rhythm?

Yes, but only on the drums. Only on the drums.

Okay. And, also, you have got some disabilities, I know. You've got autism and you've got ADHD.
Do you think that is why you don't want to read your notes? Do you think that your disabilities make it hard for you to read your notes, or is it nothing to do with that?

I don't know. I think they might affect it a bit, but other than that...

Okay. And if your singing teacher said to you, now I'm going to start to learn to read the notes, what would you say in lesson? Would you be happy to do that, or not?

I'd say, I don't know, I don't really feel like reading the notes unless you want to.

And if they insisted, would that make you, like, unhappy in lesson? Would you stop lessons, or would you just do it?

I would just do it.

Okay. Okay.Have you got anything else you'd like to say that would help me?

No.

Okay. Thank you very much.

Participant 4

Participant = black

Me = Red

Okay, so you mentioned in the questionnaire that you took that you didn't think singers need to be able to read music. Can you tell me a little bit about why you put that?

I put that because I struggle reading the music because of my dyslexia and because you could just instead of, you know, other people, different people have different ways of learning and for some people music notes are not the way of learning how to sing a song.

Okay, so I'm going to ask you about your dyslexia if you're happy to talk to me about it. You've said for you that you find it hard to learn to read the notes. Can you tell me a little bit about the history of you when reading notes and what happened?

I used to play cello and my cello teacher, I told her that I had dyslexia and she didn't take that far enough and she just kept saying read the notes but they were jumping around and whizzing everywhere and especially with the lines, reading notes, it's the most difficult.

Do you think it was the size of the music that makes it hard or just generally the amount of lines and dots?

The amount of lines and dots.

Okay, do you think there was anything that she could have done to make it easier for you to be able to read the notes?

She could have played it for me so I could hear it and then maybe I could think of what note that played and then play it myself.

Okay, so you're saying as a person who's dyslexic you learn a lot more aurally so you would prefer to listen to things and then maybe go backwards to the music if you had to and kind of put together what you've heard with the actual notes. Do you think it would help to blow the music up big if she'd done that for you?

No, I think it'd be the exact same really.

And some people with dyslexia like to have colours like over the top of their music, do you think that would have helped?

Yeah, yellow and blue work for me.

Okay, so if she could have done that that could have helped. Okay, so you also then said although you can read a little bit of music when you learn a song you don't use those note reading skills at all. Can you tell me why?

Because I will get confused with the words and the notes at the same time. So if I'm reading a sheet of music I highlight the words now and if I highlight the words I try to zone out the notes. Even if I had to read them both then I think I'd just get a bit overwhelmed.

So that's interesting, so for you as a singer if I give you a piece of sheet music that has the notes and the words on that is overwhelming for you?

Yeah, but if I highlight it out then I'm sure I'll be alright.

So either highlighting it or I know sometimes when you're singing you use lyrics separately don't you so it's just the words, do you find that that helps?

Yeah, because normally I put the colour like yellow background on it so I can read it better.

So do you think there would be at any point a time where you would say to your singing teacher actually now I'd like to start learning to read the notes or do you think the history of what happened to you with cello teacher has totally put you off that?

It's put me off totally.

Okay and you come from a musical family don't you so you've got your dad especially plays and he reads the music doesn't he but you would never think maybe now I've got to a really high level of singing and I really need to start reading the notes?

Because I think there will always be a second way of doing it instead of reading the notes. I think it's just a bit too confusing especially with like I did this thing with piano because I used to play piano and my mum told the piano teacher that I struggled reading notes and stuff and

then she started doing like listening exercises and watching so they would play something and I would have to repeat it like lower down but yeah.

And did you find that helped?

Yeah.

Yeah but it didn't still help you with reading the notes it just helped you to learn or like do you think because you've got dyslexia and you find reading and reading notes especially hard do you think your listening skills for music are really like super so I play you something and you can sing it straight back?

Well not exactly because no one's voice is the same obviously but I know normally when something's off that is something that I sometimes can do and sometimes I'm like halfway through a song because I know that is not right yeah but yeah.

Okay so if you could speak to all other singing or even indeed music teachers what would you say is the best way to help someone like you with dyslexia bearing in mind that all people with dyslexia are a bit different and have different kind of levels of it or whatever what would you say is the best way that we could help you learn to read music?

Um I think the first thing is to ask how they find actually just reading in general and like yeah and just how they find reading in general because that might like impact and then try think of different ways because for me it's highlighting and the colours that help me as well as because the processing speed as well as the actual notes they have to take time to think of what that note is but when you get to know it you probably will be able to play it but I think they just need to really just try to understand their student as much as possible no student wants to be like not understood

Yeah definitely and do you think if your cello teacher had approached it in a different way our conversation now would be different do you think you would be able to read the notes and you you would be like happy that you could do that or do you think it wasn't going to work for you?

I'd never enjoyed cello anyway because cello wasn't I really started it because my mum wanted to but I still wouldn't be able to read the notes and just play cello in general because like I said before the processing speed is the hardest

Okay and do you have anything else to add that you might want to say that would be helpful?

If any new singing teachers or whatever type of teachers there is try to get to know the student and their like difficulties first before you just assume they're like you know because for what some teachers they're like oh yeah let's just get on you know loads of students are different

So do you feel like people with dyslexia maybe if the music teacher doesn't understand them are made to feel like silly or stupid or did you feel like that

Yeah okay I had cello lessons with another two people and I just they were getting the hang of it and I was just there just like okay you're in a group with others even at school in general it's like that because you just seem like a dumb kid but well that's even more important for music teachers to take that on board isn't it because music should be for everyone and if at school you feel like you're the dumb kid as you put it it should be in music lessons that everyone can thrive and enjoy shouldn't it so that's yeah that's what I do

Right are you happy to finish it there have you got anything else you'd like to say

No

Thank you very much

Participant 5
Participant = black
Me = Red

So, you mentioned in your questionnaire you didn't think that singers really needed to be able to read music, is that right?

Yes.

Can you tell me why you don't think singers need to be able to read music?

I don't think we need to read music because, well, we're just singing and we don't need to look at the music, we just, I normally just listen and my teacher plays the music for me. So, my teacher might need to read music but I don't need to.

Oh, interesting. So, your teacher needs to read the music.
What would you think if a singing teacher then couldn't read music? Would that then cause a problem?

I mean, it won't be like a huge problem because you can always use YouTube or something like that.

To get the track?

Yeah. Like to listen to the song.

Okay, so what you're saying you think is that somewhere between the pupil and the teacher, someone needs to be able to read the music but even if they couldn't, it's still, like, get pastable, you can still get past it and learn.

Yes.

Okay, okay, right.
So, then you said you can read music a little bit, is that right?

Yes.

Because you are learning another instrument as well, aren't you? What else do you learn?

I'm learning the violin.

But you're just at the early stages of learning to read notes with that, aren't you?

Yes.

So, you can read a little bit but you said when you learn a song, you don't even look at the notes at all, is that right?

Yeah, I don't have to look at the notes.

So, how do you actually learn a song? Can you kind of take me through a process of what you do?

My teacher plays the tune for me and then we go slowly through the song, like, with the words and that stuff.

Okay, good.

And when you're at home, then how do you practise?

I just try and remember the tune or remember the song and I type it in or just start singing it.

So, you go and find a track, like, somewhere on YouTube or Apple Music or something like that. Okay. Do you think when you've played the violin a little bit longer and you can read the notes better, do you think that the way you learn songs might change, that you might look at the music or do you not see that that will change?

I think it could change because then I can go home and if I can't remember the tune, I can try and figure out the tune by looking at the notes. But so far, it's fine. So far, it's fine.

Okay. So, maybe in the future, you as a singer will rely a little bit more on your note reading. But what grade are you up to now in singing?

I've just done my grade three.

So, you've got all the way to grade three singing and you haven't really felt like you've suffered because you can't majorly read the music?

Yeah.

Okay, good. Have you got anything else you want to say? Any more thoughts?

No.

Okay, thank you so much.

Participant 6

Participant = black

Me = red

So you mentioned to me in your questionnaire that you didn't think singers who sang modern music such as pop needed to be able to read music. Can you tell me a bit about why you think that?

I feel like they don't need to read music because they're more like modernised I guess, whereas like if you're a classical singer like if you were like I don't know going through like some high notes or stuff like that you would like kind of need to know more what you're doing because it's more like I don't know structured I suppose as pop music is more like scattered.

Okay so you think for classical music like opera as you said that you need to stick closely to the music is that what you're saying whereas with things like pop you said the word scattered so do you mean it's more free you can do what you like with it?

Yeah there's like lots of I feel like there's lots of different genres of music that you probably wouldn't need to like actually read music for.

Okay what um which off the top of your head which genres do you think you've mentioned pop what else do you think?

Jazz yeah I do a lot of is it like scattered thing like improvising um and there's jazz pop um rock maybe probably a lot of like I don't know metal voice yeah they might not need to yeah

What about things like musical theatre do you think those singers need to be able to read notes or not so much?

I feel like they wouldn't either because it's more like I don't know like acting kind of singing than like actual like structural singing.

And what about folk what's your thoughts on that?

I feel like they would I don't know why I just feel like they wouldn't need to know it.

Well you've sung a bit of folk yourself haven't you I think things like Shenandoah and the water is wide so they're folk so did you feel like with those songs you were a bit more bound by the notes or did you feel free what what did you think when you sang it?

I think you are like a little bit more bound by the notes because like I don't know you need to like kind of know how long the note goes on for and stuff like that.

And do you think that was just because you did those folk songs for an exam a singing exam or do you think if it was just randomly learning that folk song would you have felt the same constriction to the music or not?

I feel like maybe if I was like randomly learning it I would have been like a bit more free but as soon as I was doing it for like an exam it was like more to do with it

So reading the music can not only depend on the genre but it can depend on what the reason you're learning so if you were learning a pop song for example but you were doing a pop exam a singing pop exam do you think you would want to read the notes and be close to the music or do you still think in that circumstance it could be like whatever you thought?

I feel like I don't know I feel like you could kind of do whatever you want but then at the same time you kind of need to make sure that you know what you're doing or else it's not really gonna like be like the song that you're doing yeah you're not gonna get marks like well because you're not doing the song okay

Okay that's really interesting that's not a thought that anyone else has given to me that um not only can it depend on the type of song you're singing but it depends on the circumstance that you're singing the song as well that's an interesting point okay so then second question you said but you thought because you can read a little bit of music as a singer you were at a bit of an advantage can you tell me why you think that?

I feel like it definitely helps because you'll like know what you're doing more and based on like I don't know the notes and they're like louds or softs but again if you're like I don't know doing it by ear then you're kind of like it's kind of the same I suppose because you can like listen to it and be really good at listening and just like completely be able to do the song does that make sense?

It does so you're saying like reading the music and just being able to listen could feed into learning it equally as well

Yeah

So do you think then you said you were at an advantage because you because you could read the music do you still agree with what you said then or do you do you think after what you've just said

I feel like I kind of disagree because I don't know I just feel like you could probably just listen to it and just kind of learn it like by ear

And do you think you could do that even up to a high standard let's say you got up to grade eight or went to university to study singing do you think that would your statement there would still be true or do you think that would change at some point?

It probably would change to be fair because as the grades get higher or get like harder and you'll need to know like more of what you're doing yeah so yeah I think yeah probably a bit harder

Yeah okay so maybe as you get onto harder stuff the note reading you lean on a bit more then don't you and do you think that would be the same for a pop exam then if you took a grade eight pop exam or you went to study popular music singing at university do you think you'd still say that or do you think it's more of a classical?

I think I would still say that because it's like kind of for all songs that like it gets quite difficult yeah so yeah

Okay good that's some very interesting points thank you do you want to say anything else.

Not really I'm good

Okay thank you so much

Appendix Five – Letter of explanation on nature of research to parents

Dear Parents and Carers,

As some of you may know, I am now in my final year of studying for an MA in Voice Pedagogue with The Voice Study Centre and The University of Wales Trinity St David. As part of my studies, I am required to undertake some research that is helpful for my current students and will improve my ability to teach and deepen my understand of voice related issues.

My research topic is concerning if school aged singing pupils benefit from being able to read music and understand music theory. Most instrumental players will learn to read music from the start of their lessons, however as singers can learn songs by ear, they often don't see the need to be able to read music. There is a body of belief that all singers should be taught to read music as this will benefit their long-term ability to be able to learn songs without the aid of a teacher. There is also those who believe that singers do not need to read music and that it is not a skill that aids their music learning in anyway.
My research will seek to ask my pupils their thoughts on this and how they best find they learn in singing lessons.

As your child falls into the above age range, I am writing to ask your permission for them to be part of my research study.

The University ethics council have given permission to undertake this research and has approved the research methodology.
As some of this research may be conducted at King Williams College or The Buchan School, I have also gained permission from the school leadership team for this research to be undertaken on their premises.

What would my child being part of this research involve?

My study will firstly require participants to complete a short questionnaire, I expect the questionnaire will have around 10-20 questions.

It will contain questions concerning your child's voice (for example how long have you been having singing lessons, what grade/level are you at). It will then move onto questions about your child's ability to read music or if they prefer to learn by ear.

The data will then be collated and I plan to then interview a cross section of students, some who can read music and others who cannot.

When will this happen?

After I have received your consent, I will ask your child to take the short questionnaire at some point in the next couple of months. This can be done in lesson time (it will not take long don't worry!) or I can send it out to be done in your own time if requested.

I will then interview a cross section of pupils after reviewing the responses.

What will happen in the interviews?

The interviews will be short (maybe around 5-10 minutes depending on how much the participant wants to talk) and will cover questions about their ability to read music or not, how they feel they best learn new songs etc.
I will be audio recording the interviews and the recordings will be available for me and the University to listen to until after my work has been marked. After that they will be destroyed. The University may keep a transcript of the audio recordings on file for 2 years in case of any marking discrepancies.
You (parents) are welcome to listen to any recordings I make of your child and can request to do so at any time.
I expect all interviews will be completed by the summer holidays.

Do we have to take part?

No, you are totally free to say you'd rather your child not be involved and can withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty for your child deciding not to take part. And if they do take part, this will be on a voluntary basis only – no incentive is offered.

Will my child's details be published, what will happen to the collected data?

Although I will have the details of each child's name, each participant will be written about in an anonymous way, referred to as participant A, for example.

All data will be kept on my personal computer in a password protected folder and will only be shared to the Voice Study Centre and the University for purposes of help with my research and marking my work.

If the research is deemed fit, then it may go on to be published in voice journals for example in the future, but all participants will still be kept anonymous. I may also return to the data in the future to undertake further research on the topic.

Will any distress be caused to my child?

I am hoping to undertake much of this research in your child's weekly singing lesson so it will be a familiar space and time for them. I do not anticipate that my questions will cause any destress to pupils, however if they do this will be fed back to parents.

Can I access the results when the work has been marked?

I will be happy to share my finished work with any participants who request to see it, once it has been marked by the University.

Who else may be involved in the research?

I will also be interviewing other singing teachers and past pupils on their views on the topic. All the research is being undertaken by me alone, although I am supported by The Voice Study Centre and The University of Wales Trinity St David. Both institutions can be contacted by you at any point should you wish to check with them any of the details of my research.

I am fully DBS checked and my certificate can be seen upon request.

If you have any further questions please do get in touch.

I am on a tight time line with this research (imposed by the University) so please could you look over the attached consent form and return it to me signed by 23rd March at the latest.
You can email me your response or I can print a consent form for you to sign by hand.

Many thanks for your help in what I hope will be a very helpful set of data and research.

Ruth

Appendix Six – Participant Consent Form

Title of project –
Is it beneficial or desirable for school aged singing students to be able to read music and understand music theory? If it is useful to read music to what extent and at what level is it beneficial or essential?
Consent for my child to take part in the above research conducted by Ruth Tickle.

- I…… voluntarily agree for my child ……. to participate in this research study being undertaken by Ruth Tickle.

- I understand that even if I agree for my child to participate now, I can withdraw at any time

- I understand that my child can refuse to answer any question involved during the research process without any consequences of any kind.

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that participation involves my child taking a questionnaire and potentially being interviewed.

- I understand that both the questionnaire and the interview will be undertaken in my child's weekly singing lesson unless I request otherwise.

- I understand that neither I nor my child will benefit directly from participating in this research.

- I agree to my child's interview being audio-recorded.

- I understand that all information my child provides for this study will be treated confidentially.

- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my child's identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by referring to students as Participants A, B C etc and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal your child's identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my child's interview may be quoted in the research paper.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a secure file on my laptop with a password until the University releases my mark (late 2026).

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board marking.

- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information my child has provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Name of researcher
Ruth Tickle

Signature of participant's parent

Date

Signature of researcher

Ruth Tickle

I, Ruth Tickle, believe the participant's parent is giving informed consent to participate in this study
Date
6th March 2026

The researcher should retain one copy of the consent form signed by both themselves and the participant. The participant should also be given a copy of the consent form as a record of what they have signed up to.

Appendix Seven – Ethical Approval University

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course. Once complete, submit this form via the ***MyTSD Doctoral College Portal*** at (https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk). This document is also available in Welsh.
RESEARCH STAFF ONLY All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.
STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:		Ruth Elisabeth Tickle			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:		Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☒	Postgraduate Research Student	☐

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	WAPPAR
4	Campus:	Camarthen
5	E-mail address:	ruthtickle@hotmail.com
6	Contact Telephone Number:	+44 7624262854
	For students:	
7	Student Number:	2316939
8	Programme of Study:	MA Professional Practice (Voice Pedagogy)
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Louise Emanuel/Julie Crossman/Debbie Winter

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	**YES**	☒	**NO**	☐
				Date	
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): ***Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval***	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in)	☒	WAPPAR ethics board representative	

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	**UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice**	☒
2	**UWTSD Research Data Management Policy**	☒
3	*[List any other relevant documents here]*	☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?		**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?		**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
7		Employed	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	**YES**	☐	**NO**	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Is it beneficial or desirable for singing students to be able to read music and understand music theory.		
2	Proposed start date:	February 10th 2026	Proposed end date:	01.10.26
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) **Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below:** *Purpose of Research Activity* *Proposed Research Question* *Aims of Research Activity* *Objectives of Research Activity* Demonstrate, briefly, how **<u>Existing Research</u>** has informed the proposed activity and explain *What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge* *How it addresses an area of importance.*			
3	**Purpose of Research Activity** To establish if singing students benefit from being able to read music and understand music theory on some level. Or is this of no benefit to singing students who can simply learn songs by ear. If it is useful to read music to what extent and at what level does it become a benefit or essential? This can be an issue that is hotly debated and some clarity on both sides of the argument with literature to back it up would be helpful for singing students and teachers. There is some existing research on the subject. Some of this research or literature is now more than 40 years old, so may need some updating to be relevant to the current generation of singing students. Some of the research is wide, including all musicians rather than just singers. I would particularly like to concentrate on singers as, unlike some instruments, the ability to learn songs by ear thus removing the need to read music is great. (this box should expand as you type)			
4	**Research Question** Is it beneficial or desirable for singing students to be able to read music? (this box should expand as you type)			

5	**Aims of Research Activity** The aim is to establish how much benefit singing students get from being able to read and understand music. This will help singing teachers understand how much time in lessons should be given over to theory, and which students will benefit from this and which will not. It will also include hopefully provide insite into if singing pupils want to be able to read music or if they find it irrelevant. (this box should expand as you type)
6	**Objectives of Research Activity** I would like to improve my own teaching skills by understanding how much reading music or not, actually impacts singing students. When I better understand both sides of the argument, I will be able to adapt my singing lessons into something most useful for the pupil involved, teaching them music theory to a high level, medium, low or no level at all. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that **may** be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	I will be using a mixed method approach in my research as I hope to collect some numerical data and some personal experiences. In order to collect my data, I intend to use the following methods. 1. Survey – I intend to send a survey to a number of my singing students asking questions about their experience of reading music, or not. According to the data gathered here I will then move onto interviews. 2. Interviews- I may select a smaller number of my students to interview in more depth. I also intend to interview other singing and music teachers to obtain their views on the matter. I may also interview some university aged singing

	students to understand how much their ability to read music or not has impacted their studies at a higher level. 3. Observations- I intend to observe a number of my students during their regular singing lesson, to see how they are impacted by being able to read the music or not. 4. Focus group (s) - I may gather a small number of students together to ask them questions on matters around music theory and reading and their views on it. I may choose to do this if I feel I may get different results from a group rather than individual interviews. 5. Literature review- I intend to gather data from others who have researched a similar subject. 6. Control group- I may decide to use a select number of my students to receive some dedicated music theory time in their lessons for a set number of weeks. This would conclude by interviewing them about if they have found their new knowledge helpful in furthering their singing skills or not. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	Isle of Man – Ballasalla, 3 Meadow Court. (My home singing studio). Zoom calls King Williams College – Castletown, Isle of Man The Buchan School – Castletown, Isle of Man Both schools have approved my researching on their premises. (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations

	beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	The Isle of Man ethical stipulations are in line with the UK's. As my research is not medical based, I do not need to seek ethical approval from them at this time. *(this box should expand as you type)*

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents **NOT** publicly available?	**NO**	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. *(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	**YES**	**NO**
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		

	(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	**YES**	**NO**
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☒	☐
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☒	☐
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☒	☐
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.		
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)	☐	☒

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	**YES**	**NO**
1	Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☒	☐
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	I would hope to involve around 20-30 participants. If a focus group was needed I would expect to use 3-6 participants in maybe 2 or 3 separate groups. A control group may consist of 4-5 participants. *(this box should expand as you type)*
11	Who will the participants be?	

		My singing students, singing teachers, music teachers, my past singing pupils who are now at university, singing students of other teachers. *(this box should expand as you type)*
12	How will you identify the participants?	I will approach my current students and use other singing and music teachers known to me and their pupils. *(this box should expand as you type)*

	Information for participants:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☒	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

	Information for participants:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☒	☐	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	My phone for audio recordings My iPad for video recordings My laptop for recording data, emailing, any zoom calls needed *(this box should expand as you type)*			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	**Full risk assessment completed and appended?**	**Yes**	☐
		No	☒
2	**Risks to participants** For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants: Risk to participants: 1. Potential emotional distress on discussion reading music for those with additional needs such as dyslexia for example. 2. Embarrassment on not being able to read music. 3. Focus groups may cause embarrassment in front of student's peers. 4. Anxiety on being observed. 5. Participants may feel pressure to participate due to me being their vocal teacher. *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to participants:* 1. Questions should be carefully crafted in order to avoid distress and any distress shown should be reported to a parent or guardian. 2. Participants will have the right to pass on any question they feel embarrassing or unable to answer. 3. Groups of students in focus groups should be carefully selected by me. Students have the right to not answer a question in a focus group or leave the group if they feel uncomfortable. 4. I will try to make sure all observations take place in a student's normal lesson or in a familiar area to lessen anxiety. I will always fully inform a pupil what I am observing and what data I am collecting. 5. I will make sure all parents and students know that there is no	

		pressure or ramifications on them if they choose to take part or not to take part. *(this box should expand as you type)*
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	I do not envisage my research will involve any sensitive topics, however if any did arise this would be passed back to the parent, guardian or school safeguarding officer. *(this box should expand as you type)*	
4	**Risks to the investigator** For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: 1. Risk of accusation of causing distress 2. Risk of students dropping out before the end of my research. 3. As an insider researcher I must be aware of bias I may encounter towards my students. 4. Risks in the teaching room, such as cables, trip hazards etc. *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:* 1. By carefully crafting my questions and making sure that parents of my students are always fully aware of potential questions and areas of discussion. 2. I will make sure parents and students are aware they can drop out at any point they feel necessary. I will endeavour to make my research unobtrusive, not time consuming and enjoyable for the students to take part in, in

		the hope they will be happy to see the study to its end. 3. I will try to remain unbiased and compare my research with other research already done to make sure I am not producing a bias set of data. 4. I will indevour to maintain a safe teaching space for myself within health and safety guidelines. Any support needed to myself as the researcher will be provided by the Voice Study Centre and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. *box should expand as you type)*
5	**University/institutional risks** For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: 1. Violation of data protection rules. 2. My conduct bringing the University into disrepute. *(this box should expand as you type)*	*How you will mitigate the risk to the University:* 1. I will make myself aware of all data protection rules within the University. 2. I will endeavour to behave in a manner worthy of representing the University at all times, and if I am unsure of an action I should take, I will check with the University or my tutor. *(this box should expand as you type)*
6	**Environmental risks** For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: N/A	*How you will mitigate the risk to environment:* N/A

	(this box should expand as you type)	*(this box should expand as you type)*

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☒	☐	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write “Pending”; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.	**001794432715**		

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	**Feedback** What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	All participants and parents will be able to contact me after the research has ended for full details of my results and what data was collected or a debrief of my research. *(this box should expand as you type)*
2	**Informed consent** Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	All participants and parents will be emailed about what my research will entail and how I will be collecting data. If Participants are under 18 a consent form must be signed by parents, but students will be verbally asked for their agreement to participate also. *(this box should expand as you type)*
3	**Confidentiality / Anonymity** Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	No participants names will be published in my research write up, students may instead be referred to as student A, B,C etc. Singing and music teachers may be referred too as singing teacher A, B, C etc. *(this box should expand as you type)*

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	**YES**	**NO**
1	***"Personal data"*** *means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.*	☒	☐
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	1. I will collect names on the initial survey so I am able to analyse which students/singing teachers I should take to the interview stage (subject to these students being willing to be taken to the interview stage, if any are unwilling then other students will be approached). 2. I will use audio and video recordings of the participants in interviews, observations and focus groups in order to be able to watch back later to collect data. 3. I will have a list of parents email addresses so I am able to communicate with them regarding my research. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	**YES**	**NO**
3	***"Special category data"*** *means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' –* *(a) racial or ethnic origin,* *(b) political opinions,* *(c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,* *(d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),* *(e) physical or mental health or condition,* *(f) sexual life,*	☐	☒

	(g) genetics, *(h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),*		
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	*(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	**YES**	**NO**
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	“Cloud” storage or websites?	☒	☐
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	Manual copies of the survey may be needed. These will be stored in my filing cabinet which has a combination code to access. Information will be stored on my laptop which is personal to me and password protected. Any very sensitive information files will require an additional password to access the file. I will use dropbox as a cloud storage backup for my data. The dropbox account is personal to me and cannot be accessed by others due to the password requirement. *(this box should expand as you type)*		

	Data Protection		
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	**YES**	**NO**

13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☒	☐
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☒	☐
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	1. I may need to transfer data with my tutor at the Voice Study Centre. 2. I may need to share data with the Voice Study Centre and also with King Williams College and The Buchan School. 3. I may need to collect parents email addresses in order to correspond with them about my research. 4. I live and will conduct my research, on The Isle of Man which it not part of the UK, but is part of Great Britain. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	The University of Wales Trinity Saint David The Voice Study Centre King Williams College The Buchan School Parents and participants should they wish to access the data. *(this box should expand as you type)*		

23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	The University of Wales Trinity Saint David The Voice Study Centre *(this box should expand as you type)*		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on the Company's Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected and will be reformatted at the end of the project in order to destroy the data. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. *(this box should expand as you type)*		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. (*Most relevant to academic staff)*		
	N/A *(this box should expand as you type)*		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	**YES**	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	**YES**	☒

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	**Signature of applicant:**	Ruth Tickle	**Date:** **09.01.26**

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		**Date:**
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		**Date:**
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed **ALL RELEVANT** sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☒	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (**where appropriate**)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) *ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE* ***ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT***
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.

☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk).
RESEARCH STAFF ONLY All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.
STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

Appendix Eight – School Permission

KING WILLIAM'S COLLEGE

5" January 2026

Dear UWTSD,
I hear by confirm that as the Director of Music at King Williams College and the Buchan School, 1 am
happy for Ruth Tickle to conduct her research into the pros and cons of singing pupils being able to read music,

King Regards,
Steve Daykin
Director of Music
Email: SteveDaykin@kwc.im
Castletown • Isle of Man • IM9 1TP
Tel: +44 (0)1624 820400 • Web: www.kwc.im
King William's College, Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in the Isle of Man Number 52022C. Charity Number 615
Bishop Barrow's Foundation, Registered in the Isle of Man Number 000063M. Charity Number 119

Appendix Nine – Self Permission

Ruth Tickle Singing Teacher
3 Meadow Court,
Ballasalla,
Isle of Man
IM9 2DW
ruthtickle@hotmail.com

Dear UWTSD,

RE: Is it beneficial or desirable for singing students to be able to understand music theory and read music.

I confirm that I approve of the research proposed into Is it beneficial or desirable for singing students to be able to understand music theory and read music, to be carried out by Ruth Tickle singing teacher during private lessons and lessons in King Williams College and The Buchan School between 10th February 2026 to 1st October 2026.

Kind Regards,

Ruth Tickle