

Learning in the Digital Era E-Portfolio

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Part 1 - Written Summary: Essential Skills for Study and Employment

People within the Performing Arts Industry need to have many essential skills. Depending on their main discipline, these will vary in physical skills and mental skills. They must work exceptionally hard, as stated by IAMPRO, “constantly improving and working to develop their skills” (**IAMPRO 2023**).

Essential skills for an Actor include: memorisation, researching, and adaptiveness. Memory is important for learning scripts, for both performances and auditions in educational settings and the professional world. Researching is important for understanding characters and settings, which allows them to give a deeper and more convincing portrayal. Adaptiveness is especially important during rehearsal processes, as a director may give you new ideas and you must quickly adjust to their requests.

Essential skills for a Singer include: technical knowledge, vocal maintenance, and pitch accuracy. Technical knowledge is important because it allows you to create different vocal colours and emotions which makes them a more versatile singer. Vocal maintenance. Vocal maintenance is important because keeping the vocal tract healthy will allow them perform night after night without vocal damage. Pitch accuracy is possibly the most important skill of a singer as without it, the recital may sound displeasing.

Essential skills for a Dancer include; flexibility, stamina, and kinaesthetic awareness. Flexibility is important for a dancer to be physically capable of creating elaborate shapes within routines. Stamina is important as dance is very physical and needs to look effortless. Kinaesthetic awareness is important to create visually pleasing movements.

Generally speaking, all performers should share the skill of networking and marketing themselves. This should not only be an advertisement of their performing abilities but their personalities. Getting an Agent can be useful for marketing yourself in the Performing Arts Industry, as they already have many professional connections. However, not everyone wants an agent as they take a percentage of your earnings. Sometimes, confidence and perseverance is enough without one.

All performers should also learn how to be mentally hardy. In the Performing Arts Industry, a performer is quite likely to experience rejection and criticism. This can be upsetting for anyone, so developing a thick skin is vital. A performer must not take rejection and criticism to heart and separate themselves from their performances. Every performer is a person, after all, not just a character.

-Self-Analysis for future Essays (100 Words)-

For my 'Written Summary', I would mark myself about 60/100. I could have referenced more and used textbooks to help me. In my essay, I paraphrased from research that I carried out which still showed up on my similarity score. Next time, I would try to use more of my own words in my descriptions so that my work is more original. I also didn't ration my word-count as effectively as I would have liked which left no room for me to write a conclusion. In the future, I will be more careful with watching my word count as I write to ensure I have enough space to meet all the criteria.

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Part 2 - Skills Class Reflective Essay: Estill Singing

Before starting my Estill Singing Technique Classes with Louise Hunt, I had a little bit of knowledge about Estill Voice Technique. However, I was only really aware of the Vocal Health side of Estill's teachings. My goal for this module was to improve my control when I belt so that I would reach higher notes and develop as a stronger Tenor.

My previous knowledge on Estill's Vocal Health included diet and habits; the do's and don't's. For example, things like drinking enough water and steaming are good for hydrating the vocal folds which makes them less likely to be injured. On the other hand, inhaling irritants like smoking and vaping can cause temporary and/or permanent damage to the vocal folds.

To gain more background knowledge, I looked further into Estill Voice Technique when I found out we would be studying her methods at Level 4. I found out that Jo Estill started sharing her ideas in the 1980s, which focus on 'the science' behind how the voice actually works. **(Estill, date unknown)**. Estill made a three-part vocal development plan including: 'Craft', 'Artistry', and 'Performance Magic'. Jo Estill calls these 'layers of an exquisite cake', and she uses lots of baking metaphors in her explanations **(Estill, date unknown)**. First, 'Craft' covers everything the voice can do. It covers vocal terminology, power, source, vocal health, vocal safety, and vocal warm-ups. Jo Estill saw Craft as 'ingredients' that have to be 'measured, stirred and baked' to create a palatable sound. **(Estill, date unknown)**. Second, 'Artistry' covers how to apply the above elements in 'Craft' to make the 'Five Principal Qualities of

Voice': 'Speech Quality', 'Falsetto Quality', 'Sob Quality', 'Belt Quality', and 'Twang Quality'. Jo Estill made a 'recipe' on how to make them and saw Artistry as the 'icing' on top to create each separate quality's sound. Third, 'Performance Magic' covers using knowledge collected in 'Craft' and 'Artistry' in your actual performance material. This is mostly about using the skills learned to connect with the audience.

As mentioned earlier, I wanted to get better at belting control. So, 'Belt Quality' in Estill's 'Artistry' was something I hoped to focus on in my Estill Voice lessons.

Louise started these classes with Onsets and Offsets, which was a new concept to me. Onsets are about how you start a note and Offsets are about how you end the note. I learned they three main categories: Aspirate, Glottal, and Smooth. An Aspirate Onset begins with abducted vocal folds which allows air to pass through before the note begins. Glottal Onset begins with adducted vocal folds which means the note begins abruptly. Smooths sits somewhere in between. I have used these subconsciously in the past but didn't know about the terminology. For belting, I found Glottal Onsets to be my preferred technique. This is because my notation is more accurate this way.

Next, we looked into Larynx positions. The Larynx can be in three positions: High, Mid, and Low. I identified that my Larynx naturally sits High when I sing. Here, I learned that this is called my 'attractor state'. I practiced moving my larynx out of the attractor state, which is something I hadn't considered before. I liked trying Low, as I was able to create a darker sound than I usually was able to.

After that, we were taught about BodyCover which includes the states of the vocal folds: Thick, Thin, Stiff, and Slack. Thick fold tends to give a full sound, which is good for belting. Thin fold tends to give a lighter sound, which is good for falsetto. Stiff is harder to control but is good for flipping between registers. Slack gives the grumbly vocal fry sound. For me, Thick fold was my point of focus as actively using it assisted me in hitting higher notes when belting.

Then, we looked at Thyroid positioning. The Thyroid can be Tilted or Vertical. Louise stated that Tilt sounds like 'story telling' and Vertical sounds 'bored'. She played us

some examples of performers using these techniques and we were instructed to identify if their Thyroids were in Tilt or Vertical position. I think this one was the hardest concept to use practically, as I found it difficult to actively move my Thyroid. I naturally sit a bit stilted, even when relaxed speaking, as I am quite vocally expressive. However, Louise explained how to achieve Vertical Thyroid and I got there eventually.

In my own time, I researched Estill's 5 Principal Qualities of Voice as one of them is Belt Quality. Here, I found the 'recipe' for Belt Quality, and discovered the 'ingredients' were the skills Louise had taught us. For this, 'True Vocal Folds can have Glottal or Smooth onsets, Thyroid Cartilage can be Tilted, Larynx can be High' (**Chate, date unknown**). There were also other 'ingredients' that I didn't take in during class including: Tongue in high position, velum in high position, jaw in mid height, lips spread, and all anchoring engaged.

I would say that my module goal was met. I learned how to purposefully use my vocal anatomy to belt stronger and safer. My control still needs some work, as I am prone to vocal cracks, but I definitely have improved through these classes.

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Part 3 - Live Theatre Review: The Lion King

In London, I was lucky enough to be gifted a ticket to see *The Lion King* at Lyceum Theatre on Sunday 9th December 2023. I was already familiar with the 1994 Disney movie *The Lion King* and loved it growing up. Also, I did some background research, and discovered that The New York Times said, 'there is simply nothing else like it' (Brantley, 1997). So, it's safe to say that my expectations were high.

The Lion King movie was so popular that it was adapted into a stage musical. With music by Elton John and lyrics by Tim Rice, the stage musical version of *The Lion King* was first performed in 1997. Since then, *The Lion King* has earned a great reputation because it has won Best Musical, Best Direction, and 6 Tony awards.

When I arrived at The Lyceum, I was impressed with how beautiful the building was. It had eye-catching pillars and bright posters for advertisement. The theatre was surrounded by other people who were excited to see the show.

Inside the theatre was just as beautiful, with very well-maintained original features, and good cleanliness. The tiered seating and circles allowed everybody a very good view of the stage. This was an optimal environment.

As the show began, I was instantly blown away by the design elements. African designs, such as patterns, paintings, and make up, were great cultural presentations of the story's setting. Personally, being from a white farming background, such

celebrations of tribal traditions were completely new and entirely astounding. As I was intrigued, I later found out that the costuming included “utmutsa” and “iqoyi” which are “traditional Zulu clothing”, originally made from “different animal hides” (Kwazulu-Natal, 2007). Also, the use of almost costumed puppetry for different animals was genius; especially, the birds which were represented by kites. However, my favourite design touch was the enormous Elephant puppet, manned by four cast members, that appeared through the audience during *‘The Circle of Life’*. I thought this made the opening quite immersive and that the audience felt a part of the action.

The orchestra was incredible throughout. I think that they are quite often, pardon the pun, the unsung heroes of musical theatre. They followed the cast perfectly and their volume dynamics were well-thought out. I really enjoyed the musical journey that these fantastic musicians took me on.

For me, the dancing in this show was spectacular and possibly my favourite aspect of the piece. The movement included an abstract presentation of the African landscape; from blades of grass to towering giraffes. These animalistic routines were created by Garth Fagan, one of the most famous black choreographers ever, and involved ballet, modern dance, and a mixture Afro-Caribbean moves. To no surprise, Fagan won a Tony Award for the roaring success of show’s dance elements in 1998. A stand-out dancer was Stephanie Tsz Maan Lo. She had a great kinaesthetic awareness and attacked the routines with high energy and precision. Truly, Lo was on fire in this performance.

Overall, I thought that the singing was strong. The ensemble was particularly skilled in how they tackled difficult harmonies and seamlessly sang multi-lingually. They also made animal sounds live which made for a convincing soundscape. A stand-out singer was Thenjiwe Thendiva Nofemele, who played the hilariously charismatic Rafiki. She was very powerful singer, who opened and closed the show with a bang. Her ability and belting strength was unmatched by any other and I hope I get to see this amazing performer sing again in the future.

As this was a Disney show, the acting was exaggerated for dramatic effect. For the most part, I enjoyed this artistic choice but feel some actors were slightly too far-

fetches; for example, Gary Jordan's attempt to play the goodie-two-shoes, Zazu. Although, other audience members did laugh at his comedic portrayal, so this may just be a matter of opinion. However, Mufasa's death scene was heart-breakingly tender. Emrys Zeph Adamah, who played Young Simba, realistically portrayed a grieving son and the audience, shocked with intense empathy, fell totally silent in the theatre. This moment was so moving.

The only notable shortcoming of this production was George Asprey's underwhelming performance of Scar, the show's villain. In my opinion, his energy was too low for such a high-stakes number, and he clearly struggled to hit the low notes. The ensemble outshone Asprey both physically and vocally. Unfortunately, I believe this was a simple case of miscasting. Though I'm sure Asprey is a good performer, with credits in *Chicago* and *The Crown*, this performance felt weak considering what quality I'd expect from the West End.

To conclude, I still very much liked the show. This production definitely has 'more to see than can ever be seen', and I would recommend it not only to families with children, but to anyone who enjoys good theatre (**John, 1994**). Tickets come at a range of price points, between £48 and £222, which may not be accessible to everyone. However, if you can afford to see this wonderful production, I wouldn't hesitate to book it today.

Part 4 – Reference List and Bibliography

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