

Harriet Lewis

Student Number: 2403782

Performance Class.

ADPA4003/C

1500-word Self-evaluation (WRITTEN)

Submission: 31 March 2025

Over term one and two I have required many skills in acting and singing, in my 'Performance Classes'. In this reflection I will use Gibb's Reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988) to structure my evaluation, on aspects of 'Performance'.

Performance Classes provide me opportunities to perform pieces in a safe improvement-based environment, focussing on acting and vocal technique, along with improving my stage presence and emotions through performing. I have been able to take on constructive feedback, in front of an audience, which has increased my confidence as a performer, and I am able to listen and watch as others gain feedback, much of which I have acknowledged and considered for my own personal development. This feedback ranges from technique of vocals to methods of acting and how to put them together for successful presentation. Performance class modules benefit from professional coaching, required for successful employment, after achieving the Bachelor's Degree in Music. Regular practice is fundamental for musicians, to help them progress towards performing in the professional environment, once employed in industry.

Acting class is one component within the Performance modules and is aimed at improving acting methods, specifically to convey emotion through song. Techniques such as the Laban Movement Analysis system, used to effectively show emotions, is split into two main subjects, *direct and indirect*, and *light and heavy*. According to Espeland (2024) 'Laban Movement Efforts are eight descriptive 'effort actions' that comprise the building blocks of human movement. These include FLICK, DAB, FLOAT, GLIDE, SLASH, PUNCH, WRING and PRESS'. Putting these into practice is important for physical-acting, and will help me to connect emotions and feelings, depending on the mood of the piece. For example, Wring can be used to create a nervous/ anxious emotion, whereas Float can be used to create a lust/ in love feeling. It is important to connect emotions with music for Performance, an aspect we look very closely at during classes. I have noticed my confidence within acting has improved due to this system, and I aim to utilise it effectively during performances. Furthermore, I have looked at the Seven-stages of Tension theories, which focuses on Psycho-physical exercises for performative acting. According to Wion (2008) 'Chekhov's Psycho-physical acting thesis calls for the actor to marry their imagination with their physical body to create rich, dynamic characters with a believable emotional life', crucial for character development in the text and musicality of the piece.

The other Performance Class module enables me to perform pieces incorporating acting and singing techniques while also being aware of my overall stage presence and language skills. One component I will reflect on, is my growing recognition of emotional factors. According to Compte and Postlewait (2004 pp. 1536-1557), 'there is ample evidence that emotions affect performance. Positive emotions can improve performance, while negative ones can diminish it'. I notice how my performance changes with emotions. During assessments I can become overwhelmed, and these emotions negatively affect my ability to perform successfully. It is vital to ensure I remain relaxed while being mindful of how assessments are conducted, and the coping strategies I can use to ensure I perform to a high standard without worrying. I can incorporate these coping strategies into normal performance class lessons; to enhance my presence in front of an audience and to ensure I know the sensation of successful performance. I also believe it is vital for me to allow myself to enjoy performing which will improve my confidence significantly. According to Whitcomb (2008) 'virtually all performers are affected to some degree by performance anxiety' (*ibid*) and that it is important to overcome this anxiety. He suggests that learning to look forward to performing can decrease anxiety and that thorough preparation of the music can also decrease MPA (medical term for performance anxiety). Performance class is the principal module that enables performance opportunities before assessment or University productions.

One piece I have exercised in performance class is *Nachtlied* by Robert Schumann, a beautiful and evocative piece from the Romantic era. It is part of Schumann's *Liederkreis*, Op. 39 (Schumann, 1849), a collection of twelve songs written in 1840. *Nachtlied* is the eleventh song in the *Liederkreis* and is set to a poem by the German poet Joseph von Eichendorff who was a prominent figure in German Romantic literature and his work often dealt with themes of nature, longing and the mysterious aspects of life which are elements reflected in Schumann's musical interpretation of the poem. The piece creates a calm, introspective atmosphere, reflecting the stillness of the night, Schumann uses gentle, flowing piano accompaniment to enhance the sense of quiet which I must compliment with my vocals and remain quiet throughout the piece as well. This was an aspect I worked on within the performance class. The harmonies are delicate with moments of tension followed by resolution, mirroring the contrasts between night and sleep, peace and unrest. These moods can be shown through facial expression and emphasis on certain words within the *Lieder*. The melody is lyrical, unfolding slowly with a sense of ease and calm. There's an expressive use of dynamics, where vocally I move from soft, intimate phrases to slightly more pronounced moments. The piano accompaniment plays a crucial role, almost as a partner to the voice. The pieces' arpeggiated figures and soft, repeating patterns contribute to the atmosphere of tranquillity. Vocal phrasing helps to portray the serenity of the music, and my performance of the *Lieder* should be storytelling.

I can listen to instructions and act on them quickly in performance class. Taking on advice quickly is essential for my growth in classical singing. The ability to absorb and implement feedback from vocal coaches, instructors, and peers allows me to refine my technique and adapt my performance in real-time. Classical singing requires precise control over breath, pitch, tone, and articulation, and feedback often addresses small but crucial detail that can make a significant difference in my overall sound and performance. By responding promptly and positively to guidance, I am showing my willingness to improve, which not only helps me advance technically, but also builds confidence in my performance abilities. The quicker I can apply advice during performance class, the faster I can evolve and develop a deeper

understanding of my instrument, ultimately leading to a more expressive and dynamic performance. Furthermore, when watching my peers perform and take in feedback, I can also take on the advice given to them for my own personal development. Importantly, 'all voices are different, and standardised instruction, in which similar advice is given to multiple singer, often results in less-than-optimal vocal production' (Barefield, 2006) emphasising that the advice I gain from someone else's feedback might not be beneficial, and could deteriorate my performance.

When it comes to performing in performance class, my 'perfectionist traits' diminish my ability to excel. Perfectionism can significantly diminish my ability to perform by creating an overwhelming sense of pressure that hinders my ability to connect with the music and the audience. This mindset often leads to excessive self-criticism and fear of making mistakes, which results in vocal tension, anxiety, and overthinking during my performance. Instead of focussing on expression and interpretation and emotional depth, I become consumed with technical precision which leads to a lack of spontaneity and an inauthentic delivery. Furthermore, the constant pursuit of flawlessness can cause burnout and frustration, making it harder to maintain consistent progress and enjoy the process of singing. Ultimately, my quest for perfection undermines the natural flow and artistry that makes a performance compelling, as it prioritises precision over the emotional connection and creativity that resonates with audiences. According to Bieling *et al.* (2004), 'the most pernicious aspects of perfectionism are not necessarily having high or "perfect goals" for self and others, or being organised, but rather concern or preoccupation over mistakes, doubts that one is doing the right thing'. It's the fear of making mistakes in front of an audience that causes me to want to be 'perfect', which is not a realistic mindset to own. One effective strategy I will be aiming to utilise is to embrace the concept of progress over perfection, recognising that growth often comes from learning through mistakes and imperfection, this helping me to ease the pressurised and self-doubting mindset.

In performance class, my contributions have been centred around both active participation and collaborative effort. I aim to engage in class activities and to provide constructive feedback when asked by the lecturer. I bring a creative mindset that encourages innovation and helps elevate the overall energy in the room. Additionally, I make sure to support peers by listening attentively to enhance their performances. My goal is to create a positive and collaborative atmosphere where everyone feels motivated to push their limits and explore new techniques. Through these contributions, I aim to not only improve my own skills but also uplift the entire class experience.

Word count: 1473

List of References

Barefield, R. (2006) Self-analysis Skills for the developing Singer. *Music Educators Journal*. JANUARY 2006. [online] Available at [Self-Analysis Skills for the Developing Singer](#) (Accessed: 30 March 2025)

Bieling, P. J. and Israeli, A. L. and Antony, M. M. (2004) Is perfectionism good, bad, or both? Examining models of the perfectionism construct. *Personality and Individual Differences*. APRIL. Vol, 36. Issue, 6. Pp. 1373-1385. [online] Available at: [Is perfectionism good, bad, or both? Examining models of the perfectionism construct - ScienceDirect](#) (Accessed: 30 March 2025)

Compte, O. and Postlewaite, A. (2004) Confidence-Enhanced performance. *AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW* VOL. 94 (5) DECEMBER 2004. pp. 1536-1557. [online] Available at: <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/0002828043052204> (Accessed: 31 Dec 2024)

Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic. [online] Available at: [Gibbs' Reflective Cycle | Reflection Toolkit](#) (Accessed: 30 March 2025)

Schumann, R. (1849) Schumann's "Nachtlied". Op. 108: The Gentle Approach of Sleep. [online] Available at: <https://thelistenersclub.com/2021/10/22/schumanns-nachtlied-op-108-the-gentle-approach-of-sleep/#:~:text=Schumann%20composed%20this%20autumnal%20choral%20song%20over%20the,met%20first%20with%20fear%20and%20then%20with%20acceptance.> (Accessed: 31 March 2025)

Wion, B. (2008) TRANSFORMING ACTOR TRAINING: MICHAEL CHEKHOV'S PSYCHO-PHYSICAL TECHNIQUE. The Graduate Faculty of The University of Akron. [online] Available at: https://etd.ohiolink.edu/acprod/odb_etd/ws/send_file/send?accession=akron1208278580&disposition=inline (Accessed: 30 March 2025)

Whitcomb, B. (2008) OVERCOMING PERFORMANCE ANXIETY. *American String Teacher*. NOVEMBER 2008. [online] Available at: [Overcoming Performance Anxiety](#) (Accessed: 30 March 2025)