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The impact of the modern music industry: An exploration of the leading causes and contributing factors that facilitate mental health issues in professional contemporary singers.

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Glossary of Terms

Contemporary	In this study, the term “contemporary” is used in the context of “contemporary musician” or “contemporary singer”. This term refers to a musician or singer that performs in a non-classical genre (Murphy, 2023).
Popular	In this study, the term “popular” is used interchangeably with the word “contemporary”, and may be used in the context of “popular musician” or “popular singer” (Bartlett, 2014).
Professional Musicians	Professional musicians, for the purpose of this study, will refer to adult musicians who generate income from working in the music industry (Gross and Musgrave, 2016).

Component 1

Justification

Past studies have suggested that music institutions could help to prepare students for a career in the performing arts by providing more education in managing mental health issues (Curtis, 2019; Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). This reflects my personal beliefs when it comes to my professional responsibilities within my role as a vocal coach and lecturer within a contemporary music college. My experience of supporting aspiring vocalists as they navigate anxiety surrounding securing employment, industry expectations and performance anxiety, alongside the knowledge I've acquired in my previous research, has shaped my belief that music educators have a responsibility to equip and prepare their students for the industry they aspire to. Whilst music educators do not replace the role of trained professionals when it comes to treating anxiety or mental health issues, studies have shown that voice and instrumental teachers are often a valued source of support for aspiring musicians in helping them overcome performance related anxieties (Mazzarolo, Burwell and Schubert, 2023). However, many lecturers do not feel adequately trained to support students with issues affecting their mental health (Gulliver *et al*., 2018; Mazzarolo, Burwell and Schubert, 2023). In an attempt to increase my awareness of mental health issues in aspiring singers and potential support strategies, I have utilised the modules within my studies on the MA program at The Voice Study Centre to supplement my own perceived lack of training. In my experience, however, I have encountered gaps in the literature that have created barriers within my research. For example, whilst classical musicians have received notable attention in the field of performance science, contemporary commercial music (CCM) singers are currently underrepresented in research fields surrounding the mental health issues of musicians (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). Studies that focus solely on the unique physical, emotional and artistic challenges faced by CCM singers are scarce (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). Upon exploring existing systematic reviews centred around the mental health of musicians, I noted that much of the frequently cited literature within this research dates prior to 2016. This has the potential to be problematic, as the evolution of the

music industry in recent years may have impacted singers and created new challenges. In recent history, there have been significant events including (but not limited to) the Brexit referendum of 2016 (UK Music, 2023), and the global Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 (Rozbicka, Behr and Hamilton, 2022b). These events had a significant impact on UK politics, economy, society and culture, and therefore, have created unchartered waters for professional musicians to navigate. Additionally, between 2016 and 2017, streaming became the single largest form of revenue for global recorded music for the first time in history (Friedlander, 2017; IFPI, 2018). These factors suggest that the music industry may have seen a significant period of change from the year 2016 onwards. A scoping review focusing on up-to-date research is essential to ensure that the impact of these challenges is accounted for.

Mental health issues have been shown to be prevalent amongst professional singers and musicians across both classical and contemporary spheres of the music industry. Studies indicate that professional musicians in the UK may be up to three times more susceptible to anxiety and depression than the general population (Gross and Musgrave, 2016), and rates of mental health issues are suggested to be 7% higher amongst music students in comparison to the general student population (Clements, 2022; Vaag, Bjerkeset and Sivertsen, 2021). Whilst popular musicians and singers have historically been underrepresented in literature surrounding the mental health of musicians (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019), evidence suggests that some of the leading causational factors behind increased mental ill-being amongst popular musicians include debilitating performance anxiety, financial instability, poor career development opportunities and the physical and psychological pressures of touring (Wills and Cooper, 1987).

This literature review seeks to address these gaps by exploring literature that is centred on the experiences of mental health issues within CCM singers in the modern-day music industry. The purpose of this study is to determine what current industry challenges may be contributing to the high prevalence of mental health concerns in professional singers. This study may be used as a foundational resource for raising awareness within music educators, enabling them to create more meaningful support strategies for aspiring singers within contemporary music institutions or voice studios, preparing them for industry.

Aims & Objectives

Based on the recommendations of Mak and Thomas (2022) Peters et al., (2021) and Winter, (2022), I used the following criteria to help me refine the aims and objectives of my study in line with a scoping review methodology:

- Identify main concepts within a chosen field
- Highlight what types of evidence are available within a chosen topic
- Explore and understand how research has been previously carried out within a given field
- To determine and analyse gaps within current knowledge

My engagement with these recommendations has enabled me to determine the following aims and objectives for the exploration of my chosen topic:

Aims

- To identify and develop a comprehensive understanding of some of the most prominent mental health issues faced by professional singers in the current climate of the music industry

- To use my research on this topic to inform future curriculum development and best practise within my role as a lecturer within a contemporary music institution

- To determine gaps in the literature within this topic that may be explored further in my future research endeavours

Objectives

- To identify and analyse the etiological factors relating to mental ill-being in professional singers

- To critically analyse methodologies presented in existing literature to ensure reliability within my findings

- Gain a robust understanding of literature review methodologies to enable me to source the most reliable and relevant research within my chosen field

Literature Review Methodology

In order to develop effective strategies to support and prepare aspiring singers for the potential hardships they may face as they embark on a career in the modern music industry, I have identified, with the guidance of my tutor, that it is important to first of all gain an understanding as to "what are some of the leading causes and contributing factors that facilitate mental health issues for professional contemporary singers in the music industry (post 2016)?". There are many ways in which this research question could be approached. For this study, in which a comprehensive literature review will be used to explore the research question, it is essential to ensure the appropriate methodology is selected.

A literature review is an important step in bridging the gap between academic rigour and practical relevance, and can serve as an effective primer for further study by enabling the researcher to synthesise previous research and uncover areas requiring further examination (Winter, 2022). Given the many different approaches to conducting reviews, the careful consideration of intentions and objectives is imperative when selecting the most appropriate methodology (Peters et al., 2021). As my research question seeks to synthesise current knowledge on the topic of mental health in CCM singers as a precursor for developing effective support strategies for vocal students, a scoping review may be considered an appropriate methodology.

Scoping Review: Definition and Strengths

A scoping review is a useful approach to "map out" or "scope" what has been studied within a topic previously, identify what types are evidence are available within a topic, uncover gaps within the literature and make recommendations for further study (Mak and Thomas, 2022; Peters et al., 2021; Winter 2022). When conducting a review based around a complex topic, such as mental health (Clements, 2022), scoping reviews allow researchers to gain an understanding of how a concept has been studied previously, which may be a useful insight for developing future research (Peters et al., 2021), as intended across the aims and

objectives of this project. Scoping reviews are iterative and flexible, and therefore align with the interpretivist paradigm, deriving from a constructivist epistemological position (Mak and Thomas, 2022). This orientation allows for the inclusion of multiple forms of literature, including grey literature (Mak and Thomas, 2022). Similar to a systematic review on a smaller scale, scoping reviews are comprehensive and rigorous. (Hanneke et al., 2017; Winter, 2022). Where a systematic review is best served to answer a targeted research question, a scoping review seeks to identify and explore a range of literature across a broader topic, making it ideal for exploring emergent areas of research or forming the precursor of a more targeted systematic review (Hanneke et al., 2017).

Scoping Review: Weaknesses

As the scoping review is a useful methodology for exploring broad, emergent fields of research, one disadvantage is that often findings will be equally broad and often require additional measures to draw useful conclusions (Hanneke et al., 2017). This, alongside the need for comprehensive and exhaustive searches, usually conducted by teams of researchers, means that scoping reviews are often highly time consuming (Mak and Thomas, 2022; Peters et al., 2021). In instances where researchers, such as novice or student researchers, are facing strict time constraints, scoping reviews may be criticised for lacking depth (Hanneke et al., 2017). To overcome this, a “rapid review” may be a suitable approach, but it is important for researchers to remain transparent on the limitations that arise with this (Hanneke et al., 2017; Mak and Thomas, 2022). The time restraints in place for this project and all limitations that arise as a result will be outlined with full transparency. Additionally, in emerging areas of research that have not been extensively explored within the literature, it may also be challenging to determine effective search terms as part of a comprehensive strategy (Mak and Thomas, 2022). Finally, there is no requirement within a scoping review to address potential bias (Peters et al., 2021), nor assess the rigour or quality of included studies (Mak and Thomas, 2022), which is often considered a limitation of a scoping review.

Methodological Considerations

Throughout the process of selecting an appropriate methodological procedure, I have considered the intentions and aims of my literature review as recommended by Peters et al., (2021). The process of finalising my research question has been challenging, as there are many specific subcategories within the topic of singers' mental health that have occupational relevance to me, such as performance anxiety and perfectionism to name a few. After a preliminary screening of the literature, I have realised the importance of considering the wider context of what I hope to achieve by studying this topic long term. This has led me to pursue a broad research question, allowing me to explore existing knowledge and determine potential gaps as a precursor for future studies. This feels appropriate due to my occupational experience, where I have often felt that my knowledge in this topic was insufficient due to a perceived lack of training.

It is also important to consider how my insider researcher status has influenced my perception of the realities of being a singer in the current music industry. As a vocal coach, lecturer and professional singer myself, I have worked with singers and musicians from a variety of backgrounds with a wide range of experiences. As a result, my epistemological position aligns with interpretivism, in which the lived experiences of mental health are believed to be subjective (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). Therefore, my literature review methodology must be iterative and consider a wide range of perspectives (Mak and Thomas, 2022). After determining these intentions and objectives (Peters et al., 2021), I have concluded that a rapid scoping review is the most appropriate methodology. Scoping reviews require a comprehensive strategy to ensure that searches are exhaustive (Peters et al., 2021). Given the timescale and scope of this project, a fully exhaustive search of the topic is unachievable, however, consideration of strategy will ensure a higher degree of rigour and transparency (Peters et al., 2021).

Procedure

In the preliminary stages of my research, I have focused my literature search on papers that were conducted post-pandemic (from 2020 onwards). This decision was influenced by my

own professional experience working as a lecturer in a contemporary music college since early 2021, at the height of the national lockdown. As students slowly began to return to campus after a period of online learning, I witnessed a high number of students disclosing anxiety surrounding performing, collaborating and assessments. As a self employed musician in my own right, I experienced similar anxieties surrounding returning to performing, networking and securing employment following the pandemic. These two observations, combined with my previous research, has led me to the idea that the pandemic may have had a significant impact on the mindsets of both aspiring and professional singers, and it would therefore be beneficial to focus my search for literature on papers published in 2020 onwards.

Using the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) library at my starting point, I have searched the keywords “mental health” and “musician”, and set the Boolean operators to “AND”. Search filters have been applied to include peer-reviewed only, with the intention of prioritising these first, and referring to grey literature as my secondary sources if necessary. I have also included a date filter, searching for papers published from 2020 onwards, generating 222 results. To determine article relevance, I have scanned through the titles of each one, and explored the abstracts of any papers that appear to have a connection to my topic. It has become apparent that many relevant studies on my topic, published between 2020 and 2022, were in fact conducted prior to or during the height of the pandemic. As a result of this, I have been unable to find a sufficient amount of papers that explore the direct impact of the pandemic on the experiencing of anxiety in singers within the timeframe of this module. Whilst this is something I recognise will be beneficial to explore in future research endeavours, for the purpose of this literature review, I have decided to widen my search parameters to include studies conducted from 2016 onwards. My justification for the selection of this starting date is based upon key events that have reportedly impacted the music industry in a significant way. For example, the EU referendum (or “Brexit”) of 2016 affected the economy and the live music sector within Europe (UK Music, 2023), and in the period of 2016-2017, streaming became the dominant revenue source for the recorded music sector for the first time (Friedlander, 2017; IFPI, 2018). Expanding the search filter to include literature published from 2016 onwards has generated a result of 319 papers. Literature has been initially screened by title, followed by abstract. Once relevance to the topic has been established, articles are analysed and interpreted in full. Papers are subject to a strict exclusion criteria: studies that do not include professional musicians, for example,

studies that focus on amateur or student musicians only, are not included. This is to ensure that data is relevant to mental health issues relating to being a professional musician, not relating to factors specific to being a student, such as assessments or exams. Studies that focus on all types of musicians (professional, amateur or student) are included, but these are carefully screened to ensure that relevant data from the professional musician subgroup is easily separable. All relevant sources have been compiled into a spreadsheet, in which I have made notes relating to important points to help me keep a record of key texts (Appendix 1). This has been inspired by a thematic analysis approach, in which data is analysed, coded and organised into themes to help researchers make sense of common meanings and experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2012). These notes have been coded to identify recurring patterns, from which key themes will be drawn and used to organise my findings within the report (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

To expand my search further, I have adjusted the search parameters to also include combinations of “mental illness”, “mental ill-being”, “mental health issues” and “singer”, “contemporary singer”, “popular singers”, “vocalist” and “performing artist”, to account for interchangeable terminology that is often present in this topic (Clements, 2022). This strategy has also been implemented in an attempt to overcome the challenges relating to broad search terms that are associated with the completion of a scoping review (Mak and Thomas, 2022). For each new result generated, I have repeated the screening process, resulting in 45 relevant papers. In order to widen my search beyond the UWTSD library, I have kept a record of any potential relevant citations that I found, and explored these using the same process. Additionally, as this topic has been one that I have previously touched upon in my previous research endeavours, I have also revisited previous reference lists to find any remaining relevant papers. These last two steps have led me to some relevant grey literature. Within the scoping review methodology, grey literature is deemed as a credible source of information as part of an iterative search procedure (Mak and Thomas, 2022). The grey literature that is included in this study falls into the Kepes Framework “Tier 2” category only, which includes dissertations, conference papers, and technical reports (Kepes et al., 2012). This is to ensure maximum credibility, without crossing into publication bias, in which many valuable and credible grey literature sources in this topic may be excluded as a result of not being peer-reviewed (Kepes et al., 2012). Finally, I have conducted a search within some of the journals that have appeared most prominently throughout my searches, including “Psychology of Music”, “Journal of Popular Music Education”, and “The Journal of

Voice", to identify any remaining papers that were not present in my initial search within the UWTSD library. This has resulted in a final list of 56 papers.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: Summary

As detailed above, all papers included within this literature review will be subject to a strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. To ensure maximum relevance to the current climate of the music industry, all papers included as part of the scoping review are published from 2016 onwards. Peer reviewed studies will be included as a priority, however, in line with a scoping review methodology (Mak and Thomas, 2022), grey literature that can be classified as "Tier 2" within the Kepes Framework (Kepes et al., 2012) will also be included. Grey literature that cannot be classified as Tier 2 will be excluded. Additionally, any studies that do not include professional musicians, for example, studies that focus solely on amateur or student musicians, will be excluded. Papers that include professional musicians alongside amateur or student musicians will be included, providing that data specific to professional musicians is easily separable.

Procedure Limitations

Initially, I wanted to exclude any paper from my search that did not clearly define any key terms relating to mental health issues, including mental health issues, mental health concerns, mental well-being and mental ill-being. This was intended to produce findings with greater transparency and rigour. However, unfortunately, I have discovered that the vast majority of papers on this topic fail to make such disclosures. As a result, to ensure that I have a wide enough scope of key texts, I have had to remove this from my exclusion criteria. This potentially highlights a lack of quality assurance in papers surrounding the mental wellbeing of professional musicians (Clements, 2022).

Timeline

To help me manage my time effectively throughout the process of the scoping review, I have conducted a GANTT chart to be signed off by my module supervisor. This outlines target dates for completion of tasks, including the selection of my topic, solidifying my aims and objectives, the collection and analysis of key texts, and the completion of each section of my assignment (Appendix 2).

Critical Reflection

Throughout the process of conducting this rapid scoping review, my aim was to increase my personal awareness of the most prominent challenges that facilitate mental health issues in popular singers in the climate of today's music industry. This topic was inspired by my occupational experience, working as a lecturer in a contemporary music college within the UK. In my experience, many of the aspiring singers that I encounter choose to study music at higher education (HE) because they feel overwhelmed and daunted by their perception of a turbulent music industry. This perception often arises as a result of the media, or as a result of anecdotes shared by older peers with more professional experience. The challenge that presents itself for these students is that many of them also experience their own mental health struggles as a result of a recent period of significant economic and social change, thanks to the Brexit referendum of 2016, and the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020. Many struggle with isolation, difficulties with collaborating, anxiety around travel, and financial hardship (Hulene et al., 2023). Reflecting on my findings throughout this literature review, I recognise that these struggles may make music students more vulnerable to occupational stresses, financial difficulties, and industry expectations as they progress into their professional careers. Therefore, it could be suggested that music educators may play an important role in ensuring that voice students are equipped to cope with the demands of a musical career.

One way that educators can ensure that they are maintaining best practice is through a process of critical reflection. Critical reflection promotes positive change, and is an essential component of high-quality educational practice (Thompson and Thompson, 2023). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) upholds reflective practice as a key part of learning, which is defined as a "continuous process grounded in experience" (Kolb, 1984, p.27).

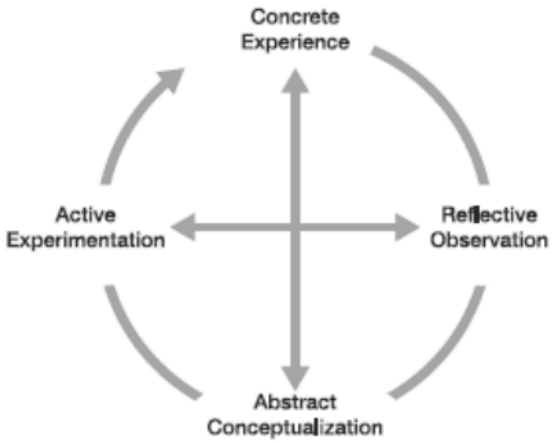

Figure 1

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984, as cited in Dennison, 2020, p. 1).

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is recognised as an effective cycle of reflective practice for complex subject matters, where learning is solidified through a four step process: concrete experience, referring to the active experience of an activity (Akella, 2010); reflective observation, or the process of reflecting upon the outcome of said experience (Akella, 2010); abstract conceptualization, defined as the symbolic representation of an idea, concept or theory (Akella, 2010; Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 1999) and active experimentation, where concepts are actively tested (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 1999). ELT posits that human experiences play a crucial role in the process of learning and knowledge accumulation (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 1999). As a result, Kolb's ELT may be adapted to suit the learning style of an individual, and there is no requirement for learners to engage with all four stages of the cycle equally (Akella, 2010; Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 1999). For example, Kolb theorizes that "diverging" learners are often creative and emotional, and therefore, are more inclined to learn using reflective observations to analyse concrete experiences from multiple points of view (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 1999), where as "assimilating" learners prefer to learn through a process of abstract conceptualization, followed by reflective observations, with a learning style centred around theory and logic (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 1999). "Converging" learners tend to engage best with abstract conceptualizations and active experimentation, to find practical ways to implement theories and ideas, and "accommodating" learners favour taking concrete experience to form the basis for active experimentation, implementing a "hands" on approach that is based upon gut-feeling as opposed to logic.

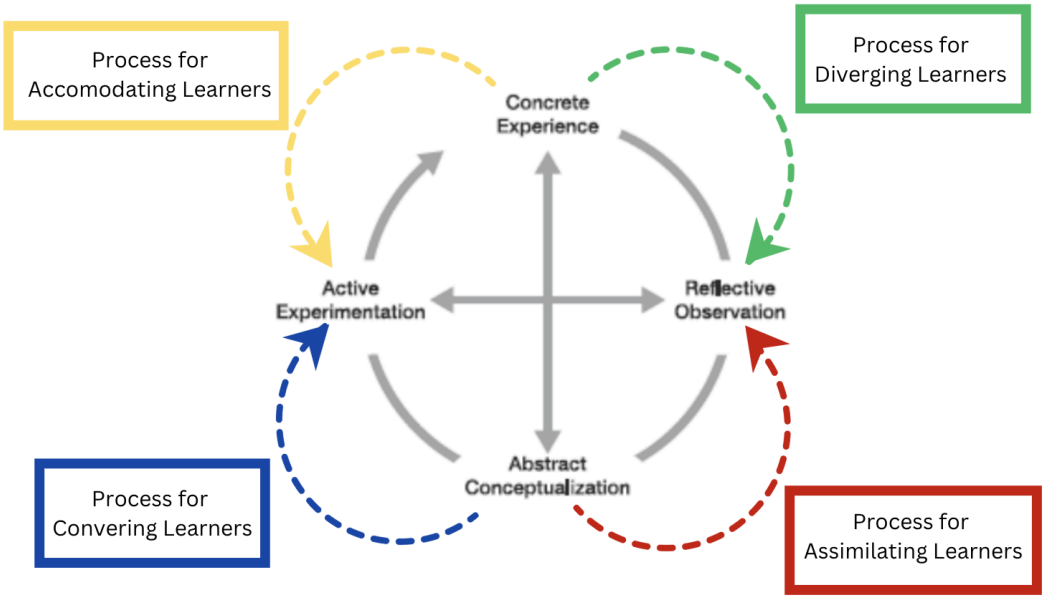

Figure 2

Diagram: Parts Kolb's ELT cycle as utilised best by different learning styles, adapted from Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984, as cited in Dennison, 2020, p.1).

Kolb's ELT is designed to be used as a continuing cycle of reflection, where observations and lessons taken from the initial engagement with the cycle are turned into action, and these actions are consequently evaluated as part of an ongoing process (Akella, 2010). My own personal research endeavours and how these are applied to my occupational practise will require a continuous process of reflective practise, as the topic of mental health in musicians continues to expand based on requirements for more robust, methodological approaches and transparency within the field (Clements, 2022; Fernholz *et al*., 2019; Willis *et al*., 2019). Continuous reflection is also imperative to my role as a lecturer, as critical reflection is essential for educators to ensure the development of good practice (Thompson and Thompson, 2023). The simplicity of Kolb's ELT will allow me to effectively and appropriately apply this reflective cycle to a variety of different areas of my research and practise on an ongoing basis. Kolb's ELT also resonates with me as it aligns with my epistemological position, emphasising the importance of human experience for assimilating new information (Kolb, 1984). For this reason, I particularly resonate with the concept of a "diverging" learning style, in which knowledge is obtained through the critical, reflective observations of concrete experiences (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 1999). Therefore, for the purpose of this critical reflection, I will reflect upon the key concrete experiences that

shaped the development of the scoping review, and draw reflective observations from which future research can be built upon, in line with the overall long-term aims of this project. Although there is no requirement to draw from all four stages of Kolb's ELT equally (Akella, 2010; Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 1999), I will engage with "abstract conceptualization" and "active experimentation" to determine strategies for future occupational development (Akella, 2010; Thompson and Thompson, 2023).

Designing the Research Question

Throughout the process of designing my research question, my passion for my chosen topic enabled me to visualise my desired aims and outcomes over a long term basis. However, my enthusiasm became problematic, as my desire to speak to participants about their lived experiences became my prominent focus. As a result, I found it challenging to ensure that my aims and objectives for this study were both appropriate and achievable using a literature review methodology, with no access to participants. Upon reflection (Kolb, 1984), I realise that this dilemma stemmed from my interpretivist position, from which I believe that the lived mental health experiences of singers are subjective. This made it difficult for me to visualise how I could explore these lived experiences only using the available literature. Discovering the scoping review methodology allowed me to identify how I could use this literature review as a precursor to better prepare myself for undertaking future research projects involving participants (Winter, 2022). This is due to the explorative, flexible and iterative nature, appropriate for uncovering existing knowledge and identifying gaps to inform future scholarship (Mak and Thomas, 2022).

The recommendations of Mak and Thomas (2022) Peters et al., (2021) and Winter, (2022), for refining my aims and objectives (as outlined under "Aims & Objectives") led me to design my first draft research question: "What are some of the leading causes and contributing factors that facilitate mental health issues for professional contemporary singers in a post-pandemic music industry?". The design of this research question was influenced by my occupational experience, based upon my own reflective observations of the impact of the national lockdowns on both my vocal students and my professional musician colleagues. However, the narrow scope of this question presented me with limitations. I quickly realised that published, peer-reviewed research focusing on the lived experiences of mental health issues pertaining to the Covid 19 (therefore, published from 2020 onwards) is still largely underdeveloped. This forced me to reevaluate my research question. Inspired by the active experimentation phase in Kolb's ELT cycle (Akella, 2010; Kolb, 1984) I decided to try broadening my inclusion criteria to include papers published from 2016 onwards. My

justification for this was to account for the impact of the 2016 Brexit referendum, record-breaking streaming revenue across 2016/2017 as well as the pandemic of 2020. My new search parameters meant that my research question became more broad and explorative in nature. This was helpful, as it allowed me to access a wider range of credible sources from a variety of different perspectives, in line with the requirements of a scoping review methodology (Hanneke et al., 2017). However, it also caused me to become more overwhelmed with findings, creating issues with organising key information. Upon reflection (Kolb, 1984), the impact of this is that my research procedure was not as linear as I had initially planned, which ultimately slowed my project down. This was problematic, as the time-consuming nature of the scoping review methodology, combined with a tight deadline made this difficult to manage, and a lot of time was wasted through the process of re-reading papers to ensure my search was as exhaustive as possible. Following Kolb's ELT cycle, this reflective observation has allowed me to identify abstract conceptualizations that can be applied to future research endeavours (Akella, 2010, Kolb, 1984). For example, when engaging with a scoping review methodology in the future, I intend to explore methods for effectively organising my findings. One way I will consider doing this is through incorporating a "six-phase approach", designed for thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012, p.60). This entails:

- Phase 1 - a thorough familiarisation process in which texts are read multiple times and language is analysed carefully to determine meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2012)

- Phase 2 - a systematic approach to generating initial codes. These may be interpretive or descriptive (Braun and Clarke, 2012)

- Phase 3 - following the initial coding procedure, data is organised into broad themes and specific subthemes. Relationships between themes are explored (Braun and Clarke, 2012)

- Phase 4 - quality checking themes against the data, and reviewing the dataset to ensure that chosen themes are appropriate and relevant against the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2012)

- Phase 5 - defining and naming themes to ensure that they represent the data coherently (Braun and Clarke, 2012)

- Phase 6 - upon completion of data analysis, a report is produced (Braun and Clarke, 2012)

Upon reflection, whilst I took inspiration from this six-phase process, paying particular attention to phases 1, 2 and 3, the broad nature of my findings meant that my approach to literature analysis was not as systematic and linear as I had initially intended. Although Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach is intended for qualitative data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012), incorporating a more formalised step-by-step process, inspired by Braun and Clarke's model, will ensure a more succinct, linear and rigorous methodological approach to future research endeavours that are centred around the experiences of mental health in musicians. This is justifiable, as thematic analysis is designed to help researchers make sense of collective meanings or experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2012), which mirrors the intentions and aims of this project.

Exploring the Literature

The heterogeneous nature of the topic of mental health presented challenges when it came to conducting an exhaustive search of the literature. First of all, the terminology that can be used in association with the topic of poor mental health is vast. Clements (2022, p.15) identifies that some of these terms may include (but are not limited to) "mental ill-being, mental illness, mental health problems and mental health concerns". Upon reflection (Kolb, 1984), I realise that in the initial stages of my research, I was naive as to the extent that this would impact my findings. In my initial searches, when using Boolean operators within the UWTSD library, I was more focused on the interchangeable terminology that could be used to refer to the contemporary singer, for example, "singer", "popular singer", "contemporary singer", "popular musician", "performing artist", and "musician" to name a few, in conjunction with the term "mental health". Using the stage of "reflective observation" in Kolb's ELT (Kolb, 1984) I believe that stems from my position as an insider researcher and my experiences as a professional musician, in which I have adapted to many job titles such as "lead vocalist" or "performing artist", depending on the context of my work. As I began to expand my search beyond the UWTSD library by following citations referenced in relevant papers, I observed that the terminology to describe the experiences of mental health issues in musicians was not consistent. Following Kolb's ELT through the process of "abstract conceptualisation" and "active experimentation" (Akella, 2010; Kolb, 1984), I realised that in order to complete a fully exhaustive search, experimenting with the interchangeable search terms relating to mental health would be imperative. This led to feelings of frustration, as the possibilities of relevant

and interchangeable terminology felt overwhelming. I found that building a citation network (Lecy and Beatty, 2012) was helpful for navigating this challenge, as it led me to discover relevant papers that may have otherwise been missed in my initial searches. Upon reflection (Kolb, 1984), this challenge caused my scoping review to evolve and become representative (Randolph, 2007), in which a process of snowball sampling was used to gather additional relevant sources, navigating issues surrounding the inconsistency of keyword searches relating to this topic (Lecy and Beatty, 2012). Given the timeframe allocated for the completion of this review, the broad scope of potential search terms made it impossible to achieve an exhaustive search of the literature. Scoping reviews that have previously been conducted on related topics regarding the mental wellbeing of musicians report similar challenges, suggesting that this issue must be addressed in future research. This reflective observation (Kolb, 1984) will be considered when approaching this topic in future research endeavours.

Occupational Impact

Reflecting on the process of completing this scoping review (Kolb, 1984), I have gained an increased sense of awareness of how the conditions of the music industry and the nature of a professional musical career impacts the mental wellbeing of popular singers in the present day. In my role as a lecturer, working with aspiring singers in a music college, my findings have inspired me to engage with students in important conversations around this topic. For example, inspired by Kolb's "active experimentation" phase (Kolb, 1984), I have incorporated discussions around how to sustain a portfolio career into music business lectures (Bartleet *et al*., 2019; Bridgstock and Cunningham, 2016), and discussed the stigma surrounding vocal injury (Siar, 2024; Suddeth and Flynn, 2022) in vocal technique sessions. Feedback from my students indicates that discussion on these topics is welcomed, which motivates me to continue exploring how the findings from this research can be more formally implemented across the curriculum and integrated into extracurricular activities across my institution. As part of the "abstract conceptualization" phase of Kolb's ELT (Kolb, 1984), I am keen to explore how the findings of this scoping review could be used to create potential educational strategies, such as mental health workshops in partnership with my institution's safeguarding team. Additionally, I will seek to collaborate with institution executives to explore and improve training strategies for staff, to ensure that tutors feel equipped to adequately support students that may be struggling (Gulliver *et al*., 2018; Mazzarolo, Burwell and Schubert, 2023). I intend to experiment with these concepts (Kolb, 1984) by conducting further research on frameworks that exist currently within other HE institutions. I will seek to

continually reflect on the progress of these initiatives to monitor progress and success, ensuring best practice (Akella, 2010; Kolb, 1984; Thompson and Thompson, 2023). This will be upheld through the completion of a reflective journal, as well as through the collection and analysis of student feedback in collaboration with relevant departments within my place of work.

Undertaking this project has strengthened my belief that music educators have a responsibility to prepare aspiring vocalists for a career in the music industry as means of mental illness prevention, as supported by much of the literature (Clements, 2022; Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019; Siomos et al., 2024). Additionally, the methodological weaknesses and the issues surrounding inconsistent, undefined and interchangeable terminology that I encountered across the existing literature motivate me to contribute meaningful and credible research to this field in the future. This study has provided me with a solid foundation from which I can approach these future research endeavours with confidence. Additionally, this literature review has provided me with an increased awareness of the most prevalent challenges facilitating mental health issues in contemporary musicians, which will positively contribute to my occupational practise, in which supporting aspiring singers as they prepare for a career in the music business is my central focus.

Component 2

Introduction

Professional musicians face a variety of challenges that may impact their health and wellbeing (Aalberg, Saksvik-Lehouillier and Vaag, 2019; Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019; Kegelaers, Schuijer and Oudejans, 2020). The demanding nature of a musical career presents risks including physical injury (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019), musculoskeletal issues (Détári et al., 2020; Jacukowicz, 2016; Vaag, Bjørngaard and Bjerkeset, 2016), hearing issues (Aalberg, Saksvik-Lehouillier and Vaag, 2019; Maghiar et al., 2023; Vaag, Bjørngaard and Bjerkeset, 2016), social and financial issues (Berg et al., 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016). Studies exploring these challenges have found that as a result, musicians are highly susceptible to mental health issues in comparison to the general population (Berg et al., 2022; Détári et al., 2020; Maghiar et al., 2023; Kegelaers et al., 2021). Mental health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as:

> "A state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community" (World Health Organization, 2024).

Research shows that an alarming number of musicians report mental health issues. Symptoms of depression may impact as many as 68% of musicians, and over 70% have self-reported symptoms of anxiety (Gross and Musgrave, 2016). Musicians also have substantially high rates of alcohol and substance abuse (Berg et al., 2022). Tragically, suicide rates within musicians may be seven times higher compared to the general population (Kenny, 2016, as cited in Berg et al., 2022). Much of the literature shows that female musicians are more likely to suffer poor psychological health than their male counterparts (Berg et al., 2022). The exact reasons behind this require further exploration, however, findings from a 2016 survey suggest that issues ranging from balancing work and family life, through to sexist attitudes and sexual harassment may be some of leading contributing factors (Gross and Musgrave, 2016).

One study by Vaag, Bjørngaard and Bjerkeset (2016), involving a mixture of classical and popular musicians, highlighted that singers are particularly susceptible to psychological distress. In response to the growing body of research highlighting these issues, organisations that support singers and performing artists, including Equity and The Musicians Union (MU), have called for educational institutions, such as music/drama schools (Clements, 2022), and instrumental/voice teachers (Siomos et al., 2024) to offer early interventions in an attempt to better equip aspiring performers to cope with industry demands (Clements, 2022). Whilst popular music education is a rapidly expanding field thanks to the increase of contemporary music institutions and the expansion of pedagogical research (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019), it is recognised that educators and researchers must do more to develop educational tools that may help singers/musicians maintain optimal health and wellbeing throughout their careers (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019).

According to the MU and the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM), teachers are often the first port of call for singers and musicians seeking mental health support (Siomos *et al*., 2024). However, studies suggest that voice teachers often do not feel adequately trained by their employers to support these issues effectively (Gulliver *et al*., 2018; Mazzarolo, Burwell and Schubert, 2023). In my current role as contemporary music lecturer and voice practitioner, I have supplemented my perceived lack of training with relevant literature. This pursuit has highlighted that the topic of general mental health issues in popular singers is under researched; however, the experiences of classical singers and specific issues such as music performance anxiety (MPA) have received notable attention (Vaag, Bjørngaard and Bjerkeset, 2016). In an attempt to address this literature gap, this paper will use a scoping review methodology to synthesise current knowledge on the main contributing factors of mental health issues within contemporary singers. This research will form a valuable basis for further study into the development of appropriate support strategies and interventions based on the key issues faced by singers in the modern music industry.

To increase reliability, this review will only include literature published from 2016 onwards to ensure that critical events in recent history affecting the music industry are accounted for. This includes the EU referendum of 2016, when the UK voted to leave the EU. Many sectors of the British economy have faced uncertainty since Brexit, including the live music industry (Rozbicka, Behr and Hamilton, 2022a). A report published by UK Music (2023), based on a survey of 1,461 music industry professionals, stated that the finances of 1 in 3 music creators were impacted, with 82% of those affected experiencing financial loss. The survey found that vocalists were amongst the worst affected due to rising tour costs, stemming from

new visa legislation, administration fees, and logistical expenses (UK Music, 2023). Additionally, the global pandemic of 2020 undeniably impacted the live entertainment industry, due to international lockdowns that restricted the work of singers and musicians (Sataloff, Naunheim and Carroll, 2020; UK Music, 2020). It could be suggested that research conducted prior to 2016 may no longer be relevant due to the significant potential impact of these recent events.

Scoping Review Findings

Upon a thorough examination of the literature, there are key themes within the topic of mental health that reoccur in studies of popular singers and musicians. This literature review will be presented to highlight such themes. These will not be presented in order of prevalence, however, each subheading will highlight a key contributing factor that has been shown to affect rates of mental health within musicians.

Occupational Stress

Studies suggest that the working conditions of professional musicians are linked with high levels of mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression (Aalberg, Saksvik-Lehouillier and Vaag, 2019; Musgrave, 2022). Whilst many professional musicians report high levels of job satisfaction (Willis et al., 2019), the very nature of the music industry means that singers are often faced with a unique set of challenges specifically related to being a professional musician. The fast-paced and ever-changing environment of the popular music industry means that the professional expectations and requirements of musicians can change rapidly and unexpectedly, often causing a great deal of uncertainty (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). For example, in recent history, record labels have placed more demands on artists to become songwriters, producers, performers and promoters of their own music (Lebler and Hodges, 2016). Whilst some singers find that having control over the creative process allows for positive self expression, many artists do not feel equipped to deal with such demands (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). Whilst juggling the pressures of industry expectations, professional singers and musicians are also subject to anti-social working hours and a lack of stability in securing employment, often leaving them unable to plan for the future and maintain a work-life balance (Berg *et al*., 2022; Détári *et al*., 2020; Gross and Musgrave, 2016). Many musicians experience high levels of occupational demands, but perceive a lack of support and financial reward for their efforts (Berg *et al*., 2022; Détári *et al*., 2020).

Additionally, the highly-competitive nature of the music industry means that musicians must engage in professional networking to secure and maintain jobs, find collaborative partnerships, book gigs and promote their careers (King, Koenig and Berg, 2024). Many popular musicians report that the pressure to uphold positive professional relationships causes significant stress (King, Koenig and Berg, 2024). This stems from the need to secure future work from establishing a positive reputation, and, in some cases, from experiences of sexism, racism or sexual assault, which have all been found to be prevalent in the music industry (Gross and Musgrave, 2016; King, Koenig and Berg, 2024). Difficulty managing these relationships has been found to positively contribute to alcohol misuse in professional musicians (King, Koenig and Berg, 2024).

Whilst the working conditions associated with being a professional musician can contribute to experiences of poor mental health, there are some occupational factors that may positively correlate with wellbeing (Willis *et al*., 2019). Many vocalists and musicians are self-employed, and studies have shown that self-employed professionals have a greater sense of creativity, autonomy and control over their work (Bujacz *et al*., 2017; Willis *et al*., 2019). However, self-employed professionals are also exposed to higher levels of failure, financial risk, lower pay and conflicts surrounding work/life balance, which have all been positively correlated with psychological distress (Reid, Patel and Wolfe, 2018). The competitive nature of the music industry could suggest that musicians are vulnerable to these pressures.

Similarly, conservatoires and HE music institutions are often highly competitive environments, where students face high expectations from faculty and intense academic workloads (Carroll, 2021; Curtis, 2019; Kuebel, 2019). These factors have been attributed to high levels of stress and burnout in music students (Carroll, 2021; Curtis, 2019; Kuebel, 2019), mirrored in the experiences of their professional counterparts. In order to ensure health and wellbeing in music professionals long term, music educators should explore strategies for managing stress and anxiety within students, such as mindfulness techniques (Carroll, 2021) and self-care plans (Kuebel, 2019).

Physical and Vocal Health Risks

For many singers, managing voice care on a day-to-day basis can be difficult, as common ailments such as colds, flu, respiratory infections and allergies can affect the singing voice and hinder performances (Colyer, 2022). Studies of classical singers have found that many

opera performers suffer a high degree of health anxiety (Colyer, 2022). Whilst popular singers are currently underrepresented in this research (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019), it could be suggested that any person that relies on their voice for work may face similar challenges. Additionally, demands placed on the voice as a result of an intense workload can lead to vocal health challenges and create risks of voice injury. Vocal disorders including nodules, muscle tension dysphonia, fatigue, vocal fold haemorrhages and lesions can occur as a result of busy performance or touring schedules, as well as teaching or other lines of work that place demands on the voice (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). For many singers, suffering with a vocal injury can be highly emotional and cause significant psychological distress (Rosen, Sataloff and Sataloff, 2021; Suddeth and Flynn, 2022). This may be attributed to the essential role that the voice plays in the identity and self-expression of many professional singers (Rosen, Sataloff and Sataloff, 2021). Voice dysfunction has been shown to be particularly devastating for singers that feel a strong connection between their sense-of self-and their craft (Rosen, Sataloff and Sataloff, 2021).

In addition to this, many singers perceive that there is a stigma within the music industry surrounding voice disorders. It is often believed that disclosing a voice injury to an employer may create the perception that the singer has inadequate vocal skills (Cooper and Bradshaw, 2018). This leads some singers avoiding, delaying or hiding treatment out of fear that their injury will impact their employment. As a result, even minor vocal injuries can be totally devastating to a professional vocalist, and cause significant amounts of stress that can actually delay the process of recovery (Rosen, Sataloff and Sataloff, 2021). The topic of vocal health has seen increased coverage within the media recently, with singers such as Adele, Sam Smith and John Mayer publicly sharing stories of vocal injury (Cooper and Bradshaw, 2018). This “trend” of disclosing such voice issues has the potential to raise awareness and reduce stigma (Cooper and Bradshaw, 2018), however, there remains a lack of evidence to show the positive impact of this movement.

Comparatively, voice students entering a performing arts degree program are exposed to many challenges, such as intense schedules, technically advanced repertoire and social pressures (Suddeth and Flynn, 2022). These issues can all cause strain on the voice (Suddeth and Flynn, 2022). In the early stages of their training, vocal students may not have the education or awareness to detect the preliminary signs of a vocal health issue (Siar, 2024; Suddeth and Flynn, 2022). Many students have also reported perceptions of stigma surrounding vocal injury (Siar, 2024; Suddeth and Flynn, 2022), as mirrored in the experiences of professional vocalists. This stigma may cause vocal students to delay seeking treatment, leading to long term vocal issues, psychological distress and difficulties in

professional pursuits (Siar, 2024). Music institutions should seek to provide interventions for students showing signs of vocal impairment, but in order for this to happen successfully, this topic requires more scholarly attention (Siar, 2024).

Eating Disorders

The demands of working in the music industry expose performers to risks associated with eating disorders (EDs) (Mainwaring and Mor, 2019). Factors such as erratic work schedules, the pressures of performing and low income have been linked to unhealthy eating habits (Kapsetaki and Easmon, 2017a). Additionally, symptoms of depression, stress (Kapsetaki and Easmon, 2017a) and perfectionism (Dobos, Piko and Kenny, 2018) often positively correlate with disordered eating. Whilst studies have shown that factors such as genre or instrument have no correlation with the prevalence of EDs, student musicians, soloists and touring musicians are at high risk for developing an ED within their lifetime (Kapsetaki and Easmon, 2017a). Professional singers, who often act as solo artists or lead performers, have been shown to be susceptible to psychological distress (Vaag, Bjørngaard and Bjerkeset, 2016), which could suggest they may be particularly vulnerable to EDs. The link between vocalists acting as lead performers and mental health issues has been attributed to higher levels of media and audience exposure (Vaag, Bjørngaard and Bjerkeset, 2016). Pressure from the media to maintain a certain body image increases the prevalence of unhealthy relationships with food in musicians and performing artists (Kapsetaki and Easmon, 2017b). Further research is required to determine exactly how much the pressure to maintain a certain body image affects the prevalence of EDs within singers (Kapsetaki and Easmon, 2017a).

Researchers have recommended that action should be taken to increase the awareness of eating disorders in teenage performers and music students (Kapsetaki and Easmon, 2017b), but literature recommending preventative strategies or educational frameworks on this topic is currently minimal. A study on EDs in university marching bands suggests that facilitators should consider providing a member of faculty with medical oversight, such as a physician or athletic trainer, to provide education on health and wellness to students (Uriegas et al., 2021). This may be a useful consideration, especially for large scale institutions, but the potential financial implications for smaller or independent music schools requires further research.

The Creative Mind and Mental Health

It has been theorised that people with a creative temperament, including those that create music, may be more inclined to suffer from mental health issues (Aalberg, Saksvik-Lehouillier and Vaag, 2019; Berg *et al*., 2022; Vaag, Bjørngaard and Bjerkeset, 2016). Studies on the personality traits of musicians have suggested that certain commonalities in those with a creative disposition, such as perfectionistic tendencies (Dobos, Piko and Kenny, 2018), may be linked to affective disorders such as depression and bipolar (Litner, 2020; Mason and Daniels, 2018; Vaag, Bjørngaard and Bjerkeset, 2016). A study in the U.S. by Mason and Daniels (2018), comprising 102 musicians, found that 14% of musicians had met the diagnostic criteria for bipolar at some point throughout their lifetime, compared to 3.7% of the general population (Mason and Daniels, 2018). Additionally, the study found that vocalists, along with composers and lyricists, scored higher in measures of cognitive disorganisation (Mason and Daniels, 2018). It must be noted that within this study, diagnostic terminology was not clearly defined, highlighting potential limitations. Whilst there is evidence to suggest that the social determinants of mental health issues, such as financial or occupational stress have a stronger correlation with rates of mental ill-being than personality traits (Berg *et al*., 2022), the link between a creative disposition and mental health and the impact of this on popular musicians could be recommended for further study.

Finances

A lack of financial stability causes significant stress for professional singers and musicians (Berg *et al*., 2022; Kegelaers, Schuijer and Oudejans, 2020). The precarious nature of the music industry often means that securing jobs is highly competitive (Bartleet *et al*., 2019; Berg *et al*., 2022), and once work is secured, it is often for low rates of pay, or no pay at all (Bartleet *et al*., 2019; Gross and Musgrave, 2016). A study of popular musicians in the U.S. found that musicians that are struggling financially are more susceptible to stress, as they are less likely to be able to access social supports, more likely to experience periods of work underload interspersed with work overload, and more likely to experience interpersonal conflicts (King, Koenig and Berg, 2024). This also makes them more likely to abuse substances or alcohol as a result, compared to musicians that are more financially secure and able to access resources to mitigate some of these challenges (King, Koenig and Berg, 2024). Additionally, financial struggles have been cited as one of the primary reasons that musicians may struggle to access help from non-pharmacological mental health services, such as private therapy sessions (Gross and Musgrave, 2016). Despite UK musicians having access to the NHS, a survey of 2000 UK based musicians showed that 50% of them

struggled to access mental health support in 2016, suggesting that access to free healthcare does not effectively mitigate this issue (Musicians' Union, 2022).

One way in which singers and musicians attempt to minimise the risk of financial instability is by pursuing a “portfolio career” (Bartleet *et al*., 2019; Bridgstock and Cunningham, 2016). This involves combining multiple income streams from performing, recording, arranging, musical directing, teaching, retail, hospitality or online work (Bartleet *et al*., 2019). Many singers and musicians resort to a portfolio career in order to sustain work in a music industry that remains in-flux due to technological advancements (Bartleet *et al*., 2019; Bridgstock and Cunningham, 2016). However, this type of career requires a high level of entrepreneurship, a consistent engagement with digital media and developing technology (Bartleet *et al*., 2019) and the necessary skills for working on a freelance or self-employed basis (Bridgstock and Cunningham, 2016). Many musicians that have gone through traditional routes of education may not be equipped to juggle these demands (Bartleet *et al*., 2019). Additionally, whilst a portfolio career may mitigate some financial risks (Bartleet *et al*., 2019; Bridgstock and Cunningham, 2016), taking on additional work in the form of teaching, hospitality or sales requires prolonged use of the voice (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). This may present additional vocal health risks for professional singers.

In 2016, a major national study in Australia investigated the career trajectories of musicians with portfolio careers. The data was used to provide educational frameworks for HE music institutions to enable them to effectively equip music students with the necessary skills for a portfolio career (Bartleet *et al*., 2019). The study suggested that the main concerns that HE institutions should address include the need for enterprise and entrepreneurship, the ability to “migrate” across different specialisms, technological expertise, gender parity and inclusion in the music industry, and education in mental health awareness (Bartleet *et al*., 2019). Whilst the impact of this study on Australian music graduates is unclear, further research to determine how music institutions may be best placed to support professional singers in building a sustainable career in the UK may be beneficial, as currently, this remains a gap in the literature.

Performance Anxiety

One of the most commonly reported forms of anxiety in studies on popular musicians is MPA (Pecen, Collins and MacNamara, 2016). MPA can be defined as persistent feelings of apprehension in the lead up to a performance (Dobos, Piko and Kenny, 2018), and may

present a spectrum of physiological, cognitive, behavioural and emotional symptoms that range from manageable to debilitating (Herman and Clark, 2023). This could include anything from sweating, poor concentration and nausea through to full blown panic attacks (Fernholz *et al*., 2019; James and Shipley, 2022). Many musicians experience symptoms of performance anxiety (PA) that negatively impact their performance ability (Dobos, Piko and Kenny, 2018). In severe cases, PA has been shown to be completely debilitating and has even ended careers (Fernholz *et al*., 2019). Although there is a wide scope of findings present within the literature on the prevalence rates of MPA, it is suggested that between 15% and 50% of musicians may suffer from debilitating symptoms of pre-performance anxiety (Dobos, Piko and Kenny, 2018; Fernholz *et al*., 2019). MPA has also been shown to cause feelings of distress and shame (Mahony, Juncos and Winter, 2022), and in some sectors of the music industry, such a musical theatre, singers have reported a perceived stigma of MPA from industry professionals, which may deter them from seeking support from employers, directors or agents (James and Shipley, 2022; Sheen, 2018).

Singers may struggle with MPA for many specific reasons related to their occupation. Factors including the pressure of meeting audience expectations (Matei and Ginsborg, 2017), the pursuit of perfectionism (Bascomb, 2019; Butković, Vukojević and Carević, 2021) and acting as the “lead” performer (Gross and Musgrave, 2020) have all shown to induce feelings of MPA in vocalists across the fields of classical, contemporary and musical theatre singing. Many singers feel pre-performance anxiety relating to their sound, and pressures to achieve a certain beauty of tone or standard of vocal technique, but find themselves in a vicious cycle when severe symptoms of MPA impact vocal delivery (Henshaw and Collyer, 2022).

The topic of PA has been explored across many fields, including sports, public-speaking and the performing arts (Matei and Ginsborg, 2017). However, it is thought that singers are currently underrepresented in PA research (Henshaw and Collyer, 2022). Studies suggest that singers that perform as a soloist or lead an ensemble may be particularly vulnerable to suffering from MPA (Dobos, Piko and Kenny, 2018; Loveday, Goss and Musgrave, 2022; Vaag *et al*., 2015), but these findings lack consistency across the literature (Fernholz *et al*., 2019). In addition, studies that focus on MPA specifically have often been found to be methodologically weak, with a lack of definition surrounding terms such as “Stage Fright” and “MPA”, and a notable degree of heterogeneity across studies (Fernholz *et al*., 2019). In a systematic review by Fernholz *et al.*, (2019), it was found that much of the literature on this topic does not specify participant criteria or diagnostic criteria for MPA, which could account for the wide scope of prevalence rates that are reported. Therefore, findings should be

interpreted with caution. To improve validity and rigour in studies surrounding MPA, a clearer definition of terms, transparent diagnostic criteria, and larger samples are some of the many issues that must be addressed (Fernholz *et al*., 2019).

Discussion

This literature review highlights key contributing factors that may facilitate high rates of mental health issues amongst professional popular singers in the modern music industry. Following the thorough exploration of peer-reviewed journals, and tier 2 grey literature (Kepes *et al*., 2012), relevant findings can be critically interpreted to produce key themes.

Research that explores mental health issues in popular singers is generally limited (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). Much of the available literature is not specific to sub-categories of different instruments, and often, genre is only considered in the contexts of classical or non-classical. A high percentage of the research that explores the specific challenges faced by vocalists focuses on classical or choral singers (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). Whilst it is reasonable to suggest that general studies of popular musicians, or studies of classical singers, may provide some relevant and valuable insights from which helpful conclusions may be drawn upon, popular singers may face unique demands that provide them with a unique experience compared to other categories of music professionals. For example, the findings of this scoping review indicate that popular singers face many occupational stressors relating to the music industry, due to an intense professional landscape where expectations and requirements are constantly in flux (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). They may also be subject to anti-social working hours, a poor work/life balance and periods of gruelling work interspersed with periods of uncertainty, which can contribute to feelings of loneliness, anxiety and psychological distress (Berg *et al*., 2022; Détári *et al*., 2020; Gross and Musgrave, 2016). These stressors have also been linked to poor eating habits and unhealthy relationships with food, and therefore, a high prevalence of eating disorders (Kapsetaki and Easmon, 2017a; Mainwaring and Mor, 2019). Studies suggest that singers are potentially more vulnerable to occupational pressures when acting as the “lead” or soloist within an ensemble (Vaag, Bjørngaard and Bjerkeset, 2016), however, the impact of increased engagement with the media, specific vocal demands, or other occupational stressors relating to the career of a popular vocalist would benefit from further research, to allow appropriate and specific interventions to be explored (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019).

The literature suggests that popular vocalists may experience financial strain as a result of inconsistent job opportunities and low rates of pay within the music industry (Berg *et al*., 2022; Kegelaers, Schuijer and Oudejans, 2020), leading to stress, substance/alcohol abuse, and interpersonal conflicts (King, Koenig and Berg, 2024). Musicians that attempt to sustain a decent living through the building of a “portfolio career” are often ill prepared for the entrepreneurial, organisational mindset that may be required to succeed in these pursuits (Bartleet *et al*., 2019). This may also present risks of voice overuse and vocal injury, which could result in more financial damage for popular singers, who rely on their instrument for their income (Heyman, Perkins and Araújo, 2019). Furthermore, the risk of vocal injury may also contribute to feelings of anxiety and distress due to the strong connection between the voice and the sense of self (Rosen, Sataloff and Sataloff, 2021). Whilst there have been studies that explore how HE frameworks can be used to prepare professional musicians for the demands of this type of career (Bartleet *et al*., 2019), there is little evidence to indicate how impactful this may be on the wellbeing of singers. This indicates that further research will be required to ensure these frameworks have the intended effect. Whilst some professional singers may be able to access advice through organisations such as the MU or Equity, these memberships come at a cost, potentially adding to financial burden.

Performance anxiety is a topic that has been widely researched in many aspects, but is still currently behind when it comes to the experiences of popular singers (Henshaw and Collyer, 2022). The literature suggests that MPA could affect as many as 50% of professional musicians in a debilitating capacity (Dobos, Piko and Kenny, 2018), but these statistics are inconsistent (Fernholz *et al*., 2019). Whilst there is evidence that performance anxiety can cause psychological distress (Dobos, Piko and Kenny, 2018; James and Shipley, 2022), many of the available studies are methodologically weak, and lack clarity when defining key terminology and diagnostic criteria (Fernholz *et al*., 2019). To explore what could be done to support popular singers with mental health challenges relating to MPA, more quality, robust research processes must be adhered to in this topic moving forward.

Limitations

This scoping review has only explored peer-reviewed studies and grey literature that has been identified as “Tier 2”, and therefore credible in line with Kepes Framework (Kepes *et al*., 2012). Additional measures have been taken to ensure validity, including the strict, exclusive inclusion of papers published from 2016 onwards, to ensure that findings are

reflective of the state of the current music industry. However, some limitations mean that these findings should be approached with caution. First of all, mental health is considered a heterogeneous research topic. Poor mental health is often referred to by a number of terms, including “mental ill-being, mental illness, mental health problems and mental health concerns” (Clements, 2022, p.15). The imprecise and interchangeable nature of these terms, combined with broad research methods, may impact the reliability of findings. Furthermore, many studies that explore the topic of mental health in musicians have been found to be poor quality, with poorly defined terms, small sample sizes (Fernholz *et al*., 2019) and lack of acknowledgement for the epistemological positions of the researcher (Willis *et al*., 2019). Many of the systematic/scoping reviews that have been explored as part of this literature review report similar limitations (Clements, 2022; Fernholz *et al*., 2019; Willis *et al*., 2019), suggesting that mental health issues in popular singers is a research topic that needs crucial attention.

Conclusion

Organisations such as the MU and Equity have called for interventions to take place at an educational level to better equip professional singers and musicians for a career in the modern music industry (Clements, 2022). This comes as a result of a high prevalence of mental health concerns that may be attributed to occupational stress, financial issues, personality traits, poor eating habits and unhealthy relationships with food, alcohol and substances, as well as MPA. This literature review outlines some of the main concerns surrounding these issues for the purpose of laying the foundations for future research, from which music and performing arts schools could develop educational frameworks that can adequately inform and prepare students to cope with the potential demands of a career in music. It is my recommendation that researchers specialising within this field must do more to increase the validity and rigour of future studies by clearly defining terminology, incorporating larger samples (Clements, 2022; Fernholz *et al*., 2019), disclosing their epistemological position (Willis *et al*., 2019) and clarifying participant criteria, or diagnostic criteria for mental health issues where appropriate (Fernholz *et al*., 2019). As a lecturer and vocal coach in a contemporary music college, I intend to build upon this research to inform my practice for the future, to expand my knowledge on this topic and explore ways that I can combine interventions and awareness with pedagogy.

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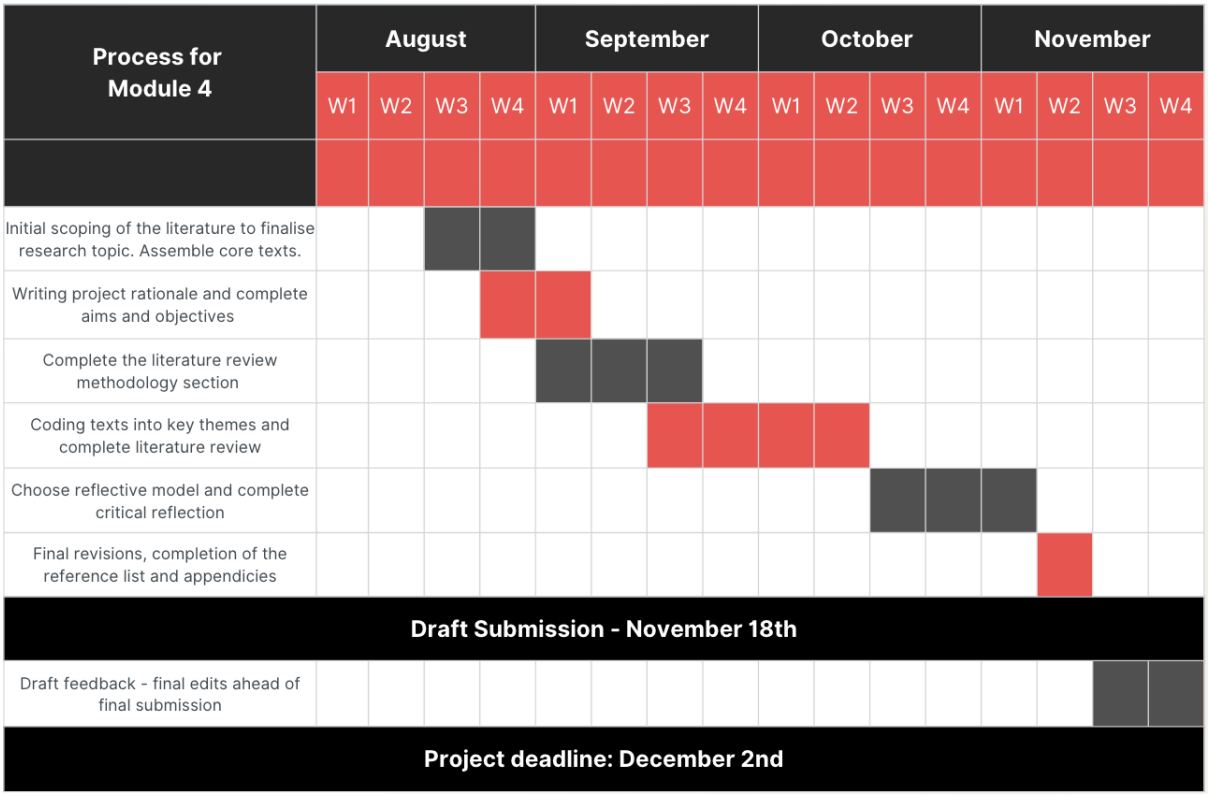
Appendices

Appendix 1 - Extract from spreadsheet used to organise key texts

Link		Title	Journal	Database	Read?	Eligible?	Notes
https://www.front	2019	The Relationship Between Occupational Demands and Well-Being of Performing Artists: A Systematic Review			☑	☐	A systematic literature review that examines the link betwen occupational demands and wellbeing in classical and contemporary musicians, actors and dancers. Conclusion: there is a lack of quality research in this field. This article also refemeces many wellbeing frameworks - useful for further exploration.
https://journals.s	2022	Musician occupational and financial stress and mental health burden	Psychology of Music	Sage Journals	☑	☐	A study focusing on popular musicians, identifying that finanical stresses linked to being a musician and occupational stress positively corrleated with moderate depression and anxiety in popular musicians. Whilst this study did find high levels of alcohol misuse amongst popular musicians, it didn't find a link between this and occupational stress, suggesting that musicians may drink more because of their personality traits or the social elements of live music
https://kclpure.kc		Challenging Performance : Classical Music Performance Norms and How to Escape Them	N/A (Book)	N/A - found throug	☐	☐	PDF Downloaded - one for future reading
https://www-scie		A scoring system for appraising mixed methods research, and concomitantly appraising qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods primary studies in Mixed Studies Reviews	International Journal of Nursing Studies	Science Direct	☐	☐	A framework for appraising mixed method research - PDF Downloaded
https://journals-s	2021	Out of tune: Perceptions of, engagement with, and responses to mental health interventions by professional popular musicians—A scoping review	Psychology of Music	Sage Journals	☑	☐	
https://journals-s	2023	Why Do Music Students Attend Counseling? A Longitudinal Study of Reasons in One UK Conservatoire	Journal of Research in Music Education	Sage Journals	☑	☐	
	2019	Examining the health and well-being experiences of singers in popular music	Journal of Popular Music Education	Intellect Direct	☑	☐	PDF Downloaded - an IPA studying that identified positive and negative musical experiences contributing to the health and wellbeing of popular artists
		Popular Musician Responses to Mental Health Treatment	Medical Problems of Performing Artists	Ingenta Connect	☐	☐	
https://journals-s	2023	Music performance anxiety and the Italian sport psychology S.F.E.R.A. model: An explorative study on 77 professional musicians	Psychology of Music	Sage Journals	☑	☑	PDF Downloaded - this article highlights that 36% of musicians still reported musculoskelatal pain related to practise during the pandemic, even when there were no gigs. Physical pain and injury have shown to have links to the contribution of MPA in musicians. This article however relates to classical musicians and not singers.

Appendix 2 - Gantt Chart