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Acceptance and Commitment Coaching within singing lessons: Piloting an 8-week programme incorporating Acceptance and commitment coaching within singing lessons to support Music Performance Anxiety in Adolescent musical theatre students.

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Project Proposal

Acceptance and Commitment Coaching within singing lessons: Piloting an 8-week programme incorporating Acceptance and commitment coaching to support Music Performance Anxiety in Adolescent musical theatre students.

Background and justification

Working as a singing teacher with students aged 7 to 18 has inspired a close inspection of the impact of Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) and psychological inflexibility in young singers (Kenny, 2011).

This study will investigate Acceptance and commitment coaching (ACC) within a singing lesson, measuring the inclusion of ACC and how it can affect an adolescent singer's levels of MPA in the singing studio over 8 weeks.

Adolescence is a vital time of growth for young musicians due to the transitional changes that occur in puberty (Kenny & Osborne, 2006).

Papageorgi (2020) found that young adults are likely to develop MPA between the ages of 15 to 18, along with increased awareness around identity and opinions of others (Kenny & Osborne, 2006; Zarza-Alzugaray et al., 2018).

Other responses to MPA are Increased psychological and emotional reactions, apprehension around performing in front of others and developments such as voice change, breathiness and vocal breaks. (Fehm & Schmidt, 2004; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Ryan, 1998, 2004; Sweet, 2018, Freer, 2015).

Due to the natural development in adolescents and the risk of developing MPA at this age, the aim of this study is to promote psychological flexibility in the singing studio, supporting young musicians with their values to work towards the performers they aspire to be, using ACC.

Through this study, I hope to contribute to the current research surrounding ACC and MPA.

Acceptance and Commitment Coaching (ACC)

ACC is a coaching framework that supports psychological intervention based around the principles from AC Therapy (ACT) (Hill & Oliver, 2019).

AC Therapy addresses extensive psychological concerns, including "psychosis, depression, anxiety, substance abuse and addiction, anger, and chronic pain" (Hill & Oliver, 2019, p. ix; Dindo, Van Liew & Arch, 2017; Zhang et al. 2018).

The flexible nature of AC Therapy has made it popular within clinical settings as well as in the coaching sector, successfully growing in popularity in sports coaching and within working environments (Hill & Oliver, 2019).

MPA in musicians has been referred to as a parallel process to those at the elite level of sport, with the striving commitment of athletes aiming to create new world records in their chosen domains (Hill & Oliver, 2019; Lubert, and Gröpel, 2022).

A vital step that promotes growth in musicians and athletes are values and goals, which are motivational tools to overcome performance barriers, increase psychological flexibility and recognise emotional obstacles. Supporting the need for an adaptable coaching model that is easily applicable for teachers wanting to support young musicians struggling with MPA (Huang & Yu, 2022; MacAfee & Comeau, 2022).

Shaw et al. (2020) and Mahony et al. (2022) applied ACC methods within the singing teaching practice supporting ACC as a teacher-led coaching method in reducing

MPA. Both studies worked with undergraduate students and presented a positive outcome in MPA reduction. Improvements were seen in the acceptance of MPA, defusion from negative thoughts on performance and increased levels of psychological flexibility (Shaw et al., 2020; Mahony et al., 2022), supporting the application of ACC in a non-clinical environment and contributing to the growing body of research.

To my knowledge, the incorporation of ACC into the practice of a singing lesson is yet to be explored, along with ACC methods for adolescents in a singing environment to support MPA. Through this study, I hope to explore and expand the research surrounding ACC and MPA.

For precision and to avoid confusion, it is necessary to establish clear and consistent terminology. Throughout this study, non-clinical techniques and research will be addressed as ACC for coaching; ACT for training and AC Therapy for clinical research.

Intended Impact

This study aims to achieve the following:

- To increase knowledge in ACC methods through training with an expert clinical psychologist.
- To explore the literature around ACT training and ACC methods, specifically suitable for adolescents.
- To create an 8-week program supporting MPA, piloting the implementation of ACC methods in a singing lesson with adolescents struggling with MPA.
- To assess ACC's effectiveness in MPA management and musical performance improvement.

Research Methods

Ontological and methodological methods

The roots of this study will be supported by the ontological and methodological framework of AC Therapy, working with the philosophical foundation of functional

contextualism (Biglan & Hayes, 2015).

Functional contextualism is a form of pragmatism that considers the holistic situation within its growing surroundings (Biglan & Hayes, 2015), supporting the individual journeys of three adolescent musical theatre students and the nature of the study itself which incorporates ACC within a singing lesson.

This study sets out to expand and adapt the current findings on ACC within a singing studio (Juncos et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2020; Mahoney et al., 2022), aiming to support adolescent singers struggling with MPA. Analysis of participants' behavioural responses will provide an understanding of the extent of how the incorporation of ACT training serves in reducing MPA in young singers and whether it enhances their performance experiences.

For a broad understanding of the application of ACC within a singing environment a hermeneutic spiral (Paterson & Higgs, 2005) will be applied, involving the process of deconstruction, reconstruction, and reflection of literature. An essential process that will assist with organising suitable material for adolescent singers, supporting them with their ongoing learning and personal growth; represented through the hermeneutic circle (Gillo, 2021).

ACC methods will be introduced at the start of each lesson to assist students in understanding their intrinsic cognitive and emotional responses throughout 1-hour lessons over the duration of 8 weeks.

Analysis

To support the rigor of this study a mixed-methods approach will be applied, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). The triangulation of research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) will be supported through combining quantitative data with qualitative data and a literature review.

Quantitative data will be studied accordingly and presented into tables and graphs to present a clear and rigorous scientific approach (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2021).

Following the exploration of Braun and Clarke (2006), a thematic analysis will be

used to collect the meaningful themes and concepts of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Research Design

1) Researcher ACC Training

The researcher will receive 5 hours of training from Dr David Juncos and will take place pre- mid and post study.

Dr David Juncos is an ACT therapist who has previously conducted similar training to relevant studies (Shaw et al., 2020; Mahony et al., 2022) and has contributed greatly to the research on AC Therapy as a treatment for MPA (Juncos & Markman, 2016; Juncos et al., 2017; Juncos & de Paiva e Pona, 2018), as well as publishing the book 'ACT for Musicians' (Juncos & de Paiva e Pona, 2022). The extensive guidance from a trained ACT Therapist will provide pedagogical rigour for this study.

2) Literature Review

A systematic literature review will explore ACT and ACC; how it has been incorporated within a music environment to support MPA and as a preventative tool in other research areas.

An inspection of suitable ACC exercises for teaching practice, the suitability for adolescent participants and how they can be included in the singing studio will be applied.

3) Self-assessment

Measures

Participants will be required to fill out the following questionnaires to measure the levels of MPA and the success of ACC throughout the study: before performance one, mid-event, and before performance two. All selected questionnaires have been designed to suit adolescent needs.

- Music Performance Anxiety Inventory - Adolescents (MPAI-A) (Kenny and Osborne, 2005) (**Appendix C**)
- Avoidance and Fusion Questionnaire for Youth (AFQ-Y17) (Greco et al., 2008) (**Appendix D**)

- Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM) (Greco et al., 2011) **(Appendix E)**
- Children's Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (CPFQ) (Dixon & Paliliunas, 2018) **(Appendix F)**

4) **Blind Adjudication of Singing Performance**

Participants will perform one song before and after the 8-week course in the exact location in front of the same small Audience; the second song will be of the same difficulty level as the first but will be different to measure the authentic reactions of performing. Reiterating similar research from Juncos et al. (2017) and Mahony et al (2022), the performance will be filmed and assessed by a panel of three external moderators who are singing teachers who teach adolescents; they will examine and compare performances for any improvements.

5) **Interviews**

Individual interviews with participants will be applied to measure and form a more in-depth understanding of the participant's experiences to help formulate what has been successful and what areas would benefit from improvement. Each interview will comprise of open questions, recorded using a secure laptop and transcribed for analysis and annotation.

Research location

The research will be conducted in person within a dance studio where the researcher works; with the option to attend lessons online to suit the convenience of the participants. Communication will be in-person and by email, corresponding with participants' parents; this is essential to support the diverse needs and preferences of the involved parties and provides efficient communication throughout the research process.

Screening Criteria

The screening process will guarantee that participants fulfil the selection criteria of this study, which are as follows:

- Participants must be between the ages of 12 – 18 and have permission from a parent or legal guardian.
- They should experience self-reported anxiety around singing performance.
- They should be able to commit to all coaching sessions, performances, interviews, and follow-ups.

Participants

Participants will be students between the ages of 12 and 18 attending a dance school where the researcher works as a vocal coach. Due to the age of the students, written consent from parents or legal guardians is vital; the consent form will be supplied within a letter defining the study design and the required expectations, clearly confirming the expectations of the study.

The completion of the questionnaire, the Music Performance Anxiety Inventory - Adolescents (MPAI-A) (Kenny and Osborne, 2005) will be used to select participants for the study and will be selected based on the scores and background of the participants.

Insider-Research

Due to the nature of the research, it is important to consider the role and relationship with the participants who are current students.

To review any 'researcher bias' (Fleming, 2018), I must ensure to consider my position, biases, and assumptions at all points of the research process (Ademolu, 2024); this will be achieved through close inspection of video data to ensure I have a complete understanding of the participants experiences as well as opportunities to reflect on my teaching methods.

Other key strategies will ensure lessons and interviews begin with a disclaimer, specifying the importance of participants responding to questions as though for the

first time. It is vital to avoid getting deferring responses such as "You know what I mean, or We talked about that before" (Chavez, 2008, p. 485), along with regular reminders to be entirely truthful for themselves during the process in order to build a credible and practical course that aims to help likeminded others (Chavez, 2008).

Ethics

The Coach is responsible for providing an educational duty of care and ensuring safeguarding responsibilities are met when working with student participants (Jenks, 1996).

As there are similarities between therapy and coaching (Hart, 2001), the role of coach must be transparent within this study to reduce the risk of unethical behaviour from the coach, ensuring they stay in their lane and rule out the risk of pseudo-therapy (Mahony et al., 2022; Lowman; 2013; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007).

The importance of addressing any emotional distress should it arise among participants is vital, and professional support options, including British association for performing arts medicine (BAPAM), will be made available to participants facing unmanageable MPA or emotional distress.

The commitment to maintaining professional boundaries by keeping the discussion and content within the context of singing and performance will be included (**see Appendix I for the ethics form**). Along with assurance to provide a platform for adolescents' voices and opinions, which will be represented relatively through a collaborative learning approach.

Consent

A consent form is to be completed by the parent or guardian to confirm that both the participant and parent/guardian are happy to participate in the research. A consent form in a detailed document outlining the aims, methods and procedures to ensure that the participant understands the length of commitment required, the contribution to questionnaires and interviews, consent to be recorded and observed by external assessors and that participation in the study is voluntary; they have the right to refuse participation in tasks and can request the results post-study.

Data Protection

Alternative names will be applied to maintain anonymity and protect the identity of participants. The information sourced is confidential and handled to align with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Data will be stored securely in cloud storage and password-encrypted to ensure all data remains protected and confidential. Participants will be informed about how their data will be used and stored to align with GDPR and will be made aware of their rights regarding data removal and deletion; if a participant withdraws from the study before its completion, all data involving the participant will be permanently deleted.

Personal Learning Outcomes

- Enhance understanding of the fundamental processes and principles of ACC.
- Incorporate and execute ACC methods into everyday teaching practice.
- Acquire fundamental skills in statistical analysis to effectively present quantitative data.
- Progress towards the presentation and publication of research.
- Maintain an ongoing practice of self-reflection and introspection to develop coaching abilities continually.

Timeline

Task	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Project Proposal								
Conduct Literature Review								
Training in ACT Coaching Model								
Devise Coaching								

Course Content								
Participant Screening								
Conduct 8-week Coaching Course								
Write Methodology								
Coding and Data Analysis								
Results and Conclusions								
Complete Draft Report								
Submit Final Project								
Write and Create Presentation								
Presentation of Project								

Acceptance and Commitment Coaching within singing lessons: Piloting an 8-week programme incorporating Acceptance and commitment coaching with singing lessons to support Music Performance Anxiety in Adolescent musical theatre students.

Introduction

Inspection of the previous research around MPA in Children and adolescents has revealed the need for MPA awareness within an educational setting, along with findings on ways to alleviate MPA in adolescents, which has provided suitable knowledge for the design and structure of a programme that supports adolescents with MPA (Shaw, 2021; Hendricks et al., 2014; Fehm & Schmidt, 2004, Thomas & Nettelback, 2014).

Hendricks et al., (2014) found that 34% of adolescents experience clinical levels of MPA and by adapting teaching strategies, support from family members and understanding values and mental health can help reduce MPA. While other reports show decreasing MPA levels in adolescents who practiced regularly, rehearsed before a performance and openly discussed MPA with peers (Fehm & Schmidt, 2004, Thomas & Nettelback, 2014).

However, a gap in the research shows the increasing demands for teachers to understand the needs and effects of MPA in adolescents (Gill et al., 2024; Biasutti & Concina, 2014; Patston, 2014; Fehm and Schmidt, 2004; Thomas & Nettelback, 2014; Zarza-Alzugaray et al., 2018; Tardif et al., 2024), supporting for a course providing MPA awareness and the suitable tools in assisting students dealing with MPA in the classroom (Fehm and Schmidt, 2004; Thomas & Nettelback, 2014; Zarza-Alzugaray et al., 2018; Tardif et al., 2024).

The lack of data in this area could be due to the ethical complications that can occur when working with children in research; as children are potentially vulnerable and dependent on the researcher during the research process, ethical guidelines are vital for protecting participants and researchers as a 'principle of care' (Jenks, 1996, p. 14).

[Therefore, a close inspection of ACC coaching methods is essential to ensure participants feel secure and comfortable within the research process for the rigor of this study and for ethical considerations that coaching standards are met with confidence (Gallagher et al. 2023).

An additional exploration into ACT methods for children, ACC coaching strategies and ACT training for MPA will be applied to support the creation of an 8-week lesson

structure for Adolescents with MPA, providing the tools needed to bridge the gap in current research (Biasutti & Concina, 2014; Patston, 2014).

Aim of Current Study

Previous studies have explored ACC as a supporting method for MPA in singers (Juncos et al, 2017; Shaw et al, 2020; Mahoney et al, 2022); revealing a positive result in ACT training in enhancing the structure of a musician's life, their drive for progression and positive reductions in MPA (Juncos & De Pavia e Pona, 2022). ACT training shows promise in its potential for adolescent motivation and well-being in singing lessons, as well as a method to support with performance nerves. Through the ACC processes, adolescents will be able to build their awareness around: self as context, defusion of negative thoughts around performance, Mindfulness in the present moment and uncovering performance values and the committed action to achieve them (Juncos & De Pavia e Pona, 2022); building the skills to accept MPA and the way they identify themselves as young singers.

To my knowledge, there is yet to be a study that incorporates ACC methods within a singing lesson or for Adolescents with MPA, a literature review of the most rigorous research on ACT and ACC methods will take place to support this study and build on the recent research on MPA in children and coaching methods.

The purpose of the literature review is to source and critically analyse ACT literature to fill this specific gap in the research. If successful, the eight-week course incorporating ACC methods in everyday singing could be shared within the singing teacher community to support others in this area and add to the work and research of both ACC and MPA.

Personal Learning Outcomes

- Enhance understanding of the fundamental processes and principles of ACT.
- Incorporate and execute ACC methods into everyday teaching practice.
- Acquire fundamental skills in statistical analysis to effectively present quantitative data.
- Contribute to the growing research of ACC and MPA

- Progress towards the presentation and publication of research.
- Maintain an ongoing practice of self-reflection and introspection to develop coaching abilities.

Literature Review

Previous research on MPA in adolescents has focused on adolescent development, identity, the influence of social impacts and their behaviour around music performance; as well as the methods applied for young musicians with MPA (Fehm & Schmidt, 2004; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Ryan, 1998, 2004; Papageorgi, 2020).

Recent research into MPA in adults supports the application of Acceptance and commitment coaching (ACC) (Hill & Oliver, 2018) as a model to help with MPA in singers (Juncos et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2020; Mahony et al., 2022).

The review on literature will explore the principles of AC therapy, the role of ACC in supporting MPA and suitable ACC exercises for adolescents in the singing studio.

MPA in adolescents

Music educators have reported a growing response in reluctance towards singing in adolescence, with specific focus on the physiological developments of voice change between the ages of 11-16 (Orton & Pitts, 2019; Cooksey and Welch, 2008; Gackle, 1991).

Previous studies have successfully identified some of the key elements of MPA, such as; context of performance, the traits of the musician, and the influence of parental support (Tardif et al., 2024; McPherson, 2009; McPherson & Davidson, 2002).

Ryan (2003) and Osborne et al, (2005) have found that levels of musical ability and career aspirations in musicianship can impact the levels of MPA within adolescents, revealing that more advanced and self-assured students encounter lower anxiety levels (Ryan, 2003; Osborne et al., 2005).

A more recent study by Tardif et al. (2024) explores the MPA levels of elementary students who took part in a music-intensive course, although this study is not specific to adolescents, the findings are comparative in the progression of MPA. Before the study, Tardif et al. (2024) predicted that higher levels of MPA would be seen in participants, however, results confirmed moderate levels of MPA in students.

Increased MPA levels were seen in students who volunteered themselves to the course; compared to those who were encouraged by their parents and increased emotions and MPA in female students compared to males, which is consistent with prior research (Ryan, 2003; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Dempsey & Comeau, 2019; González et al., 2018; Papageorgi, 2020; Ryan, 2004; Urruzola & Bernaras, 2020). However, Dempsey and Comeau (2019), who explored areas of gender, age and self-efficiency, found no difference between gender and its relation between age and MPA.

The nature of 'ACT'

The 'Acceptance' part of ACT emphasises the importance of allowing uncomfortable thoughts and emotions, building on the understanding that feelings are an inevitable and essential part of being human, and the 'Commitment' side draws upon the actions working towards value-consistent behaviour (McLoughlin & Roche, 2023; Batten, 2011).

ACT focuses on adapting responses, so they are not viewed as a problem or symptom, altering the connection between undesired thoughts and feelings (Hayes, et al., 2011). Hayes, et al. (2011). argues that labelling undesirable responses as a symptom can suggest that it is bad to experience them, triggering the desire to get rid of or change emotions. However, normalising these reactions as healthy and

natural bodily responses can lead to increased psychological flexibility and increase the willingness to think and feel with openness (Hayes, 2019).

The 'ACT Hexaflex' is a visual representation that outlines the principles of psychological flexibility.

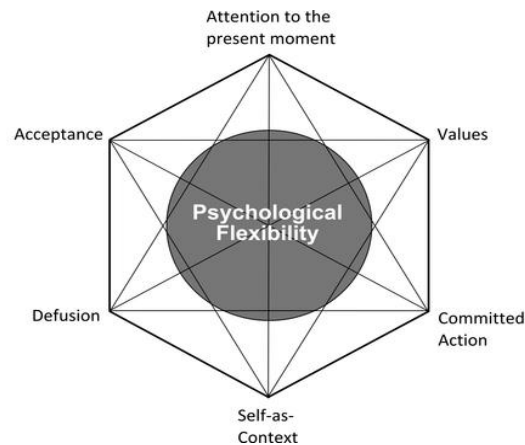


Figure 1. ACT Hexaflex (Harris, 2009)

Hayes (2019) highlights that psychological flexibility is a continuous learning journey; the 'Hexaflex' model is designed to support the ongoing developments of psychological flexibility through the six processes: being present in the moment, acceptance of unwanted thoughts and feelings, cognitive defusion from thoughts, observing a sense of self, identifying values, and committed Action (Hayes et al., 2006; Juncos & de Paiva e Pona, 2022).

While 'The inhexaflex' is a process that mirrors the hexaflex model and helps to identify psychological inflexibility, the inhexaflex processes are: Absence of awareness and acceptance of the present moment, avoidance of uncomfortable and internal experiences, inflexible views of the conceptualised self, lack of values and lacking in committed action (Hayes, et al., 1999;2011; Juncos & de Paiva e Pona, 2022).

Juncos & de Paiva e Pona (2022) notes that experiencing one or more of the behaviours in the inhexaflex can get in the way of individuals' growth and trigger psychological problems such as MPA. As a teacher, it is essential to know how to identify where a student might feel stuck; the inhexaflex can help identify any

underlying issues contributing to MPA, and the hexaflex model can identify how to support students.

Acceptance and Commitment Training with Children and Adolescents

Previous studies show supporting evidence of the success of ACT for adolescents (Petersen et al., 2022; Fang & Ding, 2020a; Gillard et al., 2018; Swain et al., 2015), increasing their well-being and life development within school settings (Petersen et al. 2022; Gillard et al. 2018).

Adolescence is a prominent period of developmental change where skills such as perspective-taking are becoming established (Icenogle et al., 2019; Luna et al., 2004). Increased emotional sensitivity during this transitional period can lead to struggles with thoughts and feelings, leading to unhelpful behaviours like short-term avoidance, impulsive actions, increased risk-taking and argumentative attitudes (Turrell & Bell, 2016; Icenogle et al., 2019; Luna et al., 2004).

Petersen et al. (2022) and Fang & Ding, (2020a) found that increased awareness of values and socially acceptable behaviours support the struggle with developmental change in adolescents, supporting psychological flexibility and values can assist with the developing stages of adolescent life (Greco et al., 2005).

Acceptance and defusion elevate skills such as decision-making, self-reflection and egocentrism (Petersen et al. 2022; Overall et al., 2005) and can support adolescents with struggles of identity and increased self-awareness in the singing studio (Sweet, 2015; Fehm & Schmidt, 2004; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Ryan, 1998, 2004) and being in the present moment can help identify emotional and cognitive experiences and increase the skills to observe internal and external reactions (Overall et al., 2005; Tan and Martin, 2016). Improvements with negative emotions, anxiety, risk-taking, depression and low mood along with reduction in depression and anxiety through values, defusion and mindfulness (Royuela-Colomer et al., 2021; Petersen et al. 2022).

Growing awareness of self-as-context is essential for fused narratives of the 'self-as-story' and has produced significant results in reducing stress among adolescents (Moran et al., 2018). However, Harris (2019) argues that self-as-context is more complex than the other stages of the 'hexaflex', which could be off-putting for those new to ACC.

Values-based behaviour provided associations with meaning in life within a large sample of 5877 adolescents (Warren et al., 2018), showing improvements in stress, grades, and dietary choices (Bryan et al., 2019; Cohen & Sherman, 2014). While research highlights the positive influence of values, Kraatz et al, (2020) argue there is "a dark side that cannot be ignored" (Kraatz et al., 2020, p. 497). Studies show that adolescent's direction of values can be influenced by selection and socialisation processes and swayed by peers (Laursen, 2017). Other challenges are societal changes which can be complex, uncertain, and evaluative of the problems in society (Kraatz et al, 2020; Ferraro et al., 2015).

Ciarrochi et al. (2011) demonstrated a positive response in social behaviour and well-being when working with acceptance, as well as an increased level of awareness, while other studies have used ACT with adolescents to help with chronic pain (McCracken et al., 2010; Beeckman et al. 2019), and reduction in mental health (García-Goómez et al., 2019; Bennett et al., 2021).

AC Therapy as a treatment for MPA

Recent studies have demonstrated the positive effects of AC Therapy as a method to support MPA in musicians (Clark et al., 2020; Juncos et al., 2014; Juncos et al., 2017; Juncos & Markman, 2015; Swain & Bodkin – Allen, 2017). However, all sample sizes were small and did not measure ACT with any other treatment (Juncos & De Pavia e Pona, 2022).

Juncos has contributed significantly to research on ACT for MPA in musicians; (Juncos et al., 2014; Juncos & Markman, 2015; Juncos et al., 2017), where all participants had improved in at least one area of the Hexaflex processes post-treatment and effectively learned to be less fused with their MPA-related thoughts while performing (Juncos & De Pavia e Pona, 2022).

Clark et al., (2020) study supported increased psychological flexibility, a reduction in MPA, and found the applicability of skills to be transferrable when dealing with depression, generalised anxiety, and stress. A significant improvement in well-being also occurred from pre- to post-treatment; however, results were not supported during the 3-month follow-up.

Acceptance and commitment coaching and MPA

Hart, et al., (2001) emphasises the cross-disciplines of coaching and therapy; both practices provide an ongoing one-to-one relationship that is confidential, providing guidance towards meaningful growth and changes towards progression in life (Hart, et al., 2001; Passmore & Lai, 2020).

However, it is imperative to emphasise that these professions are not the same, and the role of the coach must be transparent to reduce the risk of unethical behaviour from the singing teacher (Mahony et al., 2022).

Recent research explored ACC coaching to singers in a non-clinical setting (Shaw et al., 2020; Mahony et al., (2022)). Both studies incorporated suitable coaching methods alongside ACC to support the structure of their study.

Shaw et al. (2020) used the GROW model, which stands for Goal, Reality, Options, and Will, which is classed as a popular coaching model (Whitmore, 2017). Mahony et al. (2022) suitably went for the GROUP coaching model to be inclusive of the themes of their study (Brown & Grant, 2010). To follow suit with previous research, the Lundy Model will be incorporated into the study.

The Lundy Model

Lundy (2007) developed the Lundy model based on Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, supporting children's rights to express opinions and be considered in all matters affecting them (Lundy, 2007; Kennan, 2019). A vital element that needs to be incorporated within this study to support and capture the opinions of participants appropriately.

The article proposes a model that comprises four essential elements - Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence.

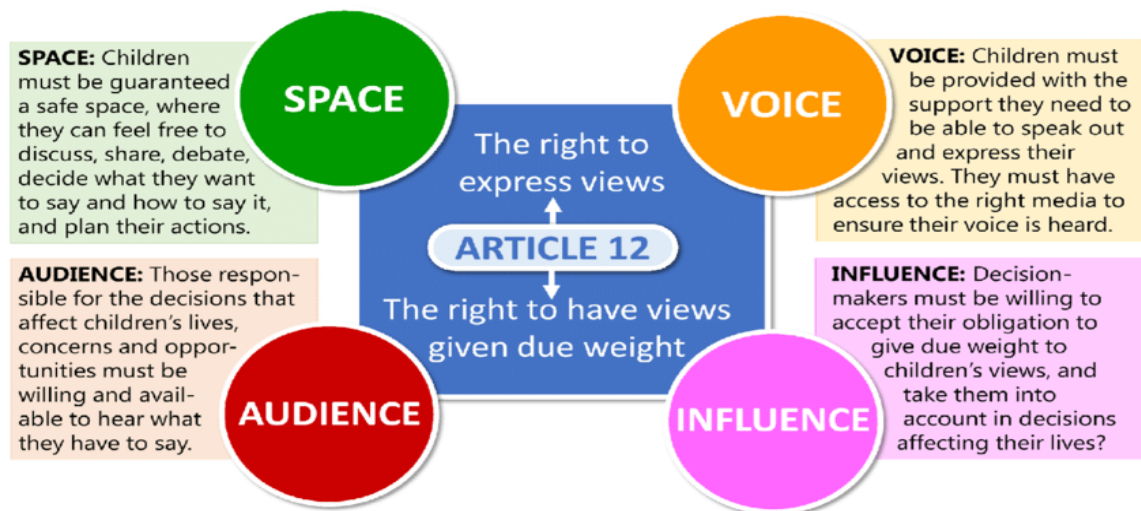


Figure 2. The Lundy model of participation (Lundy, 2007).

Space, highlights the importance of allowing children to express their views. The second element, voice, emphasises the need for facilitation to reinforce children to expressing their views. The third element, Audience, promotes listening to children's views, and the fourth element, Influence, highlights the need to act on these views appropriately (Lundy, 2007; Brown and Grant, 2010; Kennan, 2019).

A gap in the research supports the need to apply ACC within the standard setting of a singing lesson (Mahony et al., 2022) or with adolescent singers. Applying the Lundy model will ensure ethical support for participants, considering their opinions to form a course suitable for adolescents and ACC methods will promote the process for personal growth in their musicianship. Contributing significantly to growing research, aiming to assist other singing teachers interested in incorporating ACC methods into their singing lessons.

Acceptance and Commitment Coaching Strategies

A broad understanding of the different ACC exercises and strategies is essential for the progression of this study, along with the knowledge of when and where to apply them in a lesson.

Therefore, an analysis of specific exercises organised under the six ACT processes has been applied.

Attention to the present moment

Mindfulness brings conscious awareness to the present moment and supports the

development of acceptance and cognitive defusion (Bishop et al., 2004; Webb, 2023).

A popular mindfulness exercise is 'Leaves on a Stream', which is inclusive of multiple ACC processes and is particularly useful for the defusion of unwanted thoughts. This is achieved through the visualisation of placing unwanted thoughts on leaves and watching them go by, supporting acceptance that thoughts do not go away but we are able to create space for them (Harris, 2019; Turrell & Bell, 2016). Turrell & Bell (2016) Adapted the Leaves on the Stream exercise for adolescents and highlights the importance for regular practice as clients initially find their minds 'too busy' to focus on the visualisation of the stream.

Acceptance

Acceptance is about being open to experiences and creating space for uncomfortable feelings, sensations, urges, and emotions (Rolffs et al., 2018; Lau et al., 2006) and is usually applied when someone experiences experiential avoidance, keeping them from experiencing a rich and meaningful life (Hayes et al., 1999, 2011; Harris, 2019).

Experiential exercises such as the Tug-of-War with the anxiety monster encourage openness to acceptance (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005), which incorporates the physical Action of 'dropping the rope' as a representation of dropping the 'struggle' with anxiety and demonstrates actions of willingness and freedom to engage in meaningful Action in the presence of anxiety (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005; Juncos & De Pavia e Pona, 2023).

Defusion

Hill and Oliver (2019) described defusion as 'an alternative way to evaluate' thoughts on productive workability to take action and consider it a critical measure within ACT (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2012).

'Labelling thoughts' (Juncos & De Pavia e Pona, 2022) is a defusion technique that enables students to address their thoughts by labelling them out loud, allowing for space to unhook from them.

Modelling behaviour as a teacher encourages the student to apply the technique

until it becomes a natural way of communicating openly for the student and teacher and enables increasing support for the student in lessons. (Juncos & De Pavia e Pona, 2022; Turrell & Bell, 2016).

Self-as-context

Self-as-context (SAC) involves developing the observing self, bringing awareness to thoughts, feelings, and senses, promoting an internal safe space for the participants leading to increased self-awareness and emotional regulation (Biglan et al., 2008). The development of the observing self is a complex process within ACT, but it is a crucial step towards psychological flexibility and successful development within other areas of ACT (Harris, 2019; Biglan et al., 2008; Godbee & Kangas, 2020). Harris (2019) provides a five-step formula for mindfulness exercises incorporating ACT methods, including defusion, acceptance, and being present in the moment. This exercise will suit lessons where students show signs of fusion with self-stories. Practicing observing oneself requires paying attention to internal experiences, coaches can use prompts such as "There is a part of you that has watched you struggle with [this internal experience] in the past and has remained unchanged by it" (Godbee & Kangas, 2020, p.918). Applying prompting language and visual applications is an engaging way to introduce self-as-context to students (Juncos & De Pavia e Pona, 2022; Harris, 2019; Godbee & Kangas, 2020).

Committed Action

Committed Action involves putting values into practice through actions that work towards the direction of our values (Harris, 2019). ACT processes like goal setting, exposure, behavioural activation, and skills training can serve valued living rather than experiential avoidance (Harris, 2019). One exercise that applies structure to Committed Action is LLAMA, which stands for labelling, letting go, allowing, mindfulness, and approaching what matters (Turrell & Bell, 2016) and is a step-by-step guide of the ACC methods to work towards what matters.

Values

Hayes and Ciarrochi (2015) and Pass et al. (2015) promote values as the foundation

for behavioural interventions.

Turrell and Bell (2016) promote identifying potential values in early discussions with participants to develop a better understanding of the students' views and inform future discussions.

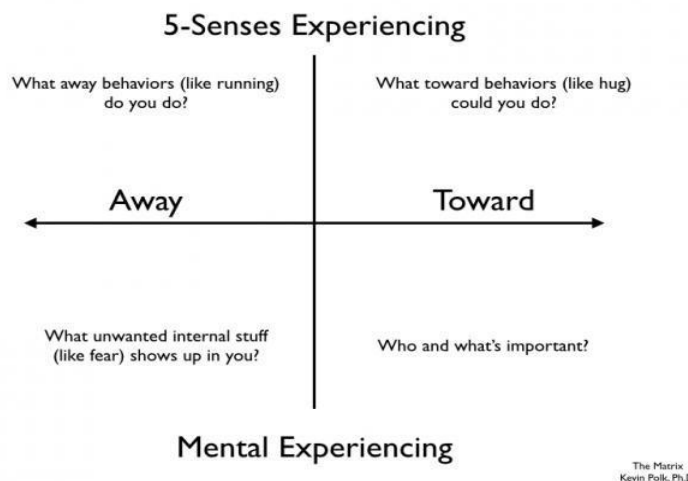


Figure 3. The Matrix (Polk & Schoendorff, 2014)

The Matrix provides a functional analysis of behaviour in the context of values, allowing both the student and coach to understand the student's relationship between values and behaviours (Turrell & Bell, 2016; Polk & Schoendorff, 2014; Hill & Oliver, 2019). The left side of the Matrix represents away moves, and the right side- towards moves, while the bottom half of the Matrix represents internal events experienced and the top half focuses on the five senses of experiencing (Turrell & Bell, 2016; Polk & Schoendorff, 2014; Hill & Oliver, 2019).

Conclusion

ACC shows promise in helping young musicians with MPA in the singing studio (Juncos et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2020; Mahony et al., 2022). Encouraging steps towards personal values and acceptance of uncomfortable thoughts and emotions (McLoughlin & Roche, 2023).

Current research supports ACC and ACT methods in treating adolescents, showing

success within a variety of sectors (Petersen et al., 2022; Fang & Ding, 2020a; Gillard et al., 2018; Swain et al., 2015). ACT and ACC has also been successful in treating MPA among adult musicians (Clark et al., 2020; Juncos et al., 2017; Mahony et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2020; Swain & Bodkin – Allen, 2017) supporting the potential success for its applicability in adolescent singers.

The gap in the research supporting adolescents with MPA and the demands on teachers knowledge in this area (Tardif et al., 2024; Ryan, 2003; Osborne and Kenny, 2008) provides evidence for the need of a practical model to support MPA in adolescents.

The exercises provided by Juncos & De Pavia e Pona (2022) show promise for being adapted for a teenage audience, supported by the exercises provided by Turrell & Bell (2016), who have already sourced practical exercises for teens suitable for a music room environment.

Furthermore, ACC has been successfully applied by non-clinicians within a teaching or coaching setting, proving its value for music teachers and singing coaches (Mahony et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2020).

Overall, the positive outcome of ACC in the singing studio shows the potential to be beneficial in helping adolescents with MPA and increase their musical performance.

Research Methodology

Ontology and Epistemology

This study aims to recognise student reflections whilst considering the researcher's influence and interpretation of data (Byrne, 2022); exploring the live experiences of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Reflexivity of data is vital to ensure assumptions and biases are addressed (Byrne, 2022). As a teacher in a creative educational setting, it is crucial to be open and flexible considering individual background, diversity and ability, along with policy, power, and identity (Cummins, 1994).

To suit the design of this study, a pragmatic approach will be applied, in line with a mixed-methods research design (Feilzer, 2010).

Hermeneutic phenomenology will be used as a systematic approach to investigate the human experiences of participants (Crowther et al., 2017) through analysing data

in a back-and-forth manner, known as the hermeneutic circle (Laverty, 2003). This approach is evident in the proposed course design (See Appendix. I), in ACT coaching moving between principles, inflexibility points and lived experiences and tying the pre-mid and post-data with current literature in this study.

Participants

Participants were a purposive sample (n=3) of adolescents attending a musical theatre class at a dance school where the researcher works as a free-lance singing teacher. Participants had to respond to a permission letter (See Appendix B), which outlined the structure and aims of the study, along with terms and conditions, safeguarding and ethical guidelines and data protection and GDPR. Along with outlining that participation is entirely voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw or refuse to participate at any stage of the research process.

It was a requirement that documents were returned and dated with signatures from the parents/ guardians of the participants and the participants themselves.

The Music performance anxiety Inventory for Adolescents (MPAI-A)(Appendix. C) (Osborne & Kenny, 2005) was included in the pack to be completed for selection of participants to measure their levels of MPA.

The selection process for participants was determined on their MPAI- A scores, individual experiences and backgrounds, age and sex of participants and the relationship between student and teacher.

ACT Coaching training and supervision

ACT training and supervision received by Dr David Juncos provided knowledge, direction and structure to the creation and delivery of this course.

Dr David Juncos is a trained clinical psychologist who has contributed significantly to the existing research on ACT for MPA (Juncos and Markman, 2016; Juncos et al., 2017, 2022; Juncos and de Paiva e Pona, 2018, 2022; Shaw, et al., 2020; Mahony, et al., 2022).

Before receiving supervision from Dr Juncos, a close inspection of his work was inspected, this consisted of pre-recorded ACT for MPA courses, existing studies and

the book ACT for Musicians (Juncos & De Pavia e Pona, 2022). Audiobooks such as 'A liberated mind' (Hayes, 2019) and '*Get out of your mind and into your life: The new Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*' (Hayes & Smith, 2005) were observed', although neither book are specific to musicians, they provided a wider perspective of ACT from the finder of ACT, Steven Hayes.

Three hours of guided supervision from Dr Juncos took place pre-study to ensure the researcher had adequate knowledge of the exercises and methods, while supervision at the mid-point supported the observation of participant progression and post-study monitored the completed statistical results from participants, where Dr Juncos supported with the understanding of quantitative analysis.

ACT Coaching and Vocal lesson programme delivery

The programme was conducted in person and online between 5th January 2024 and 1st March 2024, which were the dates of the pre-and post-coaching in-person performances, in front of a small audience of participant family members in the dance studio.

Participants received eight weeks of one-hour lessons split between ACT coaching and singing lessons. The lesson structure comprised of a 30/30-minute split, the first 30 minutes applied ACT coaching methods, and the last 30 minutes of the session included a vocal lesson featuring vocal warm-ups, techniques and performance guidance working towards the post-coaching performance.

Alternative times were arranged for in-person lessons or conducted over Zoom when the participants or the location was unavailable.

The present coaching intervention draws upon materials from three books: Acceptance and Commitment Coaching, by Hill and Oliver (2019), who provided a structured foundation for the course context; Acceptance and Commitment Training

for Musicians by Juncos and de Paiva e Pona (2022), which provided detailed descriptions of exercises, metaphors, and Hexaflex processes that suitable for the music room and ACT for Adolescents by Bell and Turrell (2016) bridged the gap with exercises suitable for adolescents.

Self-assessment Measures

Music Performance Anxiety Inventory for Adolescents (MPAI-A)

The MPAI-A questionnaire is a 15-item measure designed to evaluate the somatic, cognitive, and behavioural responses of MPA in adolescents (Osborne & Kenny, 2005). Respondents rate each item on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from "0 - Not at all" to "6 - All of the time", the total score ranges from 0 to 90 (See appendix C).

Avoidance and Fusion Questionnaire for Youth (AFQ-Y)

The AFQ-Y (Greco et al., 2008) is a 17-item self-report questionnaire that measures psychological inflexibility in children and adolescents (Bachmann et al., 2021). Each statement is rated on a five-point Likert scale with where on the scale an individual would believe is true. The scores on the scale can range between 0 to 68, with higher scores reflecting greater psychological inflexibility (Bachmann et al., 2021). (See appendix D).

The Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM)

CAMM (Greco et al., 2011) is a self-report questionnaire that assesses children and adolescents' ability to observe, accept, and act with mindful awareness. participants rate ten statements on a 5-point Likert scale (Bachmann et al., 2021). Participants' ratings on each item are reverse-scored and summed to obtain a total score, ranging

from 0 to 40. A higher total score indicates a greater level of mindfulness (Greco et al., 2011) (See appendix E).

Childhood Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (CPFQ)

The Childhood Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (CPFQ) (Dixon & Paliliunas, 2018) is a 24-item self-report questionnaire that uses age-appropriate language for children and is designed to assess psychological flexibility (Bachmann et al., 2021). Participants rate each statement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never (0) to always (4). Each item describes a behaviour associated with one of the six psychological flexibility processes, with each process having four corresponding questions, two of which are reverse scored (Bachmann et al., 2021). The combined scores from the six core processes provide the total score for psychological flexibility (Dixon & Paliliunas, 2018) (See Appendix F).

Live performance and Observation process

Both performances were presented in person in front of a small audience consisting of participant's family members, their dance teacher, and myself. For the pre-coaching performance, participants chose a song they believed represented their current singing ability to support them with confidence during the performance (Osborne et al., 2007).

For the post-coaching performance, the participants had to select a different song that shared similar themes to the first song to create an authentic learning experience for the participant. The song was worked through in the 8-week session alongside the ACC content.

All performances were video recorded and randomised for observation by three experienced judges. All judges are qualified singing teachers with a background working with children and adolescent voices and have experience in assessing vocal and performance abilities within various educational settings, including accredited musical theatre colleges. The judges received a brief description of the purpose of the study; however, performances were ordered randomly for a fair assessment. The

judges applied their expertise to observe the performances measuring the participant's performance quality of each video.

Following suit from Mahoney et al's (2022) study, marking was fair based on circumstances out of the participant's control, judges were asked not to consider the following:

- Appearance/outfit
- Lighting
- Camera angle
- Quality of video or sound
- Location of performance

The scoring measures were based on the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) singing exam marking scheme (**Appendix H**), which was used to measure performance accurately (Mahoney et al., 2022) Each section presented a rating out of 10 (1 = poor, 10 = excellent), and focused on the following:

1. Pitch and Intonation
2. Tempo and Rhythm
3. Vocal Tone and Projection
4. Musicality (Dynamics, Vocal Expression)
5. Character and Storytelling
6. Confidence and Stage Presence

Ethical Considerations

Participant and parental approval was essential before conducting research (Burke et al., 2005; Unguru et al., 2011; Crane & Broome, 2017), to ensure established mutual respect between all parties and to provide documented evidence of mutual understanding of the research risks (Woodgate & Edwards, 2010; Crane & Broome, 2017). The consent form (See appendix B) contained information about the study, the expectations and commitment requirements from participants, and outlined their right to withdraw at any stage of the study.

To ensure Data protection participant identities were made anonymous and all data handled have been abided by GDPR laws through storing all files in a password-protected folder on a personal laptop.

Due to the nature of this study, there is a potential risk of heightened emotional response when dealing with MPA, information for British Association of Performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM) was provided to support participants if needed. The researcher ensured to keep all topics related to the research to reduce risk of crossing ethical boundaries and participants were regularly reminded that they or their parents email the researcher or the dance school with any concerns throughout the process.

The Ladder of Children's Participation

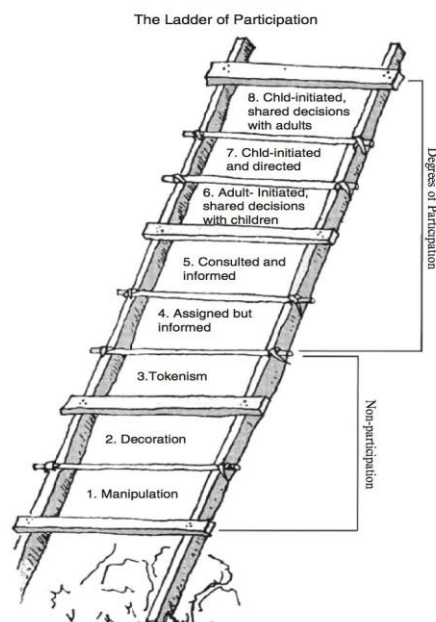


Figure 4. illustration of the Ladder of Children's Participation from Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship (Hart,1992).

The Ladder of Children's Participation (figure 4) provided a framework to help identify levels of decision-making and participation from the participants. Level 5 – consulted and informed (Hart, 1992) was included in supporting adolescent participation. Reflexivity of the researcher was also applied to bring awareness to of

the study and any influences that could occur during the research process (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017).

Insider – research

As a singing teacher working closely with participants outside of research, it is important to consider power dynamics, potential bias and ethical considerations. To support all three areas, this study will be heavily guided by student involvement (Rudduck, 2007). To establish meaningful student involvement and reduce bias or influence, the participants created a group chat via WhatsApp where they could openly discuss their experiences and share ideas in private, to create a safe space for expression and increase levels of peer support. While the researcher enabled opportunities for authentic learning and catered the course content for the participants' needs (Downes, J. M. et al. 2015; Smyth 2007).

Advantages of being an insider are the already established relationships with participants where trust is formed, making room for honest information sharing and gives the researcher a "head start in knowing about the topic and understanding nuanced reactions of participants" (Berger, 2015, p. 223). Although there was a risk of participants desire to "do well", regular reminders to provide authentic honest opinions was encouraged to support the validity of this study.

Findings and discussion

Quantitative Analysis

The Reliable Change Index (RCI) (Jacobson and Truax, 1991) is a statistic used to determine change in participant scores, whether they are statistically significant to the questionnaire's reliability. Commonly applied within small-sample studies to decrease the risk of manipulation (Zahra and Hedge, 2010).

MPAI-A (Osborne and Kenny, 2005), CAMM (Greco et al., 2011), and AFQ-Y (Greco

et al., 2008) questionnaires were analysed using this measure, by dividing the change in scores by the standard error. A number greater than 1.96 or less than -1.96 represents a reliable change (Jacobson and Truax, 1991).

Due to limited research on the CPFQ questionnaire, no alpha is provided to support the data, therefore, Kazdin's (2011) departure from dysfunction criteria was used to measure the change of the standard deviation, using the pre-mid and post-treatment scores, to measure a positive change (Jacobson and Truax, 1991), this measure was also represented on the MPAI-A, CAMM, and AFQ-Y graphs.

A T-test is used to measure the statistical significance between the pre-and post-scores of individual participants' singing performance analysis (Pallant, 2010), rated by three professional singing teachers specialising in teaching adolescents and children. The T-test measures a representation of change and if it is statistically significant; this is achieved when the probability is less than 5% ($p < 0.05$).

Quantitative findings

Participant background

Student 1 (M) = 15

Student 2 (F) = 15

Student 3 (F) = 18

Lesson settings and duration		
Student 1 = group lessons for 3 years	Student 2 = Group lessons for 3 years	Student 3* = Group and private singing lessons for 3 years

Table 1. Outline of student singing background with researcher.

Participant background is outlined (See Table 1), showing the student's individual experience with singing and the learning environment AND individual duration of time attending musical theatre class with researcher. All students have been taught by the researcher for 3 years before the study. Student 3 also attended private singing with the researcher, which continued throughout the course of the study but was kept separate by working on preparing for auditions with different materials. However, with the nature of the work there was some natural cross overs, for example performer values and committed action were prominent features that motivated student 3 who had high ego investments of auditions. However, discussions over audition experiences were shared within the study to ensure experiences of student 3 are represented clearly.

MPAI – A Results

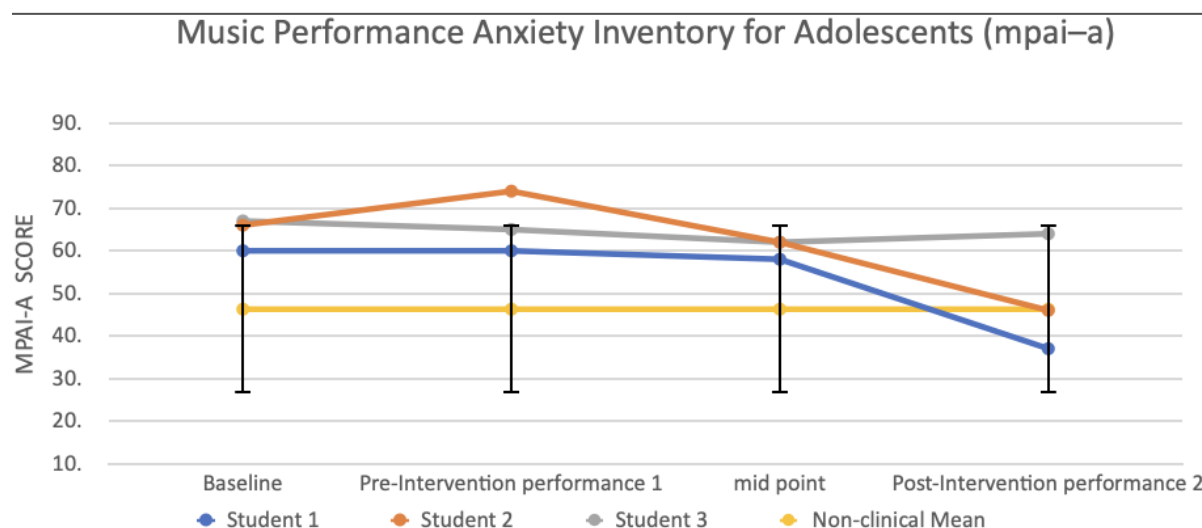


Figure 5. Changes in Music performance anxiety inventory for Adolescents (MPAI- A) (Osborne & Kenny, 2005).

MPAI -A	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
Reliable Change (RCI)	-2.73*	-2.38*	-0.36
*Reliable change, according to Jacobson and Truax (1991).			

Table 2. Analysis of findings between pre- and post-coaching scores on the MPAI-A data.

Representing high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .91 (Cronbach, 1951), The MPAI-A (Osborne & Kenny, 2005) Results indicated improvement in MPA symptoms from all three students (**Figure 5**)—however, student 3 shows marginal improvements by post-study. The non-clinical mean is 46.27, and the standard deviation is 19.83, taken from a sample of 84 young band musicians from the United States, ages 11 to 13 years (Osborne and Kenny, 2005).

The Baseline scores for all students were above the non-clinical mean (64.3), Students 1 (M=37) and 2 (M=46) consistently improve by session 8, the mean for the final score was 49, a difference of -15.3. A reliable change was seen in students 1 and 2. However, there was no reliable change in student 3.

CAMM Results

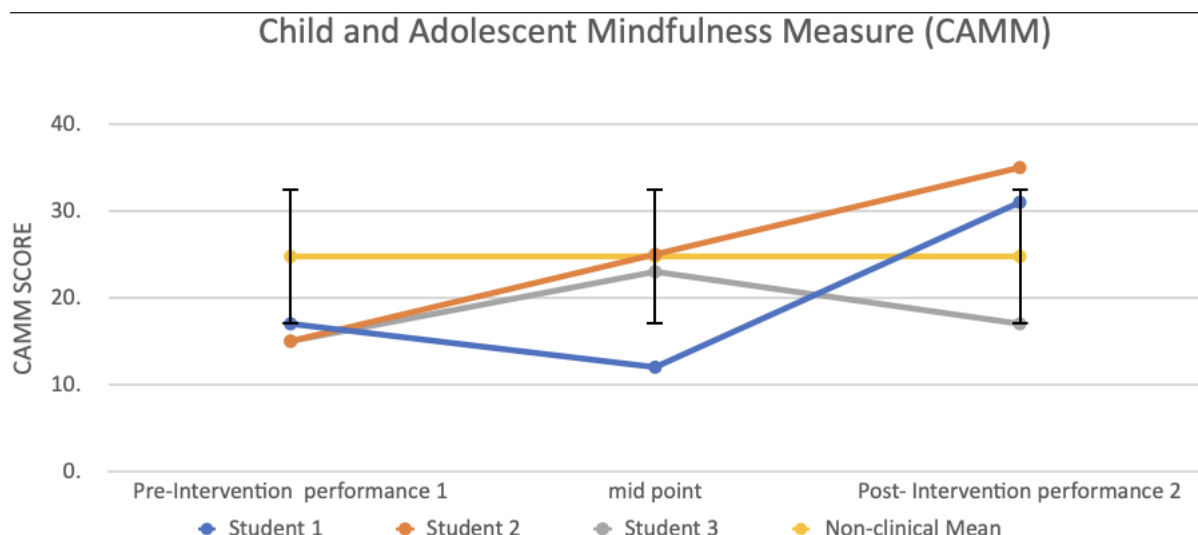


Figure 6. Changes in Child and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM) (Greco et al., 2011).

CAMM	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
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Reliable Change (RCI)	-2.8*	-4.0*	-0.40
*Reliable change, according to Jacobson and Truax (1991).			

Table 3. Analysis of findings between pre- and post-coaching scores on the CAMM data.

The CAMM measure has a Cronbach's alpha of .80 (Greco et al., 2011). The non-clinical mean used here is 24.76, and the standard deviation is 7.90, taken from a sample of 24 adolescents aged between 11 and 13 years with varied backgrounds and needs (Bachmann et al., 2021). The CAMM results show improvement in mindfulness from all three students (Figure 6)—however, student 3 only marginally improved by the end of the 8-week program. The Baseline scores for all three students were below the mean, with students 1 and 2 making consistent improvements by session 8. A reliable change was seen in students 1 and 2 but was not in 3.

AFQ-Y Results

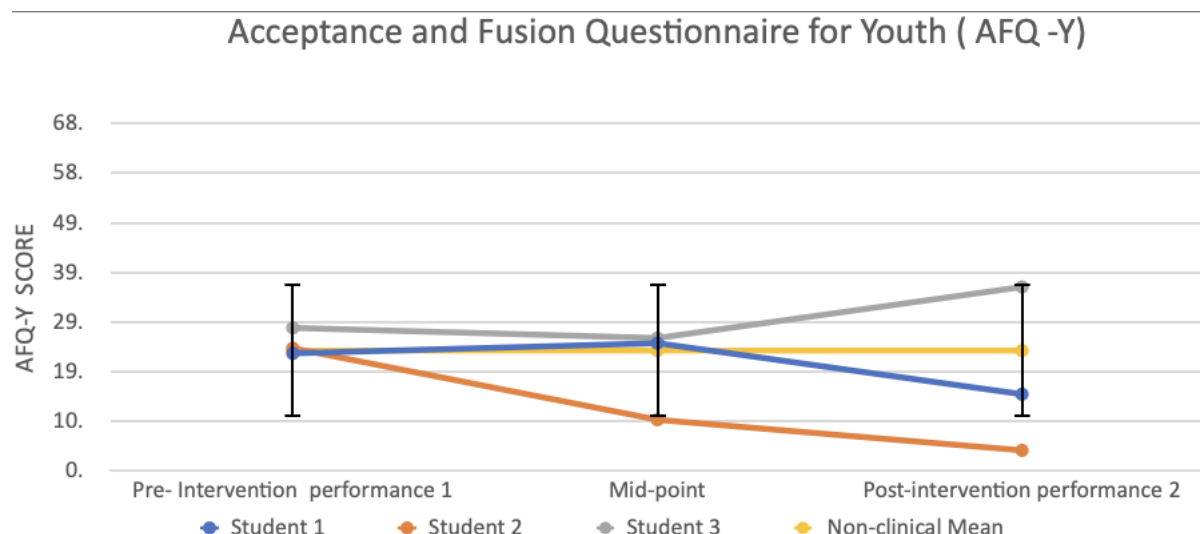


Figure 7. Changes in Acceptance and Fusion Questionnaire for Youth (AFQ-Y) (Greco et al., 2008).

AFQ-Y	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
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Reliable Change (RCI)	-1.38	-3.45*	1.38
*Reliable change, according to Jacobson and Truax (1991).			

Table 4. Analysis of findings between pre- and post-coaching scores on the AFQ-Y data.

The AFQ-Y shows strong internal reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .90 (Greco et al., 2008). The mean is 23.55, and the standard deviation is 14.99, taken from a sample of 24 adolescents aged between 11 and 13 years with varied backgrounds and needs (Bachmann et al., 2021).

Improved results were seen in acceptance and fusion from students 1 and 2. However, student 3, showed increased fusion by the end of the 8-week program. The Baseline scores for students 1 and 2 were below the mean, making consistent improvements by post-study. A reliable change was seen in student 2, but not in 1 and 3.

CPFQ Results

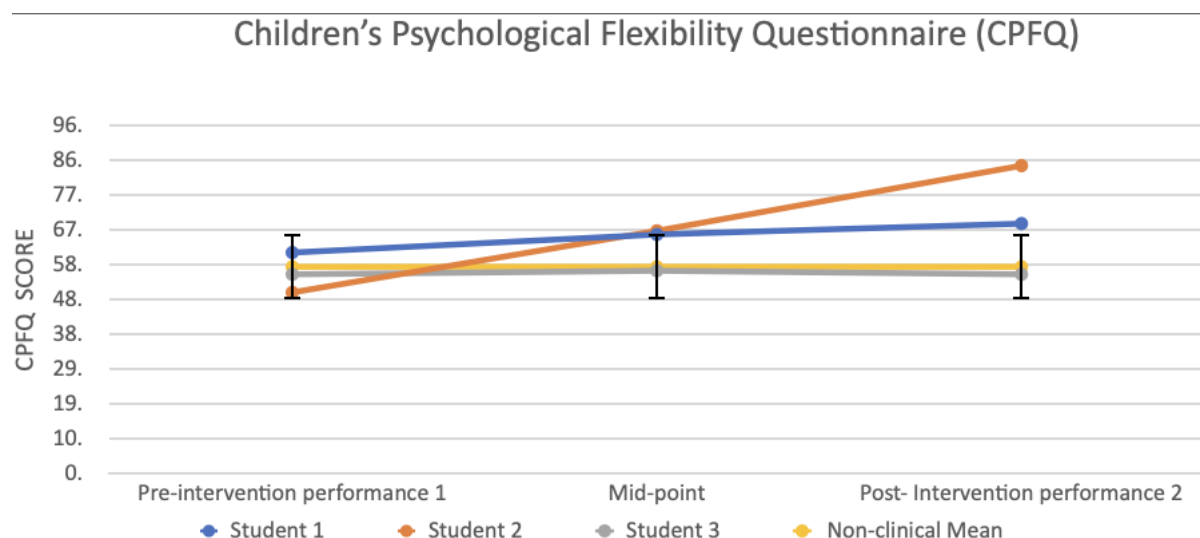


Figure 8. Changes in Children's Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire (CPFQ) (Dixon & Paliliunas, 2018)

According to Backmann et al. (2021), the non-clinical mean used in the present study was 57.07, with a standard deviation of 9.16, based on a sample of 24 adolescents aged 11 to 13 years with varied backgrounds and needs.

Results indicate improved psychological flexibility for students 1 and 2 (see Figure 1). However, student 3 had remained the same by the end of the 8-week program. The baseline scores for students 1 and 2 were above the non-clinical mean, with consistent improvements observed by session 8.

Quantitative discussion

Results presented in this study reflect previous studies with results showing reduced MPA levels and improvements in psychological flexibility, defusion, acceptance and mindfulness (Juncos et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2020; Clarke et al., 2020; Mahony et al., 2022) in students 1 & 2 but not in 3.

Kenny (2011) revealed that levels of MPA are dependent on years of tuition, practice, and musical achievement. Student 2 demonstrated a reliable change in all measures by post-study, Student 1 showed a reliable change in MPA and mindfulness and improved results in AFQ-Y and CPFQ. However, Student 3 showed increased levels of fusion post-study, minimal improvements in MPA and mindfulness and stayed the same in psychological flexibility.

Watson and Howell (2023) Suggest that individual differences can reflect through “psychological inflexibility, high materialism, and attachment, and between

psychological flexibility, low materialism, and non-attachment” (Watson & Howell 2023, p.1), or the individual differences of MPA, which corresponds with individual differences in perfectionism, particularly maladaptive perfectionism (Butković., Vukojević & Carević, 2022).

James & Shipley (2022) found that the process of auditions causes high MPA in performers as the judgement of others influences their progression within the industry. Considering the individual circumstances of Student 3, it is possible that the high investment towards progressing into the next stages of their musical theatre journey was reflected in their questionnaire results, compared to student 1 & 2 who have low levels of ego investment towards singing, mainly aiming to work towards confidence with their voice and expressed no attachment for pursuing a career in musical theatre.

The MPAl-A scores post-intervention between Student 1 (male) and Student 2 and 3 (female) support other studies that show females are more likely to experience higher MPA levels compared to males (Ryan, 2003; Osborne & Kenny, 2008; Dempsey & Comeau, 2019; González et al., 2018; Papageorgi, 2020; Ryan, 2004; Urruzola & Bernaras, 2020). However, student 1 and 2 both see a reliable change in MPA from pre-post study.

Results reflect the different backgrounds of the three students, supporting the hypothesis that effectiveness is dependent on individual experiences (Papageorgi, 2022).

Further research exploring the individual differences and long-term effects of ACC for MPA would allow a better understanding of how ACC is effective in the everyday use of the studio as well as expanding the knowledge to support adolescents with individual needs of MPA further.

Judges' performance evaluation

Statistical Analysis of Judges Scores for student 1

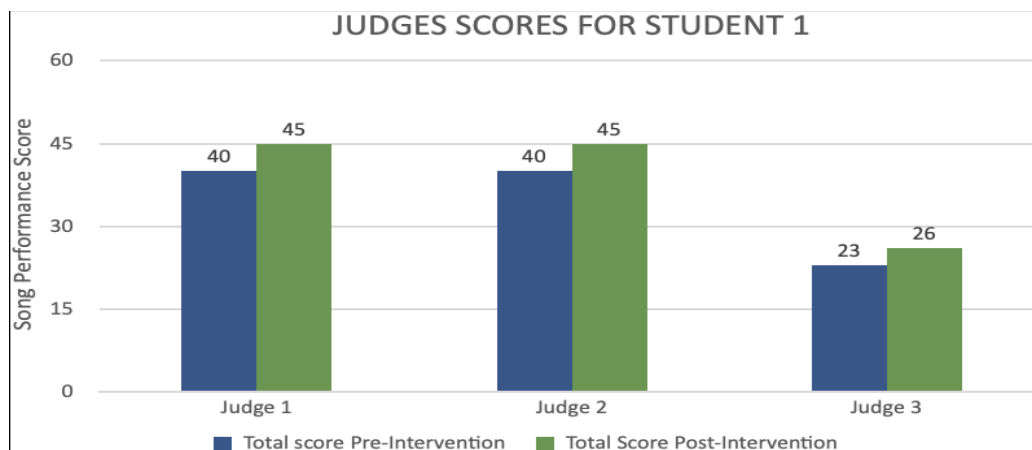


Figure 9. Student 1 Singing Performance Total Scores.

Student 1	ABRSM Scores (0 – 10)					
	Judge 1		Judge 2		Judge 3	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
Pitch and Intonation	6	7	5	6	5	4
Tempo and Rhythm	8	8	7	7	6	6
Vocal tone and Projection	7	7	7	8	3	4
Musicality (Dynamics and Vocal Expression)	7	8	8	8	3	4
Character and Storytelling	7	8	8	8	2	5

Confidence and Stage Presence	5	7	5	8	4	5
TOTAL	40	45	40	45	23	28
MEAN	6.6	7.5	6.6	7.5	3.8	4.6

Table 5. Analysis of findings between pre- and post-coaching judge scores for Student 1.

T-test results revealed that the value of t is 3.38 and the value of p is .00174, supporting a significant change in student 1's performance between pre- and post-performance at $p < .05$.

Statistical Analysis of Judges Scores for Student 2

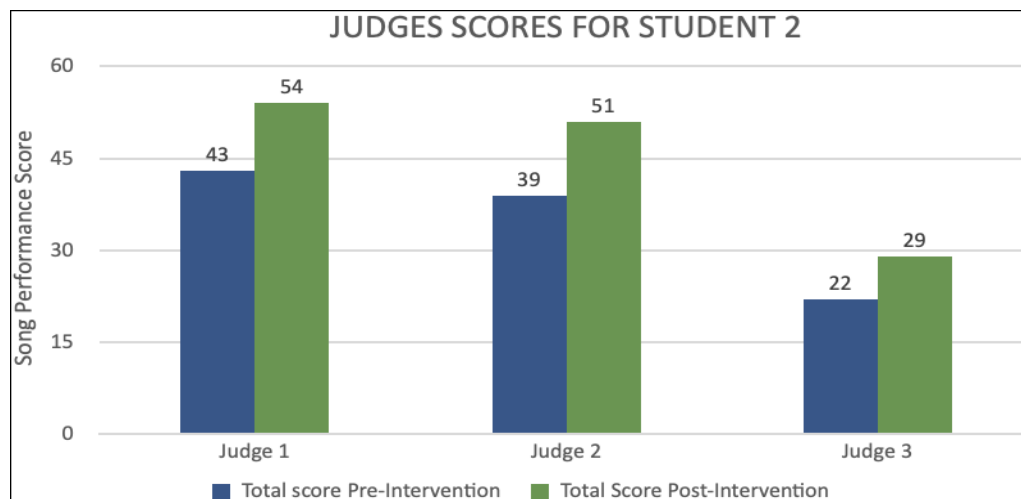


Figure 10. Student 2 Singing Performance Total Scores.

Student 2	ABRSM Scores (0 – 10)					
	Judge 1		Judge 2		Judge 3	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
Pitch and Intonation	8	9	7	8	4	4
Tempo and Rhythm	7	9	8	8	3	5
Vocal tone and Projection	8	9	7	8	6	5
Musicality (Dynamics and	7	8	7	9	4	4

Vocal Expression)						
Character and Storytelling	6	9	6	9	2	6
Confidence and Stage Presence	7	9	4	9	3	5
TOTAL	43	54	39	51	22	29
MEAN	7.16	8.8	6.5	8.5	3.6	4.8

Table 6. Analysis of findings between pre- and post-coaching judge scores for Student 2.

T-test scores revealed that the value of t is 4.55 and the value of p is .00014, supporting a significant change in student 2's performance between pre- and post-performance at $p < .05$.

Statistical Analysis of Judges Scores for student 3

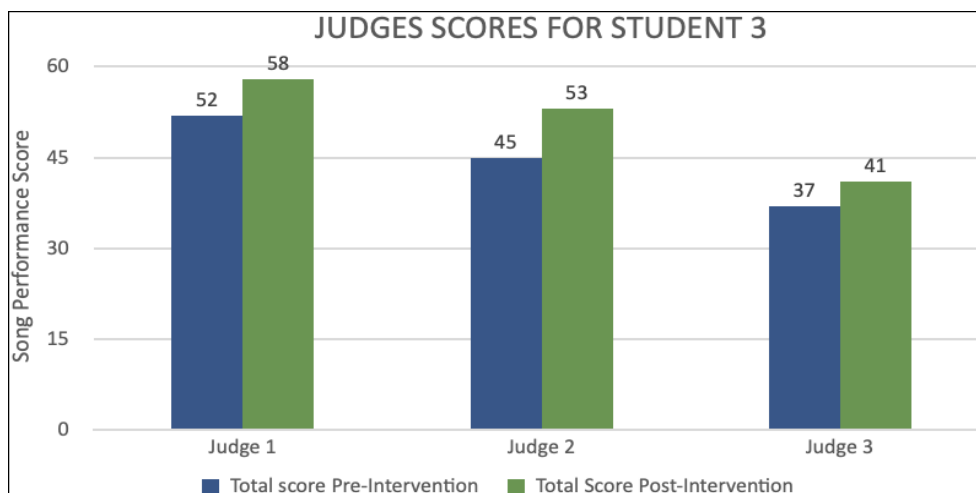


Figure 11. Student 3 Singing Performance Total Scores.

Student 3	ABRSM Scores (0 – 10)					
	Judge 1		Judge 2		Judge 3	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
Pitch and Intonation	8	9	8	9	6	6

Tempo and Rhythm	9	10	8	9	6	7
Vocal tone and Projection	8	10	8	9	6	7
Musicality (Dynamics and Vocal Expression)	9	9	8	9	7	7
Character and Storytelling	10	10	6	9	6	7
Confidence and Stage Presence	8	10	7	8	6	7
TOTAL	52	58	45	53	37	41
MEAN	8.6	9.6	7.5	8.8	6.16	6.8

Table 7. Analysis of findings between pre- and post-coaching judge scores for Student 3.

T-test scores revealed that the value of t is 5.53 and the value of p is .00002, supporting a significant change in student 3's performance between pre- and post-performance at $p < .05$.

Discussion on judge observation

Pre- and post- coaching scores were analysed using performance quality scores adapted from the ABRSM marking criteria (Appendix. H).

A one-tailed t-test was used to determine the statistical significance of each participant's pre- and post-scores. Results show that there was a significant change between pre- and post-intervention performances in all students.

Combined scores from three judges and three students found the value of $t = 7.19$ and the value of $p = 0.0001$, showing a significant result supporting the hypothesis of improved performance between pre- post-performance.

The sections that considered vocal technique varied significantly in the judges' assessments, particularly in the category of pitch and intonation. Judges 1 and 2 scores improved for all students; Judge 3 scored student 1 lower post-intervention,

and students 2 and 3 the same pre-post.

Student 1's scores remained the same for tempo and rhythm from all judges. Student 2 received improved results from judges 1 and 3 and no change from judge 2, and all judges reported improvements in student 3.

Regarding vocal tone and projection, judges 2 and 3 saw improvements in Student 1; However, judge 1 reported no change. Judges 1 and 2 see improvements in Student 2, whilst Judge 3 reported a reduction in scores post-intervention, and all judges reported improvements in Student 3.

Judges 1 and 3 saw improvements in Student 1 for musicality, whilst Judge 2 reported no change. Judges 1 and 2 reported improvements in Student 2, whilst Judge 3 reported no change, and Judge 2 reported improvements in Student 3, whilst Judges 1 and 3 reported no changes.

James, & Shipley (2022) highlights that lack of preparation can cause an increase in anxiety; it must be considered that improved results could be due to performance preparation alone, Student 2 and 3 both addressed that the second performance was easier due to a better understanding of what to expect. With the improved questionnaire results from students 1 and 2 showing increased psychological flexibility and reduced MPA supports the application of an 8-week course combining singing with ACC methods.

However, the improved performance scores and minimal reduction of MPA in student 3 indicates that it was performance preparation alone that improved performance results, although student 3 demonstrated increased willingness to explore new areas of performance with ACC methods in lessons, stating that with more practice of ACC they could see the benefits (Harris, 2019).

Czajkowski & Greasley (2015) found that mindfulness can improve performance quality in singers after 8 weeks. Participants collectively reported a positive response in mindfulness, applying exercises such as dropping the anchor, which had been reported to be easy to implement into their daily lives.

Qualitative analysis

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is a qualitative coding process that is used to uncover themes within the data. Qualitative data was collected through pre- and post-study interviews (Appendix J & K), post-study written reflections from participants (Appendix L) and transcriptions of coaching sessions (Appendix J). Becoming familiar with findings through the transcription process is essential for analysis of the study and requires carefully re-reading the transcripts, as content formed from human experience is often complex and multifaceted (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

Initially, data was arranged into smaller components maintaining its core meaning (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Verbatim participant data was organised by highlighting meaningful quotes to ensure accurate representation and a systematic and rigorous process. Awareness of personal biases during the analysis process was considered (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017); as a result "deviant or contrary cases" (Burnard et al., 2008, p. 431) remained within the context of the transcripts. Considering the study's goals, several key themes were selected based on a deductive approach (Pearse, 2019).

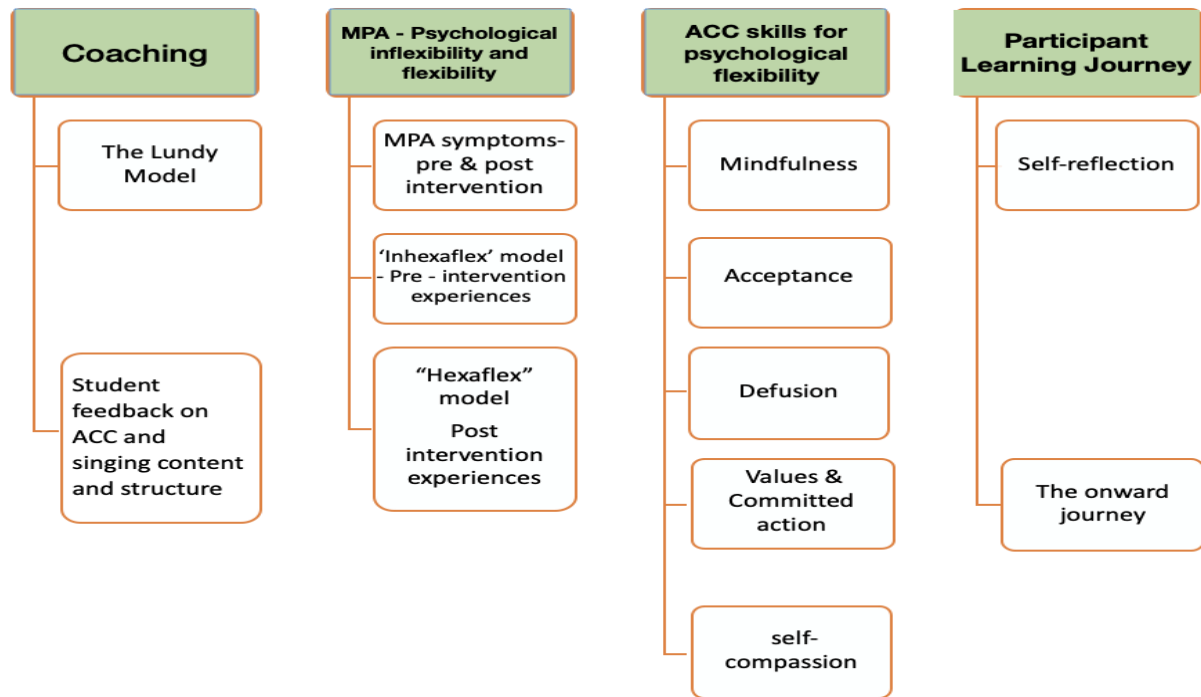


Figure 12. Themes and Categories.

Qualitative data analysis

Coaching

The Lundy Model

Henley and Barton (2022) highlight the need for greater pupil and participant involvement in decision and policymaking at all levels of music education.

Qualitative data was arranged using the Lundy model (2007) to represent participant views to improve and support the course content for future use, contributing to the decision-making process of a suitable course design for adolescents (Kaye-Tzadok & Katz, 2021; Lundy, 2007; Lansdown et al. 2014).

Space

A safe space is essential for creating a comfortable environment for young people to express their authentic views (Dalrymple, 2003; Lundy, 2007; Lansdown, 2009); with opportunities such as one-to-one tuition and interviews to report their views; along with written opportunities, completing a youth-friendly worksheets and feedback forms (Kennan, Brady and Forkan, 2019).

Zoom and in-person lessons

Online music lessons have increased in recent years, with COVID-19 prompting many teachers to move their practice online (Daubney and Fautley, 2020); studies have argued that online music lessons are effective enough to replace in-person lessons (Kruse et al. 2013; Damon and Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018; Pike and Shoemaker 2015), while other studies support a combination of online and in-person lessons for optimal results (Dammers 2009; Dumlavwalla, 2017).

Participants shared their views on the security of the environment when working within the singing/dance studio compared to working on Zoom. All participants expressed a preference for human connection when working with challenging and vulnerable situations, such as singing at home or mindfulness exercises where external noise was distracting. Students 1 and 2 had one online lesson, and student 3 had two lessons during the 8-week course but has had more experience with online singing lessons.

Student 1 shared that they felt more vulnerable singing and practising new exercises online and gave the option "I would probably not choose to do online again" due to a loss in "human contact".

Student 2 expressed the benefits of both teaching formats but also expressed a preference for in-person lessons over online, reporting a struggle to “empathise” with tasks and the potential risks of interrupting the flow of the lessons with “technical issues”. Student 3 expressed that in-person sessions felt “more real. More connected” and found there was “all the distractions” when working online.

It is vital to consider the space for learning to ensure that it is inclusive for facilitating the views of our young students, providing support for their opinions to be heard and responded to appropriately (Kennan, Brady and Forkan, 2019). Due to the small sample size, it would be interesting to delve further into the preferences of online or in-person teaching formats for both singing and ACC. However, findings show that students would choose to work in person over online.

Voice

The next step in the Lundy model (2007) is giving participants the right to share their views (Lundy, 2007). Sharing information with young students has been argued to be an important element of facilitating adolescents to express their views (Lansdown, 2009). Open discussion about MPA is said to normalise performance anxiety (Barros et al., 2024), during the study, students took part in various open discussions about how MPA impacts them personally. Below presents the data collected from students on the topic of MPA and their Pre- and- post intervention performance experience (See Appendix. O).

Pre-and post-intervention – MPA responses

Pre-intervention performance experiences

MPA is a multidimensional construct that includes individual and contextual elements that affect the interpretation and coping mechanisms during the pre-, during, and post-performance (Papageorgi, 2022).

MPA is described to consist of the following three categories: mental, physiological, and behavioural (Burin and Osório, 2017; Nanako Irie et al., 2023).

During the first session, participants revealed a variety of MPA symptoms that they experienced during their first performance, as well as acknowledging any previous experiences of MPA.

Participants reported *mental* responses to their performance including increased nerves just before the performance. Student 1 and 2 expressed worry over their ability to independently perform a full song, due to lack of previous experience and Student 3 experienced increased anxiety around performing to an audience as well as cognitive responses such as "forgetting to breathe" due to their intense focus on "what I was doing" (Steptoe, 2001; Yoshie et al., 2008b, 2009c).

All participants reported the *physiological* symptoms of increased heart rate and perspiration, Student 1 experienced his eye flickering and student 2 and 3 experienced shaking; sweaty palms and tension in the body (Salmon, 1990; Steptoe, 2001; Yoshie et al., 2008a, 2009a,b).

The *behavioural* symptoms, shown through visible changes in participants, Student 1 felt the 'urge to fidget', Student 2 reported rocking their body during the performance and student 3 found they were tapping their fingers on their leg, clenching their hands and at times unable to move them from a position due to shaking, impacting their commitment to act through the song (Steptoe, 2001; Yoshie et al., 2008a, 2009a,b; Burin and Osório, 2017; Kotani and Furuya, 2018).

Post-intervention performance experiences

All Students acknowledged a more relaxed atmosphere during the second performance; students 2 and 3 emphasised that increased preparation over the 8 weeks and familiarity with the process and audience helped reduce their nerves. However, Student 1 emphasised that ACC contributed to reducing nerves and created space for them to feel excited and confident leading up to the performance.



Student 1 reported feeling "more excited to do it than nervous" and described their nerves as a 'natural' response; Student 2 mirrored a similar response leading up to the performance, feeling "quite excited, obviously, some nerves of like, if it's going to be alright or whatever, but yeah, definitely looking forward to it."

Student 3, however, experienced nerves on arrival: "I was actually quite nervous... obviously, we had musical theatre before. Like, that's all I could think about".

A similar pattern has formed on reflection of the second performance, Student 1 felt content with their final performance: "I was happy with it. And then, like, it wasn't on my mind anymore".

Student 2 felt proud and relieved to complete the 8 week Course and their performance: "I enjoyed it as well, so just thinking that that's a really good thing", acknowledging growth in their performance.

However, Student 3 reflected the perfectionistic traits of "striving for flawlessness, accompanied by harsh self-evaluation and oversensitivity to mistakes"(Haraldsen et al.,2020, p.110) in their evaluation of their performance. "I've been doing the song for eight weeks. So, like, it had to go good". On evaluation of performance, Student 3 "thought it was okay. It was just, I didn't, I didn't like the last note that I did" and reported "having a bit of a meltdown, like because I'd forgotten all the lyrics" before the performance "But then when I was actually doing it, it was fine".

MPA Awareness

During the post-intervention interview, students were asked if they would be able to recognise MPA in others and if they would be able to support them.

I would probably be able to recognise, especially with the, um, well, because I was quite anxious at the start as well, like for that best performance, because I can use those past memories when I felt more anxious and remember how I felt and what physical signs that I had as well and see that in other people. And if I did, then, um, it would be like very easy to just send them a couple of those like videos, like just maybe just a couple of links, those videos, like the diffusion videos, um, send them like the links to that, like Yorkshire man who does, um, those videos. And I think I would definitely be in a position to help. - Student 1	I definitely think i could give them at least some tools and stuff that i've learned, I don't know how easy it would be to recognise it, except from like them telling me, oh i'm feeling scared. Like i probably could, obviously, if they're like not talking or talking a lot, i will just like, well, just all signs that i would see in myself that i would then see in others. I think i could recognise that and then give them some techniques on anything that they could point out yeah that they need help. - Student 2	I think I am quite good at spotting when other people are like feeling that kind of way because I'm, I'm very, I would say I'm quite observant. So yeah. Um, and I feel like, because also I get it as well, obviously not everything works for everybody, but, um, for me, I just like to, I like to focus on like the then and there kind of thing. Cause when I'm performing, the one thing that I don't get worried about is the actual performing its the, the bit before and the bit after. So yeah, that would, what, that would be what I would say is focus on what you're doing. -Student 3
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Figure 13. Verbatim participant MPA Awareness (Irie, et al., 2023)

A shared response from students was the ability to recognise MPA through their own experiences to support others who might struggle with MPA. Through open discussion around MPA throughout the 8-week course, all students were able to recognise and understand how MPA impacts them individually, reducing the stigma and normalising their response to performance, providing them with the tools to support themselves and their peers with the struggles of MPA (Sieger, 2017; Papageorgi, et al., 2013).

Pre- and post-intervention – Psychological inflexibility and flexibility

Psychological inflexibility

Over the course of the study, students openly discuss behaviours that contribute to their psychological inflexibility around singing and performance.

Psychological inflexibility contributes to behaviours that can stunt the growth of musicians (Juncos and De Paiva e Pona, 2022).

Participants expressed concerns of fear of making mistakes and being judged, worry about disappointing others and struggling to perform in front of people they knew. Other reports were self-conscious about sounding "silly" and avoiding practising at home; one student questioned if they are "even meant to sing".

Self-doubt, comparison and rankings to others were other barriers reported "I think about hierarchies in lots of things I do", stopping student 2 from auditioning for productions completely.

The intense emotions of self-criticism were experienced before and after performing for student 3, provoking fused thoughts of not being "good enough", which was reflected from all students.

Psychological flexibility

When asked to share their impressions of the overall course during the post-intervention interview, students 1 and 2 reported increased confidence in their performance skills. All participants found that approaching the performance through valued action gave them a direction for their performance, which led to less focus on trying to control MPA (Juncos et al., 2017).

Through applying performance values, students reported being more determined to practice; finding value in expression, character and emotion, which are common values reflected in performers such as musicians and dancers (Haraldsen et al, 2020); other values were "Connecting to my body ... to become the performer, I strive to be" and "to be a versatile and adaptive performer".

Through values practice and committed action, students 1 and 2 successfully

auditioned for solo singing opportunities in class and student 3 pushed through many performance boundaries during the sessions that would have been a struggle before the 8-week sessions.

Students reported regular mindfulness practice outside the sessions to redirect their minds from unhelpful responses; one student reported applying the frame scan during a high-pressure audition, while others utilised the skills in their daily lives before going to sleep to process the day and during test assessments at school. Students all responded positively to bringing their attention to the present moment when working on performance, providing them with the tools to support when they are experiencing worry and negative self-reflections (Crowley et al., 2018; Chen, Rapee, & Abbott, 2013).

All students acknowledged that to practice acceptance they must "make room for nervousness", although "its uncomfortable" they developed a strong awareness that "It's what you can control that you need to put your energy into".

Donald et al. (2017) describes being cognitively "defused," as the ability to form psychological distance between the individual and their thoughts. Discussions with students demonstrated their strong understanding of the purpose of defusion and its role in decreasing emotional discomfort and believability of negative self-referential thoughts (Mandavia et al., 2015; Masuda, Feinstein, Wendell, & Sheehan, 2010; Masuda, Hayes, Sackett, & Twohig, 2004; Masuda, Twohig, et al., 2010).

Students understood that "it's not getting rid of the emotion entirely as well, it's just making it smaller", while others found defusion exercises allowed "another perspective. And takes away the meaning". One student found they have to be "in the right mindset", finding it difficult to apply when they are "more like heightened", however they did find defusion helpful if they made a mistake when they were practicing.

Through SAC, a person observes their internal experiences and learns that "I am not my distress" and "I am more than my experiences" (Hayes, 2016).

Student reflected on Self as context as a way of "taking a step back and just reflecting on who you are instead of always being caught in the moment." Another student found it helped them to identify "what I want for myself, rather than what others want for me or what I would like for someone else". Others found they felt

more in control of their views of themselves "I can control what I think of myself. And I can control like improving and putting effort into improving"

Audience

Lundy's (2007) primary purpose in developing the Lundy model was to reflect that the 'voice is not enough' (Lundy, 2007, p.937) and children and adolescent have the 'right to an audience' (Lundy, 2007, p.937). Therefore, a variety of formal channels of communication were used (Kennan, Brady and Forkan, 2019) to support the individual views of the adolescent perspective, contributing to the growing body of research of ACC in supporting MPA.

Shao, Shao and Kang (2022) argue that peer relationships can affect learning engagement and plays a vital role in encouraging and acquiring knowledge for productivity in learning, supporting adolescents' academic development.

To establish meaningful student involvement and a platform for peer support, the participants were encouraged to create a group chat via WhatsApp where they could openly discuss their experiences, share ideas in private, create a safe space for expression and increase levels of peer support.

The content of the group chat was not shared with the researcher but the researcher encouraged activity and communication within the group chat, for example one of the out of session tasks was to independently research ACC exercises and share something with the group that participants found helpful or interesting, enabling opportunities for independent and authentic learning (Fielding, 2006; Smyth, 2007).

Student teacher relationship

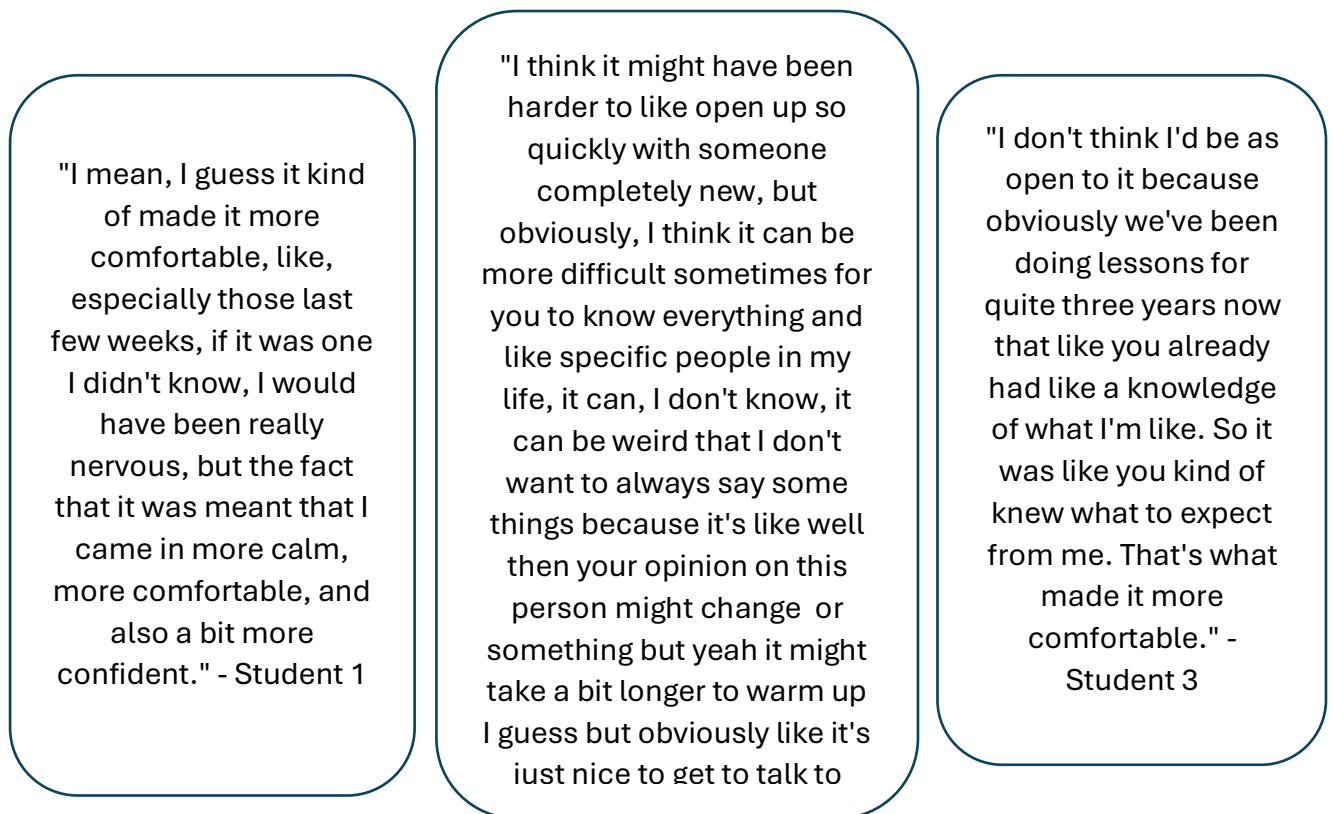


Figure 14. *Qualitative verbatim data on Student teacher relationship and course delivery.*

Students reflect on the delivery of ACC methods with a known teacher, discussions show that all students found comfort in working with a familiar teacher, particularly when participating in potentially sensitive discussions around performing and singing in lessons.

Student one felt "more calm, more comfortable, and also a bit more confident" and felt working with a known teacher "really helped" allow them to "be more open."

Student 2 was reassured due to already understanding "how you might react to certain things" and emphasised appreciation for one-to-one time to "talk about things that you might not always get to go into so much detail in a group lesson."

Student 3 acknowledges that working for three years with a familiar teacher is what made the course "more comfortable" due to the teacher's prior knowledge of the student's boundaries.

Other elements raised by student 1 was the positive element of a known teacher knowing their vocal range: "already know my voice", which could have been a potential obstacle for them in the first few weeks of the course and building the

"confidence to feel comfortable performing around them."

Student 2 expressed that students might have difficulty disclosing information with a known teacher who "knows everything and specific people in my life", which could result in withheld information through the concern of teachers' opinions changing on others: "your opinion on this person might change or something". Which is important consider for teachers working with established students.

Working with a known teacher promoted comfort in the students. However, Observing the students' results with an unknown teacher would have been interesting. You could argue that student 1 may have benefited more from working with someone specialising in Male voice change and would have gained different results (Freer, 2022).

It has been found that struggling student musicians with MPA prefer to seek support from their teachers over psychotherapists (Williamon & Thompson, 2006; Jordan, 2016; Sieger, 2017); reaching out to mental health professionals has also been found to be more troublesome for adolescents (Radez, et al. 2021). The demand calls for teachers to support their struggling students, however, many teachers feel unqualified to do so (Rothi et al., 2008; Shaw et al., 2020).

Transportability reveals whether an "intervention is feasible, flexible, socially valid, and sustainable in real-world settings" (Meiklejohn et al., 2012, p.302).

To date, two previous studies have piloted ACC methods delivered by a singing teacher successfully (Shaw et al., 2020; Mahony, 2022).

This study is the first, to my knowledge, to explore the transportability of ACC incorporated within a singing lesson and with adolescents.

Growing research and results from this study show the potential for ACC to be a credible method of support for our adolescent students.

Incorporating ACC into the everyday singing lesson has the potential to be used as a preventative tool for MPA in young singers, as well as the potential to instil coping

skills to navigate day-to-day life.

Influence

According to Lundy (2007) the process of Influence within the Lundy Model (2007) is in place so that the opinions shared from children are heard and that adults are openly influenced apply the changes suggest from participants (Lundy, 2007).

Course feedback

Students 1 and 2 found establishing values and committed action to be the most helpful part of the course; student 1 found it most beneficial 'in terms of in lesson, but mostly outside as well'. Through prioritising values and committing to their goals of vocal practice, helped student 1 create space for nerves and focus on what matters (Harris, 2019; Juncos and de Paiva de pova, 2022).

Student 2 found values allowed to establish 'what is going to be important to you so that you can take forward steps towards that'.

However, Student 3 found Mindfulness to be the most accessible ACC process as it they could 'immediately understand', and when tasks became mentally challenging for student 3, they applied mindfulness to "stop and re-centre and go again".

Findings support Chełkowska-Zacharewicz and Baran's (2023) argument of instilling values as a foundation for developing psychological support for musicians.

Rodríguez-Jiménez et al. (2023), emphasise that Instilling values can provide support for adolescents and "is part of the process of integration of the individual into society" (Rodríguez-Jiménez et al. 2023, p.285).

Research has found benefits in using mindfulness for MPA (Czajkowski, and Greasley, 2015; Steyn et al., 2016) along with increasing popularity of mindfulness practice in schools (Lo, 2024). Supporting the applicability of the ACC mindfulness practice of being in the present moment for adolescent singing lessons.

García-Gómez et al. (2019) argues that defusion may help students cope with internal and interpersonal situations involving negative emotions such as anxiety.

Student 1 found that defusion exercises were easy to understand and apply after just

a few sessions, and techniques of acknowledging thoughts helped Student 1 remain present with their practice and performance.

Student 2 found defusion less helpful, "disassociating your emotions from who you are", which is argued to be a common experience during defusion tasks (Harris, 2019). Student 2 did recognise the benefits of defusion can "help you really progress through in a situation where you're having a lot of unhelpful thoughts" and suggested "more reminders" for the use of defusion being "for a heightened place". However, Student 3 acknowledged the need for defusion in lessons, sharing that they are often fused with thoughts, emphasising the need to practice ACC skills to make a difference for them (Harris, 2019).

The importance of considering the individual when practising defusion is highlighted in this study, "as it is not the learning situation itself that is crucial, but its meaning for the student" (Alonso-Tapia and Pardo, 2006, p. 296), which is reflected in the individual student experiences of defusion practice.

Lesson duration and structure

Janeiro, *et al.* (2017) argues that time perspective plays a significant role in approaches to learning, Students shared their experiences with the length and duration of the lessons as well as the structure:

Student 1 "liked that we did the ACT first, especially before the singing" and suggested adding 15 more minutes for singing practice "to really delve into parts a bit more" and believed that the course could be completed within 10 weeks, if time was spent working within a 1-hour lesson.

Whereas student 2, felt that 8 weeks was sufficient time for what was covered but felt it "could be helpful, just to talk a bit more in-depth" with ACC exercises and extend the lessons for 15 minutes.

Student 2 recognised that the experience would be different for individuals, supporting for a personal and flexible structure in lessons, "just really depends on each week". Some of the out-of-session tasks were "quite a lot on some occasions" with commitments to dance and school, however, student 2 recognised the benefits of having them each week.

Student 3 felt that the 8-week time frame “wasn't too much that it was overwhelming but wasn't too little that you didn't get anything done”; however, they found it difficult to remember what was covered in earlier weeks and suggested using the “toolkit” provided in the last session at the start of the course to keep track of exercises, along with a recap of tasks mid-way through.

Student 3 preferred when there was an “equal split” between ACC and singing content and that the singing tasks were enjoyable after experiencing “something uncomfortable” in the ACC exercises.

Student views on the recommendation of the course

“Definitely. Yeah. 100%. Because, I mean, I've seen how much it impacts me. And I've been performing for quite a while as well. So, especially if someone hasn't even started out performing, to say that it's helped me so much when I've already been performing, and I've still had this much improvement.” - Student 1

“Definitely. Yeah, I feel like I've learnt so much and I've got so many more things that can help me with my confidence, and I understand, like, just so much more about myself and what I actually value and my goals. I think that's really important to know about yourself” - Student 2

“I mean, yeah, I would, because I think for me, it helped put things into perspective. I think, yeah, that was the biggest thing I got from it, because like, as I've said, I get very much into my own head, and my everything can be like, quite overwhelming. So, when it's put into perspective, you're like, oh, okay, yeah, that's like, that's not too bad kind of thing. So yeah, I would definitely recommend it.” - Student 3

Figure 15. Qualitative verbatim data on course recommendation.

Participants collectively agreed they would recommend the course to others, along with the shared opinion that strategies learned can be applied not only to music but to other performance areas; this is evident through the actions of student 3, who used their values to work towards their performance barriers during their drama A-

levels. Overall, student 1 found the course “done everything I wanted to accomplish” and has integrated mindfulness strategies like “dropping the anchor” into their life beyond performance. Student 2 felt the course helped them with their self-awareness and personal growth, while Student 3 found that the course put their views into perspective, allowed them to recognise their anxiety and enable them to build on skills such as being present in the moment. The shared experience of all participants supports the effectiveness of the course design.

Student self-reflection written feedback

The written reflection from students outlines their experiences of gaining skills to manage performance anxiety, with all students reflecting similar experiences. Shared experiences of the development of deeper understanding of their emotions were experienced, along with learning techniques to identify and manage their thoughts. However, there were some differences in their individual reflections.

Student 1 found the course particularly insightful, as it introduced them to the concept of the observing self, which they expressed as “fascinating”. Student 1 plans to utilise techniques learned to improve their performances in musical theatre productions and manage negative thoughts and stress while preparing for their GCSEs. While, Student 2 gained insights into their own personality and values, helping them to understand what is important and has “filled them with ambition to work hard” on things they are passionate about. Student 2 plans to use this new knowledge to approach their goals with action plans and continue recognising their behaviours to make progress in all aspects of their life.

Finally, Student 3 has acquired a diverse set of skills to manage performance anxiety throughout the course. The techniques learned have enabled them to cope with anxiety and gain a new perspective on managing overwhelming situations. Through mindfulness and defusion, student 3 feels they have the skills to assist with overthinking and “not be in my own head all the time”, enabling them to push their comfort zone and improve. Which was reflected within the 8-week program where student 3 consistently showed commitment to the process, meeting challenges and

regularly overcoming them.

Despite these differences, all students expressed excited to continue developing their singing and ACT skills and experiment with new songs and techniques to expand their vocal abilities.

Limitations and future recommendations

Due to the small sample size a direct conclusion on the efficacy of ACC as an intervention for problematic MPA cannot be made (Mahony et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2020). There is a possibility that students experiences decreased anxiety levels after the ACC course because they understood the process and knew what to expect within the second performance, which could be the reason for improved scores after the ACC intervention. However, the results from this study and Mahony et al., (2022) and Shaw et al., (2020) strengthened the positivity that the improved results in self-report data could be due to the application of ACC.

The time taken to transcribe data was particularly challenging, due to the noisy nature of a dance studio which caused sound to leak through on the recordings, making it hard to hear participants. Other sound limitations were the suboptimal microphone quality of the laptop used, suggestions for future studies would be to use high quality recording equipment or provide a quieter location.

Other technical limitations, causing two sessions to not be recorded was relying on one recording device. Unfortunately, sessions 2 and 7 did not record for student 2 due to a technical failure of the laptop which was used to record video and sound footage. Alternative options to ensure data is fully captured would be to provide a second recording device.

In order to effectively address students' responses to the ACC intervention or other challenging behaviours and understand the ethical boundaries of coaching a psychological intervention, consultation was received from an experienced clinical psychologist who has extensive knowledge on MPA with ACT, this ensured adequate support was provided for students.

It is highly likely for those experiencing ACT treatments to not accept some of its principle methods of ACC, such as the willingness to accept anxiety rather than attempting to control it (Mahoney, 2023). Gloster et al., (2017) highlights the struggle for those new to ACC, can often experience avoidant behaviours in the short term. Patterns can form between the degree of struggle against anxiety and the emotional suffering connected to it (Mahoney, 2023), and those who experience high levels of anxiety, remain high during interventions due to the likelihood of still being influenced by the struggle to control their emotions (Gloster et al., 2017), which was observed in the case of student 3.

Therefore, It is advisable for teachers to receive supervision from an ACT-trained practitioner before applying ACC into their practice.

During their post-coaching interviews, students had expressed the need for more time for learning by 15 minutes, with varied views on the extension of ACC methods and singing. This can be easily applied and catered to the student's individual needs, with the extra incorporation of work allowing for less out-of-session tasks.

Other areas of extension on this research would be to look at and measure the teacher's experiences of the application of the designed model with the revisions of the student feedback, as well as applying them to a group teaching model and with a wider sample.

Conclusion

Overall, ACC is a promising approach for helping adolescents who struggle with symptoms of MPA in a singing environment. The exercises provided by Juncos & De Pavia e Pona (2022) and Turrell & Bell (2016) can be easily adapted for a teenage audience and applied within a 1-hour singing lesson to assist with supporting the needs of individuals and contributes to research on providing support adolescents with MPA (Tardif et al., 2024; Ryan, 2003; Osborne and Kenny, 2008).

Findings support Mahony et al., (2022) and Shaw et al., (2020), that brief training in ACC of less than ten hours may be reasonable in producing positive results for singing and music teachers seeking to assist their students who show problematic levels of MPA (Mahony et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2020).

The students provided valuable feedback on the course, and all of them reported values and commitment to help support their progression into working towards the performer they strive to be. While there were differences in the responses towards ACC among the participants, the overall data supports the hypotheses of improved psychological flexibility after an 8-week course (Jeong & Ryan, 2021).

This intervention could help fulfil the increasing need for teacher training in supporting young musicians who experience high levels of MPA as well as being used as a prevention tool (Fehm & Schmidt, 2006; Patston, 2014; Patston & Waters, 2015; Sarikaya & Kurtaslan, 2018; Mahony et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2020).

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