

BMPF7013

Song and Dance – an investigation into the relationship between dance and voice.

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Assessment 1 – Portfolio

1. Introduction and rationale

The aim of this independent study is to gain a further insight into the act of singing whilst dancing. A particular focus is placed upon exploring efficient breathing methods for the dancing singer. The study sets out to investigate the requirements of voice production in relation to the physical demands of movement and how to train towards combining these actions. This subject is of particular interest to my own practice and teaching as I specialise in musical theatre. Even though I have a dance background, my personal development in the last decade has mainly aimed towards bridging the gap between acting, singing and dancing. However, I still feel that I have much more to investigate in relation to the act of singing and I therefore aim towards gaining a wider understanding of the subject. Through the reading of the works of PhD. Joan Melton and vocal coach Liz Caplan, I quickly became intrigued by the topic of singing mechanics when dancing and wanted to invest more time into this area of study. As a teacher I always aim to evolve and improve the ways that I teach. This study presented an excellent chance of doing this with the aim of incorporating any useful findings into my future teaching practice.

In this study I will draw from different sources related to breathing techniques in singing and dancing. The aim is to investigate the demands of engaging with singing and dancing, thus the study sets out to analyse sources from different disciplines. In order to fully explore the chosen subject, I will need to conduct a thorough literature analysis of a wide range of sources considering breathing techniques when singing

and breathing techniques when dancing. I will also explore sources related to the demands of the cross training of singers and dancers as well as the demands of the musical theatre performer. My main interest lies within the notion of furthering my knowledge of how to produce efficient sound whilst engaging in high stamina movement.

I am currently teaching musical theatre in a private dance school in Norway and I have several years with experience in regard to choreographing and directing musicals as well as pure dance performances. During my 10-year teaching practice I have worked towards continuously improving my teaching methods in order to meet the need of my students. In the recent years, I have particularly taken an interest in how to bridge the gap between singing and dancing in musicals. This has been a reoccurring issue amongst my students when preparing for musical theatre performances. Students often show a great ability to sing and dance, however when asked to combine these skills they are faced with difficulties in managing the same standard as they would when performing the disciplines separately. I remember how this was an issue for myself when I attended higher education in musical theatre. As a strongly trained dancer it was challenging to produce efficient sound whilst engaging in high cardiovascular movement. This made me want to investigate the topic further in order to gain a deeper understanding of how to best combine these disciplines, and in particular, explore how to better guide my students.

Through this study I hope to widen both my personal and teaching practice in order to make me better equipped to teach all aspects of musical theatre. I also wish to gain more confidence when teaching voice. Due to the ongoing pandemic, teaching opportunities are limited, and therefore I will evaluate this study as a pending teaching practice where I will explore and analyse future teaching possibilities and possible implications upon my practice. Despite this restriction, I believe this experience remains valuable for my own professional development as it will give me tools that can develop my knowledge and understanding of singing whilst dancing.

Throughout both my professional – and teaching practice, I have noticed a change in the demands of the musical theatre performer and how these have become increasingly advanced. This has led me to reflect upon how to most effectively train

the multi-disciplinary performers required for the 21st century musical theatre industry. In the past it was often common to have separate singing and dancing choruses (Mordden, 2013; Cramer, 2013; Long, 2003), and therefore performers were often specialists within their field of training. As the years went on, perhaps mostly due to the integration of the disciplines in musicals such as *Oklahoma!* (1943) in the 1940s and the limitation of economics in the 1960s (Sternfeld and Wollman, 2011), the musical theatre performer had to be fully skilled in acting, singing and dancing and thus the notion of the triple threat performer was born (Cramer, 2013; Henshall, 2012; Paul, 2003). However, being a triple threat performer is no longer enough in this competitive industry, rather a fourth threat has been added to the list of requirements. A performer in the 21st century should ideally master a fourth threat such as playing an instrument or speaking a second language and thus become a quadruple threat (Bryer and Davison, 2005; Henson and Pickering, 2017). Being able to combine the skills in a seamless performance, enabling each discipline to flow organically and strengthen the performance is what I aim to investigate in this desktop research. However, due to limitations in the scope of this study, I have chosen to focus on the subject of integrating song and dance and the breathing technique required for this.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the chosen topic, I will explore and analyse a variety of source material considering the use of appropriate breathing for singing, the use of breath for dancing and the demands of the musical theatre performer in relation to this. I hope to gain a valuable insight into this subject as I believe it to be of high value for both my personal development as well as my teaching practice. By gaining a solid understanding of the mechanics behind the relationship between dance and voice and how to combine these skills, I believe that it will enrich my practice by enabling me to guide my students with more confidence. The main aim of the study is to develop my knowledge of singing whilst dancing.

2. A planned programme of study

Aims of this study:

- To gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between dance and voice.

- To investigate the subject of singing and dancing with the focus upon widening my knowledge in regard to the integration of these skills.
- To explore various sources in order to expand my knowledge of different approaches to use when teaching singing and dancing.
- To gain insight into different teaching methods and to be able to incorporate these into practice.
- To improve upon my own practice by applying newly learned skills into my teaching practice and performance.

Objectives of this study:

- Explore relevant literature texts in books, journals and articles.
- To further my knowledge of teaching techniques in relation to the use of voice and the combination of physical activity with a focus upon breathing management.
- Critically evaluate and analyse a range of sources.
- To explore the changes in the demands of the performer in the field of musical theatre.

Planned timescale and review dates of the study:

Activity	31.Sept 2020	31.Oct 2020	4. Nov 2020	18.Nov 2020	2. Dec 2020	16.Dec 2020	30.Dec 2020	6.Jan 2021	8.Jan 2021
Discuss topic idea with tutor									
Explore various literature – gather information									
Portfolio – writing of introduction and rationale, literature, critical reflection									
Assignment – evaluate the learning process									
Send draft to tutor									
Rewrite and submit									
Assignment due date									

Literature review:

This independent study contains a literature review which aims to explore various sources relevant for the chosen topic. This step is vital in the process of conducting academic research and enables the researcher to become familiar with the subject being studied (Hart, 1998). Due to the limitations of this study, there will also be a limited time frame for the exploration and analysis of the relevant literature. In the initial state, planning the review, I will draw upon Cooper's (1988) Taxonomy of Literature Review. The six stages include the concepts of (1) "focus", (2) "goal", (3) "perspective", (4) "coverage", (5) "organization" and (6) "audience" (Efron and Ravid, 2019, p. 24; Randolph, 2009).

Drawing upon Randolph's (2009) explanation of Cooper's (1988) system, the *focus* of the literature review will be outcomes oriented as well as application focused. It is important for me that the outcome of the study enables me to use the new knowledge in such way that I can apply it to my teaching practice. The *goal* of the literature is to critically analyse a range of sources, exploring any issues that needs to be furthered focused upon. As this study draws upon qualitative research method, the *perspective* naturally rests within what Randolph (2009, p. 3) describes as "espousal of position". My approach to this research is through the perspective of a musical theatre professional and teacher and it is therefore important that I acknowledge the pre-existing thoughts and ideas I bring with me into the research. I will return to this later in the proposal.

A *purposive sampling* method has been applied to this process in order to find and explore relevant sources (Berg, 2001; Denscombe, 2010). Such sampling method enables the researcher to explore the scholars specialised within the field of enquiry (Denscombe, 2010) or the most relevant sources (Randolph, 2009). Due to the limitations of time, an extensive literature review seems to be far beyond the scope of this study, rather a focus has been placed upon exploring sources that are of immediate relevance to the project. Therefore, the preliminary search includes sources which respond to the search words such as: 'breathing in singing', 'dance and song', 'musical theatre dancer' and 'breathing in dance'. The aim is to gain an entry point to the exploration of the wide possibilities of sources available. The next

step will then be to determine relevant sources in order to narrow the information so that it becomes possible to analyse the most relevant scholars and source material.

As previously mentioned, the demands of the musical theatre performer have become increasingly higher throughout the decades and the history of musical theatre points to a rather profound change in the demands of the stage performer. Therefore, it feels somewhat natural to follow a *historical format* when organising this literature review where the evolution of the element of singing whilst dancing is explored. A historical format enables the researcher to systematically present the review in a chronological manner (Randolph, 2009). The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of any developmental changes throughout the years in regard to the demands of the musical theatre performer in order to become aware of the technical demands of singing when dancing. The focus will be placed upon any changes in literature and exploring relevant teaching methods in order to bridge the gap between the disciplines of song and dance. However, as I aim to explore various aspects of singing whilst dancing, the organisation might become a combination of a historical and a conceptual format. The *audience* of the study is usually the “supervisor and reviewers of the dissertation” (Randolph, 2009, p.4).

The main aim of the literature is to familiarise myself with the data, identify any emerging themes and to code and categorize the data (Denscombe, 2010). In this process, a particular focus will be placed upon grouping similar sources and to create a system of categorisation of the material. This process aims to investigate the “general” in order to draw out the “particular” from the wide array of sources (Hart, 1998, p. 53). The exploration of literature will mainly consider sources such as books, journals and online searches in articles or research papers such as PhDs. Since I have experience in conducting literature reviews from previous master dissertations, I am well familiar with the process. However, my research has mainly been focused upon the element of dancing and acting in musical theatre and therefore I need to emphasise the exploration of the element of singing when exploring literature in order to gain a thorough insight into this area. I am also more familiar with teaching the elements of dancing and acting and therefore I also have to focus the exploration of sources upon various teaching methods for the training of the voice in relation to dance.

During the literature review process, I intend to explore, analyse and compare the different sources related to the two disciplines of singing and dancing in order to evaluate any similarities or differences in the methods of teaching breathing techniques. This will then be connected to sources related to the musical theatre performer in order to gain a wider picture of the demands of the singing and dancing musical theatre performer and the teaching methods of simultaneously mastering these two disciplines. Naturally, acting as an insider researcher and being highly familiar with the subject, it is vital to be aware of how my own beliefs and perspectives and how I view the world will affect the way in which I evaluate the source material (Maxwell, 2013). Thus, the notion of validity and reliability has to be acknowledged when conducting the literature review. Being aware of my own role in the research through the consideration of researcher bias might bring a sense of validity to the study (Robson, 2011).

A hermeneutical-phenomenological approach will be used in the process of conducting the literature review. This approach can be seen as a creative way of exploring written text (Efron and Ravid, 2019). Efron and Ravid (2019, p. 22) discuss how this approach enables the researcher to acknowledge his lack of objectivity and become aware of how social and cultural background is part of shaping the reading of text. I felt that this approach enabled me to create a sense of validity to my study as I was able to position myself as being a part of the research, stating my awareness for my own subjective view when exploring literature. Taking a hermeneutical-phenomenological approach to the literature review, the process in itself becomes a cyclical process where “new meaning” in regard to the topic is found through the exploration of various sources (Efron and Ravid, 2019). Through the exploration of relevant literature, it becomes possible to find categories and themes in which enables further investigation. Denscombe (2010, p. 286) refers to this process as a “data analysis spiral” which becomes “an iterative process”. In this process it can be particularly helpful to explore the reference or bibliography list within relevant sources as these might lead to other interesting sources. It is also important that the exploration of the sources is thorough and selective in order to remain within the time frame of the research process.

Through this literature review process, I aim to widen my knowledge and understanding within the field of study by critically evaluating a range of relevant sources in regard to breathing for singing and dancing. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of how to use methods of breathing in order to produce effective sound at the same time as executing physically demanding movements. The literature review process offers an excellent opportunity to critically explore information relevant to the teaching of voice and dance. By the end of this process, I hope to have gained valuable tools that can be applied to my teaching practice in order to better guide my students.

3. A critical reflection on the learning experience

This study aimed to investigate the use of voice whilst dancing. The goal was to implement any new knowledge deriving from this project into my personal and teaching practice. In order to do this, a reflective model was applied to the process of conducting this study. I embarked upon this study with the main hope to be able to bridge a gap within my own personal and teaching practice. In this process I adapted Schön's (1983) theory of "reflection in action" and "reflection on action". Through the collection of literature, I was able to reflect upon the information in order to progress my study (reflection in action). Such reflective activity enabled me to truly make sense of the information at hand in order to become aware of the learning process taking place (reflection on action). I also found Kolb's (1984) learning cycle consisting of the stages: experiencing, reflection, conceptualization and planning valuable as a guide throughout the development of knowledge. By becoming aware of these four stages, as I delved through the literature, made me more aware of the process of questioning, reflecting and analysing the sources and thus becoming more aware of my own learning process.

My hope for this study was to be able to answer reoccurring questions such as 'how can I better guide my students when attempting to sing and dance?' and 'how do the use of breath in dance restrict the flow of the voice?'. In this review, the aim is to critically reflect upon the learning experience in which I have undertaken with a particular focus upon the learning outcomes.

The process of diving into what seemed like an extensive ocean of sources usually starts with the thought of 'where to begin?'. At first glance the literature seemed overwhelming, however since I have been through this process a few times I was already aware of the importance of categorising and systemizing the information from the very beginning. This process can resemble that of data analysis as the use of coding can be very helpful. Throughout the years I have achieved a good system for coding data such as interview transcripts, however, this was the first time I intentionally applied a coding system to my literature review. This enabled me to quickly go in depth into the source material in contrast to skimming the surface of multiple sources. By searching for key words and themes that could be connected to the subject of investigation I was able to explore a variety of sources and start my evaluation. Throughout the process I would alter the search words in order to reach a wide range of sources.

The preliminary research consisted mainly of book and articles. Along the reading of these sources, I also explored methods of conducting literature reviews as I believed this would strengthen my process. Naturally in these processes it becomes easy to be caught up in too much material, thus it became important to keep with the scope of the study. The main aim was to gain new knowledge in order to explore any gaps within my teaching practice. I started a learning journal so that I could track any ideas or concepts that I wished to explore further. Henson and Pickering (2017) notes how journals can aid the student in their process of reflecting and sense making.

This created an opportunity to continuously evaluate my learning process (Brinson, 2014) as I explored sources. Stobart (2009) discusses how journals are an excellent tool to use in order to encourage "self-realisation" and contemplation upon learning.

Throughout the research process, as I searched through multiple scholars and works, I quickly became immersed with the material. Historically there has been an interesting shift in the use of the musical theatre performer. In the past, as previously mentioned, there used to be large choruses with separate singing and dancing performers (Mordden, 2013; Cramer, 2013; Long, 2003). Throughout the decades the boundaries between the performing choruses started to merge and there was a new trend that lead roles should take part in the full action of the story, they also had

to dance as seen in Rodgers (1902-1979) and Hammerstein's (1895-1960) musical *Oklahoma!* (Gardner, 2016).

The integrated musical emphasised the importance of storytelling through all elements of the musical, from text to song to dance (McMillin, 2006). This was viewed as the new norm for musical theatre productions (Purdy, 2016; Miller, 2007), thus a need for cross training was created. The demands of the musical theatre performer increased and with new dance heavy musicals such as Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* (1980) (Miller, 2005), the training of the triple threat performer became the new "norm" (Henson and Pickering, 2017, p.99). Performers had to be skilled within acting, singing and dancing. Naturally this made it more challenging for the 21st century performer and it can be difficult to successfully master all areas and especially learning how to bridge the gap between the disciplines in order to achieve a seamless performance. Experienced dancers might struggle with finding the technique of producing effective sound whilst dancing, let alone multitasking but also feeling an accomplishment of these skills. Breathing methods for voice production is different from that required in physical activities such as dance (Melton, 2012). I particularly found the books *Dancing with Voice* (2015), *One Voice* (2012) and *The Oxford Handbook of The American Musical* (2011) helpful for my quest of exploring this issue.

The aim of this process was to give myself the opportunity to investigate the particular in order to gain a wider viewpoint into the subject of voice, dance and musical theatre. As previously mentioned, my passion lies within the field of musical theatre and therefore I always strive to further my practice and understanding of how to best guide my students in their aim of becoming fully skilled musical theatre performers. I also aimed towards furthering my own knowledge and expertise within the field as I do believe that lifelong learning is important in order to grow and develop both my professional and teaching skills. In an ever-changing business I do believe that it is important to keep up with the latest trends and developments in order to not become stagnant, uninspired or dated. I experienced this project as being highly beneficial in the search for more knowledge building up to my master's dissertation. The process of reading the various literature provided interesting

information about the subject which enabled reflection upon my own practice and viewpoints.

However, the timing of conducting this study came at a time where the whole world became estranged from the familiar way of living. The Covid-19 pandemic made it rather challenging to focus upon engaging fully with this study, and I found myself several times doubting my ability to complete this task. At the time of enrolling onto the programme, I was planning to expand upon my teaching practice to include the teaching of voice. However, the pandemic quickly made a dent into my plans as restrictions were placed upon the teaching of the arts. With strong limitations in regard to vocal practice and uncertainties of the future months with lockdowns, it did not seem like the right time to expand my practice. Naturally this made it challenging or even impossible to apply the research to my practice and I had to write this based upon my own experience within the field with a pending practice in mind. Becoming aware of this made it somewhat easier and more motivating to embark upon the investigation of sources for the rest of the project.

Reflecting upon my learning experience, I kept returning to Kolb's (1984) learning cycle in order to explore my internal learning process. Throughout this process I have felt overwhelmed but also gratitude towards gaining strength to engage with the source material and the subject of investigation with both interest and perseverance. In relation to the first stage (experience) I have experienced my actions and reactions through the gathering of new knowledge, the source material. I have then, in the second stage (reflection) reviewed my actions and experiences. In the third step (conceptualization), I have explored and achieved new understandings in regard to the concepts being explored in which have aided my quest of furthering my knowledge and learning development. The fourth step (planning) considers the next step to take (Kolb, 1984), or as Oelofsen (2012, p. 8) describes as "action". I am taking action to change my teaching practice by implementing new knowledge into my approach to teaching singing whilst dancing.

If I were to conduct this study again, I believe that I would find myself in a quite different situation, particularly in regard to the mindset as I would hope that the stressful situation with the uncertain surroundings would, to some extent have

settled. This would naturally provide a less stressful environment to work in. I do believe that this learning experience, with its upsides and downsides, has given me valuable insight in regard to my psychological response to meeting obstacles, which has led to an even higher need of reflection upon practice in order to find meaning in my work. The reflective tools applied has enabled me to gain a deeper understanding into my practice by giving me time to truly evaluate, respond and incorporate new knowledge into my practice. I hope that by the end of this project, I have successfully managed to expand my knowledge of methods that I can use in order to better guide my students when attempting to master the task of singing whilst dancing.

Assessment 2 – Written assignment

Song and Dance – an investigation into the relationship between dance and voice.

This desk top study sets out to investigate the relationship between the act of singing and dancing, focusing upon exploring efficient breathing techniques for the dancing singer. The aim is to explore and analyse a range of literature in order to expand upon my own knowledge and learning, and the objective of this study is to critically evaluate these sources and explore how to implement any findings into my practice. The reason for conducting this study derives from experiencing gaps in my knowledge of and ability to effectively guide my students when participating in musical theatre ensemble numbers where they are required to sing whilst dancing.

As a musical theatre teacher working with time limitations, there are seldom opportunities to go in-depth into all areas of performance technique. The main goal of our teaching semester is often the final result, which is a production. Throughout the years, this has made my teaching focused upon the end product, and I have realised that in order to better aid the students, I need to shift towards a process-oriented strategy. As I have been in charge of choreographing and directing the musicals, I have not been fully involved with the singing aspect as we have had a separate voice teacher for that part. However, I have noticed a missing element in our teaching which is that of fully combining and integrating the skills needed for musical theatre performers. I have also felt a growing wish to be able to gain more knowledge about the field of vocal pedagogy. One of the areas in which I have seen my students

struggle in, and something in which I also found challenging in my own training, is how to combine the skills of singing and dancing and still be able to fully execute the movements whilst maintaining a clear vocal sound.

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyse source material in order to investigate the breathing technique required for singing and dancing and to gain a deeper insight into the requirements of the singing dancer. This project seeks to find methods to use in order to best combine these skills and to be able to draw advantage of this into my teaching practice. I believe it can be very helpful to make both myself and my students aware of the different requirements of breath in singing and dancing as this is something I have not focused upon in the past. By becoming more aware of the different methods, it then becomes possible to gain a deeper understanding of what precisely it takes to be able to combine these actions. I believe this explorative study will enable me to further my knowledge and learning development and thus contribute to bridge this gap in my teaching practice.

In the process of investigating the literature and creating a reflective activity, I used Cooper's (1988) Taxonomy of Literature Review to aid the exploration. When creating the written assignment, I felt that I needed a simple way of presenting the explored literature. Therefore, I have applied Driscoll's (2007) approach to Borton's (1970) model of reflection entailing asking three questions of *what*, *so what* and *now what*? Ghaye (2011) notes how this process might feel more complete in contrast to that of Cooper, as the cyclical process might seem to be one of continuous manner. The '*what*?' was used to investigate the pre-existing information in regard to breathing for song, breathing for dance and the notion of singing whilst dancing. The '*so what*?' enabled me to critically evaluate the relevance of this information in relation to my teaching practice whilst the '*now what*?' enabled me to evaluate how this new knowledge could be used in practice. This conceptual framework made me focus my thoughts and enabled me to achieve a clear sense of direction in the process of exploring, reflecting, analysing and evaluating the information gathered.

What?

The training of singers is different to the training of dancers; however, it has now become increasingly popular to focus upon integration or cross training, especially in the field of musical theatre. Melton (2012) discusses how it sometimes can be challenging for students to master the integration of disciplines as they might feel that their training is highly separated between disciplines due to their different focus. It can also be challenging for students to know how to connect each discipline in such way that it results in a wholeness. There are many areas in which would be interesting to investigate when it comes to singing and dancing, however, due to time limitations, the main focus in this study is placed upon exploring effective breathing technique. In dance, it is common to have a strong and rigid core so that one can move freely and safely across the stage. The front ribs are pulled in in order to create stability, however in singing, the front ribs are more open due to the lifted sternum (Melton, 2012). At first glance, it might seem challenging to merge these demands of the body, however in order to do so it becomes important to learn how to combine the disciplines in such way that they fulfill each other.

Breathing techniques are often taught differently across disciplines and Melton (2012) notes how the main issue seems to be concerning the inhale and exhale in voice training versus movement. Humans breathe in order to stay alive and tend to not focus too much on the breathing mechanics as this happens automatically (Smolover, 2006). Indik (2009, p. 138) notes how the purpose of breathing is to “provide oxygen for the metabolism and rid the body of CO₂ and other wastes”. The brain is signaling the wish for oxygen (Kayes, 2004) and the process of inhalation happens when the muscles in close relation to the lungs expands whilst the exhalation is produced through the closing of these muscles (Melton, 2012). Muscles around the ribs also aid the process as it enables the expansion of the chest, however it is the diaphragm that is in charge of “60-80% of the work” when inhaling (Kayes, 2004). Naturally, this process takes about 4 seconds with one second on the inhale and 3 on the exhale (Miller, 1986).

According to Indik (2009, p. 131), the process of breathing when singing is one of both simplicity and complexity. When singing, the body requires more oxygen which requires deep inhalation (Doscher, 1994) and a more controlled and prolonged exhale (Miller, 1986; Indik, 2009). Stark (1999, p. 92) notes how exhalation is strongly related to “phonation” which has to be carefully exercised through proper breath management in order to “produce the optimum tone quality and flexibility”. Similar to the action of producing text onstage, it is important to release the abdomen when inhaling (Melton, 2012) which is referred to as “the elastic recoil” (Kayes, 2004) and engage the deep abdominal muscles when exhaling. The activity of singing requires support in which the process of inhaling and exhaling will not have the same bodily experience as when being completely relaxed (Kayes, 2004). However, the aim is to take deep breaths (deep diaphragmatic breathing) which enables the shoulders and neck to be relaxed and free of tension (Smolover, 2006).

Efficient breathing when singing should be carried out in a cycle where the inhale and the exhale becomes linked together (Doscher, 1994). A widely used method for breath management is the Italian “appoggio” (Doscher, 1994) which refers to the “coordination” of all muscles involved and the balancing act of “breath pressure and controlled phonation” (Stark 1999, p. 120). Stark (1999, p. 120) notes how this approach has become a useful “pedagogical concept” throughout the history of teaching voice. Another common breathing technique used in the teaching of singing is the “belly-in” and “belly-out” method (Indik, 2009, p. 131) which, similar to appoggio, requires good posture and control over the process of inhalation and exhalation.

Miller (1986, p. 20) discusses how in order to accomplish efficient breath for singing the student have to master and co-ordinate “the phases of the breath cycle (inhalation, onset, phrase duration, release)”. This four-step process consists of an inhale, preparation “suspension”, a controlled exhale “phonation” and lastly “recovery” (McKinney, 2005, p. 48). Kayes (2004, p. 28) emphasizes the process of engaging the muscles in exhalation as in order to be able to sustain pitch, something that requires “airflow and balanced pressure”. However, the singer must be aware of the process and how to manage their breath for singing in order to avoid unnecessary tension or damage to their voice (McKinney, 2005).

Breathing for singing also requires the control of the “sub-glottic pressure” where the vocal folds control the amount of air flow passing through on the exhale (Kayes, 2004, p. 28). In addition to this, it is also important to have enough air to sustain longer phrases (Nair, 2007). Changes in the quality of the voice can also affect the breath when singing as the air pressure will be different when producing a belt sound or a twang (Kayes, 2004). Other elements that interfere with the breath is the text that is being sung. Often in musical theatre there are stops in the phrasing of the song which affects the breath (Kayes, 2004). Therefore, it becomes important for the singer to be able to control the breath by managing the airflow on the exhale (Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald, 2017). In order to be able to manage the breath when singing, it is vital to understand how proper breath management feels like in the body. Returning to the natural breathing cycle which usually lasts 5-8 seconds, the act of singing demands longer breathing cycles which might stress the natural bodily instincts to breathe (Nair, 2007). Therefore, as discussed by Nair (2007, p. 113), the singer has to somewhat “ignore the brainstem’s call for regular breathing” and train the muscles to prolong the breathing cycle when performing longer vocal phrases.

The training of movement is according to Melton (2012) a positive factor in training the breath amongst singers, however it is important to become aware of the differences in the breathing techniques required by each activity. In dance, the breath is functioning differently than if asked to stand still and sing. Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald (2017, p. 253.e2) notes how the body requires more breath and “gas exchange” when dancing in order to give the muscles enough oxygen to maintain its power. This is a contrast to singing, where mastery of the airflow is the main focus, especially if taking a more static position of the body (Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald (2017). Melton (2012, p. 4) discusses how “noisy inhalation” as often experienced in fitness classes is unhelpful for singers as it often creates tension as well as engaging “muscles that should be relaxed in deep and efficient breathing”. In addition to this, high intensity physical movement such as dancing, often makes the body increase its need for oxygen, resulting in “involuntary heavy breathing” (Gates, Forrest & Obert, 2013, p. 27). It takes a great amount of focused and mindful training, let alone stamina in order to master efficient breath management when dancing. Guss-West (2021) notes how the correct use of breath is seldom taught in dance.

Furthermore, Guss-West (2021) discusses how the eastern dance tradition has an inside out approach to dance where the dancer has to focus his training upon being mindful in the creation of movement. In methods such as Thai Chi, Yoga and martial arts, mastering efficient breath management “enhance performance” and contribute to a healthy body (Brodie & Lobel, 2012, p. 39). In contrast to this, in the western approach, dancers often focus upon outer factors of movement, such as performing technical advanced steps by visually referring to the mirror for physical corrections (Brodie & Lobel, 2012). The challenge lies within the notion of being able to train, and master both “inner and outer demands” at the same time in order to move as one unity (Guss-West, 2021). The element of breathing thus becomes an important factor in successfully moving the body with efficiency. The breath has a direct influence upon the energy flow of the body and it is therefore important to integrate the focus of breath into the training of dancers (Guss-West, 2021).

Dance instruction often include words such as “tighten your abs”, “pull in your ribs”, “tighten your glutes” which, in comparison with the teaching of voice, might seem very different as the main aim is to find relaxation (Melton 2014). For example, when preparing for a large jump or multiple pirouettes, the dancers tend to hold their body. Guss-West (2021, p.54) discusses how this restrict breathing and the flow of oxygen at the time when the body needs it the most, resulting in “a loss of power and stamina”. Henson and Pickering (2017, p. 82) notes how “an overall focus on the accuracy of taught movements restricts breath” as dancers have a tendency to focus upon the technical demands of movements which might create tension in the body. Returning to the concept of “the elastic recoil” (Kayes, 2004), it becomes possible to notice a conflict in the practice of song and dance and it seems unlikely that dancers easily will release the abdomen whilst dancing as they are trained to maintain a tight core. Therefore, without even adding the element of singing, it becomes possible to assume that the dancer is already restricting the flow of breath by tensing the body.

Another method that has been widely used in the teaching of voice which can be useful to gain an awareness of the breath is the Accent Method. This method aims to “resolve pathological symptoms by optimising normal functions, and to do this by achieving the best possible coordination between breathing, voicing, articulation, body movement and language for each individual” (Thyme-Frokjaer, 2001, p.7). It is

noted by Morris (2014, p. 95) how this method serves well for the training of voice due to its aim to enhance and improve upon the “normal functions”. Morris (2012, p. 5) discusses how the Accent Method aids the singing student in achieving awareness and mastery of the breathing mechanics when singing as well as enhancing “appropriate muscular support for the voice”.

The goal of training efficient breathing in dance is, according to Brodie & Lobel (2012) to become aware and present in the movement. There is a huge demand of control required of the laryngeal muscles in order to control the “subglottal pressure” when singing and dancing, a process that may lead to “overload” (Sandage and Hoch, 2017, p. 849). Therefore, it also becomes important to learn how the body response to each activity and to find an inner sense of what it feels like to perform with a balanced instrument.

The demands of the 21st century performer is rather high. LeBorgne and Rosenberg (2021) notes how being able to excel in singing, acting and dancing is important in order to become a competitive performer and they also discuss how it is vital to have a healthy instrument in order to survive the eight show a week schedule. The triple threat performer is one that excels in acting, singing and dancing (Lodge, 2014). As performers trained towards mastering these three skills, the need for the “dance double”, as originally seen in the musical *Oklahoma!* disappeared (Cramer, 2013, p. 87). However, the literature has pointed out that it is now vital to be a quadruple threat performer. The skill of speaking another language, performing acrobatics or playing an instrument is added to the list (Henson and Pickering, 2017).

Cohen and Matheson (1992, p. 2). argues that whilst the actor’s “physical potential has remained virtually unchanged”, dancers have continued to push their boundaries in regard to their physical ability in order to express their bodies in new ways. The need for higher skilled musical theatre performers has changed the training by placing a particular focus upon developing the dancer’s “strength, flexibility, and coordination” (Cohen and Matheson, 1992, p. 2). Training all these different disciplines takes a tremendous time and careful dedication. After mastering all skills, the new challenge becomes to be able to integrate these skills in order to achieve a seamless performance. A focus upon cross training in the studio has been

increasingly popular. Naturally, if the demands of the musical theatre dancer have increased, the demands of being able to execute even more advanced movements whilst singing also becomes a challenge. The changes in the musical theatre scene, where the audience is experiencing impressive vocal performances, extraordinary movement combinations and acrobatics, reflects the fast phased lives of the 21st century population.

So What?

The next question I have to answer to aid my reflective process is ‘*so what?*’ In order to do this, I need to investigate the relationship between voice and movement. Melton (2014) emphasizes how musical theatre performers have to be trained with a focus upon integration of the disciplines. It is important to stand out in this industry, and therefore the demands of being able to act, sing and dance at the same time has increased. In order to sing whilst dance it becomes interesting to look at how the breathing mechanics and the awareness of an efficient breathing technique can aid the performer in bridging the gap between the disciplines. It has been established that the breathing requirements for song and dance are different, however there have been observations of the two disciplines not being as different as often thought (Melton, 2014). Melton (2014, p. 201) notes how even though the dancer’s body is held, they still breathe and “their abs release enough” to be able to sing with bodily support, however it can still be challenging to produce demanding vocal sound that require a more relaxed body of breath.

The amount of oxygen needed differs according to the level of physical activity (Melton, 2012) and it thus becomes very different to stand still and sing in contrast to engaging in high tempo physical movement such in a dance break in a musical. The dancer’s body is trained to hold the abdomen which restricts the moveability of the diaphragm and increase “upper chest breathing” which might create tension (Morton, 2014, p. 213). A slightly lifted chin along with an upwards lift in the cervical spine is also a common feature, which gives the larynx a higher position (Morton, 2014). In contrast to this, good posture for singing, is recognized by even distribution of weight on each foot in order to achieve an aligned and relaxed body so that the vocal sound

can be free flowing (Phillips, 2011). The cervical vertebrae and chin are relaxed, finding a neutral position and the abdomen and ribs are free in their movements (Morton, 2014).

There is a conflicting use of the abdomen in singing and dancing. As the dancer holds her core, the breath will locate elsewhere. Morton (2020, p. 213) discusses how dancers often have to use “upper thoracic breathing” due to the tight abdomen. This method of breathing is regarded as inappropriate for singing (McKinney, 2005; Chapman, 2017) as the singer loses the ability to control the exhale (Doshier, 1994). Breathing with the upper chest, or “clavicular breathing”, is highly visual through the observation of the chest rising and falling (McKinney, 2005, p.56). One of the negative effects of this type of breathing is the tension it creates in the area of the “chest and shoulders” which might again create tension in “the neck area and the vocal mechanism itself” (McKinney, 2005, p. 57). McKinney (2005) also points out how breathing with the rib cage also can be restricting the flow of breath for singing, which has the same negative impact as upper chest breathing. Rib cage breathing is common amongst dancers, limiting the expansion of the abdomen. Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald (2017) point out the importance of creating stability in the body both in the act of singing and dancing and note how more muscles are involved as the movement of the body increases, restricting the movement of the lower ribs and abdomen and giving the body less space to breathe.

The literature points out to two rather contrasting uses of the abdominal muscles when engaging in singing in contrast to dancing. The act of singing demands a free abdomen, whilst dancing often aims to have a held or pulled in core. I will once again return to the “recoil” in singing technique where the focus is placed upon controlling the exhale in order to release the abdomen for the inhalation as this notion might be what can contribute to the integration of singing and dancing. Morton (2014, p. 213-214) discusses how by shifting the focus from “sucking in the abdomen during inhalation” to aid in challenging movements, an efficient breathing technique can be achieved if the dancer shifts her focus towards an appropriate use of the abdomen on the exhale. By connecting the transversus abdominus as a movement falls towards gravity, such as when landing from a leap, the body will still support the movement as well as creating a “natural reciprocal recoil for inhalation” enabling the

abdominals to “soften” (Morton, 2014, p. 213-214). This enables the dancer to safely execute advanced movements at the same time as freeing the abdominal muscles so that an efficient breath can be taken in order to produce efficient vocal sound. With this in mind it becomes possible to imagine an effective approach to dancing with voice by focusing upon shifting the focus of abdominal support and exhale to suit the downward motion of movement thus freeing up the abdomen to make an efficient inhale.

The literature points out the challenging of sustaining vocal phrases through a controlled airflow when dancing whilst singing (Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald, 2017). Through their research, they noticed a 50% drop in “maximum phonation time (MPT)” when attempting to sing whilst dancing (Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald, 2017, pp. 253.e3, 253.e6). The ability to sustain vocal phrases whilst engaging in movement is in its essence a challenge in which the singing dancer must find techniques to maintain control of the airflow. Sell (2005) notes how due to the unlikeliness of a singer performing in a complete static position, it is valuable to approach good posture for singing with a moving perspective in mind. “The objective is to balance being relaxed against being alert and ready for action” (Sell, 2005, p. 72). No matter how much or little movement, the aim should always be to balance and align the body in such way that it becomes possible to use the whole “body with maximum efficiency” (Melton, 2012, p. 3).

A common notion in musical theatre is that when the characters no longer can convey their emotions through speech, they sing, and when that is not enough, they start to dance (Harvard, 2013). Deer and Dal Vera (2008) notes how each discipline enables the characters to express themselves on a heightened level. Even though a dancer performs the most elegant and technical correct dance, as discussed by Henson and Pickering (2017, p. 82) the “real impact of breath” happens when the dancer is able to connect with the audience by telling the story. For the actor in training, to act on impulse and breath is a common technique. In singing, it is also recommended that the breath is “motivated or inspired by the action” (Streeton and Raymond, 2014, p. 33). In the attempt to find effective methods to integrate singing and dancing, it becomes possible to focus the training upon how to dance with impulsive breathing. If the student can achieve efficient use of breath, following the

movements, then the words of the song, it might aid the singing, and help with the movements and the achievement of an efficient sound.

Dancers are athletes. Therefore, in the aim of bridging the gap between song and dance, it becomes possible to imagine the singer as an athlete. The literature presents the singer as an athlete as he has to be able to sing many different styles and thus train his voice to master many different techniques (LeBorgne and Rosenberg, 2021). By also viewing the singer as an athlete in the manner of physical exercise, it becomes easier to integrate the disciplines and method of training (Gates, 2018, p. 25). The way to do this is through the training of increasing stamina, allowing the student to develop their skills in singing and dancing at the same time. Athletic training which is good for the development of cardiovascular fitness includes swimming, running, cycling and rowing (Westcott, 2003). In order to avoid overuse and injury of muscles, it is important to engage with athletic cross-training such as combining running and cycling (Westcott, 2003).

In athletic training the training of stamina reflects the ability to “metabolize oxygen” in order to endure physical activity over longer amounts of time (Friedlander, 2018). Efficient breathing in athletic training is also important in order to avoid muscle tension. Stamina is important to sustain the physical activity as well as to maintain control over the voice. Good stamina is vital for the singer to be able to maintain energy during performances as well as being able to sing long phrases (Friedlander, 2018). This can be trained by running whilst singing. Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald (2017) discuss how there are similarities between dancing and running. Both activities demand a more “spontaneous breathing with high minute volumes and high airflow” (Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald, 2017, p. 253). Through the practice of cardiovascular training, the student becomes familiar with how the physical activity of running affects his breath. “The correct control of breath is a fundamental principle in obtaining freedom and is all-important to our art” (Streeton and Raymond, 2014, p. 34). The aim is to become aware of the differences and to build up skills to train with this in mind.

Now What?

In this section I will shift my thinking towards exploring ways of using the new knowledge gathered in this study. Throughout my investigation I have continuously evaluated and reflected upon the texts that have been explored in order to create meaning and to gain a wider understanding of the mechanics behind breathing for song and dance. Following the question ‘now what?’ it becomes possible to reflect upon any possible impact these findings might have upon my own learning development and my teaching practice. The literature has pointed out the challenges of singing whilst dancing and it can be understood that both disciplines must be, to some extent, altered or compromised when being combined (Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald, 2017). When dancing, the “natural response of breathing” is limited by the moving body “resulting in reduced minute volume” (Sliiden, Beck and MacDonald, 2017).

It can be understood that without breath there is no song (Indik, 2009) and without breath there is no movement (Henderson, 2018). This might seem obvious; however, breath management is still a reoccurring issue in both the training of singing, dancing and other physical athletic training. In an attempt to gain awareness of the importance of breath in the training of musical theatre students, I have created an introductory lesson plan with some exercises (Appendix A) that aim to benefit the student in training. In the past, I have found it challenging to bridge the gap between song and dance, however with the new knowledge gained from this study I now have a wider understanding of the differences in the use of breath in the two disciplines. The lesson plan presents some practical implication of the study where I aim to shift the focus from a technical oriented approach towards a more kinaesthetic approach to breathing when singing and dancing.

I believe the new knowledge will better guide me in experimenting and analysing the breathing habits of my students when dancing, first by noticing how high impact movement, such as landing from a leap might impact the breath and also the need of recoil. This can then be analysed by the student as the voice is added with the aim of finding a balance between breathing, singing and moving the body. “The ultimate goal of the voice teacher and the singer is to produce beautiful and steady tone and

often to shape long elegant phrases” (Indik, 2009, p. 135). With this in mind it can be understood that the dancing/singing relationship is also one of harmony and endurance in order to achieve an organic flow in the performance.

Conclusion

Even though my aim was to investigate the particular by narrowing down the area of investigation, my experience was that I only managed to investigate the tip of the iceberg. In order to go further in-depth into this subject, I would have had to have more time. However, throughout the research process it was important to have in mind that this was not a master dissertation, rather an opportunity to investigate an area in which I needed to focus upon in order to expand my knowledge and teaching practice. I have noticed a growth in my reflective mindset throughout this study. This investigation was also very helpful in preparing for the final master dissertation as it has provided a chance for me to widen my knowledge and understanding of the difficulties of singing whilst dancing and how to approach this in my practice. The study has given me useful tools to implement into my teaching practice and I do believe I am better equipped to guide my students in their pursuit of becoming a multi-disciplinary performer.

Appendix A:

Lesson Plan: Introductory exercises aimed to enhance mindful breathing and development of stamina for singing whilst dancing.

1. Diaphragmatic Breathing

In Feller's (2018) article, vocal coach Liz Chaplan discusses the importance of exercising good diaphragmatic breathing for the singing dancer. Through a daily practice, it becomes possible to create mindful breathing that reduces bodily tension and stress. This exercise lends from the Pilates tradition and is highly beneficial for practicing correct abdominal breathing as it helps to elongate the spine, create a sense of breath management and freedom of movement (Brennan, 1996). However, it is important to make the student aware of the contradiction of breath management in Pilates compared to singing. The Pilates method often uses an audible inhale and a forced exhale, something that is not helpful for singing where the aim is to take deep breaths without emphasizing the inhale (Rosenberg and Leborgne, 2019).

- *Semi supine position:* Lie on the floor, flat on your back with the knees drawn up and the soles of the feet planted on the floor. The legs should be hip distanced apart, shoulders relaxed and the chin slightly tucked in. Place both hands on the abdomen and spread the fingers. Inhale through the nose and feel your hands rise and exhale through the mouth, feeling the hands lower. Repeat 8-10 times. Try to find relaxation in this position and feel how with every exhale, you are letting go of any tension in the body, finding a deep breath.

2. Standing roll through the spine

This exercise focus on achieving a good posture and to warm up the spine. The first step is to align the body and to become mindful of what signals the body gives us in regard to any areas in which needs further consideration such as tight shoulders, neck or other aches and pains. The aim is to release and prepare the body before engaging with singing or movement.

- *Finding a neutral spine:* Finding a neutral position is important for both singing and dancing. Stand with the feet hip width apart and knees released. Check the positioning of the pelvis to make sure it is neither tucked or tilted, relax the ribcage, shoulders and neck and slightly tuck in the chin. Then slightly sway from side to side, noticing your weight on the feet. Repeat this motion forward and back. Then find your neutral position where the weight of the body is evenly distributed on both feet.
- *Forward roll:* Having established your neutral position, inhale deeply. On the exhale, release the neck forwards and let the weight of the head draw you towards the floor. Roll down through each vertebra, releasing towards the floor. Inhale and roll back up on the next exhale, making sure the neck and the head is the last thing that returns to the neutral upright position. Chapman notes how this exercise is great for both dancers and singers (Feller, 2018) as it warms up the body enabling the air to flow freely. Repeat 5-8 times. It is also possible to grasp each elbow and sway sideways when the body is in the forward fold in order to release unnecessary tension.

3. Cardiovascular endurance exercises

After exploring breathing on the floor and warming up the body through the forward rolls, the student can now engage in cardiovascular endurance exercises. This set of exercises prepare the student for being able to practice singing whilst running. The aim is to build stamina in order to aid the student when engaging in singing whilst dancing.

- *Running:* The first step is to familiarise the body with the action of running in order to train stamina, endurance and gain control over the breath. This might be difficult at first, however, the students should aim to become aware of the responses the body gives them when engaging with cardiovascular exercises.
- *Walking and vocalising:* The next step is to keep the body in motion whilst starting to practice vocal exercises such as scales and other vocal phrases.

- *Slow jog whilst vocalising:* In the third step the intensity of the movement is increased, and the students should maintain a moderate jogging tempo whilst practicing scales, vocal phrases, or songs. In this step, the students should pay attention to the changes in the breath as the intensity of movement increases.
- *Running whilst vocalising:* The fourth and final step is to practice running whilst singing a song. The aim is to develop stamina in order to manage the breath in an efficient manner so that the body does not have to gasp for breath whilst being in physical activity. Regularly training will aid the students when entering the dance studio and asked to sing whilst dancing as it will gradually become easier to manage the breath when engaging in high intensity choreography.

4. Putting it all together

This exercise aims towards bridging the gap between singing and dancing. It could be interesting to carry out this exercise prior and post a regularly practice of steps 1-3 to notice any changes in the breath management.

- *Practice a short choreography:* The students will learn a short musical theatre choreography which will then be practiced to music. The next step is to make sure they know the song that is being sung during the dance before combining the two actions. It is important that the students learn the choreography and the music thoroughly before continuing with the next steps.
- *Exploring the lyrics:* Similar to singing, it is possible for the dancer to explore the lyrics of the song in order to create a sense of where the emphasis should be placed and when to breathe. This can be done by either choreographing to the lyrics or creating metaphors behind the meaning of the text.
- *Musical phrases:* In singing, it is common to explore places in the music where it is possible to take a breath. Aiming to merge the disciplines of singing and dancing, it can be valuable to also incorporate this into the choreography that is being performed. Exploring movement phrases where breath can be taken naturally or intentionally to support or strengthen the movement quality can

enable the student to manage their breath more efficiently. This might make it easier for the student to add the layer of vocalising when dancing.

- *Analysis of high impact movements:* Performing the same choreography, analyse landings, turns and high extensions such as kicks to notice how the body automatically inhales and exhales. Then try to manage the breath in such way that it supports the body when performing the movements at the same time as having enough power to sing. Can you find the elastic recoil (Kayes, 2004) and notice if the landing from a jump can kick off the next inhalation of breath? Continue practicing each step in this exercise, returning to previous steps as needed. The aim is to create a higher sense of awareness of managing the breath whilst singing and dancing the choreography.

Exercises 1-3 should ideally be incorporated into the students' weekly practice. It is beneficial to practice exercise 1 on a daily basis and to create a balanced mix of exercises 2 and 3 in a weekly practice. Exercise 4 is designed for classroom workout with teacher guidance. Along with these exercises it is recommended that the student maintain a nutritious diet and gets enough rest to make sure they maintain a healthy instrument. Students are suggested to keep a journal in order to trace their development and to make reflective notes throughout their training.

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