

Module 5

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Module: BMPF7013F

Project Title: An Acceptance and Commitment Coaching and Psychological Skills Training based audition preparation program for professional musical theatre singers.

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Part 1 -PORTFOLIO

In this study I aim to create an audition preparation program for professional musical theatre singers to improve performance skills and mitigate music performance anxiety (MPA).

This artefact, labelled PEP (Performance Enhancement Program) is a self-guided program consisting of two introductory sessions followed by a 5 day program of daily exercises, meditations, and practice prompts designed to enforce beneficial thought patterns, practice habits and performance routines.

The artefact was created using a combination of the EBMgt framework (Mitchie, 2004) and the hermeneutic cycle (Kakkori, 2009) moving between the research question, theoretical concepts, acceptance and commitment coaching (ACC), psychological skills training (PST) and the realities of the musical theatre industry. Specifically, "ACT for Musicians" (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022) and "Performance Success" (Greene, 2003) were key influences. Academic research on self efficacy, acceptance and commitment therapy, self regulated learning, mindfulness, goal setting, exposure therapy and pre-performance routines supported the selection of exercises and structure of the program.

The aim of the artefact is to introduce participants to ACC and PST theories in relation to musical theatre auditions then to guide participants through daily exercises that integrate ACC and PST into the audition preparation process. As performance preparation and music performance anxiety (MPA) are highly personal experiences (Kenny, 2005), the program integrates individual needs through personal goal setting, self-reflection and incorporation of unique, personal values (Clark, Osborne and Baranoff, 2019).

Though professional musical theatre (MT) auditions may be executed in a variety of manners (dance calls, self tapes, type-outs), this project was created as a preparation program for the "in-person singing audition." Based on analysis of all MT audition calls on Canadian Actor's Equity Association throughout the month of April 2024 (Appendix, 10), these auditions typically consist of the performer going to a performance or rehearsal space where they meet the audition panel and perform between one and three songs and a scene from the show (sides) (CAEA, 2024).

The goal is to create a theoretically clear and concise program that will give professional MT performers the skills required to not only execute their material to the best of their abilities, but also to introduce a psychological state that allows them to be at their most present and confident in audition situations.

Rationale

Occupational context

The rationale behind this artefact comes from my experience as a post-secondary performing arts program graduate, work as a professional musical theatre performer and experience as a voice coach.

MT performers spend years cultivating their skills as actors, singers and dancers, however very little time or energy is dedicated to developing one's psychological skills and abilities to thrive in high stress situations, such as auditions (Shaw, Juncos and Winter, 2020). The author's assessment of Canadian post-secondary MT training programs (Sheridan College, 2024; Randolph College for the Performing Arts, 2024, Canadian College of Performing Arts, 2020; St. Lawrence College, 2024; St. Claire College, 2024) found that MPA, MPA intervention, performance and audition psychology or performance enhancement was not included in any of the aforementioned curricula (Appendix 9 p.64).

Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) as explored in a previous essay (Hayes-Crook, 2023) is described as recurring and consistent anxiety in relation to musical performance (McCambridge, 2004; Kenny, 2008; 2011; 2023). Throughout this essay the term "MPA intervention" will be used to describe various empirically assessed strategies used in research or best practice to mitigate anxiety symptoms caused by music performance. Greene et al. (2003) assert that though competitive and demanding (Kenny, David and Oates, 2004; Sandgen, 2009) auditioning is an integral element to gaining MT employment (2013). James and Shipley (2022) suggest that auditions specifically may induce more anxiety for MT performers than rehearsal or show performance as they are competitive and require solo performance, thus more frequently inducing feelings of judgement (Osborne and Kenny, 2008; Keating, 2020) fear of failure (Kenny, Davis and Oates, 2004; Sandgren, 2009), emotional and psychological distress (Steptoe, 1989; Kenny and Davis, 2008) and perfectionistic tendencies (Kenny, 2005; Sandgren, 2009). These factors have demonstrated a strong correlation to the development of poor self-efficacy and higher levels of MPA which can have damaging, long term effects on one's performances, career and overall well-being (Kenny, 2005). When considering the technical abilities required from MT singers in auditions, we must consider the particular effect MPA symptoms can have on acting and singing.

Nervousness and MPA has shown to create tension surrounding the vocal cords (Stothert, 2012), increased breath rate (Kenny, 2011), shortness of breath (Studer, 2011) and shaking

(Crake and Craig, 1984). These symptoms are of particular concern to the MT singer as they can prevent complete vocal cord closure (Van Puyvalde et al., 2018; Herbst et al., 2014), interfering with the singers resonance placement, subglottic pressure, phrasing and vibrato (Kochis-Jennings et al., 2012; Sundberg, 2012). MT is a style that requires use of mixing and belting (Roll, 2016). These are vocal styles that require finite control of breath, laryngeal placement, registration and vibrato (Roll, 2019). Consequently a change in mechanics caused by anxiety can be challenging and result in poor execution of the music.

The MPA symptoms of shaking, mind-going blank, distraction, low self efficacy, poor posture, fear of judgement and catastrophic thinking can impact one's ability to be present in the moment (Juncos, 2018), a core principle of acting (Sanders, 2019; Meyer-Dinkgrafe et al., 2012; James and Shipley, 2022), hindering the execution of choices, commitment to character and story telling.

MPA is experienced uniquely and exists on a gradient (Spahn, Cramp and Tussock, 2021). Those who are mildly affected may experience annoyance at the symptoms whereas those heavily affected may be on the verge of giving up performance entirely (Kenny, 2005). The artefact is designed to support MT performers who experience moderate to mild MPA or feel their MPA hinders their ability to win roles or perform their best in auditions (James and Shipley, 2022). Individuals experiencing intense symptoms of avoidance and severe MPA should be referred to a more intensive, personalised intervention (Mahony, Juncos and Winter, 2022).

Relevance to learners developmental needs

Through my review of literature, a variety of scientifically assessed MPA interventions were taken into consideration (Appendix 2 p.60). In these interventions (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005; Harris, 2009; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022), concepts were often explained theoretically, and though supported by research, there were few actionable exercises that could be implemented into practice. For example, in "ACT for Musicians" by Juncos and Pavia e Pona (2022), the reader is often presented with "exercises" that were actually metaphors (for example, Finger Trap Metaphor, pg. 66). A metaphor is "a phrase that is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable" (Oxford, 2023) and therefore these *exercises* are not concrete practices that could be employed into physical practice by readers. As auditioning is a practice, application of theory to practice is a critical educational tool (Muurinien and Kaariainen, 2021; Zimmerman and Perkins, 1995). The labelling of "exercises" for both practices and metaphors may cause frustration for readers seeking practical exercises for MPA mitigation.

Another hurdle to learning that must be considered is use of language and overall presentation (Schleppegrell, 2012). The programs that were assessed (Appendix 2 p.60) are often presented as lengthy self help books, which may exhibit a challenge regarding time-commitment (Osam et al., 2017). These books require the individual to take hours out of their schedule to assess the literature which as Bellaire et al. (2023) assert is a considerable barrier in adult learning. Within the books, exercises were challenging to locate and often required academic language proficiency (Krashen and Brown, 2007). This potentially presents a communication barrier as it assumes knowledge or requires time to gain understanding of the language (Penix, 1957; Chen, 2017). A short program that is clear and specific would better suit the needs of the MT professional.

Though the topic of audition preparation time in Toronto, Canada for MT singers has not been researched, an assessment of my own auditions (Appendix 3, p.60) from the last six months found that on average I have 5 days from the confirmation of the audition to the audition date. During this time an actor must familiarise themselves with the project, role, casting and direction teams, memorise the music, lyrics and scenes and make role specific voice and acting choices (Saunders, 2019). The assessed interventions though well researched and thorough, required a timeline of 10-12 weeks. Though this amount of time is ideal in the development of new cognitive patterns (Hofmann, 2012), based on my practitioner knowledge it is beyond the realistic time commitment of a working actor who often must balance rehearsals, auditions, networking, another job and their own personal life.

After careful consideration of these factors, it was my assessment that an introduction to PST and ACC, followed by a 5 day program that applies these theoretical and best practice concepts directly to the audition preparation process would be of best benefit to the MT performer.

Planned Programme of Study

Theoretical and Best Practice Influences

The first course of action taken was critical analysis of the already available MPA reduction and PE programs. To meet inclusion criteria these programs required applicability to the research question, scientific evaluation that underwent peer review and subsequent publication (Appendix 2, p.60). This presented four primary intervention categories; Acceptance and Commitment Coaching (ACC), Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), Psychological Skills Training (PST) and Flow. Upon critical analysis, the theoretical underpinnings of these interventions fell into two categories. CBT and PST based interventions are constructed on the belief that dysfunctional thought patterns can be changed (Kenny, 2005). ACC however, is based on relational frame theory (RFT) (Hayes, 2004), a psychological framework that examines how cognition and language are developed through relational networks between stimuli and responses in the mind (Blackledge, 2003). ACC functions under the belief that through mindful observation and defusion of anxious symptoms, one can become more accepting and less reactive to stress (Juncos, 2020). When comparing the efficacy of these two intervention practices, CBT has significantly more scientific support (Burin and Osorio, 2016; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2020) however, there is sufficient assessment of the efficacy of ACC for comparison. In research assessing MPA, CBT has shown to be more effective at reducing anxiety symptoms (Nagel and Himle, 1989; Brown et al., 2011) but had little to no effect on performance quality (Osborne, Kenny and Cooksey, 2007) whereas ACC has shown greater capacity to improve behavioural performance and performance skills (Block, 2002; Brown, 2011; Glassman et al., 2016). Additionally, as CBT requires specific training and certification, it has limited accessibility to voice teachers, whereas ACC can be used by appropriately educated voice teachers (Mahony, Juncos and Winter, 2022). As ACC has increased accessibility for voice teachers, an ACC based method meets the practical and ethical standards that CBT does not. Consequently, my artefact is largely based on ACC and inherently underpinned by RFT. That said, voice professionals are not psycho-therapists and must maintain cognizant of the ethical implications, boundaries and appropriate education when incorporating ACC into their practice (Mahony, Juncos and Winter, 2022).

Through the review of literature, it became increasingly challenging to distinguish theory from practice as MPA interventions do not isolate practice from theory, instead they are reciprocally supportive of one another in both education and workplace (Oonk et al., 2015). Bjork and Johansson (2019) suggest that the dualistic approach in education wherein theory is separated from practice creates an antagonistic separation of the two, when in-fact an integration of theory to practice can form a reciprocal relationship, bridging the theory-practice gap. Specifically when assessing both ACC and PST, separating theory from

practice provided a challenge as most research interrelates the two (Hayes et al., 2011). As the purpose of this project is to apply the field of research to the MT singers audition needs, separating the theory from practice proved to be antithetical, thus best practice and theory will be explored synchronously.

White literature on ACC predominantly depicts the intervention efficacy, however actual methods of intervention (exercises, practices), were largely only available through affiliated grey literature. Numerous publications demonstrating how ACC theory can be applied to practice met the inclusion criteria, however an exhaustive assessment was beyond the project's timeframe (Cronin, 2018). To uphold standards of validity and rigour, footnote searching white literature to select grey literature resources (Bates, 1989) was applied in addition to the grey literature methodology explained below (p.10). The publications "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Anxiety Disorders (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005), "ACT made simple" (Harris, 2019), "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy" (Hayes et al., 2012) and "ACT for Musicians" (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022) became key practice resources due to their frequent reference and influence within white literature (Palinkas, 2015). In particular, "ACT for Musicians" (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022) became influential as it directly relates each ACC process to MPA, and integrates scientific research within practical application, providing ease in transference to the research question and supporting method validity (Juncos et al., 2014; Juncos and Markman, 2015; Juncos et al., 2017). "ACT for Musicians" is intended for use as both a practitioner guide and a self-guided intervention method whereas the other publications are intended solely for practitioner education. As the writer intends for the artefact to be a tool used independently by the MT artist, the structure of "ACT for Musicians" parallels the artefact's goal.

As thorough, rapid preparation of pieces is an essential component to audition preparation, it was critical the artefact support effective, efficient material preparation in addition to beneficial cognitive patterns. This directed my research towards PST. PST teaches self regulatory skills that aim to reduce psychological arousal to support optimal performance through various methods, including preparation practices (Gould, Eklund and Hardy, 1992; Hardy, Jones and Gould, 1996). PST's intention of "reducing arousal" parallels that of CBT, contradicting ACT's fundamental belief that acceptance of symptoms can mitigate psychological distress (Juncos and e Pavia de Pona, 2022). However, in practice, PST consists largely of independently researched elements (goal setting, pre-performance routines, planned practice) that can be applied to an ACC underpinning (Harris, 2009; Nielsen, 2010).

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) is an PST component that refers to the deliberate planning and time management of practice (Zimmerman, 1989). SRL theory suggests that through thoughtful analysis and planning of the specific elements that must be achieved in order to execute a specific task (singing a song), individuals are better able to recognize smaller improvements, more accurately track progress and therefore will experience more successes (Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Pons, 1992). Awareness of smaller successes has shown to reduce uncertainty in one's ability, improving their self-efficacy (Kenny, Fortune and Ackermann, 2009; Miksza and Tan, 2015). Self-efficacy is the belief that one has the skills needed to successfully perform a task (Zimmerman and Bandura, 1992). As a result of the competitive nature of MT, MT actors encounter frequent rejection (Donahue and Patterson, 2013; Saunders, 2019). McPherson and McCormick (2006) suggest those who have experienced negative performance outcomes (like losing roles) may be more likely to experience poor self-efficacy and reduced confidence. Bandura et al. (1988) suggest that those with high self-efficacy exhibit less stress than those who experience lower levels of self-efficacy, supporting the initial notion that an improved preparation process through integration of SRL in preparation for an audition may not only improve quality of work but also self-efficacy.

In addition to integrating an empirically supported preparation method, the PST practice of pre-performance routines (PPR) should be considered in MT performance. PPR's are a set of cognitive and behavioural elements that one systematically engages in prior to performance (Cotterill, 2010; Tief and Gropel, 2021). Integration of a consistent, practised routine that shifts one's cognition away from anxiety symptoms and towards the task at hand, mirrors the overall intention of ACC and has shown to improve the interpretation of anxiety symptoms (Jones, Hanton and Swain, 1994; Hanton, Mellalieu and Hall, 2004) and once established, can improve the individual's sense of control and consistency (Clark and Williamson, 2011). In particular, the PST inspired training program "Performance Success: Performing your Best Under Pressure" (Greene, 2003), presented a PPR that ideally supported the MT singer's auditions needs. Review of literature presented Greene's book (2003) as the only PST program for musicians that had been peer reviewed and published (Osborne, Greene and Immel, 2013). Further exploration of method and research validity will be discussed in part 2 (p.26).

A third and final theory used in PST, ACC and CBT is exposure therapy, the process wherein one is systematically introduced to a feared stimulus (Harris, 2009; Burin and Osorio, 2016; Juncos and Pavia e Pona, 2022). Through an ACC lens, exposure therapy intends to practise mindful acceptance of the anxiety symptoms (Juncos and Pavia de Pona,

2022). However in PST, exposure therapy is used as a means of introducing performance-like circumstances to rehearsal in order for the participant to improve their skill to the level at which anxiety symptoms do not affect performance (for example, improving cardio to the point where increased heart rate does not affect vocal breath control) (Greene, 2002). Though vastly different in intent, both theories can benefit the performer (Reeves, Curran and Hannah, 2021; Cahill et al., 2006). It is the hope of the author that both of these outcomes can support MT singers and will be explored more thoroughly in part 2 (p.28).

In summary, I intend to use an ACC based approach with practical elements of PST to develop a program that aims to reduce MPA and foster performance enhancement for MT performers preparing for auditions.

Theory to Practise

Once the contents of the program had been considered, the focus of research shifted towards learning theory and how to most effectively disseminate knowledge through the artefact (Artino and Konopasky, 2018).

Empowerment theory suggests that by understanding the processes and consequences of thoughts and actions, individuals can gain a sense of control over their quality of life (Zimmerman and Perkins, 1995; Rappaport, 2001). The “Introduction Sessions” aim to apply this through exploring audition related cognitive processes with participants and explaining how alternative processes (ACC and PST) may benefit their psychology and actions (Zimmerman and Perkins, 1995) through implementation of new patterns.

When creating both the introduction sessions and the program, cognitivism was used as an underpinning theoretical base (Winn et al., 2019). Cognitivism places acquisition of knowledge, the internal functionality of learning and the learner’s active participation in learning at the forefront of education (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). Specifically, how information is received, organised and stored by the brain (Winn et al., 2019).

Key elements of cognitivist learning included in this artefact are instructional explanations, demonstrations and metacognitive training (planning, goal setting) (Shuell, 1986). Other constructivist inspired components that will be further investigated in part two are efficient dissemination of material to support knowledge assimilation (Winn et al., 2019), connecting new information to previous experiences, exploring the benefit of acquiring this new knowledge and active feedback (Ertmer and Newby, 1993). Though it is likely personalised feedback would benefit participants, at this juncture the artefact does not involve any

interaction with a coach, as it would potentially increase program cost, time commitment and obstruct the self led nature of the program. Instead, participants are encouraged to give themselves constructive feedback through post-practice reflection to support retention of new information (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995).

As the ultimate goal is performance, the skills explored in the artefact must be internalised to the point where the individual can execute them without conscious thought (Greene, 2003; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022). Thus, the daily practice portion of the artefact also applies aspects of Motor Skill Learning Theory (MSL). MSL suggests that to learn a new skill one must repetitively practise until that skill can be executed automatically (Schmidt and Wrisberg, 2007). MSL is broken into three separate phases:

Cognitive Phase: Each step must be talked or walked through, external feedback is necessary. Skill is slow, inconsistent, inefficient, and considerable cognitive energy is demanded (Singer, 1988; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona).

Associative Phase: Skill has been partially internalised, prompts or feedback are still required. Skill has become more reliable and efficient, less cognitive energy is required (Wulf, 2007).

Autonomous Phase: Execution of the skill is automatic. The skill has become efficient, consistent and accurate, little to no cognitive energy is required (Singer, 1988; Wulf, 2007; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022).

As Johnson and Proctor note (2017), these phases are not strictly sequential and individuals will often cycle within the process. Additionally, learning is highly individualised and the time required to progress through phases varies, however frequent, focused practice (SRL) has shown to support skill acquisition (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). Through the daily exercises, the artefact applies MSL to audition material preparation, the integration of ACC processes and in the cultivation of a pre-performance routine.

Methodological Influences

This project was executed through use of a pragmatic paradigm. Performance and MPA is experienced individually (Kenny, 2005) and thus, any efforts to improve performance or mitigate MPA must adhere to the concept that multiple realities can exist and that truth is experienced uniquely (Pansiri, 2005; Creswell and Clark, 2017). As the artefact must consider numerous challenging components of the MT performer's reality, an approach that

focuses on ‘what works’ best supports the needs of my student’s and the research question (Morgan, 2007; Kaushik and Walsh, 2019).

My research was explored through a mixed method thematic narrative review using a semi-systematic approach using a combination of Pare and Kitsou’s (2017) six steps for assessing literature and the EBMgt framework (Michie and West, 2004). In combining these two methods, I am able to apply the specificity of Pare and Kitsou’s (2017) literature review process, while considering the step by step practical application of knowledge to my artefact through the EBMgt framework (Michie and West, 2004).

Figure 1 - Literature Review Frameworks

EBMgt Framework (Michie, 2004)	Pare and Kitsiou (2015)
Asking	Formulate Research questions
Acquiring	Searching the extant literature
Appraising	Screening for inclusion Assessing the quality
Aggregating	Extracting data - thematic analysis Analysing Data
Applying	Creation of artefact
Assessing	Module 6 assignment

Initially I began by exclusively assessing published, peer reviewed articles to provide a strong basis of validity for my research. A keyword search of databases (Google scholar, pubmed, UWTSD library, Elsevier) using the following terms, independently and with Boolean operators, served as an initial foray into the literature (Pickering and Bryne, 2013).

Figure 2 - Keywords search

Terms use alone or combined	Boolean Operators	
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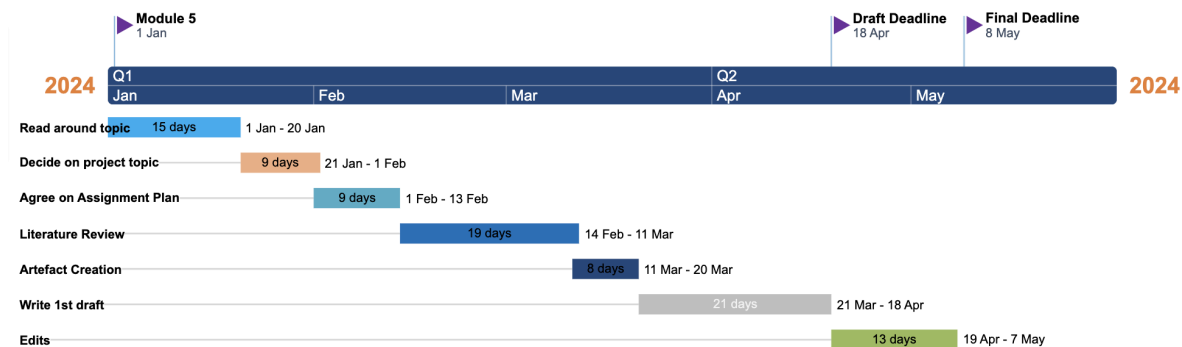
• Musical Performance Anxiety • Music Performance Intervention • Music Performance Anxiety • Acceptance and Commitment Therapy • Psychological Skills Training	with/in	• Musical Theatre • Singers • Auditions
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From there, citation and footnotes searching (backward and forward chaining) was applied to continue to access authors and articles most relevant to the research question (Bates, 1989). During this process, purposive sampling of published, peer reviewed articles allowed for maximum efficiency and validity within the project's time constraints (Palinkas, 2015). Literature that examined the intersectionality of MPA and PST or ACC was most heavily weighted, however articles that examined PST or ACC in other fields (therapy or athletics) were consulted to develop a more thorough understanding (Pickering and Bryne, 2013).

Though white literature substantiates the foundation of this project, it became clear that inclusion of grey literature would be a necessary element in the creation of my artefact as reviews of white literature alone could not provide a sufficiently detailed exploration of the practical application of theory (Nelson, 2013). To assert a clear inclusion criteria for grey literature, only that which could be classified as 'first tier' in Adam's framework would be used (Adams, 2016). Additionally, the selected grey literature would be assessed through the O'Leary strategy (Appendix 4, p.61) in order to assess for bias and agenda (2014).

Once relevant documents had been gathered and assessed for validity, attribute and holistic coding methods were applied (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2015). This presented scientific support of concepts, theories and practices used to initiate and guide the construction of my artefact.

Module 5 Gantt Chart



Ethical Considerations

As an inside researcher who is currently an active member of the professional MT community there are numerous potential ethical issues I must take into account surrounding bias and personal motivation (Breen, 2007). I have strived to mitigate these ethical challenges through a rigorous, systematic assessment of literature (Breen, 2007; Cohen et al., 2011). By applying the O’Leary strategy (2014) to selected grey literature and Pare and Kitsou’s (2016) six steps to all literature, I aim to emotionally detach from the material and explore the validity of the material through various external lenses (Saidin, 2016).

However, as an inside researcher, I have first hand knowledge of the MT audition process which may prove to be beneficial in assessing elements which have not received academic attention (audition preparation needs, time commitment, MT audition format) and support the realistic application of studied theories (Saidin, 2016).

Professional boundaries for this project also must be assessed ethically. I am creating a program that can be used by an ACC trained voice coach and aims to support an MT performer in their preparation for a singing audition. However, as this is a topic that I have personal experience with, it is critical I maintain professional boundaries and do not allow my personal experience to be projected onto the artefact or participants. Any performance related topic can invoke negative memories, potentially causing distress (Kenny, 2005). I must remain cognizant of my limitations as I am an educated practitioner not a psychologist (Kenny, 2005).

Learning Outcomes

- To improve my theoretical and practical knowledge of ACC, PST and RFT
- To improve my theoretical and practical knowledge of pre-performance routines, self regulated learning and exposure therapy
- To improve my understanding of learning theories
- To identify the challenges and shortcomings of the current MPA and performance enhancement programs
- To create a evidence based audition preparation program that meets the needs of professional MT performers and can be realistically used

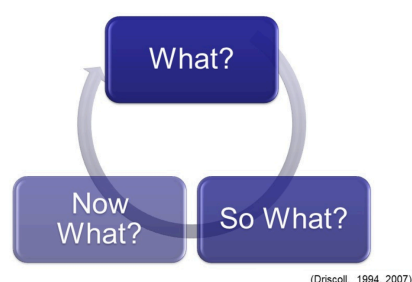
Critical Review

Concrete Experience

Through a previous module, I had begun to develop an understanding of MPA, performance enhancement and intervention methods (Hayes-Crook, 2023). However, when asked directly by students, “how do I deal with my nerves in an audition,” I was unable to clearly respond. I felt so overwhelmed by the information I had acquired, I was unable to distil my knowledge into clear actionable instructions (Bjork and Johansson, 2019). Through previous reflection, I have identified that the voice teacher educated in MPA and performance enhancement has the capacity to uniquely support students (Mahoney, Juncos and Winter, 2022). However, the practical application of my studies presented a challenge. In my own practice, I have taken to the application of Driscoll’s reflective cycle (Figure1) (Driscoll, 1994) based on Borton’s “what, so what, now what?” (1970). I find Driscoll’s cycle (1994) to be particularly suitable as it is easy to implement, functionally supportive and its self led nature supports the self lead process of this program (Nielsen, et al., 2022).

Through this cycle, I was able to identify this clear gap in pedagogical knowledge and identify a path forward in my studies (Dewey, 1933). Reflection of the challenge at hand, partnered with my practitioner knowledge (Plack and Greenberg, 2005) led to the notion that though challenging, developing a program that could be easily understood and executed would be of great benefit to my practice as it would support practical application of the theoretical knowledge I have gained.

Figure 3 - Driscoll's Reflective Cycle



Reflective Observation

In my analysis of ACC theory, two concepts of conflict in relation to MT performance arose.

The first, as previously explained, is the lack of interaction between ACC and the performance material. In my own experience, and in accordance with cognitivism, learning occurs most effectively when new concepts are integrated with already acquired knowledge and applied to practice (Ertmer and Newby, 1993). Cognitivism suggests this is because relation of new knowledge to already learned information supports effective organisation, storage and retrieval of new information and therefore new knowledge is better retained (Ertmer and Newby, 1993; Malik, 2021). In my assessment of performance programs (Appendix 2 p.60), individuals often received ACC or other intervention education and exercises to explore but were not tasked with integrating them within rehearsal, presenting a disconnect between theory and practical use (Bjork and Johansson, 2019).

Almost all cognitive intervention programs that have been assessed for MPA and PE take place over 10 - 12 weeks (Nagle and Himel, 1989; Osborne, Kenny and Cooksey, 2007; Hoffman and Hanrahan, 2012; Osborne, Greene and Immel, 2014; Brandon Osborne and Wilson, 2015; Hatfield, 2015; Juncos and Markman, 2016; Cohen and Bodner, 2019; Juncos, Winter and Mahony, 2022; Moral-Bofill, 2022). As previously discussed, this timeline is beyond what is available to most MT professionals, unless they are taking time off auditioning and performing. Though these programs did not provide time frame justification, it is likely aligned with CBT research that suggests 12-16 weeks is ideal for intervention efficacy (Kenny, 2005; Hofmann, 2012).

In my practitioner experience, a time demand that great is likely to lead to poor adherence in professional MT performers, as the extended duration would likely conflict with work and personal obligations. Though research suggests that a longer time is required for new cognitive patterns to develop, it is my hope that through application of cognitivism, MSL and

daily interaction with the material throughout the 5 days of the program, albeit less thorough, a shortened program will ultimately be more practical.

Abstract Conceptualisation

Through application of the Driscoll model (1994) it became clear in the artefact creation process that in addition to my research on MPA and PE, I would need to consider research on learning methods. In order to meet learners' needs and support the integration of new information, I would have to increase my understanding of learning processes (Schunk, 2012). This led my research to the fields of cognitivism, MSL and empowerment theory. It is my hope that through use of these theories I could build a new program that would support PE and MPA reduction in a theoretically sound manner while adhering to the standards of validity and rigour (Chetwynd, 2022).

Active Experimentation

In order to create a theoretically sound artefact that considered both rigour and validity (Chetwynd, 2022), I recognized the need for strict protocols for literature assessment, particularly as much of this project is based on grey literature exploring practitioner experience and best practice (Adams, 2016). In order to mitigate these challenges, a mixed method approach (Cohen et al., 2011) was used. A systematic approach to the literature through simultaneous use of EBMgt Framework (Michie, 2004) and Pare and Kitsou's guide (2017) was additionally applied as well as O'Leary strategy (2014) to uphold standards of rigour and validity.

Through the use of Driscoll's model, as I moved from literature analysis onto the creation of my artefact I recognized a secondary framework to actually create the artefact would be required (1994). To mitigate this I applied a combination of EBMgt framework (Janati et al., 2018) and the hermeneutic cycle (Kakkori, 2009; Patterson and Higgs, 2015), moving between theoretical concepts, ACT exercises, PST practises, practical realities of MT industry and the research question (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2001) to develop the artefact.

In reflection of this process, I recognized the many elements that must be evaluated when developing an educational tool. It is not only the topic that must be considered but the audience, then method and the execution (Mayer, 1998). Moving forward, the multi-dimensionality of educational tools is an aspect that will be more thoroughly considered on project outset.

Part 2 -THE ASSIGNMENT

Justification - Why create my artefact / Know how

MPA and performance skills have the capacity to greatly impact the MT performer's experience professionally and personally (Kenny, 2005; Shipley, 2022). As a pedagogue, when approached by students seeking guidance to manage MPA, my practical knowledge of the topic fell short (Arteaga et al., 2024). Though I had developed a strong theoretical understanding, transference to actionable steps was challenging. This demonstrated a theory to practise gap in my own education (Murrinen, 2022). On reflection, students most often sought MPA and performance enhancement guidance in relation to auditions (Driscoll, 1994). Literature suggests this is likely due to the fear of judgement, competitive nature and high stakes circumstances that come with auditions but are not as prevalent in rehearsal or performance (Kenny, David and Oates, 2004; Sandgren, 2009; Papageorgi, Creech and Welch, 2013; Keating, 2020). Additionally, upon conducting an analysis of Canadian postsecondary MT programs it was observed that none of these programs offered courses in MPA, PE or MPA intervention (Appendix 9, p.64) demonstrating a shortcoming professional MT performance training (Randolph College, 2024; Sheridan College, 2023; St Lawrence College, 2024; St Claire College 2022; Canadian College of Performing Arts, 2023).

This invoked consideration of what empirically sound resources for MPA are currently available to professional MT performers. As explained in the portfolio, the scientifically assessed MPA and PE programs (Appendix 2, p.60) that presented in my literature review did not realistically meet the needs of professional MT singers preparing for auditions. Particularly in reference to application of theory to practise, relevance to audition needs, integration into performance, use of language and timeline.

In order to construct an empirically sound program that would benefit the MT performer I reflected on the most prevalent elements within these programs, identifying the key components that facilitated audition preparation for MT singers and delineating the elements that were inadequate or absent (Michie, 2004; Kakkori, 2009). Below is an analysis of said components.

Time Frame

I was unable to source research that assessed the average number of days from when an MT actor receives an audition request to the day of the audition in Canada as this

information is not publicly available. However as an inside researcher, data from my own experience was available (Saidin, 2016). Analysis of the MT singing auditions I have done over the last six months (Appendix 3, p.60), found 5 days is the average time given to prepare. Therefore, the artefact takes place over 5 days with two sessions of psycho-education to be done prior (Figure 4).

Based on practitioner experience, MT performers often must maintain commitments (such as another job, classes, familial commitments) while preparing for any audition (Teague and Smith, 2015). Consequently, the program can not be overly time demanding or adherence will likely decrease (Taylor et al., 2012). To mitigate these challenges, the artefact allows participants to choose how much time they would like to contribute with a minimum of 45 min daily, which based on SRL (see p.25), is divided into three separate sections (Figure 2) (Winn et al., 2019). Hatfield, Halvari and Lemyre (2016) assert that the amount of optimal “practice time” for musicians is yet to be identified. However Mikza, Blackwell and Roseth (2018) suggest that when SRL skills are incorporated, learning intensity increases and more progress can be made in a shorter amount of time. Thus, it was interpreted that a minimum of 45 minutes of intensive, goal driven work, is both a realistic time commitment and an effective amount of practice time (Eriksson, 2008; Hatfield, Halvari and Lemyre; 2017).

Figure 4 - PEP Schedule

Introduction Session 1	Introduction Session 2	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
30 min	30 min	Pre-practice 20 min	Pre-practice 20 min	Pre-practice 20 min	Pre-practice 20 min	Pre-practice 20 min
		Practice 20-60 Min	Practice 20-60 Min	Practice 20-60 Min	Practice 20-60 Min	Practice 20-60 Min
		Post-practice 15 min	Post-practice 15 min	Post -practice 15 min	Post-practice 15 min	Post-practice 15 min

It must be noted that most PE, MPA and PST programs take place over a considerably longer timeframe. Studies that demonstrate MPA improvement as a result of ACC (Juncos and Markman, 2016; Cohen and Bodner, 2019) take place between 10-12 weeks and PST publications suggest a minimum of 6 sessions of at least an hour to cover the principles alone (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005; Harris, 2009). Comparatively, the assessment of Greene's PST program by Osborne, Greene and Immel (2003) was based on two lectures, a masterclass and a workbook taking place over three weeks, which aligns more closely with

the self led nature of the artefact. Within reflection of the literature compared to the realistic needs of the student, it became apparent that this artefact would likely not instigate a participant's complete shift towards ACC cognitions surrounding auditions but would instead offer an introduction to this theology and practice, and if perhaps applied to numerous auditions, may have a more thorough effect.

Psychoeducation

All of the assessed PE and MPA reduction interventions (Appendix 2, p.60) included some form of psychoeducation initiating further inquiry into its methodology. According to cognitivism (Winn et al., 2019) and empowerment theory (Zimmerman, 2000), explaining a program's theoretical underpinning to participants is a critical introductory step that benefits the participant's self awareness of and commitment to the program (Zimmerman, 2000; Lukens and McFarlane, 2004). Ochuba and Abrama (2019) explain that inclusion of a clear theoretical explanation of the "why" behind exercises and practices has shown to promote participant investment, adherence and commitment (Sarkhel, Singh, Arora, 2020). ACC practitioners (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005; Harris, 2009; Juncos, 2016) recognize that upon introduction, some individuals may find ACC to be paradoxical as one must learn to accept unwanted sensations, memories and emotions (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022) as opposed reducing them, as is suggested in CBT (Kenny, 2005).

Based on the author's experience, and the gap in post-secondary MPA and PE education (Appendix 9, p.64), most professional MT performers have very limited knowledge of MPA. Thus, providing participants with the knowledge to develop awareness of the cognitions that initiate MPA symptoms prior to practical application can support the learning process (Zimmerman, 2000) and the development of new cognitive patterns (McFarlane and Lukens, 2004).

To integrate psychoeducation into the artefact, two "Introduction Sessions" ranging from 30-60 minutes (depending on how long participants take to complete exercises) were included at the outset. These sessions include descriptions of ACC and PST components, relation of these theories to MT, and exercises that encourage self analysis in light of these theories (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022). As the psychoeducation portion would not include any material preparation, these "Introduction Sessions" would ideally be completed prior to receiving an audition request and are to be done before the 5 day program. This allows participants to begin to understand and explore the new cognitive processes prior to implementation in practice (Lukens and McFarlane, 2004). "Introduction Sessions" can be completed within the same day or on two different

days, depending on the participants time availability and ability to intake new information (Sweller, 1994).

Material

As the MT singer's needs are central to this artefact, in addition to considering the most appropriate timeframe, we must also consider the theory to practise gap (Arteaga, 2024). Performance that integrates ACC and PST is the ultimate goal, therefore, integrating these elements into practice is essential (Muurinen, 2021). To achieve this, the new information (ACC and PST) is directly related to already known skills (acting and singing) as is suggested by cognitivism (Bandura, 1986) then is implemented directly to practice through exercises that integrate performance material with PST and ACC (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022).

How material is prepared has also shown to contribute to one's self-efficacy and overall performance (Zimmerman, 1989; Zimmerman and Bandura, 1992; Hatfield, Halvari and Lemyre, 2016). As auditions often require preparation of new material, it is of benefit to the participants to initiate empirically assessed learning methods that integrate this new material with new ACC and PST elements through Motor Skill Learning (MSL) theory.

Method - A plan for artefact creation

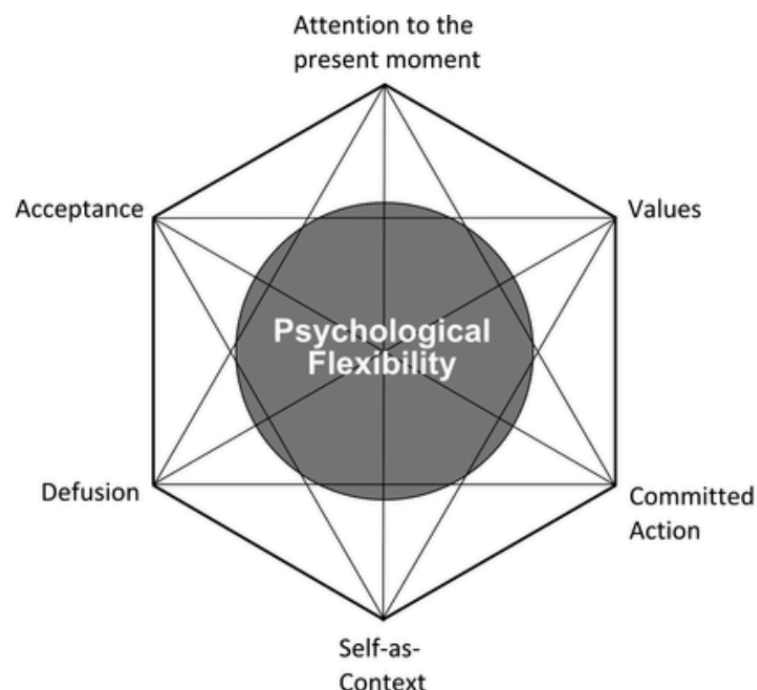
Literature analysis and integration of this information to create an artefact are two distinctly different processes, thus two different frameworks are required. In the artefact creation process I applied a combination of the aforementioned EBMgt framework (Janati et al., 2018) and the hermeneutic cycle (Kakkori, 2009; Patterson and Higgs, 2015), moving between theoretical concepts, ACT exercises, PST practises, practical realities of MT industry and the research question (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2001).

In this next section, as suggested by the module handbook (UWTSD, 2024) I will apply Nelson's model (2006) to explain the artefact and its creation process. Through Nelson's model (2006) the following section will explore each theory, how it relates to best practice then how it was interpreted for practical application in the artefact. As ACC is the underpinning theology and the first concept introduced to participants, an assessment of included ACC components will be explored first.

ACC Principles

As explored in a previous essay (Hayes-Crook, 2023), ACC is based on six core principles: contact with the present moment (mindfulness), acceptance of unwanted internal experiences, cognitive defusion, cultivating a transcendent sense of self, identification of one's values and commitment to action consistent with values (Figure 5) (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005; Harris, 2009; Hayes, 2019; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022). Though these elements are interrelated, the artefact's limited time frame makes thorough exploration of all six principals challenging. "ACT for Musicians," suggests students can self-direct their focus towards ACC components that best serve their needs (Juncos and de Pavia a Pona, 2022). Harris (2009) explains not all components are likely to resonate depending on the individual's needs and experience. Considering the time limitations, overall goal of performance preparation and the aforementioned guidance by authors, certain hexaflex processes have been included and excluded based specifically on the MT singer's audition preparation needs. Below is an analysis of how and why these decisions were made and their practical application.

Figure 5 - ACC Principals



Mindfulness

Mindfulness in ACC is a tool used to strengthen and sustain one's attentional focus (Juncos, 2022; Eifert and Forsyth, 2005). This practice aims to improve one's ability to non-judgmentally bring their focus to the present moment (Behan, 2020). It is suggested that when *mindless* (as opposed to *mindful*) one allows thoughts of the past or present to absorb

their attentional focus (Juncos and Markman, 2015). In relation to performance enhancement, if one is reactive to their anxious thoughts and feelings, they may engage in mindless behaviours to try to make anxiety symptoms stop (Zenner et al., 2014; Czajkowski, 2022). This pulls the individual's attention towards their MPA and away from focusing on the important parts of the performance, resulting in poorer execution (Lin et al., 2008; Juncos and Markman, 2015).

A well supported practical method wherein mindfulness is cultivated and improved is meditation (Harris, 2009; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2023). Within the artefact mindfulness through meditation is addressed twofold; initially through the introduction sessions where the theory is explained and in practice where meditation is then integrated. The meditation included in the artefact is an adaptation of those exemplified in “ACT for Musicians” (pg. 52-56). Adaptations include modification of language to directly reflect the MT performer's needs within audition scenarios and combination of body centric and breath centric focuses to mitigate time limitations.

Acceptance

Acceptance and willingness to experience anxiety or distress is an ACC principle that refers to the act of accepting uncomfortable thoughts, feelings and sensations when they arise as opposed to attempting to stop, control or change them (Eifert and Forsyth, 2009 pp. 86; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022). For example, the MT singer experiencing the symptom of breath shortness may feel all consumed by this symptom and thus their focus is pulled away from storytelling and technique. ACC theorises that attempts to control or unwillingness to experience emotional discomfort, causes anxiety, preventing one from building a healthier relationship with these internal experiences (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005; Juncos and Markman, 2015; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022).

In the artefact, acceptance is first explored in “Introduction Session 1” (Appendix 1, p.47) (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022 p.63; Eifert and Forsyth, 2005 p. 156). To support theory to practice learning (Meyers and Jones; Wrenn and Wrenn, 2009), participants are then encouraged to undertake a brief writing exercise to identify any unpleasant internal sensations they may have experienced in audition situations and if or how they attempted to avoid these internal experiences. Written exercises have shown to support improvement of self reflective skills (Lew and Schmidt, 2011) and self regulation (Jafarigohar and Mortazavi, 2013) and inclusion within the artefact aims to provide variety in exercise type.

Acceptance is then revisited in the practice process on Days 2 and 3 (Acceptance exercise p.56). The acceptance exercise is modelled from “Evaluating Effectiveness of your

Emotional Coping Skills” (p. 64) and “Acceptance of Related Thoughts and Feelings” (p. 70) from “ACT for Musicians,” (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona). This exercise aims to clarify what unwanted symptoms the participant has previously experienced in auditions and works to improve their emotional willingness and increase tolerance towards having these unwanted emotions, through non-judgemental exploration (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022).

Defusion

Fusion is a concept in ACC that refers to when thoughts are experienced as literal truths, when in actuality they are constructs of their mind (Eifert and Forsyth, 2005; Harris, 2009). When a thought becomes *fused* it can then dominate one’s attentional space and cause them to react to it as though it were a truth, in turn modifying their behaviour (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022). Additionally, ACC suggests that we may project this thought or feeling on to a completely unrelated circumstance (Hayes, 2011). Though there is no research on the effect of fusion with these negative thoughts in relation to performance, it is suggested (Juncos and Pavia e Pona, 2022 p. 85) it can lead to poor self efficacy, avoidant behaviour and intensify anxiety symptoms.

To modify this negative cognitive pattern, ACC suggests introducing the concept of defusion; the practice of recognizing thoughts as passing mental events, not as absolute truths (Hayes, 2011). The concept of defusion is introduced following acceptance in the “Introduction Session 1” then immediately applied to the participant through “Defusion exercise 1” (Appendix 1 p. 56). “Defusion exercise 1” encourages the participant to identify their own fused thoughts, then to create distance between themselves and the thought through emotion and idea labelling (Juncos and e Pavia de Pona, p. 87). Based on MSL, the practice of articulating fused thoughts is then repeated on Days 1-4 of the program to encourage participants to engage with challenging thoughts and improve their practice of defusing them in relation to the material they are preparing.

Research demonstrates that cultivation of these three aforementioned skills (mindfulness, acceptance and defusion) can improve distress intolerance, support effective use of mental energy, and increase focus (Feliu-Soler et al., 2018; Levin, Krafft and Twohig, 2020). A number of studies have demonstrated an improvement in performance after individuals receive training in a combination of these processes (Brown et al., 2011; Glassman et al, 2016; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022). It is suggested that the cultivation of these three particular skills can improve “artistic presence” or “flow” which is described as the state wherein one is completely present in performance (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022 p. 79;

Csikzentmihahyi, 1975). This state is often associated with low levels of self criticism, the sensation of achievement and positivity (Van der Linden, 2021).

From a practical perspective, these concepts focus on different aspects of the performer's experience and the exercises used in practice differ in terms of subject matter as well as exercise type (writing exercise, meditation, imagery practice). Variety in topic as well method aims to support participant's individual learning styles and performance needs (Kenny, 2005; Hatami, 2012).

It is at this point “self as context” is often introduced in ACC (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022; Harris, 2009). When considering the practical applications of “self as context exercises,” many exercises were extremely similar in both content and execution to those used in defusion (Appendix 11, p. 67). To reduce repetition of exercises, information overload (Wren and Wren, 2009), remain within time constraints and mitigate overwhelm in the audition preparation process this concept was omitted. Though omission of this concept is likely to provide participants with a less holistic understanding of ACC, based on practitioner experience, its inclusion would not benefit the specific needs of the audition preparation process.

Identifying and Aligning with values

Often this is explained as two separate concepts (values/committed action) (Harris, 2009; Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022) but as they are heavily interrelated, identifying the value and immediately exploring how it could be integrated into practice provided practical clarity. In ACC, performer values are defined as unique performance elements that hold intrinsic value to the participant (Eifter and Forsyth, 2005). ACT proposes that when one encounters distracting symptoms or fused thoughts, instead of allowing it to fill their attentional focus, the individual should accept and defuse the thought, then refocus their attention on their values instead (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022).

This element in particular has demonstrated efficacy in improving overall performance scores (Juncos and Markman, 2015; Juncos et al., 2017). By increasing engagement with valued actions individuals are introduced to new patterns of behaviour that support more beneficial cognitive patterns (Harris, 2009).

In “Introduction Session 1,” of the artefact, participants are encouraged to identify their performance values (Eifter and Forsyth, 2005, Russ, 2009; Hayes, 2011), then create an audition mission statement. The act of organising values to a “mission statement” is inspired

by the values exercise on page 131 of “ACT for Musicians” (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022). The mission statement serves as a simple yet clear directive that supports participants identification of daily goals and reminder of the performer they aim to be when negative cognitions come up.

As ACC is the underpinning theology behind the artefact, it is critical participants understand the concepts and methods behind the ACC exercises. This is achieved through the psychoeducation sessions and integration of concepts into practice. However the structure of the practice component and material preparation are based on PST practice. This essay will now examine those elements and how they function within the ACC framework.

Self Regulated Learning

Most MT training programs focus on the cultivation of performance skills (singing, dancing, acting) but do not provide learning strategies to support the execution of these skills under time limitation and pressure as is required in audition scenarios. This demonstrates a clear gap in audition education (Nielsen, 2004; Jorgensen, 1996). Self Regulated Learning (SRL) provides participants with a framework with which to structure their rehearsal (Zimmerman, 1992). SRL improves cognition by creating visibility within the learning process (Brenner, 2022). By setting smaller more achievable goals, individuals are more aware of their success which has shown to improve self-efficacy (Locke and Latham, 1987; Butler and Carter, 2004; Stoeger and Ziegler, 2008; Zimmerman and Schunk, 2011; Miksza and Tan, 2015) accelerate skill improvement (Miksza, Blackwell and Roseth, 2018) and improve adherence to goals (Lopez- inigues and McPherson, 2020).

Zimmerman’s Model (Appendix 5, p. 62) for SRL best fits the needs of inquiry as its simplicity allows for easy comprehension and manageable implementation (Moos and Ringdahl, 2012). Though other models may include a deeper exploration of the subprocesses, these elements are not necessary for practical use (Brenner, 2022).

Learning is a highly individualised and complex process and application of a new practice method over one that has been heavily developed over a number of years is potentially an unappealing challenge (Osborne, Osborne and Baranoff, 2020). To mitigate this and allow for freedom of learning methods, the SRL component of the artefact is constructed more as a guide and less as instructions, allowing for the individual to select and explore their own goals within each section. SRL in the artefact is used daily in its three distinct phases: pre-practice, practice and post-practice (Zimmerman and Bandura, 1992).

In the pre-practice portion the participant sets their goals for the practice session based on their audition mission statement. Miksza and Tan (2015) emphasise that goals should be few, specific and attainable. During the practice portion, rehearsal is executed in an attempt to achieve those goals. In post-practice the participant assesses how successful they were in attainment of those goals (Zimmerman and Bandura, 1992; Zimmerman, 1989).

A key element of SRL is the identification and frequent referencing to goal setting. Research strongly suggests that specific, challenging, self referenced and hierarchical goals tend to most efficiently result in the attainment of tasks (Locke and Latham, 1990, 2002). In relation to the overall intention of PE and MPA reduction, it is the self regulatory and confidence building effects of constructive goal setting that must be considered.

Zimmerman and Clearly (2001) found that expert basketball players who set specific training goals for themselves often attributed failure to inappropriate strategy whereas novice players who applied the mentality of “doing their best ” (p.203) attributed error to their lack of ability or personal failure. The distancing of one's outcome from their person mirrors the aforementioned goal of defusion explored in ACT. The overall intention of both these methods is to create space between the individual and their thoughts, feelings or outcome of their actions. In doing this, failure is less likely to be personalised (Zimmerman and Clearly; Harris, 2009).

This reciprocal relationship between self efficacy and goal setting could greatly support the audition preparation process. Thus a learning system to support both of these elements (SRL) was used as a foundational tool in structuring the artefact.

Pre- performance Routine

Within the daily execution of planned practice, participants are encouraged to integrate a pre-performance routine (PPR). Though most supportive research for PPRs comes from athletics (Jones, Hanton and Swain, 1994; Connaughton et al., 2002; Clark and Williamon, 2011), Osborne, Greene and Immel (2014) assessed a PST program for musicians, based on Don Greene’s “Performance Success.” Results demonstrated a decrease in MPA, improvement in concentration, preparation, courage and focus. Central to this program was **centring down**, a process initially designed by Dr. Robert Nideffer and modified for the artist’s use (Greene, 2002) that aims to help performers effectively channel energy under stressful circumstances. The process of “centring down” is a series in steps wherein one shifts their focus between body relaxation, breath, connection to the centre of their body then to the task at hand (Greene, 2002). For a clear breakdown of the process and scripts please see Appendix 7 and 8 (p.63-64). Kageyama (2007) assessed the efficacy of centring down and did not find any significant increase in PE or MPA reduction. Though well supported by

personal recounts in "Performance Success," (Greene, 2002) the research on the use of PPRs for anxiety reduction or PE in musicians is weak (Kageyama, 2007). That said, auditions can be a highly dysregulating and uncomfortable experience as one is often performing for strangers in a foreign space, executing new and challenging material and in a situation of high career and monetary stakes (Shurtleff, 2005; Saunders, 2019). An exercise that can be done immediately before performance to centre one's focus on the task at hand is specifically appealing to the MT performer's audition challenges. There are four key elements that contribute to why centring down specifically is the PPR included in this artefact:

1. It can be done quickly and inconspicuously in the audition room immediately prior to singing. Greene explains that in the process of learning to centre one should begin by taking a few minutes to execute the skill, but with practice it can be sped up to only requiring a couple of seconds (2002).
2. It is a skill that can be learned and practised alongside the preparation of material. In order to integrate this concept within the artefact, MSL theory was applied. Initially participants learn to centredown by using different guides that slowly truncate the process and increase its use (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Introduction Session 1	Introduction Session 2	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Centring down Audio 1	Centring down audio 1	centring Down Audio 1	centring Down Audio 2	Centring Down Audio 2	Self lead centring down	Self Lead centring down
3 min	3 min	3 min	1 min	1 min	10-30 sec	10 sec
Daily	Daily	Daily	2 x daily	2 x daily	5 x during practice	5-15 x during practice

3. Though the process of centring down is quite prescribed, what the individual chooses to focus on in this process, remains up to them. This supports the participant's individual values and integration of mission statements in a daily practice, reinforcing the ACC concepts that were previously explored (Kenny, 2005).
4. Within the centring down process the participant is encouraged to consider the ACC processes that most greatly align with their current challenges and to commit to that process

in performance or rehearsal. This encourages the active application of ACC in practice and allows for ACC integration within a PST component.

Exposure Therapy

Exposure therapy is a concept explored in both PST and ACC however it serves different purposes depending on the lens through which it is assessed (Juncos and Pavia e Pona, 2022; Greene, 2003). In ACC, participant's are intentionally exposed to MPA stimulus and aim to accept the sensation as opposed to fighting it (Harris, 2009). Participants are then encouraged to refocus on their values and the task at hand (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022). However in PST, the participant intentionally invokes the symptoms or discomfort to improve their skill to a level at which they are unaffected (Greene, 2002; Cina, 2021). For example: performing a piece while running up and down stairs to mimic the MPA symptom of elevated heart rate. From the perspective of the MT performer preparing for an audition, it is likely both these approaches can benefit the participant. Learning to accept the discomfort (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022) while simultaneously improving their capacity to perform through it (Greene, 2003) aims to benefit the skill as well as self efficacy. In the artefact, exposure therapy is only integrated on days four and five of the process, once the material has been adequately rehearsed through SRL and the ACC cognitive processes have been practised in relation to the material. This aims to mitigate potential reduction of self efficacy and confidence (Greene, 2002).

Ethics

As both exposure therapy and elements of ACC intentionally induce or recall MPA symptoms the ethical responsibility of the artefact must be considered (Denscombe, 2003). Musical performance and recollection of past performing experiences can elicit an upsetting emotional response (Kenny, 2005) and invoking said memories through exercises or exposure therapy could be a triggering experience. As the artefact is self led and a psychotherapist is not involved, if the artefact becomes emotionally triggering participants are encouraged to cease continuation and are guided towards resources such as psychotherapists and more medically qualified support (Appendix 1, p.46). Additionally, in accordance with beneficence and non-maleficence (Gillian, 1985) the program is designed to maximise benefits and reduce harm. This is considered through program design as the most emotionally challenging aspects come only once foundational concepts have been integrated, the use of informed consent at the beginning of the programs Appendix 1, p.46) , and warnings before exercises that can invoke upsetting memories (Appendix, 1 p.46). Participants are encouraged to use their own discretion throughout the program (Juncos and

de Pavia e Pona), if exercises lie beyond their comfort they are encouraged to omit them and continue only with those that feel appropriate.

Conclusion

Through the creation of this artefact, it was critical to constantly refer to the inquiry at hand while critically assessing the validity of the research, as to not be distracted by the element of creative practice (Nelson, 2013). Through reflection, (Driscoll, 1994) I recognized at the outset of this project, I had been naive to the number of elements that had to be considered in order to meet the scientific standard of the program. Specifically, educational theories and their relevance. Additionally, as an inside researcher I have an intimate understanding of MT components in my specific area that were challenging to validate. This hurdle provided new realms for my personal development as a learner and supported mitigation of bias as each aspect that was true to my experience as an inside researcher still required scientific analysis, literary justification and triangulation from various academically sound sources

In summary, I created this artefact based on an ACC framework that integrated elements of PST and active preparation of performance material. Specific realities of the MT performer's experience were heavily considered to best cater to the needs of the intended subject.

Though by no means is this program a fail safe method for performance improvement or MPA mitigation, it provides a clear detailed starting place for MT professionals to begin their PE journey. As MPA is heavily personalised it is highly likely not all components will resonate with all participants, but the program serves as an introduction to an empirically assessed method of audition preparation that simultaneously supports material preparation, MPA reduction and performance enhancement.

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APPENDIX

ARTEFACT - PEP

Informed Consent Statement:

The PEP program is based on the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Psychological Skills Training. The program aims to mitigate Music Performance Anxiety and support performance enhancement for Musical Theatre Singers preparing for an in person singing audition. This is achieved through education, meditations, written exercises, practice routines, pre performance routines and exposure therapy. Throughout the program, memories of past musical performances which may be triggering may come up. Should this occur participants are encouraged to omit exercises that are upsetting. Resources for mental help are attached below and participants are encouraged to access them should they feel necessary.

Resources:

211 Central - 1-888-340-1001

Distress Centre GTA - 416-408-4357 (call or text)

CAMH Urgent Care - 416-535-8501

<https://camh-virtualurgentcare.vertoengage.com/engage/generic-open-clinic?key=urgentcare-booking>

Performance Enhancement Program

Hello! Welcome to the Performance Enhancement Program (PEP) for Musical Theatre Performers.

PEP was created to give professional musical theatre performers a clear, detailed audition preparation programme. PEP is based on two key performance enhancement theories that have proven to improve confidence and preparation, enhance creativity and in turn actually improve performances.

Over the two introduction sessions we will discuss the fundamental concepts PEP is based on to better equip you with the knowledge you need to carry out the daily exercises.

PEP timeline:

Intro 1- 30 min

Intro 2- 30 min

Practice Days 1-5

Preparation -20 min

Rehearsal - 40 min- 1 hour

Reflection - 10 min

Introduction Session 1

The goal of this program is to improve artistic presence through mindful acceptance of the present moment and defusion from the mind's negative distractions. Much of this is based on the work of David Juncos, Elvira de Pavia e Pona, George Eifert, John Forsyth, Russ Harris and Steven Hayes.

PEP is founded on the theory that how we think critically influences how we perform, particularly when in the high stakes, competitive nature of the audition process. If we practice singing, acting and dancing in order to refine and improve our skills we can also practice our thought patterns in order to become more present, confident, self assured and grounded and in turn improve our skills to better meet the needs of performing. Today's session will introduce you to the concept of acceptance and commitment and provide you with skills to begin to implement into your daily practice.

Today's Session will consider 4 key concepts

- Mindfulness with the present moment
- Acceptance and willingness to experience anxiety and distress
- Defusion, separating yourself from your thoughts
- Identifying and aligning with values

ACC does not attempt to control or change the unwanted sensations and feelings in relation to auditions and instead it encourages the performer to accept those sensations and direct focusing your energies on what you love about performing and what makes you an engaging, unique performer.

The concept of accepting anxiety symptoms may seem counterintuitive when your goal is to reduce those symptoms. But research suggests that programs like (CBT) that attempt to minimise the experience of anxiety do not actually result in performance improvement. And ACT has shown to not only reduce the discomfort caused by performing but to also improve confidence and performance level.

Why is this approach useful?

What have you previously done to reduce the anxiety that comes with performing? Tried to force your heart to slow down? Repeated your lines over and over in your head? Contracted your muscles to make your hands stop shaking? Have any of these methods actually stopped the feelings of distress and anxiety?

ACC suggests the energy that you are using to control MPA that is naturally occurring (for good reason) is being wasted. Your mental efforts are going towards stopping something that isn't going to be stopped. Instead if we can accept that those feelings are going to be there (and that's okay) and alternatively direct our energy to being present, focusing on our acting choices or executing our technique we will be better performers and ultimately less ruled by our experience of anxiety

INSERT hand metaphor maybe??

So how do we actually go about applying this new way of thinking?

There are 5 key principles we are going to explore through daily practices and exercises

Mindfulness - improving being present in the current moment, not thinking about the future or past. Being present is a skill. If you consider your best performances, I imagine you were completely immersed in your performance. The experience of being "in it" is something we crave as performers. A daily practice to improve your ability to "be present" is key in terms of

accessing acting skills. Additionally improving our ability to be mindful instead allows your attention to be pulled to the symptoms of anxiety, self judgments during performance, and other surrounding diversions are distractions pulling you from being immersed in performance. By practising meditation we can improve our focus and increase the likelihood of feeling “in it” in the high stakes auditions we encounter. From the perspective of experiencing MPA research suggests that musicians who react to anxiety in a judgement or unaccepting way have shown to receive poorer performance ratings than those who mindfully accept their anxiety. This is because judging, attempting to control anxiety or mindlessly reacting to anxiety expends energy and focus that could be put towards focusing on the performance at hand.

Through PEP we will work to cultivate our mindfulness through a daily meditation practice. Please see the audio file attached below! This mediation can be done

Acceptance - when we come into contact with discomfort it is our natural reaction to try to avoid it right? This is also true with thoughts, memories, sensations. In the short-term avoiding these internal sensations usually works, we don't have to feel icky in the moment. However in the long run avoiding these thoughts and feelings creates a pattern of avoidance. Unwillingness to experience discomfort contributes greatly to the development and maintenance of dysfunctional and disordered behaviour like performance anxiety and audition stress. ACC believes that attempts to control or avoid emotional discomfort is not the solution but the problem - if you are unwilling to experience symptoms of emotional discomfort you'll continually struggle with them, causing more frequent, more intense discomfort.

“What you resist, persists”

Some examples of this in relation to musical theatre might be

“I don't want to do this because I am going to be so nervous”

“I can't sing as well when I am nervous”

“My anxiety makes acting through song impossible”

The first exercise we will do is identify how we may try to control our anxiety and avoid anxiety.

The following exercise discusses past experiences, if you feel distress, please do not continue the exercise

Below write down any ways you may try to avoid or control uncomfortable internal experience and rate how successful these methods have previously been.

Now how do we increase our ability to accept discomfort? We need to practice being accepting and open to any and all emotions, thoughts and internal experience, especially the unwanted ones. This is a practice that ACC suggests is best practised all day everyday, when anxiety or sadness, MPA symptoms pop up, try to accept those feelings as they are.

Additionally on days 3-6 of the training program we will explore an Acceptance Exercise together to start contextualising how this practice can improve the audition experience. If you are willing to have unwanted thoughts you will struggle less with them

Defusion - Our thoughts are not reality. In language driven society we often learn to experience our thoughts as completely true realities. When a thought is perceived to be true it can dominate the front and centre of our minds, governing our attentional space. When this happens we might be compelled to react to this thought as though it were a real, true fact. Consequently this thought is not only dominating our mind but also our behaviour. In practice, this might look like; distracting yourself from practising or considering challenging thoughts or memories, exercising the thought away, sleeping it off or using drugs or alcohol. We call these thoughts that we perceive to be reality “fused” thoughts.

Some examples of fused thoughts or experiences might be

“I must not make a mistake”

“If I mess up my agent will be mad”

“I’m too stressed to practice”

Memory of a bad audition

Memory of shortness of breath affecting your voice

The alternative option is to recognize that thoughts are passing mental events, that may or may not be true. Instead allowing these negative thoughts fill your focus we can learn to recognize thoughts passing through our minds as merely temporary ideas and choose to redirect your energy towards the task at hand. The act of learning to recognize thoughts as just thoughts and distancing ourselves from them will be called “defusion”

There are a few ways we will explore defusion through the PEP program. One of which we will dive into now:

The first step in defusion is to notice when negative, anxious thoughts are occurring and to identify it. You can do this by saying, thinking or writing down the thought and recognizing that is you mind having this notion

“ I notice I am having the thought that...”

“ my mind is having the thought that.....”

“I notice my mind is having the memory of.....”

This can also be transferred to our actions and emotions in relation to a upcoming performance event

“ I notice I am having the feeling of (sadness, fear, distress)”

“ I notice my body is having the sensation of (shortness of breath, shakiness, distraction)”

The larger the distance you can place between yourself and the thought the more effectively you will be able recognize that your thoughts are not reality sooner you will be able to choose not to focus on them.

The following exercise discusses past experiences, if you feel distress, please do not continue the exercise

Take a few moments now and consider the troubling thoughts that occur for you in relation to auditioning. Trying writing them down in a way that distances them from you and attributes them to your mind.

It is not the goal to eliminate these negative thoughts. That's impossible. They are our minds trying to protect us. Instead we don't want them to overwhelm us. The next step in this process is when those negative thoughts pop in our mind:

1. Notice the thought is occurring
2. Recognize it is your mind having the thought, not you
3. Thank your mind for the thought
4. Refocus your attention on your goals

An example of this in practice might be
"I am going to get nervous and crack on the the E"

1. I just the thought my anxiety is going to ruin my audition
2. My mind thinks my anxiety is going to ruin my audition
3. Thank you for that thought mind but I think I'll be just fine
4. Re focus on my moment before

Some other ways we can defuse thoughts are by

- singing or rapping them
- saying them in a weird voice
- putting it in a song
- writing them down on cue cards and carrying them in our pocket all day (you can have troublesome thoughts and not respond to them)

Values and Committed Action

At this point we have discussed how our presence, focus and therefore, performance will be improved if we can distance ourselves from negative, distracting thoughts, right?

However, that attention needs to go somewhere. We will now consider how we can refocus our attention in a way that helps improve our performance and supports being mindfully present.

ACC believes that all performers have unique values. Here the term values refers to an activity, event, person, place or experience that has intrinsic worth to you and when you are engaged in that activity you experience a sense of meaningfulness, belongingness or excitement. Values however are not the same as goals. Goals are concrete measurable actions whereas values may inspire goals; they are ongoing actions that guide us towards the behaviour that aligns with what we deem important.

Some examples of performance related values might be:

- Connecting with the audience
- Having strong technique
- being a leader
- Being well prepared and rehearsed
- Connecting with scene partners
- Telling a complete story
- Making bold choices

- Emotionally impacting the audience
- Growing as an artist

We will now identify your unique performance values and consider how they can be applied to the PEP process to better inform your upcoming audition

Let's consider the following questions:

- What is important to you as a musical theatre performer?
- How do you want to be remembered?
- In the past, when you felt proud of a performance, what were you doing?
- What are some future performance goals you have?
- When you felt most engaged with your performance what were you doing?
- If you gave up musical theatre, what would you miss the most?
- What do you crave to do more of in performance?

Now we will create your audition mission statement. This is a phrase to help solidify your performance values for practical application in your audition preparation process.

I value being a “adjective, noun” by “example of valued action” and/or “example of valued action” and/ or “example of valued action”

Ex.

I value being a connected and bold performer by being prepared enough to focus on storytelling, making bold interesting choices and by committing to the emotional journey of the character.

Now we want to consider what are the actual steps we can take in order to feel that we have done the most we can to present a mission statement in the audition room.

As actors, it is key that in the audition we are present, open to offers and able to “let go” .

Thus depending on the type of audition, coming in with a completely set performance may or may not be beneficial.

So we will want to consider what steps can be taken **during the preparation process** to best support our mission statement.

Try to identify overall goals that can be achieved in preparation for the audition that will align your work with your artist mission statement. Consider how you can make these goals as concrete and actionable as possible. Time frame and number of repetitions are great ways to do this.

Some examples for the above mission statement might be:

- be completely comfortable with the material by dedicating 60 minutes to learning it over 3 days
- spend 2 hours learning the music to be specific and clear with the vocal technique required
- create a clear character backstory
- explore 3 different moments before and after to select the most interesting, bold choices
- meditate as the character daily for 5 min
- identify 3 key points of choice in the song and rehearse them

There are no right or wrong ways to do this, what is important is that over the audition preparation time, when you are distracted by negative thoughts you refocus your energy on working towards one of these goals.

A final consideration before we complete this introduction session is that there will be barriers that arise and make this program challenging to complete, either in restructuring your thought processes, or in working towards aligning your performance with your values. Take a moment and consider what these barriers might be. Aim for at least 5. Now consider how you might overcome them.

le. I'm too busy to do this with my Joe job

What do you value more? Money from your Joe job or executing an audition you feel proud of.

If you decide to commit to your audition carve out 20 min a day to focus on this program This program is challenging, it asks you to reconsider how your mind works, and rediscover the audition preparation process, however I venture to say musical theatre is an extremely challenging field and you deserve every chance at success. So by trying out this program you are simply giving yourself a better chance to reach your goals.

Introduction Session 2

Last session you were introduced to the key concepts of ACC that will be practised in the PEP program.

PEP believes that if we understand why we do something there is a better chance of it being practised. So today we will focus on some concepts that are taken from **psychological skills training** and have been reinterpreted for the audition process. This is largely based on the research of Barry Zimmerman. Psychological Skills Training is the basis of numerous peak performance programs that athletes competing at international levels use.

Whereas the goal of yesterday's session was to introduce a new way of thinking in relation to performance, the goal of almost every element of PST that PEP uses is to improve your self-efficacy. Self efficacy means the belief that you have the skills required to succeed.

The key elements that we will discuss today are:

- Planned practice + Practice Goals
- Centring down
- Exposure Therapy

Planned Practice & Practice Goals

So much of the work actors do has to be self guided. With all that an actor has to keep in order, knowing how to best practice in a way that prepares you technically as well as emotionally and mentally can be so overwhelming. This program does that for you. Based on scientific research we will give you a program that will help you rehearsal efficiently and effectively.

During this program you will breakdown each rehearsal period into three parts:

- ☐ Preparation
- ☐ Practice
- ☐ Reflection

Preparation: Give yourself 5-10 minutes before your rehearsal time. Consider your artist statement and your preparation goals. Now set between 2 and 4 goals that you can accomplish in this rehearsal today. Write them down in your practice journal

Some examples might be:

- learn the music correctly
- do 3 passes with a clear moment before
- set my breaths
- become comfortable singing without the melody guide by practice it with 5 times then without 5 times
- practice the full piece with 3 different scene partners or 3 different intentions to discover the most interesting choice

These goals should change for every practice depending on your artistic process and where you are in terms of proximity to audition date.

For example, I like to feel completely prepared with my technique and music before I layer in my acting choices. An example of how I might approach this may be:

Day 1 might be:

- learn music
- memorize music
- set breaths and phrasing

However Day 5 might be:

- rehearse 4 times full out with 4 different scene partners
- decide on a clear moment before

For an actor that likes to approach the acting first they might reverse the goals of the two days. What is important is you list a small number of achievable goals that work towards aligning with your artist statement

Practice: Execute your practice session, with focus on your practice goals

Reflection: Take 2-5 minutes and in your practice journal assess how your rehearsal went.

Did you achieve your practice goals? If not, why? Can they be simplified or broken down for tomorrow's practice session?

This reflection practice may also occasionally involve thoughts or feelings that your mind is telling you. Some days of the program will focus more heavily on training our defusion skills. What is important is you track your progress in preparing for the audition. By breaking down our large tasks and goals into actionable chunks we are more easily able to actually see our progress and are more aware of the time we have committed to ourselves and our work.

This does two really great things:

1. Demonstrates our progress, making us feel accomplished and improving our confidence (consciously or subconsciously)
2. Helps us more realistically evaluate where we are in the preparation process so we are using our time and energy most effectively not getting stuck in habitual loops or hyper fixating

Exposure Therapy

The following exercise discusses past experiences, if you feel distress, please do not continue the exercise

This is an intense sounding term for simulating audition sensations in the rehearsal process. On the final days of this program, once you are comfortable with your material and creative choices we will induce some of the symptoms of anxiety and practice performing through them. For example many singers struggle with the anxiety symptom of shortness of breath, this is an issue for singers particularly because shortness of breath affects registration, phrasing, subglottic pressure, and phonation and therefore can have a destabilising effect on the unprepared singer.

We can simulate the symptom of shortness of breath by running stairs, or doing jumping jacks before or while singing our song. If you can get through a song while doing jumping jacks you surely can get through the song while nervous right! This is another great way to improve our confidence in ourselves and the material.

More examples of how to emulate different anxiety symptoms will be suggested on Days 4 and 5.

Centring Down

This practice is inspired by the work of Don Greene (2003).

A common practice athletes use immediately prior to running a race or making a throw is the use of a pre performance routine. This is a routine that is done immediately before performance. The pre performance routine is something that is initially introduced in rehearsal and done either before every pass of the piece or at the beginning of the practice session. The repetitive process of doing this routine every time before performing helps bring the elements that have been trained in rehearsal into the performance by training the performers muscle memory.

The pre performance routine we will be using in this program is based on a practice used by Don Greene in his book "Performance Success: Performing your Best Under Pressure"

Centering aims to shift the focus from left to right brain. Is a focusing strategy

What is great about entering down is it is quick and can be done right before performing a song or monologue in front of a panel.

We will now start our first centering down practice!

At first centring should take a little while with practice we will slowly start to speed up the process till it can be done in a few seconds immediately before performing

Sit down with your hands relaxed at your sides, head tilted slightly down.

Form a clear intention of what you intend to do- this may be for a single pass at a piece as you would do prior to performing in an audition

Some examples may be : I want to learn the words to my audition pieces

Now pick a precise point below your eye level in front of you to focus on this will be called your “focus point”

Let your eyes soft focus on this point and direct your attention towards your breathing.

Breathe slowly and deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth. Do this for 3 to 7 breaths.

As you continue to breathe slowly and deeply scan your body for tension. Releasing with each breath.

Now we will locate your centre. You're centre is in the middle of your body roughly two inches below your belly button and two inches into your body. Focus on that area of your torso. Feel solid in that space . Feel where you connect to the chair and earth beneath you Connect to your centre and breath for another 5-7 breaths

Now think of a word or phrase that will guide your upcoming rehearsal or performance, accumulate all that energy from your centre, feel it come up through your body and send it towards your focus point.

Here is a condensed order of the cues

1. Focus down, hands relaxed
2. Intention
3. Focus point
4. Soften focus
5. Breathe
6. Release tension
7. Locate centre
8. Breath
9. Guide word
10. Release energy forward

Audition Preparation Program

Each day of this program you will apply exercises that come from either an ACC or PST background. The goal of these exercises is to train your brain and muscles memory efftely so that when it comes time for the audition you feel confident, prepared, grounded and are able to let go and enjoy the experience

Each day consists of pre practice and practice exercises.

- ☐ Materials
- ☐ Notebook

Day 1

Pre- practice 1 (20 min)

- Goal Setting (5 min)

In your notebook consider the upcoming audition you are preparing for and your artist statement. How can this audition be an opportunity to align with our artist statement? Try to set three overall goals that you will work towards accomplishing through the preparation and

execution of this audition. Try not to make the goals outcome based. For example the goal to “get the part” is not useful as “getting the part is dependent on numerous factors that you can not control. However, goals like “be prepared” “connect to my scene partner” “have interesting choices” “be technically proficient “ are goals that can be achieved regardless of the outcome, casting decisions, or other factors beyond your control.

Once you have decided on 3-5 overall goals, consider how these goals can become more tangible in the rehearsal process. We want you to feel free and open in the audition to take offers that come your ways so consider how these goals can be measured over the next five days

- Complete the daily mindfulness meditation

Practice 1 (20-90 min)

- In your journal set three specific goals that can be achieved in your practice today
- Centre down using centre down audio 1
- Execute practice session

Post Practice 1 (15 min)

- Reflection - Once you are done practice assess where you are in relation to your daily goals, were you successful? Can you check any off your preparation list? Consider how you might be able to make the goals more clear or attainable in the future
- Defusion - did any negative thoughts come up in your practice

le.

”I can’t sing that”

“I’ll never get all those acting beats”

“I auditioned for this panel before and it didn’t go well”

Take a moment to write down these thoughts then. Below add “my mind is having the thought that”

This might feel silly, but this practice will help you distance yourself from negative thoughts and beliefs and allow you to be more present in performance.

Day 2

Pre-Practice (20-30 min)

- Daily Meditation
- Acceptance Exercise

The following exercise discusses past experiences, if you feel distress, please do not continue the exercise

Consider a past performance or audition where you felt particularly overwhelmed, bothered or affected by anxieties. What were the manifestations of anxiety? Consider the following symptoms and try to identify which ones you experience most often or intensely

- Shortness of breath

- increased heart rate
- heart palpitations
- muscles tightness (what part of your body feel most affected?)
- cold or sweaty hands
- shaking in hands
- knees or torso
- lightheadedness
- Forgetting lines
- Pitchiness
- Chest tightness
- Distraction
- Hyperfixation

Now take one of these symptoms, close your eyes and imagine it, try to manifest the symptoms in your body. Imagine the pressure of an audition. Focus on that one symptom. Where is it in your body? Does it move or stay stationary? How does it feel? Is it painful or heavy? Sharp or dull? Does it change? Now breathe deep into your centre and accept that feeling. That feeling or symptom is a part of you. That symptom is not going to be the difference between whether you get the job or not, in fact no one but you is even going to know it's happening. Take 5 deep centring breaths into the affected area. Imagine the sensation of the symptoms spreading through your body. Do not try to push it away or minimise it. Simply practice accepting it as it is and existing in its discomfort. Once you feel you have made some peace with this symptom, take a deep breath and release the focus. Congrats you have completed your first acceptance exercise

- Plan Practice- set 3 to 5 specific achievable goals for your practice session

Practice

- Centre down Audio 2
- Execute practice session

Post- Practice

- Reflection - Once you are done practice assess where you are in relation to your daily goals, were you successful? Can you check any off your preparation list? Consider how you might be able to make the goals more clear or attainable in the future (5 min)
- Defusion - did any negative thoughts come up in your practice, repeat the defusion exercise from Day 1. It is critical you are honest with yourself (5 min)

Day 3

Pre-Practice

- Daily Meditation
- Acceptance Exercise
- Plan practice

Practice

- Centre down Audio 2
- Execute practice session

Post Practice

- Reflection - Once you are done practice assess where you are in relation to your daily goals, were you successful? Can you check any off your preparation list? Consider how you might be able to make the goals more clear or attainable in the future (5 min)
- Defusion - did any negative thoughts come up in your practice, repeat the defusion exercise from Day 1. It is critical you are honest with yourself (5 min)

Day 4

Pre Practice

- Daily Mediation
- Plan Practice

Practice

- Centre down without audio guide
- Execute Practice Session
 - In this practice session we are going to introduce centring down as a pre performance routine. Every time you go to perform a full pass at your piece, centre down. Aim for this to happen a minimum of 5 times in the practice session today. You may start to feel that you do not need the guide words, great! The quicker and more personal this process can be, the more effective

Exposure therapy time!

The following exercise discusses past experiences, if you feel distress, please do not continue the exercise

You should now feel in a place where you are quite comfortable with both the piece and the character. We will now intentionally introduce the symptoms of anxiety into your practice so you can experience what it is like to perform through the discomfort. Here it is important you use the stimulus that is most challenging for you. If cold, shaking hands isn't a symptom that annoys you, holding ice through your rehearsal isn't likely to benefit you. Below are a few exposures that are most beneficial to singers

Post Practice

- Reflect on your success in achieving your goals in practice today. Also assess your experience with exposure- did you surprise yourself at all? Was singing while running easier or harder than you imagined?

Day 5

Pre Practice

- Daily Meditation
- Plan Practice

Practice

- Centredown without audio guide
- Execute practice , this time centring down before every single pass of the material
- Exposure Therapy- If this was a useful exercise for you yesterday, do it again!

Post Practice

- Reflect on the practice session
- Audition goals - Come back to the audition preparation goals you set on Day 1. How was your success? Are there any changes you can make now or next time? If you didn't reach all the goals, that is okay. Adopting this preparation is a process and it can take time to identify which goals are most attainable and beneficial for you.

- Now consider what you aim to achieve from the audition tomorrow,

Appendix 2- Comparison of assessed MPA mitigation strategies

[illegible]

Appendix 3 - MT Audition break down of past 6 months

Audition	Request Date	Audition Date	Days to prepare
1	April 8 2024	April 11 2024	3
2	March 26 2024	March 28 2024	2
3	March 13 2024	March 19 2026	6
4	Feb 1 2024	Feb 4	3
5	Jan 2 2023	Jan 8 2024	6

6	Dec 8 2023	Dec 14 2024	5
7	Dec 6	Dec 13	7
8	Nov 13	Nov 16	3
9	Nov 2	Nov 9	7
10	Oct 15	Oct 21	6

Average = 4.8 days between audition request and audition dates

Appendix 4- O'Leary Strategy

1. Gather Relevant texts
2. Develop an Organizational and management scheme (Adams framework for categorization)
3. Make copies for annotations (unnecessary as I am working from in a digital medium)
4. Assess authenticity of documents
5. Explore documents agenda and bias
6. Explore background informations (tone, style and purpose)
7. Ask questions about the document (why was it produced, when what type of information)

Appendix 5 - Zimmerman's model for Self Regulated Learning (Zimmerman, 2006)

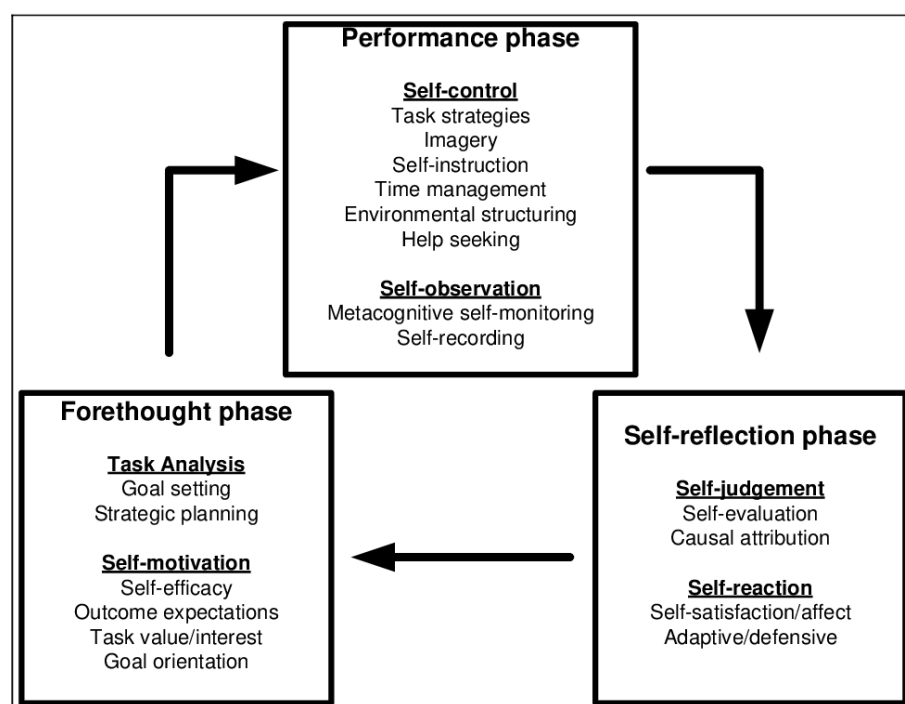


Figure 1. Phases of Self-regulated Learning (Zimmerman, 2006)

Appendix 6 -Daily Meditation (Time of recorded Mediation 9:57)

We will start by finding a comfortable position either sitting or laying down. If you wish to use a pillow to support your head or seat, please go ahead and place it. Let your arms rest gently to your sides. close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, inhaling fully through your nose and releasing the air through your mouth. Notice the sensation of air moving through your nose... shift your attention to the rise and fall of your chest... notice how your body shifts with each inhale and exhalation without attempting to change or control it in any way....sit in this space of gentle acceptance and awareness for a few breaths...what did you notice while mindfully observing your breath, are there places your breath catches, what does the air feel like ..does the air fall in your chest or lower down in your belly... is it shallow or deep, laboured or relaxed...none of these elements need to be changed or adjusted, simply take this time to observe

Now shift your attention to your feet, notice where the material of your clothes makes contact your skin, what sensations do you feel in your feet your toes your heels...shift your focus up to your legs to your calves, shins, knees and thighs, is there tension are they sore, relaxed, tired, energised.... consider your left leg then move your focus to your right leg, do they feel the same? Do they differ? Try not to judge any sensations that pass through simply notice and accept them. You may feel your mind being pulled towards other thoughts and worries, that is okay, simply accept that thought, release it and refocus on being present in your body.

Now move your attention to your pelvis, tummy and chest, are your hips tight, are your abs still knitted together, is there tension... breathe into those spaces ...scan these areas of your

torso for tightness... if you notice tension try not to pull away, simply recognize its presence... consider how it feels, is it sharp, tight, fuzzy, warm, cold...whatever it is ...simply recognize the feeling and accept it in your body...when you feel ready move your shift your focus let's bring it up to your shoulders, down through your biceps and triceps through your elbows to your forearms, wrists and hands, scan these areas, notice how they are today... may feel allow breathe into it and accept it..do your clothes make contact with your skin, how does that feel, now bring that energy, that focus to your neck, your jaw, your mouth, eyes, forehead, feel the skin on the back of your head breathe into these spaces, what sensations make themselves known...now when you are ready... expand your attentional energy to your whole body, scan for any sensations that arise... feel those sensations, breathe into them accept them...accept everything you notice exactly how it is.... When you are ready, bring your focus back to the room you are in... what do you hear, how does it smell, take three gentle, accepting breaths... now when you are ready, open your eyes. As you prepare to go about your day try to bring this grounded, present, accepting energy with you as you move

Appendix 7

Centering Down Audio Script 1- 3 min

Before we begin please consider your training goals, consider a clear precise goal that you can work towards in your session today

Now consider a phrase that will help you facilitate successful performance, some examples for singers might be, support, phrasing, connection to scene partner. Ensure it is not a verb or effect word like "beautiful" or "emotive" this will be your process cue for today

SCRIPT

Begin this practice by either sitting with your hands relaxed in your lap or standing with your feet shoulder width apart, arms hanging heavy at your sides.

Form a clear intention by stating your training goal in clear, specific achievable terms

We will now pick a point of focus, choose a specific, easily findable point below your eye level...now narrow your scope of attention onto this tangible focus point

Now close your eyes, pull your focus towards your breath, breath slowly and deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth. Feel the sensation of breathing, how your body moves with each inhale, try not to judge or change it, accept your body and breath as it is in this moment

We will now locate your centre, in your mind's eye find the space two inches below your navel and two inches into your body. If it helps place your hand there. Get in touch with this space.. Your centre... meanwhile recognize your contact with the ground, feel solid, stabilised, connected. While fully centred take three full breaths

Recall your process cue, the phrase you decided upon to facilitate successful performance, connect it to your breath inhale cue exhale cue.... Combine your process cue with your breath for three cycles

Now accumulate your energy from your base to your centre, feel it grow and compound...bring it up through your torso to your neck and into your head. Now opening your eyes refocus on your focus point. Allow that energy to spin out your eyes like a laser beam towards your focus point. Feel the connection between your centre and your focus point. Recall your intention, let's go!

Appendix 8

Centering Down Audio Script 2- 1 min

Before beginning please identify for goal for today's session

Identify a process cue to achieve that goal

SCRIPT

Stand with your feet hip width distance, arms hanging heavy at your side, tilt your head down slightly

Pick your focus point. It should be in front of you, specific, below your eye level

Relax your eyes to create a soft focus on this point, try to maintain this soft focus instead of closing your eyes

Pull your focus towards your breath, accept how it is today

Locate your centre, feel the connection between your centre and your feet, breathe into it

Recall your process cue. Inhale cue exhale cue

Gather the energy from your feet to your centre, bring it to your chest, through your neck, and out through your eyes to your focus point

Feel the connection between this point and your centre

Let's go!

Appendix 9

Randolph College	Sheridan	St Lawrence College	St Clair College	Canadian College of Performing Arts
Acting Foundations 1,2	Acting 1,2,3,4,5,6	Jazz 1,2,3,4,5,6	Acting 1,2,3,4,5,6	Scene Study
Improv 1,2	Vocal Music 1,2,3,4,5,6	Ballet 1,2,3,4,5,6	Voice 1,2,3,4,5,6	Improv
Movement 1,2,3	Dance 1,2,3,4,5,6	Ensemble Singing 1,2	Dance 1,2,3,4,5,6	Text Analysis
Scene Study 1,2,3,4,5,6	Music Theatre 1,2,3,4,5,6	Script Analysis 1,2	Musical Theatre 1,2,3,4,5,6	Modern and Western classical theatre
Voice and Text 1,2,3,4,5,6	Composition and Rhetoric 1	Musical Theatre Performance 1,2,3,4	Musicianship 1,2,3,4,5,6	Speech technique
Ballet 1,2,3,4,5,6	MT business 1,2,3	Acting 1,2,3,4,5,6	Performance 1,2,3,4,5,6	Physical theatre
Jazz 1,2,3,4,5,6	Production 1, 2, 3	Music Literacy 1,2,3,4	Theatre Business 1,2,3	Stage Combat
Musical Theatre History 1	Writing for musical theatre 1,2,3	Musical Theatre History 1,2		Transition to screen

Dance History 2	Musical theatre production team 1,2, 3	Voice and Speech/ Movement 1,2,3,4		Theatre History
Theatre History 2	Commercial Artist development 1,2,3	Physical Warm up Techniques 1,2		Monologues
Project Presentation 1,4	Advanced Technique 1,2	Applied Performance 1,2,3,4		Devised Theatre
Musical Theatre Presentation 1,2,3,4,5,6	Musical Theatre Capstone Project	Ear training, sight singing & keyboard 1,2		Ballet
Chorale 1,2,3,4		Vocal Technique 1,2,3,4,5,6		Contemporary/jazz
Singing Lessons 1,2,3,4		Performance Showcase		Musical theatre dance
Musicianship 1,2,3,4,5,6		Tap 1,2,3,4		tap
Film & tv 3,4,5,6		Musical Theatre Scene Study 1,2		Private voice
Shakespeare 2		Performance Placement 1,2,3,4,5		Vocal ensemble
Professional Development 6		Original Performance		Music theory/sight singing
Play Production		Dance Audition		Career management
Musical Production		Musical Theatre Audition Technique		Creative mentorship
		Business and Promotion		cabaret
		Audition Simulation		play
		Applied Acting		

Appendix - 10

Audition Notices pulled from Canadian Actor's Equity drive

Company	Date	Show	Location	Material
Yellow Point Christmas	April 30 2024	Christmas Spectacular	Scotiabank Dance Studio	Upbeat and ballad songs / sides
Quest Theatre	April 30 2024	Snow White	NA	Song / sides
Stratford Theatre Festival	April 26 2024	Generals	N/A	Two songs
Mirvish	April 25 2024	Lion King	Winter garden Theatre	Song / sides
Theatre North West	April 18 2024	Little Shop of Horrors	N/A	2 Songs / sides
Neptune Theatre	April 18 2024	Frozen	Neptune Theatre	Songs / sides
Quest Theatre	April 15 2024	Generals	N/ A	song/ monologue
Grand Theatre	April 14 2024	Waitress	N / A	Songs/ sides
Citadel Theatre	April 15 2024	Midsummer's Night Dream 70's Musical	N /A	songs/ sides
Manitoba Theatre	April 11 2024	A year with frog and toad	Manitoba Theatre for Young People	Song / sides
Under a Grove Productions	April 9 2024	Boy Boy and the Magic Drum	Tarragon Theatre Mainspace	32 bars of a musical theatre uptempo / comedic monologue
Terra Bruce Productions	April 9	No Change in the Weather	N /A	Song / sides
Globe Theatre	April 4	Bring it On	N/A	Song / sides

Appendix 11 -Comparison of Defusion and Self as Context Exercises

Defusion Exercises	Self As Context Exercises	Similarities/ Differences and artefact adaptation
Becoming aware of thoughts you are fused with (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022 p.81; Eifert and Forsyth, 2005 p. 105) -participant writes down the thought that occupy attentional focus		
Becoming aware of Other Internal Thoughts you are Fused with (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022 p.81; Harris, 2009 p.103) -participant writes down internal experiences that “seem very important” including anxiety symptoms		
List Relational Frames that Cause Distress (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022 p. 83; Eifert and Forsyth, 2005 p. 229) -participant aims to identify how they are relating their fused thoughts to other scenarios ie. They are a better belter than me, thus I am the worst belter here	Becoming Aware of the Mind’s Stories about you (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022 p. 99) -recognizing relational frames you have built between experiences and what you now think	-They are the same practice, one is applied to thoughts and other is to experiences. -In the artefact they are combined and thoughts and experiences are explored at the same time.
Thought Labelling (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022 p. 87; Harris, 2009 p. 103) -participant aims to recognize internal experiences as thoughts not realities	Creating Flexible Self As a Musician (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022 p.101; Eifert and Forsyth, 2005 p. 157; Harris, 2009 p.133) -participant identifies troubling thoughts, recognizes they are the creator of these thoughts, identifies emotions that come up from the thought, where in their body the thought lives, identifies how the thought has limited them	-creating flexible self as a musician is a more in depth, time consuming version of though labelling -in the artefact thought labelling is used and elements of creating flexible self as a musician are incorporated to support a thorough understanding
-Word Repetition (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 2022		

p.88; Harris, 2009 p.110) –participant says activating words over and over again until they loose meaning		
Treating the Mind Like a Separate Entity (Juncos and de Pavia e Pona, 89, Harris,2009 p.109) -when participant notices unhelpful thoughts they say to themselves “thank you mind for that thought”		