

Module 3 BMPF7008

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*What are the differences in approach to practice
for actively performing singers and
instrumentalists?*

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Research proposal

Unlike instrumentalists, singers may be more inclined towards the illusion of effortless, “natural talent”, likely due to the belief in an “inborn” gift or that singing is as simple and natural a behaviour as speech (Caplan, 2013; Duschak, 1962b; McKoy, 2016). The competing belief in both academic and lay literature suggests, however, that singing with ease is a complicated, learned behaviour requiring years of intentional training to achieve proficiency (McKoy, 2016). With its uniqueness, the voice carries its own benefits and limitations (Kemp, 1996). Although many studies into duration, method and effectiveness of music practice have been conducted (e.g. Ericsson et al., 1993; Hallam et al., 2020; Jørgensen, 2002; Mornell et al., 2020; Pitts & Davidson, 2000), very few comprehensively acknowledge the voice or investigate practice considering the voice’s uniqueness, focussing rather on instrumental practice.

During the nineteenth century, skill-acquisition-based teaching in western (classical) singing saw a sharp rise in the use of “bel canto” practice etudes such as Vaccai’s “Practical Method of Italian Singing” (Sansom, 2024). These are still in circulation today but, just as Hanon’s (1873) “The Virtuoso Pianist”, the relevance and lasting effectiveness of rote learning in the fact-based era of contemporary pedagogy is now questioned (Brunell, 2015; Hoch, 2024). With advancements in neuroscience, motor learning and subsequently effective music practice (Wulf & Mornell, 2008), singing practice requires a cross-discipline review through the lens of current best practice.

In a quantitative study into differences in instrumentalists’ practice time and strategy, ineffective practice strategies were found to decrease with expertise (Hallam et al., 2020). Strong positive relationships were also found between deliberate intentional practice, strategy effectiveness and progress in elite instrumentalists (Mornell et al., 2020). It follows, then, that singers and singer-instrumentalists (who both sing and play an instrument) should approach voice technique similarly, avoiding blaming limitations on a lack of “God given” voice (Duschak, 1962b). By exploring practice approaches of actively performing singers and instrumentalists through data rich qualitative interview, this research will build on existing knowledge, learn from other instrumental disciplines, and contribute towards a relevant, systematic practice strategy for modern singers.

Research outline

The aims of this cross-discipline exploratory study are to investigate the potential differences in current “best practice” practice approaches, strategies and methods between actively performing singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists, whilst considering the distinct uniqueness of practising the voice.

Following a comprehensive literature review, an online qualifying questionnaire will be conducted on www.smartsurvey.co.uk to collect a convenience-snowball sample of 50 actively performing singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists based in the UK (Appendix A for survey questions). The survey will close when 13 participants aged 14-18 (from a secondary boarding school) and 37 online participants aged 18-68 (the planned state pension age) have responded. By 14, it is hoped respondents are seriously committed to their chosen instruments and/ or music qualifications, and will provide useful data about learning how to practise.

Six questionnaire respondents will be purposively selected from the survey sample for interview. This sample will include two singers, two instrumentalists and two singer-instrumentalists. The gender split will be equal to gain different insights into practice strategy and error correction (Hallam et al., 2017). Instrumentalists chosen will aim to represent piano (percussion), stringed, woodwind/ brass, unamplified and electric instruments to explore practice approaches from different physical approaches and acoustic production (e.g. keyed, plucked, bowed, blown and amplified). One under-18 singer-instrumentalist participant will be selected to gain insight into initial music learning practices. Voluntary, informed, written consent from school, guardian, student and online adult participants will be obtained.

Interview participants will be emailed a week's practice diary template to complete digitally to encourage reflection (Appendix B). The template will be deliberately sparse to maximise freedom in completion. Once completed and returned, semi-structured interviews will be individually scheduled. Interviews will be conducted in person (teaching studio or school teaching room) or online (via Zoom) using questions found in Appendix C. Interviews will be videoed, transcribed and coded using thematic content analysis. A final focus group discussion with all interview participants will then be conducted online to explain data gaps and explore contrasting lived experiences. It will also be recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed. A planned timeline for the project can be found in Appendix D.

Ethics and Insider Research

Anticipated ethical risks and mitigations have been fully considered for university approval in Appendix E. These include physical, mental and emotional harm to participant and researcher, voluntary informed consent, participant rights, data protection, conflict of interest and professional harm to researcher and university. The complex, subjective nature of insider-research, should also be considered (Appendix E). For example, participants may be at risk of emotional harm if (lack of) practice is highly connected to participant self-worth and efficacy. The participant will be assured of the researcher's impartiality to participants' practice approach and methods, especially within the school the researcher teaches and participant

attends. It is hoped the benefits of a greater, swifter rapport with participants (Mercer, 2007), understanding the distinct cultural logistics and language of music practice (Snellgrove & Punch, 2022), and ethical mitigations will compensate for insider-researcher challenges.

Expected Learning Outcomes

- Discover best practice across disciplines to inform the researcher's teaching practice.
- Consider a clear, systematic approach to practising singing to create future student resources and share with peers.
- Acquire skills in conducting surveys, interviews and focus groups.
- Develop a comprehensive knowledge of thematic content analysis coding.

Project Report

Introduction

Music practice is the activity of acquiring or maintaining musical motor and performance skills (Araújo, 2016; Lehmann et al., 2007). Crucial to musicians' development, understanding and learning the complex skill of effective practice is an important factor in mastering performance achievement and should not be underestimated simply as a means to an end (Miksza, 2007; Pitts & Davidson, 2000). Singers and singing are rarely considered in music practice research (Heller et. al, 2015), yet their unique instrument cannot help but influence a subjective approach to practice and performance (Kemp, 1996). Understanding therefore how and why singers practise could be beneficial for singing pedagogy (Baughman, 2015), and comparing it to instrumental disciplines may help clarify this.

This study aims to explore differences in practice approach, strategy and method between singers and instrumentalists, whilst considering the voice's unique needs in singing practice. The literature will explore the need for voice research in greater detail, the conflicting concepts of talent and deliberate practice, and practice considerations for both singers and instrumentalists within the latest research in neuroscientific self-regulated music learning. A qualitative research design will then investigate the internal perspective of actively performing singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists and gather primary data on questions arising from the literature.

Literature review

The need for voice research

The voice is the oldest musical instrument of all (Ugoo-Okonkwo, 2013), yet of the 296 papers investigating music practice between 1928 and 2020, only 3.7% specifically included or addressed practice for singers (Appendix F, How et al., 2022). Singers' instruments are unique, personal, invisible, intangible and highly complex, causing vocal performance to be more kinaesthetic and body-focussed than that of instrumentalists (Kemp, 1996; Theiler & Lipman, 1995). The singer is also the only musician to combine words with music (Ugoo-Okonkwo, 2013). The extension of voice by microphone (especially in popular music) and its subsequent implications on technique, vocal production, expression and singing style should also be remembered (Frith, 1996). Further research of current singing practice strategies, with reference to instrumentalists' established methods, is therefore needed to inform singing teachers and their students of best practice (Baughman, 2015).

Natural talent paradox and deliberate practice

The natural talent paradox describes diametric beliefs that singing is i) as simple and natural as speaking, and ii) a complicated, learned behaviour requiring years of discipline, practice, talent, and training (Caplan, 2013; McKoy, 2016). These mixed messages imposed on singers may be confusing, even anxiety inducing, when it comes to practice and performance (Howard, 1982; Kemp, 1996). In their seminal paper on deliberate practice, Ericsson et al. (1993) challenge the belief that exceptional performance is attributed purely or predominantly to a perceived gift, innate ability, “natural talent” or genetics. They assert that intense, deliberate practice over at least 10 years, unique environmental conditions and parental support of music training from an early age, are the most important factors in developing expert performance, with a direct correlation found between accumulated practice hours and level of expertise. For this reason, the evaluation of deliberate singing practice in comparison to actively performing instrumentalists may be highly insightful.

The view that deliberate practice is likely the fundamental influence in expert performance has since been scrutinised as too simplistic (Marion-St-Onge et al., 2020). Along with more frequent, intense practice in early life, defining characteristics of musical prodigies have shown to be greater external motivation to begin playing an instrument, and a significantly higher tendency to achieve “flow state” in practice. In their study of monozygotic twins, Mosing et al. (2014) found that deliberate music practice may not be the primary basis of music ability, with genetic variation among individuals affecting both ability and motivation to practise. Macnamara et al. (2014) also challenge the deliberate-practice view (Ericsson et al., 1993), when empirical results showed deliberate practice accounted for only 21% of variance in music performance. They concluded that, although significant, deliberate practice is not as important as Ericsson et al. (1993) first suggested. Perhaps, then, singing talent and practice should be viewed holistically: avoiding using vocal talent as an excuse for apathy or to protect the ego from the voice’s limitations, and approaching technique as instrumentalists do (Duschak, 1962a; Duschak 1962b).

Instrumental and vocal practice

There has been very little research into differences in practice time and strategy between instruments (Hallam et al., 2020), and none primarily comparing vocal practice to these differences. Whilst singers may avoid excessive hours practising due to concerns of overuse and strain, balancing alongside daily vocal usage outside the studio (e.g. socially and at work) (Kemp, 1996; Zuim et al. 2023), expert violinists were found to practise 19.5 hours per week (24.3 for violin “soloists” and 9.3 for violinist music teachers), with a mean practice session lasting 80 minutes (Ericsson et al., 1993). Out of all music-related activities, this was

considered the most important activity relating to performance improvement. Rather than isolating musical concepts, expert (predominantly classical) vocalists were found to approach singing practice more holistically, with the goal of maintaining vocal health rather than developing technique (Summit & Weidner, 2022). Here, mental modelling (e.g. silent music practice reciting lyrics, visualisation or audiating certain passages with the internal voice, rather than aloud) was frequently relied upon. Of the strategies listed in Appendix G however, “rehearse errors until corrected”, “repeat phrases” and “mark music” were most popular with singers, followed by long and short-term goal setting and specific problem-solving methods. As no clear formula for singing practice instruction appears to exist in pedagogical literature (Baughman, 2015), sharing best practice across disciplines is likely to help work towards this.

Self-regulated learning

Scientists’ understanding of learning and behaviour has been transformed by radical developments in neuroscience (Mornell et al., 2020). Self-regulated learning (SRL) is a proactive, self-directed, cyclical process (or “feedback loop”) which transforms students’ mental abilities into (academic) skills, guided by i) forethought/ planning, ii) performance, and iii) self-reflected evaluation (Araújo, 2016; Zimmerman, 2002). In other words, personally set, manageable goals are approached systematically with task-related strategies, their performance monitored and reflected upon to inform and motivate the next loop cycle (Mornell et al., 2020; Zimmerman, 2002). This counters Ericsson’s (1993) assertion that practice is not in itself inherently motivating, demonstrating rather an upwards spiral of progress and motivation when planned well.

Figure 1

Self-Regulated Learning Feedback Loop



Note. Figure based on Zimmerman (2002) and Fitch (2024)

Quality of practice is far more significant a predictor of improvement than quantity (Miksza, 2007). Whilst young, novice musicians most commonly implement “playthrough” performance with little understanding of or strategy for effective practice (Pitts & Davidson, 2000), advanced musicians rely heavily upon self-regulated practice behaviours to elevate performance, with positive relationships found between strategy effectiveness, deliberate intentional practice and progress (Araújo, 2016; Jørgensen 2002; Mornell et al., 2020). Advanced musicians have been found to regulate practice through organisation, personal and external resources, favouring above all i) the use of specific goal-related practice strategies, ii) acknowledging the goal's challenge, iii) understanding the nature and demands of a musical activity, iv) understanding the musician's own strengths and weaknesses and v) understanding the need to practise in order to improve (Appendix H, Araújo, 2016). Exploring the practice goals, organisation, strategies and challenges of singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists may therefore help formulate a more science-based approach to singing practice. By understanding the influences on practice and how the voice's nature may affect practice approach, today's singer can better regulate quality learning and increase motivation to ensure long-lasting progress.

Methodology

A constructivist paradigm was chosen to explore the individual musician's complex, subjective worldview and lived experience within the cultural norms of music practice (Creswell, 2007). The insider-researcher's positionality as a classically trained singer, violinist, pianist, classical and jazz performer, and one-to-one teacher, acknowledged the role of her own personal, cultural and historical experiences of music practice, with the intent of understanding others' perspectives from their own realities. In their quantitative comparison of practice time, strategy, organisation and motivation of 3,325 child musicians (excluding singers), Hallam et al. (2020) recommended further qualitative investigation into practice. For this reason, a qualitative approach was taken to collaboratively explore potential differences in how musicians approach and experience practice (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

The aims of this study were to investigate multidisciplinary approaches, influencing factors and potential differences in strategy and method between singers', instrumentalists' and singer-instrumentalists' practice, whilst considering the distinct uniqueness of the voice. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to better understand the interior experiences (e.g. strategies, thoughts, observations and emotional processes (Weiss, 1994)), and methods of musicians during instrumental and singing practice. A comprehensive literature review, qualifying participant questionnaire, pre-interview practice diary task and semi-structured interviews were triangulated to ensure study validity and rigor (Carter et al., 2014).

Sample

Six participants contributed to the study (three male, three female), with an age range of 16-43 ($m = 43$). Recruitment commenced following ethical approval from the Voice Study Centre, University of Wales Trinity St David and consent from relevant teaching organisations (Appendix I). 18 actively performing singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists responded to the request for interview participants, six of which were invited to contribute due to their eligibility best meeting the required criterion. The request included a digital recruitment poster (Appendix J) and qualifying questionnaire (Appendix K), which was sent out to music GCSE and IB students at a secondary boarding school and to adults on social media via email and WhatsApp. Respondents were asked to pass onto others also deemed suitable. The questionnaire explained the project in greater depth and required informed, voluntary consent in question 1 to continue further. Eligibility required participants to be aged 14-68 years old. By 14, British children have usually committed to and begun music qualifications such as GCSE music or graded performance exams. 68 is the planned retirement age in the UK and was considered an appropriate cut-off point for professional (and therefore amateur) adult musicians. Due to school exams taking place in years 10 and 12 at the time of the project callout, and study leave fast approaching for years 11 and 13, only two year 11 students volunteered. The adult sample did not “snowball” as quickly as hoped and the target sample number was therefore not reached within the project’s time constraints. The first pianist recruited had to withdraw due to practice demands, delaying data collection further. The study’s size, further ethical considerations required for international research (e.g. Alfano, 2013) and fact that cultural differences have not been found to significantly affect efficient music practice (of western classical music) (Araújo, 2016), restricted participant location to the UK. As singer-instrumentalists may be best placed to compare cross-discipline differences in practice approach, two singer-instrumentalists were also chosen, the split as follows:

Figure 2***Participant Demographics and Pseudonyms***

Participant	Pseudonym	Singer/ Instrumental group	Gender	Age
1	Singer-instrumentalist 1	Professional jazz singer, guitarist & pianist	M	44
2	Singer-instrumentalist 2	GCSE music student, jazz & pop singer & flautist	F	16
3	Instrumentalist 1	Concert violinist	F	46
4	Singer 1	Amateur choral singer	M	50
5	Singer 2	Professional singer	F	53
6	Instrumentalist 2	Concert pianist	M	47

Note. Participant demographic information is presented in the above table. The pseudonyms indicated above are used to associate quotes with their authors throughout the submission.

Data collection

The six selected volunteer participants were sent participant packs in accordance with ethical approval (Appendix I) including i) age-appropriate consent forms ii) a week's practice diary template to be completed before interviews and iii) British Voice Association voice care leaflets (singers only) (Appendix L). The aim of the practice diary was to encourage evaluation of existing practice approaches and methods to facilitate easier interview discussion. Five participants completed the practice diary task formally. Upon return of the consent forms (Appendix M) and practice diaries (Appendix N), semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded on password-protected Zoom Workplace and a personal password-protected Asus VivoBook laptop. A backup audio recording was also made on a password-protected Pixel 7a phone and deleted after each interview was transcribed. Questions (Appendix O) were formulated from the literature review. Interviews began with an introductory reminder of the study's aim, the right to withdraw, and assurance of anonymity and data protection. They were scheduled for one hour and lasted (excluding introductory opening and informal conclusion) between 23 minutes and 68 minutes, averaging 47 minutes, and totalling 4 hours and 43 minutes across all interviews.

Data analysis

Interview transcription is a significant part of the research process for most qualitative researchers (Kobakhidze et al., 2021). As there is no single right way to transcribe (McMullin, 2023; Weiss, 1994), the main aim of transcription being to arrive at an agreed transcript adequate for analysis (Silverman, 2014), interview recordings were first transcribed using Zoom Workplace cloud-based audio-transcription to expediate the process. Interview transcriptions (Appendix P) were then thoroughly edited manually by the researcher. “Intelligent transcription” (cleaning up grammar, excluding excessive repetitions, pauses or verbal fillers) was chosen to provide readable quotations appropriate for discussion in the report (DelveTool, 2024; McMullin, 2023). The editing process revealed a number of errors due to internet instability, poor audio quality, response overlap and mistranscription by Zoom, providing the researcher opportunity for considerable initial data immersion and familiarisation (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Although Interview Transcript Review (ITR) (also known as ‘Respondent Validation’ (RV), ‘Informant Feedback’, ‘Member Checking’ or ‘Participant Verification’) can be considered “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314), the potential difficulties and ethical considerations were first fully considered and summarised in Appendix Q (Rowlands, 2021). Concluding the benefits outweighed potential difficulties in this instance, participants were sent their interview transcription, providing the option to electively check them within a given time frame and debrief. An extension was offered if needed. Three participants confirmed reading the transcript with one offering a minor correction.

To analyse data systematically and rigorously, looking for themes and patterns across the dataset, interview transcripts were then coded using thematic analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2013; DelveTool, 2024). Recommendations for reliable TA listed in Appendix R (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were applied to the process: i) re-reading transcripts and noting initial points of interest ii) inducing initial codes for meanings and patterns iii) applying initial codes to the data iv) adding supplementary codes where appropriate v) collating coded excerpts vi) adjusting the codes vii) grouping codes into emergent themes (Appendix S) viii) evaluating and revising themes across the dataset and ix) creating a narrative from the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013; DelveTool, 2024).

Findings

The study’s aims were to:

- investigate multidisciplinary approaches to practice between singers and instrumentalists.
- explore influencing factors and differences in strategy and method.

- consider the uniqueness of the voice and its impact on practice.

From the dataset, three overarching themes were identified and developed:

1. How the instrument's nature affects practice
2. Determining when practice is practice
3. How limitations can negatively impact and creatively shape practice

The table below summarises the overarching themes, subthemes and correlating codes from the six interviews. A more comprehensive overview, including excerpts, can be found in Appendix T.

Figure 3

Summary of Overarching Themes, Subthemes and Codes

Overarching theme	Subthemes	Related codes
How the instrument's nature affects practice	1. No matter the instrument, consistent hard work is required	- Hard work & talent - Skill vs. artistry - Consistency
	2. Considerations for a living instrument	- Physical & psychological vulnerability of the voice - The ageing voice - Voice care - Pacing (around performance) - Physical & psychological enjoyment of singing - The voice: intuitive but abstract & intangible - Immediacy of singing: you take your instrument wherever you go
	3. Efficiency is key	- Learning from singers: The necessity to be efficient due to the voice's limits - Attractor state - Efficient target practice
	1. Is deliberate singing practice common	- The nature of our voice leads to spontaneous practice - Deliberate vs. spontaneous practice - Unconscious practice

Determining when practice is practice	practice for singers?	
	2. Learning when our instrument is silent	- Silent practice - Practising/ learning on the go - Consolidation
How limitations can negatively impact and creatively shape practice	1. Negative impacts upon practice: Travel, time, inhibitions, health problems	- The impact of travel on practice - The battle with time - Practice mute & its impact on practice - Procrastination, inhibitions & fear of failure - How the brain affects practice & the voice
	2. Using your limitations to practise creatively	- Problem-solving within your limits - Pushing yourself beyond your comfort zone - Limitations leading to creativity

Theme 1: How the instrument's nature affects practice

This theme addressed the idea that musical talent always requires practice (subtheme 1), not only to improve, but to maintain health in a living, performing instrument (the voice). The physicality of the internal instrument presents positives and negatives (subtheme 2), which must be carefully managed with vocal pacing and efficient practice (subtheme 3).

Theme 1, Subtheme 1: No matter the instrument, consistent hard work is required

"Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard" was cited by two participants and the complex relationship between hard work and talent acknowledged by five:

"You've got to have a voice in the first place [but] I always say it's not about how good your voice is, it's what work you put into it... For example, you're not going to be Michael Ball without having something naturally in the first place. But it's the work he did to build his voice which made him Michael Ball." - Singer-instrumentalist 1

Although Instrumentalist 2 attributed talent purely to the ability to hyperfocus, Singer 1 believed the deficit of either talent or hard work creates a ceiling for progress. This was not the only influencing factor recognised however, with good, formal training and innate motivation also valued:

“To get to a really good standard, you don't have to be super talented. You just have to have good teaching, and enjoy it, and want to practise, and practise well.” - Instrumentalist 1

An important distinction was also made between practising skill and artistry. The question was twice raised as to whether artistry could be actually taught (and therefore practised). The reliance of artistry on skill was however observed:

“I very much believe that the greater the technical facility you have, the greater the artistic freedom you have. And that's what we all really want from our voices, isn't it? [...] To be able to make any artistic decision you want, and know how to do it, and your body just be able to provide that for you. That you can train, but I don't know how much of the artistry side of it can be trained.” - Singer 2

This would suggest the relationship between talent, hard work, skill and artistry is complexly intertwined, perhaps placing even more significance on skill development to compensate for those with lesser “natural talent” or artistry.

Lastly, the importance of a consistent approach to practice was highlighted by all participants, be it as a way of achieving specific muscular manipulations, embedding motor memory, covering a large amount of repertoire or to achieve desired performance results. Pinpointing weaknesses to reduce inconsistency was surmised by Instrumentalist 2:

“I think part of being an experienced performer is understanding where the danger moments are. And that [only comes with] the experience of performing stuff, and also knowing yourself. Knowing what you cope with well and what you don't cope with well. [...] There are things that I do need help with - as with most people who are quick learners - consistency. We shouldn't just sit back and rely on the fact that it might come off. [...] You need to eliminate as much of the “might” as possible.” – Instrumentalist 2

Knowing what needs to be consistently worked upon should therefore enhance the skill needed to enable a musician's artistry.

Theme 1, Subtheme 2: Considerations for a living instrument

Although injury/ strain was attributed to poor instrumental technique (Instrumentalist 1), other influencing factors such as dehydration, diet, allergies, tiredness, illness and time of day were all mentioned as influencing factors affecting the voice specifically. Longer term, the affects of ageing on the voice were also a concern. These, coupled with variance in mood and the psychological vulnerability of practising an instrument uniquely personal to the singer, all appeared to threaten the goal of consistency in singing practice, many of which do not affect

instrumental practice or can be circumnavigated by instrumentalists. Although singers appeared to spend less time on daily practice than instrumentalists, maintaining a healthy instrument can be a constant consideration:

“I probably spend more time thinking vocally, because that is my living. And if I didn't focus on that, and I damage my voice, what would I do? [...] So vocally I have to keep on top of it.” - Singer-instrumentalist 1

Vocal maintenance or “hygiene” presented in a number of ways, from practising particular exercises for strength, stamina and range, to monitoring vocal strain during practice and drinks consumed throughout the day. “Vocal pacing”, finding the balance between vocalisation, its intensity, frequency and rest (Groves, 2024; Searce, 2016), was frequently mentioned in managing vocal health, especially around performance:

“One time I had a really sore throat the day before I had a gig, so I just didn't sing at all. I listened to the songs and tried to remember the lyrics.” - Singer-instrumentalist 2

This appeared to be a prominent consideration for voice. Whilst most instrumentalists may be able to undertake extended practice hours, one instrumentalist observed the difference for singers:

“A singer can only go on so long before they have to rest their voices or things just stop working. There's nothing you can do about it. It doesn't matter how good your technique is, the stamina goes. The same for wind players and their lips.” - Instrumentalist 2

The physicality and unique nature of the internal voice presented mixed benefits. One singer mentioned the mood boost practising always provided:

“I feel more energised after I've sung, without a doubt. [...] Even if I don't necessarily sing all that well on a particular given day, or my voice is a bit weird or croaky or something, I still feel, on balance, better after having done some singing. So it's definitely for me a mood enhancer.” - Singer 1

The instrument's nature can result in a different, deep connection to problem solving:

“You can practise wrong techniques, but generally it's very intuitive. You can feel when it's wrong, and then you steer away from it.” - Singer-instrumentalist 2

However this is not always guaranteed, with the voice's intangibility sometimes creating a barrier to understanding or progress. Counter-balancing this frustration is the voice's unique accessibility and immediacy:

“With singing, you've always got your voice on you so unless you're in a public place, you can just start singing. So it's a lot less restricted in terms of when you practise.” - Singer-instrumentalist 2

Awareness of the voice's positives and negatives appears, therefore, to significantly shape and inform the way a singer practises.

Theme 1, Subtheme 3: Efficiency is key

Due to the physical considerations of the voice, efficiency was suggested as key to maintaining vocal health and striving for consistency:

“I learn a lot working particularly with wind players and singers, because you guys have time limits. As a singer you cannot practise for eight hours day. It's not doable. Most wind players can't. Some can. And brass players absolutely never. So they have to be really economical with how they practise. [...] Pianists do, because we have to learn more notes than anybody else. [...] But you actually have to be economical to think, ‘Okay, I can't really work for more than two hours. So I'm gonna have to make the most use of those two hours and be as productive as possible within the time.’ I don't have that kind of pressure as a pianist. That doesn't exist.” - Instrumentalist 2

One singer relies heavily upon the Estill Voice concept of “target practice”, using elements from a toolbox of vocal manipulations to specifically work on problem areas. Many participants highlighted the need for reflexivity in the process of problem-solving to pinpoint the cause of a mistake. This, however, seemed reliant on experience and formal training:

“I think the important thing is that [...], and I don't always do this consistently, but if you make a mistake, making a conscious effort to correct it, or to understand maybe why it happened. Because I'm having lessons now as well, I think my discipline is better in that respect. Because if I'm singing with my singing teacher and they point out a mistake, it's bit more obvious. It's more obvious as to why it is, whereas if I was just on my own trying to sing something, I wouldn't necessarily know. Well, A) I might not know that I've made a mistake, or B) I don't know, if something's not quite right, I don't always have the skills or experience to be able to fix it.” - Singer 1

Time management, reflexivity and effective prioritisation are then needed to pace vocal use and practise efficiently.

Theme 2: Determining when practice is practice

A significant theme running through the dataset was the question of when practice occurred and how. Due to the considerations mentioned above, singer-participants appeared to have

ambiguous boundaries as to when practice occurred, with spontaneous and unconscious practice interspersed across the day (subtheme 1). Silent practice, deliberate or on-the-go, was mentioned by both singers and instrumentalists as a popular tool, and as a form of consolidation (subtheme 2).

Theme 2, Subtheme 1: Is deliberate practice common practice for singers?

The immediacy of the voice seems to create unclear boundaries as to when singing practice occurs: Whilst a flute needs to be accessible at a particular time, a voice is constantly with the singer. This appears to result in flexible and spontaneous singing practice, brought about by a curious thought, a creative moment or impulse. It is also perhaps a less analytical, conscious approach to practice:

“I just float over there and do this. And I think I do need a little bit more routine. And I think that's a learning point for me this week: actually make a little more time to schedule actual practice in so it's a bit more structured.” - Singer-instrumentalist 1

Although subconscious or unconscious practice were also mentioned as a cause of occasional distress, their value was acknowledged as “a process that has to be gone through” (Instrumentalist 2) rather than a consistent habit.

Theme 2, Subtheme 2: Learning when our instrument is silent

Learning away from the instrument or silently was mentioned as a useful practice tool for singers and instrumentalists alike. This involved listening to repertoire playlists on-the-go, listening as a memory aid for lyrics, watching YouTube videos, “audiation” (using the internal voice rather than aloud), mimicking physical hand or vocal manipulations without making a sound or examining music scores. As with spontaneous practice, this process was both conscious and unconscious:

“When I'm away from the violin, I'll often be noodling [mimics fingering out passages], practising through something or it will be going on subconsciously. Sometimes my fingers won't be moving, but I'll suddenly catch myself working through something I'm playing.” - Instrumentalist 1

It appears therefore that silent practice can be a form of conscious or subconscious consolidation, or as a means to practise when an instrument is inaccessible or it is not possible to vocalise.

Theme 3: How limitations can negatively impact and creatively shape practice

The idea that limitations (such as access to an instrument or protected practice space) can impact whether and how music is practised, forms the third theme. Negative impacts on practice such as travel, time, inhibitions and mental health problems were all mentioned as roadblocks to practice (subtheme 1). These either restricted or prevented practice, or provided motivation to approach practice creatively in a different way (subtheme 2).

Theme 3, Subtheme 1: Negative impacts upon practice: travel, time, inhibitions, mental health problems

Travel delays and cancellations were recognised as significant influences not only in practice scheduling but environment too, with time limitations around travel and performance dictating when, where and how participants practised:

“I was staying with people because I had a concert the night before. While they were all in bed, I went and hid in their... This is always a difficulty if you're staying somewhere away from home, finding a space in their home that you're not going to disturb people, even with [a] practice mute on.” - Instrumentalist 1

As a result, acceptance, frustration and guilt motivated the following responses to restrictions: practising after breakfast in a hotel room (so as not to bother fellow guests), a secluded spot of a host's house, with a practice mute, early in the morning after a concert or “catching up” upon return home. Practising with a mute can allow for more flexibility around these restrictions when carefully planned, but only for particular purposes:

“I couldn't use [practice mute] if I was trying to concentrate on sound quality and phrasing [...]. It's useless. But it's a necessary evil for those times when you just can't make a lot of noise. And it's just focussing your practice so that you know that the time that you've got - three hours of practice with practice mute, and then some other time in the day that you don't need to use practice mute – it's making sure you practise the right things in the different times, so that you're not wasting time with practice mute practising something that you can't really practise.” – Instrumentalist 1

It appears adapting to practical limitations is therefore the best solution available.

Psychological restrictions discussed by all singers came in the form of procrastination, inhibitions of being overheard, fear of failure, neurodiversity and mental health problems. Specifically related to the voice was the need to psychologically or emotionally “let go” to facilitate necessary technique “because otherwise you're never going to find the physicality you need in order to do it” (Singer 2). This is not however always possible, with the risk of

long-term serious emotional stress exemplified as leading to temporary voice loss and the inability to practise:

“I had this period in my life where both my Gran and my Nan were in their final illness at the same time. [...] They basically passed away within ten days of each other. At the time, I was also going through a breakup with the man I was living with at the time. [...] The combination of those stressors: I got a pain in my shoulder that was incredibly intense and never went away. [...] I then lost my voice, completely. It started off with a touch of laryngitis and then, within a couple of days: gone! It was gone for a couple of months which, when that's how you make your living, was very stressful because it cost me a lot of money! [...] that was very much a part of mental health feeding into a negative vocal situation.” - Singer 2

Although all musicians observed negative practical constraints on practice, psychological limitations seemed to have a far more significant affect on singers.

Theme 3, Subtheme 2: Using your limitations to practise creatively

Circumnavigating obstacles through problem-solving, challenging limitations and using creativity offered an insight into reflexive practice strategy.

“Whatever it happens to be that I'm struggling with, if you can make it harder, then reality is a much more comfortable place in concert, because you don't want to be feeling in concert that you're only just getting to that place. You want to feel that it's a comfortable place to be.” - Instrumentalist 1

Singer 2 spoke of Billie Holiday's limited vocal range defining her interpretation of jazz standards and inspiring her own singing practice. During lockdown she experienced her own breakthrough whilst practising quietly within her environmental and emotional limits:

“I did masses and masses of either silent practice or lots and lots of thin fold noodling singing. Obviously it was an extended period. [...] As a result of it, the one sort of silver lining to all of that isolation was that my relationship to my thyroid tilt completely changed. As a result, my belt suddenly is so much more comfortable, so much easier. Just everything!” - Singer 2

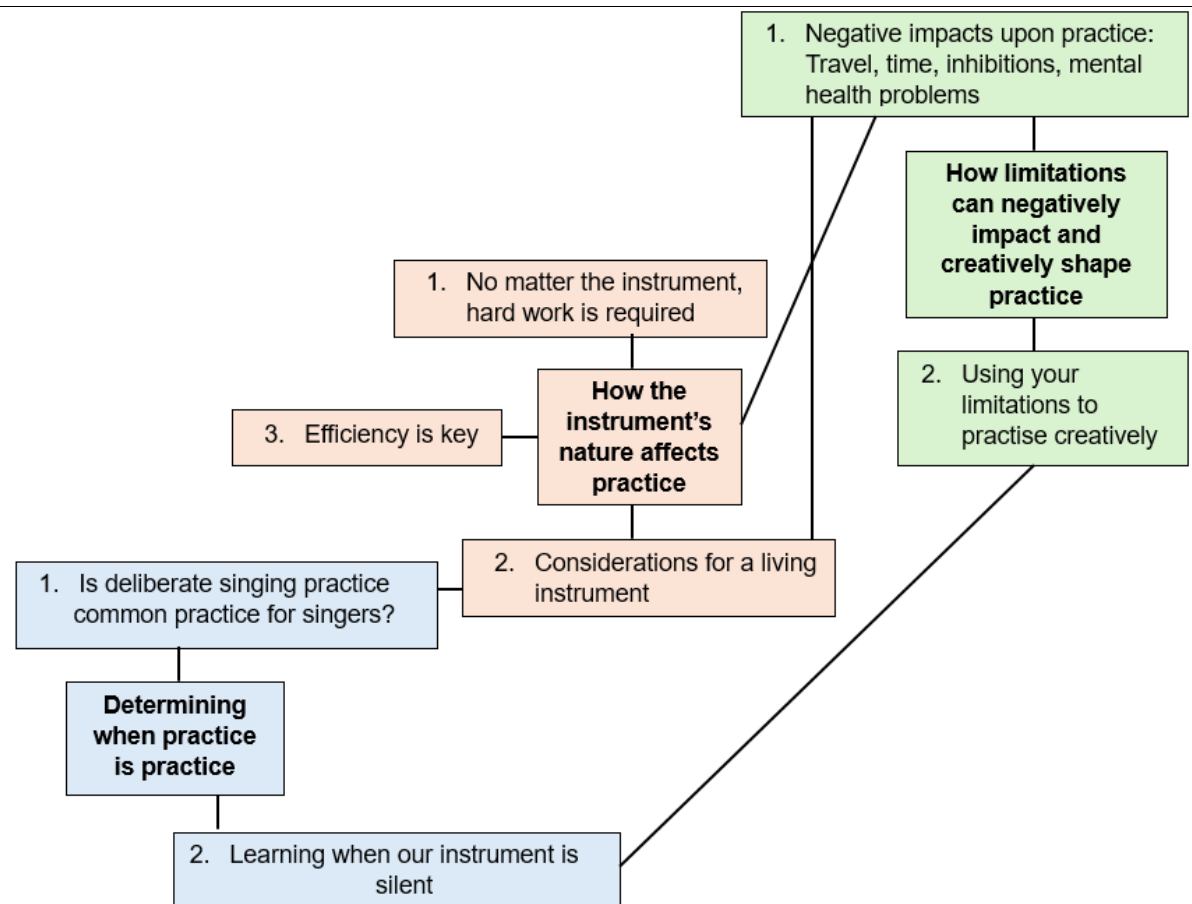
What can be seen as a great challenge or restriction can therefore be used creatively to shape practice, rather than limit it.

Discussion

The thematic map below summarises relationships within overarching themes as well as between them and subthemes:

Figure 4

Thematic Map of Overarching Themes and Subthemes



Note. Thematic map summarising the relationships within and between overarching and subthemes.

Although results cannot be generalised, five key points were confirmed or raised in relation to the literature and study's aims (to investigate multidisciplinary approaches to practice, and influencing factors and differences to strategy and method between singers and instrumentalists, whilst considering the uniqueness of the voice).

1. The "natural talent" paradox was confirmed in the complex relationship between talent, hard work, skill and artistry. The idea was raised that a ceiling could be reached when one element is lacking.
2. The unique nature of the voice was confirmed as having a huge impact on practice, with both benefits and limitations associated with the internal, living instrument.

3. Formal training appears a significant influence on practice strategy and method.
4. SRL (in singing practice) can perhaps also be viewed as a process occurring throughout the day, rather than solely in demarcated, deliberate practice sessions.
5. The voice's limitations were confirmed to impact practice, either restricting it or encouraging creative problem-solving.

Rather than seeing musical excellence solely as a static personality trait with a predetermined capacity, talent development should be explained by the interaction between specific tasks and social environment, including opportunities, challenges, socio-cultural resources, tools and values (Dai, 2020). Although Instrumentalist 2 considered talent to be purely attributed to an ability to hyperfocus, the other five participants confirmed this through their lived experiences and beliefs in the first theme relating to hard work, challenging the assumption that singers approach practice with lesser belief in its efficacy. Perhaps the Estill idea of the voice's "attractor state" (mentioned by Singer 2) should also be considered in the understanding of vocal talent, especially through Dai's (2020) socio-cultural lens: "All humans have vocal attractor states informed by their mother language, dialect, peer language, predetermined anatomy habits and skills acquired via imitation and tuition (Marko et al., 2021, p.6)." Understanding human potential and how likely an individual can progress towards a set goal, whilst considering the voice and its socio-environmental influences, is therefore critical for (music) education and the pursuit of excellence in "gifted" musicians (Dai, 2020).

The voice's unique nature proved to have great impact upon practice. Participants identified both physical and psychological limitations (e.g. intangibility, illness, dehydration, stamina, strain, ageing, inhibitions and mental health problems) as negative influences. The psychological and emotional influence on Singer 2's voice loss support the positive relationship found between general physical fatigue, psychological disorder (perfectionism) and functional dysphonia (where no detectable organic pathology can account for vocal dysfunction) (O'Hara et al., 2011). In an attempt to manage negative physical limitations, Singer 1, Singer-instrumentalist 1 and 2 referred to "vocal pacing" (see Zuim, 2023) and holistic practice as a means of maintaining vocal health and strength (see Summit & Weidner, 2022). This unique, heightened sensitivity and concern for the singer's voice and vocal health (Sapir et al. 1996), also reinforces itself as one of the voice's benefits. As an intuitive instrument, accessed anytime and place, Singer-instrumentalist 2 confirmed the kinaesthetic nature of vocalising and problem-solving (Theiler & Lipman, 1995).

Formal training was frequently mentioned by participants, recognising a significant influencing factor on practice strategy and method, confirming formal training encourages a particular strategical approach (Tzou et al., 2016). Originally an aspiring actor, professional Singer-

instrumentalist 1 highlighted his inferior singing training to acting, the result of which possibly exemplified by his comment “I just float over there and do this.” Conversely, Instrumentalist 1 was a highly trained and self-aware practice athlete, frequently mentioning the influence of past teachers:

“I just didn't really practise efficiently. [...] Because he was a spoon feeder, and my previous teacher had been all about teaching me to teach myself, I switched off for those final four years of school [...]. And then I'd lost the ability to practise and to hear what I was doing by the time I was at music college.” – Instrumentalist 1

Perhaps due to the ubiquitous nature of singing, practice is therefore less likely to have a strategic approach unless formal training has been undertaken.

An interesting difference in approach between singers and instrumentalists was that of deliberate and spontaneous practice. This challenged Ericsson et al. (1993) definition that practice (as opposed to “play”) is inherently less enjoyable than leisure and more effective when deliberate, specially designed and highly structured. Due to the nature of the voice, singers tended to practise across the day and spontaneously, as well as deliberately. This could suggest a greater innate motivation and enjoyment of singing, evidenced in additional benefits such as enhanced respiration, immune function and the upregulation of “happy hormones” oxytocin and endorphins (Kang et al., 2018). Play is now considered an essential, judgement-free approach to learning and progress, growing confidence with curiosity and freedom and giving the brain varied options to explore the best path forward (Moss Erickson, 2022). It is perhaps here that singers have the best access to such a tool. Considering then SRL's feedback loop, singers have great advantage in being able to return to stages two (“play”) and three (“evaluate”) with ease across the day, extending the cyclical process as a form of consolidation. The area of singing practice most vulnerable may therefore be that of forethought/ planning (stage one).

The voice's limitations were considered a significant influence on practice approach, restriction and avoidance. This is consistent with findings of reduced voice use in teachers reporting higher scores in vocal fatigue, and hypersensitivity to mild vocal problems possibly leading attentive (professional) voice users such as singers and singing teachers to avoid voice activities (Ilomäki et al., 2017). Using silent, mental practice (e.g. score reading, listening to music or audiating) was cited as a solution to vocal, travel or time restrictions. Mental practice has a positive, significant effect on performance, but the advantages of this depend on the musician's learning style (e.g. visual, aural or kinaesthetic) and is moderated by (cognitive) task type (Driskell et al., 1994; Loimusalo & Huovinen, 2016). This again stresses the need

for a creative, strategic approach to practice when considering what can be focussed on within particular limits.

Limitations

Due to the study's qualitative design, results cannot be generalised but provide useful insights into areas for further exploration. Results have shown a difference in approach to practice between singers and instrumentalists, as well as some commonalities. Commonalities presented in the impact of formal training upon practice and the shared value of consistency, discipline and approach to analysing mistakes, although these were often referred to as an ideal rather than reality. Understanding how elite singers achieve consistency when challenged by the voice's vulnerabilities and limitations would therefore be of value, as would observing the differences in practice strategy between trained and untrained singers. Differences were revealed in the voice's physical limitations and vulnerabilities, as well the negative impact of inhibitions and mental health problems on such a unique, personal instrument. The convenience of the internal instrument appeared to affect when and where practice occurred, with spontaneous and deliberate practice occurring across the day. Whilst the three (western) classically trained instrumentalists acknowledged the significant amount of notes required to be learned as one of the reasons for extended, deliberate practice, they also recognised practice in this manner was not possible for the voice to the same extent. Further research into how singers consolidate learning, and the differences in practice strategy and approach between vocal disciplines (e.g. self-taught, classical, musical theatre and CCM) would therefore also be insightful.

Using the lens of contextualism to understand the lived experiences of actively performing (and therefore practising) singers and instrumentalists provided opportunity to explore the individual musician's complex, subjective experience of music practice (Creswell, 2007). It also acknowledged the role of the insider-researcher as a singer-instrumentalist affecting the project throughout, using personal experiences to shape research design, structure interviews, build rapport with participants, analyse data and examine recognised biases and assumptions. Had practical and time limitations allowed, further exploration of these biases could have been explored in a focus group discussion with participants, allowing for expansion upon data without considerable input from the researcher. It would also have allowed more opportunity for the sample to snowball more effectively, offering a broader group to select participants from.

Conclusion

This study addressed the need for further research into singing-specific music practice. By exploring differences in approach between singers and instrumentalists, its aims were to

discover multidisciplinary “best practice” to work towards a strategic approach to vocal practice. This was partially met in this exploratory study, but further, wider research is required to be able to generalise “best practice”. The “natural talent” paradox was discussed as a reason for potential differences in approach. Findings showed however that the unique nature of the voice, its benefits and limitations, and undertaking of formal training were the most significant influences on consistency and when and how singing practice occurred. Much more can be learned across disciplines as to “best practice” strategy and method, especially in view of SRL, however it is clear that the voice’s unique nature offers both positives and negatives in shaping a different approach to practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Qualifying questionnaire questions

Assurance of anonymity and GDPR					
Voluntary consent				Confirm	
Are you based in the UK?				Yes	No
Would you be willing to take part in a research study which involves:					
1. Completing a practice diary for a week				Yes	No
2. A 1:1 interview (online)				Yes	No
3. A focus group with 5-7 fellow musicians (online)				Yes	No
Age:					
14-18	19-28	29-38	39-48	49-58	59-68
Gender:					
Male	Female	Other	Prefer not to say		
Please list the instruments you play (including singing):					
Instrument	Years played	Level	Genre/ style	Training	
Please list the instruments you actively perform (including singing):					
Anything else you feel you should mention:					
Thank you for your time and interest!					

Figure 1: Qualifying questionnaire questions

Appendix B: Practice diary template

Please complete a practice diary using the template below over the course of a calendar week. Your diary will help you prepare for both a one-to-one and focus group discussion on the topic of practice. A copy will be kept for reference alongside interview transcripts and your identity will be anonymised.

Consider the following whilst completing the diary:

- Attitude and feelings towards practice
- Approach and/ or strategy towards practice
- Practice methods
- Progress
- Achievements and challenges

Day	
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
Observations	

Figure 2: Practice diary template

Appendix C: Semi-structured one-to-one interview questions

For all participants

1. Tell me briefly about your music journey and performing.
2. How did you find the practice diary task?
Did you discover anything about your own practice in the process?
3. What motivates you to practice and what happens when you don't feel motivated?
4. Do you plan and structure your practice? If so, how?
5. Describe a typical practice session to me.
6. Do you rely on or incorporate any formal practice methodologies into your practice?
7. What do you consider to be core practice skills?
8. What are your favourite or most commonly used practice methods?
9. What is your attitude to mistakes and error correction during practice?
10. Do you incorporate recording, listening to music, silent practice or visualisation into your practice?
11. Do you monitor your practice progress? If so, how?
12. Is there anything you wish you could change in your practice?
13. Do you consider singers and instrumentalists to approach practice in the same way?
14. What are your thoughts on innate talent?
15. Do you have any questions yourself?

For singers

- What makes singing practice unique?
- What are the benefits and limitations of practising singing?

For singer-instrumentalists

- Do you take a similar approach to practising singing as practising your instrument?

Figure 3: Semi-structured one-to-one interview questions

Appendix D: Research project Gantt chart timeline



Research project Gantt chart timeline continued

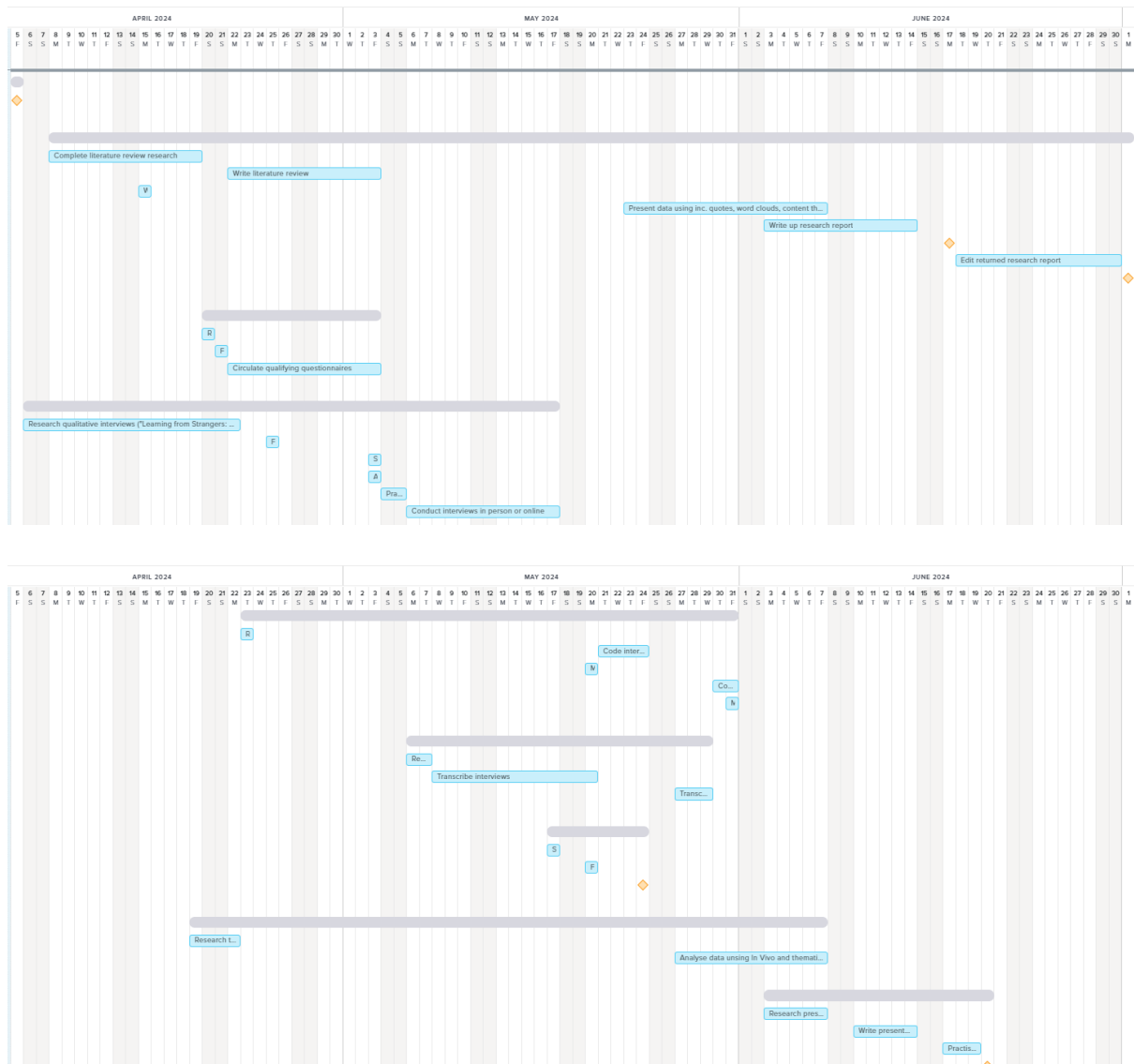


Figure 4: Research project Gantt chart timeline

Appendix E: Ethical approval anticipated risks and mitigations

Risk to participant	Mitigations
Physical harm e.g. over-practising and vocal strain.	Discuss with and provide participant information on vocal health prior to and during research (see BVA <u>Take care of your voice</u> handout).
Mental harm e.g. self-induced pressure to produce 'good results'.	Inform participants prior to study of the research's impartiality and independence from other studies and qualifications. Ensure anonymity and confidentiality.
Emotional harm e.g. if (lack of) practice is highly connected to participant self-worth and efficacy.	Discuss with and provide participant information on vocal health prior to and during research (see BVA <u>The effects of stress and emotion on the voice</u> handout). Highlight researcher's impartiality to participants' practice approach and methods.
Challenges to participant rights (diversity, lifestyle, values or attitudes) within focus group or informal discussion by other participants.	Ground rules for group discussion to be clearly and carefully presented in writing beforehand and verbally before group discussion.
Physical, mental, emotional and time costs of research project to participants are out of proportion to benefits.	Inform participants of right to withdraw from research at any time during or after process.
Lack of informed, voluntary consent.	Inform participants of right to withdraw from research at any time during or after process.
Questions raised, misunderstandings or concerns developed during or following the research process.	Provide support and additional information after taking part in the research.
Identity of a focus group participant revealed.	Discuss requirement for anonymity beyond focus group both in writing and verbally at the beginning of discussion(s). Ensure anonymity unless consent is given prior.
Confidence of a participant broken.	Ensure consent given verbally and in writing for responses to be used anonymously in results discussion.
Personal data provided by participant is breached.	Ensure electronic, physical, audio and video data is stored in accordance with current GDPR requirements.
Participant vulnerability online e.g. interaction between researcher and/ or other participants.	Ensure all communication is carried out via school intranet and email in accordance with school policy and that all wider communications with non-school participants conducted professionally, in

	accordance with the ISM's policies of conduct and via email as soon and as much as possible.
Risk to investigator	Mitigations
Mental harm e.g. stress from task management around work and personal commitments.	Create Gantt chart for task management from research design through to write up and participant debrief.
Emotional harm e.g. results bring up difficult feelings	Check-in with tutor regularly. Seek further support from the university if needed.
Conflict of interest between participant welfare/ progress and research aims.	Stop immediately and seek advice from tutor.
Conflict of interest between school/ university narrative and research results.	Stop immediately and seek advice from tutor.
Risk of accusation from in-person school interviews.	Inform Director of Music when interview is taking place. Leave window to teaching room unobstructed. Video duration of interview interaction.
Risk of harm from in-person interviews in teaching studio.	Inform shared workspace colleagues when interview is taking place. Leave windows to teaching room unobstructed. Video duration of interview interaction.
Risk of damage to reputation from online communication and data collection via email, within internet forums and delivering online questionnaire.	Construct clear, professional boundaries for online interaction via school intranet, school email and within university's ethical framework.
Risk to university/ Voice Study Centre	Mitigations
Adverse publicity in the event of participant accusation of researcher	Researcher to follow university ethical framework to the best of their ability. Researcher to discuss any potential concerns with VSC immediately.
Adverse publicity to UWTSD or Sevenoaks School in the event of fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, failure to meet ethical, legal and professional obligations or improper dealing with allegations of misconduct.	Conduct research professionally in such a way to minimise the potential for claims of negligence made against the University, its researchers and any collaborating individual or organisation. Comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, as well as the

	university's Research Integrity and Ethics Code of Practice, Sevenoaks School Safeguarding Policy, the ISM Members' Safeguarding Policy and Code of Practice.
Table 5: Ethical approval anticipated risks and mitigations	

Appendix F: List of research papers specifically including or addressing practice for singers

1995	Effects of mental practice and modeling on guitar and vocal performance.	Theiler & Lippman
2002	Classical singers learning and memorising a new song: An observational study	Ginsborg
2004	Strategies and self-efficacy beliefs in instrumental and vocal individual practice: A study of students in higher music education.	Nielson
2005	A comparison of successful and unsuccessful strategies in individual sight-singing preparation and performance	Killian & Henry
2008	The use of specific practice and performance strategies in sight-singing instruction	Henry
2012	The effects of a positive mindset trigger word pre-performance routine on the expressive performance of junior high age singers	Broomhead, Skidmore, Eggett & Mills
2015	A comparison of the efficacy of individual and collaborative music learning in ensemble rehearsals.	Brandler
2015	Mindfulness for singers: The effects of a targeted mindfulness course on learning vocal technique	Czajkowski and Greasley
2015	The relationship between personality traits, flow-experience, and different aspects of practice behavior of amateur vocal students.	Heller, Bullerjahn & von Georgi
2019	Investigating the circumstances under which singers use imagery.	Desantis
2019	The Art and Skills of Learning (New) Music: Lucy Shelton's Practice Guide	Shelton
Table 6: List of research papers specifically including or addressing practice for singers. Taken from How et al. (2022).		

Appendix G: Strategy use in vocal practice

Strategy	M	SD
Rehearse errors until corrected	4.26	0.829
Repeat phrases	4.21	0.762
Mark music	4.19	1.026
Imagine yourself as a character or in a situation related to the text	3.73	1.094
Set goals for the practice session	3.65	1.288
Repeat one to two measures	3.63	0.989
Warm up using a predetermined sequence of activities	3.61	1.234
Repeat short motives	3.56	0.961
Work on most difficult sections first	3.54	1.06
Whole-part-whole practice approach	3.51	1.102
Body movement (e.g. foot tapping, conducting, gesturing)	3.51	1.277
Practice diction separate from melody or rhythm	3.50	1.102
Use mental practice	3.45	1.234
Chaining	3.44	0.997
Set long term goals	3.37	1.312
Alternate slow practice with at tempo practice	3.27	1.047
Repeat whole etude or piece	3.25	1.103
Speak rhythms	3.23	1.187
Varying tempo	3.23	1.062
Practice while playing the piano	3.20	1.265
Work on memorization separate from technical and expressive practice	3.18	1.227
Formally self-evaluate	3.09	1.388
Reference a music or foreign language dictionary	3.00	1.062
Utilize visual imagery	3.00	1.269
End practice by singing completely through current repertoire	2.99	1.115
Review the music before starting each practice	2.97	1.074
Listen to recordings	2.97	1.105
Audio and/or video record practice to review later	2.62	1.254
Varying/simplifying pitch patterns	2.56	1.174
Practice with a metronome	2.47	1.113
Practice with a live accompanist	2.39	1.031
Varying/simplifying rhythms	2.32	1.127
Warm down at the end of practice	2.32	1.193
Clap/tap rhythms	2.29	1.123
Practice with an accompanist recording	1.85	0.975

Note. Scores were reported on a five-point scale in response to the question of "In how many of your own practice sessions did you use each of the following strategies?" (1 = None, 2 = Few, 3 = Some, 4 = Most, 5 = All). Dashed lines indicate the categories of results described in the narrative.

Table 7: Strategy use in vocal practice. Taken from Summit & Weidner (2021).

Appendix H: Self-regulated music practice behaviours

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of musicians' practice behaviours and reliability tests.

Factor	Practice behaviour	Mean	Mode	Median	SD	α
Self-Regulation through Practice Organization	I use specific strategies related to my practice goals	4.14	4	4.00	.86	.83
	I understand that my goals are challenging	4.11	4	4.00 ^a	.85	.83
	I set goals for my practice sessions	3.95	4	4.00	.93	.83
	I set specific goals for my practice sessions	3.88	4	4.00	1.03	.83
	I evaluate the progress made towards my goals	3.80	4	4.00	1.01	.83
	I set long-term goals (weeks, months, years)	3.75	4	4.00	1.10	.83
	I organize the physical environment of my practice sessions	3.65	5	4.00	1.20	.84
	I set short-term goals (minutes, hours, days)	3.62	4	4.00	1.08	.84
	I plan the order of the activities of my practice sessions	3.61	3	4.00	1.05	.83
	I plan the time of my practice sessions	3.46	3	3.00	1.11	.83
Self-Regulation through Personal Resources	I understand the nature and demands of my musical activities	4.39	5	4.00	.68	.84
	I understand my strengths and weaknesses	4.31	4	4.00	.61	.84
	I am aware of the strategies that I use during practice	4.25	5	4.00	.83	.83
	I use strategies that have been effective in the past	4.22	5	4.00	.83	.84
	I know what I must do to in order to complete my musical activities satisfactorily	4.20	4	4.00	.77	.84
	I know when and in which contexts my strategies will be most effective	3.99	4	4.00	.81	.83
	I am able to achieve my practice goals satisfactorily	3.95	4	4.00	.72	.84
Self-Regulation through External Resources	I practice in order to improve my musical skills	4.50	5	5.00	.65	.84
	I seek information from several sources (books, CDs, videos, internet, biographies, arts, etc.) to support my study	3.83	5	4.00	1.07	.84
	I request help from others (teachers, peers, composers, musicologists and specialists)	3.39	3	3.00	1.12	.84
	I cannot reach my practice goals without the support of some external factors (peers, teachers, materials, environment)*	3.09	2	3.00	1.20	.85
	I practice in order to achieve high ratings (e.g., grades) and positive feedback**	2.93	3	3.00	1.28	.86

Note. SD = Standard Deviation; α = Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient if item deleted; a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest values shown; * Reversed score; ** Item removed.

Table 8: Self-regulated music practice behaviours. Taken from Araújo (2016).

Appendix I: Application for ethical approval from UWTSD



PG2 / E1 FORM

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Jennifer Laura Maslin			
2	Tick all boxes which apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
3	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☒	Postgraduate Research Student
4	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Institute of Management and Health			
5	Campus:	Carmarthen			
6	E-mail address:	info@jennifermaslin.co.uk			
7	Contact Telephone Number:	07929 070543			
For students:					
8	Student Number:	2238742			
9	Programme of Study:	MA in Professional Practice (Voice Pedagogy)			
10	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Julie Crossman/ Debbie Winter			

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known):	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
3	<i>Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval</i>	Institute Research Committee	☐		
4		Other (write in) WAPPAR Ethics Board Representative Director of Music at Sevenoaks School	☒	09.02.24	

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice ☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy ☒
3	Sevenoaks School Safeguarding Policy 2023 ISM Members' Safeguarding Policy 2023 ISM Members' Code of Practice 2023 ☒

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

1	Does the research activity involve collaborators outside of the University?	YES	☐	NO	☒
2	If Yes, please provide the name of the external organisation and name and contact details for the main contact person and confirmation this person has consented to their personal data being shared as part of this collaboration.				
3	Institution	N/A			
4	Contact person name	N/A			
5	Contact person e-mail address	N/A			
6	Has this individual consented to sharing their details on this form?	YES	☐	NO	☐
7	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES	☐	NO	☐
8	Is your research externally funded	YES	☐	NO	☐
9	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO
10		Employed	YES	☐	NO
11	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO

12	Permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐
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Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

13	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
14	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Differences in approach to practice		
2	Proposed start date:	18.03.24	Proposed end date:	01.07.24
3	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the three points below: • Purpose of Research Activity • Proposed Research Question • Aims of Research Activity • Objectives of Research Activity Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain • What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge • How it addresses an area of importance.			
4	Purpose of Research Activity To discover if there are differences in approach, strategy and method of practice between singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists and what can be learned from them.			
5	Research Question What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?			
6	Aims of Research Activity • To investigate current "best practice" practice approaches, strategies and methods. • To investigate influencing factors and potential differences in approach to practice and practice methods between singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists. • To identify potential differences in approach to practice and practice methods across musical disciplines (e.g. classical, jazz etc). • To explore what can be learned from a cross-discipline approach to practice. • To consider the distinct uniqueness of practising the voice and the impact of its singularity to practice approach.			
7	Objectives of Research Activity • To conduct a thorough literature review into "best practice" practice approaches and methods for both singing and instrumental performance, determining any potential influencing factors and differences between voice and instrument, as well as musical genre/ discipline.			

	- To consult actively performing singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists about their lived experiences of practice routines, habits and methods. - To identify effective practice approaches and methods common in other disciplines which may not be (well) established in approaches to and methods of singing practice. - To identify and consider the uniqueness of the voice and its impact on practice approach and method.
8	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed.
9	The qualitative methodology to achieve my aims and objectives will include the following triangulated methods: 1. A literature review will explore approaches and methods to singing and instrumental practice and consider self-regulated learning strategies across different musical genre disciplines. 2. A qualifying questionnaire of randomly selected, actively performing singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists will be conducted electronically online. Under-18 participants will be invited to take part in the study at the school I teach in and will be aged from year 10 (aged 14) upwards. By this age at this school, those interested in either GCSE music or pursuing music seriously are committed to the instruments they are studying and will hopefully provide useful data from a demographic still in fulltime education and learning how to practise. Adult participants will be from aged from 18 to the average UK retirement age of 65. 3. A practice diary template will be distributed to 6-8 purposively selected questionnaire respondents to be completed. The sample will include 1 classical singer, 1 singer of another genre, 1 classical instrumentalist, 1 instrumentalist of another genre, 1-2 classical singer-instrumentalists and 1-2 singer-instrumentalists of another genre. An even split of gender will be aimed for. 1-2 of the above will be selected from Sevenoaks School. 4-5 will be selected from online interest in the study. 4. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the same purposive sample of active performers to discuss their completed practice diary, habits and methods. This will be conducted in person at my teaching studio, in my school teaching room or online via Zoom and will be video recorded. 5. A focus group discussion with all interview participants will be conducted via Zoom to explore contrasting lived experiences. All interviews and discussion will be transcribed first using transcription software then thoroughly checked and corrected manually. Interview and focus group discussion analysis will be member checked using Interviewee Transcript Review (ITR). Data will then be manually and inductively coded and analysed.

10	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.		
11	- Teaching studio within larger office building, close to other individuals. - Sevenoaks School teaching room, close to other Visiting Music Teachers' teaching rooms and with written permission from Director of Music. - Online (Zoom).		
12	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants.		
13	N/A		

14	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
15	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with prevailing data protection law of the country in question and England and Wales.		
	N/A		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

1	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
2	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
3	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
4	Use of diaries?	☒	☐
5	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
6	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
7	Use of video or audio recording?	☒	☐
8	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
9	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
10	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
11	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
12	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
13	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
14	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
15	Other primary data collection methods, please explain in this box For example, 'focus groups'. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) in this box and tick the accompany box.	☒	☐

16	Details of any other primary data collection method: Literature review Practice diary Focus group		
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If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

1	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
2	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
3	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
4	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
5	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☒	☐
6	Prisoners?	☐	☒
7	Young offenders?	☐	☒
8	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
9	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
10	Others (please identify specifically any group who may be unable to give consent) please indicate here and tick the appropriate box.	☐	☒
11	Other – please indicate here: N/A		

12	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
13	How many participants are expected?	Qualifying questionnaire: 30-50 aged 14-65 Purposive sample for practice diary, interview and focus group: 6-8 aged 14-65
14	Who will the participants be?	Active amateur and professional performers aged 14-65 (who do not teach) from within the UK.
15	How will you identify the participants?	The qualifying questionnaire will be selected from a convenience sample of years 10-13 within Sevenoaks School music department via email to school students and an online convenience to snowball sample within musician and music organisation (social media) forums. The qualifying questionnaire will close at Sevenoaks School when 13 responses have been received. The qualifying questionnaire will close online when 37 responses have been received. (These numbers reflect the ratio of Sevenoaks School and online participants according to the

		purposive sample criterion for the practice diary, interview and focus group.) Practice diary, interview and focus group participants will be purposively selected from the convenience(-snowball) samples at Sevenoaks School and online.
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16	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
17	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
19	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
20	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
21	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
22	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
23	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
24	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
25	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
26	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
27	N/A			

28	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
29	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
30	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☒	☐	☐
31	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
32	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
33	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
34	Interview will be videoed and/ or recorded using a mobile phone and microphone.			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

1	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
2	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes	☐
		No	☒
3	Risks to participants For example: emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
4	Risk to Participant: 1. Physical harm e.g. over-practising and vocal strain. 2. Mental harm e.g. self-induced pressure to produce 'good results'.	How will you mitigate the Risk to Participant 1. Discuss with and provide participant information on vocal health prior to and during research (see BVA Take care of your voice handout). 2. Inform participants prior to study of the research's impartiality and independence	

	3. Emotional harm e.g. if (lack of) practice is highly connected to participant self-worth and efficacy. 4. Challenges to participant rights (diversity, lifestyle, values or attitudes) within focus group or informal discussion by other participants. 5. Physical, mental, emotional and time costs of research project to participants are out of proportion to benefits. 6. Lack of informed, voluntary consent. 7. Questions raised, misunderstandings or concerns developed during or following the research process. 8. Identity of a focus group participant revealed. 9. Confidence of a participant broken.	from other studies and qualifications. Ensure anonymity and confidentiality. 3. Discuss with and provide participant information on vocal health prior to and during research (see BVA The effects of stress and emotion on the voice handout). Highlight researcher's impartiality to participants' practice approach and methods. 4. Ground rules for group discussion to be clearly and carefully presented in writing beforehand and verbally before group discussion. 5. Inform participants of right to withdraw from research at any time during or after process. 6. Inform participant of the aims and procedures of the research in writing and verbally. Obtain participants' written and verbal, voluntary agreement to take part on the basis of aims and procedures detailed, if over 18. Obtain school participants' verbal agreement and guardian's written voluntary agreement to take part on the basis of aims and procedures detailed, if under 18 or boarding. Even if a school student is 18 and boarding, they should be treated as a minor for the purpose of the study to fulfill the school's duty of care. Inform participants of right to withdraw from research at any time during or after process. 7. Provide support and additional information after taking part in the research. 8. Discuss requirement for anonymity beyond focus group both in writing and verbally at the beginning of discussion(s). Ensure anonymity unless consent is given prior. 9. Ensure consent given verbally and in writing for responses to be used
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	10. Personal data provided by participant is breached. 11. Participant vulnerability online e.g. interaction between researcher and/ or other participants.	anonymously in results discussion. 10. Ensure electronic, physical, audio and video data is stored in accordance with current GDPR requirements. 11. Ensure all communication is carried out via school intranet and email in accordance with school policy and that all wider communications with non-school participants conducted professionally, in accordance with the ISM's policies of conduct and via email as soon and as much as possible.
5	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
6	Risks to investigator For example: personal safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to Investigator: 1. Mental harm e.g. stress from task management around work and personal commitments 2. Emotional harm e.g. results bring up difficult feelings 3. Conflict of interest between participant welfare/ progress and research aims. 4. Conflict of interest between school/ university narrative and research results. 5. Risk of accusation from in-person school interviews. 6. Risk of harm from in-person interviews in teaching studio.	<i>How will you mitigate the Risk to Investigator:</i> 1. Create Gantt chart for task management from research design through to write up and participant debrief. 2. Check-in with tutor regularly. Seek further support from the university if needed. 3. Stop immediately and seek advice from tutor. 4. Stop immediately and seek advice from tutor. 5. Inform Director of Music when interview is taking place. Leave window to teaching room unobstructed. Video duration of interview interaction. 6. Inform shared workspace colleagues when interview is taking place. Leave windows to teaching room unobstructed.

	7. Risk of damage to reputation from online communication and data collection via email, within internet forums and delivering online questionnaire.	Video duration of interview interaction.		
	7. Construct clear, professional boundaries for online interaction via school intranet, school email and within university's ethical framework.			
7	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection			
	Risk to University:	How will you mitigate the Risk to University:		
	1. Adverse publicity in the event of participant accusation of researcher	1. Researcher to follow university ethical framework to the best of their ability. Researcher to discuss any potential concerns with VSC immediately.		
	2. Adverse publicity to UWTSD or Sevenoaks School in the event of fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, failure to meet ethical, legal and professional obligations or improper dealing with allegations of misconduct.	2. Conduct research professionally in such a way to minimise the potential for claims of negligence made against the University, its researchers and any collaborating individual or organisation. Comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards as required by statutory and regulatory authorities, as well as the university's Research Integrity and Ethics Code of Practice, Sevenoaks School Safeguarding Policy, the ISM Members' Safeguarding Policy and Code of Practice.		
8	Disclosure and Barring Service			
9	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
10	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☒	☐	☐

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when? ITR (Interviewee Transcription Review) will be conducted via email after interviews and focus group discussions are transcribed. Appropriate email address provided for participants to request feedback, raise questions and request final report.
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation. Inform participants in writing and verbally of the research process, its purpose, requirements and time involvement.

	Obtain participants' written and verbal, voluntary agreement to take part on the basis of aims and procedures detailed, if over 18. Obtain school participants' verbal agreement and guardian's written voluntary agreement to take part on the basis of aims and procedures detailed, if under 18 or boarding. Inform participants of right to withdraw from research at any time during or after process. Informed consent for online questionnaire to be provided by clicking "next" button on homepage screen. Informed consent for practice diary, interview and focus group participation to be requested online via email. Draft consent email and questionnaire consent homepage to be approved by supervisor.
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	All questionnaire respondent names and email addresses will be redacted. Interviewee and focus group participants will be assigned random pseudonyms to protect anonymity. Other names and organisations mentioned within conversation will also be redacted or altered to protect participant anonymity.

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

In completing this section refer to the University's Research Data Management Policy and the extensive resources on the University's Research Data Management web pages (<http://uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/>).

1	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	YES	NO
	<i>"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person.</i>	☒	☐
2	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
	Personal data collected will involve names, email addresses, IP addresses, usernames and consent forms, audio/video recordings and transcriptions of interviews with participants.		
3	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
	<i>"Special category data" means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' –</i> <i>(a) racial or ethnic origin,</i> <i>(b) political opinions,</i> <i>(c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,</i> <i>(d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),</i> <i>(e) physical or mental health or condition,</i> <i>(f) sexual life,</i>	☐	☒

	(g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),		
4	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
	N/A		
5	Will the research activity involve storing personal data and/or special category data on one of the following:	YES	NO
6	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
7	University computers?	☐	☒
8	Private company computers?	☐	☒
9	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
10	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
11	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☒	☐
12	Other – specify:	☐	☐
13	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	Any written notes made by the researcher during interviews or focus group discussion will be immediately typed up and transferred to online storage account following the session. Written notes will then be destroyed. All electronic data will be kept in password protected cloud storage on my personal password-protected laptop and will not be shared. Audio/visual data will be recorded on my password protected phone and immediately transferred to cloud storage after the session. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected. Audio/ visual data will be transcribed either manually onto my personal laptop or using transcription software. The exact transcription software is yet to be determined but data protection will be carefully considered if/ when the software is chosen. Transcribed interviews will be shown to participants to check accuracy of reporting. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder.		
14	All Data Storage		
15	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
16	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
17	Sharing of data with others at the University?	☒	☐
18	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
19	Export of data outside the European Union or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
20	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☒	☐
21	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
22	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
23	Data archiving?	☐	☐

24	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and DPA (and/or any international equivalent):		
	All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage on my Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected. All data transfers will be encrypted and password protected. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. In accordance with the DPA2018, participants will have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests this, in which case the data will not be used in the project.		
25	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	The principal researcher and my tutor.		
26	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	The principal researcher.		
27	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected cloud storage my Office 365 system which will not be shared. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected, and will be reformatted at the end of the project in order to destroy the data. The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted.		
28	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. (<i>Most relevant to academic staff</i>)		
	N/A		
29	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
		NO	☐
30	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒
		NO	☐

SECTION K: Declaration

31	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.		
	In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
	Signature of applicant:		Date: 10.02.24

For STUDENT Submissions:

32	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Laura James	Date: 13.3.24
33	Signature:	Laura James	

For STAFF Submissions:

34	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
35	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☒	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (and have NOT completed Section H of this form) (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.
☒	I have deleted the guidance notes before submitting the PG2 for consideration

RESEARCH STUDENTS AND STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name. You will be informed of the outcome of your claim by email; therefore it is important that you check your University and personal email accounts regularly.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

**PG2 / E1 FORM**

This form is available electronically from the Academic Office web pages:
<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/appendices-and-forms/>

Jennifer
Maslin

Jennifer Maslin Singing Teacher
The Old Bakery
90 Camden Road
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN1 2QP
info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

10th February 2024

Dear UWTSD,

RE: What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?

I confirm that I approve of the research proposed into 'differences in approach to practice' to be carried out by Jennifer Maslin, of Jennifer Maslin Singing Teacher via questionnaires, one-to-one interviews and a focus group between March 2024 and July 2024.

Kind Regards,



Jennifer Maslin

Sevenoaks School
High Street
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN13 1HU

9th February 2024

Dear UWTSD,

RE: What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?

I confirm that I approve of the research proposed into 'differences in approach to practice' to be carried out by Singing VMT Jennifer Maslin in one-to-one interviews of students at Sevenoaks School between March 2024 and July 2024.

Kind Regards,



Christopher Dyer
Director of Music

Figure 9: Application for ethical approval from UWTSD

Appendix J: Research project participant recruitment poster



MUSICIAN?

**SINGERS &
INSTRUMENTALISTS
NEEDED!**

**How do
you
practise?**

**VOICE STUDY
CENTRE**

CAN YOU HELP?

RESEARCH PROJECT

For more info, contact Jennifer Maslin
info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

UK-based?

Actively performing?

Master's student seeks musicians to interview for study
on music practice to share... "best practice"!

Participants will be asked to:

- Keep 1 week practice diary
- Give 1 hour Zoom interview
- Take part in 1 hour Zoom group discussion

To take part, see www.surveymonkey.com/r/2SYBBHL

WITHIN 6-24 MAY 2024

Figure 10: Research project participant recruitment poster. Contact name and address altered for school use in line with school policy.

Appendix K: Qualifying questionnaire

How do you practise?

Thank you for your time and interest!

My name is Jennifer Maslin. I'm a singing teacher and Master's student in Voice Pedagogy (Singing Teaching) at the Voice Study Centre (with the University of Wales Trinity St David). This research project forms the third module in my degree and is the first time I have ventured into primary research - speaking to musicians, rather than reading about them!

Questions?

If you have any questions, you can contact me at 2238742@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

My tutor is Mel Toy. You can reach her at mel@voicestudycentre.com

My research project

The working title of this research project is *What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?* I hope to discover if there are differences in how singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists practise. By learning from different disciplines, I plan to share "best practice" and create a systematic approach to teaching singing practice.

Are you eligible?

Volunteer participants must:

- Live in the UK.
- Be actively performing.
- Aged 14 - 68 years old.

What does it involve?

I am looking for volunteers to:

- Keep a practice diary for a week.
- Give a 1 hour (Zoom) interview with me about music practice.
- Join a 1 hour online (Zoom) group discussion with 5-7 other participants about music practice.

This survey

This survey will help me find the right people to interview. It will take 5 minutes to complete and involves 11 questions. It will remain open until the participant limit is reached or until 17 May 2024.

- **Ethical approval:** The research project has passed ethical approval by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's Ethics Committee.
- **Data protection:** Any written notes made during interviews or focus group discussion will be immediately typed up and transferred to online storage account following the session. Written notes will then be destroyed.
All electronic data will be kept in password protected cloud storage on my personal password-protected laptop and will not be shared. Audio/visual data will be recorded on my password protected phone and immediately transferred to cloud storage after the session. Any USB sticks used to store or transfer data will be password protected. Audio/ visual data will be transcribed either manually onto my personal laptop or using transcription software. The exact transcription software is yet to be determined but data protection will be carefully considered if/ when the software is chosen. Transcribed interviews will be shown to participants to check accuracy of reporting. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder.
- **Data storage:** Data will be stored until my degree is completed in March 2026.

* 1. **Informed, voluntary consent**

- Participation in this research is voluntary.
- Refusal to participate in the research will not affect your treatment or education.
- Participation from the research can be withdrawn at any time during or after, and for any reason.
- You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to.
- Your data will be kept confidential and, if published with your permission, your identity will be anonymous.
- A debrief will be offered to participants at the end of the project.

☐ I have read about informed, voluntarily consent and understand what is involved in this project. I give my consent to take part. (Check the box to provide consent.)

2. Please provide your contact email address:

3. Are you based in the UK?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. Check the boxes that apply.

Would you be willing to take part in a research study which involves:

- ☐ 1. Completing a practice diary for a week.
- ☐ 2. Giving a one-to-one online (Zoom) interview.
- ☐ 3. Taking part in an online (Zoom) group discussion with 5-7 fellow musicians.

5. Please select your age:

- ☐ 14-18
- ☐ 19-28
- ☐ 29-38
- ☐ 39-48
- ☐ 49-58
- ☐ 59-68

6. Please select your gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

7. Please list the instruments you **play** (including singing). Include:

- Instrument
- Years played
- Level
- Genre/ style
- Training

8. Please list the instruments you **actively perform** (including singing):

9. Do you have singing/ instrumental tuition yourself?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. Do you teach singing/ and instrument?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. Anything else you feel you should mention:

Figure 11: Qualifying questionnaire to recruit convenience sample

Appendix L: Participant pack

Participant pack: Consent form

Thank you for volunteering for my research project into music practice! I really appreciate it and hope your contribution will help grow our understanding of the field further.

About me

My name is Jennifer Maslin. I'm a singing teacher and Master's student in Voice Pedagogy (Singing Teaching) at the Voice Study Centre (with the University of Wales Trinity St David). This research project forms the third module in my degree and is the first time I have ventured into primary research - speaking to musicians, rather than reading about them!

My research project

The working title of this research project is *What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?* I hope to discover if there are differences in how singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists practise. By learning from different disciplines, I plan to share "best practice" and create a systematic approach to teaching singing practice.

The project will be submitted as a report and short presentation to the Voice Study Centre (in partnership with the University of Wales Trinity St David) and possibly to journals afterwards for publication.

What the project involves

By taking part, you will be asked to:

- Keep a practice diary for a week.
- Give a 1 hour (Zoom) interview with me about music practice.
- Join a 1 hour online (Zoom) group discussion with 5-7 other participants about music practice.

Interviews and group discussion will be scheduled before the 31 May 2024.

Your welfare

It is very important that by exploring a topic that can bring up different emotions, you take care of your vocal/ physical, emotional and mental health at all times. I attach two leaflets for your information. If you have any questions or concerns at any point, please let me know. As a researcher, I aim to be impartial. Please know that I make no judgement on your current practice as a musician and am not looking for 'good results', just a reflection of how different musicians practice! Sharing our approaches will hopefully help build a cross-discipline approach.

Attached are:

- a practice diary for you to complete in the week leading up to our interview.
- a voluntary consent form to be completed and returned before our interview takes place.
- two leaflets on voice care.

Arranging an interview

Could we please schedule an interview for the week commencing 13 May?

My availability is currently:

- Monday 13 May before 4pm
- Tuesday 14 May before 4pm
- Wednesday evening from 6pm
- Thursday 16 May before 3pm
- Friday 17 May before 4pm

Adult participant consent form

What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?

Consent to take part in research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any question involved during the research process without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves keeping a practice diary for a week, giving a one hour interview and taking part in a one hour focus group discussion.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.
- This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the research project report, which may in time be published, as well as a viva presentation.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in personal, password protected Dropbox folders until graduation in March 2026.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for until graduation in March 2026.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Mrs Jennifer Maslin BAHons PGCE DipABRSM MISM

Master's student at the Voice Study Centre and University of Wales Trinity St David

Questions, contact: info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

Questions or complaint, contact supervisor Mel Toy: mel@voicestudycentre.com

Signature of research participant:

----- Date -----

Signature of researcher:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

-----  -----

----- Date ---03.05.25--

Participant pack: Consent form continued

Thank you for volunteering for my research project into music practice! I really appreciate it and hope your contribution will help grow our understanding of the field further.

About me

My name is Jennifer Maslin. I'm a singing teacher and Master's student in Voice Pedagogy (Singing Teaching) at the Voice Study Centre (with the University of Wales Trinity St David). This research project forms the third module in my degree and is the first time I have ventured into primary research - speaking to musicians, rather than reading about them!

My research project

The working title of this research project is *What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?* I hope to discover if there are differences in how singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists practise. By learning from different disciplines, I plan to share "best practice" and create a systematic approach to teaching singing practice.

The project will be submitted as a report and short presentation to the Voice Study Centre (in partnership with the University of Wales Trinity St David) and possibly to journals afterwards for publication.

What the project involves

By taking part, you will be asked to:

- Keep a practice diary for a week.
- Give a 1 hour (Zoom) interview with me about music practice.
- Join a 1 hour online (Zoom) group discussion with 5-7 other participants about music practice.

Interviews and group discussion will be scheduled before the 31 May 2024.

Your welfare

It is very important that by exploring a topic that can bring up different emotions, you take care of your vocal, emotional and mental health at all times. I attach two leaflets for your information. If you have any questions or concerns at an point, please let me know. As a researcher, I aim to be impartial. Please know that I make no judgement on your current practice as a musician and am not looking for 'good results', just a reflection of how different musicians practice! Sharing our approaches will hopefully help build a cross-discipline approach.

Attached are:

- two leaflets on voice care.
- a practice diary for you to complete in the week leading up to our interview.
- a voluntary consent form to be completed and returned before our interview takes place.

Child participant consent form

What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?

Consent to take part in research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any question involved during the research process without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves keeping a practice diary for a week, giving a one hour interview and taking part in a one hour focus group discussion.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.
- This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the research project report, which may in time be published, as well as a viva presentation.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in personal, password protected Dropbox folders until graduation in March 2026.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for until graduation in March 2026.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Mrs Jennifer Maslin BAHons PGCE DipABRSM MISM

Master's student at the Voice Study Centre and University of Wales Trinity St David

Questions, contact: info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

Questions or complaint, contact supervisor Mel Toy: mel@voicestudycentre.com

Signature of research participant:

----- Date -----

Signature of research participant parent, guardian or *loco parentis* (please underline):

----- Date -----

Signature of researcher:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

----- Date -----

Participant pack: Practice diary template

Practice Diary Template

Please complete a practice diary using the template below over the course of a calendar week. Your diary will help you prepare for both a one-to-one interview and focus group discussion on the topic of practice. A copy will be kept for reference alongside interview transcripts and your identity will be anonymised.

Consider the following whilst completing the diary:

- Attitude and feelings towards practice
- Approach and/ or strategy towards practice
- Practice methods
- Progress
- Achievements and challenges

The boxes will expand as you type.

Day 1	
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
General observations	
Day 2	
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
General observations	
Day 3	
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
General observations	
Day 4	
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
General observations	
Day 5	

Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
General observations	
Day 6	
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
General observations	
Day 7	
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
General observations	

Thank you!

Participant pack: Voice care leaflets

Diagnosis: Psychogenic voice disorders can affect adults and children, so if you, or your child, become hoarse or lose your voice, the most important thing is to exclude any physical cause. You will need to see your GP who will arrange a referral to an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) surgeon or, better still, a voice clinic where there will also be a voice specialist Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) who can offer further assessment and treatment. Your GP can also diagnose and treat any other contributing medical conditions.

What can be done to help?

Speech and Language Therapy: Many SLTs are trained in counselling techniques and can help the patient uncover the underlying emotional causes of the voice problem. They can also improve or resolve the voice problem using specialist voice therapy techniques.

Counselling/Psychotherapy: Sometimes the emotional aspects need professional help from a Counsellor, Psychologist or Psychotherapist. There are many different psychologically approaches available. One that has been used successfully with voice disorders is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). This may be available on the NHS through your GP or by contacting the 'Improving Access to Psychological Therapies' (IAPT) scheme. Private therapists can be found via the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy (BABCP) or through the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) – see reference section on back page.

Manual Therapy/Laryngeal Massage: Muscle tension in and around the larynx can sometimes be difficult to resolve

with voice therapy alone. In these cases, laryngeal massage/manipulation can be useful. Some SLTs are trained in these techniques or they can be carried out by a Physiotherapist or Osteopath who specialises in voice disorders. Your SLT can help you find these services.

Medication: Very occasionally psychogenic voice disorders fail to respond to speech therapy. There may be associated depression or some other psychological disorder that would respond better to medication. In this case, your GP will either help you find the most suitable medication or will refer you on to a Psychiatrist (a medical doctor specialising in mental health) for further assessment and help.

If your voice disorder is stress related there is no need to feel embarrassed or ashamed. It is often just your body's way of letting you know there is a problem you need to attend to. The more we can learn about the mind/body interaction the better we understand how the mind can affect our health and its role in illness. With help, psychogenic based voice disorders usually resolve quickly and completely.

Useful References:

- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT): www.iapt.nhs.uk
- The British Association for Behavioural & Cognitive Psychotherapy: www.babcp.com
- British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) 'Find a Therapist': www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk/therapists

Further information is available at:
www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk

Tel: +44 (0)300 123 2773
email: administrator@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk
Company no. 3873285. Registered Charity no: 1078709

Acknowledgements: Author Sara Harris. With grateful thanks to Peter Butcher, (Consultant Psychologist), Annie Elias, (Voice Specialist Speech and Language Therapist), and John Rubin (ENT Consultant) for advice and editing.

© 2016



When it isn't just physical...

The effects of stress and emotion on THE VOICE

the b. voice association

WORLD VOICE DAY
APRIL 16th

Participant pack: Voice care leaflets continued

When it hurts to speak, your voice is hoarse or down to a whisper and no one can hear you, it is often a shock to be told that nothing is physically wrong and that your voice problem is due to "stress". You may not necessarily feel stressed and find it hard to understand the diagnosis. So why does emotional stress affect our voices and how can this be treated?

What do we mean by 'stress'?

When life gets on top of us for any reason we react physically and emotionally. We may feel irritable, anxious or depressed. Physically we may notice increased muscle tension, headaches, difficulty sleeping or digestive problems. The source of the stress may be obvious and significant, for example, bereavement, redundancy or illness. However, frequently it is simply due to a slow build up of pressure and overload, with too much to do in too little time.

Why can it affect my voice?

Our vocal tract (vocal folds, larynx and pharynx) has a rich and complex nerve supply which includes input from the

sympathetic nervous system. These nerves are part of the autonomic nervous system which controls and maintains unconscious body functions such as heart rate, swallowing and digestion. It is largely responsible for our 'fight or flight' response and is closely linked to the emotion centres in the brain. This neurological link explains how we can recognise when our loved ones are upset or angry just by listening to their voices.

When we perceive something as threatening or upsetting the body reacts rapidly, preparing for action and producing physical changes we are all familiar with. These may include:

- Increased muscle tension
- Increased heart and breathing rates
- Perceived changes in temperature with shivering or sweating
- Tremor
- Dry mouth and throat

What about emotions?

Emotions are experienced mentally and physically, and our physical reactions to different emotions are often similar. Think how you feel when excited and when frightened; both emotions may result in increased muscle tension, tremor and palpitations but we interpret them differently. Excitement is perceived as a positive 'stress' while genuine fear or anger is perceived as unpleasant 'distress'. When situations in our lives create emotional distress we may find it difficult to deal with. We may choose to ignore our feelings and 'get on with life'. However, our bodies may react to the distress, developing physical symptoms such as:

- Gut problems: (e.g. acid reflux and irritable bowel syndrome)
- Skin problems: (e.g. eczema / psoriasis)
- Back, neck or other muscle pain (including laryngeal pain)
- Breathing difficulties: (e.g. over-breathing panic attacks, a trigger for attacks in some asthmatics)
- Hoarseness (dysphonia) or complete voice loss/whisper (aphonia)

The symptoms are perfectly real, but not necessarily related to infection, physical abnormality or disease. When the voice is lost as a result of emotional distress it is usually termed a 'psychogenic' voice disorder. However, clinicians vary in their use of terms and others sometimes used include 'conversion' aphonia/dysphonia, or occasionally 'functional aphonia' / dysphonia. While most people with psychogenic dysphonia are aware they are stressed, others may not be, in which case the diagnosis may come as a complete surprise and be hard to believe.



Participant pack: Voice care leaflets continued

the british **voice** associationYOUR **Voice** IS A VERY VALUABLE RESOURCE**DO NOT**

Misuse or abuse your voice...
Smoke, or if you can't give up, cut down...
Talk above the noise at social or sports events...
Talk or even whisper if you are losing your voice...

**AVOID**

Answer by shouting when you're upset or anxious...
Chemical irritants or dry dusty conditions...
Eating a large meal before going to bed at night...
Excessive use of the telephone...

**TAKE CARE**

If you have to use the telephone for your living...
About what you drink: too much alcohol, coffee, tea or cola will dry you up...

**TRY**

Not to clear your throat unnecessarily...
To warm up your voice if you're going to use it for a long time...
To have a humidifier in your workplace...

**MAKE SURE**

You drink at least 6–8 glasses of water each day...
That if your voice sounds different for more than two weeks, you see your doctor...

**NOTE**

Spicy foods and dairy products may affect the voice...
Hormonal changes (such as the menopause, pregnancy or menstruation) can affect voice quality...
The voice is closely linked with emotion, so tension or depression might show in your voice...

**Get
medical
advice
if you're
worried**

TAKE CARE OF YOUR Voice

issued by the British Voice Association

www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk

Figure 12: Participant pack

Appendix M: Redacted, signed consent forms in order of interview schedule

Thank you for volunteering for my research project into music practice! I really appreciate it and hope your contribution will help grow our understanding of the field further.

About me

My name is Jennifer Maslin. I'm a singing teacher and Master's student in Voice Pedagogy (Singing Teaching) at the Voice Study Centre (with the University of Wales Trinity St David). This research project forms the third module in my degree and is the first time I have ventured into primary research - speaking to musicians, rather than reading about them!

My research project

The working title of this research project is *What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?* I hope to discover if there are differences in how singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists practise. By learning from different disciplines, I plan to share "best practice" and create a systematic approach to teaching singing practice.

The project will be submitted as a report and short presentation to the Voice Study Centre (in partnership with the University of Wales Trinity St David) and possibly to journals afterwards for publication.

What the project involves

By taking part, you will be asked to:

- Keep a practice diary for a week.
- Give a 1 hour (Zoom) interview with me about music practice.
- Join a 1 hour online (Zoom) group discussion with 5-7 other participants about music practice.

Interviews and group discussion will be scheduled before the 31 May 2024.

Your welfare

It is very important that by exploring a topic that can bring up different emotions, you take care of your vocal/ physical, emotional and mental health at all times. I attach two leaflets for your information. If you have any questions or concerns at any point, please let me know. As a researcher, I aim to be impartial. Please know that I make no judgement on your current practice as a musician and am not looking for 'good results', just a reflection of how different musicians practice! Sharing our approaches will hopefully help build a cross-discipline approach.

Attached are:

- a practice diary for you to complete in the week leading up to our interview.
- a voluntary consent form to be completed and returned before our interview takes place.
- two leaflets on voice care.

Arranging an interview

Could we please schedule an interview for the week commencing 13 May?

My availability is currently:

- Monday 13 May before 4pm
- Tuesday 14 May before 4pm
- Wednesday evening from 6pm
- Thursday 16 May before 3pm
- Friday 17 May before 4pm

Adult participant consent form

What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?

Consent to take part in research

- I, [REDACTED], voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any question involved during the research process without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves keeping a practice diary for a week, giving a one hour interview and taking part in a one hour focus group discussion.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.
- This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the research project report, which may in time be published, as well as a viva presentation.

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in personal, password protected Dropbox folders until graduation in March 2026.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for until graduation in March 2026.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Mrs Jennifer Maslin BAHons PGCE DipABRSM MISM

Master's student at the Voice Study Centre and University of Wales Trinity St David

Questions, contact: info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

Questions or complaint, contact supervisor Mel Toy: mel@voicestudycentre.com

Signature of research participant:

 Date 12.5.24

Signature of researcher:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

 Date 03.05.25

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Mrs Jennifer Maslin BAHons PGCE DipABRSM MISM

Master's student at the Voice Study Centre and University of Wales Trinity St David

Questions, contact: info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

Questions or complaint, contact supervisor Mel Toy: mel@voicestudycentre.com

Signature of research participant:



Date 13/05

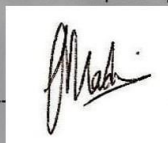
Signature of research participant parent, guardian or *loco parentis* (please underline):



Date 13/05/24

Signature of researcher:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study



Date 13.05.24

Adult participant consent form

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Master's student at the Voice Study Centre and University of Wales Trinity St David

Questions, contact: info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

Questions or complaint, contact supervisor Mel Toy: mel@voicestudycentre.com

Signature of research participant:

_____ [Redacted Signature] _____ Date —10.5.24—

Signature of researcher:



I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

_____ Date ---03.05.25--

Attached are:

- a practice diary for you to complete in the week leading up to our interview.
- a voluntary consent form to be completed and returned before our interview takes place.
- two leaflets on voice care.

Arranging an interview

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Adult participant consent form

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Mrs Jennifer Maslin BAHons PGCE DipABRSM MISM

Master's student at the Voice Study Centre and University of Wales Trinity St David

Questions, contact: info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

Questions or complaint, contact supervisor Mel Toy: mel@voicestudycentre.com

Signature of research participant:



----- Date ---10/5/24-----

Signature of researcher:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study



----- Date ---03.05.25--

Attached are:

- a practice diary for you to complete in the week leading up to our interview.
- a voluntary consent form to be completed and returned before our interview takes place.
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- Thursday 16 May before 3pm
- Friday 17 May before 4pm

Adult participant consent form

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- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Mrs Jennifer Maslin BAHons PGCE DipABRSM MISM

Master's student at the Voice Study Centre and University of Wales Trinity St David

Questions, contact: info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

Questions or complaint, contact supervisor Mel Toy: mel@voicestudycentre.com

Signature of research participant:



Date 27/05/2024

Signature of researcher:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study



----- Date ---03.05.25--

Adult participant consent form

What are the differences in approach to practice for actively performing singers and instrumentalists?

Consent to take part in research

- I, [REDACTED], voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any question involved during the research process without any consequences of any kind.
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- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
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Master's student at the Voice Study Centre and University of Wales Trinity St David

Questions, contact: info@jennifermaslin.co.uk

Questions or complaint, contact supervisor Mel Toy: mel@voicestudycentre.com

Signature of research participant:



Date

28.V.25

Signature of researcher:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study



Date 03.05.25

Figure 13: Redacted, signed consent forms in order of interview schedule

Appendix N: Completed practice diaries in order of interview schedule

Singer-instrumentalist 1 practice diary

Practice Diary Template

Please complete a practice diary using the template below over the course of a calendar week. Your diary will help you prepare for both a one-to-one interview and focus group discussion on the topic of practice. A copy will be kept for reference alongside interview transcripts and your identity will be anonymised.

Consider the following whilst completing the diary:

- Attitude and feelings towards practice
- Approach and/ or strategy towards practice
- Practice methods
- Progress
- Achievements and challenges

The boxes will expand as you type.

Day 1	Bank Hols
Time(s)	3pm
Duration(s)	15 mins
How and what you practised	Piano chord finger exercises via Musora subscription following practice guides. Warm up and scales
General observations	No real observations. Didn't do too much today as long weekend of gigs. Rest is also important
Day 2	Tuesday
Time(s)	9am approx
Duration(s)	15 mins
How and what you practised	Vocal exercises. Only light warm ups as performance in the afternoon . Piano scales and learning songs evening
General observations	9am is too early to sing really but I prefer to warm up my voice early on afternoon shows and just a short warm up before actual performance.
Day 3	Wednesday
Time(s)	1130am
Duration(s)	30 mins approx
How and what you practised	Vocal exercises
General observations	Felt warm. Top end felt good.
Day 4	Thursday

Singer-instrumentalist 1 practice diary continued

Time(s)	0930
Duration(s)	60 mins
How and what you practised	Guitar. Changing key to song for performance.
General observations	Have been a bit lazy with guitar practice of late fingers a little sore But not for long.
Day 5	Friday
Time(s)	8am
Duration(s)	20 mins
How and what you practised	Piano scales. Gig other side of M25 day so nothing major. Sang along with a song.
General observations	
Day 6	Saturday
Time(s)	12pm
Duration(s)	1 hour vocal. Bit of guitar
How and what you practised	Vocal exercises. Also some songs on guitar
General observations	Voice feels relaxed A good stretch. Working on more Musical themed songs for musicals show and wanting to hit higher notes.
Day 7	Sunday
Time(s)	9am
Duration(s)	30 mins
How and what you practised	Rehearsing new songs for this week performance. A mix of track and guitar. Played some festive songs too do no good reason. Travelling to Devon for 3 shows this week so time is short.
General observations	Words are getting harder to learn.

Singer-instrumentalist 2 practice diary

Day 1	Monday 6 th – I was ill so didn't practise
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
General observations	
Day 2	T-7th
Time(s)	Not really a specific time i just did a lot of singing
Duration(s)	From time to time throughout the day
How and what you practised	I'm writing a new song, so while I went about my day I practised it to see what approach would work best
General observations	I found an approach I like so now I just need to record it!
Day 3	W-8th
Time(s)	5-5.20
Duration(s)	20
How and what you practised	Francis Poulenc, Allegro malinconico movement of the flute sonata – i went over and over the double tonguing sections especially
General observations	I cannot double-tongue for the life of me
Day 4	Th-9 th – I was cramming for biology so didn't practise
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	

Singer-instrumentalist 2 practice diary continued

General observations	
Day 5	Fri 10 th – I had my biology GCSE and then stayed the night at a friend's so didn't practise (sorry if this is quite a sparse practise diary)
Time(s)	
Duration(s)	
How and what you practised	
General observations	
Day 6	Saturday
Time(s)	1-1.20
Duration(s)	20 mins
How and what you practised	Francis Poulenc, Allegro malinconico movement of the flute sonata again – broke down the bits i couldn't do
General observations	It's still hard to coordinate my double-tonguing to my fingers but I think I'm getting better??? idk
Day 7	
Time(s)	Not specifically any timings
Duration(s)	A long(ish) time?
How and what you practised	I was doing the vocals for another song so i was practising my approach
General observations	I think I'm getting better at singing lower and trying to do vibrato

Instrumentalist 1 practice diary

Day 1	
Time(s)	9:30-11:30; 1:15-3pm
Duration(s)	3 hours 45
How and what you practised	Warm up with scales esp double stops 15 mins thinking about LH shape and thumb position. Ysaye 5 working through learning notes, focus on shifts, intonation, LH shape/thumb, putting everything in right place, string crossings etc. Changed strings. Then worked on Tchaikovsky concerto, Kreisler Recitativo and Scherzo Caprice, Bach Erbarme Dich, Toccata and fugue and D minor Corrente.

Instrumentalist 1 practice diary continued

General observations	A lot of my practising right now is damage limitation because there are always too many notes to get through in too short a space of time. So I'll be figuring out what the most important things are to fix. Often it's working on fast passages with spiky dotted rhythm permutations, then with metronome starting super slow, working up to well above actual speed then going back to correct speed. Practising in ways that make things harder than they are so that the reality feels more comfortable. I also go through making sure my left hand is really clear on shifts, also being clear on options for phrasing, colour etc. Making sure RH knows always the bow division, string crossing etc.
Day 2	
Time(s)	09:20-11:15; 11:40-12:35; 1:30-2:40
Duration(s)	4ish hours
How and what you practised	Bach D minor, Ebarne Dich, Toccata and Fugue, Tchaikovsky concerto, Ysaye 5th Sonata Working through fixing problems as I went
General observations	Also having to fix admin problems, calls to manager etc. so everything felt quite frantic, lots of damage limitation, trying to get through Tchaikovsky at the end in least possible time before heading out to rehearse it with orchestra. A week before the concert so plenty of time to refine but obviously needs to be in a good enough place for the rehearsal too.
Day 3	
Time(s)	2pm- 6:15
Duration(s)	4 hours 15
How and what you practised	Bach Toccata and Fugue, Erbame Dich, Passion Chorale, D minor partita, Telemann Fantasia no. 9, Ysaye 5th Sonata. Exhausted after a late night and a tonne of admin in the morning so frustratedly didn't get to work until the afternoon and then it all felt like damage limitation just fixing the most necessary things, making sure everything sitting in the right place.

Instrumentalist 1 practice diary continued

General observations	It's really good focus in a way when you know you have really limited time, but also I just really want a week to prepare each of these concerts so I feel really on top of everything. I prepare so that I'll get through everything fine but I just would dearly love more breathing space.
Day 4	
Time(s)	06:15-09:00; 3pm-6:30, brief warm-up before concert
Duration(s)	6 hours 15
How and what you practised	Am prac mute going through evening unaccompanied programme of Bach Toccata and Fugue, Erbame Dich, Passion Chorale, D minor partita and Telemann Fantasia no. 9
General observations	AM prac mute working through making sure everything is ordered and no chaos or panic. Afternoon work was in the concert venue and somewhat frustrating in patches because people from the church/festival kept coming in and talking really loudly. In the quiet patches it was really good work though. It's just hard to know how to explain to people you need them to shut up without seeming rude. Also brief interruption with the presenter of the concert wanting to go through a couple of cues.
Day 5	
Time(s)	06:10-06:40; 07:00-08:30 (prac mute prac at hosts with a great dane); 1pm-5:15
Duration(s)	6 hours 15
How and what you practised	Tchaikovsky concerto; Kreisler Recitativo & Scherzo Caprice; Bach toccata and fugue; Caroline Shaw in manus tuas; Cyril Scott Idyll; Michael Small Prism; Ysaye 5th Sonata; Schumann Träumerei; Debussy Girl with the flaxen hair; Moon River; Seonaid Aitken The
General observations	
Day 6	
Time(s)	05:40-9am; 4:30-6pm (6:40-6:55 warm-up before concert)
Duration(s)	Just over 5 hours?

Instrumentalist 1 practice diary continued

How and what you practised	Repertoire for last night's concert: Kreisler Recitativo & Scherzo Caprice; Bach toccata and fugue; Caroline Shaw in manus tuas; Cyril Scott Idyll; Michael Small Prism; Ysaye 2nd Sonata; Schumann Träumerei; Debussy Girl with the flaxen hair; Moon River; Seonaid Aitken The Mad Piper
General observations	Early practise with practice mute by necessity working through fixing things damage-limitation-style because of not enough time to prepare the programme, and a last minute change (should have been playing Ysaye 5 for the first time to try it out ahead of a concert in July but it felt too fresh so chose this morning to replace with 2 so as not to build stress into it with a less than comfortable first performance). Useful practice fixing motor skills but useless for much more than that because of the mute. Afternoon work in the venue was blissful - beautiful acoustic and nobody to disturb me. Really calm measured work, able to refine sound/colour/intonation and make sure everything was calmly in its right place.
Day 7	
Time(s)	06:30-08:00; 1pm-5pm
Duration(s)	5 hours 30
How and what you practised	Saint-Saens 1st Sonata, Tchaikovsky concerto
General observations	Morning work with prac mute reminding my fingers where all the notes are in S-S - really tough play but it's good when things are still sort of there from a month or two back. Too tired to think. PM prac really positive work through Tchaikovsky fixing things. Nice to work in a different environment with nothing to disturb. Today had been a write-off in my schedule for practising but managed to work at a friend's place so it felt like I'd won the lottery!

Singer 1 practice diary

Monday 13th of May 2024

- Started with general warm up – bumble bees, mmm-ah/may/ee, voiced. From A below middle C to C octave higher. Achieved quite easily, although more of a strain when voicing it.
- Moved on general vocal training. Did a range of exercises given to me by Jenny. Particular emphasis on the vocalization of the vowel sounds, such as 'E' and 'eh'. This element went well, I thought.
- I forgot the vocal exercises we did at our last practice on 9th of May. Should have written these down to remember for my own practices.
- Also worked on the latest Vaccai exercise that Jenny has given me. It wasn't too bad, but struggled with trying to sing the notes short-long or long-short. I tend to get a bit glottal with the sound production and it just felt awkward.
- Worked on the Handel song I'm learning - Lascia ch'io Pianga. Focused primarily on the second lot of ornamentation we covered last Thursday. Most of it went ok, but struggled a bit with the bars that had longer turns around the D note. Will need to go over this again with Jenny.
- Overall my voice today was in reasonable shape – I managed to get to the top of my vocal range without any particular strain, although the F and G in Lascia ch'io Pianga is a stretch at times.
- Moved onto a new song we need to sing with my male voice choir at our concert this coming Saturday, the American folk song Shenandoah. Not very familiar with the tune, so spent a few minutes really just picking out and singing the notes on the piano, and then repeating, to embed this into my conscience.
- Overall practice lasted about 40 minutes, starting at around 12.45.

Tuesday 14th May 2024

- My goal for today was to spend less time on the vocal exercises and Lascia ch'io Pianga, and more on my [REDACTED] choir music, as we have a rehearsal tonight and a concert this weekend.
- Started with breathing, as I forgot to do this yesterday, then moved on to my usual warmup and then a more condensed vocal exercise session. Took it fairly easy, particular at top of range, as I wanted to preserve my voice due to rehearsals later today at [REDACTED] School and then tonight. I did some of the arpeggios and octave jumps blowing through a straw, partly to reduce strain on my voice, and also as recommended by Jenny.
- Continued to work on the Vaccai exercise, but the short-long, long-short concept still evades me!

Singer 1 practice diary continued

- With Lascia ch'io Pianga I continued to reinforce the ornamentation as mentioned yesterday, and it definitely felt a bit more familiar and comfortable. I'm still not 100% sure about the turns around the D note, so did not spend any time on this, to avoid creating a mental pattern that is wrong.
- I then sang through the programme for the upcoming [REDACTED] concert, focusing in particular on the trickier 2nd tenor parts for the songs Drunken Sailor, When the Saints go Marching in and Rhythm of Life.
- I finished by spending more time on the Shenandoah parts we are singing with the [REDACTED] Choir on Saturday. Again, I mainly picked through the notes at a fairly slow pace, to reinforce this in my mind at an early stage. It felt more familiar than yesterday and I was quite pleased with the progress made. An interesting observation for me – the notes for the part that I sang at home felt quite light and comfortable. However, when we rehearsed this with the full choir later on, I felt as if the notes in certain areas felt very low for my voice. It almost seemed like the overall tone of the male choir had brought my voice down in timbre.

Wednesday 15th May 2024

- I had a busy day today and struggled to find time to practice. Also having some of my family at home means that I am a bit self-conscious about them hearing me sing and practice. Probably a bit of a confidence issue. I did end up finding 20 minutes to practice in the evening, but it was a bit rushed and not ideal.
- I did a much shorter warm up and vocal exercise session, followed by a brief sign-through of the Vaccai exercise, then only sang through the Handel piece once.
- My voice was feeling a bit strained on the higher notes this evening, so I experimented with gently touching my voice box with my fingers as I sang higher. The interesting for me was that somehow this encouraged me to sing with less tension, as I was probably more aware of how the muscles and tendons in my throat reacted to touch, thus being less constricted. It seemed to help me reach the higher notes with less tension. Obviously this isn't something that I should do all the time – perhaps I can learn to 'feel' or be more aware of what my throat muscles are doing without having to touch my throat?
- Again, I focused more on the 2nd ornamentation notes, which are getting more familiar.

Singer 1 practice diary continued

Thursday 16th May 2024

- Did a fairly long practice today, covering both my personal music and [REDACTED] Choir material. We have a big concert on Saturday, so spent time singing through the whole program, and again focusing on Shenandoah towards the end. The song is now far more familiar to me, and I'm enjoying the piece.
- Started with my usual warmup, and then a fairly long training session, which included the usual exercises, and also some singing through a straw.
- I don't know if I am starting to get a cold, but my voice was feeling a bit hoarse and tickly today, and so while I did quite a lot of work, I did it at a lowish intensity, and didn't push my voice too much, bearing in mind I have my singing lesson this afternoon and an [REDACTED] practice tonight.
- I also worked on the Vaccai exercise again, and went a little further than previously, just touching a bit on the next section.
- In addition to singing through the choir material, I continued to work on Lascia ch'io Pianga, particularly the second set of ornamentation. I found the key rather high for the state of my voice today, so most of my focus was on the turns.

Friday 17th May 2024

- My voice felt surprisingly ok this morning, given that we had a very intense rehearsal last night.
- My practice felt really good today. Although I didn't push my range much, I spent a decent amount of time doing vocal exercises, including the ones that I remembered to write down yesterday from my singing lesson.
- I sang through the entire Vaccai exercise, including the second section that we covered on Thursday. This part is very new, but felt that I did relatively well in remembering what we covered. I also worked on the long-short method of trying to smooth out the notes. I asked Jenny about this as I was struggling to do it, and when she mentioned the swung element of doing it, it suddenly clicked and made far more sense, and was easier today.
- Lascia ch'io Pianga – I worked especially on the section of the ornamentation I was struggling with i.e. the turns around the two D notes. This felt improved following the lesson, but is still not totally secure. Jenny has asked me to sing the song with more feeling/dramatic effect, and also try to understand the words behind

Singer 1 practice diary continued

the song. I didn't get to this in my practice (in truth, I forgot to do it) but will work on this in my next practice.

- The final section of my practice was on [REDACTED] pieces, but I only focused on a handful of songs which we are very familiar with, but haven't focused on very much for the concert tomorrow (e.g. Bring Him Home, American Trilogy, Halleluiah)

Saturday 18th May 2024

- I didn't practice today as I have the [REDACTED] Choir concert starting with a rehearsal in the mid-afternoon, and I want to preserve my voice as much as possible beforehand.

Sunday 18th May 2024

- I sang in my church choir this morning, but I did not do any preparation for it due to the various singing commitments I had during the week.
- I didn't practice today as my voice was feeling quite tired following the concert last night, and thought it best to give my voice a full day's rest.

Monday 19th May - Wednesday 21st May

- No practice at all on these days, partly because I was resting my voice a bit, and also because I sang at a funeral on Tuesday, with lots of other work stuff going on too.

Instrumentalist 2 practice diary

Day 1	
Time(s)	930-1030 - bits and bobs in the afternoon
Duration(s)	All in all about 2 and a half hours
How and what you practised	Mozart concerto, Liszt Rhapsody 12 and Chasse-Neige. Pieces by Sophie Menter and Clara Schumann
General observations	Totally chaotic and unstructured but got quite a lot done
Day 2	
Time(s)	Bartók disaster day. Managed to run through my programmes for the weekend though. Almost no sleep because of the dog's bad reaction to drugs he needed
Duration(s)	1.5 hour
How and what you practised	Evening
General observations	More of a meditation to take my mind off the day. Calm with a feeling of inner retreat
Day 3	

Instrumentalist 2 practice diary continued

Time(s)	Almost no sleep again. Train at 5 30 am. Azuma train to Edinburgh was an assault to the spine so I arrived at rehearsal with a sore neck. Rehearsed Mozart Concerto - Lovely musicians, all very smooth. Solo recital before the concerto and only had about 10 minutes to practise. Covered a few danger moments.
Duration(s)	Including rehearsal, 40 mins and then 2 concerts
How and what you practised	Mozart Concerto and a few danger moments in Liszt
General observations	Tough day, very tired, managed to keep afloat
Day 4	
Time(s)	None
Duration(s)	None
How and what you practised	Nothing
General observations	Journey home took nearly 11 hours!
Day 5	
Time(s)	Afternoon
Duration(s)	About an hour
How and what you practised	Collingwood Quintet
General observations	Wonderful music, excited
Day 6	
Time(s)	Morning
Duration(s)	About 2 hours
How and what you practised	Medtner quintet and Schumann Carnaval
General observations	Medtner isn't as difficult as I thought. Schumann - why is something I played as a teenager so damn hard to memorise?
Day 7	

Figure 14: Completed practice diaries in order of interview schedule

Appendix O: Semi-structured one-to-one interview questions

Introductory script

Thank you so much for volunteering for this research project. I really appreciate your time and insight.

I'm hoping to discover if there are differences in how singers, instrumentalists and singer-instrumentalists practise. By learning from different musicians and disciplines, I plan to share "best practice" and create a systematic approach to teaching singing practice.

I'd just like to remind you that my role here is as an impartial researcher. I will not be judging your practice habits or you as a musician and/ or student.

If at any point you wish to withdraw from the interview or study just let me know. Your identity will be kept anonymous and data will be held securely in accordance with current GDPR requirements.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we start?

For all participants

16. Tell me briefly about your music journey.
 - a. and your performing?
17. How did you find the practice diary task?
 - a. Did you discover anything about your own practice in the process?
18. Can you describe a practice session from last week?
19. Do you plan and structure your practice? If so, how?
20. Do you rely on or incorporate any formal practice methodologies such as etude exercises into your practice?
21. What are your favourite or most commonly used practice methods?
22. What is your attitude to mistakes and error correction during practice?
23. Do you incorporate recording, listening to music, silent practice or visualisation into your practice?
24. Do you monitor your practice progress? If so, how?
25. What motivates you to practice and what happens when you don't feel motivated?
26. Is there anything you wish you could change in your practice?
27. Do you consider singers and instrumentalists to approach practice in the same way?
28. What are your thoughts on innate talent?
29. Do you have any questions yourself?

For singers

- What makes singing practice unique?
- What are the benefits and limitations of practising singing?

For singer-instrumentalists

- Do you take a similar approach to practising singing as practising your instrument?

Figure 15: Semi-structured one-to-one interview questions

Appendix P: Interview transcriptions

Interview	Pseudonym	Singer/ Instrumental group
1	Singer-instrumentalist 1	Professional jazz singer, guitarist & pianist
2	Singer-instrumentalist 2	GCSE music student, jazz & pop singer & flautist
3	Instrumentalist 1	Concert violinist
4	Singer 1	Amateur choral singer
5	Singer 2	Professional singer
6	Instrumentalist 2	Concert pianist

Interview 1 Singer-instrumentalist 1

00:00-00:05:16.410 Interview preamble

00:05:16.410 --> 00:05:20.789

Researcher: Could you tell me briefly about your music journey?

00:05:22.410 --> 00:07:41.150

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Well for me, it's a strange one, because I went to drama school. I did two years performing arts at BTech level and then I went from there to a private drama school up in East London. This was like 20 odd [years ago]. That was in 1999. So it's a long time ago. I did two years there. So it's strange, because musically, singing-wise, whatever we wanna call it, you only do one hour, maybe two a week. The rest of it's all drama. It's all Shakespeare, Stanislavski and improvisation, and all this stuff. So you don't do an awful lot when it comes to singing and music. You only really learn the basics. You learn the top line of the music that you're going to be singing. So you know where the notes are. You don't do much else. So for me, I always thought my career would go that way. I always thought that's where my career would go. If I'd known that my career was going to end up literally being fulltime in music - whether it be singing in a restaurant like [restaurant name] on a Wednesday night, or whether we'd be doing [inaudible] gigs on a Saturday night, [or] whether it's touring (what I'm doing now), which is performing for veterans around the country - I probably wouldn't have gone to drama school. I would have gone and studied music in the first place. So my journey has been a little bit strange, because I kind of accidentally fell into singing fulltime. So [laughs] it's been a very different kind of journey. What really made me think during that seven-day diary [was]: "What do I normally do?" You know, because I had two gigs this week. I stepped in last minute at the [venue name] to cover a singer who wasn't well. I spent three hours stuck on the A249 with an accident. On Friday I did a gig up in Slough that took three hours to get home because I couldn't get over 20 miles an hour on the M25. And I was still fitting in practice, when I probably might not have [done] because of the diary. So that was kind of interesting for me to see how I think. So yeah, my journey's been a strange one.

00:07:42.190 --> 00:07:51.549

Researcher: And how did that happen? How did you end up in music? How did that transition happen from drama to music?

00:07:51.970 --> 00:10:22.476

Singer-instrumentalist 1: I suddenly became too old to play young, and I'm still too young to play old. In 2006, 2007, I didn't have any acting work at all. Anything on TV for a 20-something year old went to Paul Nichols, straight away. There weren't many parts for 20-something year olds on TV or film, you know, or stage. So I took some time out, and I went and did recruitment, and I was doing recruitment in London. I convinced myself that I quite enjoyed it. And a friend of mine that I'd done a musical with was working with an Abba tribute band, [band name], and they needed a new Benny and asked me, and I was bit like: "Oh, I don't know if that's really what I really want to do. I don't know if I want to do that." But I thought, "Yeah, alright, I'll come and do it." So I went and did a gig with them on the Isle of Wight and that was it. I sort of fell into doing music, fulltime. I ended up leaving recruitment and was working with [band name] still for a few years, but then my own. I went back to singing swing music, which is what I was doing on and off before. That's what kept me going in-between the acting jobs in a way. Do you know? I didn't think of it as a fulltime thing, but it all coincided at the same time, then, with the birth of my daughter and then all of a sudden, there's a bit of a kick up your backside. "Ooh, I need to get serious here. I can't keep temping. I can't keep walking into a full-time job for my mortgage for a little while and [then] "taking time out", as I'd call it. That all kind of fell in at the same time. Although I haven't worked with [band name] for a long time, well over 10 years, I still do the Sound of Musicals show with [bandmate] from [band name]. So, I'm still working with that group and I just fell into it that way really. I wasn't trained musically on piano or guitar. I had a few lessons. The rest of it was all very self-taught, so for me I kind of always felt like I accidentally fell into this sort of stuff. And although I still act occasionally and still do the odd bit, I make my money from music, from singing in all those events that we talked about. You know, that's how I earn my living. So it was kind of accidental, really.

00:10:23.220 --> 00:10:23.860

Researcher: Yeah.

00:10:23.860 --> 00:10:25.230

Singer-instrumentalist 1: How it kind of went along.

00:10:26.000 --> 00:10:34.019

Researcher: And did you discover anything about your own music practice in the process of doing the diary task?

00:10:35.680 --> 00:10:36.930

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely, because in a normal week, I might only do... I mean, I might do four or five gigs a week. They're not all necessarily things where I lose my days. This week, I've lost a lot of my days because there've been a lot of daytime things. So normally, I just kind of naturally end up sitting there and start doing something. So, depending on how I feel - it might be there's a song I particularly want to learn - so I'll sit at the piano and I will work it out. Or the same with the guitar. But I do try to do vocal exercises weekly, especially when I was doing the musicals show at the [venue name] the other week because I hadn't done a solo musical show since before the pandemic. So I suddenly thought to myself, "Oh, I'm gonna have to really stretch my voice here", because I haven't sung things from Phantom of the Opera and Les Mis solo for a couple of years, because it's normally a duo with [bandmate name]. So we don't tend to worry about so much of that. So normally I do do exercises, but the other week I was actually doing a full on hour and a half vocal stretching "Yoga for the cords". Every year I go and get an "MOT", as I call it, with a friend of mine, [name] [inaudible]. I use those exercises on sort of a weekly basis. It's just kind of [to] keep my voice, depending on what I'm doing.

00:12:10.830

Researcher: Uh huh.

00:12:10.830 --> 00:12:12.160

Singer-instrumentalist 1: So this week, because I had so much daytime stuff, I really had to plan it. And I think that was, in a way, a good thing. Because I had to do the seven-day diary, that kind of actually helped me?

00:12:27.875 --> 00:12:28.140

Researcher: Uh huh.

00:12:28.140 --> 00:12:35.000

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Whereas I might have just been a little bit lazy this week *if* I hadn't had to do that. So that makes it, you see.

00:12:35.000 --> 00:12:35.720

Researcher: Yeah. So am I right that you don't, and this is not a judgment, do you not normally plan and structure your singing practice. Would you say it fits in around your performing commitments?

00:12:56.130 --> 00:14:33.420

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Yeah, it does. It fits very much with what I'm doing, because, you know, some weeks I might have Monday to Friday daytime, so I might... I'll do something every day. That is something I'm very conscious of, whether I am just sitting there playing a song, or whether I'm learning the words to a new song or something, I'm doing *something* every day. But I don't think I don't necessarily plan, "Right, Tuesday, I'm gonna do this". Although in saying that, maybe naturally I do, because Tuesday would normally be a day that I would do my vocal exercises! Because I don't tend to do much vocally Monday, unless I've got a unless I'm doing a care home or something. (If I go to a care home gig on a Monday, then I'll sing.) But normally, Monday's a day I don't try to do too much with my voice, because you know you've had the weekend, you've had everything else, so I tend to give myself a day of *not* doing anything specifically, unless I've *specifically* got something. So I don't want to choose normally a day that I might do some vocal exercises. But obviously with this week's a bit different, because you've had Bank Holiday, and I got a call Monday afternoon saying, "Can I come do this [showname] show on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon. So when I would normally have Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday off, this week, which is how I planned it, but that went out the window. But generally I think I might naturally veer towards certain days for certain things. But I don't think I actually planned it that way, I think it's just how it happened. I don't really structure typically.

00:14:34.300 --> 00:14:41.519

Researcher: Uh huh. No, and you mentioned Tuesdays are your vocal technique days or your exercises days? Do you incorporate any formal practice methodologies or studies? What are these exercises?

00:14:55.500 --> 00:14:57.480

Singer-instrumentalist 1: How [name] described to me as "Yoga for the cords". It's just kind of stretching exercises. So I'll start in my mid-range, and first of all I'll go downwards, and as low comfortably as I can - nothing pushed - and then the other way around, and I'll do that. There's several different ones, everything from blowing your lips out and making a [...] sound right up to a... I have an issue with my "Rs". So the "ahs" [exercise] I do is [sings 5 note scale] "Ma-li-i-i-i-i-i-i-ah", and I hold [the last note] but I don't tend to do "Maria", because I don't like my "Rs". So I do "My-knee-ah" instead.

00:15:42.380

Researcher: [laughs]

00:15:42.380 --> 00:15:45.550

Singer-instrumentalist 1: [laughs] and I do those exercises mainly then, because they really help me to stretch those top notes. I can really feel that. You can hear it when you're when you're doing it, and at the end of it. If I do that at the beginning of the week...

00:15:58.710

Researcher: Uh huh.

00:15:58.710 --> 00:16:08.019

Singer-instrumentalist 1: ...I really do think it gets me through the weekend. It gets me through all the... I mean, I'm regularly doing four gigs a week on average, sometimes six, seven, depending on what else there is, and weddings, (and they're every day these days), and...

00:16:18.990

Researcher: Uh huh.

00:16:18.990

Singer-instrumentalist 1: And I really do believe that's what keeps my voicing in good "nick". At the [venue name] I sometimes do a set straight through. I very rarely take a break.

00:16:27.270 --> 00:16:27.700

Researcher: Oh, wow!

00:16:27.700 --> 00:16:29.670

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Cause Wednesday night's aren't that busy. If you take a break on a Wednesday night you might lose two more people and there's not many. Isn't never too busy on Wednesday. I do believe it's doing these exercises, which is keeps my voice strong and healthy really, touch wood.

00:16:43.990 --> 00:16:44.400

Researcher: Uh huh.

00:16:44.400 --> 00:16:48.854

Singer-instrumentalist 1: So, yeah, they are formal exercises, but I've long forgotten the name for it.

00:16:53.260 --> 00:16:56.419

Researcher: No, that's fine. And would you say those are your favourite practice methods, or if you are learning a song, what would be your favourite practice method?

00:17:06.609 --> 00:17:08.449

Singer-instrumentalist 1: If I'm learning a song, I'll do a shorter version. If I go to [singing teacher], I'll be doing a two-hour thing. I'll do an hour of that [formal exercises], and then we'll do an hour of songs. If I'm just wanting to learn a song, I'll do 10/ 15 minutes warming my voice up...

00:17:35.000 --> 00:17:36.430

Researcher: Oh, I've lost you!

00:17:47.970 --> 00:18:04.829

[Internet instability]

00:18:04.830 --> 00:18:11.400

Researcher: You said to me, if you were learning a song you would do a shortened version. That's where I got to.

00:18:14.510 --> 00:18:16.370

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Yeah, I won't overdo it. If I'm learning a song, I'll do a 10/ 15 minute warm up so my voice is warm for the learning the song and also, if I've got a gig later that day, I don't overdo it. This is something I'll do at the beginning of the week. I'll do the long thing at the beginning of the week. You don't want to overdo it. You don't want to put your voice through it too much if you're going to go and sing for an hour or two. And so, I certainly don't overdo it. But yeah, 10/ 15 minutes warm up, and then I'll use my voice to practise. And I'll be doing that song most of the day. I'll take the dogs for a walk and let the words try and subconsciously fall into my head. But I'll be humming them as I go around. I don't wanna *overdo* it by then spending an hour on vocal exercises. They're [for] the days where I've got nothing else to do. I'll do that for an hour, and then move on. But if I'm learning songs: short warm up and then I'll be singing throughout the day, on and off.

00:19:24.980 --> 00:19:25.850

Researcher: Uh huh.

00:19:25.850 --> 00:19:33.912

Singer-instrumentalist 1: But, as I say, this week it's been a little bit different, cause I have gone off and done gigs instead. So it's [completing the practice diary has] certainly made me think a little bit more about things.

00:19:36.170 --> 00:19:42.125

Researcher: You've mentioned rest and pacing a bit, and dog walk and running the lyrics through your head. Do you incorporate any of the following in your practice? Recording, listening to music, silent practice, or visualization?

00:20:04.406 --> 00:20:08.210

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Listening to music. Yeah, what was it? What were the other ones? Sorry.

00:20:08.210 --> 00:20:27.220

Researcher: Sorry. So, silent practice I suppose is probably what you're doing on the dog walk where you're internally practising, but not physically practising? I suppose that's what I mean by silent practice.

00:20:28.190 --> 00:20:41.279

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Absolutely and in the gym. If I've got a playlist of songs I need to learn. So if I'm running in the gym, or whatever I'm doing in the gym, I've got those songs playing constantly. So they go into my head. That changes all the time, so songs I need to learn will be whatever songs I have at that moment that I need to do. They'll be there. So even if I'm in the gym, I'm in a way, learning them. I do record myself. I record myself on my phone all the time, especially if I've got ideas of my own songs. If I'm writing my own songs in my head that I'm putting together, writing and so forth, I record on there. I'm very rarely go upstairs and do it properly on my Cubase, because I am a little bit lazy and the laptop up there is slower than anything and gets on my damn nerves.

Researcher: [laughs]

00:21:25.550 --> 00:21:40.146

Singer-instrumentalist 1: So I tend to record a lot on my phone. [I] only go up there for something specific, because it's so slow. It does my absolute head in. But I record and if I'm

learning a new song and I want to see how it sounds key-wise and stuff like that (as I'm getting older), sometimes I think, "Ooh, should I lower the key on this a bit?"

00:21:40.650 --> 00:21:41.320

Researcher: Uh huh.

00:21:41.470 --> 00:21:23

Singer-instrumentalist 1: My voice is still quite [inaudible], but I do worry about it. 'Cause the thing is, what we have to remember, is we're also our own musical director and everything else. You know we don't have the benefit of, oh, I don't know... going into a show where there's somebody that's... we're doing it all ourselves. I might learn a song and try and sing it at the [music venue] on Wednesday night. So you do need to record yourself. You do need to check it and see, "Is this key ok for me? Does this sound ok?" So recording and listening to yourself, I think, is really important. Really important. And sometimes a bit of video as well, because it might sound ok, but does it look ok?

00:21:23

Researcher: Uh huh.

00:21:23-00:21:46.480

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Sometimes with the musical theatre stuff: I was singing "Bring him home" which I hadn't sung for a while. I recorded myself and I thought my eyes were doing something weird. Every time I went for a big note, my eyes were doing something weird. And you wanna be conscious of little things like that. I know it sounds weird, but I do think it's quite important to see how you look. Everyone has a habit. You can look at stars: You look at Gary Barlow and his eyebrows go up a lot when he's singing. And I think that's also quite important to make sure that your technique is where it needs to be, and you're not cheating with things.

00:23:08.170 --> 00:23:08.680

Researcher: Yeah.

00:23:09.400 --> 00:23:19.270

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Shoulders: You look at a lot of people and their shoulders go up and you've got to concentrate. When you've got a big note, you need to make sure you keep your feet firmly on the ground and your shoulders down. That's how I was always taught. But obviously, as we know, doing...

00:23:26.290 --> 00:25:00.470

Researcher: Oh, I've lost you. [internet instability]

00:25:03.830 --> 00:25:23.399

Researcher: So it sounds as though within your practice you're monitoring yourself. You've got various methods of monitoring your progress. Do you have a way of measuring your practice longer term?

00:25:31.000 --> 00:26:33.069

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Um.. [long pause]. That's a good question. I don't know. I suppose, in a way, just keep note when you've been singing songs. Monitoring how your voice changes over time is a way of monitoring yourself long term. I'm very conscious that some songs that were easy 20 years ago are a little harder now. My voice is still quite high and healthy and strong, and I can do all this stuff. But I'm sure there are some songs that are a little bit more difficult now than they were, and I'm sure that's going to be more noticeable as time goes on. I'm 45 in a few weeks and there's very, very, very big difference between singing "Gethsemane" at 25 years old in "Jesus Christ Superstar", with the high notes in the middle,

and I haven't tried that for a long time, so maybe I'll give that a go, and I'll answer that question again.

00:26:34.610 --> 00:26:36.560

Researcher: [laughs] It'll be a doddle now!

00:26:37.100 --> 00:26:37.895

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Oh, ha. So, yeah not formally, but I suppose I do keep an eye on it. Yeah.

00:26:44.590 --> 00:26:51.779

Researcher: And what motivates you to practise and what happens when you don't feel motivated?

00:26:54.470 --> 00:29:03.190

Singer-instrumentalist 1: If I don't feel motivated, it's probably because of my work schedule that week, so I'm not going to be too hard on myself. But, I do get a little bit angry with myself if I haven't done *something* - not so much vocally, because I'm singing all the time, anyway. But at the moment I'm doing this... During the lockdown I started using "Pianote". I don't know if you've seen it on Facebook. It's a Canadian piano teaching group and it's now called "Musora". They've incorporated guitar, drums, and everything else into it. It's a membership, and it's so good for me, because I sit and I'll do 30 days of "better finger strength" or something. So every day, there's a quick lesson on doing something which makes you use your fingers differently, and stuff. Rather than me just sit there and play a song I know, I guess it makes me think about more technical things. So I'll get angry if I haven't sat there for at least 10 minutes and done something on that. That helps me. That keeps me motivated a little bit. But I haven't done anything. I'm on this tour at the moment and I've not done anything for a couple of days. So when I get back I've got a couple of days to catch up on. I did that during lockdown, to try and boost my skills, especially musically. Because although I can read the music, I can't sight-read music. I can't sit there and just play and do it. I have to sit and look at it, write it out, because that wasn't how I was trained. That was great for me, because then I was doing something with sheet music daily. That helped me during lockdown to develop those, to do something to keep me occupied. So that's been a [inaudible] really because sometimes it just takes you to the basics, and just do things you wouldn't normally do. So that's always good. If you can try and do 10 minutes, it's better than nothing, isn't it?

00:29:04.560 --> 00:29:14.759

Researcher: Definitely, and what's your attitude to mistakes in your practice, or correcting errors?

00:29:15.410 --> 00:30:37.829

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Really hard on myself. I look at other musicians like my regular Instrumentalist 2, [name], and he very rarely makes mistakes. So I look at it and think, "How come [inaudible]?" and he told me once that, "No, no, he's making mistakes. It doesn't matter. No one dies. It's not the end of the world and no one notices unless you make it obvious that it's happened." So I can be quite hard on myself when it comes to a mistake, although if he does make a mistake like he did once on a musical show, everyone thinks it's the singer's fault, anyway. No one thinks... it's always our fault.

30:01

Researcher: [laughs]

30:01

Singer-instrumentalist 1: This is true! That's how people think, you know. He didn't finish in the right place, and I tried to jump in because he was going round and round and round and

then, of course, it was [inaudible] in the wrong key, and we had to fix it, and it looked like it was *my* mistake when it was actually him! [inaudible] But no, I'm really hard on myself with mistakes because - I don't know about you - I find if I'm recording myself, if I press record, that's when I start making mistakes. I can have a perfect version of something. As soon as I press record, something goes wrong. I'm really hard on myself with mistakes, but I think we *all* are really.

00:30:38.040 --> 00:30:38.576

Researcher: Uh huh.

00:30:39.650 --> 00:30:40.400

Singer-instrumentalist 1: I get frustrated.

00:30:40.400 --> 00:30:55.559

Researcher: So can you think back to last week how you dealt with a mistake in your practice? I don't know if that's a bit too long ago!

00:30:55.560 --> 00:30:57.740

Singer-instrumentalist 1: No...I keep going...

00:30:57.740 --> 00:30:58.790

Researcher: Can you describe what you would do?

00:30:59.140 --> 00:31:56.990

Singer-instrumentalist 1: I keep going over it. And I find, sometimes, if I know it's coming up and I struggle with that chord change or something, I overthink it and then make a mistake anyway. Something like that. So you have to sometimes walk away, go make a coffee, come back, do it again. But you *keep* going over it until it's in your mind, you don't do it. I do it sometimes live, (because there's very few places that I *do* live, just me). But I do the [venue name 1], not the [venue name 1], I do the [venue name 2], and I'll take my keys along there, and there's always one song you think to yourself, "Don't screw it up. Don't screw it up." I'll play someone down the aisle. (I don't do that very often.) And I'm thinking all the time, "Don't screw it up. Don't screw it up.", you know. And I didn't screw it up, but at home I did. But you just go over and over it until you... but I think we're all hard on ourselves, really.

00:31:59.200 --> 00:32:09.469

Researcher: Uh huh. Yep. So coming on to my next question, which ties in. Is there anything you wish you could change about your practice?

00:32:14.060 --> 00:33:04.490

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Ummm [pause]. I wish I did have a little more time. I do sometimes wish that I could be a little bit more selfish and have a, make a bit more time for it. I think one of the learning points for me of this week is, I think it would be really, really good to look at my diary for the week, and actually *schedule in* a little more a bit more of a routine. Cause I think that's the thing: I think I don't... I think I'm very much... I just float over there and do this. And I think I do need a little bit more routine. And I think that's a learning point for me this week, that actually, make a little more time to schedule *actual* practice in so it's a bit more structured, I think is the word.

00:33:05.930 --> 00:33:22.060

Researcher: Hmm. And do you take a different approach to practising singing than practising your instruments?

00:33:22.210 --> 00:34:01.030

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Yeah, as I say, I make sure I've been singing it. I do structured vocal exercises which, like I said on a Tuesday, that's a bit more different. But I think that's because that's my main thing. If I'm with my band... I'm never gonna do a swing jazz thing myself on piano. I've got [name], who's super. He's.. I'm never... I could practise every single day, *all* day. I still won't be as good as him, 'cause he's so good, and he's done it all his life. So I'm never gonna take that place. If he's not available, I have to cancel the gig or find someone else. I'm not gonna do it myself.

00:34:01.030 --> 00:34:01.880

Researcher: Hmm

00:34:02.080 --> 00:34:55.969

Singer-instrumentalist 1: I'm not that good and the same with guitar. I [join in with the] band and I play, but if I need an actual guitarist, I'll get a proper, an actual guitarist because I wanna concentrate on my vocals, you know. So I do think I probably spend more time thinking vocally, because that is my living. And if I didn't focus on that, and I damage my voice, what would I do? I don't *have* to play keys on a gig. I don't *have* to play. I mean, I'm playing guitar this week. That's why this [guitar] is here. I'm changing keys to some Elvis songs this morning to make them a little bit more interesting for me. But I don't normally *have* to do that. But singing, I have to. I'm not gonna get up as an accompanist for somebody else. So vocally I have to keep on top of it.

00:35:02.010 --> 00:35:23.230

Researcher: Yeah. You've mentioned vocal rest and vocal health, and you're developing voice as you age. Is that quite a big consideration for you in practice, or generally?

00:35:27.050 --> 00:36:50.370

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Do you know what, not. I'd like to say yes, but it's not. I drink too much coffee. I live on coffee. Generally, not when I'm touring, but generally I fast from 8 in the evening until 12 the next day. Coffee is the only thing I have. I'll go down the gym and coffee is the only thing that keeps me alive. I don't like green tea, but I do drink "Throat Coat", and I have the "Vocalzone" teas and stuff to keep my voice good when I've got gigs, especially if I'm not feeling well, or if it's a big gigging week. But I also like to live my life as well, and that does mean coffee. It does mean if I've got a Saturday night off, I wanna have a few beers. On this tour, you can't *not*. It's written in a contract that you have to have a drink before, in the evenings. If you say you're not having it, you know, "Oh, we're not booking you again!". So yeah, I joke, but you have to live as well. That doesn't mean... I mean, I obviously don't smoke and do things like that. I *consciously* look after my voice, but I probably do have 2 more caffeine that would be recommended for a singer to have... Michael Ball used to smoke 40 cigarettes a day, believe it or not. He only quit a few years ago.

00:36:50.880 --> 00:36:53.130

Researcher: Oh! No way! Ha!

00:36:53.740 --> 00:37:03.040

Singer-instrumentalist 1: And when you listen to his voice now you can kind of hear it. And he said, he's [inaudible], because he thinks what he would have been able to do with his voice, because he's noticed such a change since you stopped smoking.

00:37:03.720 --> 00:37:04.990

Researcher: Ah!

00:37:04.990 --> 00:37:36.109

Singer-instrumentalist 1: I always found that quite surprising, because his voice was so big, and I thought "I can't believe he smoked". He was [says] Andrew Lloyd Webber used to nag him all of the time and he's making him smoke more because of it. Like the usual smoking thing, the more someone tells not to do it, the more they do it. And you've got other things like Tom Wilkinson that don't touch caffeine. He doesn't touch anything bad for his voice. When he does soundcheck and stuff, he just keeps it all very mellow and saves it for his performance, and everything else.

00:37:36.110 --> 00:37:36.880

Researcher: Hmm.

00:37:36.880 --> 00:37:50.720

Singer-instrumentalist 1: So you learn from these guys. But you've got to live your life. We're doing this every week. You want to enjoy your life as well, so I probably have a few bad habits that I shouldn't, but you know!

00:37:50.720 --> 00:38:04.549

Researcher: And lastly, what are your thoughts on innate talent. The voice as a gift rather than a skill that you learn.

00:38:05.050 --> 00:40:35.039

Singer-instrumentalist 1: I think you've got to have a voice in the first place. I always say it's not about how good your voice is, it's what work you put into it... For example, you're not going to be Michael Ball without having something naturally, in the first place. But it's the work he did to build his voice which *made* him Michael Ball. So I do think you have to have something naturally, but I do believe everybody can sing. I know people say "I'm tone deaf." [inaudible] You might not necessarily want to be up on the stage, belting all them songs out, but I think everybody can if they do some... If you don't have any exercises at all, and you try to do what we do, your voice won't last that long. You'll damage it. So you have to do the work in the first place, is what I'm saying. I think some people are born naturally to have a nice voice, but they still... but you're still gonna lose that... And I see it a lot actually. I see it on the tribute market. I'll see someone that's everywhere [who's] new to it. After 6 months they disappeared. And that's normally because they've either got fed up with having no social life and didn't realise it was going to be like that. ('Cause you're out most Saturday nights.) I'm lucky my daughter's 14. My wife sits down at the cheer group on Saturdays. She's not fussed about going out on a Saturday night. But obviously, if you like a social life then it's not for you. So sometimes it's that. Other times it's because they do actually damage their voices because they've been told they sound like somebody. They go out on the circuit and then realise that actually doing a full night every week is bad for your voice. You will damage your voice if you don't learn to support it. So there's no such thing as "I've never had a singing lesson in my life, and I'm up on stage doing all this". I don't believe that. I think you have to learn to support your voice. But you've got [to be able to sing] in the first place. The same with acting. You audition to get into drama school. But you have to have *something* in the first place, to win a place to get in. But then you learn the tools [inaudible] to develop, and I think it's the same with singing and any form of music. You might find a certain instrument easy to learn, but you become Elton John by... you know... and that's why I'm not Elton John!

00:40:39.763 --> 00:40:40.810

Researcher: [laughs] Yeah! One day!

00:40:41.047 --> 00:40:46.500

Singer-instrumentalist 1: I always feel a bit awkward [answering] questions like that because you don't want to sound *really* pretentious and...

00:40:47.140 --> 00:40:48.170

Researcher: Oh!

00:40:48.320 --> 00:42:05.600

Singer-instrumentalist 1: You know, what I've noticed as I've gotten older. It's amount of younger people that I meet that ask me advice. All of a sudden! I've become this guy where I, I get people, I get Facebook messages asking, "I don't hope you don't mind, but..." and they ask me questions, and I'm thinking, "Christ, I've got to that point!", where I'm around long enough that people come and ask me. But you don't want to sound really... One girl messaged me saying, "What do you do... I've got a gig. They want me to do a wedding and it's next year. How do I know I'm going to be available? How do I know I'm not going to want to go on holiday?" And I said, well, "If you take the gig, you can't go on holiday!". I think that's fairly self-explanatory, and I think she was a little bit embarrassed that I felt like I was kind of being rude to her, and I wasn't my intention. But I was trying to say, "Look, if you're gonna to do this, and you take a gig. You're doing that gig. You book your holiday around it." I look a year ahead and go, "Right. That week. We'll grab that. You can't do *that*." So I always feel a little bit like you don't want to come across up your own arse about when people ask you advice, and you want to try and give a bit of that without sounding like a dickhead. [laughs] I worry about that.

00:42:06.308 --> 00:42:12.299

Researcher: [laughs] Ah... Well, that was really helpful. Thank you. And have you got any questions yourself?

00:42:15.480 --> 00:42:17.010

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Not really! I mean. What's the next part of the process for you?

00:42:22.630 --> 00:44:12.590

Researcher: Well, I need to transcribe the interviews. Then I send them to the interview participants to read over, which is called "member checking." So you can read through and say, "You misheard that name or that phrase, or everything is exactly what happened. Then I do what's called "coding". So I go through, and I pick out themes in the interviews, and I tie them all together in an essay and make sense of it all. If I have time, I'm going to try and organise a focus group discussion with those who can attend. But realistically, I think it's a bit optimistic, given my deadline. It would be so interesting to get a group of musicians together and compare our experiences, because we're so unique and work by ourselves a lot of the time. But I think probably your main job is done and now I've got to sit and work through it all. So that's what I'm going to do this morning. I'm going to transcribe your helpful words, and then I'll send them to you to, to give me the "ok". And then I will write the essay and submit it in... I think my deadline's the first of July. And... that's it! If they love it, I might...

00:44:13.077 --> 00:44:25.832

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Yeah. If you do that focus group, then, do let me know. If I can be on it, I think I'd find that interesting as well. So if it is able to happen, again, do let me know if I can then...

00:44:26.060 --> 00:44:27.470

Researcher: Oh, thank you! Well, I'm aware...

00:44:28.850 --> 00:45:11.466

Singer-instrumentalist 1: This has been really good for me, actually. This has been good for me, because it did really make me think during the week about that... just realising really, that I don't structure as much as I probably should. I might *do* something daily, but I've never really got a *plan* other than vocally, really. So it has been really good for me, really beneficial. As you can see I've been annoying all of the neighbours [in the hotel] this morning. I went down for some coffee and a bit of breakfast and I'm really conscious people of in their rooms aren't

having to check out till midday. Someone might want to lay in and then there's me singing [sings] "Hunk, a hunk of burning love!" [laughs]

00:45:12.050 --> 00:45:12.650

Researcher: [laughs]

00:45:14.930 --> 00:45:20.480

Singer-instrumentalist 1: [inaudible] annoying, neighbour! But we have to work! You know?

00:45:21.640 --> 00:45:22.420

Researcher: We do! Where we can.

00:45:25.280 --> 00:45:37.770

Singer-instrumentalist 1: So you don't just warm your voice up when you go and sing. I've got to warm my fingers up as well, 'cause I've got a whole set on that. So you have to do that in the morning in this room, annoying everybody. [laughs]

00:45:40.284 --> 00:45:49.619

Researcher: [laughs] That's great. Thank you so much. Well, you've got an extra 15 minutes of free practice time now!

00:45:51.855 --> 00:45:53.234

Singer-instrumentalist 1: Yes, I planned it that way!

00:45:56.130 --> 00:45:59.730

Researcher: [laughs] Thank you very, very much. I will email you soon.

00:46:00.330 --> 00:46:01.100

Singer-instrumentalist 1: I hope that was alright.

00:46:01.100 --> 00:46:03.780

Researcher: It was fab. Thank you.

Interview 2 Singer-instrumentalist 2

00:02:20.350 --> 00:06:11.130 Interview preamble

00:06:11.260 --> 00:06:15.320

Researcher: Can you tell me, briefly, about your music journey?

00:06:15.980 --> 00:07:17.890

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Okay, so my family is quite musical. There's always been music happening. And then, when I was very young, everyone in my year had to play the recorder, which was awful, but you know it got you into reading music! [laughs] And so, as soon as I could, I switched to flute. Well, there was a bit of an interim stage where I did the fife, but then I switched to flute. And I played the flute - just the flute - until probably year 4. Then I tried to do the piano, and I did grade one and I realised I hated it so I stopped! [laughs] And then it was just the flute. But I started singing, trying to actually learn how to sing... well, I just sort of practise[d] but I didn't think of techniques until I started singing lessons with you. So I've been singing for a while, because at my old school choir was mandatory, but...

00:07:17.890 --> 00:07:18.600

Researcher: Uh huh

00:07:19.870 --> 00:07:24.520

Singer-instrumentalist 2: I've been singing my own stuff properly since I was 11.

00:07:25.810 --> 00:07:30.450

Researcher: Wow! That's great. And how about you're performing?

00:07:30.910 --> 00:07:52.820

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Performing? I did my first singing performance... Well, technically it was when I was in the guitar group at my old school in year 7, but that was too traumatic to count as a proper performance! [laughs] So I'd say my first performance when I was singing was probably when I was 14, because I supported [name] in the [venue]. So it was kind of scary!

00:07:54.260 --> 00:08:08.285

Researcher: Cool! And how did you find the practice diary task? You mentioned being ill for some of it. But the bits you were able to complete, how did you find it?

00:08:08.922 --> 00:08:44.660

Singer-instrumentalist 2: I didn't really know what to write, so you'll see it's not very detailed. Sorry! For example, with flute, I wrote what piece I did and then specifically what I practised - a lot of double tonguing, because that's... [laughs] but with singing I don't really sit down and practise singing, which I probably should. Mainly what I've been doing this week singing-wise is practising *how* I should sing some of the songs I'm working on because I've got four that need vocals but I don't really know how to sing two of them. So I've just been practising that.

00:08:44.660 --> 00:08:45.500

Researcher: Uh huh!

00:08:45.500 --> 00:09:00.669

Singer-instrumentalist 2: So whenever I have a spare moment, I'm humming the tune, or singing the tune and thinking "Ooh ok!". Then if I'm actually in the studio trying to make it work, then I'll do that. It's not sitting down and practising. It's just sort of thinking about it.

00:09:01.697 --> 00:09:28.870

Researcher: And did you discover anything about your practice in the process of doing the practice diary? I suppose you've already said, you've noticed a difference between your flute and your singing. One is you sit down purposefully to do flute and the singing is a little less formal?

00:09:28.870 --> 00:10:21.150

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Yeah, cause with flute, it's not like I have it around me all day. It has to be a time, and I have a music stand, and I've got my flute, and then I'm practising. [gestures process] But with singing, you've always got your voice on you so unless you're in a public place, you can just start singing. So it's a lot less restricted in terms of when you practise. I'd say it's harder to think about *how* you could practise, because it's kind of hard to practise scales and stuff like that. But with flute, if you want to improve your finger coordination, you practise skills. That's how you do it. And with singing, I suppose it is very similar, in fact, in the way that if you want to practise shifting then you'd be doing scales or something like that. I don't know. It's just not quite the same, because it's not like you're moving your fingers to a different key.

00:10:21.570 --> 00:10:30.110

Researcher: Uh huh! Can you describe one of your practice sessions from last week? You can choose which one.

00:10:30.550 --> 00:10:33.350

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Okay. Singing or flute?

00:10:34.230 --> 00:10:35.859

Researcher: You choose, or both!

00:10:36.240 --> 00:11:22.680

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Okay. Well, one of the singing ones then. I was in the studio and I was trying to see how I would sing something, because it's fairly low so I did actually have to change some of it. If I tried to sing it loudly, then I couldn't sing it low. But if I sang it quite quietly, especially on the low notes - I was very breathy - then I sort of got away with it not actually being a proper note. So I practised with that, and then practised trying to make it, so that in some of them I was still singing loudly, and then I went... You know the Laufey technique that we were trying to do where she was doing... what was it? I can't remember what it's called... when she was going low she went like [implies Estill "sob quality"].

00:11:23.290 --> 00:11:29.169

Researcher: Yeah, sorry the sob? [demonstrates sob quality back]

00:11:29.370 --> 00:11:30.750

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Hmm!

00:11:30.750 --> 00:11:31.370

Researcher: Yeah.

00:11:31.870 --> 00:11:43.209

Singer-instrumentalist 2: So I tried to do that. And then a flute one... I'm working on a piece right now that I'm gonna do for grade 8. I don't know if I'm still doing grade 8 cause I haven't done a grade since 2019 or something. But I just practised a lot of the double tonguing and the faster note passages. So I [didn't] really play it through. I just went over and over sections.

00:11:59.290 --> 00:12:09.420

Researcher: Great! And you've already covered this a little bit, but do you plan and structure your practice? And if so, how?

00:12:10.799 --> 00:12:47.710

Singer-instrumentalist 2: With singing definitely not [laughs]. With flute, I used to do a thing where I did 30 minutes a day, but because of GCSEs when I'm not revising, I don't want to do anything [laughs]. But when I do have time, from the moment I start playing, I say, "Right, I have to do at least 20 minutes". So I end up, usually just doing 20 minutes. So in that way it's structured. I have a time limit. But I don't really have a specific time I *have* to start practising, unless I'm planning out my day, which I do sometimes, in which case I'll practise then. Not really.

00:12:49.840 --> 00:13:04.279

Researcher: And again, you've mentioned this a little bit, but do you incorporate any formal practice, methodologies, etudes or study exercises into your practices?

00:13:05.100 --> 00:13:34.260

Singer-instrumentalist 2: For flute, yes, in the form of scales. I have a few printed out sheets which are specifically [for] practising things like double tonguing or harmonics or something. With singing, no. Sometimes I'll go around and I'll try to do scale type things whilst singing, but I don't really have a specific practice technique, you know.

00:13:34.260 --> 00:13:49.150

Researcher: Yep! And what is your favourite or most commonly used practice method? And by that I mean a way of working on material.

00:13:49.989 --> 00:14:25.900

Singer-instrumentalist 2: With flute it's definitely smashing the notes just again and again, and then when I play it through, it's like, "Oh, yay! I can play it!". [laughs] Then I work on phrasing and stuff like that. With singing, I'd say the phrasing comes first and then you figure out how to fit in how to sing it. At least that's how I do it. And also because I kind of cheat, because when I'm recording, you can just choose an approach from one recording and then cut it up with another one, and then you can create [inaudible]. But if I was to do it in real life, I'd try to match them up.

00:14:27.536 --> 00:14:41.360

Researcher: Yeah! And what is your attitude to mistakes and error correction in your practice? So if you notice a mistake, what happens?

00:14:41.960 --> 00:14:52.479

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Well with flute - I don't have this habit anymore - but every time I made a mistake I used to have a bad habit of going [pulls a face] after playing it, which made it really obvious, especially when I was doing a performance! [laughs]

00:14:52.480 --> 00:14:54.020

Researcher: So a chicken face?

00:14:54.400 --> 00:14:55.120

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Hmm?

00:14:55.120 --> 00:14:57.040

Researcher: A little chicken face. [laughs]

00:14:57.320 --> 00:15:35.229

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Yeah, I just go [pulls face and laughs]. But my teacher told me I couldn't do that, because generally the audience doesn't even know when you've made a mistake. So now I just go through, pretend it was correct. Sometimes I do it to the point... because my teacher has perfect pitch, so he can always tell. I forget that in lessons I should go back and correct the note. But I just go through and he goes, "That was a C#!". So I ignore them unless I'm practising on my own, in which case I'll just go through again and again. With singing I'll just re-record it, or if I'm doing it live I'll just ignore it!

00:15:36.210 --> 00:15:45.230

Researcher: Yep. And there is a difference, I think, between errors in practice and errors in performance?

00:15:45.230 --> 00:15:45.960

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Hmmm.

00:15:47.025 --> 00:15:53.020

Researcher: Yeah. So you've mentioned. Oh, sorry... Carry on.

00:15:53.370 --> 00:15:56.129

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Oh, sorry. Yeah. I was just agreeing, the difference.

00:15:59.390 --> 00:16:16.500

Researcher: So you've mentioned recording a bit already, and I know that you do a fair bit of recording. Do you incorporate either recording, listening to music, silent practice, or visualisation into your practice?

00:16:18.597 --> 00:16:20.300

Singer-instrumentalist 2: What's silent practice?

00:16:21.120 --> 00:16:57.549

Researcher: So silent practice, I would term as thinking about the music that you're gonna play and hearing it in your head, and perhaps looking at the score and thinking about how you would perform it, or silently singing a tune in your head whilst doing something else, or planning fingering in your head. It could be miming out some fingering on your flute without actually making the sound. [wiggles fingers]

00:16:58.060 --> 00:17:19.160

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Ooooh. Well, sometimes when I'm practising flute, if I just can't get the notes, I'll finger the notes whilst looking at the flute and say the name of the note. I'll be like, "A. B...". [demonstrates] With singing I don't really do any of that cause I don't really read music for singing much. I just sing it out loud when I want to practise it.

00:17:21.229 --> 00:17:28.449

Researcher: Uh huh! And do you monitor your progress in your practice? And if so, how?

00:17:29.540 --> 00:17:59.379

Singer-instrumentalist 2: I mean, not really with flute. It's just, "I used to not be able to play that piece, and now I can". With singing, you get better at singing it. [motions stepwise upwards hand movement] You know, more consistent in when it sounds nice, or you figure out the correct approach and then you can sing the whole song and record it. So I don't really track it. It's just you can tell when the practice has worked or not.

00:18:00.100 --> 00:18:05.289

Researcher: And you record it when you feel it's good enough? Or do you record it throughout?

00:18:05.931 --> 00:18:20.579

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Generally I record it throughout, so I have past versions to look back on, and sometimes I just use them [in the final mix]. Sometimes when I have a song that I recorded ages ago, but for some reason I didn't quite finish it off so I didn't actually release it, sometimes I just re-sing it because chances are my voice is different again. I've got one of them now that I need to re-sing. But yeah, generally, that's what I do.

00:18:32.190 --> 00:18:38.789

Researcher: Hmm! And what motivates you to practise, and what happens when you *don't* feel motivated?

00:18:39.300 --> 00:19:22.646

Singer-instrumentalist 2: What motivates me to practise flute is, well, I *like* the flute! That's one of the main reasons, and also I've done it so long that I feel obligated, I can't just *stop*! So I've got to keep getting better. Especially because double tonguing is something I *should* have gotten a long time ago, but because I haven't done any grades, I just stick with the pieces that don't need it. [laughs] So I need to get that, so I just *have* it. And with singing, mainly cause I like music a lot and I like writing it. And so I just need to be able to sing the songs that I write, because otherwise I have to get someone else to [record] it for me and that's a *lot* more inconvenient! [laughs]

00:19:22.950 --> 00:19:44.419

Researcher: It sounds like you're fairly, internally motivated because you just love it, which is lovely. What happens if you have a day where you feel you *ought* to do some practice because something's coming up, but you don't feel motivated, for whatever reason.

00:19:45.200 --> 00:20:35.000

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Generally, if I'm really worried about it, if I have a flute performance the next day but I just don't wanna practise, I'll watch a load of YouTube videos on people performing it, because then it makes me feel like I'm productive. It's still very passive but, you know, it's something! And with singing, one time I had a really sore throat the day before I had a gig, so I just didn't sing at all. I listened to the songs and tried to remember the lyrics. Even though I wrote it, I forget the lyrics all the time! But if I don't want to practise, I'm not motivated enough to then force myself to, because I don't really have a major goal it's just "upkeeping".

00:20:36.095 --> 00:20:41.200

Researcher: And is there anything you wish you could change about your practice?

00:20:42.350 --> 00:21:09.120

Singer-instrumentalist 2: The consistency, I think. I wish I was more consistent, especially more... cause some people find practising really cathartic on their instruments, and sometimes that's the same for me. But if I'm tired I won't want to practise, so I wish I would be more motivated to practise when I needed to be relaxed, cause then I'd be able to do a lot more during exam season and stuff.

00:21:10.610 --> 00:21:21.600

Researcher: Hmmm. And do you feel... Do you consider singers and instrumentalists to approach practice in the same way in general?

00:21:22.540 --> 00:21:59.940

Singer-instrumentalist 2: I don't really know. From my own experience I'd say yes, because it's just quite different. I don't really know about classical singers, cause they probably have a different set of things they need to practise. But [at] least for me, cause I do more classical flute, and then more pop singing. So I need to practise more for flute, because generally it's more difficult. But I'm not really practising anything particularly challenging in singing, so I don't need to approach it with such regimented sections.

00:22:02.490 --> 00:22:14.829

Researcher: And what are your thoughts on innate talent? So by that I mean you have a "gift" rather than a skill which you develop.

00:22:15.360 --> 00:23:17.859

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Hmm! Well, I always think of the phrase "Hard work beats talent, once talent doesn't work hard", so I feel like, if you're lucky enough to have the innate talent, you should still work hard, because then you can be so much better than the people who just work hard and don't necessarily have the innate talent. But I still feel hard work *can* get you on par with innate talent, even if the innate talent is working hard. Maybe just skill wise, not necessarily artistically wise, because sometimes you just have it, or you don't have it. And knowing how to phrase things and stuff like that. But there's a difference, especially when you're younger, because if a young child picks up the violin and they progress very quickly, then they'll think, "Oh, I'm good", and in some ways they might be more motivated to practise, which might make people wrongly think that just that they're just talented when in actuality, because they were a little bit better at the start they were more motivated to work harder. So I don't know, it's a hard question.

00:23:18.190 --> 00:23:37.320

Researcher: Hmm! And it's one I feel... What am I saying? I wonder whether that question is more relevant to the voice because it's part of the body? And you're born with it. I don't know. That's what I'm wondering about. And...

00:23:44.360 --> 00:24:21.470

Singer-instrumentalist 2: I feel... That makes sense, because [for] some people their voices just naturally sound nice, even in comparison to someone who's very well trained at singing and technically good. It's subjective. One voice would sound nicer to someone else. For example, for me, opera singers, they're incredibly talented, but I personally don't like how it sounds. So I prefer a pop singer over [an opera singer]. But that doesn't mean they're more *skilled*. It's just subjective.

00:24:21.900 --> 00:24:30.690

Researcher: Hmm! And what makes what makes singing practice unique do you think?

00:24:31.530 --> 00:25:09.740

Singer-instrumentalist 2: You're constantly using your voice. It's always around you. I feel like in that aspect, singing in general is more, not embarrassing, but more revealing when you're doing it as a performance. Because you're using your *own* voice, you're not using something else to channel something through. So it's actually how *you* sound, because although people have different sounds on instruments, if you play the flute, you're going to sound very similar to another flautist. But that's not the same for singers, so it's a bit more revealing.

00:25:10.714 --> 00:25:17.090

Researcher: And how does that transfer to practising singing, would you say?

00:25:17.935 --> 00:25:18.520

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Generally?

00:25:18.520 --> 00:25:20.060

Researcher: [the] uniqueness.

00:25:20.620 --> 00:26:10.330

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Although I wouldn't really practise anything in front of people, I'd definitely not practise singing in front of people more so. Unless I'd already gotten it to a level where I'm just practising through the performance, through my set. Then I would use people to watch, to practise singing with nerves. I feel like all instruments are affected when you're nervous, but singing especially. With flute, if you're nervous then yes, your breaths are a bit more shallow and your fingers are a bit shaky, but you can control it a bit more. With singing, sometimes what I do to practise singing while I'm feeling nervous, is I do a tonne of exercise and then I try to sing while out of breath to sort of mimic it. So in that aspect, I think it's different.

00:26:11.140 --> 00:26:27.949

Researcher: That's interesting! So you prepare your body. You simulate a shallower breath, or an out of breath feeling as a practice method?

00:26:28.430 --> 00:26:38.499

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Yeah, because you're not very used to singing with a tonne of adrenaline in your body, because generally you're just on your own practising. So I try to do that.

00:26:39.771 --> 00:26:48.260

Researcher: Hmmm! And what would you say the benefits and limitations of practising singing are?

00:26:50.256 --> 00:27:39.430

Singer-instrumentalist 2: The benefits of practis[ing] singing is just sort of [an] upward curve. [demonstrates with hand] You *can* practise wrong techniques, but generally it's very intuitive. You can feel when it's wrong, and then you steer away from it. So that's a benefit. And then a limitation. Probably, at least for me, sometimes it's quite hard to hear how I sound when I'm singing, so I have to record myself. And then the recordings sometimes are kind of bad. And then, when I record myself, I'm not very good at recognising what exactly I did to make it sound bad! But with flute you can tell: "Oh, I messed up that note", or "I didn't take a big enough breath here". Singing [is the] same a little bit, but it's not quite as easy to spot.

00:27:40.200 --> 00:27:55.899

Researcher: Hmm! And do you have any questions yourself about singing practice, instrumental practice or any other things that you'd like to share about your own practice?

00:27:59.900 --> 00:28:28.250

Singer-instrumentalist 2: I can't really think of anything to be honest. I'd say, with instrumental practice, it's a lot more satisfying when you complete a piece than singing practice, because with singing you can usually sing it all the way through from the first try, at least at the standard that I do. But with flute, generally the first try you go, "Well, it's not even the same piece!". [laughs] So it's a lot more satisfying when you complete a flute piece than when you complete a singing piece. But...

00:28:28.250 --> 00:28:29.180

Researcher: Hmmm...

00:28:29.180 --> 00:28:31.820

Singer-instrumentalist 2: I think that's it.

00:28:32.070 --> 00:28:45.919

Researcher: Thank you! I think that's everything! We've whizzed through [name]. You were *really* helpful. [You] provided some really interesting insights for me. Thank you.

00:28:45.920 --> 00:28:46.879

Singer-instrumentalist 2: Yay, I'm glad!

Interview 3 Instrumentalist 1

00:01:46.860 --> 00:06:17.539 Interview preamble

00:06:17.630 --> 00:06:28.979

Researcher: It sounds as though you've got loads of really interesting insights to offer me. So, could we start with you telling me briefly about your music journey?

00:06:30.100 --> 00:07:13.770

Instrumentalist 1: Yeah! I started playing when I was probably six or seven. My brother had started doing Suzuki. I didn't start when he started because he was a couple of years older than me. They had classes at the weekend that were like musical games classes which he hated, but he *had* to do to be part of, but that was fine because I loved them and the teacher let me join in with the games class! But then a new teacher took over and wouldn't let *me* join in. So my parents decided this was the end of the road for Suzuki and that teacher because he [the Instrumentalist 1's brother] wouldn't go [inaudible]...

00:07:13.770 --> 00:07:14.270

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:07:14.270 --> 00:13:11.740

Instrumentalist 1: ...and it was just too much stress. So, they found a new violin teacher locally for him, and decided that, because I was being a real pain in the arse and wanted to do everything that he did, they'd get me started as well, and it was a bit of a disaster cause all I did was feed her rabbits. So, when it came to the local music festival and my brother was going in for a class, and my parents said, "Oh, there's a beginner class. Maybe [Instrumentalist 1 name] could go in for that", and the teacher said, "No, [Instrumentalist 1 name] is terribly talented. I'm holding her back". And my parents thought, "What the [fuck]?" [laughs]. So they found me *another* new teacher! And yeah it was just lucky that there was a little girl in my class at school, when I started, whose dad was a Instrumentalist 1 and a violin teacher, so I went to him. And then it was a really obvious journey from there onwards. I was at a school that didn't do music and they brought my parents in when I was about nine to say, "You've got to find her somewhere that actually caters for her". And my parents didn't know anything about music but they knew there were music schools, so they worked through them alphabetically! [laughs] And at [specialist music school 1] I met this amazing Instrumentalist 1 who did my audition. He *didn't* give me a place because he was about to leave and he wanted to teach me and he didn't think it was a good school. And in the meantime I'd already auditioned for [specialist music school 2] who *had* given me a place but also then said that I could learn with this violin teacher. So that's what I did. From when I was nine or ten, I was at [specialist music school 2] and the first four years I was learning with him and then there was all this dramatic stuff going on, and I was forced to move teachers, and I hated my last 4 years because I didn't want to be with that teacher, and it would probably have been [the same with] anybody [else]. I would have been in the same position. *Anyway*. Then I went to music college in London, and then in my fourth year in London, at [music college], I did an exchange to Germany, which was totally life-changing. And I then did postgrad in Germany and lived there for nearly 4 years altogether, with all the studying and loved it. [I] just spent the first year, and maybe two years, sitting in a basement learning how to play the violin properly, because I'd survived on talent maybe more than on actually... Because of those four years with the teacher I didn't enjoy, I just didn't really practise efficiently... I'd lost... Because he was a spoon feeder, and my previous teacher had been all about teaching me to teach myself, I switched off for those final four years of school, which was a real shame because it was a waste. And then I'd lost the ability to practise and to hear what I was doing by the time I was at music college. I was spending all the hours practising, but I didn't know how to practise so it was useless. I wasn't really hearing what was coming out the violin. I was hearing what I *expected* was coming out of the violin. So then, going to Germany and sitting in a basement, having literally nothing to do. Going to a teacher who is *all* about training her students to win German orchestral auditions and give them a real solid grounding and technique because she'd been through a similar journey that I'd been through. She'd got her position in Germany. (American Instrumentalist 1, bit of a whizz kid youngster.) and then had got a position in a German orchestra and suddenly realised after a few years that she just wasn't playing to the standard that she believed she was capable of doing. So she quit the job and mid-twenties went to one of the really great violin pedagogues, [name], and spent a few years going back to basics, *learning* how to play the violin properly, and then had this amazing career in chamber music. Musically, I think probably we struggled, because we didn't see the world the same way, even slightly. But technically, going back to basics at *that* point when I must have been 20/ 21 was exactly what I needed to go back and *really* consider what it was doing, learn how to how to play the violin. And then, because I'd done that, my playing just flew! But my confidence didn't. It took a long time after leaving studying for my confidence to begin catching up and *trust* that I was able to do what I could now do. But because I had so many years of concerts [that] were a bit, more than a bit... They were just really erratic, just because I wasn't practising *well*. Sometimes I'd play brilliantly and sometimes I'd play *hideously*. And so the confidence that I could trust in what I'd practised took a long, long time to catch up with my actual playing ability. That has an effect, of course,

on how you then perform in concert - that you screw up because you don't have confidence, not because you can't do it. That's been my journey. And then I played in a piano trio then and then I left that nearly ten years ago, just to see what would happen if I really believed in myself and it was definitely the right thing to do. Now I do a mixture of chamber music and solo work and lots of stuff that's totally on my own. That's my journey!

00:13:14.020 --> 00:13:35.150

Researcher: Sounds good! [laughs] Sounds fascinating. There's so much to delve into that. I might come back to some of those points. We could spend *hours* talking about this. For a slightly easier question: How did you find doing the practice diary task?

00:13:36.090 --> 00:14:13.020

Instrumentalist 1: I found it really interesting, partly because it showed me that I was practising more than I think I am, which is really helpful. I suppose it's the same as if you keep a food diary. You make maybe better choices about how you eat. I made perhaps better choices about how I was practising, because even though there was nobody watching me practising, on some level, I think your brain is acting like there is because you're gonna have to write down what you did. And so it was really interesting.

00:14:15.140 --> 00:14:30.730

Researcher: That aside, is there anything else you discovered about your own practice, apart from you're doing more than you thought. In the process, is there anything that you notice that you tend to do in your practice?

00:14:32.170 --> 00:14:40.769

Instrumentalist 1: Nothing new, because I'm very self-aware about how I work, because I have to be - because there's never enough time, so I have to be...

00:14:40.770 --> 00:14:41.780

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:14:43.100 --> 00:15:41.269

Instrumentalist 1: ...quite analytical and focussed about what I need to do. I can't just spend hours having fun playing violin, because there's *never* time to do that. So, I think I am quite self aware already. Also because during lockdown, I started doing a Patreon and I shared practice videos. That made me learn a lot about how I practise. And I think because I've had that (which I've just stopped doing a couple of months ago, because I was just too busy. I couldn't keep doing it, because it was sending me crazy trying to do these videos as well, three videos a week, because they take hours. So I've just recently stopped doing that.) It was almost like being back in that world of Patreon, of sharing my practising with somebody.

00:15:41.270 --> 00:15:41.880

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:15:41.880 --> 00:15:52.330

Instrumentalist 1: I think I didn't learn anything about how I practise, but I had already been on that journey by sharing the practising with somebody else, if that makes sense.

00:15:52.860 --> 00:16:11.909

Researcher: Definitely. You provided a really clear and, like you say, very self-aware account of your week's practice. Could you describe one of your practices from last week? Walk me through one of them.

00:16:14.430 --> 00:20:27.140

Instrumentalist 1: I'll do yesterday's cause I'm still really aware of it and I can't remember as far back as a week ago. [laughs] I was staying with people because I had a concert the night before. While they were all in bed, I went and hid in their... This is always a difficulty if you're staying somewhere away from home, finding a space in their home that you're not going to disturb people, even with [a] practice mute on. I went in their utility space [which] hasn't got any of the house above it, it's a little extension, with my music on their coal fired boiler. That was an experience! [laughs] I got up extremely early, given I'd been up till one o'clock, very tired. I hadn't opened the music for the concert on Sunday, which we *did* perform just over a month ago. So at least I'd played it recently, but there's a Saint-Saëns first sonata on the programme, which is just *really* hard. It has a tonne of notes in it. I just needed to get my hands around it. I *hate* practising with [a] practice mute, but it's so necessary when you're practising early, and especially if you're staying in somebody's home, because you obviously can't just play full pelt. That was a working through that sonata: [gestures] reminding my hands where they need to be at any given point, practising with rhythms, particularly in the last movement, because it's a "moto perpetuo". It's really important to get that back up to speed, because it's really fast and it doesn't stop! It's constantly crazy. That was my morning practising. When I'd been looking ahead in my schedule, I'd written off that day for practising, because I had to sit on a jury in the evening and they were leaving their home in Suffolk at 10ish and I was thinking, "What am I gonna do?". (They'd said they'd drive me back to London.) "What am I gonna do for the afternoon?" And then they said I could go back to theirs in Blackheath and was welcome to stay and practise as long as I wanted, so I ended up having this extra... I felt like I'd *won* time. Because it was afternoon, it was absolutely fine to practise *without* practice mute. So, I really worked diligently through Tchaikovsky concerto, which I'm playing on Saturday, just working through [gestures] fixing, making sure that my left hand really knew all the shifts, all of the passage work, again practising it with rhythms, making sure that all of the complex things with potential coordination issues - that I really knew where I was going with all of that - and thinking analytically (because I'm playing from memory with that). Where he goes into different keys and doing that analysis, you constantly have to remind yourself of [that], because otherwise you forget it in the concert. You just have to be really focused: "Okay, this is the exposition. I go to this place." [gestures], thinking of the keys, but also thinking of muscle memory [and] of where you shift to for all the places where it goes to, where the two times it comes, it's different keys. And so you're thinking about all that analytical stuff and just fixing problems, making sure everything's in the right place. I don't know how better to describe it! [laughs] And then I gave my mate a brief violin lesson on Bach G minor fugue for about ten minutes.

00:20:27.970 --> 00:20:28.250

Researcher: [laughs]

00:20:28.250 --> 00:20:30.288

Instrumentalist 1: Then I had to run for my train.

00:20:32.870 --> 00:20:55.960

Researcher: It sounds as though the answer will be yes to this question, and you've answered some of it already. But, do you plan and structure your practice individually, but perhaps also longer term as well? And if so, how?

00:20:56.940 --> 00:21:31.650

Instrumentalist 1: Yes, in the sense that I know, obviously, what repertoire is coming up in concert. I know... Give me 2 seconds.. [leaves room and returns with large notice board and hand drawn Gantt chart] This probably answers your question.

00:21:32.710 --> 00:21:34.440

Researcher: Oh, wow!

00:21:35.160 --> 00:21:39.670

Instrumentalist 1: This is my practice schedule.

00:21:41.290 --> 00:21:42.200

Researcher: Gosh!

00:21:42.230 --> 00:22:06.829

Instrumentalist 1: Down here I have the works I'm performing over this period of time. Orange shows where [/ when] the concert is. So from that point it's gone [from the practice schedule]. At the moment I've not been filling [it] in very well, because I've been away from home so much so I'll need to do another one of these, because I've now got to about here I think on it. [points to end of Gantt chart timeline]

00:22:07.159 --> 00:22:07.489

Researcher: Uhuh!

00:22:07.815 --> 00:22:32.464

Instrumentalist 1: So I need to do another one for the next month or two. It's to give me a clear sight of what's coming up to make sure I don't miss anything, because when there're so many programmes to play, it's really easy to forget something [laughs] and not practise it and then get to the day before the concert be like, "Nooo!".

00:22:32.870 --> 00:22:35.330

Researcher: That's amazing. That's kind of like...

00:22:35.330 --> 00:23:35.170

Instrumentalist 1: ...a diary with all of my concerts. The concerts are in pink so that I can see what's coming up really clearly. Otherwise, if you're looking at a week-per-view diary, you can miss the bigger picture of *how* much there is to do and think, "Oh, yeah, that's really relaxed", and then suddenly realise it wasn't. So, yes, I do very much plan ahead what I need to do. For the last week, I've known there are certain pieces that I could walk on stage and play them and not have practised them really. But there's loads of other pieces in those concert programmes that that is *really* not the case. So it's figuring out what needs the bulk of my time, what needs to be practised every day, and what can be practised less. [laughs]

00:23:37.200 --> 00:23:46.299

Researcher: That's amazing. It's like a Gantt chart, I suppose. Have you heard of a Gantt chart?

00:23:46.300 --> 00:23:47.370

Instrumentalist 1: No.

00:23:47.370 --> 00:23:50.290

Researcher: You've just done one! [laughs]

00:23:51.020 --> 00:24:56.542

Instrumentalist 1: Oh, great! Yeah, I've been doing that for years when it's a busy patch and I've now got to the point where it always seems to be a busy patch! I just need to know what the next weeks are bringing me. Even if I don't end up filling it in, at least it's there in front of me to show me how - the *fear* - of how many pieces of music there are that I have to have ready for that point. It helps. I'm quite methodical and a little bit OCD. I need order in my life. And that helps me massively, because otherwise I feel like it's a massive chaos in my head. [gestures] There's all this going on and I can't figure out what it is I'm supposed to be doing. But if it's ordered and structured like *that*, then it makes me a lot calmer. [laughs] Although I then look and go, "Nooo!". [laughs]

00:25:01.374 --> 00:25:14.750

Researcher: [laughs] My next question is, do you rely on or incorporate any formal practice methodologies such as etude exercises or anything else into your practice?

00:25:15.568 --> 00:28:08.129

Instrumentalist 1: When it's not mental like this, yes! [laughs] You saw the first practice day [of the practice diary task], I'd just got to the point where I couldn't cope and I actually realised yesterday it was because I'd put new strings on and the bridge was slightly uneven. So actually, it *had* just ever so slightly changed the relationships between the strings. They were just slightly different. It meant all double stops were in slightly different places. [gestures] To play in tune, everything was in slightly different places. And I hadn't realised that. I thought somehow something must be wrong in the way I was holding everything. Everything just felt a little bit uncomfortable to play everything in tune. So that morning I did some scales. If I'm in a period where I don't have this much repertoire to play, ideally I love having an hour at the start of the day to do a series of exercises. Some of them I've made up. Some of them, like the Ševčík exercises, I love doing. There are some that to [practise] the position changes. There's the book by Flesch called Urstudien, which is amazing. It's really basic, but really difficult technical exercises that really improve your playing and keep you fit. Flesch also wrote a scale system, which I do. That's the double stopping scales that I was doing. I always go back to that. When I've got plenty of time, I'll do a different key of that each day. There's a book by a guy called Dounis, which has lots of shifting exercises which are really helpful to do. There are a couple of Kreuzer studies that I go back to because they're just really basic technique. There's one that's all about string crossings and I find that really helpful to do. But mostly I don't go back to studies that are like pieces. I don't really do that. Mostly it's exercises that consolidate a technical thing. I find that really helpful. But right now there's *too* much repertoire to get through in a day to be able to have the luxury of being able to do dedicated technical work. At the end of the day all of that technique's coming into pieces anyway. So as long as you practise well and right... [inaudible]

00:28:08.680 --> 00:28:10.149

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:28:10.150 --> 00:28:13.659

Instrumentalist 1: But yeah, I do like being able to do that when I can.

00:28:14.830 --> 00:28:42.520

Researcher: And you mentioned what I've come across the phrase "self regulated learning". I don't know if you're aware of that term - where you've learnt to monitor your own practice and do it efficiently, I think from your American tutor in Germany. Do you have a favourite or most commonly used practice method?

00:28:42.520 --> 00:30:18.619

Instrumentalist 1: Rhythms. [laughs] So, if it's something that's in a group of four, I'll practise it in groups of two first [vocalises "long-short" dotted rhythm] and [vocalises "short-long" dotted rhythm] and then go into the groups of four [vocalises crotchet followed by three quaver triplets]. This is only if it's passage work that you want to consolidate, because it speeds up your brain's awareness of coordination, it speeds up your awareness of *where* the shifts are, *how* the shifts are, *where* you're crossing strings. It means that your fingers... It's no use if you do it in a kind of lazy rhythm. [demonstrates a more relaxed rhythm]. That won't do you any good. But if you do it in that really spicy rhythm, it means that your brain's only having to cope ever with three fast notes. So it helps your brain compartmentalise and figure out where the issues are and fix them. It's amazing how that speeds up learning or speeds up improvement. You could play it without the rhythms and play it slowly a hundred times, and you still wouldn't be able to play it fast. But I do that in tandem with metronome work, especially if it's something really hard. I'll start off way below the tempo, and I'll very gradually speed it up until it's way

above the tempo, and I'm falling off it, so that when you come back to the right speed everything feels simple. But then you do have to practise it at the right speed, because otherwise you end up rushing in the concert. [laughs]

00:30:20.530 --> 00:30:27.930

Researcher: Yeah, you mentioned in your practice diary, challenging yourself *beyond* what you will need to do...

00:30:27.930 --> 00:30:28.250

Instrumentalist 1: Yeah.

00:30:28.250 --> 00:30:34.340

Researcher: ...in the performance so that it feels free and easy when it comes to the *actual* performance.

00:30:34.830 --> 00:32:02.730

Instrumentalist 1: Yeah, I had a great teacher, (the guy [who taught me] when I was 9 or 10), who *his* teacher, (he was in his eighties), *his* teacher way back when - when he started he played in a really well known string quartet - and when they started out... Obviously as a kid, you're always practising [and] playing standing up and having to join the string quartet and having to sit down to play, he went into his lesson and said, "I'm finding this really uncomfortable. Can you give me some advice?" And the teacher made him sit down, cross-legged on the floor and play, and he said, "You make everything harder." And then when he came in and said, "I find it really hard to play in a suit jacket for concerts, because obviously I don't normally do that." The teacher made him practise in the suit jacket, but with his *overcoat* on top so that it was so much harder to play that, coming back to the suit jacket, felt really easy! So from when I was little, he was instilling this idea "Always make it harder than it is and then doing it the right way is easy". So I try and build that approach into my practising as well. Whatever it happens to be that I'm struggling with, if you can make it harder then reality is a much more comfortable place in concert because you don't want to be feeling in concert that you're only just getting to that place. You want to feel that it's a comfortable place to be.

00:32:03.593 --> 00:32:12.079

Researcher: And what is your attitude to mistakes and error correction during your practice?

00:32:15.150 --> 00:34:41.009

Instrumentalist 1: My attitude is really interesting. Lots of Instrumentalist 1s, and especially when you're teaching, you'll have kids who'll make a mistake and slide around. If it's an intonation mistake or a bad shift, people will slide around to get it right which, of course, enforces the error. So my attitude, especially when I'm behaving myself, is then figure out: "What did I do wrong? Why did I do it wrong?" For example, shifting on the violin, so often you look at the distance between the two notes, but that's not the shift. Your brain will see the distance between the notes. Say you're shifting between two notes that are fourth apart but you're going first finger to second finger. [gestures] That means you're [actually] shifting a third. But your brain is confused because your brain's thinking it's a fourth, because there's a fourth between the two notes. So things like that. It's very easy to make a mistake with a shift. Analyse *why* you made the mistake. Realise it's because your brain's thinking it's a bigger shift than it is and then you've clarified that. Then you don't make the mistake. But I think it's so important when you make mistakes, to figure out what the mistake is, why did I make it, and then fix it rather than ignoring it and hope it goes away. [laughs] If you actually fix it, it's like this. There are a few things in certain pieces where I've made the mistake in a concert. There's this one patch in Tchaikovsky concerto. [It] doesn't matter how much I practise it. Because I didn't immediately fix it after the concert the time I had a memory slip at this point, even though I know *absolutely clearly* what I did wrong and what the correct thing is, as I'm coming to a

couple of bars away from that passage, I feel the tension building in my stomach. So if you don't fix those things, you build in that kind of fear and tension that you *just* could live without.

00:34:41.552 --> 00:35:04.359

Researcher: You mentioned your Patreon videos of your practice earlier and I wanted to ask you about practice recording, listening to music, silent practice and visualisation. So, any of those techniques that you use within your practice?

00:35:05.205 --> 00:36:18.420

Instrumentalist 1: I do sometimes. If I've got something coming up, I will sometimes record myself playing it. I'm very bad at doing that, because it's painful. I'd rather play it through to somebody, than record it, in a way. Because also, if you're playing it through to somebody, then you're going through that kind of process. If you're recording to video and nobody else is going to see it, you don't put yourself in that place. When I'm away from the violin, I'll often be noodling [mimics fingering out passages], practising through something or it will be going on subconsciously. Sometimes my fingers won't be moving, but I'll suddenly catch myself working through something I'm playing. The cellist in my old piano trio used to do the visualisation thing and I never really figured it out. I could see it really helped her but I never really figured out what she was doing and how she was doing it. What were the other things you said?

00:36:18.810 --> 00:36:38.600

Researcher: I think you've pretty much covered it. Silent practice. I think that's different for different musicians and the motivations for that are different for different musicians. I suppose somewhere in between that...

00:36:39.240 --> 00:36:51.999

Instrumentalist 1: I will sit and look through scores on trains and stuff when I've got time. So I will sometimes do that sort of silent practice as well.

00:36:55.340 --> 00:37:16.720

Researcher: Cool! We talked about structuring and planning practice. And you showed me, your impressive Gantt chart. Do you monitor your progress as well? Or is that achieved by the performance at the end of your Gantt chart?

00:37:18.540 --> 00:38:54.020

Instrumentalist 1: Yeah, I guess it's more that. I'm very hypercritical and have high expectations of myself. *But* also I've learnt to accept that things are just going to go wrong in concerts because it's life! But you *are* constantly evaluating and you're constantly evaluating after every concert, even if you're not doing a serious sit down and [evaluating] *everything* that went wrong, but you are constantly evaluating. I've been thinking a lot recently actually about different approaches of playing, because I tend to be somebody who I'll be very much in the moment and take lots of risks. But of course, by taking lots of risks, you've got also the risk of things going wrong. And there's a bit of me that's thinking, "Well, maybe I should do what everybody else does, and not take risks [laughs] and be a bit more kind of..." I've been trying to be a bit better about doing that and just giving myself a bit more space and not practising in a way also that means that I'm more thinking about how to make everything *perfect* every time. But at the end of the day, then, when I play like that in concerts, I get really annoyed. So it's finding a happy medium and that's something that you're constantly evaluating....

00:38:54.020 --> 00:38:54.810

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:38:54.810 --> 00:39:10.069

Instrumentalist 1: ...in your playing. I *am* evaluating, but there isn't a tick chart of the things I've achieved or anything like that. [laughs]

00:39:11.720 --> 00:39:19.040

Researcher: Uhuh! And what motivates you to practise? And what happens when you don't feel motivated?

00:39:20.070 --> 00:40:10.940

Instrumentalist 1: And what motivates me to practise is the fact that I'm going to have to stand up in front of other people and play this stuff whether I like it or not and [laughs], I don't want to fall flat on my face! I can't, because I need to keep earning money, so I keep practising because there's no other choice. When I don't feel motivated to practise, I *still* don't have any choice, so I *still* have to do it, because the concert's still going to happen whether I like it or not. So I have to have a different attitude on those days, which I have quite a lot of the time. [laughs] Of course, I've been doing this for so long, all I *really* want to do is sit on the sofa with the cat and watch shit TV and knit! That would be my ideal. [laughs] But I *don't* have a choice in that so...

00:40:10.940 --> 00:40:11.820

Researcher: [laughs]

00:40:11.820 --> 00:40:26.770

Instrumentalist 1: and read good book. Yeah, that would be great. [On a] like a day like this, where it's really awful weather, I would *love* to sit down with a pot of tea and a book, bit of knitting, cat. All that stuff but...

00:40:28.200 --> 00:40:29.630

Researcher: Oh! [laughs]

00:40:29.630 --> 00:40:31.738

Instrumentalist 1: ...it's not an option, so I practise.

00:40:33.500 --> 00:40:39.399

Researcher: Uhuh. And if there's anything you wish you could change about your practice, what would it be?

00:40:40.890 --> 00:40:43.360

Instrumentalist 1: Be better without having to do any work? [laughs]

00:40:45.810 --> 00:40:48.050

Researcher: Amazing. Amazing. [laughs]

00:40:53.380 --> 00:40:56.109

Instrumentalist 1: Yeah, that would be the ideal. [laughs]

00:40:56.890 --> 00:40:59.589

Researcher: Yeah. It'd be the best life.

00:41:00.220 --> 00:41:09.688

Instrumentalist 1: Wouldn't it? But then everybody would be musicians if you could do that. If you could skip the practising part, and just be a genius! [laughs]

00:41:13.295 --> 00:41:25.440

Researcher: [laughs] I've just got a few more questions. Do you consider singers and instrumentalists to approach practice in the same way or differently?

00:41:27.610 --> 00:41:59.439

Instrumentalist 1: I imagine it's different. Musically, I'm sure it's very similar. But I'm assuming that technically it's quite different and there's only so much practising that you can do, as a singer, before you're just killing yourself. Presumably it has to be quite structured and analytical about *how* the instrument itself is working.

00:41:59.680 --> 00:42:00.630

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:42:00.630 --> 00:42:32.830

Instrumentalist 1: Because it's not an abstract thing of, "Okay, I did that and then it's in the right place." Also on the piano you've got *keys* and you press them and the note comes out! Violin is already a bit more abstract than that, but I'm assuming that because of those things, as a singer it is a different approach to how to practise. But I don't know. I haven't done it properly since I was a kid, and I wouldn't say I really knew how to practise then.

00:42:33.430 --> 00:42:55.319

Researcher: Hmmm. You mentioned earlier about getting by on talent, and also that your teacher spotted that talent early on, thankfully. What are your thoughts on innate talent and practice?

00:42:56.610 --> 00:43:12.759

Instrumentalist 1: I think that anybody can... If they have the right teaching - and not just good teaching, but also teaching from somebody where the chemistry between teacher and people is good -

00:43:13.310 --> 00:43:13.830

Researcher: Hmm.

00:43:13.830 --> 00:43:57.949

Instrumentalist 1: ...anybody can play really well. I don't believe that there's anybody... Also, different people get on with different instruments, so you might not really particularly get on with the violin, but you might then play the saxophone and find it's *totally* you. But you could still get on. You could work well and analytically and [in a] structured way and become a really good Instrumentalist 1, regardless of whether you've got huge amounts of... I mean what even is talent? It's such a banal concept, but it *does* seem to exist.

00:43:58.190 --> 00:43:58.670

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:43:58.670 --> 00:44:53.509

Instrumentalist 1: But I think with good teaching, you will *always* be able to get to a higher level - and with dedication and with enjoyment of what you're doing. But I think there is that "something else" as well that takes it to a different place. There's always going to be some kid. (It doesn't matter which art form it is.) There's always going to be the one person who just is. You just listen, or you watch, or you look at the art, or you read the poetry, and it's just in a different place, and you can't put finger on why. But I think that actually, to get to a really good standard, you don't have to be super talented. You just have to have good teaching, and enjoy it, and want to practise, and practise well.

00:44:54.430 --> 00:44:55.390

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:44:55.390 --> 00:44:59.956

Instrumentalist 1: I think practice is everything at the end of the day, frustratingly! [laughs]

00:45:03.410 --> 00:45:24.399

Researcher: Oh, I just wanted to return to two things that you mentioned earlier. I found your comment about the expected sound versus reality really interesting, and I wondered if you could just expand on that slightly?

00:45:25.990 --> 00:46:53.020

Instrumentalist 1: Yeah, I think we're all guilty, to a certain extent, of knowing what we want to achieve, knowing how we want it to sound. It's very easy, then, to hear that coming out of the instrument, even if it isn't. It's that thing that when you're younger and you've got teachers saying, "I can hear what you're meaning to do, but you have to do it 100 times more for it to carry even to me, let alone into an audience". And it was really interesting yesterday, sitting on this jury because you had groups who we're definitely in that place, that if they'd done everything a hundred times more, it would have been a totally different performance. So I think it's very easy to be convinced that you're doing something, and it's not coming out like that. For me, a massive, massive crisis actually in my life was that I'd won some competition to play Sibelius concerto with an orchestra. I was "*amazing*". Everybody told me I was brilliant. It was the "greatest performance of Sibelius concerto anybody had ever heard". A few weeks later I went back to my flat. I was in third year at Music College. I went back to my flat. This parcel arrived through the door. It was the CD of the recording of the concert. I thought, "Ah, I'll just sit down and listen to that. That'll be fun!", because it was "great". I was "so good", and because I was distanced enough from the performance...

00:46:53.340 --> 00:46:54.020

Researcher: Yeah.

00:46:54.280 --> 00:47:43.000

Instrumentalist 1: I *really* heard what the performance was and I had a massive crisis of, "If that's how I actually play the violin..." I went to my violin teacher and said, "If this is how I really play, I'm not doing this as a career. I need to change that because I know I'm capable of *not* playing like that. I know what I'm capable of doing." And that's when he sent me to Germany to sit in a basement and learn play the violin because I was absolutely in the right mental place to do it. It obviously changed everything. But I needed to have that, to realise that I wasn't playing what I was hearing.

00:47:43.420 --> 00:47:44.440

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:47:45.780 --> 00:48:24.450

Instrumentalist 1: It's really hard. You see so many conductors doing that as well. They're standing there waving their arms, and you can see that they're hearing what they want to hear, but you know that the orchestra is not playing *anything* like that and they've somehow kidded themselves into hearing this other version of it. And it's so frustrating. I think it's very easy as a performer to be "in your head" and not hear from outside, but hear from inside. And inside is not what's coming out.

00:48:24.450 --> 00:48:48.230

Researcher: That's a great insight. And lastly, you've mentioned in your practice diary, and also today, about using your practice mute. I wondered if you could just briefly talk about *why* you use it, how you use it and its impact on your practice.

00:48:48.820 --> 00:51:47.210

Instrumentalist 1: So it's a massive lump of metal that sits on the bridge and stops the vibrations coming out. People call them hotel mutes, cause they're basically designed so that you can practise in a hotel and not disturb your neighbours. I obviously don't... At home, I don't want to end up getting... even though my practice room, we did sound installation panels when we moved in, and I've got sound insulation underneath the carpet. I've got a thick carpet. I've got curtains. I've done an extra double glazing window to try and make sure that the sound doesn't travel into my next-door neighbour's, because I'm planning on living here a long time. They're planning on living here a long time, and if we fall outside over my practising, that's a bad thing. So the sound doesn't travel through too much, but at the same time, if I'm practising at 5am, *nobody* wants to hear that. So I will always use my practice mute for out-of-hours practice. Anytime between 9am and 6[p]m, maybe 7pm, I'll feel that I can practise without practice mute. But outside those hours I would always use practice mute, because I don't want to upset people. The same when you're staying with people and you get up before everybody else and you practise, I'll always use it then as well. It's not ideal, because you can't really hear. You can *sort* of hear the intonation, but you can't *really* hear *fine* intonation. It'll be in tune, but actually to get it really *crisply* in tune, you *can't* do that with [a] practice mute. You can't work on *anything* to do with sound, because none of that is coming through. You can't hear any variation in what you're doing with your right arm. But, when it's a matter of, (like yesterday), just working through the technical stuff of basically just getting something back in my fingers, that's fine. I can really use that practice time well, doing the right things, but I couldn't use it if I was trying to concentrate on sound quality and phrasing and things like that. It's useless. But it's a necessary evil for those times when you just can't make a lot of noise. And it's just focussing your practice so that you know that the time that you've got - three hours of practice with practice mute, and then some other time in the day that you don't need to use practice mute - it's making sure you practise the right things in the different times, so that you're not wasting time with practice mute practising something that you can't really practise.

00:51:49.910 --> 00:51:50.630

Researcher: Great!

00:51:50.630 --> 00:51:51.779

Instrumentalist 1: [inaudible] organisation.

00:51:51.780 --> 00:52:01.330

Researcher: That's fascinating. That's fascinating as well. Thank you. Have you got any questions, just to finish off? You don't have to have any.

00:52:04.000 --> 00:52:12.150

Instrumentalist 1: Just, because you do both, obviously, is it really different to be practising as a singer than it is to practise as a Instrumentalist 1?

00:52:14.260 --> 00:53:45.900

Researcher: I think, for me, a prominent concern as a singer is vocal health and stamina - not straining and overdoing it - and pacing yourself, because you use your voice throughout the day to speak or to teach. Obviously stamina is also a concern for instrumentalists, too. But I do feel that's a constant concern, and planning it in the right point of the day and always wishing I could do *more*, but physically not being able to. That's a constant tension in life. And then it's always a consideration when you're socialising: "I shouldn't drink too much tonight, because tomorrow I need to get up early and practise" or "I've got something in a few days time, and I don't want that to impact it". But I also feel that I as a singer and some singers I know, tend to "get by" a lot more on just maintaining general vocal health. You know, we have *hardly* any notes to learn! We have lyrics and you know we can tend to be a bit lazy on just "getting by". So it's swings and roundabouts.

00:53:46.920 --> 00:53:50.280

Instrumentalist 1: Yeah, and I can totally believe it.

00:53:50.880 --> 00:53:51.580

Researcher: [laughs]

00:53:51.580 --> 00:54:11.169

Instrumentalist 1: Yeah, just things like you wouldn't want to go to a pub the night before you have a heavy practice day, or you've got a concert. Because, even as a non singer, the quality of my voice the morning after having spent an evening shouting across a pub, [mimics low voice] my voice has gone down by, you know...

00:54:11.575 --> 00:54:11.979

Researcher: Yeah.

00:54:11.980 --> 00:54:14.180

Instrumentalist 1: So, yeah, I can totally understand that. But then...

00:54:14.560 --> 00:54:14.940

Researcher: Yeah.

00:54:15.320 --> 00:54:11.169

Instrumentalist 1: I think the stamina thing as an instrumentalist, I think that also is down to technique. And if you have a technique that's all built around relaxation and is a tension-free approach to playing - is a really holistic whole-body tension-free approach - I *don't* think stamina is an issue as long as you're doing it a lot.

00:54:41.175 --> 00:54:41.590

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:54:42.540 --> 00:54:58.940

Instrumentalist 1: Obviously if I practise for ten hours, when you only would normally practise for five minutes, that's going to be an issue. But if you're constantly practising quite a lot, I think stamina is not a problem, unless you have a lot of tension built into your technique.

00:55:01.010 --> 00:55:28.499

Researcher: I think that's where healthy voice technique in your *speaking* voice is really important as well, which is something I've learnt in the last five years, that I wasn't speaking healthily. If I'm teaching younger children, and because I'm a people pleaser, and my voice will slightly lift up here [demonstrates high larynx, breathy tone], and it'll go a bit more breathy. Then by the end of the day it's really tired!

00:55:28.500 --> 00:55:38.000

Instrumentalist 1: I can imagine, as you're saying that, I can feel myself trying to do it and feeling tension in there. Yes.

00:55:38.400 --> 00:56:02.760

Researcher: Yeah, it's all fascinating. Never a boring moment. Oh, thank you so much, [name]. I've got so much data that's fantastic. So what I need to do, is I've got... Zoom thankfully does a lot of the hard work for me. It transcribes the recording, and then I go through. Sorry?

00:56:02.760 --> 00:56:04.359

Instrumentalist 1: I didn't realise it could do that!

00:56:04.690 --> 00:56:39.309

Researcher: I know, it's amazing, given that my deadline is the 17th of June. I've got six interviews to transcribe and then I've got to go through it. Before that, I will send you the transcript, just to have a quick look over to see that I've anonymised it okay, and a few other little things and get your approval. Then I go through and I pick out recurring themes, and I tie it all together into an essay.

00:56:40.340 --> 00:56:46.029

Instrumentalist 1: Oh, but it's amazing that you're doing this because nobody talks about practising!

00:56:48.150 --> 00:57:30.830

Researcher: No! And interestingly, I found out I think there's something like 236 papers on practice between a 20 year span of research papers, and only 3.7% are on singing practice. That's how little singers talk about it! So I was like, "I need to sort this out!" It is fascinating. Because it's something we do generally by ourselves, we can learn a lot from each other.

00:57:31.290 --> 00:58:58.979

Instrumentalist 1: Oh, something you said before just reminded me of something. When you were saying about relying on good vocal health. I went through a period where I had a relationship break up, and I didn't have anywhere to live. I was sleeping on sofas for weeks and had lots of concerts. I already felt like I was taking advantage of people, so my practice had to be so distilled. I was barely practising. That was when I realised exactly that thing - that we can spend hours practising something that is actually unnecessary because we have so much with our technique and with all of the years of practice. If you're in that position that you have to perform without having the time to do the 20 hours of practice for that three minute piece, it doesn't mean you can't play it. And actually, so often the thing that stops us doing it well in the moment is *actually* our head. It was a really interesting lesson to learn. That doesn't mean that I've stopped practising, but it means that I'm less harsh with myself when there are times when I can't practise the amount that I would like to practise, to prepare something. I just have to make sure my head doesn't get away in the way in the concert, because then I'm fine.

00:58:58.980 --> 00:58:59.640

Researcher: Hmm.

00:58:59.640 --> 00:59:35.659

Instrumentalist 1: It's really interesting. I think we're so conditioned, Instrumentalist 1s when you're little, it's like "You have to do at least six hours practice a day", you know, "If you're *really* good, you probably do eight or nine hours practice" when you're a little kid. If you've grown up being surrounded by that mentality, you feel like you've cheated if you've not done that practice for a concert. And actually it's totally unnecessary a lot of the time if you're practising in a very ordered, methodical sort of way!

00:59:36.270 --> 00:59:36.790

Researcher: Hmm.

00:59:36.790 --> 00:59:41.160

Instrumentalist 1: Anyway! Sorry it was just you saying that.

00:59:41.160 --> 00:59:42.920

Researcher: No, no!

00:59:42.920 --> 00:59:50.240

Instrumentalist 1: Actually we can be so convinced of the hours that are necessary that actually aren't.

00:59:52.690 --> 00:59:59.020

Researcher: Thank you so much! I'm aware you've got lots of practice to do... or crochet!

00:59:59.020 --> 01:00:04.530

Instrumentalist 1: Unfortunately, yes! [laughs] This is my procrastination!

01:00:05.150 --> 01:00:27.110

Researcher: I don't wanna take up any more of your time. I would love to just sit and chat to you for longer, but I'm aware you have very kindly give me a *whole hour*! So I want to let you free. I'm gonna send you a paper you might find interesting as well, from some of the things you mentioned, you know, just to fit into your day as well!

01:00:27.760 --> 01:00:56.589

Instrumentalist 1: No, that'd be really interesting and good luck with all of this. And thanks, it's been really interesting to have to verbalise stuff. It's really interesting to make yourself do that because it's like when you're teaching, it suddenly gives you extra clarity about how you do a specific thing. I'll probably practise better because of it! [laughs]

Interview 4 Singer 1

00:02:51.230 --> 00:05:25.280 Interview preamble

00:05:25.710 --> 00:05:34.079

Researcher: So, [name], can you tell me briefly about your music journey?

00:05:34.970 --> 00:09:33.509

Singer 1: My music journey. Wow, okay! Well, I can go right back to primary school, wh[ere] I used to sing in a primary school choir until I was probably about twelve. It was an all boys, all male school where it wasn't very cool to sing when you were approaching puberty. So I guess with peer pressure I moved away from that which I regret now with hindsight. I wish I'd actually done more singing when I was younger. When you're very malleable and learn things very quickly and easily. But that's where I started from a singing point of view. But I think I grew up in a relatively musical family, in the sense that my parents listened to a lot of music: quite a lot of classical music and my dad was a big jazz fan. So I listened to quite a lot of jazz - and classical music at that stage as well - which I think probably helped to create my love of music to a degree. And then, as a teenager, I started playing guitar, probably when I was about 16 or 17. I never did it formally, so I never had lessons or anything like that, but I used the guitar mainly to learn how to sing pop songs and folk like Simon and Garfunkel and that kind of music when I was just starting out playing guitar. I've been playing guitar pretty much ever since I was 17, but it's always been a very informal and quite casual thing for me. I've stuck with guitar all these years, cause it was just really fun. I did that literally all the way up until about my early forties. Then, because my wife [name] plays piano, she encouraged me to actually take up learning the piano. So I started learning piano relatively late in life, I suppose, early to mid-40s. I've been doing that for about eight years. I think it's the first time where I really started to take music, from a practice point of view, a bit more seriously, where I actually had a practice routine. Up until then it [practice] was really whenever I had the urge - I pick up the guitar and play - whereas with piano, like I say, it was a bit more of a formal kind of approach. Then two and a half years ago, after Covid, I decided to try and do something for myself and just get out a bit more, and see people again after being at home for quite a long time. That's when I joined the [name] choir at the beginning of 2022. And it rekindled my love of singing, because I always loved singing, even when I was playing guitar. I would never just play the guitar without singing.

The singing and the guitar playing always went together for me. Joining this choir, felt like I picked up where I'd left off when I was 11 years old, albeit almost 40 years down the line. Joining a choir has made a big impact on my musical world in more recent times. It's felt really good to be part of a group of people that sing. It feels like a... I don't know if it sounds a bit grand to say a greater purpose. It's not just about me. It's a group of people doing something collectively for the good of themselves, but also the people who come and listen to us perform. That's really where I felt like my music has gone off in a bit of a different direction. But I'm quite passionate about the choir singing. And then, of course, even more recently off the back of that, I've also started to have singing lessons. So that's probably a bit of a convoluted way of saying where I am at this point in time.

00:09:33.980 --> 00:09:44.150

Researcher: It's not convoluted. I think everybody's journey's different. So that's really helpful to have the background. Can you tell me a bit more about your performing?

00:09:47.440 --> 00:09:51.240

Singer 1: In the sense of what it feels like, or just what I do or...?

00:09:51.470 --> 00:09:52.830

Researcher: What you do!

00:09:53.420 --> 00:10:51.200

Singer 1: Okay, so the choir... It varies from year to year, because sometimes we get invited to sing at certain events that might be a one-off, but we tend to have a season where we have regular events that we do every year. So we have a big event every May at [venue name] and we also have a St. George's Day concert that we sing at a church in [town]. There's a couple of other annual events in October/ November. We also sing at the Remembrance Day service at the War Memorial. We sing a couple of songs with that. We tend to sing mostly in churches, the occasional theatre performance. Depending on numbers. There's somewhere between 30 and 40 of us in the choir. So it's quite a big group of people singing together and...

00:10:52.690 --> 00:10:53.679

Researcher: That's great!

00:10:53.880 --> 00:11:01.729

Singer 1: Yeah? I could go into a lot more detail. I don't know if you need to know more about what it actually is like to sing or...?

00:11:03.190 --> 00:11:25.960

Researcher: No, that's great. Those questions are to provide a bit of context and hopefully, easier ones to [provide] familiar territory for you. Moving on to the practice diary task. How did you find the process of doing that? Did you discover anything about your practice in the process?

00:11:28.040 --> 00:12:02.479

Singer 1: Well, I think it was useful, probably to get it down on paper, so to speak, just because I do have a practice routine, but I hadn't really thought all that much about what the routine was. It was just kind of happening more out of habit and just how I developed it. So it was getting it down in on paper means I can take a step back and look at it and think, "Okay, this is how I approach it". So it was quite interesting from that point of view. So yeah, I enjoyed doing it, I think. [laughs]

00:12:03.642 --> 00:12:06.657

Researcher: [laughs] You didn't have to enjoy it.

00:12:07.460 --> 00:12:16.855

Singer 1: Yeah, it was fine. I'm an accountant, so doing things in an orderly fashion it's a good thing for us. [laughs]

00:12:17.170 --> 00:12:30.669

Researcher: Yeah! So, can you describe a practice session from last week? You can use the template and that you filled in, if you want to, as an aid, or you can just describe one for me.

00:12:30.670 --> 00:13:23.439

Singer 1: Yeah. So I think what I realised when I'd written it down is, I actually do have quite a quite a set approach to practising singing. I always start off with some warm ups. I mean, this has evolved since I've started. I would say the practice routine has become more entrenched since I've been having singing lessons. I think, when I joined the choir, my practice would just involve learning the songs and trying to learn the notes and that kind of thing. With our choir we are given Midi files, so we have guided recordings of Midi files of the pieces, so we can get an idea of the notes for our section. But since I've had singing lessons, I actually have a far more formal approach to how I work at things. So I have a general warm up. Do you need a lot of specifics of what my warm up is, or...?

00:13:24.066 --> 00:13:28.359

Researcher: Just go into as much as detail as you like. It's helpful.

00:13:28.360 --> 00:13:33.674

Singer 1: Okay. So my warm up is generally something that actually I just got off the internet. [laughs]

00:13:33.970 --> 00:13:34.300

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:13:34.300 --> 00:14:22.519

Singer 1: So in addition to having singing lessons, I do follow a couple of voice coaches or singing teachers on YouTube. Just a couple of people I quite enjoy [watching] some of the things. And this one person just set out a very basic warm up routine before you get into any *actual* vocal exercises. It's your standard thing about focussing on the breathing, making sure that you're engaging your core in terms of breathing. This person gave the visual representation of a balloon being inflated and deflated, so that your diaphragm and your stomach is expanding, and you're not using your shoulders to go up and down. So I started off...

00:14:22.520 --> 00:14:22.970

Researcher: Hmm.

00:14:22.970 --> 00:15:15.370

Singer 1: ...trying to focus on that, and then I do some what I call "bumblebees". You do an octave, but you go up and down on a zzz sound, to start off. I do it over effectively a couple of octaves, and then I do a 5-note scale using *Ah-May-Ee* sounds. Sort of vowel sounds, I guess. And then I sing a phrase as well. I'll move from the vowels into just a phrase. The one that I use is "Mummy made me..." I can't remember it now [laughs] off the top of my head. Something about "Mummy made me eat my M&Ms."

00:15:15.370 --> 00:15:16.090

Researcher: "Munch."

00:15:16.090 --> 00:15:17.899

Singer 1: Munch! Something like that.

00:15:18.325 --> 00:15:18.750

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:15:19.370 --> 00:20:18.600

Singer 1: I guess it's getting your lips and your whole mouth engaged with the singing process. That's done over an octave or two, just as a very sort of easy warm up. And then I move on to the vocal exercises that you and I have developed or you've brought into my lessons. I've got them all written down on a piece of paper, otherwise I'll forget them. Depending on how much time I've got in any particular day, sometimes I'll go through all of them. Sometimes I'll just do a selection depending on how I'm feeling, or how much time I've got available between other things. All those sort of standard ones that we do, including producing all the vowel sounds. I think what I'm trying to do as well is increase the top of my range a bit. Over the course of quite a few months I go up to about the A above middle C. I've been trying to build it up so I can get up to maybe a B, and eventually a C. Depending on any given day, and what sort of state my voice is [in], I don't always get there. But I always try to improve just a little bit every time to see if I can just push it a *little* bit more. So that's the vocal warm ups that I've been doing. Then I move onto that Vaccai exercise. I've got about three or four of those Vaccai exercises. In the last week, when I've been doing work at home, I've been working on that one with the turns. But looking back over the last couple of years, I sometimes go through the other ones, depending on how I'm feeling. I tend to try and do at least one of those. Once that's done, I tend to go through whatever piece I'm working on. Obviously [in] the last week or so I've been working on the Handel song "Lascia ch'io pianga". Over the last ten days, I've still been learning the second part of it, and then there's that second ornamentation that I've got that, I've been trying to work through. The focus has primarily been on trying to play that out on the piano, picking the notes out and just trying to familiarise myself with the actual turns and what the notes are. I would probably just sing through that quite slowly, picking it out on the piano and then, as I got more familiar with it, I'd try and make it a bit more musical, first of all slowing it down a bit. Once I'd done that, I would then sing through the whole song. Then, maybe second or third time around, I would just sing through the second half two or three times, rather than just focussing on the start of the piece. I think that's something that I've learned from my piano practising in the past. Because, with pieces, very often you learn the first eight bars quite well and then, when you practise, you just go back and keep on repeating the easy start. When you hit a difficult section, that's always where you stumble. What I used to do is I'd always go back to the start of a piece, but then you never get to the part that really needs working on. So it takes a bit of discipline, but I try and ensure that I spend a bit of time working specifically on the area that's the trickiest part of the piece or needs a bit more work. That's essentially what I've been doing most days for the last ten days. The other thing as well is, because I was working towards this performance with the [name] choir, which happened this last Saturday, I had to also spend a bit of time trying to work through some of those pieces. We have rehearsals, obviously, with the whole choir, but from a sectional point of view I just wanted to make sure that I was comfortable with my second tenor part on two or three of the songs that we were singing that were a little bit more difficult, or had difficult vocal lines for us. So what I did, is I left that to the end of the practice session. Then I would just sing through maybe three or four of the pieces that we were going to perform this last Saturday. I did that pretty much most days. I don't practise every single day necessarily. Because I had quite a busy singing week last week, I've rested my voice over the last two or three days, so I haven't really been doing a lot of practice *this* week. But in the week prior to that I was doing it most days, just to gear up for the performance.

00:20:19.880 --> 00:20:26.379

Researcher: Great! You explained a lot of how you structure individual practice.

00:20:26.380 --> 00:20:26.700

Singer 1: Hmm.

00:20:26.700 --> 00:20:52.140

Researcher: And you sound like you set yourself goals within a practice. Actually, you also mentioned long-term goals earlier on, and I just wondered whether you consciously plan and structure your practice short-term and long-term, or whether it's something that happens as you [go] along?

00:20:54.360 --> 00:23:05.970

Singer 1: I'd say I've developed it over the last two years, since I started having singing lessons. A lot of the techniques and exercises that I've taken from that, I'm building that into any practice that I do. And I guess longer term, I *do* see that as a step-by-step process of helping my voice become better. I think when I first came to you, one of the things I really wanted to do was try and increase my vocal strength and projection. I think that was one of the things. Because when I sing in the choir, very often, I'm not... When you're in a choir, you're not really meant to be heard, unless you're doing a solo, but I still felt that I could be quite subdued, and not necessarily project very much. So, that was the initial impetus of trying to have singing lessons, and I view all the vocal exercises and I see the songs as a progression as well, in the sense that I feel that the songs will get a bit more challenging and a bit more complicated as time goes by. [They're] all those building blocks [to] becoming a better singer, a more powerful singer and, hopefully, a more nuanced singer as well, by having the different styles that we cover. I'm losing my thread now! I do see all of those step-by-step towards becoming an overall better singer, but I haven't sat down and documented a long-term plan for where I want to be as a singer necessarily. I think I had that overarching theme of wanting to be a more projected, powerful singer. Not powerful just for the sake of being loud, but confident. I guess confidence is the other thing. Being a confident singer. I think by trying to improve my voice and ironing out the flaws and the ...what's the word to use? ...the inconsistencies in my voice. I think that's all part of working towards that longer-term goal of being a better singer, a more powerful singer, and a more nuanced, smooth and nice sounding singer, if that makes sense.

00:23:06.420 --> 00:23:25.180

Researcher: Yeah! Yeah, it really does. What are your favourite or most commonly used practice methods? By method, I would define it as how you work on a particular thing within a song.

00:23:31.150 --> 00:25:11.900

Singer 1: Oh... [thinks] I guess it's always stages with a song. The first time you hear it... It might be a song that's very familiar, or it could be something I've never heard before. So the first stage is always about trying to get a feel for the overall structure of the song and what it sounds like and what it's trying to come across as. It's always [a] very broad brush outline to start with. I guess what I enjoy with anything, and it's not just singing, it's also even learning to play a song on a guitar or piano, is I like the process of starting from knowing nothing about it, to building it up to the point where it can be performed or sung with a degree of confidence and enjoyment. It's almost like the whole process itself is as enjoyable as the end goal, if that makes sense. I like the feeling, even with the choir, you start learning a piece, and you're all over the place, and nothing really makes sense. It feels disjointed. Then there's that lovely moment where it all clicks. You feel all the harmonies coming together for the first time or, if you're singing on your own, you just get a feel for the run and the way the song progresses, just mastering it. Well, I never master it 100%, but you know that feeling of getting to a point where you can sing it fairly well. For me the process is probably more enjoyable than just getting to the end. I like the journey. That probably sounds a bit cheesy, but that's what I enjoy probably most about it.

00:25:12.890 --> 00:25:24.960

Researcher: I think that's quite a healthy way round to look at it, really. [laughs] And what's your attitude to mistakes in your practice and error correction?

00:25:27.820 --> 00:26:59.249

Singer 1: I think I have a pretty open mind when it comes to mistakes. I see it as part of the process. You gotta be able to make the mistakes and then learn from it. I think the important thing is that when you make a mistake that you, and I don't always do this consistently, but if you make a mistake, making a conscious effort to correct it, or to understand maybe *why* it happened. Because I'm having lessons now as well, I think my discipline is better in that respect. Because if I'm singing with my singing teacher and they point out a mistake, it's bit more obvious. It's more obvious as to *why* it is, whereas if I was just on my own trying to sing something, I wouldn't necessarily know. Well, A) I might not know that I've made a mistake, or B) I don't know, if something's not quite right, I don't always have the skills or experience to be able to fix it. But when I'm practising at home, I am trying to get better. If I do make a mistake, I don't just gloss over it and say, "Oh, well, I'll try it again tomorrow, and hopefully it'll be fine". I do try and fix it or try and make a conscious effort to try and understand it, and then think, "Okay, well, how do I get better?" And if I can't fix it, I always then come back to you in the singing lesson, if it's something that's we're working through together. If it's with the choir, it tends to get fixed or sorted out as part of the rehearsals, for the most part. If that makes sense.

00:26:59.660 --> 00:27:02.959

Researcher: Yeah! Yes, that's really helpful.

00:27:04.060 --> 00:27:04.400

Singer 1: But I don't...

00:27:04.400 --> 00:27:04.940

Researcher: Do you...

00:27:04.940 --> 00:28:23.639

Singer 1: But I don't get angry. I don't get angry with mistakes. It's actually weird, because when I'm playing piano, I get more frustrated with errors. Maybe because with piano playing there's a lot of motor skills, isn't there? Your fingers have to be coordinated and have the strength, and all sorts of things. Sometimes I would play a piece that, in truth with hindsight, is probably a little bit too difficult for me. You get to the point where I just cannot quite master it or [due to] a performance pressure, it falls apart, and you make a mistake that you never made in practice. That could be very frustrating for me, particularly on the piano. I find that with voice and voice practice that doesn't seem to happen quite as much. I don't know if that's because maybe with voice, I'm singing to the correct level that I'm at this point in time and, with piano, maybe I was sometimes a little bit overambitious in terms of wanting to run before I could walk. I'm speculating slightly while I'm talking here, but I don't get very frustrated when I do make the odd mistake with the singing. I'm kind of more relaxed about it and I don't exactly know why that is.

00:28:24.620 --> 00:29:03.709

Researcher: Again, that sounds nice and healthy, so great! Do you incorporate any of the following into your practice? I'm going to give you four things, which is probably too many to retain, but I'll give them to you anyway: recording yourself, listening to music, visualisation or silent practice (which could be any of visualisation, listening to music, practising in your head - anything else where you're *not* vocalising).

00:29:04.620 --> 00:30:12.179

Singer 1: Yeah, I think I do all of those except the visualisation. I don't visualise very much, but I very much listen to recordings of other people singing things that *I'm* learning. The same applies with everything actually, with guitar - piano. I've always been someone who loves listening to the stuff that I'm wanting to sing or play. I *have* had people tell me sometimes, actually that is a bad thing, because you're meant to create your own - not just interpretation of the music - but if you listen too much to how, say a Beethoven sonata is played, you're not

working it out for yourself in terms of really understanding the structure of piece. If you just listen to Barenboim playing it, you're gonna try and copy him and that's not always necessarily the best thing. But for me, personally, I like understanding what the music actually sounds like at a high level, at a professional level, or an artistic level. I find that helpful, actually. And I do that with all the music, even my choir music. I like to listen to what it is that we're singing. Hearing it actually being sung in a proper performance.

00:30:12.640 --> 00:30:13.040

Researcher: Mmhm.

00:30:13.340 --> 00:30:16.339

Singer 1: Sorry. Can you just remind me of the other ones?

00:30:16.340 --> 00:30:19.569

Researcher: Yeah. Silent practice and recording.

00:30:19.570 --> 00:31:42.400

Singer 1: Recording. Yeah, and I *have* actually recorded myself singing [laughs], which is then quite awkward listening to myself, because then I realise, "I can't believe I quite sound like that". When you don't record yourself, you don't always know exactly how you're sounding. But when you hear it in black and white, so to speak, it can be quite startling, I find. For example, when we were working through those two Schubert Winterreise pieces, I recorded myself singing those quite a few times as I was working through them. Also there was another one, "An Sylvia", I think it was called, where there was a backing track that I had off YouTube. It was quite nice to record myself with the backing track and sing over it. I find if you're singing a piece that should have music accompaniment, but you're just hearing your voice without any background music, it sounds very different. Whereas having the backing track was quite useful, helping me with the rhythmic momentum of the piece. But yeah, I do record myself. And then I run away, crying [laughs] after hearing it. No, not quite, but yeah!

00:31:43.480 --> 00:31:44.090

Researcher: [laughs]

00:31:44.360 --> 00:32:21.679

Singer 1: It is quite revealing, though. What I've picked up the most with recording myself, is hearing how un- or non-legato I sometimes sing. When you sing very vertically sometimes, a recording picks it up, particularly when it sounds very choppy. And I thought to myself, "I didn't think I sounded so much like that". It's almost disappointing in a way when I think, Oh, geez! I didn't realise I sounded so abrupt. I thought it was a nice flowing line". And but anyway, I *do* do that.

00:32:22.460 --> 00:32:22.930

Researcher: Yeah.

00:32:23.400 --> 00:32:55.149

Singer 1: And then I do, when you say listening in your head, I do sort of sing in my head without it actually coming out. But it's a little bit disturbing to be honest, because it becomes like a brainworm! And then I can't seem to stop singing it in my head, which actually starts to become a bit annoying after a while. I don't know whether it's embedding the song in my head by having it in my head, and actually [if] it is helping or not. I don't do it on purpose.

00:32:55.150 --> 00:32:55.490

Researcher: Yeah.

00:32:55.490 --> 00:33:02.949

Singer 1: [that particular] element. It just seems to happen almost like a brainworm of a piece that I'm having to learn. It always seems to pop into my head, all the time.

00:33:05.310 --> 00:33:06.325

Researcher: Uhuh, yeah

00:33:06.580 --> 00:33:17.620

Singer 1: But the visualisation I don't think I really do. Do you mean visualising actually performing the piece in a concert setting or something, or...?

00:33:18.080 --> 00:33:52.809

Researcher: I suppose I would. I think people have different ideas of what it is. I think some people might use it for that purpose. They might visualise or - what's the aural equivalent – audiate, imagine what they want it to sound like, thinking through the piece with the ideal sound or feeling. It's not necessarily just geared towards the performance, but an ideal sound as well.

00:33:54.230 --> 00:34:14.650

Singer 1: Yeah, I think, probably in a sort of a more subconscious way, I *do* do that. But it's not a conscious decision with both singing it internally and kind of visualising. I think those just happen during the course of my day when I'm doing things.

00:34:15.139 --> 00:34:15.519

Researcher: Yeah.

00:34:16.175 --> 00:34:23.110

Singer 1: Whereas the other two, the actual recording it and - I've already forgotten what the fourth one was - but the other one...

00:34:23.110 --> 00:34:25.849

Researcher: I think you've covered it! Listening to music.

00:34:25.850 --> 00:34:34.260

Singer 1: Those two are very conscious decisions whereas the others just happen on a far more random basis.

00:34:36.820 --> 00:34:37.560

Researcher: Great.

00:34:37.854 --> 00:34:48.120

Singer 1: Put it this way. I haven't built them into any of my practice or into my routines as a specific tool to achieve something. It happens more naturally, I think.

00:34:48.120 --> 00:34:50.379

Researcher: The silent practice and the visualisation.

00:34:50.380 --> 00:34:51.005

Singer 1: Yes.

00:34:52.760 --> 00:35:16.000

Researcher: Moving on to monitoring progress. You've mentioned this a little bit already in terms of seeing progression in the difficulty of your pieces and measuring it in the breadth of your vocal range. Is there any other way you monitor your progress? And if so, how.

00:35:19.590 --> 00:36:34.759

Singer 1: The way I might have been doing it is I benchmark myself a little bit against the others in the choir. When I joined the choir I was very inexperienced from a singing [and] male voice choir scenario. I was one of the brand new second tenors. I didn't know how good or bad I was compared to anyone else. Not that I'm trying to judge myself or anyone else necessarily in a black and white, good and bad [way]. I was kind of trying to get benchmark as to, "Where do I fit on how everyone else sounds". So, I guess when we have rehearsals and sometimes we break down into smaller sections where you can hear the others around you a bit more. It's probably again more instinctive than an actual thing, but I do gauge how I sound now relative to them, but also how I thought I sounded maybe two years ago. It's not like an exact science thing. It's probably a bit subjective to a degree, but I am monitoring myself in that sense, in terms of the progress that I've maybe made in the last couple of years. But it's not a specific benchmark or a specific way of gauging or judging it. I don't know if that makes sense.

00:36:34.760 --> 00:36:36.089

Researcher: It does. Yeah.

00:36:38.060 --> 00:37:04.440

Singer 1: I suppose, in another way, I've managed to pick up how quick I pick up a piece or not, as maybe compared to how I would have done so two years ago. There's certain pieces, particularly with the choir again. Because I'm more experienced now, when we're given new repertoire, I think I'll learn it probably far faster than I did two years previously.

00:37:04.920 --> 00:37:05.350

Researcher: Mmm.

00:37:05.820 --> 00:37:21.679

Singer 1: And it comes down to experience. Hopefully I am a slightly better singer than I was two years ago as well. But I don't have any other real method or way of gauging that I don't think.

00:37:23.520 --> 00:37:24.110

Researcher: Uhuh. And.

00:37:24.110 --> 00:37:25.970

Singer 1: I suppose the other thing. Sorry to.

00:37:25.970 --> 00:37:26.390

Researcher: Yep?

00:37:26.390 --> 00:38:16.319

Singer 1: I think, with piano, I was always very conscious of what grade level I was playing, because, [learning] piano is a bit like that. You know that if you're playing a Mozart sonata movement, you know that it's like grade 6 or 7 or 8, whatever it might be. When you give me those songs to sing, I don't really know what level they are. I have absolutely no idea. I'm trying not to think in terms of, "Ooh, I'm singing a grade 8 piece. Wow!" or "This is grade 1". I don't really care. I'm just wanting to sing songs that I like. And obviously I want to be challenged and learn new techniques and increase my repertoire. But I'm not thinking of it in terms of, "This is difficult", or "This is easy" in such black and white terms.

00:38:18.900 --> 00:38:36.690

Researcher: Uhuh. And you mentioned earlier practising depending on how you're feeling. I don't know if that was emotionally, physically or what, but what motivates you to practise, and what happens when you don't feel motivated?

00:38:38.500 --> 00:40:40.430

Singer 1: Well, the motivation is partly I *do* genuinely enjoy it. I actually enjoy practising singing. It's sort of a break in my day. It helps to de-stress. It's fun! I think that's the important thing. At the moment, it's fun and it's not, generally speaking, a chore. I don't feel like, "Oh, God, I've got to now spend half an hour singing". It's actually something I want to do, because I'm doing it for myself. It's not like a kid who's been asked by their parent to go and do singing. It's something that I've chosen to do as a middle-aged adult and therefore, because it's fun and it's for myself, I don't see it as an obstacle or a chore, or anything like that. Having said that when I do miss a practice... (Sorry, there's a couple of people swearing at each other outside here. They almost had an accident. [laughs]) When I do miss a practice, I do feel a little bit guilty, or I think to myself, "Damn! I wish I'd actually found half an hour today to sing". Right now is a good example, because I've only practised once this week, because after my concert on Saturday I wanted to give myself a couple of days break, but then I also had quite a lot of work, so I didn't really practise on the Monday or the Tuesday. Then I do start to feel a little bit guilty and a little bit frustrated, because then I think, "Ah! I don't want to miss too many days. I want to be consistent". Probably a lot of people are like this, but when you get into the swing of things and a routine, it just gets easier and easier, whereas if you break from it, it's sometimes harder to get back into things. So I like to get that momentum going, of doing it most days. But I don't like to practise seven days a week. I feel that having a little bit of a break now and again, is a good thing. But I do feel that slight sort of twinge of it's not a full-on guilt, but I do feel slightly guilty when I when I do miss the day or two.

00:40:43.450 --> 00:40:48.129

Researcher: Uhuh! And is there anything you wish you could change in your practice?

00:40:53.650 --> 00:41:15.480

Singer 1: Well, when I practise at home and everyone else is at home, (my wife and my kids,) I feel self-conscious. So I always feel like I practise better when I'm alone in the house. Whereas when I know that people [are] next door, sometimes even with neighbours, if it's summer and all the windows are open, I think, "What if someone can hear me singing from next door? What are they going to think?".

00:41:16.010 --> 00:41:16.390

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:41:16.390 --> 00:41:44.380

Singer 1: Then I feel a bit uncomfortable and then I don't sing with as much conviction, because I'm toning it down a bit. I think that means that I don't put as much into the practice. The same thing applies, maybe to a lesser extent, when everyone else is at home. I prefer to be on my own and then I feel like I practise better. Probably what I'm trying to say is, I wish I had less concern about what others might think about my practising or about my voice, and then I can just say...

00:41:44.380 --> 00:41:44.720

Researcher: Hmm.

00:41:44.720 --> 00:41:49.810

Singer 1: "To hell with that. I'm going to do it anyway and enjoy it!". Maybe that's what I would change.

00:41:50.810 --> 00:42:01.449

Researcher: Would you say you have the same inhibitions for when you're playing the piano and guitar as when you're singing? If people are around.

00:42:02.700 --> 00:42:49.969

Singer 1: No. I think because I find my voice very personal. You know it's the sound of *me*, whereas the piano - yes, I'm playing it - but it's just a percussion instrument that's just making a noise, and I'm just the one who's pushing a lever that makes the noise. Although, having said that, internally I can play the piano [and] play guitar quite easily with everyone else in the house. I would still be a bit more self-conscious about people walking past who can hear from outside. Maybe. But I'd say definitely, with singing, it's the most *personal*. It feels like the most personal thing, cause it's my actual voice. It's part of me and I'm probably more self-conscious about that.

00:42:50.610 --> 00:43:07.810

Researcher: Hmm! And do you consider singers and instrumentalists to approach practice in the same way? You've mentioned guitar and piano practice yourself. Do you personally take a similar or different approach?

00:43:09.270 --> 00:43:10.499

Singer 1: With the other instruments?

00:43:10.890 --> 00:43:11.850

Researcher: Yes!

00:43:11.850 --> 00:44:45.660

Singer 1: I think with piano I do, because with piano I'd always make sure I do some technical practice. So I would practise some scales, arpeggios. Sometimes I would even do things like Hannon exercises, or things like that. And I would try and do focussed practice on the piece that I was doing. I'd break it down. I wouldn't always play the whole piece. I'd focus on a tricky section, or I'd try to if my discipline [inaudible]. So I think, with piano. That's partly because I did have some piano lessons for a while, and even my wife [name], although she's never really taught me, in the early days she did help me learn the fundamentals of piano, so she drilled into me to have a more of a focussed approach. But with guitar I never had formal lessons, so guitar was always something far more casual. I would just pick up a guitar. And because it's the kind of instrument you only need, (it's a bit of a cliché), but you only need to know three or four chords and you can play a lot of different things. Guitar was more a way of accompanying my singing where I just wanted to sing and have a guitar to strum with. It was just a bit more of that kind of vibe, sort of a campfire vibe, more relaxed. So with guitar, I've never been disciplined. In fact, I'm very ill-disciplined with guitar. I just pick it up to pass five or ten minutes when I feel like just singing something. So I've definitely never employed a proper practice approach to playing the guitar. That one differs a lot from the others.

00:44:46.160 --> 00:45:02.489

Researcher: Yeah. Just a couple more questions. These are a little more abstract. What are your thoughts on innate talent and practice or skill?

00:45:04.760 --> 00:45:08.749

Singer 1: In terms of how much natural talent influences, how you...?

00:45:09.320 --> 00:45:15.229

Researcher: Yeah! It could be that. I don't want to lead you too much! [laughs]

00:45:15.230 --> 00:45:15.610

Singer 1: Right.

00:45:15.610 --> 00:45:34.779

Researcher: I suppose innate talent in singers, perhaps, versus innate talent in instrumentalists. That could be one approach to the question, or innate talent versus developing skill through practice.

00:45:34.780 --> 00:47:59.659

Singer 1: Hmm! I think they go together. There's no doubt that some natural talent goes a long way to how good you can ultimately get. What I'm trying to say is, you can be as hardworking and disciplined as you like, but if you don't have some degree of natural talent, you're only ever going to progress to... you're going to hit a ceiling. Whereas people who've got a lot of natural talent, their *potential* is much greater. But then, on the other side of the coin, you get lots of naturally talented people, in all sorts of walks of life (not just music), and if they don't put in the hard graft and have the discipline and the enthusiasm and the perseverance and everything else that goes with it, they're also going to hit a ceiling because they're just eventually going to get frustrated, or they're just going to waste their talents. So my view is that it's great if you can have a bit of both. As an amateur, someone who's not a professional or aspiring professional musician, it's really difficult to gauge it, but I think hard work and perseverance will take me quite a long way. I like to think I've got some natural talent [laughs] Particularly with the voice, because there are so many things internal[ly], that influence what your voice is. As you age, I guess your voice can deteriorate if you don't look after it, and undertake exercises to improve it and your breathing... It's something I've learned far more recently. When I was younger I had no idea how all the things like breathing and breath support [work]. Ironing out those little things in your voice, from trying to sing smoother and doing vocal exercises that help to do that and strengthen things. There's so much that goes into creating a consistently good voice, particularly with singing. I'm more convinced now that, particularly at my age, it's not just the talent. It's the work. But I think ultimately the two *have* to go together. I don't think you can have one without the other. I think there has to be *some* degree of it. If I'm being honest. I don't if that makes sense, but that's my...

00:47:59.660 --> 00:48:08.169

Researcher: It does! It's a really interesting insight. I like the idea of a ceiling with either one because...

00:48:09.860 --> 00:48:18.860

Singer 1: I think the other thing, sorry to interrupt. But the other thing that I find makes a huge impact is confidence, or the lack thereof.

00:48:19.460 --> 00:48:20.160

Researcher: Mmm.

00:48:21.050 --> 00:49:15.489

Singer 1: Because again, no matter how hard you practise or no matter how naturally talented you are, if you're in a situation (and I can speak from personal experience) where, if you're stressed out or you lack a bit of confidence in your singing voice or your playing, that can still mess up your performance regardless of how hard you've worked or how much talent you may or may not have. That can be quite frustrating. For example, with piano, I can remember learning pieces really well, and then performing them just in front of two or three people who hadn't heard you play. Then you stumble and the piece falls apart. For me there's no worse feeling than thinking, "I can play that. I know I can". But under a bit of stress, it just doesn't... you never quite achieve what you thought you could. And that's a very frustrating thing. That becomes far more of a mental thing, which is very difficult to sometimes overcome or control.

00:49:16.680 --> 00:49:32.370

Researcher: Hmm. Last couple of questions. What makes singing practice unique?

00:49:33.500 --> 00:51:07.649

Singer 1: [pause] I don't know. That's a tough one, actually! I don't know if this is really about the actual *practice* so much. But the voice comes from within you. It's produced by you and you only, whereas everything else, all other instruments - yes it's your body making movements that create it - but it's all external. The voice comes from within. I find that it's a very personal thing. But I guess that sort of informs or influences how I practise. I struggle to really put it into words. But practising as a singer just feels very different to practising a musical instrument, because it's so personal. You're producing that sound and it's unique to you, your voice. There's no other person in the world that has a voice that sounds exactly like you. Whereas okay, I know that Instrumentalist 2s will play pianos very differently, and I know different instruments, different pianos will have different timbres and different actions and all sorts, but it's still an external machine that's just wood and metal and wire. Your voice is an organic, living thing really. I know it's ultimately just a sound wave, but it is produced from organic things, if that makes sense? It always feels very personal. I can't really express it much more than using that word for me, "personal".

00:51:07.650 --> 00:51:18.030

Researcher: You've expressed it beautifully. Do you think, therefore, there are benefits and limitations to practising singing?

00:51:22.670 --> 00:51:38.301

Singer 1: Well, I mean, there are definitely benefits. Are we talking about benefits in terms of improving the voice or just benefits to life? I know you probably don't want to lead me down a route, but... [laughs]

00:51:38.580 --> 00:51:48.530

Researcher: I think any benefits that you can name are benefits. So whatever pops into your head!

00:51:49.800 --> 00:52:55.079

Singer 1: Yeah. Well, with singing, the thing that I find frustrating is that on any given day your voice can be so different. If you're dehydrated, the way that you sing and practise can be very different to another day. Or if you've eaten something spicy and you've got a tickle in your throat, or if you've got hay fever or a cold coming on, or if you're tired, or I find that if I sing at night, my voice is very different to how it is if I practise or sing in the morning. There's so many variations with the voice and singing that I don't find with anything else I do. And your mood, if you're feeling a little bit down or up, that can also influence significantly how I practise or how it *feels* when I'm singing, which comes back to "personal" things. What am I trying to say? I've probably gone off topic here.

00:52:44.850 --> 00:52:55.079

Researcher: No, you haven't. That's really helpful! Are you comfortable expanding on how mood affects practice? Or would you prefer not to?

00:52:56.670 --> 00:53:16.250

Singer 1: Personally, I find that singing improves my mood. I definitely feel better after I sing. In fact, I'd say it rarely is the opposite. I don't find that singing puts me into a bad mood or makes me feel bad. It always improves my mood and I feel more energised after I've sung, without a doubt.

00:53:16.830 --> 00:53:17.810

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:53:20.880 --> 00:54:46.019

Singer 1: I don't think I ever feel like I'm too tired or too demotivated to sing. I think the only obstacle to me is usually time constraints. It's very rare that I'm feeling so depressed or I'm so focussed on something else that I really don't want to [or] I don't feel like I can sing, because my moods not in the right place. Whereas, as a contrast, sometimes with piano, I found that that was very much the case. And I don't quite know why. To give you an example, when Covid first came along, I found that for a few months I really struggled to actually go and practise the piano. I found it was a very stressful time for everyone, but I just felt like I didn't have the energy to go and practise. It just didn't feel like it was possible for a while. But with singing, I never really feel like that is ever an obstacle at this point. I mean, that might change. Who knows? But certainly where I am at this point in time I always feel that singing is a positive thing and it energises me. Even if I don't necessarily sing all that well on a particular given day, or my voice is a bit weird or croaky or something, I still feel, on balance, better after having done *some* singing. So it's definitely for me a mood enhancer.

00:54:46.560 --> 00:55:06.560

Researcher: Hmm. Great! I just wanted to quickly go back to how being part of the choir impacts your practice. Because you've mentioned a couple of useful things, and I didn't know if there was anything that you could expand on that in any way?

00:55:08.320 --> 00:55:41.717

Singer 1: Does it impact my practice? [pause] I do practise some of the choir stuff when I'm doing my normal singing practice but because I have a rehearsal every week where we do quite intense practices, I use it just to reinforce certain things or to work on one or two specific things. I don't know. I'm actually struggling to answer this one. Does it actually influence how I practise?

00:55:43.610 --> 00:55:52.819

Researcher: I think you've almost answered it, in a way, by saying that the choir rehearsal itself is a practice.

00:55:52.820 --> 00:55:53.330

Singer 1: Yeah.

00:55:53.330 --> 00:55:58.060

Researcher: Some people will see it as that, some people might see it something else. So that is a practice...

00:55:58.060 --> 00:56:50.870

Singer 1: Yeah. With the choir, we don't do a lot of technical stuff. Obviously for a lot of the guys, the technical part is just learning the piece and obviously the music director gives us a lot of direction on *how* to improve the vocal lines or to improve how we sound, making sure we sing the words clearly and how we introduce dynamics into the piece. We do cover all those sorts of things. So I think at some level, some of that is probably subconsciously filtering through to how I approach things. But then again, what I'm learning in my individual lessons: The repertoire is very, very different and the style and the whole setup is very different to what I'm doing as a collective in a choir. There's far more technical stuff coming out of my individual singing lessons than the choir stuff.

00:56:51.420 --> 00:56:51.960

Researcher: Hmm.

00:56:52.698 --> 00:57:13.339

Singer 1: Therefore my practices do tend to draw on that more intensively than from the choir side of things. But they both form objectives in terms of what I'm trying to achieve as part of my singing journey, for want of a better phrase.

00:57:14.460 --> 00:57:30.850

Researcher: Hmm! You've given me so much really useful material. My page is covered with little notes of really useful insights. So thank you so much. Have you got any questions yourself?

00:57:31.060 --> 00:57:37.890

Singer 1: Any questions... No, I not specifically. No, no!

Interview 5 Singer 2

00:07:41.050 --> 00:27:46.320 Technical issues and interview preamble

00:27:46.940 --> 00:27:49.730

Researcher: Can you tell me about *your* music journey?

00:27:49.900 --> **00:27:50.630**

Singer 2: Yeah. I come from a family of singers. But I come from a family of, on my dad's side, classical singers but that's never been the music that speaks to my soul. I've dabbled in it. In the early part of my life, the *only* singing training I was exposed to was classical, which didn't actually help me at *all* in terms of the genres of music that I wanted to do. I constantly spent my time *fighting* a battle between the training that I was giving myself by singing along to contemporary - CCM - artists and the notion that this is what I "should" be doing, because I should be doing the classical thing. And "that's what trained singers do". That only really changed at all, and it didn't really change much, (but it changed a *little* bit), after the summer of 1992. Now, at this point I was at drama school. I was training to be an actress, because I didn't think I was [a] good enough singer to be a singer. So I was training to be an actress. And the singing teacher there was a one [singing teacher 1]. Are you familiar with [singing teacher 1]? Have you met [singing teacher 1]? [singing teacher 1] is fabulous! In those days he had lots of very blonde curly hair and he was really rather pretty. Obviously he's subsequently gone on to become an Estill vanguard teacher and to use it primarily in the classical world. But I knew him that summer when he came back to our school so fired up by a workshop he'd just done, which I *now* know was the first ever workshop that Jo Estill taught in the UK.

00:30:15.810 --> 00:30:16.620

Researcher: [laughs]

00:30:17.780 --> 00:33:25.190

Singer 2: Which was in the summer of 1992. That's when [singing teacher 2], my own singing teacher and mentor now, that's when they met. And that's when they met Jo. And that's when that whole journey started and the whole process of it coming over to the UK started. At that point, I'd say, he came back very enthused. But of course you do one course, and there's so much to learn about Estill, that he still had so much to learn. And so basically, he gave us the siren and he gave us the "miren". And then some stuff happened that was to do with the year below me that caused him massive problems and he left the school. There was an element in that year that treated him so badly that he chose to leave the school. And so for the next 15 years the only bit of Estill that I had, (and I didn't even know it was called that), was the siren and the "miren". But I used the siren extensively and that was the thing that actually allowed me to, for the first time, connect my "chest voice" to "head voice" that I'd never been able to connect before *at* all. I still had this issue where I would try and push, what I now know as

being, an overly heavy “speech quality” up and then having this massive break, and then going over. But I found a way that I could do a lighter vocal and could get over that transition. I couldn't do it *consistently*, but I could do it. And then 15 years later I was reading an advert advertising for a singing teacher. (I was already doing quite a lot of singing teaching at the time.) It asked specifically for someone who was familiar with the Estill model. I thought, “Ooh, what's that?” By this time Google existed or something. It might have been “Ask Jeeves”, or something at the time that I was using! So I Googled it, and [singing teacher 1]'s name came up and I made the connection immediately. *This* is what he came back enthused about and I've not had access to it for the last 15 years. But this is it! And I went and did a one day workshop and every vocal issue I had *ever* experienced was explained to me that day.

00:33:25.740 --> 00:33:26.420

Researcher: Wow!

00:33:26.420 --> 00:34:05.839

Singer 2: I'm still working on dealing with some of them now. Because that was in 2007 that I did that workshop. And yeah, there's still stuff that I'm dealing with. It actually took me literally 10 years. They say it takes 10,000 hours or 10 years to become an expert at something. It *literally* took me 10 years to get my tongue under control - to get to the point where I suddenly realised I'm not even thinking about it anymore, which was an amazing discovery. But it literally took 10 years for that to be the case.

00:34:05.840 --> 00:34:06.910

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:34:07.080 --> 00:34:26.529

Singer 2: And now, subsequent to that, everything [viewed] within the model [means] my relationship's changed to it, because there were so many things that I couldn't do, because my tongue was getting in the way. And that's a really interesting journey that I'm now going on having gone back to...

00:34:26.530 --> 00:34:27.210

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:34:27.210 --> 00:34:32.409

Singer 2: Because I started doing the Estill master trainer...

00:34:32.960 --> 00:34:33.350

Researcher: Hmm.

00:34:33.350 --> 00:34:26.529

Singer 2: ...which is the qualification that [singing teacher 3] has. I started doing that in 2011. And I did that through 2011, 2012, did the initial lot of the - at the time - “CFP”. (But it's now called Estill Figure Proficiency.) I did that. But then, in 2013 I had what I *now* know was a nervous breakdown. At the time, I just thought I was not coping, and I was so used to not coping with things that I didn't realise that this was a particularly bad one.

00:35:08.530 --> 00:35:09.449

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:35:09.450 --> 00:36:00.439

Singer 2: And I dropped out. It's only literally 10 years later, 2003, that I started back on that. But [singing teacher 2], who was my mentor then, and is my mentor now. I had a number of years when she was my one-to-one singing teacher, and I was seeing her on either a weekly or a bi-weekly basis dependent on what I could afford. She wasn't quite as expensive then as

she is now but she was more costly than most singing teachers can be, though now she doesn't charge as much as she could! I suspect she has a bit of a sliding scale for different clients.

00:36:00.440 --> 00:36:00.880

Researcher: Hmmm. [laughs]

00:36:01.320 --> 00:37:41.150

Singer 2: [inaudible] if I was working at the level that she works at, but still working with Joe Bloggs singer that wants... So, I picked that back up again. But in the interim, in terms of my performing side of things... because I've always considered myself (well for most of that time) to be a singer who *taught* rather than a teacher who'd sing. I was just gigging, gigging, gigging, doing all sorts, doing lots of pop, rock and soul gigs with backing tracks that allowed me to actually make a living from it. I first realised that I was into jazz when I was about 14/ 15. My dad had the soundtrack of "Lady Sings the Blues", which is Diana Ross playing Billie Holiday. And one day he handed this to me and says, "Here you go, [name]! You'll like this". And he was right. I listened to it and I was absolutely hooked. What was quite interesting was that it was a little while later that I actually heard Billie Holiday for the first time, rather than Diana Ross being Billie Holiday and, excuse my language, I was like, "What the fuck's that?"

00:37:41.720 --> 00:37:42.100

Researcher: [laughs]

00:37:42.100 --> 00:38:12.130

Singer 2: Because at the time, my idea of what a good vocal was, was Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey. I just had this really limited view. [inaudible] I had this really limited view of what constituted a good vocal, because it was the stuff that I found hardest. I've always considered that to be what a vocalist is.

00:38:12.130 --> 00:38:12.630

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:38:12.630 --> 00:38:27.250

Singer 2: Whatever I can't do, that's what's needed to be a good vocalist. So I never considered myself to be that, and I still don't, because it's always whatever I can't do.

00:38:27.850 --> 00:38:28.210

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:38:28.210 --> 00:38:29.510

Singer 2: That's what's desirable.

00:38:30.010 --> 00:38:34.410

Researcher: Hmm. So...

00:38:34.410 --> 00:39:41.190

Singer 2: I've had this career. I first started actually singing jazz in the mid-90s and dabbled very, very briefly (as in only went once) with the national youth jazz orchestra. It's NYJA. But the guy who ran it at the time, who is the guy who started it, his attitude to singers was, and he literally said this to me, "I don't know anything about singers. I don't want to know anything about singers. Everybody else will let me know if you're any good or not." But it was in *such* a dismissive way that me being the insecure mess that I quite frankly still am, I couldn't handle it. So I didn't go back.

00:39:41.190 --> 00:39:41.560

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:39:41.560 --> 00:41:18.819

Singer 2: Even though I put *masses* of work into preparing, going down there, learning a load of their songs and all this sort of thing. But one thing, and that was me done. I couldn't handle it. But then I did a few courses. I did one particular one at [college], which was a night class once a week, and it was led by [singing teacher 3]. And it was basically "Sing Jazz", like an introductory thing. I can't remember how long it ran for, but it felt like quite a long time. I certainly learned a *massive* amount. And the other thing was, considering where I was living at the time, this must have been 1994, because I remember that that is, when I met [name]. So the accompanist on that course was [name] who is now the artistic director at [jazz venue] but at the time he'd only just graduated from [music college name]. And we became really good friends from that. Basically because, though I didn't realise it at the time, I was rather gorgeous then. I didn't appreciate it at the time at all. But I was rather gorgeous then and he basically he wanted to shag me.

00:41:18.820 --> 00:41:20.049

Researcher: [laughs]

00:41:20.050 --> 00:41:49.500

Singer 2: He started taking me places, but it never actually happened, because he already had a girlfriend. He was just one of these musicians - and there are *many* - who have a girlfriend but also, you know, anybody that will stay still long enough! I'm hoping he's not that way now, because I rather adore his *now* living girlfriend. She's the most incredible singer and I'd be very, very surprised if he was still the same way.

00:41:51.950 --> 00:41:58.120

Researcher: Can we move on to the practice diary task?

00:41:58.120 --> 00:41:58.450

Singer 2: Yes.

00:41:58.450 --> 00:42:08.069

Researcher: I know that you, for various reasons, might not have filled it in completely, but the main point of it was just to get you thinking.

00:42:08.070 --> 00:42:22.590

Singer 2: Yes, I started telling you that story, and then I went off on a ramble, and I forgot where I was, which is something that I do. So any time you need to kind of bring me back to topic, feel free, because I am aware I do it.

00:42:22.590 --> 00:42:29.140

Researcher: So, did you discover anything about your own practice in the process of thinking about the practice plan?

00:42:29.140 --> 00:43:52.150

Singer 2: Yes. So this was the thing. When I started reading the little brochures and things and the information and stuff that you sent with the original email, I'd thought that I hadn't practised at all this week. But then things started popping into my head that made me realise that actually, I'd had several sessions where I'd practised. I just don't demark them [gestures] as a practice session. If something pops into my head, I will practise it and then just carry on with what I was doing before, or go do something else. I strongly suspect that's an ADHD thing, again, so I can't help wondering if that's an avenue [to explore], because you do find a lot of musicians, particularly at the high end, that have neurodivergent traits. There are a lot of musicians that are somewhere on the spectrum, that have things like ADHD... It's then the difficulty that they have with social interaction is one of the reasons that you spend hours and hours and hours in your room doing something like music.

00:43:52.820 --> 00:43:53.390

Researcher: Hmm.

00:43:53.390 --> 00:45:35.639

Singer 2: Certainly from a singing point of view. One of the things that as a teacher, as I always say to students (and it's one of the reasons why I don't tend to scat all that much) is that I think the biggest thing that singers have over instrumentalists [is]: Instrumentalists can communicate broad strokes of emotion, but singers can communicate specifics. I think that storytelling element of singing is so important. That's why, even though when I first heard her voice, with Billy Holiday, I was like, "What the fuck's that?", I actually came to love her as one of my main jazz influences. Because she taught me how actually *unimportant* a wide vocal range can be, and how sometimes your limitations lead to you being the most creative. Because only having that octave and a half of range that she had at her strongest, (and that's not even before the drugs and everything took it away from her), she only had an octave and a half. And that's why she changes... all the standards that I'd learned from her, I then had to relearn when I came to want to do them myself, because she sang her own...

00:45:36.010 --> 00:45:36.470

Researcher: Hmm.

00:45:36.470 --> 00:45:56.380

Singer 2: She had her own reinterpretation of them, because she only had an octave and a half of range. So she had to. But that's her style. And that's what's so incredible about her. And it's actually her limitations that caused her to develop that level of creativity.

00:45:56.760 --> 00:45:57.550

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:45:57.910 --> 00:46:51.570

Singer 2: So it's the timing and the storytelling and the changes that she makes to the melody, which is probably why I absolutely hero worship Claire Martin, because she's *got* much more range, but those are still the cornerstones of what she does. And when it comes to scatting, I feel like we're getting into the instrumentalist territory, and if you can't enter that territory, and do it as well as they do, then sometimes it's better just to leave that to them and do what [suits you]. Having said that, because it's something that I find difficult, *that's* what I feel I *should* be able to do in order to be a good jazz singer. There we go. But that's why I've spent time studying with [singing teacher 4].

00:46:52.230 --> 00:47:01.880

Researcher: Yeah. Can you describe one of your spontaneous or remembered practice sessions from last week?

00:47:01.880 --> 00:47:02.270

Singer 2: Yes!

00:47:02.270 --> 00:47:05.619

Researcher: You say, you realise you did some. Describe one for me!

00:47:05.750 --> 00:48:41.200

Singer 2: Okay, I can't even begin to tell you what popped it into my head. But it's something that pops into my head periodically, which is the ability to do the soul growl. Christina Aguilera does it loads. [inaudible] That distortion. You hear it a lot in gospel music. It's something that I have a theory about in terms of how it's done. But I get obsessed with it for a while, and then I forget about it. And so I've never done anything consistently enough to actually be able to do it consistently. I can *do* it. I can't do it on demand, which is always the Estill thing: you've not

mastered something until you can do it on demand. So that, for some reason, a couple of nights ago, popped into my head. I was like, "Oh yeah, I've tried this before. And I've looked on YouTube and found some people that try and describe it and stuff". So I thought, "I'll have another go". So I went on, YouTube, spent a while trawling through a few... There's so much on YouTube about vocal training. A lot of the time I'll be watching it. "Fine, fine, fine!" Then they'll say something that I know is *fundamentally* physically untrue and inaccurate and inconsistent, and I'm like, "I can't take you seriously anymore".

00:48:41.200 --> 00:48:42.839

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:48:43.060 --> 00:50:23.169

Singer 2: It's usually something to do with breath and "support", which is something that Estill has a very particular take on. A lot of people think it doesn't deal with it, but it just deals with it in a fundamentally different way to every other [method]. Well, not every other [method] cause "bel canto" is not entirely dissimilar, but it's completely different to sort of traditional singing training. Anyway, I digress. So I went on. Eventually I found a particular video which was actually going to go on and deal with different kinds of vocal distortion. And, whilst they didn't have as specifically physical an approach as Estill, they *were* talking about specific places that you experience it, specific things that you do, which then means that you can "target practice". That's one of the big advantages of the Estill approach, is that you can "target practice". So if there's things you're already doing well, you can leave them alone. That's your "attractor state". You don't need to change it. Don't mess with it. But you can go specifically to the muscles and target practice. So everything becomes like a masterclass.

00:50:23.780 --> 00:50:24.200

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:50:24.200 --> 00:50:41.499

Singer 2: So yeah, I started, and I've basically saved that video. With the ADHD, I may or may not ever go back to it again, but I have saved it in my "Voice education" YouTube folder...

00:50:41.500 --> 00:50:41.880

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:50:41.880 --> 00:51:31.899

Singer 2: ...which would probably be fascinating if I actually go back through it, because some of the stuff will be absolute gold - that at some point I've trawled through and found - and for me to consider it worthy of saving. So basically, I was practising that for I don't know how long, but [during] the whole process, I certainly got into a hyperfocus, which I now know it's an ADHD thing. It's one of the things that when, if I'm designing a poster or something, I can literally forget to eat, forget to sleep. I can just go and go and go until it's done, because I'm so focussed.

00:51:32.240 --> 00:51:32.760

Researcher: Hmm.

00:51:32.760 --> 00:51:52.040

Singer 2: Yet at other times, I can't focus on anything, at all. It's just a really weird thing that having *no* executive function does to you, which is what ADHD is!

00:51:52.040 --> 00:51:52.620

Researcher: So...

00:51:52.620 --> 00:52:02.470

Singer 2: So, I think I spent probably over an hour practising that, just because something popped into my head.

00:52:03.461 --> 00:52:15.230

Researcher: Uhuh! So I think I know the answer to the next question, but I might be wrong. Do you plan and structure your practice? And if so, how?

00:52:17.110 --> 00:52:19.479

Singer 2: Okay, so it's kind of yes and no.

00:52:20.230 --> 00:52:21.230

Researcher: Mhmm.

00:52:21.230 --> 00:52:25.959

Singer 2: Mostly "no", which is probably what you're expecting. *But* I try to structure practice.

00:52:25.960 --> 00:52:27.700

Researcher: Mhmm.

00:52:27.700 --> 00:52:58.809

Singer 2: So, for example, I have a colour-coded Google calendar. [shows phone] Everything has different colours as to what they are: so yellow is appointments, dark green is friends and family, salmon pink is when I go swimming. Fuchsia pink is a gig that I mean to attend.

00:52:58.810 --> 00:52:59.320

Researcher: Right.

00:52:59.715 --> 00:53:37.770

Singer 2: Purple is for anything to do with study or practice. I have several purples in there. Now when they're purples that involve me going somewhere and doing something, or it's somebody else's timetable, generally those will happen. If they're purples that I put in there myself, the intention is there but they tend to be a sliding scale, because if I get to it, and I don't feel like doing it...

00:53:38.665 --> 00:53:38.990

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:53:39.230 --> 00:54:45.310

Singer 2: There's actually something that [singing teacher 2] said to my study group the other day, which was, "You don't have to want to do it, just do it". And I thought, "Oh, I like that". I printed it out. I put it on my fridge, and then I thought about it for a while and thought, "Actually, that's exactly what ADHD is. You *can't* overrule yourself like that. You don't, because it's executive function that's required to *overrule* your desire or your immediate need. That's an executive function thing." And though I have times when I've fought myself so hard that I've made myself do it, it's actually painful for me to do that - emotionally painful to the point where it feels physically painful. And again, that's something I've only realised relatively recently.

00:54:47.860 --> 00:54:51.189

Researcher: Uhuh. Physically painful in your... oh, sorry!

00:54:51.190 --> 00:54:52.810

Singer 2: Oh, no. Go ahead and say. Ask!

00:54:52.810 --> 00:54:54.849

Researcher: Physically painful in your voice?

00:54:54.880 --> 00:55:59.959

Singer 2: No. This is why I say it's emotionally painful to the point where it feels physically painful. It's the best way that I can describe that level of emotional pain that it's like hitting a brick wall. [gestures] I cannot make myself do something. And if I try and push through it, it hurts. It doesn't hurt my voice. It doesn't actually cause me any physical injury, but inside myself it is so painful. It is like I've run into a brick wall. [gestures] I always thought that that was as a result of laziness and fear. And I think part of it *is* about fear, because I very much think that when I'm preparing for something - having now recognised it as a pattern, I'm getting better at overriding it -

00:56:00.430 --> 00:56:00.910

Researcher: Hmm.

00:56:00.910 --> 00:56:22.270

Singer 2: - but I've always had this pattern where, if I'm preparing something specific, I will keep procrastinating the rehearsal process, the practice process, because I'm terrified that I'm going to find out that I can't do it. And the sooner I start practising, the sooner I'll find out I can't do it, so I delay practising.

00:56:22.810 --> 00:56:23.680

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:56:23.680 --> 00:56:31.359

Singer 2: ...which of course makes it far more likely that, when I finally get to the last minute, I haven't left myself enough practice [time] to make sure that I can do it.

00:56:31.830 --> 00:56:32.470

Researcher: Yeah.

00:56:32.470 --> 00:58:19.730

Singer 2: And I'm just in this constant cycle of failure [gestures], because I stopped myself from being able to do that thing. And it was really interesting. So every year for the last... (other than covid year,) for the last 15 years, I've gone up to Edinburgh and sung at the jazz bar as part of the Edinburgh festival. And I put together specific shows and stuff. I've set myself to do a new show this year, and I don't know why I've done it. It's ridiculous behaviour. I don't know why I do these things to myself, because I put so much pressure on myself. But anyway, the last couple of years I revived a show that I'd done just before the pandemic. But when I did it last year... Basically each year my parents go up and so they can go to the festival and also they take up the caravan. They stay in a little campsite in Roslin, which is just outside Edinburgh, and I sleep on a blow-up mattress in their awning, so that it doesn't cost me anything to stay! Because that's very expensive during fringe and it makes it financially viable for me to do it. But it just sounds really weird. "I sleep in the awning on my parents' tent when I do Edinburgh." But there we go. It kind of works. It works for us.

00:58:19.730 --> 00:58:20.290

Researcher: Yeah. [laughs]

00:58:20.290 --> 00:58:24.540

Singer 2: Mostly, except when my mum and I are get... You know, we're too similar and we push each other's buttons but there we go. So in preparation for that, at the time I was still running my choir. So once a week, I had this school hall that I'd got booked for the choir.

00:58:50.330 --> 00:58:50.960

Researcher: Hmm.

00:58:50.960 --> 00:58:59.109

Singer 2: And I had a key to it, so nobody knew how late I stayed. But I would stay after choir and do my rehearsal.

00:58:59.110 --> 00:58:59.840

Researcher: Ah!

00:58:59.840 --> 00:59:20.449

Singer 2: I actually started doing it months and months before, and I finally discovered that, if you start rehearsing at an appropriate time - and really, really, really, really practise - the result is a lot better [laughs] than procrastinating everything until the last minute!

00:59:21.330 --> 00:59:22.210

Researcher: Ah!

00:59:22.210 --> 00:59:23.359

Singer 2: Who knew!

00:59:23.650 --> 00:59:35.409

Researcher: Who knew! [laughs] Do you have any favourite or most commonly used practice methods in your practice?

00:59:38.610 --> 00:59:46.510

Singer 2: Yeah, I do a lot of I do a lot of silent practice actually.

00:59:47.000 --> 00:59:47.840

Researcher: Hmmm!

00:59:48.140 --> 01:02:10.949

Singer 2: So one of the things, for me, that I discovered during lockdown is: In the situation in which I live, I'm in a flat. But it's in a Victorian house conversion, so they were never designed as separate flats. There is very little in terms of soundproofing and as a result I feel very uncomfortable practising in my flat. If I want to practise things like "belt", I have to go for a drive and [laughs] practise in my car or I have to try and be up at a time of day where I don't think my upstairs neighbours are in. For some reason, when I'm struggling with my mental health, I find nighttime hours easier to deal with than daytime hours. I *think* because I feel if it's daytime I should be working and I'm not. I'm signed off from work. It's kind of difficult to tell, because there are a lot of symptoms that are the same for ADHD and borderline personality disorder. A couple of months ago, I had the most thorough mental health assessment I've ever had. And they came to the conclusion that I have a significant number of traits of borderline (which is a "Class B"), which is only one step down from psychotic and schizophrenic and all that sort of thing. Which is another thing that I'm kind of trying to get my head around. But it actually has a lot of symptoms in common with ADHD, like emotional dysregulation and lots of negativity and things like that. So we don't know. So basically I'm about to go onto medication for ADHD. Now I've had my diagnosis.

01:02:11.443 --> 01:02:12.430

Researcher: Uhuh.

01:02:13.495 --> 01:02:36.849

Singer 2: And from that we'll then see how many of those symptoms improve as a result of that, and then we can have a look at whether there's this residual stuff that is to do with borderline. I suspect there will be, just because I know how difficult I find certain things. But we'll see.

01:02:37.267 --> 01:02:38.102

Researcher: That sounds so tough.

01:02:40.030 --> 01:03:55.360

Singer 2: Yeah, but everybody has stuff in their life that's difficult. It's like with lockdown, with the pandemic. Everybody had their own journey through that. But this is why I was talking about the pandemic. I've just remembered why I was talking about the pandemic. So, because I felt really confined, but also I find singing quietly to myself is a self soothing thing. I did masses and masses of either silent practice or lots and lots of thin fold noodling singing. Obviously it was an extended period. I was shielding because I'm high risk and so I had 10 months when I didn't see another human being at all. I mean [I did] on Zoom, but not in real life. Not having a hug for that long is not... Well, I always say, "There's a reason why solitary confinement is a punishment in prison".

01:03:55.930 --> 01:03:56.380

Researcher: Hmm.

01:03:57.570 --> 01:04:14.080

Singer 2: Anyway, as a result of it, the one sort of silver lining to all of that isolation was that my relationship to my thyroid tilt completely changed.

01:04:14.660 --> 01:04:15.630

Researcher: Hmmm!

01:04:15.630 --> 01:04:36.120

Singer 2: As a result, my belt *suddenly* is so much more comfortable, so much easier. Just everything! And I *don't* think I could have done that if I hadn't sorted out my tongue first, because I think my tongue was so involved.

01:04:37.154 --> 01:04:37.540

Researcher: Hmmm.

01:04:38.240 --> 01:04:41.160

Singer 2: Because I have a relatively large larynx for a woman. I've got a big bottom end, as it were. But I've trained myself so that I can go really, really, high. Menopause has stolen a couple of tones from me and I am *determined* to get them back!

01:04:58.818 --> 01:05:00.610

Researcher: [laughs]

01:05:00.610 --> 01:05:45.450

Singer 2: So that's one of the things that I practise on. I do lots and lots of lip trills and sirening up high. That's one of the things I do lots of. But I also do a lot of focussing on the muscular movement. And silent practice allows you to do that because you can do it with the true folds open and so you're taking the air pressure out of the equation and you can focus on "What is actually the appropriate muscle engagement that I need to do this at a most comfortable vocal level?" And so I do a lot of that. And that's a very Estill thing to do.

01:05:45.450 --> 01:05:46.230

Researcher: Hmm.

01:05:46.230 --> 01:05:58.440

Singer 2: You know that silent practice to do isolation practice. So I do a lot of very, very specific vocal manipulation stuff.

01:06:00.890 --> 01:06:06.929

Researcher: And what's your attitude to mistakes and error correction in your practice?

01:06:09.440 --> 01:06:30.060

Singer 2: I'm not saying I always do, but how I *try* to look at it is, "Ooh, that's interesting! Why did that happen?" Usually, from an Estill point of view, I can work out what is making it more difficult, and then target that for practice.

01:06:33.210 --> 01:06:34.259

Researcher: That sounds great!

01:06:34.260 --> 01:07:23.159

Singer 2: I usually have a few missions that I'm on. A lot of the very fundamental things that I needed to change, I *have* done. But in order to do that, I'd aim for a "five by five". I'd aim to do this particular physical manipulation five times, five times a day. Now I wouldn't always remember to do it that many, but if I was *aiming* for that, then I would still do it a lot. And for *me* that works, because then that's practice that I can do: It's very short, but I can do it whenever it pops into my head.

01:07:23.490 --> 01:07:28.630

Researcher: And by manipulation, is that an Estill figure?

01:07:28.940 --> 01:07:45.859

Singer 2: Yes, so it would be like a specific element of an Estill figure. It's like when you're doing Master's research, the more specific you can make it, the better. Right?

01:07:45.860 --> 01:07:46.180

Researcher: Yeah!

01:07:46.180 --> 01:07:59.079

Singer 2: With practice, I think the more specific your practice is, the more effective it is. And so the more you can focus on one thing....

01:07:59.400 --> 01:07:59.820

Researcher: Hmm.

01:07:59.820 --> 01:08:28.170

Singer 2: ...and change that, and then move on to something else. Now I find it quite difficult to just focus on one thing, because I always want everything to be better all at once. And whilst intellectually, I know that that is *simply* not possible, at the core of my being, I feel that I *should* be able to do it. And that actually incorporates my *least* favourite word in the English language, which is the word "should".

01:08:29.550 --> 01:08:42.580

Researcher: I actually wrote that down earlier because you mentioned it quite early on, what you "should" be doing as a trained classical singer!

01:08:42.580 --> 01:08:48.140

Singer 2: Yeah, I think it's just *the* single most damaging word in the English language.

01:08:48.649 --> 01:08:49.159

Researcher: Mmm.

01:08:49.990 --> 01:08:56.500

Singer 2: In my head, it's a very big stick with which I beat myself.

01:08:57.060 --> 01:08:57.870

Researcher: Uhuh.

01:08:57.870 --> 01:09:48.119

Singer 2: Even though I know that that is the absolute opposite of what's helpful and what's going to allow you to extend. Because, it's just constantly this negative thing. But what I try and do is when something's not working, I try... My initial reaction will be emotional and will be negative, but I try to then step back from it and think, "*Why* is it happening? Is there a specific... Is the issue emotional? Or is it actually a physical thing that is being masked by my emotional reaction to it?" And if it's a physical thing, I can do something about that, because I can drill it.

01:09:48.790 --> 01:09:49.460

Researcher: Yeah.

01:09:49.460 --> 01:09:52.770

Singer 2: Physical things you can deal with a lot more easily.

01:09:53.029 --> 01:10:04.769

Researcher: Yeah. What motivates you to practise? And you've mentioned previously hitting this brick wall. What happens when you don't feel motivated?

01:10:09.010 --> 01:10:56.329

Singer 2: Nothing happens, basically. Particularly if I've planned, or I know that there is a real need for me to get on and do something, and I'm not doing it. Number one, if there's more than one thing that's really important, and I can't choose between them, then it's paralysing. It's absolutely paralysing. And it's literally what happened just before the start of the [interview] session, because I was fine when I was just focusing on, "Oh, I'm gonna log on, and that's fine." But the moment something else came up that felt as important as that...

01:10:56.780 --> 01:10:57.730

Researcher: Uhuh.

01:10:57.730 --> 01:11:33.400

Singer 2: ...I was paralysed, and I wasn't doing either of them! Fighting my way out of that paralysis is really, really hard because it's [relying on] part of my brain that is simply not functional. Whilst I know I have a very high IQ, I'm in the top 1% of the population from that point of view, but it's completely useless when I can't do anything, because I don't have executive function that allows me to prioritise!

01:11:35.200 --> 01:11:35.920

Researcher: Hmm.

01:11:35.920 --> 01:11:36.460

Singer 2: And as a result of that...

01:11:36.460 --> 01:11:36.930

Researcher: So...

01:11:36.930 --> 01:11:38.310

Singer 2: ...I do nothing.

01:11:38.310 --> 01:11:45.519

Researcher: So if there was anything you could change in your practice, what would it be?

01:11:53.890 --> 01:12:02.370

Singer 2: I think having the ability to say, "Right, I'm going to practise this, at this time, for this amount of time."

01:12:03.000 --> 01:12:03.530

Researcher: Hmm.

01:12:03.550 --> 01:12:18.859

Singer 2: And actually being able to schedule it. Because there's lots and lots of things that technology helps me with, that are ADHD things. Things that I might potentially forget about. I've got so many reminders and things scheduled.

01:12:19.815 --> 01:12:20.200

Researcher: Hmmm.

01:12:20.350 --> 01:13:19.409

Singer 2: If I'm preparing for something, [to help with] with time blindness, within the last hour of something, I leave my alarm on snooze, so that every ten minutes my attention is being deliberately brought back to what time it is in order to counteract that. The one thing that I *cannot* counteract with technology is that feeling that "That's not what I want to do right now". And the really frustrating thing is, I think a lot of why I *don't* want to do it right now, (because we're talking about things that actually, when I'm doing them, I enjoy doing them), but that "I don't want to do it right now" thing, I think, comes from fear. You can tell I spend a lot of time thinking about why I'm dysfunctional, can't you! [laughs]

01:13:20.190 --> 01:13:22.260

Researcher: Oh, well.

01:13:22.540 --> 01:13:23.190

Singer 2: It's my [inaudible]

01:13:23.190 --> 01:13:41.739

Researcher: I'm in that club, too! [laughs] Moving on to something perhaps a little less personal, maybe to lighten the mood for you: What are your thoughts on innate talent?

01:13:42.850 --> 01:15:02.670

Singer 2: Oh, that's a really interesting one. I've had had a massive row with my parents about that once. It's really interesting. One of the little sayings that I really, really love, and it was something that they had up on the wall at Arts1, which is James Grimsey's theatre school (and they are an Estill affiliate school), and it's "Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard". And that's how I feel about it. I do believe that any anybody can learn to sing. Anybody can learn to use the instrument that they have. It *doesn't* mean that anybody can sing on the stage of a West End theatre. But anybody can learn to use the muscular mechanics of how to produce a good sound. With the exception, maybe, of people that are tone deaf, but that's *actually* extremely rare. [I've] met a lot of people who thought they were. [I've] never actually met somebody who was.

01:15:03.090 --> 01:15:03.530

Researcher: Hmm.

01:15:04.470 --> 01:15:40.070

Singer 2: I've actually taught people. There was one particular student I had. (I taught for 14 years at a local private school.) And this lad, he was a really good actor. He knew that if he wanted to pursue it beyond A levels, beyond that educational level, he needed more strings to

his bow. Also that school put on *amazing* musicals, and he was never getting cast in them because he didn't sing.

01:15:40.070 --> 01:15:40.790

Researcher: Uhuh.

01:15:40.790 --> 01:15:59.170

Singer 2: When he got into Sixth Form he came for lessons. And he came to me and he said, "I think I might be tone deaf, but just in case I'm not, I really want to try and learn to sing at least a little bit."

01:15:59.660 --> 01:16:00.460

Researcher: Hmm.

01:16:00.740 --> 01:16:04.739

Singer 2: Two years later, he won the school singing prize.

01:16:06.210 --> 01:16:07.490

Researcher: Wow!

01:16:07.490 --> 01:16:36.439

Singer 2: Basically that first lesson, I was able to show him that improvement was possible. And I was able to show him a method that he could practise and make a difference in a week. He made a difference every single week from then on for two years.

01:16:36.710 --> 01:16:39.520

Researcher: Wow. That's amazing.

01:16:39.780 --> 01:16:56.749

Singer 2: Isn't it incredible? That's the power of Estill, I think. It opens those possibilities. But the first thing we actually looked at in that first lesson, was finding out if there were *any* pitches that he could *hear* and reproduce.

1:16:57.345 --> 01:16:57.560

Researcher: Yeah.

01:16:58.022 --> 01:17:33.469

Singer 2: And it turns out there was *one*! There was only one note - and it was around about his fundamental speaking pitch - one note that he could hear and reproduce it. But we found where that was, and then we just started moving out from there. Just a little bit: [gestures] little bit one way, little bit another. We'd get a bit further and then we needed to look at a physical thing he needed to change in order to extend that further. And so he didn't have any bad singing habits, because he didn't sing, at all!

01:17:33.990 --> 01:17:34.570

Researcher: Hmm.

01:17:34.570 --> 01:18:02.510

Singer 2: And each week I'd give him the sort of practice I was saying that I do a lot [of], which is really, really specific, really focused. And I'd say to him, "Aim for five times, five times a day", because I *know* that works cause I've *done* it. And I've done it with *multiple* things. I *know* what difference it makes. And I've always said to students, "I don't have to ask you if you practised. If you've practised, I will hear it."

01:18:03.130 --> 01:18:04.780

Researcher: Hmm.

01:18:05.110 --> 01:18:49.540

Singer 2: And he did. But the thing there is that he *did* have an innate talent, which was his acting. And I never needed to deal with that. The only way I needed to deal with that is - This is one of the things that, were I to do the course that you're doing, is the thing that I would want to research, because I'm kind of obsessed with (cause I've taught a lot of acting through song) -where the craft meets the artistry. And how do you knit those together? [gestures]

01:18:50.260 --> 01:18:50.960

Researcher: Mmmm.

01:18:50.960 --> 01:20:00.900

Singer 2: And is there a way that you can *teach* the artistry side of it in as precise a way as you can teach the craft side of it? I tend to think of these things as [gestures]: If you've got a foot on each of two ladders, there's only so much you can move one of those feet up, before the other one *has* to move in order for you to then progress. And so you've got the craft side of it, the technical side of it. You can move that up. But, if the top is the goal of becoming a great singer, you can move that up. But it doesn't *really* mean that much until you bring the artistry up to meet it. Then with the artistry, you can move that up, but there's only so far you can go with that, before you need the technical tools in order to be able to make something of that..

01:20:01.270 --> 01:20:01.640

Researcher: Mmm!

01:20:02.440 --> 01:20:07.560

Singer 2: And for me, that's what the craft is all about. It's giving you that toolkit.

01:20:08.490 --> 01:20:08.990

Researcher: Hmmm.

01:20:08.990 --> 01:20:25.349

Singer 2: I very much believe that the greater the technical facility you have, the greater the artistic freedom you have. And that's what we all really want from our voices, isn't it? In terms of producing something good:

01:20:25.350 --> 01:20:25.710

Researcher: Hmmm.

01:20:25.710 --> 01:21:42.950

Singer 2: Is to be able to make any artistic decision you want, and know how to do it, and your body just be able to provide that for you. That you can train, but I don't know how much of the artistry side of it can be trained. Now I know it can be improved, and you can help people to think of it in a different way. If they already have artistic ideas, you can help people to approach how to manifest them in a physical way. But I don't know how much you can teach that spark, that will to put the time into that particular thing. Then also there are other elements, in that, the more symmetrical you are, the more efficient you are. So if you are someone who is born with naturally a greater physical symmetry, are you then potentially going to have a better instrument?

01:21:43.280 --> 01:21:57.359

Researcher: That leads on to: what makes singing practice unique? And what are the benefits and limitations of practicing singing? And that was my last question for you really.

01:21:57.360 --> 01:22:52.530

Singer 2: Yeah. It's an interesting one. I have a theory. And this is completely anecdotal. And it's my own personal theory that, as a singer, the longer the neck you have, the wider the potential range you have. Because the larynx has to be free to move. [Researcher points to their own long neck!] Yeah, quite a long neck! Now, you can't see it on me anymore, because partly age, partly because my neck is now *extremely* muscular and partly just because I'm carrying more weight. But when I was younger I had a really quite a freakish looking long neck. [laughs] I saw it as freakish, because if I can make something a negative, I will. But my dad does too!

01:22:52.530 --> 01:22:53.040

Researcher: [laughs]

01:22:53.040 --> 01:23:23.229

Singer 2: The crazy thing is, my dad's 6'4", so he's allowed to have a long neck. I don't know why I had a long neck, because I'm only 5'4"! It's a weird thing. I have quite a short body, but my neck is quite long. I think that that potentially allows you to have a wider range, because you've got more room for the for the larynx to move [gestures]. But, as I say, it's anecdotal. It's theoretical. I don't know.

01:23:23.780 --> 01:23:24.410

Researcher: Hmm.

01:23:24.410 --> 01:23:27.780

Singer 2: But it's actually something that would be researchable.

01:23:28.150 --> 01:23:31.230

Researcher: It would be. Yeah, definitely.

01:23:31.565 --> 01:25:12.669

Singer 2: I think there are very specific reasons why some people may have a physical advantage. But then there's other things that are to do with desire and that can come from different places. I mean, I was brought up with singing, because my brother and me and my dad sang in the car, always. My dad used to sing in the clubs around the North of England. When I was a kid, he had a day job and then in the evenings he went off and he performed. Then when he'd get home, if my brother and I were still awake, he'd come and stand on the landing in between our bedrooms, with his guitar and sing us to sleep! So, I just grew up with it! So why wouldn't I [sing]? I was basically singing before I could talk. But I think the thing that practice gives us, is that opportunity to broaden the scope of your artistry. Whatever that desire is, the more specific the practice of your craft is, the more you're likely to maximise whatever that spark is, that gives somebody "something". That is whatever talent is.

01:25:15.750 --> 01:25:49.590

Researcher: I'm aware we've hit an hour now. I've remembered, I've left my dinner on, so I haven't got too much longer, which feels very rude of me to say that! But I wondered... You left a little marker earlier about mental health and the voice. Please feel free to say you don't want to talk about it...

01:25:49.740 --> 01:25:51.169

Singer 2: Oh yeah!

01:25:51.550 --> 01:26:01.850

Researcher: I wondered if you could expand on any anything further about the relationship to practice, singing and mental health?

01:26:01.870 --> 01:27:15.659

Singer 2: Yes, very specifically. I knew I'd forget to talk to you about it, and I think it's really interesting! That's how I came to Estill in the first place. It was the result of something very, very dark, but sometimes these things happen for a reason. I had this period in my life where both my Gran and my Nan were in their final illness at the same time. They were both in hospital for six weeks: My Gran, because she'd had a stroke and was in a coma, my Nan, because she was gradually fading as the result of type 2 diabetes. I'm in Bedford. My Gran was in Sheffield. My Nan was in Newark. So every week I was travelling up, to go and visit each of them in those respective hospitals. My Gran was an operatic soprano and I would sometimes sing to her in her coma and she would react.

01:27:16.830 --> 01:27:17.880

Researcher: Oh!

01:27:18.190 --> 01:27:31.309

Singer 2: And I told my dad that and it broke my heart, because he tried it and it didn't happen. But I think it's because [I've a] higher pitched voice and the human ear hears higher pitches...

01:27:31.840 --> 01:27:32.540

Researcher: Hmmm.

01:27:32.540 --> 01:27:46.100

Singer 2: ...better than lower pitches. Her hearing wasn't great anyway but that kind of broke my heart a little bit he couldn't, anyway... But they basically passed away within ten days of each other.

01:27:47.070 --> 01:27:47.820

Researcher: Gosh!

01:27:47.880 --> 01:28:35.720

Singer 2: At the time, I was also going through a breakup with the man I was living with at the time. I was in the process of basically kicking him out. The combination of those stressors: I got a pain in my shoulder that was *incredibly* intense and never went away. The whole of that shoulder blade on this [lefthand] side just felt like it was being held a vice 24/7. I was going and having acupuncture and all sorts. I then lost my voice, *completely*.

01:28:36.690 --> 01:28:37.340

Researcher: Oh!

01:28:37.340 --> 01:30:20.709

Singer 2: It started off with a touch of laryngitis and then, within a couple of days: gone! It was gone for a couple of months which, when that's how you make your living, was very stressful because it cost me a lot of money! And when it started coming back... It was during that period when it had just come back. (I had weeks and weeks of acupuncture to try and help with it.) But I was like, "I can't have something going as badly wrong as that again." I just didn't know. I felt it was *probably* associated to what I'd been going through psychologically. But during that period is when I read that advert saying that somebody wanted specifically a singing teacher that was familiar with the Estill model and I was like, "OK, I need to look this up, because maybe this is something I should know about and it will give me some answers." And so when I read about it... (Because when you Google, it certainly in this country, the first thing that comes up is [singing teacher 2]'s website. There was [singing teacher 1]'s name, and I put the two together. So it was losing my voice. And that was very much a part of mental health feeding into a negative vocal situation.

01:30:21.390 --> 01:30:22.310

Researcher: Uhuh.

01:30:22.310 --> 01:31:51.790

Singer 2: One of the things I've started doing recently, if I'm struggling to fall asleep, is trying to focus very specifically on, "Where am I tense? Where am I holding onto something?" There's always loads around here [points]: neck and shoulders, always. But also, I started to realise that, when I'm tense, I spend a lot more time than I need to, with my vocal folds closed, and pressed closed. One of the things I check if I'm struggling to fall asleep is, "Are my vocal folds actually open?" Obviously they're opening and closing to breathe, but what I'm talking about is an unnecessary closeness of them, where they're literally just letting through as much as I need to breathe. (Bearing in mind I have a CPAP machine, so I've got air constantly being blown through.) But I still somehow manage to have my vocal folds tensed together. So there's definitely stuff going on there that's to do with mental health, stress [and] voice. Definitely.

01:31:53.250 --> 01:31:55.960

Researcher: Oh, thank you for sharing that.

01:31:56.040 --> 01:32:05.860

Singer 2: I read your leaflets and it just it popped into my head. Oh, she might be interested in that. I knew I would forget! [laughs]

01:32:07.080 --> 01:32:07.890

Researcher: [inaudible]

01:32:07.890 --> 01:32:11.210

Singer 2: Obviously it was the early hours of this morning which [inaudible]

01:32:11.210 --> 01:32:22.200

Researcher: [laughs] I'm glad you read my leaflets. That's nice. Well, the BVA's leaflets!

01:32:22.200 --> 01:34:02.730

Singer 2: Yeah, I was scanning [them]. And then I was like, "OK, there's something here that's interesting". Because it was specifically to do with mental health, and it *is* something that I think is very important. I also think that singing teachers can sometimes become a *little* bit like therapists. Because there are certain things singing-wise, like belting for example: You can get caught in a Catch 22, because in order to engage the muscles the way you need to in order to belt safely and efficiently, you have to completely commit. How do you completely commit if you're not sure it's going to work? How can you be sure it's going to work if you haven't done it before? But how do you do it before, if you're not able to completely commit?! With my Master's students at [university name], I used to tell them that what they need is a heavy dose of "fuck it". [laughs] And they turned this into a little song they used to sing amongst themselves: "You take your fucks and throw them away! You take your fucks and throw them away!" Basically, when you're learning to belt, there is an extent to which you have to just go "Fuck it!" and do it. Because otherwise you're never going to find the physicality you need in order to do it. I've also had years of [singing teacher 2] saying to me about my own voice, "Don't try and drive a tank like it's a Fiat", because I've got this big voice that needs a lot of stabilisation!

01:34:02.970 --> 01:34:03.500

Researcher: [laughs] Yeah.

01:34:03.500 --> 01:34:36.710

Singer 2: Driving it like it's a little Fiat is not going to help! You need to drive it like a tank. [laughs] Until your body learns how much it needs and *then* you can go, "OK, how little can I get away with and still get the result?" Then you're looking at efficiency, which is more, what I

deal with now, because my body's happily prepared to work as hard as it needs to. And now I have to look at "That's actually too much."

01:34:36.710 --> 01:34:38.400

Researcher: Mmmm.

01:34:38.420 --> 01:34:59.000

Singer 2: Actually, your belt doesn't need to be forced out that loud. It doesn't need to be forced out at all! In fact, it's far more efficient if you... [inaudible] But there we go. I digress.

01:34:59.315 --> 01:34:59.630

Researcher: No, your digressions are equally useful, so it doesn't matter!

01:34:59.630 --> 01:35:18.789

Singer 2: Good! Do you know, I came to that conclusion with the practice diary. I thought, "I can either beat myself up about the fact I haven't done this practice diary, or I can take it as an example of what happens when someone with ADHD is trying to do formal practice. Maybe that would be interesting and useful for you to think about."

01:35:18.790 --> 01:35:34.009

Researcher: It's really useful. Thank you so much for your time. And before I go and save my casserole, have you got any questions for me about the process, or anything? You don't have to have any!

01:35:34.050 --> 01:35:43.621

Singer 2: No, just that I'm definitely really interested to stay in touch and hear how you get on.

Interview 6 Instrumentalist 2

00:05:43.120 --> 00:11:18.629 Interview preamble

00:11:18.970 --> 00:11:22.760

Researcher: Can you tell me briefly about your music journey?

00:11:24.128 --> 00:12:38.730

Instrumentalist 2: Oh, crikey, okay. When I was a toddler, our next door neighbours had a piano. I spent more time next door than at home, messing around on Mrs. Hammond's little upright piano. Then at some point, my dad said, "Okay, that's fine!". He bought me a little Cassio keyboard or something, and I figured it out in a day. So they thought, "Okay, we need to do something about this". So I ended up getting music lessons quite early. That's really how it began. Then I was *very* fortunate that both my first violin teacher and piano teachers were very good. My violin teacher unfortunately died of motor neurone disease a few years back, but we always stayed in touch distantly, if not closely. Jenny, my first piano teacher (who now lives in New Zealand), I'm very much in touch with. It's just a spot of good luck that there were these two teachers around the [town] area who were really excellent. Because I think it matters that a first teacher really knows what they're doing. I think there's probably quite a lot of wasted talent through bad early days.

00:12:38.730 --> 00:12:39.929

Researcher: Yeah, definitely.

00:12:39.930 --> 00:13:14.759

Instrumentalist 2: Certainly from the start. I mean, mega talented kids are always gonna find a way. But even so. Eventually I got a scholarship to the [music specialist school]. I consider it the completion of my main education, was at the [music specialist school]. [Music college],

that didn't work out so well. I got thrown out at the end of my first year, so I never graduated. So my career started very young, because it *had* to. There was no choice. And that's it, really.

00:13:15.590 --> 00:13:18.080

Researcher: Ah! And can you tell me a bit about your performing?

00:13:19.170 --> 00:13:27.430

Instrumentalist 2: Yeah, I had intended to be a Instrumentalist 1 until I was about 16 years old, and that was when I went to study with [piano teacher name].

00:13:27.960 --> 00:13:28.470

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:13:28.470 --> 00:14:16.980

Instrumentalist 2: It was him who showed me possibilities about latent abilities I did not know what I had at the piano. I think I was always sort of a talented, how can I put it, a "talented bluffer" at the piano until [piano teacher name] showed me how to really focus on details and stuff! And very, very quickly it became my main instrument. So I really credit him with that. Performing, my first performances were around here around about the age of six or seven, and then more proper performances through school. There were some quite interesting ones. We had an exchange with the [specialist music school] in Moscow, so I was sent to the Soviet Union and played on live TV and radio in Russia when I was a teenager.

00:14:16.980 --> 00:14:17.810

Researcher: Wow!

00:14:17.810 --> 00:14:46.669

Instrumentalist 2: So some quite high profile stuff through the [British music specialist school]. Then I started my career out of necessity, playing more chamber music than anything else, because I just needed to. It emerged that I was... I basically gave up music up. There were a whole load of things that went wrong at the same time. I won't go into too much detail, but on the same day I was thrown out of college, somebody broke into my student house and tried to murder me, and I was quite unwell for a year after that.

00:14:47.340 --> 00:14:48.770

Researcher: Oh, my gosh!

00:14:48.770 --> 00:14:53.709

Instrumentalist 2: So it was a really *bad* start to a career. The start of my career was *not* very auspicious.

00:14:54.250 --> 00:14:55.130

Researcher: No.

00:14:55.460 --> 00:14:56.179

Instrumentalist 2: And then it... [inaudible]

00:14:56.180 --> 00:14:56.570

Researcher: You poor thing.

00:14:56.570 --> 00:15:48.760

Instrumentalist 2: So I was on the dole, going to the job centre to try and get employment so I wasn't just bleeding mum and dad dry. It became apparent very quickly that I'm basically unemployable. Even Marks and Spencer didn't want me stacking shelves. I couldn't get a job. Then Peter Feuchtwanger was giving a masterclass nearby, and he sort of resurrected me

from the musical grave. My career started primarily as a chamber musician, and that was, I suppose to some extent, holding onto the coattails of other people. I was very young and quite inexperienced and *had* to make a career. I think what happens when somebody completes a degree is that they find themselves part of a musical community. You're working as part of a musical community. Everybody sort of progresses together.

00:15:49.270 --> 00:15:49.900

Researcher: Hmm.

00:15:49.900 --> 00:16:06.340

Instrumentalist 2: I was completely isolated. So that is a double-edged sword, you know. On the one hand, that's quite a lonely place to be. On the other hand, there is no choice. It was like Hayden talking about being shut away in Esterházy. There is no choice but to be original. There is no other way.

00:16:06.705 --> 00:16:07.070

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:16:07.570 --> 00:16:36.409

Instrumentalist 2: So to some extent my career was... I borrowed a lot of ideas from people that I worked with in ensemble. And it came to a point when I realised that I'm not capable of having an argument with *myself*, but I thought sort of basing everything around more solo work would be easier. I'd had a few very frustrating fallouts with other musicians. You know how it goes. I think that's not unique in our community!

00:16:36.730 --> 00:16:37.440

Researcher: No.

00:16:38.150 --> 00:16:43.300

Instrumentalist 2: We're an argumentative bunch really, aren't? [laughs]

00:16:43.300 --> 00:16:43.780

Researcher: [laughs]

00:16:43.780 --> 00:16:45.690

Instrumentalist 2: Passionate people. That's what it is.

00:16:45.960 --> 00:17:04.300

Researcher: It is. I think possibly even more so at the level you're playing at. You have to really know what you think about things musically and you dedicate so much time to it. You're gonna feel...

00:17:04.569 --> 00:17:07.029

Instrumentalist 2: We *do* but I think things get easier as you get older.

00:17:08.180 --> 00:17:08.440

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:17:08.440 --> 00:17:33.819

Instrumentalist 2: I think that, if *my* journey was anything to go by, late teens/ early 20s is an incredibly bitchy time in the profession. And I think people reach an age where they just leave all of that behind and think, "Okay, I've found my space. I've found what I do". There's a sort of security in it, and therefore it doesn't really matter about what anybody else is doing, maybe because we don't have time to think about it!

00:17:33.820 --> 00:17:34.330

Researcher: Uhuh. [laughs]

00:17:34.330 --> 00:18:16.079

Instrumentalist 2: I had a *terrible* time at college. Looking back on it, I wasn't very nicely treated by the rest of the department. I think part of it was that I suppose if you've been through one of the specialist music schools, you then go on to further education being a little bit overeducated in the sense that you're then part of a system that has to generalise by its very nature. So the people who *haven't* had the advantages that I had struggled to catch up, and the people that *have* had the advantages I had were like, "Why, the fuck am I doing this?" in the basic way that people in their late teens will, you know.

00:18:16.350 --> 00:18:17.790

Researcher: Hmm.

00:18:17.790 --> 00:18:27.660

Instrumentalist 2: I'm a bit older and look back now at it and have a slightly more considered view of the thing and think actually they did me a real favour kicking me out. They really did.

00:18:28.360 --> 00:18:28.940

Researcher: Hmm.

00:18:28.940 --> 00:18:33.880

Instrumentalist 2: And I say that with absolutely *no* bitterness. I didn't fit. I absolutely did not fit there.

00:18:35.840 --> 00:18:39.199

Researcher: Wow. I wasn't aware of any of that!

00:18:39.990 --> 00:18:49.580

Instrumentalist 2: There's no reason to tell that many people about it and it's a fairly upsetting story. But it's a big part of how I am, who I am.

00:18:52.500 --> 00:19:01.640

Researcher: Uhuh. How did you find the practice diary task? And did you discover anything about your own practice in the process?

00:19:01.640 --> 00:20:48.260

Instrumentalist 2: Yes, I'm shit! [laughs] I was thinking it would be good if I were to write a practice diary of one of those weeks where I'm home, and there's nothing going on. But that's not real life. Real life is... My life is a catalogue of delayed trains, cancelled flights, and trying, as far as possible to fit practice around the increasingly complicated realities of everyday life in a divided kingdom. A country where absolutely nothing works anymore. People who travel regularly understand it better than most. The days running up to two concerts on the same day in Edinburgh for the same organisation: So it was a Mozart piano concerto with a chamber orchestra, and then a solo recital. No solo recital first, then the chamber concerto. It was a fairly intense workload. I *deliberately* programmed music that A) sounds impressive and B) doesn't need an awful lot of practice. That was what was needed for this event. So then, when it comes to the practice, it really is just... If you're playing Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, one shouldn't really be complacent about it (because I've played it about 400 times but) it's *still* Beethoven and it's still difficult. It's about the most feral piece of music that he ever wrote, actually. It really is. So it's just about trying to... And again, this is a thing that only comes with experience. I think as I get older, I'm trying to master the art of practising as little as possible.

00:20:49.050 --> 00:20:49.820

Researcher: Uhuh!

00:20:49.820 --> 00:20:56.080

Instrumentalist 2: So only focussing on that which is necessary and [learning to tell myself] that the performance is going to be okay.

00:20:57.040 --> 00:21:01.090

Researcher: Yeah, you mentioned “danger moments” in your practice diary.

00:21:01.350 --> 00:21:29.839

Instrumentalist 2: Yeah, particularly if you're dealing with pieces of music that you've performed often, I don't need to bother with practising the whole thing. Memory stuff I can do away from the piano [on] long train journeys. I just go through the music in my head. Check everything. All the sections are in the right order and stuff like that. But the actual finger stuff: I know that there are some places in that Liszt Rhapsody, where I'm likely to fall off the piano if I haven't spent half an hour knuckling down, and bringing it in.

00:21:30.900 --> 00:21:31.250

Researcher: Hmm.

00:21:31.250 --> 00:21:38.450

Instrumentalist 2: So, I think part of being an experienced performer is understanding where the danger moments are.

00:21:38.450 --> 00:21:39.050

Researcher: Hmm.

00:21:39.050 --> 00:22:08.059

Instrumentalist 2: And that [only comes with] the experience of performing stuff, and also knowing yourself. Knowing what you cope with well and what you don't cope with well. I don't need to train myself to play anything fast, because as soon as I'm nervous I'm sort of turbo speed, anyway. Rather, I need the opposite. I need to find a way of slowing everything down a bit, which is often what I'm doing with the “danger moments”. I know that if I haven't prepared them and it gets to the concert, I'm just going to rush furiously and risk busting up.

00:22:09.313 --> 00:22:09.966

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:22:10.620 --> 00:22:12.310

Instrumentalist 2: That's just knowing yourself.

00:22:13.200 --> 00:22:17.169

Researcher: Yeah. Can you describe? Oh, sorry.

00:22:17.170 --> 00:22:20.879

Instrumentalist 2: I was gonna say, because, we're all different. Some people struggle to play fast.

00:22:21.430 --> 00:22:22.010

Researcher: Hmm.

00:22:22.381 --> 00:22:24.240

Instrumentalist 2: Some people *really* struggle with memory.

00:22:24.850 --> 00:22:25.400

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:22:25.400 --> 00:22:53.870

Instrumentalist 2: It's about tailoring your practice to your own natural abilities. So I don't need help playing fast. I *learn* fast, so I *usually* don't need too much help with memorising. But there are things that I *do* need help with - as with most people who are quick learners - consistency. We shouldn't just sit back and rely on the fact that it might come off. It *might* come off. You need to eliminate as much of the "might" as possible.

00:22:54.990 --> 00:23:03.750

Researcher: Hmm! Can you describe a practice session from last week, if you can remember it?

00:23:05.470 --> 00:23:53.679

Instrumentalist 2: Yes, let's say the first one that I knocked down. So sometimes I look through the diary, and I think, "Fuck! How am I gonna learn all of this? There are so many notes there." It's like inputting into a computer. I'm a Gemini and [work by] using my butterfly brain just doing a little bit of this, a little bit of that, just slowly putting it into my brain so it's bouncing around in there while I don't know it is, actually speeds up the preparation later on. So I spent a day of doing a bit of this, a bit of that, knowing that in a couple of weeks time, when I have to come back to note learning the Medtner quintet, for example, (it's quite difficult), the fact that I went through bits of it the other day, that will actually have helped me a lot and will speed up the process.

00:23:55.170 --> 00:24:12.510

Researcher: Has it got a proper name? Because I was falling asleep last night thinking about that. Where it's like a background programme running all the time. Is it embedding?

00:24:12.801 --> 00:24:50.079

Instrumentalist 2: I don't know what the term is, but I know that it works. I know that if anybody who is a professional teacher heard me practising, they'd tell me I'm doing everything wrong. I know they would. But I know that it works for me. But it is literally this thing. Particularly in processes of note learning and memorising a new piece, this actually keeps me awake at night. I can't actually silence [it]. It's like a chorus of musical voices in the back of my head. Sometimes, when it gets intense, it literally just affects everything in my life, in a not always very nice way.

00:24:50.480 --> 00:24:51.100

Researcher: No.

00:24:51.100 --> 00:24:54.029

Instrumentalist 2: It's just a process that has to be gone through.

00:24:54.460 --> 00:24:54.980

Researcher: Yeah.

00:24:54.980 --> 00:25:04.690

Instrumentalist 2: A lot of what we do happens away from the [inaudible]. I learn a lot working particularly with wind players and singers, because you guys have time limits.

00:25:05.570 --> 00:25:06.020

Researcher: Hmm.

00:25:06.410 --> 00:25:26.160

Instrumentalist 2: As a singer you cannot practise for eight hours day. It's not doable. *Most* wind players can't. Some can. And brass players absolutely never. So they have to be really economical with how they practise, in a way that perhaps... Instrumentalist 2s *do*, because we have to learn more notes than anybody else. So it's a different kind of [inaudible].

00:25:26.160 --> 00:25:27.329

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:25:27.330 --> 00:25:43.390

Instrumentalist 2: But *you* actually have to be economical to think, "Okay, I can't really work for more than two hours. So I'm gonna have to make the most use of those two hours and be as productive as possible within the time." I don't have that kind of pressure as a Instrumentalist 2. That doesn't exist.

00:25:46.360 --> 00:25:53.139

Researcher: Yeah, definitely. Do you plan and structure your practice?

00:25:53.330 --> 00:25:53.850

Instrumentalist 2: No!

00:25:53.850 --> 00:25:55.999

Researcher: And if so, how?

00:25:56.040 --> 00:26:01.280

Instrumentalist 2: I just don't. I have to have deadlines.

00:26:01.940 --> 00:26:02.620

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:26:02.620 --> 00:26:34.240

Instrumentalist 2: The nearest I get to planning and structuring and stuff, is knowing that by such and such a date such and such a thing has to be ready to perform. I'm becoming better at... Particularly as an ensemble musician when you're doing ensemble work. / know that I can learn really fast, but my colleagues don't. And I don't want to freak them out. So, [when I'm] play[ing] in a rehearsal and I can't play the piano part. I'll say, "It's okay. I'll just spend a few hours the day before the concert, and it's going to be fine". / know it's going to be fine, but *they* don't. So I don't want to make other people feel uncomfortable. So that's dealing with the ensemble stuff.

00:26:34.370 --> 00:26:35.250

Researcher: Oh!

00:26:35.250 --> 00:26:56.630

Instrumentalist 2: My own stuff: I *know* that I can do stuff superhumanly quickly, but it's *not* comfortable. I needs to feel stable. So as I get older, I think to myself, "I just want to make my life, the macro, easier through making the micro *slightly* less comfortable. If you see what I mean.

00:26:58.610 --> 00:27:00.770

Researcher: No, explain that a little bit more!

00:27:00.770 --> 00:27:12.970

Instrumentalist 2: Well, I don't *enjoy* the process of *really* focusing exclusively on a problem at the piano! I don't enjoy the hum of being consistently insecure all of the time.

00:27:13.380 --> 00:27:14.286

Researcher: I see.

00:27:14.740 --> 00:27:22.291

Instrumentalist 2: Better to have the minute discomfort of doing things that I don't really enjoy doing, in order [to change] my life.

00:27:22.620 --> 00:27:36.130

Researcher: Sorry, I wasn't sure if you meant push a certain thing beyond comfort to then get it comfortable. That's why... Is [dog name] awake?

00:27:36.130 --> 00:27:37.279

Instrumentalist 2: He saying, "Feed me!"

00:27:37.695 --> 00:27:43.199

Researcher: [to dog] Hello, lovely boy!

00:27:43.520 --> 00:27:46.009

Instrumentalist 2: [about dog] He's such a good boy. Yes, he is. He's such a good boy.

00:27:46.010 --> 00:27:46.820

Researcher: [laughs]

00:27:47.630 --> 00:28:06.250

Instrumentalist 2: Walk all over the computer, like you usually do! [laughs]

00:27:57.300 --> 00:28:06.250

Researcher: [laughs] Right. Do you rely on or incorporate any formal practice methodologies or etude exercises into your practice?

00:28:08.460 --> 00:28:30.290

Instrumentalist 2: It depends. For example, there's a likelihood I'm going to be playing Tchaikovsky 1 next year. There are some pieces of music that require me to go into what I call "weight training". Do like huge double octave passages and stuff. I don't do that sort of thing very often.

00:28:30.810 --> 00:28:31.470

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:28:31.470 --> 00:29:05.720

Instrumentalist 2: One of the processes I have to put my body and brain through in order to do it.... So my first big concert after lockdown was Tchaikovsky 2, and it was in the original version which is nearly three quarters of an hour long, for the Tchaikovsky Gesellschaft in Germany. The original version is hardly ever performed. That was really something where I had to go into some degree of Instrumentalist 2ic weight training for, because of the amount of fairly muscly stuff! There are Instrumentalist 2s [for] who[m] that's their bread and butter, and they do that all of the time.

00:29:06.220 --> 00:29:06.750

Researcher: Hmm.

00:29:07.280 --> 00:29:42.710

Instrumentalist 2: That *could* have been me but my career didn't really go in that direction. I'm quite happy [inaudible]. It's a bit more varied. If I'm going to do those things, then I have to take out extra time in the day to do octave exercises and stuff to build up a bit of musculature

that isn't necessarily there all of the time. So specific things, then, yes. I used to be an absolute stickler for this when I was younger. I would spend 40 minutes of everyday practising skills and arpeggios. At some point in my career I thought, I don't have time for this. I just don't have time.

00:29:42.710 --> 00:29:43.370

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:29:43.370 --> 00:29:52.219

Instrumentalist 2: So I trust that I'm using my body sensibly when I'm practising what I need to practise. [That] it's going to cover all of the bases.

00:29:54.790 --> 00:29:56.990

Researcher: And do you have a favourite or most commonly used practice method?

00:30:01.180 --> 00:30:08.800

Instrumentalist 2: I'm starting a new thing at the moment, which is, I'm slowly going through... Have you heard of Wassily Safonoff?

00:30:09.740 --> 00:30:10.295

Researcher: No!

00:30:10.850 --> 00:30:46.180

Instrumentalist 2: Well back at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century, he wrote a piano [method]. "A new method", I think, is the title of the thing. I'm trying to learn, I *am* learning some of the exercises that are in there. I think that they've been known about by a select few for decades, a century even, but not that many people seem to be aware of them. They're really good brain exercises for the piano. I've been doing those in my spare time. Just for fun. It's a bit like a sudoku puzzle at the piano, or something like that.

00:30:46.600 --> 00:30:47.090

Researcher: Yeah.

00:30:47.090 --> 00:30:51.210

Instrumentalist 2: [inaudible] these brain exercises, things that destabilise what we think we know.

00:30:53.830 --> 00:31:03.930

Researcher: Ah! That sounds interesting. So is it a mental coordination thing, or physical, or both?

00:31:03.930 --> 00:31:08.159

Instrumentalist 2: A bit of both. So, for example, if you're playing third exercises.

00:31:08.520 --> 00:31:09.500

Researcher: Hmm.

00:31:10.070 --> 00:31:27.710

Instrumentalist 2: [gestures] [inaudible] you change the fingering. So the first, that is 2-3, then 1-4, then 3-5, then... 2-1 (with a thumb under), 3-4, 1-5. Like that. So [inaudible] pulls up the hand, but you keep the other hand just doing them regularly.

00:31:28.600 --> 00:31:29.230

Researcher: Oh!

00:31:29.230 --> 00:31:39.110

Instrumentalist 2: So, stuff like that. The first time you do it, you *really* have to concentrate and focus very hard. It's just good for the brain!

00:31:39.110 --> 00:31:48.249

Researcher: Yeah. Do you then transfer that approach into learning a tricky passage of runs or anything like that, or not?

00:31:48.250 --> 00:32:13.479

Instrumentalist 2: Not consciously. But I think all of these things just go into your consciousness. If there's a tricky bit of passage work. I call them "systems". Systems of ways of practising things that will fix them and make them how I want them to sound very, very, quickly.

00:32:14.690 --> 00:32:15.690

Researcher: Oh, what are those?

00:32:15.690 --> 00:32:47.510

Instrumentalist 2: A lot of a lot of Instrumentalist 2s believe in practising stuff in rhythms. I *sort of* do, but not in the sort of generic sense. I do other things: accents on offbeats and stuff like that. You know, systems that train all of the fingers to do stuff: finger tapping like Glenn Gould did can be really useful. Only if I reach a passage, and I think, "I really don't know how to play this. It's very difficult." Then I think, "Okay, I need to go through some systems to make it not difficult." That sort of thing.

00:32:47.510 --> 00:32:55.240

Researcher: So systems. Sorry. So systems are almost like your little toolbox of practice methods.

00:32:55.516 --> 00:33:05.970

Instrumentalist 2: I call it the toolbox, which is largely a thing that [piano teacher] gave me. So systems of going through things that make things possible. Enable it.

00:33:05.970 --> 00:33:08.289

Researcher: What is your favourite "system"?

00:33:08.660 --> 00:33:10.719

Instrumentalist 2: I can't, really. It just sort of depends what...

00:33:11.320 --> 00:33:13.670

Researcher: Okay!

00:33:13.670 --> 00:33:22.850

Instrumentalist 2: It changes all the time. You've probably got this already. I'm not particularly systematic in how I work.

00:33:25.200 --> 00:33:31.799

Researcher: Do you have an attitude to mistakes and error correction during practice? And what is it?

00:33:31.970 --> 00:33:56.240

Instrumentalist 2: Yes, I swear. I'm incredibly destructive. I'm awful. I would never recommend how I work to anybody else. I'm quite aggressive with myself when I'm practising. I've tried to not be. I've tried to be a bit more zen about it, but it's just not me. I'm a fiery person. It's just how it is.

00:33:58.060 --> 00:33:59.490

Researcher: Ok! So do you....

00:34:00.670 --> 00:34:03.380

Instrumentalist 2: I bully myself into submission. That's what I do.

00:34:03.380 --> 00:34:13.860

Researcher: Ok! Do you do that immediately? [laughs] You just tell yourself off, or? [laughs]
After swearing, what do you do?

00:34:14.300 --> 00:34:15.599

Instrumentalist 2: I do it again. Better.

00:34:16.250 --> 00:34:16.770

Researcher: Ok! [laughs]

00:34:17.820 --> 00:34:24.530

Instrumentalist 2: So normally, it's "For fucks sake [Instrumentalist 2's name], that's shit!" and then go back and then, "Ok, what went wrong?" That's my normal. [laughs]

00:34:27.820 --> 00:34:33.279

Researcher: That could go into my new approach to practice.

00:34:34.120 --> 00:34:39.093

Instrumentalist 2: I wouldn't recommend what I do for anybody else, but it seems to work for me. [laughs]

00:34:39.600 --> 00:34:52.980

Researcher: You've already mentioned some of these things. You've mentioned silent practice by reading through scores and memorising...

00:34:52.980 --> 00:35:11.200

Instrumentalist 2: All musicians do this, even if they don't know they're doing it. It's like one of those things they say, "Running as an exercise keeps burning calories after you finish running". It's the same sort of thing with music practice. The brain is working after you've stopped working, if you see what I mean. It still does its thing.

00:35:11.860 --> 00:35:12.829

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:35:12.830 --> 00:35:29.279

Instrumentalist 2: Particularly with memorising: I can finish a day of trying to memorise something and think, "This is useless. I can't do it" and then I wake up the next morning, and it's there. Even though it wasn't there when I went to bed. So this happens, you know. The brain just keeps doing its thing.

00:35:29.690 --> 00:35:31.830

Researcher: Yeah. It's magic.

00:35:31.830 --> 00:35:32.180

Instrumentalist 2: It is.

00:35:32.180 --> 00:35:49.580

Researcher: (I think I know the answer to this but) for purposes of the interview, do you incorporate listening to music, visualisation or recording into any of your practices?

00:35:49.580 --> 00:36:19.000

Instrumentalist 2: Oh, yeah, all of that. Yeah. I listen to far more music than most musicians do. I'm aware of this. I don't ever want to lose touch with the idea that music's also my hobby and my passion. Yes, it's my job. I don't want to lose touch with taking enjoyment from it. So I actually *do* set aside part of the day for music listening as far as possible. What has he [the dog] seen? Who's he seen? [laughs] He loves to look out that window and he sees his friends walk fast, and this happens.

00:36:19.910 --> 00:36:20.850

Researcher: Oh!

00:36:20.850 --> 00:36:38.605

Instrumentalist 2: Always carrying a slipper to the door and coughing. What are you coughing on? You alright, [dog's name]? Ew. Really? Don't puke! No, he's alright... Yeah. So I set aside a part of the day for focussed listening, not background listening.

00:36:38.950 --> 00:36:39.860

Researcher: Yeah.

00:36:39.860 --> 00:36:49.520

Instrumentalist 2: I do record myself, because I think sometimes we don't always understand how we're coming across. It's just a really helpful tool that can speed things up. It makes everything a bit quicker.

00:36:50.620 --> 00:36:51.699

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:36:51.700 --> 00:36:54.971

Instrumentalist 2: He's got a slipper.

00:36:57.000 --> 00:37:00.720

Researcher: That's a very useful insight, [dog's name]. Thank you!

00:37:00.720 --> 00:37:09.460

Instrumentalist 2: Yeah, he likes to have a bit of input. Dead. [command to drop] Thank you. [laughs] Sit down.

00:37:09.460 --> 00:37:11.319

Researcher: Oh, I really want to meet him.

00:37:11.490 --> 00:37:18.289

Instrumentalist 2: He is hilarious. He's one of the funniest dogs I've ever known. He's just hilarious.

00:37:20.920 --> 00:37:21.520

Researcher: Oh.

00:37:21.520 --> 00:37:29.019

Instrumentalist 2: He's just gonna [inaudible] at me for a while.

00:37:29.750 --> 00:38:05.880

Researcher: I noticed, actually, you quite regularly will post your videos online. And what I notice is how *comfortable* you are with the camera and how it's clearly habit for you. And I think that's, without sounding patronising [laughs] (because you're such a superior musician to me), but I can see the benefit that it has in your playing, your posture... everything. So...

00:38:06.210 --> 00:39:07.409

Instrumentalist 2: It's one thing to have the urge to become very good at an instrument and to love music and do all of this. But there's a secondary instinct that isn't talked about very much, which is the need to share. Which is very much the performer's instinct. It *does* come with a whole load of psychological baggage, this need to share. But some people are just born... It's *not* enough for me to enjoy music on my own. It's not enough. It needs to be a communal experience. I have mixed feelings about it, but the whole social media thing - of being able to share your musical thoughts with people in a very direct way - can be wonderful, can also be dreadful. It depends. We all had to confront this a lot during lockdown. I'll tell you hilarious story. Of course, you know [colleague and Instrumentalist 2].

00:39:07.910 --> 00:39:08.410

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:39:08.410 --> 00:40:11.500

Instrumentalist 2: He set up [classical music promotion company]. This was a child of lockdown, and because he's got such an entrepreneurial spirit, it's now spiralled into this massive thing. But at *that* time it started out with him inviting Instrumentalist 2s to record recitals at home and then send them over to him. He'd take a commission on ticket sales and we were all delighted to do it. *Except* when I did one of mine, my old Mac was in the process of dying a long slow death and iMovie stopped working. If I record at home, there are some things that are definitely going to happen. One of them is my mother's going to phone. One of them is there is always an Amazon delivery, and the other thing that will always happen is the next door neighbours will mow their lawn. These things all happened in the midst of recording this recital. At the same time my iMovie kept quitting so I was trying to glue all of this together, and it just kept quitting.

00:40:12.010 --> 00:40:12.740

Researcher: Hmmm.

00:40:12.740 --> 00:40:42.390

Instrumentalist 2: At the eleventh hour on the evening it was supposed to be going out public, I managed to send him the completed file in two sections via WeTransfer. The recital went out. Nothing. Then, late that evening I had a phone call from my friend [name] who said, "[Instrumentalist 2's name], that was a really lovely recital. But did you know in your in the middle of your Liszt piece you stop playing, look at the camera, scream "Fuck off!" at the top of your voice and start again at the beginning? [laughs]

00:40:48.340 --> 00:40:52.819

Researcher: [laughs]

00:40:52.820 --> 00:41:00.370

Instrumentalist 2: This actually happened. So embarrassing!

00:41:00.370 --> 00:41:03.320

Researcher: Oh, you will have made so many people's evenings! [laughs]

00:41:03.790 --> 00:41:23.230

Instrumentalist 2: What's funniest, it was only commented on by one person! [laughs] That's so British. Nobody else mentioned it. [laughs]

00:41:23.230 --> 00:41:23.560

Researcher: [laughs]

00:41:23.560 --> 00:41:41.530

Instrumentalist 2: [We] were both *screaming* with laughter over this. Yes, there was that. But yeah, if you want to freak out any musicians at the moment, after that [lockdown] experience, you just say the word "livestream".

00:41:42.150 --> 00:41:43.580

Researcher: Yep.

00:41:44.880 --> 00:41:47.070

Instrumentalist 2: You know, that was tough. That's like walking on stage naked.

00:41:50.880 --> 00:42:11.579

Researcher: Yeah, I only did it, I think once or twice. [laughs] No thank you! Yeah. I've just got few more questions. Do you monitor your practice progress? And if so, how.

00:42:12.373 --> 00:42:13.160

Instrumentalist 2: Nah, not really.

00:42:13.910 --> 00:42:14.470

Researcher: No.

00:42:14.670 --> 00:42:24.700

Instrumentalist 2: I don't know. Like I say, it's kind of deadline focussed. I've learned to trust myself that it's *kind of* going to be where it needs to be in time.

00:42:25.270 --> 00:42:25.820

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:42:25.820 --> 00:42:33.770

Instrumentalist 2: I can't really say that I have like a sliding scale or thing that I... Nah, not really.

00:42:33.770 --> 00:42:44.600

Researcher: Hmm. And this is *probably* also related, then. What motivates you to practise and what happens when you *don't* feel motivated?

00:42:45.530 --> 00:43:39.610

Instrumentalist 2: Ok. Well, when I don't feel motivated, I have a bad day. What motivates us to practise is in part a... There is an element of fear of failure. I think if musicians are honest about this, that's true for everybody. Cause, you know, at the end of the day we don't just want to be good at a thing. We *have* to be good at it in front of people. And the other side of that, though, is trying to understand what it is that people value in a concert. And I don't think that musicians are always very good at that. Everyone gets really obsessive about stuff backstage, and the thing I always say to people is, "Nobody ever left a concert saying, 'I'm going to remember this for the rest of my life, because it was so efficient'". It's just simply not a thing that anybody remembers. So, anyway, I've just moved away from what the question was. What was the question again?

00:43:40.258 --> 00:43:45.310

Researcher: The question was, what motivates you, and what happens when you don't feel motivated.

00:43:45.610 --> 00:44:10.130

Instrumentalist 2: Ok. When I don't feel motivated, it becomes a job. That can be for a number of reasons. If, as happens sometimes, I have to learn a piece of music that I don't believe in,

then that is just drudgery. And it's just like literally putting your shoes on and going to work. "Down't pit" or something. [laughs] or something that's really not very enjoyable.

00:44:10.580 --> 00:44:12.030

Researcher: Yeah, uhuh..

00:44:12.030 --> 00:44:16.360

Instrumentalist 2: Inspiration isn't like a tap. You can't just turn it on and off.

00:44:16.920 --> 00:44:17.350

Researcher: Mmhm.

00:44:17.350 --> 00:44:43.819

Instrumentalist 2: Sometimes you *burn* with inspiration and everything flows, and things come very, very quickly. You have to capitalise on those times and use them, and make sure that you get the stuff done that you can during those times of inspiration flashes. But the rest of the time, for the most part, when I'm not feeling particularly motivated, I can't say that I *don't* enjoy it. It becomes a slightly more meditative thing of somewhat going through the motions, I suppose.

00:44:45.190 --> 00:44:50.579

Researcher: Hmm! And is there anything you wish you could change about your practice?

00:44:52.070 --> 00:44:58.229

Instrumentalist 2: Oh, yeah, everything. Yeah. My personality.

00:44:59.410 --> 00:45:01.229

Researcher: Oh no!

00:45:01.230 --> 00:45:36.250

Instrumentalist 2: Everything I've said about me being really self-destructive when I'm practising. It's just how I'm made. And I could see a psychologist about it, or something, and try and fix it. But I don't think my performances would have as much fire. It's just how I'm made. I *genuinely* suffer for my art. My practice can be really... I beat myself up a lot. I wish I weren't like that sometimes, but it's just how I'm made. [laughs]

00:45:37.000 --> 00:45:43.879

Researcher: Yeah. You have to the highs with the lows. It's part of the temperament, I suppose.

00:45:44.050 --> 00:46:26.129

Instrumentalist 2: It is, but you know you learn it as well. You learn. I'm not a depressive personality by any stretch of the imagination, but I know that after a big project I will go through a few days afterwards that feel like everybody describes depression. I *know* that, so I'm able to sit back and observe it and let it happen. Let my brain do what it needs to do before it gets back to normal. And I suppose that's to do with... Effectively, we're all junkies. We've got these adrenaline chemicals running around through our brain, and when they go there must be some kind of withdrawal, or something that happens afterwards.

00:46:26.670 --> 00:46:27.530

Researcher: Yeah. [chuckles]

00:46:29.710 --> 00:46:34.549

Instrumentalist 2: When I describe this to other musicians, and I do sometimes, *everybody* is familiar with it.

00:46:35.360 --> 00:46:37.530

Researcher: Uhuh. Yeah.

00:46:37.530 --> 00:46:49.799

Instrumentalist 2: It's just that with the pressures of social media and stuff we live in this "la de da", "everything's marvellous" to the public reality. Life isn't that great. It's not as great as everyone projects it being. But I'm certain that's true for everybody.

0:46:49.800 --> 00:46:50.330

Researcher: No.

00:46:50.330 --> 00:46:52.469

Instrumentalist 2: I'm certain it's true for everybody.

00:46:56.510 --> 00:47:28.540

Researcher: Again, I'm reminded of one of your videos you put up [online]. I think it was a swearsy one, where you [were] having a bad practice day, and I was like, "That is brilliant. I wish I had the bravery to do that". It really made me smile. Yeah, we all have them. You've mentioned this already, actually. I don't know if you want to expand on it any further. But do you consider singers and instrumentalists to approach practice in the same way?

00:47:28.930 --> 00:48:33.119

Instrumentalist 2: No, I really don't. I think the singers have a whole load of other considerations. First thing, singers are more on show than instrumentalists. They don't have anything to hide behind. Instrumentalists can get a bit sneery about how studied the stage persona of the singer can be. There isn't a choice. That is part of what singers do. Persona is part of the performance. The other thing is text. Text and diction, which musicians would do *well* to think about more. Whenever a composer writes "cantabile" over a piano melody. "Cantabile" is "in a singing style" which involves diction and breath. So I think, even without knowing you're doing it, singers have a very refined sense of "rubato", because you need to in order to fit in words, particularly if you're doing something like German language or stuff where you've got like this shit tonne of consonants to fit in no space. You have to bend the tempo in order to accommodate the words.

00:48:33.120 --> 00:48:33.689

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:48:33.690 --> 00:48:57.179

Instrumentalist 2: You do it all the time. That's what Chopin meant, I think, when he told Instrumentalist 2s to listen to the great singers. [Dog name] will you shut up? [dog groans] He's saying, "Feed me!" and grabbing my hand. This is what he does, isn't it? You're such a [dog breed]. He's just gonna groan at me until I feed him.

00:48:57.180 --> 00:48:58.710

Researcher: You wanna go feed him?

00:48:58.710 --> 00:49:00.210

Instrumentalist 2: I'll feed him in a minute. He's fine.

00:49:00.210 --> 00:49:08.309

Researcher: Ok, we're nearly done anyway. Yeah. So Chopin and "cantabile".

00:49:08.590 --> 00:49:33.100

Instrumentalist 2: Yeah Chopin and cantabile: It means imitate what singers have to do, which is find ways to accommodate breath and diction and still create the impression of a

smooth phrase. You know about that “bel canto” method of adding the consonants last? That method of singing, where they tried to make everything as smooth as possible.

00:49:33.100 --> 00:49:33.660

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:49:33.660 --> 00:49:44.860

Instrumentalist 2: We have to approach it “reverse engineered”, because Instrumentalist 2s are as “lumpy” as possible, and we have mitigate the lumpiness. If you consider the beginning of every note on a piano as being like a “K”.

00:49:45.480 --> 00:49:46.180

Researcher: Hmm.

00:49:46.900 --> 00:49:58.320

Instrumentalist 2: A pronounced “K” is the head of every note on the piano. So we have to mitigate the “K” at the beginning of notes. Whereas singers often have to find ways of making the “Ks” very, very clear.

00:50:00.400 --> 00:50:01.450

Researcher: Hmm.

00:50:01.450 --> 00:50:03.529

Instrumentalist 2: That’s probably a bad way of looking at it.

00:50:03.530 --> 00:50:04.215

Researcher: No!

00:50:05.060 --> 00:50:40.530

Instrumentalist 2: But that is, I think, a fundamental difference between how singers and Instrumentalist 2s work. Other instruments are different. I think a lot of it is to do with articulation and the nature of what we’re doing. So playing the Brahms’ Horn Trio is a really interesting experience because of the impossibility of blend. You have the struck string. You have the bowed string and you have the brass trying to make music together. That is three *completely* opposed timbres and three *completely* different forms of articulation.

00:50:40.530 --> 00:50:41.080

Researcher: Hmmm!

00:50:41.080 --> 00:50:54.180

Instrumentalist 2: That actually made me think about that for the first time, about how articulation is actually part of the core nature of each musical instrument or voice. You know, articulation is so important.

00:50:54.650 --> 00:50:59.440

Researcher: Hmm, yeah, I hadn’t considered that. That’s fascinating. Yeah!

00:50:59.440 --> 00:51:37.120

Instrumentalist 2: That must affect how we work. It affects how singers work. And the other thing, of course, I said at the beginning was time limits. A singer can only go on so long before they have to rest their voices or things just stop working. There’s nothing you can do about it. It doesn’t matter how good your technique is, the stamina goes. The same for wind players and their lips. They can’t go on as long as Instrumentalist 2s can, Instrumentalist 2s and string players. We can just go on and on and on and on, unless we’ve got an injury or something.

00:51:37.500 --> 00:51:38.020

Researcher: Uhuh.

00:51:38.020 --> 00:52:59.860

Instrumentalist 2: So I think that's the main, fundamental difference. The other thing is with singers, specifically opera singers, is that everything they do is project-based. Therefore, I think that their work tends to be completely immersive. So, if somebody is contracted by an opera house to sing a role, they're going to be involved in that for about three or four months, *only* studying one thing. [For] instrumentalists, it tends to be a lot more varied and a lot more multi-style. That's not to suggest that what the singers do is in any sense easier, because it's not. They're not. An opera singer has to be an actor at the same time as being a singer and [deal with] a slave dickhead, director and stuff like that. And then the recital singers are always having to deal with the psychology of poetry - an element that mattered a *very* great deal to instrumentalists in the nineteenth century, but not so much now. You know that there were songs for instruments that were written out *actually* with text, but were never intended to be sung other than at a musical instrument? Liszt with his Schubert song transcriptions *always* included the text in them.

00:53:01.210 --> 00:53:02.100

Researcher: Ah!

00:53:02.100 --> 00:53:25.279

Instrumentalist 2: There's a really interesting thing. I know I can find out who wrote it. There was, I think, this is going back to the eighteenth century, a strophic song analysed by somebody in the nineteenth century, where they give a separate metronome mark for each phrase of the song.

00:53:26.790 --> 00:53:27.380

Researcher: Wow!

00:53:27.880 --> 00:53:47.780

Instrumentalist 2: Yeah, relating to the text. I'll find it. I can't find it now, but I'll find it for you and send it to you because it might actually be relevant to your study in terms of other stuff. I mean, we work differently because we have to.

00:53:48.490 --> 00:54:07.739

Researcher: Yeah. Last question before [dog name's] breakfast! You mentioned that you were a talented bluffer. What are your thoughts on innate talent?

00:54:08.430 --> 00:54:40.170

Instrumentalist 2: I don't know... If you look at talented children. Some kids just have a natural knack to pick up certain things. Now that is, I think, about attraction. That some kids are *attracted* to music and sound. But the other thing, I think, that separates... Going back to when I was teaching, the ones who did well, were the ones that had an ability to hyperfocus. So talent is probably an ability to concentrate *very*, *very* hard.

00:54:41.060 --> 00:54:41.280

Researcher: Yeah.

00:54:41.531 --> 00:54:45.809

Instrumentalist 2: For a longer period of time than perhaps many other people. I *think* that's what talent is.

00:54:49.432 --> 00:54:54.179

Researcher: [sneezes] Ok, that's interesting! Cool! Thanks.

00:54:54.390 --> 00:54:55.120

Instrumentalist 2: That's alright!

00:54:56.293 --> 00:55:00.380

Researcher: And lastly, do you have any questions yourself?

00:55:00.380 --> 00:55:04.430

Instrumentalist 2: No, but I'd love to see what the results are of your research when they're done.

00:55:04.970 --> 00:55:07.718

Researcher: I will send you the paper if you would like it.

00:55:07.930 --> 00:55:08.839

Instrumentalist 2: I would love it.

00:55:09.930 --> 00:55:10.800

Researcher: Ok!

<i>Table 16: Interview transcriptions</i>
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Appendix Q: Summary of benefits, difficulties and ethical considerations arising from ITR

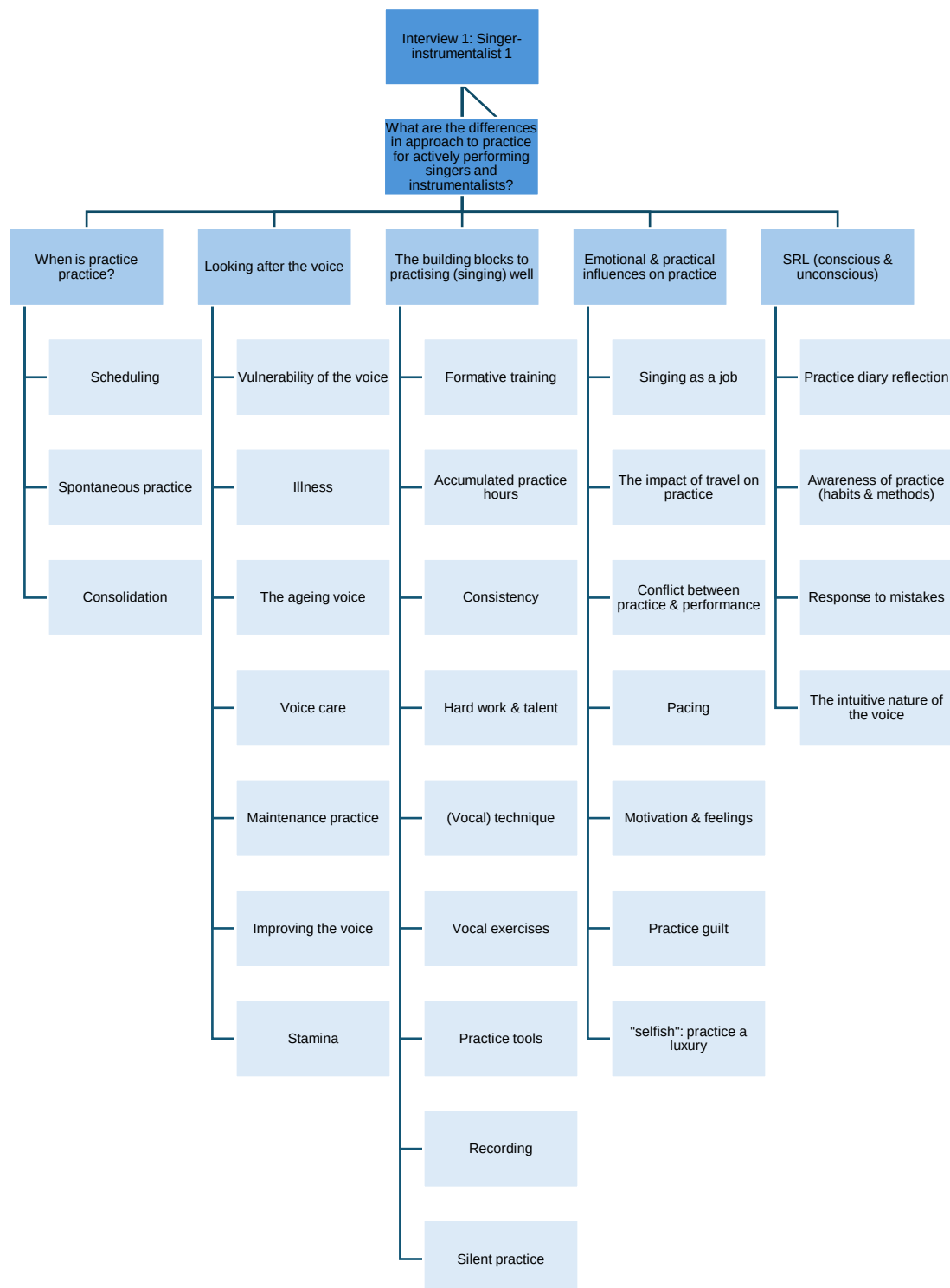
Potential benefit	Potential difficulties
Provides participants with assurance that the transcript is representative of their experience.	Pursuit of accuracy could assume only one “truth”. Participants are drawn into a dialogue with their transcript, threatening the epistemological snapshot of “truth” at the given time of the interview. (Perspective changes across time and space.)
Participants are given greater control of potentially sensitive or identifying data.	Opportunity cost could outweigh the benefits.
Increase participant confidence in anonymity.	Can affect research relationship negatively
Can be reassuring for participants to see their words in writing.	Seeing speech in writing can cause discomfort or distress in participants who may react adversely (e.g. participant feels they are come across illiterate).
Can help readjust power relations between researcher and participant.	Power rebalancing can only be partial.
Acknowledges contribution of participants	Process can be time-consuming
Communication between researcher and participant kept open	Participants can feel obliged to participate
Further way of engaging participants in the research process.	An extra expectation and responsibility placed upon participants.
Improve accuracy by inviting correction.	Transcript revision can lose data richness by formulisation.
Encourages continuous consideration of voluntary, informed consent.	
Demonstrates a commitment to ethical praxis	
Opportunity for (researcher) closure and self-care.	
Table 17: Summary of benefits, difficulties and ethical considerations arising from ITR (summarised from Rowlands, 2021).	

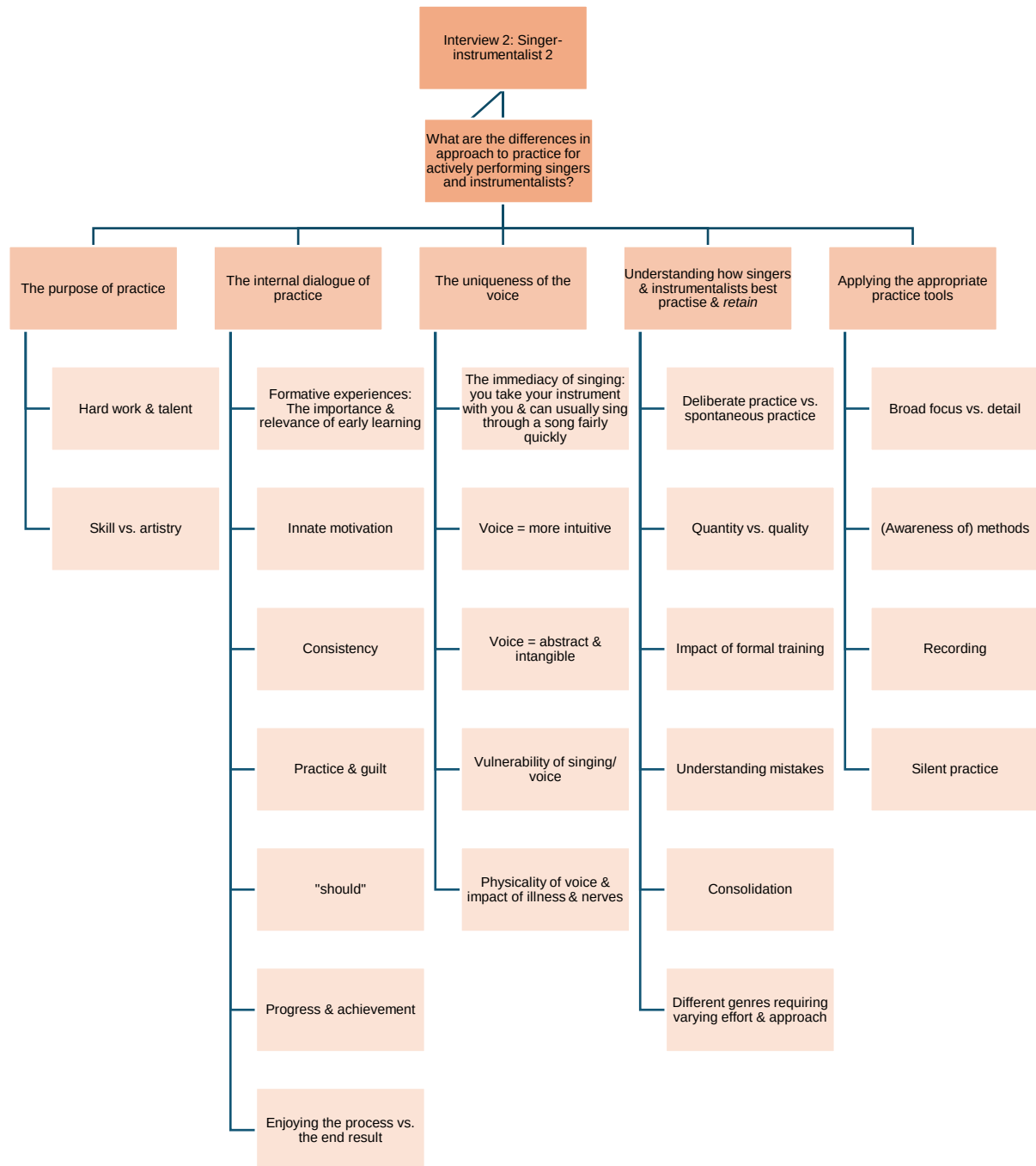
Appendix R: Checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

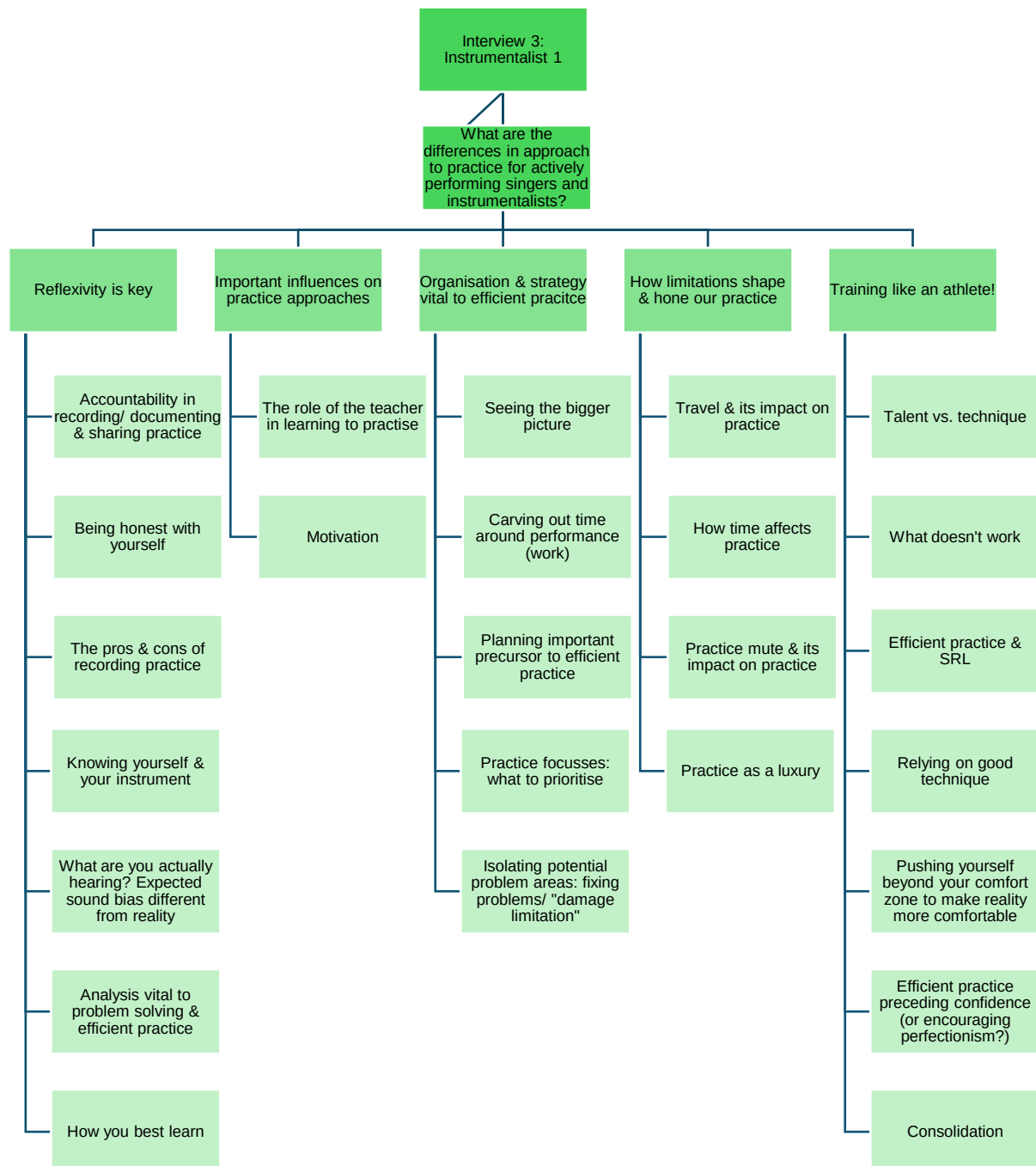
Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
Analysis	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
Overall	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as <i>active</i> in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

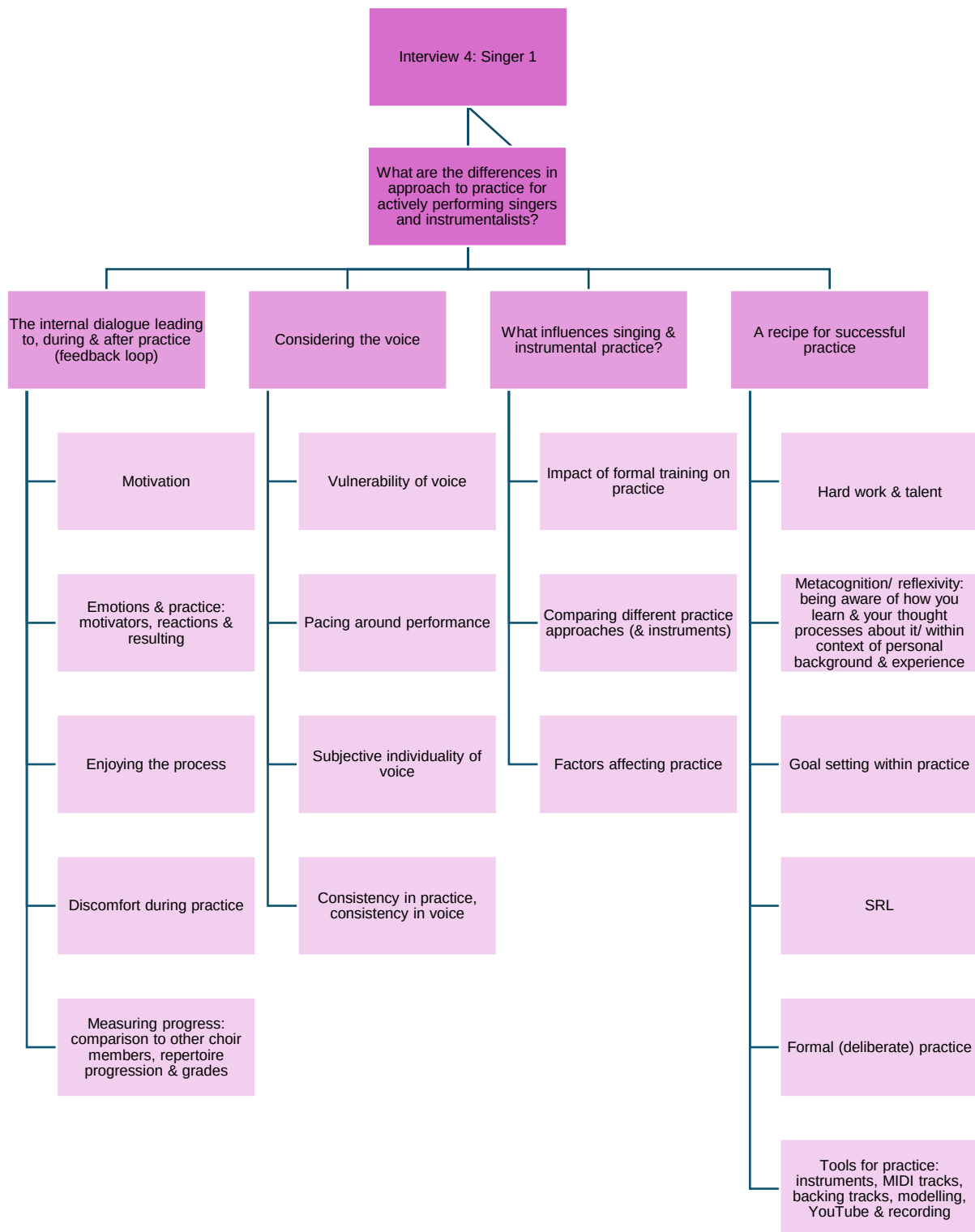
Table 18: Checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

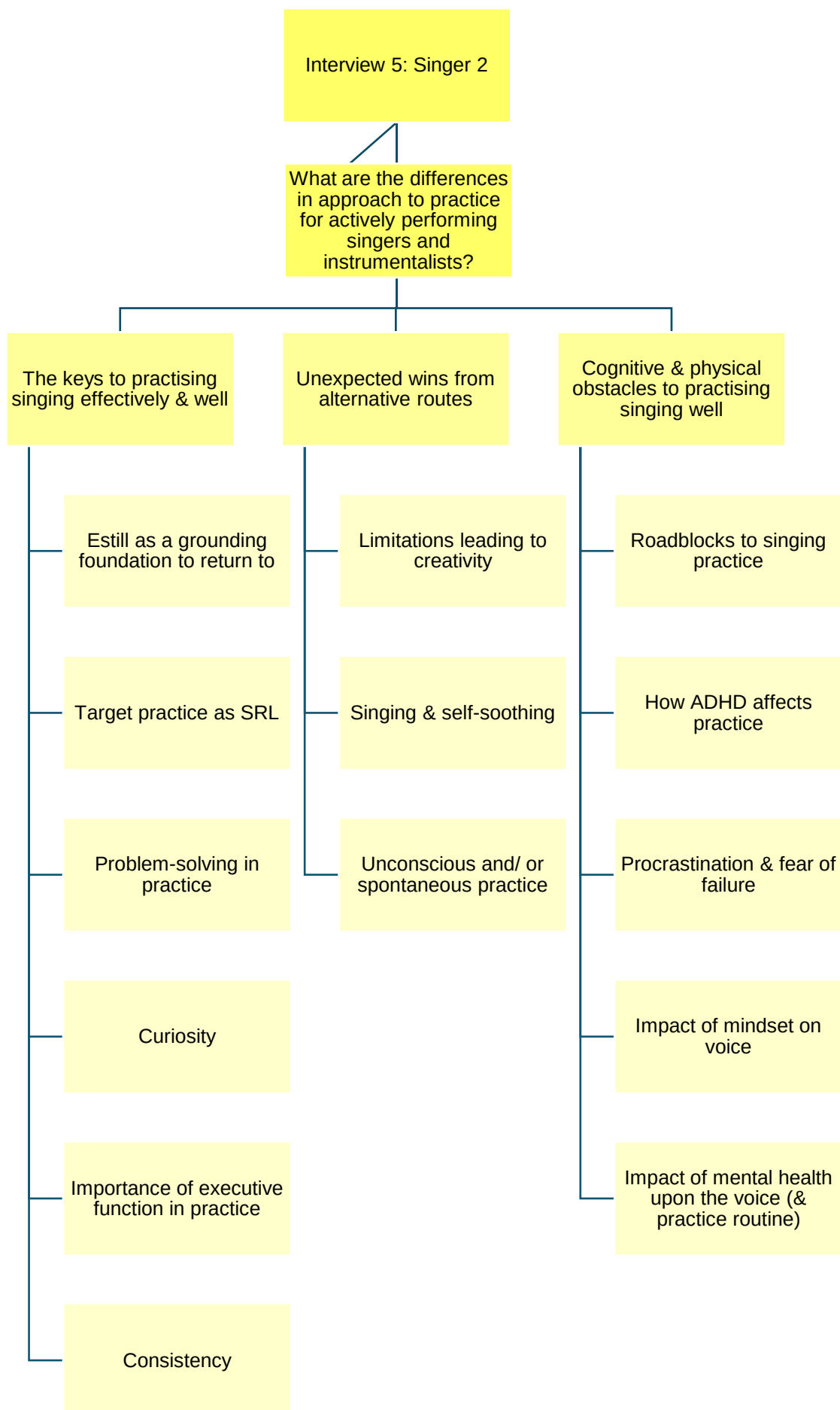
Appendix S: Emergent themes from thematic analysis of dataset











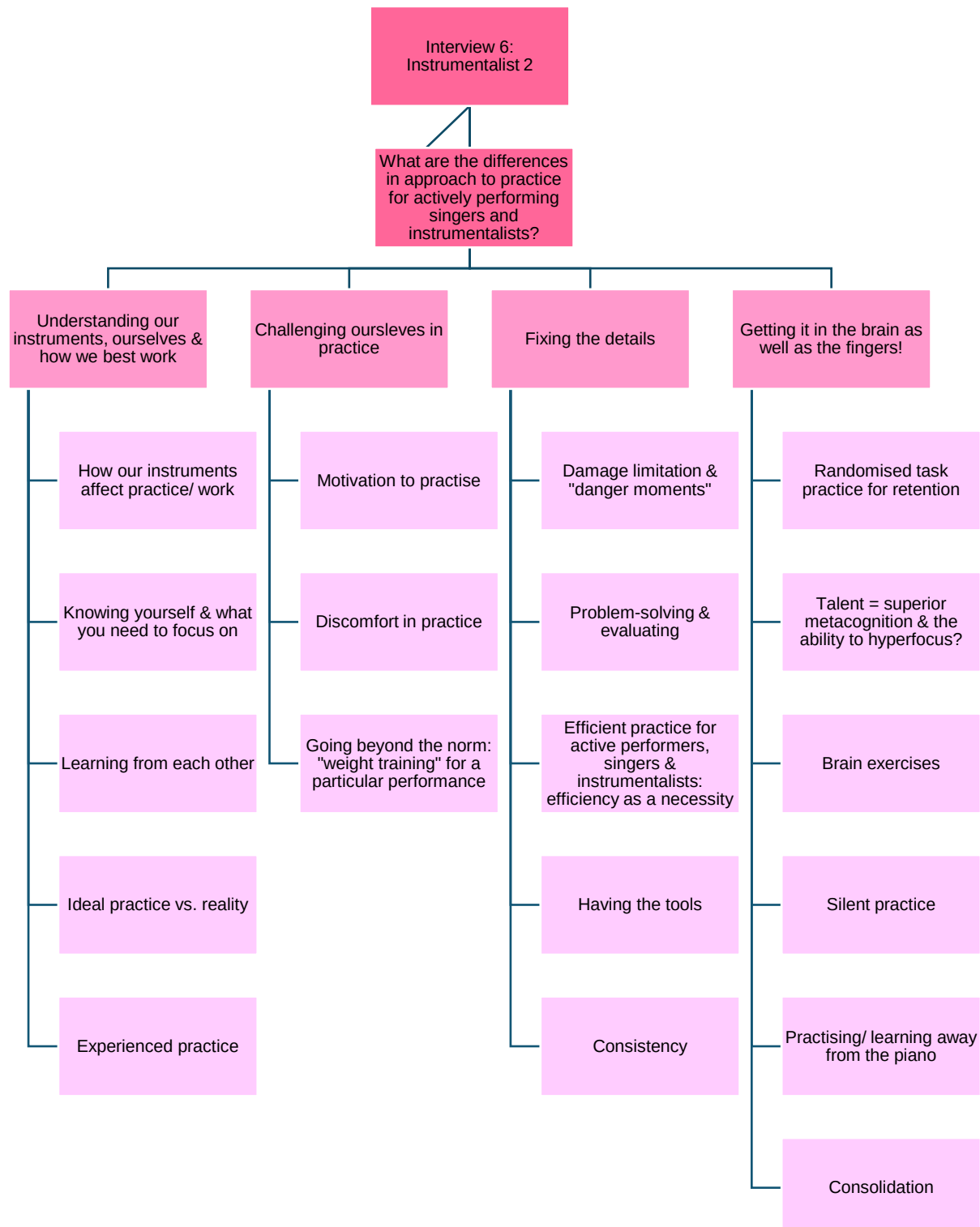


Figure 19: Emergent themes from thematic analysis of dataset

Appendix T: Comprehensive table of overarching themes, sub-themes, correlating codes and exemplifying excerpts from the six interview transcripts

Overarching theme	Sub-themes	Related codes	Excerpts
How instrument's nature affects practice	No matter the instrument, consistent hard work is required	Hard work & talent	Singer-instrumentalist 1: I think you've got to have a voice in the first place. I always say it's not about how good your voice is, it's what work you put into it... For example, you're not going to be Michael Ball without having something naturally, in the first place. But it's the work he did to build his voice which <i>made</i> him Michael Ball. So I do think you have to have something naturally, but I do believe everybody can sing. [...] The same with acting. You audition to get into drama school. But you have to have <i>something</i> in the first place, to win a place to get in. But then you learn the tools [inaudible] to develop, and I think it's the same with singing and any form of music. Singer 2: "Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard". And that's how I feel about it. I do believe that any anybody can learn to sing. Anybody can learn to use the instrument that they have. It <i>doesn't</i> mean that anybody can sing on the stage of a West End theatre. But anybody can learn to use the muscular mechanics of how to produce a good sound. With the exception, maybe, of people that are tone deaf, but that's <i>actually</i> extremely rare. [I've] met a lot of people who thought they were. [I've] never actually met somebody who was. Singer-instrumentalist 2: I always think of the phrase "Hard work beats talent, once talent doesn't work hard", so I feel like, if you're lucky enough to have the innate talent, you should still work hard, because then you can be so much better than the people who just work hard and don't necessarily have the innate talent. But I still feel hard work <i>can</i> get you on par with innate talent, even if the innate talent is working hard. Singer 1: There's no doubt that some natural talent goes a long way to how good you can ultimately get. [...] you can be as hardworking and disciplined

			as you like, but if you don't have some degree of natural talent, [...] you're going to hit a ceiling. Whereas people who've got a lot of natural talent, their <i>potential</i> is much greater. But then, [...] and if they don't put in the hard graft and have the discipline and the enthusiasm and the perseverance and everything else that goes with it, they're also going to hit a ceiling because they're just eventually going to get frustrated, or they're just going to waste their talents. So my view is that it's great if you can have a bit of both. [...] There's so much that goes into creating a consistently good voice, particularly with singing. I'm more convinced now that, particularly at my age, it's not just the talent. It's the work. But I think ultimately the two <i>have</i> to go together. I don't think you can have one without the other. Instrumentalist 1: I mean what even is talent? It's such a banal concept, but it <i>does</i> seem to exist. [...] To get to a really good standard, you don't have to be super talented. You just have to have good teaching, and enjoy it, and want to practise, and practise well.
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		Skill vs. artistry	Singer-instrumentalist 2: But I still feel hard work <i>can</i> get you on par with innate talent, even if the innate talent is working hard. Maybe just skill wise, not necessarily artistically wise, because sometimes you just have it, or you don't have it. And knowing how to phrase things and stuff like that. Singer 2: Is there a way that you can <i>teach</i> the artistry side of it in as precise a way as you can teach the craft side of it? [...] I very much believe that the greater the technical facility you have, the greater the artistic freedom you have. And that's what we all really want from our voices, isn't it? In terms of producing something good: Is to be able to make any artistic decision you want, and know how to do it, and your body just be able to provide that for you. That you can train, but I don't know how much of the artistry side of it can be trained. [...] I think the thing that practice gives us, is that opportunity to broaden the scope of your artistry. Whatever that desire is, the more specific the practice of your craft is, the more you're likely to maximise whatever that spark is, that gives somebody "something". That is whatever talent is.
		Consistency	Singer-instrumentalist 1: That is something I'm very conscious of, whether I am just sitting there playing a song, or whether I'm learning the words to a new song or something, I'm doing <i>something</i> every day. Singer 2: They say it takes 10,000 hours or 10 years to become an expert at something. It <i>literally</i> took me 10 years to get my tongue under control - to get to the point where I suddenly realised I'm not even thinking about it anymore, which was an amazing discovery. But it literally took 10 years for that to be the case. Singer 2: For the last 15 years, I've gone up to Edinburgh and sung at the jazz bar as part of the Edinburgh festival. [...] In preparation for that, at the time I was still running my choir. So once a week, I had this school hall that I'd got booked for the choir. [...] And I had a key to it, so nobody knew how late I stayed. But I would stay after

			choir and do my rehearsal. I actually started doing it months and months before, and I finally discovered that, if you start rehearsing at an appropriate time - and really, really, really, really practise - the result is a lot better [laughs] than procrastinating everything until the last minute! Instrumentalist 2: I think part of being an experienced performer is understanding where the danger moments are. And that [only comes with] the experience of performing stuff, and also knowing yourself. Knowing what you cope with well and what you don't cope with well. [...] We're all different. Some people struggle to play fast. Some people <i>really</i> struggle with memory. It's about tailoring your practice to your own natural abilities. So I don't need help playing fast. I <i>learn</i> fast, so I <i>usually</i> don't need too much help with memorising. But there are things that I <i>do</i> need help with - as with most people who are quick learners - consistency. We shouldn't just sit back and rely on the fact that it might come off. It <i>might</i> come off. You need to eliminate as much of the "might" as possible.
	Considerations for a living instrument	Physical & psychological vulnerability of the voice	Singer 1: With singing, the thing that I find frustrating is that on any given day your voice can be so different. If you're dehydrated, the way that you sing and practise can be very different to another day. Or if you've eaten something spicy and you've got a tickle in your throat, or if you've got hay fever or a cold coming on, or if you're tired, or I find that if I sing at night, my voice is very different to how it is if I practise or sing in the morning. There's so many variations with the voice and singing that I don't find with anything else I do. And your mood, if you're feeling a little bit down or up, that can also influence significantly how I practise or how it <i>feels</i> when I'm singing, which comes back to "personal" things. Singer-instrumentalist 2: With singing, one time I had a really sore throat the day before I had a gig, so I

			just didn't sing at all. I listened to the songs and tried to remember the lyrics. Singer-instrumentalist 1: I probably spend more time thinking vocally, because that is my living. And if I didn't focus on that, and I damage my voice, what would I do? [...] So vocally I have to keep on top of it. Singer 1: But the voice comes from within you. It's produced by you and you only, whereas everything else, all other instruments - yes it's your body making movements that create it - but it's all external. The voice comes from within. I find that it's a very personal thing. But I guess that sort of informs or influences how I practise. I struggle to really put it into words. But practising as a singer just feels very different to practising a musical instrument, because it's so personal. You're producing that sound and it's unique to you, your voice. There's no other person in the world that has a voice that sounds exactly like you. Whereas okay, I know that Instrumentalist 2s will play pianos very differently, and I know different instruments, different pianos will have different timbres and different actions and all sorts, but it's still an external machine that's just wood and metal and wire. Your voice is an organic, living thing really. I know it's ultimately just a sound wave, but it is produced from organic things, if that makes sense? It always feels very personal. I can't really express it much more than using that word for me, "personal". Singer-instrumentalist 2: Because you're using your <i>own</i> voice, you're not using something else to channel something through. So it's actually how <i>you</i> sound, because although people have different sounds on instruments, if you play the flute, you're going to sound <i>very</i> similar to another flautist. But that's not the same for singers, so it's a bit more revealing.
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		The ageing voice	Singer-instrumentalist 1: I'm very conscious that some songs that were easy 20 years ago are a little harder now. My voice is still quite high and healthy and strong, and I can do all this stuff. But I'm sure there are some songs that are a little bit more difficult now than they were, and I'm sure that's going to be more noticeable as time goes on.
		Voice care	Singer-instrumentalist 1: Normally I do do exercises, but the other week I was actually doing a full on hour and a half vocal stretching "Yoga for the cords". Every year I go and get an "MOT", as I call it, with a friend of mine, [name] [inaudible]. I use those exercises on sort of a weekly basis. It's just kind of [to] keep my voice, depending on what I'm doing. Singer-instrumentalist 1: I do believe it's doing these exercises, which is keeps my voice strong and healthy really, touch wood. Singer-instrumentalist 1: If you don't have any exercises at all, and you try to do what we do, your voice won't last that long. You'll damage it. Singer-instrumentalist 1: I'll do the long thing at the beginning of the week. You don't want to overdo it. You don't want to put your voice through it too much if you're going to go and sing for an hour or two. And so, I certainly don't overdo it. Singer-instrumentalist 1: I have the "Vocalzone" teas and stuff to keep my voice good when I've got gigs, especially if I'm not feeling well, or if it's a big gigging week. But I also like to live my life as well, and that does mean coffee. It does mean if I've got a Saturday night off, I wanna have a few beers. [...] . I <i>consciously</i> look after my voice, but I probably do have 2 more caffeine that would be recommended for a singer to have.
		Pacing (around performance)	Singer-instrumentalist 2: With singing, one time I had a really sore throat the day before I had a gig, so I just didn't sing at all. I listened to the songs and tried to remember the lyrics. Singer-instrumentalist 1: I won't overdo it. If I'm learning a song, I'll do a

			10/ 15 minute warm up so my voice is warm for the learning the song and also, if I've got a gig later that day, I don't overdo it. [...] I'll do the long thing at the beginning of the week. You don't want to overdo it. You don't want to put your voice through it too much if you're going to go and sing for an hour or two. And so, I certainly don't overdo it. Singer-instrumentalist 1: I'll be doing that song most of the day. I'll take the dogs for a walk and let the words try and subconsciously fall into my head. But I'll be humming them as I go around. I don't wanna overdo it by then spending an hour on vocal exercises. They're [for] the days where I've got nothing else to do. I'll do that for an hour, and then move on. But if I'm learning songs: short warm up and then I'll be singing throughout the day, on and off. Singer 1: I don't practise every single day necessarily. Because I had quite a busy singing week last week, I've rested my voice over the last two or three days, so I haven't really been doing a lot of practice <i>this</i> week. But in the week prior to that I was doing it most days, just to gear up for the performance. Singer 1: When I do miss a practice, I do feel a little bit guilty, or I think to myself, "Damn! I wish I'd actually found half an hour today to sing". Right now is a good example, because I've only practised once this week, because after my concert on Saturday I wanted to give myself a couple of days break, but then I also had quite a lot of work, so I didn't really practise on the Monday or the Tuesday. Then I do start to feel a little bit guilty and a little bit frustrated. Instrumentalist 2: A singer can only go on so long before they have to rest their voices or things just stop working. There's nothing you can do about it. It doesn't matter how good your technique is, the stamina goes. The same for wind players and their lips. They can't go on as long as Instrumentalist 2s can, Instrumentalist 2s and string players. We can just go
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			on and on and on and on, unless we've got an injury or something. Instrumentalist 1: As an instrumentalist, I think [stamina] also is down to technique. And if you have a technique that's all built around relaxation and is a tension-free approach to playing - is a really holistic whole-body tension-free approach - I <i>don't</i> think stamina is an issue as long as you're doing it a lot. Obviously if I practise for ten hours, when you only would normally practise for five minutes, that's going to be an issue. But if you're constantly practising quite a lot, I think stamina is not a problem, unless you have a lot of tension built into your technique.
		Physical & psychological enjoyment of singing	Singer 1: Personally, I find that singing improves my mood. I definitely feel better after I sing. In fact, I'd say it rarely is the opposite. I don't find that singing puts me into a bad mood or makes me feel bad. It always improves my mood and I feel more energised after I've sung, without a doubt. [...] Even if I don't necessarily sing all that well on a particular given day, or my voice is a bit weird or croaky or something, I still feel, on balance, better after having done <i>some</i> singing. So it's definitely for me a mood enhancer. Singer 1: I <i>do</i> genuinely enjoy it. I actually enjoy practising singing. It's sort of a break in my day. It helps to de-stress. It's fun! I think that's the important thing.
		The voice: intuitive but abstract & intangible	Singer-instrumentalist 2: You <i>can</i> practise wrong techniques, but generally it's very intuitive. You can feel when it's wrong, and then you steer away from it. Singer-instrumentalist 2: It's just not quite the same, because it's not like you're moving your fingers to a different key. Instrumentalist 1: I'm assuming that technically it's quite different and there's only so much practising that you can do, as a singer, before you're just killing yourself. Presumably it has to be quite structured and analytical about <i>how</i> the instrument itself is working because it's not an abstract

		thing of, "Okay, I did that and then it's in the right place." Also on the piano you've got <i>keys</i> and you press them and the note comes out! Violin is already a bit more abstract than that, but I'm assuming that because of those things, as a singer it is a different approach to how to practise. Singer-instrumentalist 2: Sometimes it's quite hard to hear how I sound when I'm singing, so I have to record myself. And then the recordings sometimes are kind of bad. And then, when I record myself, I'm not very good at recognising what exactly I did to make it sound bad! But with flute you can tell: "Oh, I messed up that note", or "I didn't take a big enough breath here". Singing [is the] same a little bit, but it's not quite as easy to spot. Singer 1: When I'm practising at home, I am trying to get better. If I do make a mistake, I don't just gloss over it and say, "Oh, well, I'll try it again tomorrow, and hopefully it'll be fine". I do try and fix it or try and make a conscious effort to try and understand it, and then think, "Okay, well, how do I get better?" And if I can't fix it, I always then come back to you in the singing lesson, if it's something that's we're working through together.
	Immediacy of singing: you take your instrument wherever you go	Singer-instrumentalist 2: You're constantly using your voice. It's always around you. Singer-instrumentalist 2: Whenever I have a spare moment, I'm humming the tune, or singing the tune and thinking "Ooh ok!" Singer-instrumentalist 2: With singing, you've always got your voice on you so unless you're in a public place, you can just start singing. So it's a lot less restricted in terms of when you practise.
	Efficiency is key	Instrumentalist 2: A singer can only go on so long before they have to rest their voices or things just stop working. There's nothing you can do about it. It doesn't matter how good your technique is, the stamina goes. The same for wind players and their lips. They can't go on as long as Instrumentalist 2s can, Instrumentalist 2s and string players. We can just go

			on and on and on and on, unless we've got an injury or something. Instrumentalist 2: I learn a lot working particularly with wind players and singers, because you guys have time limits. As a singer you cannot practise for eight hours day. It's not doable. <i>Most</i> wind players can't. Some can. And brass players absolutely never. So they have to be really economical with how they practise, in a way that perhaps... Instrumentalist 2s <i>do</i>, because we have to learn more notes than anybody else. [...] But <i>you</i> actually have to be economical to think, "Okay, I can't really work for more than two hours. So I'm gonna have to make the most use of those two hours and be as productive as possible within the time." I don't have that kind of pressure as a Instrumentalist 2. That doesn't exist.
		Attractor state	Singer 2: That's one of the big advantages of the Estill approach, is that you can "target practice". So if there's things you're already doing well, you can leave them alone. That's your "attractor state". You don't need to change it. Don't mess with it. But you can go specifically to the muscles and target practice. So everything becomes like a masterclass.
		Efficient target practice	Singer 2: I think the more specific your practice is, the more effective it is. Singer 2: When something's not working, I try... My initial reaction will be emotional and will be negative, but I try to then step back from it and think, "Why is it happening? Is there a specific... Is the issue emotional? Or is it actually a physical thing that is being masked by my emotional reaction to it?" And if it's a physical thing, I can do something about that, because I can drill it. Physical things you can deal with a lot more easily. Singer 1: I think the important thing is that when you make a mistake that you, and I don't always do this consistently, but if you make a mistake, making a conscious effort to correct it, or to understand maybe <i>why</i> it happened. Because I'm having lessons now as well, I think my discipline is better in that respect. Because if I'm

			singing with my singing teacher and they point out a mistake, it's bit more obvious. It's more obvious as to <i>why</i> it is, whereas if I was just on my own trying to sing something, I wouldn't necessarily know. Well, A) I might not know that I've made a mistake, or B) I don't know, if something's not quite right, I don't always have the skills or experience to be able to fix it.
Determining when practice is practice	Is deliberate singing practice common practice for singers?	The nature of our voice leads to spontaneous practice	Singer 2: I'd thought that I hadn't practised at all this week. But then things started popping into my head that made me realise that actually, I'd had several sessions where I'd practised. I just don't demark them [gestures] as a practice session. If something pops into my head, I will practise it and then just carry on with what I was doing before, or go do something else. Singer-instrumentalist 2: With flute, it's not like I have it around me all day. It has to be a time, and I have a music stand, and I've got my flute, and then I'm practising. Singer-instrumentalist 2: You're constantly using your voice. It's always around you. Singer-instrumentalist 2: Whenever I have a spare moment, I'm humming the tune, or singing the tune and thinking "Ooh ok!" [...] It's not sitting down and practising. It's just sort of thinking about it. With singing, you've always got your voice on you so unless you're in a public place, you can just start singing. So it's a lot less restricted in terms of when you practise. Singer-instrumentalist 1: I just float over there and do this. And I think I do need a little bit more routine. And I think that's a learning point for me this week: actually make a little more time to schedule <i>actual</i> practice in so it's a bit more structured. Singer-instrumentalist 1: Normally, I just kind of naturally end up sitting there and start doing something. So, depending on how I feel - it might be there's a song I particularly want to learn - so I'll sit at the piano and I will work it out. Or the same with the guitar.

		Deliberate vs. spontaneous practice	Singer-instrumentalist 2: With flute, it's not like I have it around me all day. It has to be a time, and I have a music stand, and I've got my flute, and then I'm practising. Singer-instrumentalist 2: With singing I don't really sit down and practise singing, which I probably should.
		Unconscious practice	Singer 1: I think, probably in a sort of a more subconscious way, I <i>do</i> [visualise/ audiate]. But it's not a conscious decision with both singing it internally and kind of visualising. I think those just happen during the course of my day when I'm doing things. Singer 1: I haven't built [silent practice and visualisation] into any of my practice or into my routines as a specific tool to achieve something. It happens more naturally, I think. Singer 1: I do sort of sing in my head without it actually coming out. But it's a little bit disturbing to be honest, because it becomes like a brainworm! And then I can't seem to stop singing it in my head, which actually starts to become a bit annoying after a while. I don't know whether it's embedding the song in my head by having it in my head, and actually [if] it is helping or not. I don't do it on purpose. Instrumentalist 2: Particularly in processes of note learning and memorising a new piece, this actually keeps me awake at night. I can't actually silence [it]. It's like a chorus of musical voices in the back of my head. Sometimes, when it gets intense, it literally just affects everything in my life, in a not always very nice way. It's just a process that has to be gone through.
	Learning when our instrument is silent	Silent practice	Singer 1: If I've got a playlist of songs I need to learn. So if I'm running in the gym, or whatever I'm doing in the gym, I've got those songs playing constantly. So they go into my head. That changes all the time, so songs I need to learn will be whatever songs I have at that moment that I need to do. They'll be there. So even if I'm in the gym, I'm in a way, learning them. Singer-instrumentalist 2: One time I had a really sore throat the day before I

		had a gig, so I just didn't sing at all. I listened to the songs and tried to remember the lyrics. Singer-instrumentalist 2: Generally, if I'm really worried about it, if I have a flute performance the next day but I just don't wanna practise, I'll watch a load of YouTube videos on people performing it, because then it makes me feel like I'm productive. It's still very passive but, you know, it's something! Instrumentalist 2: Particularly if you're dealing with pieces of music that you've performed often, I don't need to bother with practising the whole thing. Memory stuff I can do away from the piano [on] long train journeys. I just go through the music in my head. Check everything. All the sections are in the right order and stuff like that. Instrumentalist 1: I will sit and look through scores on trains and stuff when I've got time. Singer 2: But I also do a lot of focussing on the muscular movement. And silent practice allows you to do that because you can do it with the true folds open and so you're taking the air pressure out of the equation and you can focus on "What is actually the appropriate muscle engagement that I need to do this at a most comfortable vocal level?" And so I do a lot of that. And that's a very Estill thing to do.
	Practising/ learning on the go	Instrumentalist 2: Particularly in processes of note learning and memorising a new piece, this actually keeps me awake at night. I can't actually silence [it]. It's like a chorus of musical voices in the back of my head. Sometimes, when it gets intense, it literally just affects everything in my life, in a not always very nice way. Instrumentalist 1: When I'm away from the violin, I'll often be noodling [mimics fingering out passages], practising through something or it will be going on subconsciously. Sometimes my fingers won't be moving, but I'll suddenly catch myself working through something I'm playing. Singer 1: And I'll be doing that song most of the day. I'll take the dogs for a walk and let the words try and subconsciously fall into my head. But I'll

			be humming them as I go around. [...] I'll be singing throughout the day, on and off.
		Consolidation	Instrumentalist 2: All musicians do this, even if they don't know they're doing it. It's like one of those things they say, "Running as an exercise keeps burning calories after you finish running". It's the same sort of thing with music practice. The brain is working after you've stopped working, if you see what I mean. It still does its thing. Particularly with memorising: I can finish a day of trying to memorise something and think, "This is useless. I can't do it" and then I wake up the next morning, and it's there. Even though it wasn't there when I went to bed.
How limitations can negatively impact and creatively shape practice	Negative impacts upon practice: Travel, time, inhibitions, mental health problems	The impact of travel on practice	Instrumentalist 2: I was thinking it would be good if I were to write a practice diary of one of those weeks where I'm home, and there's nothing going on. But that's not real life. [...] My life is a catalogue of delayed trains, cancelled flights, and trying, as far as possible to fit practice around the increasingly complicated realities of everyday life in a divided kingdom. Singer-instrumentalist 1: I had two gigs this week. I stepped in last minute at the [venue name] to cover a singer who wasn't well. I spent three hours stuck on the A249 with an accident. On Friday I did a gig up in Slough that took three hours to get home because I couldn't get over 20 miles an hour on the M25. And I was still fitting in practice, when I probably might not have [done] because of the diary. Singer-instrumentalist 1: As you can see I've been annoying all of the neighbours [in the hotel] this morning. I went down for some coffee and a bit of breakfast and I'm really conscious people of in their rooms aren't having to check out till midday. Someone might want to lay in and then there's me singing [sings] "Hunk, a hunk of burning love!" [laughs] [...] But we have to work! You know? [...] you don't just warm your voice up when you go and sing. I've got to warm my fingers up as well, 'cause I've got a whole set on that. So you have to do that in the

		morning in this room, annoying everybody. [laughs] Singer-instrumentalist 2: With singing, you've always got your voice on you so unless you're in a public place, you can just start singing. So it's a lot less restricted in terms of when you practise. Instrumentalist 1: I was staying with people because I had a concert the night before. While they were all in bed, I went and hid in their... This is always a difficulty if you're staying somewhere away from home, finding a space in their home that you're not going to disturb people, even with [a] practice mute on. I went in their utility space [which] hasn't got any of the house above it, it's a little extension, with my music on their coal fired boiler. That was an experience! [laughs] I got up extremely early, given I'd been up till one o'clock, very tired. I hadn't opened the music for the concert on Sunday, which we <i>did</i> perform just over a month ago. So at least I'd played it recently, but there's a Saint-Saëns first sonata on the programme, which is just <i>really</i> hard. It has a tonne of notes in it. I just needed to get my hands around it. I <i>hate</i> practising with [a] practice mute, but it's so necessary when you're practising early, and especially if you're staying in somebody's home, because you obviously can't just play full pelt.
	The battle with time	Instrumentalist 1: I'm very self-aware about how I work, because I have to be - because there's never enough time, so I have to be quite analytical and focussed about what I need to do. I can't just spend hours having fun playing violin, because there's <i>never</i> time to do that. Instrumentalist 1: They said I could go back to theirs in Blackheath and was welcome to stay and practise as long as I wanted, so I ended up having this extra... I felt like I'd <i>won</i> time. Because it was afternoon, it was absolutely fine to practise <i>without</i> practice mute. When I do miss a practice, I do feel a little bit guilty, or I think to myself, "Damn! I wish I'd actually found half an hour today to sing". Right now is a good example,

	because I've only practised once this week, because after my concert on Saturday I wanted to give myself a couple of days break, but then I also had quite a lot of work, so I didn't really practise on the Monday or the Tuesday. Then I do start to feel a little bit guilty and a little bit frustrated. Singer 1: When I do miss a practice, I do feel a little bit guilty, or I think to myself, "Damn! I wish I'd actually found half an hour today to sing". Right now is a good example, because I've only practised once this week, because after my concert on Saturday I wanted to give myself a couple of days break, but then I also had quite a lot of work, so I didn't really practise on the Monday or the Tuesday. Then I do start to feel a little bit guilty and a little bit frustrated.
	Practice mute & its impact on practice Instrumentalist 1: If I'm practising at 5am, <i>nobody</i> wants to hear that. So I will always use my practice mute for out-of-hours practice. Anytime between 9am and 6[p]m, maybe 7pm, I'll feel that I can practise without practice mute. But outside those hours I would always use practice mute, because I don't want to upset people. The same when you're staying with people and you get up before everybody else and you practise, I'll always use it then as well. It's not ideal, because you can't really hear. You can <i>sort</i> of hear the intonation, but you can't <i>really</i> hear <i>fine</i> intonation. It'll be in tune, but actually to get it really <i>crisply</i> in tune, you <i>can't</i> do that with [a] practice mute. You can't work on <i>anything</i> to do with sound, because none of that is coming through. You can't hear any variation in what you're doing with your right arm. But, when it's a matter of, (like yesterday), just working through the technical stuff of basically just getting something back in my fingers, that's fine. I can really use that practice time well, doing the right things, but I couldn't use it if I was trying to concentrate on sound quality and phrasing and things like that. It's useless. But it's a necessary evil for those times when you just can't make a lot of noise. And it's just focussing your

	practice so that you know that the time that you've got - three hours of practice with practice mute, and then some other time in the day that you don't need to use practice mute – it's making sure you practise the right things in the different times, so that you're not wasting time with practice mute practising something that you can't really practise.
Procrastination, inhibitions & fear of failure	Singer 2: If I'm preparing something specific, I will keep procrastinating the rehearsal process, the practice process, because I'm terrified that I'm going to find out that I can't do it. And the sooner I start practising, the sooner I'll find out I can't do it, so I delay practising which of course makes it far more likely that, when I finally get to the last minute, I haven't left myself enough practice [time] to make sure that I can do it. And I'm just in this constant cycle of failure [gestures], because I stopped myself from being able to do that thing. Singer 2: There are certain things singing-wise, like belting for example: You can get caught in a Catch 22, because in order to engage the muscles the way you need to in order to belt safely and efficiently, you have to completely commit. How do you completely commit if you're not sure it's going to work? How can you be sure it's going to work if you haven't done it before? But how do you do it before, if you're not able to completely commit?! With my Master's students at [university name], I used to tell them that what they need is a heavy dose of "fuck it". [laughs] And they turned this into a little song they used to sing amongst themselves: "You take your fucks and throw them away! You take your fucks and throw them away!" Basically, when you're learning to belt, there is an extent to which you have to just go "Fuck it!" and do it. Because otherwise you're never going to find the physicality you need in order to do it. Singer 2: In the situation in which I live, I'm in a flat. But it's in a Victorian house conversion, so they were never designed as separate flats. There is very little in terms of soundproofing and

	as a result I feel very uncomfortable practising in my flat. If I want to practise things like “belt”, I have to go for a drive and [laughs] practise in my car or I have to try and be up at a time of day where I don't think my upstairs neighbours are in. Singer 1: I can play the piano [and] play guitar quite easily with everyone else in the house. I would still be a bit more self-conscious about people walking past who can hear from outside. Maybe. But I'd say definitely, with singing, it's the most <i>personal</i>. It feels like the most personal thing, cause it's my actual voice. It's part of me and I'm probably more self-conscious about that. Singer 1: But the voice comes from within you. It's produced by you and you only, whereas everything else, all other instruments - yes it's your body making movements that create it - but it's all external. The voice comes from within. I find that it's a very personal thing. But I guess that sort of informs or influences how I practise. I struggle to really put it into words. But practising as a singer just feels very different to practising a musical instrument, because it's so personal. You're producing that sound and it's unique to you, your voice. There's no other person in the world that has a voice that sounds exactly like you. Whereas okay, I know that Instrumentalist 2s will play pianos very differently, and I know different instruments, different pianos will have different timbres and different actions and all sorts, but it's still an external machine that's just wood and metal and wire. Your voice is an organic, living thing really. I know it's ultimately just a sound wave, but it is produced from organic things, if that makes sense? It always feels very personal. I can't really express it much more than using that word for me, “personal”.
How the brain affects practice & the voice	Singer 2: Something that [singing teacher 2] said to my study group the other day, which was, “You don't have to want to do it, just do it”. And I thought, “Oh, I like that”. I printed it out. I put it on my fridge, and then I thought about it for

a while and thought, "Actually, that's exactly what ADHD is. You *can't* overrule yourself like that. You don't, because it's executive function that's required to *overrule* your desire or your immediate need. That's an executive function thing." And though I have times when I've fought myself so hard that I've made myself do it, it's actually painful for me to do that - emotionally painful to the point where it feels physically painful. And again, that's something I've only realised relatively recently.

Singer 2: Particularly if I've planned, or I know that there is a real need for me to get on and do something, and I'm not doing it. Number one, if there's more than one thing that's really important, and I can't choose between them. [...] It's absolutely paralysing. [...] Fighting my way out of that paralysis is really, really hard because it's [relying on] part of my brain that is simply not functional. [...] And as a result of that I do nothing.

Singer 2: I had this period in my life where both my Gran and my Nan were in their final illness at the same time. They were both in hospital for six weeks: My Gran, because she'd had a stroke and was in a coma, my Nan, because she was gradually fading as the result of type 2 diabetes. I'm in Bedford. My Gran was in Sheffield. My Nan was in Newark. So every week I was travelling up, to go and visit each of them in those respective hospitals. My Gran was an operatic soprano and I would sometimes sing to her in her coma and she would react. And I told my dad that and it broke my heart, because he tried it and it didn't happen. [...] But they basically passed away within ten days of each other. At the time, I was also going through a breakup with the man I was living with at the time. I was in the process of basically kicking him out. The combination of those stressors: I got a pain in my shoulder that was *incredibly* intense and never went away. The whole of that shoulder blade on this [lefthand] side just felt like it was being held a vice 24/7. I was going and having acupuncture and all sorts. I then lost my voice, *completely*. It started off with a

		touch of laryngitis and then, within a couple of days: gone! It was gone for a couple of months which, when that's how you make your living, was very stressful because it cost me a lot of money! [...] that was very much a part of mental health feeding into a negative vocal situation.
Using your limitations to practise creatively	Problem-solving within your limits	Singer-instrumentalist 2: I was trying to see how I would sing something, because it's fairly low so I did actually have to change some of it. If I tried to sing it loudly, then I couldn't sing it low. But if I sang it quite quietly, especially on the low notes - I was very breathy - then I sort of got away with it not actually being a proper note.
	Pushing yourself beyond your comfort zone	Instrumentalist 1: I had a great teacher, (the guy [who taught me] when I was 9 or 10), who <i>his</i> teacher, (he was in his eighties), <i>his</i> teacher way back when - when he started he played in a really well known string quartet - and when they started out... Obviously as a kid, you're always practising [and] playing standing up and having to join the string quartet and having to sit down to play, he went into his lesson and said, "I'm finding this really uncomfortable. Can you give me some advice?" And the teacher made him sit down, cross-legged on the floor and play, and he said, "You make everything harder." And then when he came in and said, "I find it really hard to play in a suit jacket for concerts, because obviously I don't normally do that." The teacher made him practise in the suit jacket, but with his <i>overcoat</i> on top so that it was so much harder to play that, coming back to the suit jacket, felt really easy! So from when I was little, he was instilling this idea "Always make it harder than it is and then doing it the right way is easy". So I try and build that approach into my practising as well. Whatever it happens to be that I'm struggling with, if you can make it harder, then reality is a much more comfortable place in concert, because you don't want to be feeling in concert that you're only just getting to that place. You want to feel that it's a comfortable place to be.

			Instrumentalist 1: I do that in tandem with metronome work, especially if it's something really hard. I'll start off way below the tempo, and I'll very gradually speed it up until it's way above the tempo, and I'm falling off it, so that when you come back to the right speed everything feels simple. Instrumentalist 2: There are some pieces of music that require me to go into what I call "weight training". Do like huge double octave passages and stuff. I don't do that sort of thing very often. [...] If I'm going to do those things, then I have to take out extra time in the day to do octave exercises and stuff to build up a bit of musculature that isn't necessarily there all of the time.
		Limitations leading to creativity	Singer 2: [Billie Holiday] taught me how actually <i>unimportant</i> a wide vocal range can be, and how sometimes your limitations lead to you being the most creative. Because only having that octave and a half of range that she had at her strongest, (and that's not even before the drugs and everything took it away from her), she only had an octave and a half. [...] All the standards that I'd learned from her, I then had to relearn when I came to want to do them myself, because [...] she had her own reinterpretation of them, because she only had an octave and a half of range. So she had to. But that's her style. And that's what's so incredible about her. And it's actually her limitations that caused her to develop that level of creativity. Singer 2: I felt really confined [during the pandemic], but also I find singing quietly to myself is a self soothing thing. I did masses and masses of either silent practice or lots and lots of thin fold noodling singing. Obviously it was an extended period. I was shielding because I'm high risk and so I had 10 months when I didn't see another human being at all. [...] as a result of it, the one sort of silver lining to all of that isolation was that my relationship to my thyroid tilt completely changed. As a result, my belt <i>suddenly</i> is so much more comfortable, so much easier. Just everything!

***Table 20:* Comprehensive table of overarching themes, sub-themes, correlating codes and exemplifying excerpts from the six interview transcripts**