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An exploration into vocal teachers' attitudes towards their student's (pre-
/professional) emotional wellbeing.

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Project Proposal

Title:

An exploration into vocal teachers' attitudes towards their student's (pre-/professional) emotional wellbeing.

Context and Justification

There is an innate paradox that lies at the heart of the singing for wellbeing discussion (Musgrave, 2022). The benefits of singing on physical and psychological wellbeing have been widely discussed (Perkins, et al., 2017); yet research has shown that stress is ingrained within the life of professional musicians (Gross & Musgrave, 2016). More research must be done to resolve the paradox at the heart of this discussion (Musgrave, 2022).

Gross and Musgrave (2016) found that musicians are three times more likely to experience anxiety and/or depression than the general population, with 71.1% of respondents (all of whom identified as professional musicians) having experiences of panic attacks or anxiety. This is relevant for vocalists when considering the links between emotional distress and the onset and exacerbation of voice disorders (Siefert & Kollbrunner, 2005; O'Hara, *et al.*, 2011; Holmqvist, *et al.*, 2013; Yosunkaya, 2021). Furthermore, teachers can have an impact upon the emotional lives of their students, leading them to 'worship' (Matai & Phillips, 2023, p. 11) their teachers' every word. This relationship emphasises a teacher's responsibility to their students which requires both care, and clear boundaries.

I teach students at a pre-professional level, meaning I am working with people who hope to make a living with their voice. Knowing the impact a career in music can have upon someone's emotional wellbeing (Musgrave, 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016), and, consequently, their voice (Siefert & Kollbrunner, 2005; O'Hara, *et al.*, 2011; Holmqvist, *et al.*, 2013; Yosunkaya, 2021), I have concerns about the ethics of encouraging a student to pursue this route.

Intended Impact

Vocal coaching is largely an unregulated profession (Norton, et al., 2019) meaning there are few standard practices to safeguard students' emotional wellbeing. This research will explore current attitudes towards this, developing both my own, and other teachers' understanding of their role as a vocal teacher. This is necessary within the context of an industry, full of stressors, that can impact vocal health and function.

A greater understanding of these areas will begin the process of developing a more formalised and standardised approach for teachers in protecting students' wellbeing, whilst building resilience to successfully navigate the stresses of working as a professional vocalist.

Outlined Intention for the Project (methods/research design)

I will conduct a narrative literature review surrounding the topics of stress related voice disorders. This will include an exploration of current research surrounding teachers' and students' attitudes towards wellbeing, and an identification of potential strategies to develop strength to the external stressors of professional musicianship. I will conduct semi-structured interviews (November 2024) with vocal teachers who work with pre-/professional students, across genres (including, CCM, Jazz and Classical). The interview will explore: how far they feel they are responsible for student wellbeing; what, if any, strategies they have in order to develop resilience towards stress; and where they feel the boundaries lie in terms of offering emotional support to their students. Due to the experiential nature of this interview, I will use thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2016) to identify congruent and conflicting areas. I will then oversee a focus group (early December 2024) of 5 -7 participants with the same demographic of teachers (including those I have interviewed) to see if any further ideas have percolated since the interviews, using the themes identified within the interviews to inform the direction of the focus group. See appendix 1 for a full project timeline.

Individual Learning Outcomes

- To use this experience to develop my interviewing and focus group facilitation skills.
- To build strategies to support students in developing resilience to stressors related to the music industry.
- To define clearer boundaries surrounding the role of a vocal coach and their relationship to their students' emotional wellbeing.

Ethics and Insider Researcher Information

I must be wary of my own bias when interviewing participants." (Thirsk & Clark, 2017). This can be achieved through maintaining reflexivity (Galdas, 2017) throughout the process which is "essential for good qualitative research" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 37). Reflexivity involves maintaining an understanding of my role and position within the wider world and it is important to outline when my experience is relevant to the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Power dynamics are also an interesting area within this research. I will be interviewing my peers (we work separately, but within the same institution), and some of my previous teachers. This creates an interesting dynamic as there is a potential role reversal. Reflexivity is required to address this. If I take the time to consider how my presence within the research has affected the data, the data can then be interpreted accordingly (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Focus group participants will be asked to respect confidentiality, and interviewees will be coded to protect their identities.

An Exploration into singing teachers' attitudes towards their students' emotional wellbeing.

Introduction

Mental health is a topic at the forefront of both research and popular narratives (Goa & Sazara, 2023). Whilst statistics show that experiences of poor mental health are increasing nationwide (Proto & Quintana-Domeque, 2021), musicians are up to three times more likely to experience depression than the general population (Gross & Musgrave, 2016). There is an irony, therefore, in the fact that singing for wellbeing has become an increasingly popular activity in the pursuit of happiness (Musgrave, 2022). This paradox, therefore, has ethical implications for voice and instrumental teachers, particularly when working with goal-orientated students. Students tend to pursue something they are good at, potentially leading them to a career in music (Connell, 2020). This has the potential to do them harm due to the stresses and strains that come with being a musician (Musgrave, 2022; Gross and Musgrave, 2016; Perkins, *et al.*, 2017). This research aims to explore whether this poses an ethical quandary for voice teachers, working with enthusiastic and goal orientated students.

There are practical considerations, specific to the voice teacher, within this context. Link have been made between psychological distress, and the onset, exacerbation and perpetuation of voice disorders (Seifert & Kollbrunner, 2005; O'Hara, *et al.*, 2011; Holmqvist, *et al.*, 2013; Yosunkaya, 2021). Furthermore, singers may be susceptible to the psychological impact of a voice disorders (Caputo Rosen, *et al.*, 2021), which, in turn, causes a "vicious circle" to emerge (Seifert & Kollbrunner, 2005). This is of little surprise when reflecting upon the relationship between the singer's sense of self and their voice; the two are often considered to be inextricably linked (O'Bryan, 2015). This is, potentially, a complex situation for voice teachers to navigate, particularly when considering the unregulated nature of the profession (Norton, *et al.*, 2019).

In my experience of teaching, I have found that a large part of my role is focussed on managing students' emotional wellbeing, within this complex backdrop. It is rare to teach a student, of any age, in which their emotions and feelings do not end up, in some way, prohibiting their technique. This is an experience that is also reflected

within the literature. For example, stress has been shown to effect vocal output (Caputo Rosen, et al., 2021), whilst, for singers in particular, threats to one's ego, including issues surrounding self-esteem and a pressure to succeed may cause "performance-disturbing emotions" (Wellens & van Opstal, 2008, p. 259). When working with students who show a particular talent, furthermore, I hold concern about actively encouraging them towards a career in singing. At a pre-professional level, my students appear to gain great deal of joy from the act of singing, and I would hate for the thing that boosts their morale, to become the thing that comes to wear them down. It was my experience, alongside previous studies into the paradox of the singing for wellbeing discussion, and the connection of emotional distress and voice disorders, that led me to this question. The interviews revealed that, amongst the sample group, a concern for students' wellbeing lay at the heart of teachers' practice and that the more holistic approach was commonplace amongst all participants.

Literature Review

This review will explore the relationship between the voice and an individual's emotional wellbeing, before going on to investigate the psychosocial context in which voice teachers are working. A narrative literature review will be used, as the broad and sensitive nature of the topic requires a meaningful and nuanced analysis (Sukhera, 2022).

The Relevance of Singing and Emotional Wellbeing

Singing is an emotional process at every level; it "comes from feelings that communicate to other people's feelings" (Chapman & Morris, 2023, p. 1). It seems natural, therefore, that how a person *feels* can impact voice function. In the short term, for example, singers may experience the physiological symptoms of performance anxiety (Doscher, 2023), which include shortness of breath, oral dryness, and increased tension (both generally and vocally) (Driskell, 2012) all of which can negatively impact vocal function. In the long-term the persistent experience of emotional distress can cause both organic, and non-organic voice disorders (Seifert & Kollbrunner, 2005; Yosunkaya, 2021). It therein follows, that a change in one's voice,

might also impact one's emotional wellbeing (Caputo Rosen, *et al.*, 2021; Caputo Rosen, *et al.*, 2017). The cyclical nature of this dynamic is compounded when looking at the how tightly the singer's capacity to sing, is entwined within their own sense of self (O'Bryan, 2015). From a young age, those who have an affinity to singing, are shown to have increased levels of self-esteem and experience higher levels of social inclusion (Papageorgi, *et al.*, 2022). If, therefore, that ability to sing is removed or criticised, it seems natural for a singer to have a negative, emotional response.

It is this set of circumstances that informs Chapman's *holistic* style of teaching (2016; 2023). Chapman *et al* talk of creating a space in which there is an openness of dialogue surrounding emotions, where it is felt that, in order to master the full palette of the voice, one must understand one's own internal, emotional map. She goes on to discuss how the use of "emotional intelligence" is required by teachers to sense, and understand the feelings brought into the room, not only by the student, but by the teachers themselves (2023). Edwin (1997) reflects this idea with his presentation of the 'Vocal Parenting' pedagogical approach. If you were working on posture, Edwin poses, with a shy, introverted child, you must also address the emotional and attitudinal issues around the child's own self-image, in relation to their alignment, to combat the problem. Edwin uses role-play and physical exercises to encourage the child to adopt different physiques.

There is a danger, however, when addressing the emotional issues that may block progression in technique. Teachers must be careful to ensure lessons don't become "counselling sessions of the unburdening-of-the-soul type" (Sell, 2003, p. 60) in which it is easy for the *singing* element of the lesson to get lost.

The Wider Context

When boosting wellbeing is the focus, singing is shown to have an incredibly positive physical (Yoon Irons, *et al.*, 2019; Więch, *et al.*, 2023) and mental (Campbell, *et al.*, 2021) effect. However, high pressured or outcome focussed singing lessons were not shown to improve emotional wellbeing in participants (Grape, *et al.*, 2003). In the wider context, studies have shown that professional musicians suffer from

significantly poorer mental wellbeing than the general population (Gross & Musgrave, 2016). Most significant, however, is the study showing that singers were 2.6 times more likely to experience psychological distress than the general population. Singers also had the highest rates of distress amongst other instrumental groups (Vaag, et al., 2016). The combination of all this research highlights the intense paradox that lies at the heart of the singing for wellbeing discussion (Musgrave, 2022).

This study largely focussed on pre-professional students. For the purposes of this essay, that includes students who display the talent to pursue a career in music. They may be high achieving, both within their school's music department and in the outside world, and beginning to explore and experience professional opportunities. Within this age group (largely secondary school age), studies have not only shown that mental ill health is a rising issue (Newlonve-Delgado, et al., 2021), but that teachers and schools have neither the knowledge nor resources to deal with the problem (Svensson & Warne, 2024).

Student's wellbeing is, therefore, potentially at risk from many angles. Not only are there external stressors specific to being a young person in our society, but also due to being a singer. When combined with the emotional nature of singing, in which the voice can be affected by poor emotional wellbeing, and emotional wellbeing can be affected by the voice, it is vital that teachers feel confident in managing and supporting their student's emotional health. Therefore, more research must be done to explore how pedagogues can contribute to closing the gap between music for wellness, and outcome focussed music (Musgrave, 2022), both within the microcosm of the 1-1 setting, and within the wider vocal coaching industry.

The Role of the Singing Teacher

It is easy, as a voice teacher within this context, to feel somewhat deflated. If we, as teachers, are required to put our student's wellbeing at the heart of our practice, what are the ethics behind encouraging a student towards a career within the industry? It is natural to feel our own progression as teachers is reflected in the progression of our

students. Where does that leave us, though, if we fear for the future wellbeing of our pupils when they head out into the industry?

Furthermore, teaching is, largely, an unregulated profession (Sell, 2003; Norton, *et al.*, 2019) and these are, potentially, big questions for teachers to answer when working independantly. It is widely accepted that a “good teacher” has a broad range of skills. Not only do they require a solid, physiological understanding of the voice, but skills such as “empathy” and “curiosity” (Williams, 2012, p. xxiv). Studies also suggest that teachers can work with students to develop resilience against the stressors of the industry. Kobasa labelled this quality as “hardiness” (1979). This is achieved when one: feels they have *control* over life’s events; can exercise *commitment* to goals, work and/or family; and views *challenges* as opportunities for growth, as opposed to a threat. A level of “expectation management” (Musgrave, 2022, p. 283), which involves working with students to realise what, and how, they want to use music in their career, may be useful to achieve this quality. Teachers may also want to draw upon their own experience, incorporating pedagogical, digital, and entrepreneurial skills into their lessons (Bartleet, *et al.*, 2019) alongside the singing to prepare their students for a portfolio career.

Teachers, therefore, need to manage a great deal of different elements, particularly when working with outcome focussed students. Vocal coaches, working with students at a pre-professional level, may find that they sit in the gap between wellbeing focussed singing, and professional based singing. Sell astutely points out the ethical quandary teachers may face: where is the line between fostering *confidence* (in those who struggle with insecurity and low self-esteem) and *progress* (for those who want to develop) (2003)?

Methodology

Research Philosophy and Methodology

This was a work-placed study which attempted to identify teachers’ attitudes towards their students’ wellbeing within the wider context of a complex psychosocial backdrop.

An understanding of this issue will largely come from exploring an individual's experiences and feelings surrounding the issue. Therefore, this research was conducted with an understanding that there are many truths (Easterby-Smith, 2012) and that truth is transitory and dependent on experience (Crotty, 1998). This relativist ontological, and subjective epistemological, standpoint allows for the objective to be considered alongside (Crotty, 1998), whilst encouraging the interpretation of varying perspectives, and giving credibility to all human experiences (Mounce, 1997). This research aimed to explore participants' experiences and their interpretation of those experiences. The subjective nature of this data, therefore, required an informal and sensitive interview style to ensure participants felt comfortable and safe to explore this in depth (Taylor, 2005).

The nature of this research question is "rooted in life itself – a life that was inherently contextual, emotional and social" (Morgan, 2014, p. 1047) which reflects Dewey's philosophy of 'experience' (Dewey, 2008). This mirrors the pragmatic paradigm in which research stems from the identification of a problem and the attempt to come to some kind of resolution (Morgan, 2014). Gross and Musgrave's research into musicians' mental health identified the need for a 'code of best practice'. This research question stemmed from the identification of that gap within the research and hopes to act as a step towards developing such a framework for vocal pedagogues.

Research Design

Due to the nature of the research question, this is a qualitative study using in depth interviews and thematic analysis to identify the themes and outliers in voice teachers' responses and attitudes towards their student's mental health. Often, educators' experiences are neglected within pedagogical research, though including discussions about their experiences and attitudes helps to explore and identify the role of the educator, both as people and professionals (Winwood, 2019). The use of the *semi-structured* interview was also valuable for both me as researcher, and for participants. The flexibility of the interviews allowed for a clear focus, led by my own questions and research, and an option to explore new themes and ideas (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Emergent themes included an exploration into balancing encouragement and

pushing progression, poor emotional wellbeing acting as a block for technique, and the wider discussion of the *role* of the singing teacher. Audio recordings were taken for all the interviews which were then transcribed using Otter AI. Transcriptions were then proofread, whilst listening back to the recording, anonymised and stored on a password protected computer to protect participants' identity.

I went on to analyse these interviews using Thematic Analysis (TA). TA is used in areas of research aiming to gather a greater understanding of experience and behaviours (Clarke & Braun, 2016; Cernasev & Axon, 2023), and its use is often encouraged for early career researchers (such as myself) (Nowell, et al., 2017). I used a hybrid approach to generate data deducing themes and theories from the literature which informed my questions (Proudfoot, 2022) I then followed Braun and Clarke's model (2006) of TA, in which I began to draw themes from the data itself (the inductive element). Nowell *et al's* study (2017) presented the tools needed to build *trustworthiness* (using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria). This involved: extensive familiarity with the data, and peer debriefing with my tutor to develop *credibility*; a thorough investigation into, and presentation of, the wider context, both within the literature review, and in the presentation of findings, to ensure *transferability*; I have maintained an audit trail of transcriptions, initial codes, a thematic spreadsheet, and information sheets to ensure *dependability*; and the combination of these three criteria builds *confirmability*. Furthermore, the use of hybrid analysis gives greater chance of developing depth in all areas of the research, enabling the discovery of not only themes, but meaning and areas for further research (Xu & Zammit, 2020).

Ethics and Insider Research

Due to the subjective epistemological nature of this research, and the fact that I was operating as an insider researcher, I took care to ensure that my research was "not just well-composed rhetoric of a well-meaning, but **biased**, researcher's opinion" (Thirsk & Clark, 2017). One struggle, here, was maintaining a level of neutrality. Several participants were colleagues, and we have a pre-established, informal communication style, meaning some participants naturally enquired for my opinion. I, therefore, had to fight the tendency to revert to our normal way of communicating as I

wanted to ensure that I found the balance of incorporating my experience, whilst not influencing teachers' opinion (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Galdas (2017) poses that this can be achieved through maintaining reflexivity throughout the research process. Reflexivity is "essential for good qualitative research" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 37) and involves demonstrating an awareness of oneself and one's position within the wider world and is particularly important to outline when your own experience is relevant to your research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The semi-structured nature of the interview meant I was, therefore, able to disclose my own experience when I felt it necessary, or when I felt it may encourage the participant to open up about their own experience.

Before interviewing took place, I presented all participants with a consent form which included information on the topic and themes of the interview. I also gained permission to audio record all participants and ensured the anonymity was protected at every level.

Finding and Results

The Person and the Voice relationship

For all teachers this was a theme that ran throughout the interviews. Five of the seven coaches regularly experienced the phenomena in which poor emotional wellbeing negatively impacted the voice and acted as a block for progressing with technique.

"You can't divorce someone's emotional feeling away from their voice, because it shows up so much." (Interview 6)

"And you know, you absolutely know that there's nothing physical in the way of them being able to do that note. It's about them telling themselves they can't do it, or there's something going on in their life." (Interview 4)

Several emotions and qualities were cited as being the root cause of this phenomena. These include anxiety (both performance, and external anxiety), lack of confidence, stress, trauma, and a fear of making mistakes. Participants felt that these feelings triggered a physical tension within their students that blocked them from accessing the full palette of their voices. This is a concept that is reflected widely within the literature. Stress is a primary and secondary aetiology for numerous vocal disorders. Caputo Rosen (2021) outlines some of the physical consequences of stress on the voice. Vocal fold secretions, heart rates and gastric acid production are affected by the body's response through the autonomic nervous system. Hölmqvist Jämsén (2019) connects the stress-induced increase in gastric acid production to laryngopharyngeal reflux disease (LPRD). Connections have also been made between stress and muscle tension. As stressors occur, the musculoskeletal system tenses as a reflex to protect the body from pain and injury (Çakmur, 2020) particularly in the head and neck (Rosen *et al.*, 2021). As Rodenburg (2015) states, this is useful in acute periods of stress, however, tensions anywhere in the body are at risk of becoming habits. This can limit voice function and, in some cases, become a more serious, physiological problem.

It is reassuring that teachers show an awareness of this phenomena within their teaching. The experience of their students "*gripping*" as an emotional response was recognised by two participants, whilst three others shared anecdotal evidence of students who held unnecessary tension or lacked power. Two teachers identified that a lot of their work as teachers...

"is about releasing tension and kind of just getting rid of the bad habits that life brings into the room" (Interview 2)

...showing just how prevalent this issue is when working with teenage students. Many shared the strategies they used to combat this, in which elementary, vocal, technical exercises encouraged students to release tension without the pressure of singing. One participant shared a technique they use with students who withhold and lack power and volume. The teacher presented circumstances to their pupil in which they may need to shout (in this scenario, the example of a student calling out to her friend across the road was used), to show the student that she had the technique within her already. Another teacher described how they would encourage play and silliness within their

lessons, doing “*ridiculous things*” to encourage their student to do the same. This reflects the suggestions made by Edwin (1997) in which role play was used to encourage their student to explore different postures.

Furthermore, three participants use breathe work to soften both the body and vocal mechanism, and one discussed the use of movement to release stiffness. The benefits of these exercises are reflected within the literature. Rodenburg (2015) supports this strategy. She presents a thorough series of movement exercises used to target specific areas of bodily tension. Diaphragmatic breathing has also been shown to reduce the negative effects of stress, as studies suggest it may reduce cortisol levels (Ma, et al., 2017). The use of these techniques in participants’ practice, links to Trondalen’s (2014) suggestion, in which “the problem is also the solution” (p.6). When working with pre-professional students, it is, perhaps, important to centre singing for wellbeing techniques within the student’s practice, as a means of giving them tools to regulate their emotions. This has benefits for both those going into the profession, and those who aren’t, as it provides them with strategies to use in moments of high stress. An area for further research could be an exploration into how teachers’ training and pedagogical style informs their management of these blocks.

There is something of a cyclical nature to this discussion.

“I do think that singing connects to something. I think the fact that you're trying to encourage people to breathe in a diaphragmatic way and get the tension out of here, and be a bit more grounded, and in contact with themselves, certainly opens that to some extent”

Teachers expressed the regularity at which students brought external life pressures into the room. For some, the act of unlocking tension, using movement and breath, for example, also unlocked students’ emotions.

For six of the seven participants, this dynamic created an environment in which lessons became something of “*a therapy room*” for their students. In fact, four of the seven teachers directly used the word *therapy* to describe their students’ experience of lessons. Participants discussed how lessons gave pupils the chance to explore their

voice and discover themselves, which may be particularly significant when working with young people. Only one participant explicitly made the connection between vocal exercises and the consequent release of emotion:

““Something comes up via exactly what you're describing, a physical tension, or a nervousness to perform, or an anxiety about something that comes up organically in the room and that takes you somewhere else, somewhere more broad...” (Interview 2)

This experience is backed up within the literature. Rodenberg, for example, says that vocal exercises, which are used to free up the voice, can leave students emotionally raw, and vulnerable “like a snail without a shell” (2015, p. 22).

Other participants within the sample spoke more generally about how the context of the singing lesson provided the space for people to be emotionally exposed.

“People do tell you things, they do share with you, things that perhaps they wouldn't share with other people” (Interview 4)

“So of course, they're going to open up to me because I'm like that big, big sister or... you know... and then grew into a bit of a parent role.” (Interview 6)

“You find that the kids will... will open up to you about things completely unrelated to singing, um, because you have that one-on-one connection.” (Interview 7)

This experience is reflected in the literature (Patenaude-Yarnell, 2004; Sell, 2003), and demonstrates the unique position teachers may find themselves. This is particularly pertinent when considering the wider context of high rates of poor mental health amongst young people (Newlonve-Delgado, et al., 2021). This increase was noted by one participant who felt that the occurrence of this phenomena had increased in recent years, citing Covid-19 and social media as potential areas of concern.

Often, however, it was noted that the act of singing itself that triggered these conversations.

"I don't know how many, how many... times people cry in sessions. Happens all the time. And I think that's because.. and maybe there's that's something about the... in this whole ... there's so much emotion in singing" (Interview 1)

"You're teaching them the song, and it's very much about the breakup of a relationship or... or death and... and they haven't got those things to draw on. Or they've got those things to draw on, and they haven't processed it themselves"
(Interview 7)

This, perhaps, is because "the voice is an integral part of the whole being" (Patenaude-Yarnell, 2004, p. 395). The fact that voice students and teachers are working together to explore lyrics, and themes that explore the wider human experience means emotions and feelings may sit close to the surface in lessons. This is compounded in a scenario in which a relationship of trust has been built between the student and the teacher, leading the student to feel that they are safe to verbalise and express themselves (Jones, 2004).

Boundaries

The experience of this phenomenon led me to the discussion of boundary setting with teachers. Teachers are not trained psychologists so it is imperative that responding to these issues is handled with great care and consideration, and that teachers ensure they refer their students on to a relevant doctor or therapist (Scearce, 2016; Sell, 2003). Two participants reflected this sentiment. Interestingly, these two participants had undergone the most thorough training in such matters; one participant shared that they had taken the first stage of counselling training in their early career, whilst the other had taken training when volunteering for a suicide prevention charity. This participant had an astute analogy in how they respond to an emotional disclosure from a student:

"If someone's in a ditch. You're not reaching your hand out to pull them out. You're getting in to know what it feels like. Just sit with them in it, you know." (Interview 2)

A third participant referred to an understanding of counselling practices stating:

"You don't really try and step in and solve their problems for them, but just sit and listen and let them, let them say what they want to say" (Interview 7)

The idea that singing teachers require solid counselling skills is not new (Harrison, 2003). This type of skill has been noted as *embedded counselling* in which practitioners who work within a profession that requires facilitation, management, or is offering help, are often relied upon to listen (McLeod & McLeod, 2022). Including counselling skills within formal training, therefore, may be a useful tool for teachers.

The Balance of Progression and Sensitivity

Many teachers discussed finding the balance between...

"Encouragement... and technical progression and detail" (Interview 1)

... as a means of maintaining the boundary of healthy emotional support. Sell (2003) also discusses this clash, describing it as a "*prima facie* obligation", in which conflicting obligations occur, leaving the teacher with an ethical quandary. Because the voice is interlinked with the sense of self (O'Bryan, 2015), criticism and feedback need to be delivered with care. However, accountability needs to be maintained to ensure the pedagogical obligations are not neglected (Patenaude-Yarnell, 2004). One teacher expressed concern that they did not have this balance quite right:

"I most sound like the teacher that I really liked, but who didn't really help me at all, which always worries me. Like, very encouraging, very warm, but she would come out with sort of what I thought of as platitudes that weren't helpful, and then I'd do the same thing." (Interview 3)

This concern was reflected in others who recognised that:

"There needs to be a professional distance, yeah, but still a supportive and fun atmosphere" (Interview 1)

"If you disregard the mental and emotional impact as a singing teacher... you'd be doing them a disservice entirely. But then... if it just becomes a therapy session, then you're not doing your work as a singing teacher." (Interview 6)

There was commonality, therefore, amongst teachers who recognised that lessons had to be a space in which students learnt to accept feedback. All teachers also recognised that managing this boundary was dependent on the student in front of them, meaning that teachers require flexibility, and sensitivity. Five of the seven teachers discussed the use of positive reinforcement as a means of fostering development.

"I always try and leave on a positive note, let them walk out the door feeling like they've achieved something" (Interview 6)

The theme of delivering feedback was often linked to preparing students for the industry. Many teachers talked of how, professionally, feedback was delivered with little sensitivity, leaving the question as to whether students needed to develop resilience within lessons to prepare them for what may be to come. This came up in two of the interviews and both participants had similar responses.

"His ethos was to be as brutal as possible to you in the lesson, because his feeling was the business was so cutthroat, that if you couldn't cope with real criticism... you were never going to survive in the industry. And um, maybe he was right in one sense, because I didn't survive in the industry, but I didn't survive in his lessons either." (Interview 7)

"You will never... reinforce a chance development by... being down on them because the world out there is hard." (Interview 2)

This is an attitude reflected in the literature, in that teachers have an ethical responsibility to build up their students (Sell, 2003). However, teachers must be aware not to rely entirely upon positive reinforcement to foster development. Studies have shown that too much positive reinforcement can foster a reliance upon rewards, consequently prohibiting the development of *intrinsic motivation*. Intrinsic motivation develops a greater sense of achievement when tasks are completed and builds confidence within an individual (Asmus, 1994). One teacher alluded to this phenomenon within the wider context of wellbeing.

"I think also, like the discipline of doing something and working hard at something can be quite saving from that... from demons anyway" (Interview 2)

There is an argument, therefore, to suggest that students need to be pushed, and challenged to gain the long-term benefits of singing to their wellbeing and increase confidence (Asmus, 1994).

The need for building *confidence* in singing was a common theme amongst teachers, with four participants citing this word exactly, with many seeing this as one of their main roles. Whilst the link between intrinsic motivation and confidence was not made directly by participants, it feels that there is an implicit connection between the two. Two teachers outwardly spoke of their intent to foster independence in their students, and how they felt their role as a teacher was to nurture the inward drive present in their students. Though many teachers recognised the difficulty of balancing encouragement and development, some presented strategies that reflected their ability to get this balance right. These included focussing on harnessing a love for the *music* itself (3), and practice Journals (1). Unfortunately, a further exploration into these strategies was intended for the focus group and the lack of strategies within the discussion is certainly a limitation of this research.

The Student Teacher Relationship

The importance of maintaining boundaries and finding an accurate balance between encouragement and development is emphasised when considering the dynamic

between student and teacher. When asked about this, four of the seven teachers referred to the relationships they had with their own teachers, both positively and negatively.

"I think every one of us that's a performer probably has one... at least one music teacher that we felt close to." (Interview 3)

This is very much reflected within the literature. Jones highlights the “intimate” (2004, p. 123) nature of the student/teacher relationship, unique because of the openness and trust that is required from both student and teacher. Studies have shown that students go so far as to see their teachers as “friends” (Almeida de Sá Serra Dawa, 2010). This is developed further in the idea that teachers’ can, not only impact their students’ vocal development, but also impact how they feel about *themselves* (Pecina, 2019). Jones also suggests that the relationship is particularly significant from the student’s perspective, given the openness and vulnerability that is required for them to perform for their teachers.

This is an understanding reflected by the participants within this study.

"You know, they grow towards me" (Interview 5)

"I think sometimes if there is a connection, particular connection between teacher student, I think it's almost like that inspires them somehow to want to take it a bit further." (Interview 2)

This evidences the impact the relationship has on the student particularly, in that a positive relationship can encourage a student towards a career. The suggestion, furthermore, that a student can “*grow towards*” their teacher implies that the teacher has a unique power over their student. This links to the concept of the *authority bias*, in which students hold their teachers in high esteem and can even “worship” (Matai & Phillips, 2023, p. 11) them. This means students look to their teachers for advice, regardless of its substance, further supporting the idea that teachers have significant power over their students. This was further emphasised by some of the participants

referencing the negative impact some of their teachers had had on them in their training.

"She might have got amazing work out of them but left them as such broken people that couldn't really work some of them..." (Interview 6)

"And so I'm very aware of how it can go wrong. And I therefore feel very scared of making it wrong for other people" (Interview 3)

This shows how the teachers' impact can go well beyond the lessons, and into their later life. In the current context of the music industry, in which poor mental health is rife amongst musicians (Gross & Musgrave, 2016), teachers have a further responsibility to protect and prepare their students. The unique nature of this relationship, and the impact it can have upon the student in particular, further highlights just how important it is that teacher sets the right tone within the lesson.

Two teachers, however, did express concern over the consistency with which boundaries were set across the profession, though this manifested itself differently. One teacher felt that some teachers neglected their responsibility towards their students' wellbeing. This is touched upon by Rodenberg, though she recognised that industry standards had improved in recent years (2015). Another participant, however, expressed a concern that some teachers...:

"need that emotional connection from their students, and that dependence"

...and taught in a way that made students feel obliged to share more than they felt comfortable. Sell suggests that this kind of behaviour from teachers comes from an insecurity and breaks the code of ethics that outlines the student/teacher relationship in which the act of *singing* needs to be protected.

Training and Experience

When asked about the training they had undertaken to develop these skills, all teachers either mentioned safeguarding training, or displayed a strong understanding of standard safeguarding practices. However, only the two, previously aforementioned participants, had undergone any formal training around protecting and supporting students through displays of poor mental health. Elsewhere, four of the seven teachers said that they had learnt their communication skills through their own experiences. Experiential factors included: parenting, teaching, and relationships. Some also felt their own personalities led them towards adopting the more holistic approach towards their students.

"I don't feel uncomfortable with having uncomfortable conversations because I don't... because that's not who I am." (Interview 4)

"I'm definitely an empath" (Interview 2)

"I'm a holistic looking person" (Interview 6)

There is certainly further research to be done into the personality traits of teachers. Are vocal coaches led to teaching because they are drawn to the *human* aspect (the development of the person, and the use of singing as a therapy, for example)? Does that mean that they, as people, are naturally capable of supporting their students' and their wellbeing?

There is, perhaps, a suggestion within these findings to imply that is the case. Three teachers displayed a strong confidence in their ability to navigate their students' emotional complexities. The combination of institutional safeguarding training, their own experience and intuition, led them to feel comfortable in responding to their students' needs. One of these participants, however, noted the need for peer support. This was also reflected by another participant.

"Meeting with other teachers to talk about it... singing is really lonely, and like, swapping processes... would be really helpful." (Interview 2)

“But I do feel that there is a lot to be learned from listening to the way other people teach and taking from that” (Interview 4)

This could be an incredibly useful strategy for teachers to enhance their career and personal development. Studies have shown that peer supervision sessions for educators fosters confidence, empowers teachers, and develops agency to advocate for change (Gardner, et al., 2022). In an industry that is largely unregulated (Sell, 2003; Norton, et al., 2019), creating communities in which teachers can both receive feedback, and be held accountable, is an excellent way of protecting both students', and teachers', wellbeing.

For the remaining participants, a similar confidence was presented, though, there was also a desire to undergo further training. Two participants identified that some form of psychological training, specifically, would be beneficial, and one participant suggested that training in assessing the severity of a mental health issue would support them in determining how far to push a student. One participant, when talking about the pedagogical training they had received at a top conservatoire, discussed how the emotional wellbeing element of teaching was never discussed. The desire for such training links back to the idea that there is perhaps a common personality trait that runs through teachers that leads them to teaching in the first place, reaffirming the idea that this would perhaps be a beneficial area for further research.

Overall, however, all participants demonstrated a clear use of emotional intelligence when working with students. There are four key spheres that build emotional intelligence which include: self-awareness, where individuals have a clear understanding their place and role within a social situation; self-management, which relates to how one manages their emotions and reactions to emotional triggers; empathy (the ability to understand, and relate to, others' feelings); and social management, in which one is able to build positive, important connections (Chung, et al., 2023). Participants within this study certainly demonstrated these qualities. For example, some recognised the impact they could have upon their students' emotional wellbeing demonstrating self-awareness. Others talked of taking time to assess their students' temperament as they walked into the room, choosing repertoire that might reflect their moods demonstrating empathy and social management. It is incredibly

reassuring that all teachers demonstrated this quality, despite the lack of standardised training, when considering Chapman's (2023) approach, in which emotional intelligence is considered vital when using holistic methods.

The Professional Context

All participants expressed a level concern for their students' wellbeing in regards to them entering the professional context, though the extent to which they felt comfortable encouraging their students towards a career varied. Three said they categorically would not suggest a career in music to a student unless the student expressed an interest in doing so. Two, said they would encourage someone who they believed had the unique talent, personality traits and characteristics to be successful, but not without a level of concern. One of these participants, however, recognised the joy there was to be had in a career in music. This links to the experience of the remaining two participants, who said they would actively suggest a career in singing to a student who showed the potential to be successful. Interestingly, both these participants expressed their own love for the career, stating that there isn't anything else they would rather be doing.

However, all participants spoke of the difficulties within the industry which directly correlated to the results cited in Gross and Musgraves study in musicians' poor mental health (Gross & Musgrave, 2017). The include financial hardship (5), competition (2), lack of work (2), heavy workload (2), negative feedback (1). This meant all participants felt that honesty was required when working with students who have professional aspirations, which reflects the recommendations made by Musgrave (2022). Generally, there was a correlation between participants who would encourage a career in music, and who's practice appeared to focus upon development and resilience. For the teachers who would not encourage a career, teachers seemed to place a greater weight upon their student's wellbeing and enjoyment of lessons. Within that, however, six of the seven teachers recognised that different students want different things from lessons, further emphasising the flexibility that teachers need when working with teenage and pre-professional students.

Limitations

The major drawback of this study was due to circumstantially being unable to organise a focus group. This would have given participants the opportunity to discuss differences in experience or opinion, giving the research a deeper insight (Winwood, 2019) into what may be needed to develop a standardised approach. There is a lack of information regarding specific strategies teachers had towards releasing tension, for example. Furthermore, it may have been beneficial to talk to a wider pool of teachers, varying genre and type of teaching. All, bar two of the seven participants taught classically. Whilst there were a range of attitudes and experiences within this sub-group, it would have been beneficial to have a wider variation of genres to assess if there were any genre-based similarities or difference in attitudes. However, this does provide an area for future research.

It may also have been beneficial to be more thorough in demographic marking of participants to explore whether gender, age, experience and training impacted how a teacher viewed their students' wellbeing. Once again, however, this does present an opportunity for further research.

Discussion and Recommendations

The aim of this research was to undertake a comprehensive exploration into teachers' attitudes towards their students' emotional wellbeing. For all teachers, protecting their student's emotional wellbeing was paramount. It is clear, that amongst teenage students, singing lessons promote emotional wellbeing, whilst also providing a unique context in which pupils often display vulnerable emotions. Three reasons emerged. These include: the act of singing itself, in which lyrics and music pave the way to emotive discussions; the use of elementary vocal exercises (including breathing and movement), which may release a tension in some way; and the unique student/teacher relationship, in which the one-to-one context and trust that is built from the student

towards the teacher leads students to comfortable opening up. It is, perhaps, this experience that led many of the participants' students to describe the lessons as some form of therapy.

Generally, teachers understood that a boundary needed to be set when discussing students' wellbeing, and that maintaining the integrity of the space as a *singing* lesson was important. Some teachers also expressed the desire to have further trainings around psychology to further understand how to manage this balance.

This is a balance, within my own practice, that I have struggled with. As someone in my late-twenties, I often wondered if my students' emotional vulnerability had something to do with my age. However, it seems that this is an experience that spans age, gender and genre. Questions around the personality traits that singing teachers have, therefore, arise. If people who are naturally empathetic, with strong communication skills, and an awareness of their own emotional framework, are attracted to teaching (as appears to be the case within this sample), can teachers be trusted to use their intuition to work with students in a more holistic way? However, the unregulated nature of the professions does arouse concern. This sample of teachers come from my own network of teachers. It is natural, therefore, that we should have a similar outlook as we work in the same places. For a more comprehensive understanding of teacher's attitudes to wellbeing, a wider sample must be used, with a thorough analysis of demographic (including age, genre, and gender).

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Braun and Clarke's Approach to TA

1.
familiarizing yourself with your data,
2.
generating initial codes,
3.
searching for themes,
4.
reviewing themes,
5.
defining and naming themes, and
6.
producing the report.

Appendix 2 – Spreadsheet of revised/grouped themes

Interview No	The Person/ Voice Relationship- How can technique be impacted by negative wellbeing, and how can technique be used to combat those effects?	Teacher/Student relationship	Emotional Support vs Boundaries vs Fostering Development
1	• "I don't know how many, how many... times people cry in sessions. Happens all the time. And I think that's because... and maybe there's that's something about the... in this whole... in your masters... there's so much emotion in singing" • "I think there, it's the only instrument where there's no barrier between you, yourself and this, and the sound you're making. So it can be really, really vulnerable." • "Often there's like a voice inside there that people are almost afraid of finding." • "A lot of the time, the act of singing is what you need." • "Recently I did, like, about a year ago, breath work, lots of breath work training. And it wasn't related to... (it was) more diaphragmatical breathing, but it wasn't really related to singing. But I found so many parallels between, you know, space and things that people were doing, to unlock emotions that were really useful when translated back into singing." • "It's almost like they're discovering themselves a little bit in that space you know." • "The role of the teacher, obviously, is to teach the student, and I think for us as singing teachers, a lot of that is about releasing tension and kind of just getting rid of the bad habits that life brings into the room" • "I do think that singing connects to something. I think the fact that you're trying to encourage people to breathe in a diaphragmatic way and get the tension out of here and be a bit more grounded and in contact with themselves, certainly opens that to some extent" • "I think also, like the discipline of doing something and working hard at something can be quite saving from that.... from demons anyway"	• "You're kind of got to be different things for people that want different things out of singing" • "I think, for any teacher, you've got to be so mindful of your position as a as an adult, as a role model, as someone that needs to like, be firm, but also to also create a safe space." • "I think the ones that want to take it to a high level are more invested in our relationship, because they care about that outcome" • "I think sometimes if there is a connection, particular connection between teacher student, I think it's almost like that inspires them somehow to want to take it a bit further." • "Outside of that, there was definitely a turning to that person for guidance emotionally as well, emotionally, psychologically."	• "Balance, trying to balance, encouragement, encouragement... sort of technical progression and detail." • "How do I make... not ruin the whole singing thing for this person by embarrassing them? But how do I make sure that this is really sort of still a safe place and, also safe for me, if that makes sense. So yeah, clear boundaries?" • "I've been teaching now for like.... you know... over 10 years, and the more I teach the more I realize that's such a big part of it." (In regards to managing students' emotional wellbeing). • "It's 80% managing the room, 20% writing and managing the room... You know, the feel of the room. And I think singing vocal coaching is sort of similar, like... how someone feels and how they feel long term, and how they're feeling about.... is so important, maybe more important." • "Giving them simpler prompts that I know that they can take on board... and long term, giving them aims has been... yeah... I've simplified what I'm saying, even though, and I don't know, and then that's more about the emotion of the room." • "That line between being professional, caring and positive is so important. So, yeah, I think it's probably up there with being the most important." • "I think having a clear idea always until... until they're of a certain age, where they're organizing their own lessons." • "But I think the over sharing thing, that's sort of what I mean about inappropriate things." • "There needs to be a professional distance, yeah, but still a supportive and fun atmosphere" • "I feel like it's almost that people say, God, this is like therapy for me when they leave, you know?"
2	• "Something comes up via exactly what you're describing, a physical tension, or a nervousness to perform, or an anxiety about something that comes up organically in the room and that takes you somewhere else, somewhere more broad..." • "I definitely have had kids with real like, I mean, I'm gonna say, like, problems with their voices, I think. And it makes complete sense to me when you see this sort of psychological picture of their lives" • "I often find the psychological stuff comes into the room in in one way or another" • "It's almost like they're discovering themselves a little bit in that space you know." • "The role of the teacher, obviously, is to teach the student, and I think for us as singing teachers, a lot of that is about releasing tension and kind of just getting rid of the bad habits that life brings into the room" • "I do think that singing connects to something. I think the fact that you're trying to encourage people to breathe in a diaphragmatic way and get the tension out of here and be a bit more grounded and in contact with themselves, certainly opens that to some extent" • "I think also, like the discipline of doing something and working hard at something can be quite saving from that.... from demons anyway"	• "The more I teach, the more I realize that's defined by the student in front of me." • "A lot of kind of going to my singing teacher for guidance and trusting them more than I trusted the scenario at home" • "I think the ones that want to take it to a high level are more invested in our relationship, because they care about that outcome" • "I think sometimes if there is a connection, particular connection between teacher student, I think it's almost like that inspires them somehow to want to take it a bit further." • "Outside of that, there was definitely a turning to that person for guidance emotionally as well, emotionally, psychologically."	• "I think I volunteered for mental health charity for a while, for a suicidal charity, and in that context, I really learned how, like, there's no... in that space... If something happens, if something's shared, it's never... the people that come and talk to us understand that there is no follow up" • "I think I've been guided by safeguarding measures in schools." • "If someone's in a ditch. You're not reaching your hand out to pull them out. You're getting in to know what it feels like. Just sit with them in it, you know." • "I know that either there's the safeguarding space in the schools or I can point them in the direction of a charity, or, yeah, someone to call. But I think I also, on a side note, really want to train as a psychotherapist, and I think there's no coincidence that those two things kind of run not too far away from each other" • "I think it's really important to think more about how we put those things, those boundaries, in place for ourselves. What's the structure, what's the framework? I don't think I really have an official one." • "Even if it was just about meeting with other teachers to talk about it, you know, just to kind of swap teaching, singing is really lonely, and like, swapping processes or practices or, you know, stories in a way that's sort of confidential, responsible in that way, you know, I think that would be really helpful." • "It's not that I feel like I don't do a good job now, or that I, you know, that I don't manage the space for both. But it's certainly something that I've just found on my own."
3	• "I think being a singer is like about working with all of yourself" • "And if it wasn't working then I couldn't bear it, you know, And I used to think, if I can't sing, what's the point of me?" • "I think there is a connection there... between self confidence... and ability" • "When we're happy or sad or angry or anything, any emotion, we automatically have a bit more kind of energy and all the things that we know that we need for singing, but they probably wouldn't have thought that they needed it for singing" - Using that emotion to generate energy within the performance. Perhaps it's not something to be unpicked but to be harnessed? • "British people, we're quite subdued all the time. And then, of course, the whole choral world is often about being very quiet and pure and, yeah, unemotional, actually, yeah. I mean, so that's, that's something else that we're battling with us." • "Because no one can sing if they're not feeling confident."	• "And so I'm very aware of how it can go wrong. And I therefore feel very scared of making it wrong for other people." • "That I just think you know, they get music in the same way that I do, and that's just lovely" • "I think every one of us that's a performer probably has one... at least one music teacher that we felt close to."	• "I most sound like the teacher that I really liked, but who didn't really help me at all, which always worries me. Like, very encouraging, very warm, but she would come out with sort of what I thought of as platitudes that weren't helpful, and then I'd do the same thing." • "And I've certainly... the ones that are very... again... I don't know if this is right, but the ones that remind me of me when I was 18... similarly, musical, similarly... similar worries. I feel very connected to and I and I do worry about that as well. I think, like, are we meant to be more distant?" • "Sometimes it is too much, like I remember somebody who's left now, but sort of telling me about her boyfriend and stuff... and I... I probably should stop this."
4	• "There always seems to be a reason why they can't do something. And it normally is a, it normally is an emotional thing... It's normally high notes" • "And you know, you absolutely know that there's nothing physical in the way of them being able to do that note. It's about them telling themselves they can't do it, or there's something going on in their life." • "You're allowing that stress and trauma to be part of who you are, then that is going to be part of.... that is going to be transported in your voice, isn't it?" • "We went right back to the beginning. We talked about breath... We sort of did breathing." - When talking about one of her students who's general emotional distress began to manifest in her voice. • "Her problems were tension, but it did come from, you know, an emotional place" • "Maybe, if we focus on posture, you might stop thinking about this. Maybe, if we focus on movement, you might stop thinking about you might stop gripping. So I... I guess what I feel is that over the years, I've developed a bit of a... there are 101 strategies to try and do something."	• "People do tell you things, they do share with you, things that perhaps they wouldn't share with other people". • "The singing teacher, student dynamic as more of a kind of partnership" • "I like to see teaching as facilitating rather than as being somebody who is... you are reliant upon. Because I think if you, if you make people reliant upon you for everything that they do, they then are unable to... to branch off and do things by themselves and actually think for themselves" • "Also it kind of feeds, feeds into what I do as a professional musician, because more often than not, I end up sharing the stage with them"	• "I don't feel uncomfortable with having uncomfortable conversations because I don't, because that's not who I am." • "This is like 1,000,001 therapies in one" • "I can also see when sort of emotionally something's not... not working as well. So my strategy changes according to what... what that person's bringing to the day." • "I suppose what I'm trying to say is that emotional wellbeing and singing, teaching are... you-... Are sort of bedfellows, aren't they?" • "I guess. I guess that. I think that singing, teaching is, is very cheap therapy"
5	• "Talking about resilience... They can, they can only ever be amateurs, because it's just too it's too much, too much pressure." • "And it was just technically, absolutely perfect, and gives him what he needs from a brain perspective. And then just they're happy." - Using technically comfortable repertoire as a way of promoting positive emotional wellbeing → encouraging student's to feel as though they are progressing.	• "You know, they grow towards me... it's really nice to work... with kids who are about to go to Conservatoire, because their's so much more you can share with them." • "Also it kind of feeds, feeds into what I do as a professional musician, because more often than not, I end up sharing the stage with them"	• "So my responsibilities as a teacher go... extend well beyond the confines of this room, you know" • "You have to be able to communicate very well. And, you know, and not ignore things, and you know, share what's going on here with my colleagues, you know." • "They leave all their other bits and bobs behind, and they just come in because they just, they just need... it is... they need to be fed." - For this teacher, the lesson itself sets the boundary. IN their experience, the student's leave the issues at the door because the WANT to sing.
6	• "But at the same time, you can't divorce someone's emotional feeling away from their voice, because it shows up so much." • "You are so at the at the mercy of your emotion." • "She could sing, but she'd been so shut down because of these voices in her head that we needed to get our way out of that. So in order to really open that voice out and help us in, we had to discuss the mental blocks as to why she wasn't opening her mouth." • "I might, I really might tailor the lesson to be a bit kinder to them. In regards to right, we're not going to do anything really big and belty today. Or if they're very emotional and raw, they might actually need a big emotional piece to kind of bring stuff to the surface." • "I had people say things and just treat me appallingly, and it did have a massive impact on me as a performer and my output and vocally, my health and my my emotions."	• "I think I have been a therapy room for my students" • "In the past... "So of course, they're going to open up to me because I'm like that big big sister or, you know, and then grew into a bit of a parent role." • "About one of her conservatoire teachers... "She might have got amazing work out of them but left them as such broken people that couldn't really work some of them"... • "how that just made them into the most nervous self-critiquing, unhealthy self-critiquing singers..."	• "I am a Holistic looking person, but therein also lies the need for regulating how close you get to a student and how involved you can be, because that could potentially get you in hot water." • "But, so if you disregard the mental and emotional impact as a singing teacher, you... you know you wouldn't, you'd be doing them a disservice entirely. But then also, on the other, on the flip side, if it just becomes a ther-, therapy session, then you're not doing your work as a singing teacher." • "You could start unearthing some really personal and personal things that would be dangerous for someone who doesn't know what they're doing to attempt to do"
7	• "Well, singing is interlinked with your... your... emotional wellbeing. So if somebody's under stress, you hear it in their voice." • "You're trying to constantly encourage them to find the freedom in their instrument, so that they're not gripping their... their technique, they're not pouring anxiety into their sound" • "Everyone who comes and starts trying to explore their voice and their instrument, they all realize that it's connected to who they are as a person, and some of them embrace it more easily than others." • "You see a lot of a lot of kids who can't fully release their voice because they're frightened of getting things wrong, they're frightened of making mistakes."	• "You find that the kids will will open up to you about things completely unrelated to singing, um, because you have that one on one connection." • "You're teaching them the song, and it's very much about the breakup of a relationship or... or death and... and they haven't got those things to draw on. Or they've got those things to draw on, and they haven't processed it themselves"	• "I tend, I tend to probably go down the same route as a as a counselor, in that you don't really try and step in and solve their problems for them, but just sit and listen and let them, let them say what they want to say" • "So if you, if you had a friend with... with issues, you would, in a very similar way, talk to them, support them, encourage them, but you wouldn't be diagnosing them or telling them you should do this or do that." • "(In regards to breaking down tensions/fighting perfectionism, I think it's important to have a safe place for them, and I do ridiculous things."

Teacher Training vs Experience	Attitudes towards industry standards and consistency within the Vocal Coaching profession.	Singing Teachers' experiences of the Music Industry	Does the responsibility towards a student's emotional wellbeing extend to encouraging/discouraging them towards a career as a vocalist?
• "I think I've also had quite, like, making sure I was, like, trained in the right sort of way, like safeguarding" • "I feel that the thing that I would like to really work on, and it kind of falls on... is some more, like mental health and sort of psychology training, yeah, because often these sessions can feel, you know, when people really open up."		• "And I think part of it's because of the nature, or the need to be, a bit more of a polymath than you would have done 20/30, years ago. The need to be like able to do different things, both vocally, and also, musically, to make a career as a musician." • "It's so competitive, and the fact that so many things are stacked against musicians these days with streaming and everything else. And, you know... financial pressure and all that sort of stuff." • "The difference between the joy of singing and how people are feeling about a life as a singer, and an artist, is to do with the expectation versus the reality of the situation, regardless of you know, of success or anything else" • "How people feel in a career in music, can be related to a power and balance of not being able to create situations."	• "I wouldn't feel comfortable doing that, and encouraging them if I wasn't being honest" • "If you can see someone from... even the way they're singing, that they, there's a sort of joy in it, or like a feeling of like connection with the, the music, I would, but I don't know if I would do it with the intention that it becomes their career, at that age." - encourage development without necessarily promoting the career? • "I would ever push anyone to do it as a career, partly because I know how difficult it is and but I would never discourage anyone because I know how much joy there's in it"
• "I think I volunteered for mental health charity for a while, for a suicidal charity, and in that context, I really learned how, like, there's no... in that space... If something happens, if something's shared, it's never... the people that come and talk to us understand that there is no follow up" • "I think I've been guided by safeguarding measures in schools." • "I know that either there's the safeguarding space in the schools or I can point them in the direction of a charity, or, yeah, someone to call. But I think I also, on a side note, really want to train as a psychotherapist, and I think there's no coincidence that those two things kind of run not too far away from each other" • "I think it's really important to think more about how we put those things, those boundaries, in place for ourselves. What's the structure, what's the framework? I don't think I really have an official one." • "Even if it was just about meeting with other teachers to talk about it, you know, just to kind of swap teaching, singing is really lonely, and like, swapping processes or practices or, you know, stories in a way that's sort of confidential, responsible in that way, you know, I think that would be really helpful." • "It's not that I feel like I don't do a good job now, or that I, you know, that I don't manage the space for both. But it's certainly something that I've just found on my own." • "Maybe it's like having the skill set to know this is how I open that door and you can walk through it or not, and that's completely, completely... up to you"	• "I think there are real like cowboy. I mean, hopefully the industry improve... is improving, but yes, yeah, I'd say this said to me, and I think that's something that I'm always aware of, because I had a hugely affirming experience as a kid being able to share this stuff with a singing teacher. However, that does not oblige all of my students to share their stuff with me." • "They want that emotional and they need that emotional connection from their students, and that dependence, right?"	• "I guess it looks like a lot of competition... A lot of setbacks." • "Because, bottom line, I think, as well as... I love my life as a singer. I have no regrets about not... I don't know, who knows what else I could do"	• "I suppose, if I heard potential in someone, I don't think I can hide the excitement. Can I really get over excited and, and, and I think that that maybe almost puts the idea in their head without me having to say anything, of sort of thinking, Oh, my God, I have this thing that I can do, and that's special. And I think that's quite intoxicating in a way." • "I have no reservations about encouraging people into that world, but I would try to be really honest about it" • "I would definitely, I would definitely say to a student, have you considered this?"
• "so suddenly we're expected to be child psychologists, which we're not trained to be" • "I mean, in theory, we have no training, but then we have our own experience, which is very relevant, yeah, I also have the additional help of having had two teenage children myself." • "I still feel that there's probably some child psychology training that might be quite useful as... as part of our training."		• "The opera world... which is sort of what I'm involved with is kind of imploding in this country" • "Less and less work available, and people are paid, in real terms, are getting paid less and less" • "Why are we pushing more and more people into this profession when there's not enough work for them?" • "Some people might need to go abroad more because there's more the opera world is much healthier in Europe than it is here. Then, of course, we've got the Brexit point. So it's really tough on British musicians at the moment..."	• "But ultimately, you know, I love working in music, and I wouldn't want to be working in anything else... and I still feel intrinsically, as a teacher, that we need to communicate that enthusiasm... because that's what, that's who we are, that's... that's what we stand for." • "Yeah, even though it's a difficult world out there, you know, if they... if she'd been really fantastic, the conversation would have come up, I'm sure"
• "Actually, the only way that you pick up, I think the only way that you pick up these skills is by working with people with different issues." • "Sixth sense of working out... what... what do you what is it that you need from me today?" - Demonstrates a reliance upon intuition • "I just wonder whether or not, whether we could all benefit from some more training about actually, how to spot a real mental health issue." • "I just wonder whether or not we could all do with a little bit more help with spotting what potentially is more serious issue, from an issue that isn't really serious at all" • "But I do feel that there is a lot to be learned from listening to the way other people teach and taking from that"	• "And that actually depends on the kind of teacher you are as well. I do know people who do not like to get involved in the... They sort of, they acknowledge that there is a sort of an issue, because I don't think it's possible to not acknowledge that there's an issue, but they kind of see it as their way as to... "okay, I've acknowledged your issue. Now we move on with the singing." I don't... I think it's important and incumbent upon all of us as educators... to understand that... try and deal in the best way we can with the issues that... a student brings, because their voice and them... they are... They are, their voice..."	• "I don't think music is a level playing field ever, and people have different understanding of... at different times there are different things that people are prioritizing." • "You're scrapping around for work, and it's poorly paid and... and I imagine the conditions are much worse. I mean, I worked for English Touring Opera in the sort of early 2000s and I know that... that what I was earning is, I think, more than what they pay people now."	• "I wouldn't be recommending anybody to go into the music industry at the moment."
		• "The one thing you can't teach them is, is, you know what it's like to depend on it financially, yeah? And that's that that you can only experience." • "Yeah, it's, it's all about confidence, and it's... and 90% of the time, it's more than just music." • "The other thing is a young person's job, you know, I'm 52 and... and there's just no way I could, I could live out of a suitcase and do all those miles. And I just, I yeah, I burn out so quickly."	• "And I have to be careful to, you know, not to discourage them too much, but also to provide a bit of realism." • "I've never encouraged someone to this... is this, this is what your focus should be, unless it's just bleeding obvious that that's what they should do" • "I've never done that, not in my 20 years as a teacher have I ever done that. Yeah, and I never will."
• "But thankfully, in my 20s, I had early counselling training" • "		• "They're taking people for these courses, knowing full well, not the jobs for them."	• "They would have to have it all for me to encourage them in every area"
• (Regarding learning how to deal with student's emotional wellbeing during teacher training at conservatoire) "Not once was it ever mentioned at all about this aspect". • "Probably not in a professional sense, but as a as a human and a caring person... and as a parent, and as a husband with a wife who's got mental health issues, I've been through quite a lot."	• "We've all got our own back story. So we're all going to be on a on a different wavelength." • "Well, I wouldn't say that most singing teachers are pretty good at it, in the same way that not every mechanic is good... good at fixing a car."	• "I think for a lot of my colleagues that I studied with, it does chew you up and spit you out in a way." • "It's very rare where... that you end up in a situation where you feel comfortable working with the people that you're working with, able to approach them and... and there's a collective camaraderie."	• "If a singer is good enough, I would tell them they're good enough. And if they themselves had the power, the passion within them, that it was their thing, and they really wanted to drive towards it, I would encourage them, and I would support them in every way that I could." • "My own personal feeling is the people that often make the best singers are the people that are the most vulnerable, and are those who are the most unsure of themselves. But they're not the people that can survive in the career."

	Beneficial Character Traits for Professional Musicians	Preparing Students for the Industry: Expectation, Resilience and Confidence	The Role of the Singing Teacher	Techniques and Strategies to combat Impacts of Low Self Esteem/Tension and build resilience
if 1 -	• "It's more of a personality, certain personality traits, I think help. And I think one of them is, is that this sort of inward drive to, to sort of discover and learn new things and, and I think you need a certain resilience to take on criticism, whether it's not even even a constructive criticism." • "It can be a quiet confidence" • "That drive, mixed with that love of music, and that want to create and express those things, of the things that where kind of, when I see those things, I'm really keen to kind of...help."	• "I'm really conscious to support, encourage, but also make people aware of the realities of the situation. When it gets to the... you don't want to ruin the magic or the or the, or the passion, but at the same time, you know, I think there's the balance of those two things." • "I try and sort of offer opportunities. There's been, there's several of singers that I've taught from when they're sort of 12/13, I've given them internships, or try...try to use them in sort of small context of professional work to see how they get on." • "We sort of talked about the realities of widening a skill base, so that it that you're not just singing in one way, or just singing your, your, your songs. That you're actually... creating a sustainable life and maybe trying to get some other skills."		
	• "I don't see, or I see very few people in the industry who don't have a second string to their bow" • "Because it can't be about you. It has to be about the music"	• "I think when I see people have real potential, what I always try to encourage is developing lots of skills alongside that." • "And I think when kids are talented at a young age, and they get a lot of attention for that. It can be chasing that attention rather than chasing like music or loving music." • "But you need to have lots of things in place to either have a portfolio career as a singer or a vocalist, or to be able to, you know, find a way into something else if you decide at some point that's not what you want." • "We just want to make sure that I'm sharing the full picture with them if that's something they really want to do." • "I'd really be wanting my student to know that, you have to work bloody hard at the singing. Oh, and by the way, you should probably have a few other you know, tricks up your sleeve." • "Who knows if this is actually true or not, but that that you will never, like reinforce a chance development by, you know, like being down on them because the world out there is hard." • "I will, certainly, if they want to go into the industry, try to be very exacting and tough on them, if you like, but I would never get angry with a kid." • "I would get them to do accountability stuff like practice journals and all those kind of things, so that they're answering their own words, in that way." • "I would try to do things like encourage them to put on their own events, or encourage them to be doing research. Like, you know, you want to go into opera, but the only person you've ever heard sing opera is yourself. Who are you listening to?" • "I think we have to be enthusiastic about it and also be realistic, yeah, and tell them"		
ti ti ti	• "And she just still can do everything she... and she... I noticed when I first met her, she was 19 and I was 28 or something. She was super confident, super confident from day one" • "Ideally, we can be someone that's a team worker, people that someone that people like to work with, but has some enough inner self confidence about their performance ability with a singing the performance."	• "So it's just that bit by bit thing, I think, trying to build up the confidence." • "We've, we've got at least words and a story and a character to tap into, even if we're feeling unconfident ourselves. Yeah. So I think that's really helpful for singers" • "In a way, if you don't have confidence, you've got maybe the acting side of things that you can impose. You can be someone else, and then use that yeah to do the confidence thing." • "The self confidence is what we're always trying to promote, because it makes such a huge difference to singing" • "It created an ability, which probably includes you, actually, but it created an ability to tap into whole streaming world and the recording world, and, and all of that, and, and they used it." - An Acknowledgment of the Importance of portfolio career... • "All you can do as a teacher is prepare them, give them the confidence and the strength to take the knocks"		• "I sometimes, if I'm doing a concert and I'm feeling you know, unconfident about it, I will visualize myself in my own singing lessons with me, because I now have a singing teacher I do trust."
	• "So there's the talent there, there's the right attitude, there's commitment, and there's all the kind of social things underneath, and also the sort of the extra star quality thing." - Talking about a young student working at professional level. • "I think if you start caring too much about something, it can actually become, become a bit of a neurosis, trauma thing, because then you're... you're so focused on getting something right that actually you're likely to make yourself get it wrong" • "Somebody who has the emotional flexibility to take you on that emotional... that emotional journey... And somebody who isn't afraid to take risks." • "So I think you have to have a basic honesty... about... what... you have to actually have... know your own worth." • "You need to be kind of socially literate and able to actually be happy to ask for opportunity." • "You have to have that honesty with yourself." • "That kind of positivity is... is amazing" • "That open bookness will mean that she doesn't get, she doesn't sort of get embroiled in those, am I good enough? Can I do that?"	• "Guiding somebody, not just through the vocal traps, but also through the kind of social understanding that needs to happen, and also the sort of professional understanding that isn't necessarily written down, but that you know happens" • "It's about giving people options. It's about saying, right, okay, if you like this sound, then you have to actually go for this." • "Singing, teaching is about improving and about sort of opening up the possibilities and saying, right, okay, here's the whole palette that you have."		• "That kind of visualization, sort of kind of looking, looking into, how do I want myself to be able to sing this." - As a strategy for encouraging students to let go.
st	• "Enormous confidence." • "You have to have it from a from a musical point of view. And you've got to have the confidence to execute." • "You can't be a performer unless you have the confidence to be one"	• "I'm never going to pretend to anyone that this is an easy job" • "You teach kids how to you teach kids how to cope and and you do it very, very different ways." • "It's very difficult to have a conversation with someone about the next that stage in their lives when they find it quite difficult to imagine what that stage would be like." • "The learning to be independent is, is, I think it's probably a little bit more of a challenge in the current environment than it used to be. We do spend a lot of time thinking about them, looking after them, and you know, you know, supporting their mental wellbeing, rather than being them being left to their own devices and learning how to cope by themselves." • "Teaching people not to worry about making mistakes is really hard" • "How to how to get them to ask you for help in a way where they don't feel like they're undermining themselves."	• "They've left with a spring in their step, you know, you've won."	
ty	• "There's so many people out there they don't have self-awareness."	• "In working with students to receive feedback... "If they besmirch them, I often say, "okay, they're talking about your character. They're talking about your portrayal of that person. Don't take it personally." • "But I always try and leave on a positive note, let them walk out the door feeling like they've achieved something" • "I said, even if you don't get into to drama school, even if you get through drama school, there might not be work. It's really not a solid job."		
h l at t e e	• "The ones that are quite, quite resilient, and, and really, just... I don't know, the Teflon coated almost."	• "You can't change the person you can't... you can advise and you can point out, but you can't change the person's character." • "I had a teacher who I didn't last with very long... but his ethos was to be as brutal as possible to you in the lesson, because his feeling was the business was so cutthroat, that if you couldn't cope with real criticism, and really be under the cosh in the lesson, you were never going to survive in the industry. And um, maybe he was right in one sense, because I didn't survive in the industry, but I didn't survive in his lessons either."	• "I think the main thing I'm looking for is, is for them to get joy from the singing"	• "The second you get critique in there... that they're gonna bolt"

Appendix 3 – Initial Interview Codes

Student/Teacher Relationship

Problems within the industry

Emotional Block – Issues where emotional wellbeing, blocks technique

The person/voice relationship –

Personality Traits (positive) – largely confidence/self-esteem.

What does it take to be a singer?

Personality Traits (Negative) -

Where are the boundaries? – How far is a teacher prepared to discuss issues with students?

How to manage student's feelings/emotions –

This includes strategies for preparing

What is the job of a singing teacher? –

What do teachers need?

Benefits of singing lessons –

Characteristics of singing teacher –

Preparing students for the industry

Appendix 4 – Interview 1 (P1)

MB 0:01

Hi, ----, thanks for joining me today.

P1

No worries

MB

This is just to confirm that you signed a consent form?

P1

Yes

MB

And you're happy for this to be recorded.

P1 0:12

Yes, great.

MB

So basically, I'm just doing some research on, kind of, how you, your attitude and feelings towards working with professional and pre professional students. So that might be people who are applying to study singing, or who are currently studying singing, and/or working professionally at the same time. There's lots of research about how professional musicians really suffer from poor anxiety and depression, and yet singing is really is used a lot within the wellbeing movement as a means of boosting wellbeing, both mentally and physically. So there's just a bit of a like paradox there. And I'm trying to explore where teachers feel they sit within that paradox, especially when working with students who have ambitions to use their voice professionally. So the first question I'm interested in is, what, how would you view the dynamic the student, teacher dynamic when teaching your students basically? What's the relationship there?

P1

The relationship in general? The relationship in terms of this specific. General first?

MB

I guess, go general, go general. Because I think there has an impact on Yeah...

P1

I think when I'm working with people that want to... there's different way. You've kind of got to be different things for people that want different things out of singing. So when I'm working with someone who's looking to progress, or wants to take singing seriously and make a career from it, I think there's... I'm really conscious to support, encourage, but also make people aware of the realities of the situation. When it gets to the... you don't want to ruin the magic or the or the, or the passion, but at the same time, you know, I think there's the balance of those two things. And I think part of it's because of the nature, or the need to be, a bit more of a polymath than you would have done 20/30, years ago. The need to be like able to do different things, both vocally, and also, musically, to make a career as a musician. So I think that's part of it is basically. Balance, trying to

balance, encouragement, encouragement... sort of technical progression and detail. And also, you know, trying to share experience of the realities of how it is to be a professional musician. I think some of the way I am with those kids, and people that are trying to move through, is a reaction to trying to be completely opposite to what I had with some vocal teachers growing up, where it's a difficult career, and there's almost a sense that knowledge needs to be earned. And there's like, I think that's sometimes the case in the classical training, that there's a sort of an idea that you can only know that when you've got to this stage. And yeah, and progression is something that's sort of shared, sometimes almost begrudgingly.

MB

Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah

P1

so I try and sort of offer opportunities. There's been, there's several of singers that I've taught from when they're sort of 12/13, I've given them internships, or try...try to use them in sort of small context of professional work to see how they get on. And usually it's been really, yeah, pretty, I think every single time it's been very rewarding to see

MB

Nice. And how do you think they value the relationship that you have with them as their teacher? What value like? Maybe more. The question is, what value do they place on you?

P1

That's really hard question to answer. I don't know. I hope, I hope that it would be some something that they... I don't know how to answer that question. I think it's, I think it's something that people have got a lot of,

MB

MMM

P1

Hopefully, confidence. And um... you know, because you can be... yeah, oo, well, you can be direct and you can be specific. But if you... also hopeful-, kind, hopefully someone is able... to grow.

MB

Yeah

P1

I think that is something that if you can try and get as much of that in in the development phase they can... You all need that later on, and we're like hustling, and it's not that much you know, of that around if you can do that early on, I think maybe there's something in that... I don't know. It's hard. I definitely had people come back later on and say, Thank you, so, which is nice. That's very nice. Yeah.

MB

Okay, cool. How do you feel about encouraging a student towards a career as a vocalist, and do you have concerns about doing that?

P1

Yeah, I think... I think as long as you're honest about the situation, I think sort of picking up from what I said in the first question.

I think... it is really tricky job. I think it takes a certain you know, when you're talking about like mental health and the paradox between how singing makes us feel great, but how difficult, how poor mental health so many artists have, it's probably not... I would say, in my opinion, it's the life that singing creates, and the difficulty, and the fact that it's so competitive, and the fact that so many things are stacked against musicians these days with streaming and everything else. And, you know... financial pressure and all that sort of stuff. So I think there's, as long as you're again being honest... I always really try... I wouldn't be able to... uh... I think 'I wouldn't have to live myself' is a bit intense, but I wouldn't, I wouldn't feel comfortable doing that, and encouraging them if I wasn't being honest. And actually, sometimes I can feel quite harsh, to kids, as singers, at 15/16 when you're explaining how the industry works, or your... I've had it before where I was work, because I worked as a vocal coach on (Singing TV Competition), and had people that wanted to audition, and I was explaining how I thought that wasn't a particularly good idea, or it could be a good idea... But here's how the reality of the situation is, and, um, this is how I felt when I was involved in... I felt like it was quite set up. Not to be... even though that's considered the most artist friendly talent TV show. It really felt like it was set up for the entertainment value, rather than for the progression of singers or their careers. And that could sometimes create friction, and... or at least at the time, when I was saying that, or other times when... I've sort of talked about the realities of widening a skill base, so that it that you're not just singing in one way, or just singing your, your, your songs. That you're actually... creating a sustainable life and maybe trying to get some other skills. It's been... it creates friction sometimes, but I think ultimately it's the only way to be hopefully preparing people to the realities of situation. And I think sometimes maybe the current mental health para... well, you know, the difference between the joy of singing and how people are feeling about a life as a singer, and an artist, is to do with the expectation versus the reality of the situation, regardless of you know, of success or anything else. I think it's a very different it looks very different to how it is. I think...I might have answered the question. I said a lot of words...

MB

(laughs) no, you definitely did! I had a follow up for you. What was it!? Sure it'll come back to me... Yeah, it's very interesting that... that was my question! In terms of, if you saw a student with a lot of potential, great voice, all the other stuff that you need to feel like they could potentially take on a career, would you outwardly recommend that or encourage them to do so, if they hadn't come to you first with that?

P1

I mean, I think, I suppose I did with ---. She wasn't really... she was just doing a bit of singing at school, and I thought that she... I encouraged her to sort of, start thinking about writing songs herself, rather than just doing covers. And when you see someone is, has a...kind of... I don't know, an apti-, no... it's not really aptitude, it's like a... if you can see someone from... even the way they're singing, that they, there's a sort of joy in it, or like a feeling of like connection with the, the music, I would, but I don't know if I would do it with the

intention that it becomes their career, at that age. It's sort of, you can encourage someone to pursue creating music without it being a career choice. I wouldn't... I don't think I would ever push anyone to do it as a career, partly because I know how difficult it is and but I would never discourage anyone because I know how much joy there's in it. So it's like that again, balance is the only...

MB

...balance. Is there anything else in within a person, if they, you know, you're if you feel comfortable encouraging them towards a career, or... if they came to you with that ambition anyway, what kind of... are there any other elements, characteristics, personality traits, that kind of thing. that you feel are necessary...

P1

Yes

MB

...for you to feel like you would 100% commit to being like, yeah, we can make this... definitely, let's do this.

P1

I would never try, and.. if I... I would never try and discourage anyone. But there have been... there have been times... where I thought, you know, I'm going to focus on the singing and I'm not going to focus on the career side, or because of certain things that have happened in sessions, and the main things in terms of the positives, or the types of people that I would kind of keep encouraging, keep offering... guidance, and not pushing, but kind of... allowing people to progress, is... there's a lot that comes down to... it's not so much work ethic, **It's more of a personality, certain personality traits, I think help. And I think one of them is, is that this sort of inward drive to, to sort of discover and learn new things and, and I think you need a certain resilience to take on criticism,** whether it's not even even a constructive criticism. And I... Yeah, and it's not so much about being someone that's sort of going to like... jazz hands on stage and like, you know, that's not really. **It can be a quiet confidence,** but I think a drive, an inward drive to... to develop and learn, is so important because... the desire to make music, and to create these days is probably not enough when you're fighting for sort of attention on such a... on these sort of overcrowded platforms. And I think that ability to... that ability to kind of... to want **that drive, mixed with that love of music, and that want to create and express those things, of the things that where I kind of, when I see those things, I'm really keen to kind of... help.**

MB

And how far do you see as their teacher, your responsibility, not responsibility, but like... how keen are you to also work on honing those personality traits or those characteristics within a person... talking about those things with them. Yeah, I or do you feel like you just want to stick to the singing?

P1

I think I try and offer those, those... that extra guidance and help... if, if, but it has to sort of, you know, usually it's after seeing or what... Usually there's a kind of a relationship, or a, you know, where someone's asking the question, rather than, because, I feel like that's

important as well, because then you're not pressuring or forcing anyone into something that they're, you know, but you can, I plant the ideas... I think last time, a positive comment at the end that you really mean, like that, you know, something like they're doing... a musical theatre and that's... you're at that... you're so close to the level, where you need to be, you know, if you're auditioning for the for Matilda at the west end, you know, for example, you're close to that level. You know, if you can just work on this one thing, and we really need to work on, you know, just that one bit... if you do that technical thing, and then usually at that point that's okay, they'll go, they'll either go one or two ways. They'll go and work on that. And they'll say, is there anything else I can do? Or... or they'll come, or they won't, you know, but if you kind of give them the opportunity. That's what I feel like, is... being really honest about the where they are, but where you think they could get to.

MB

Mmm

P1

I think that really helps... I mean, but it's different... some, I don't know, you must have it as well... like some students, just want to be told that they're really good... and other students... which is fine as well... I mean, you know, other students want to be... want to know how they can... Yeah, kind of keep pushing.

MB

Yeah, yeah. How do you view your responsibility to your students, emotional, wellbeing?

P1

The more... you know... I've been teaching now for like... you know... over 10 years, and the more I teach the more I realize that's such a big part of it. I would say, like when I... because when I used to do some songwriting and production, I was always told by an old manager that it's 80% managing the room, 20% writing and managing the room... You know, the feel of the room. And I think singing vocal coaching is sort of similar, like... how someone feels and how they feel long term, and how they're feeling about... is so important, maybe more important. And I've found that re-, you know, working on how they feel... and giving them simpler prompts that I know that they can take on board... and long term, giving them aims has been... yeah... I've simplified what I'm saying, even though, and I don't know, and then that's more about the emotion of the room. It's amazing... I don't know how many, how many... times people cry in sessions. Happens all the time. And I think that's because.. and maybe there's that's something about the... in this whole... in your masters... there's so much emotion in singing. So I think the emotional... is probably the... it's up there with the most important thing about being, you know, helping people with their voice... for lots of reasons. I think there, it's the only instrument where there's no barrier between you, yourself and this, and the sound you're making. So it can be really, really vulnerable. You know, make people feel vulnerable. Can make people feel quite self-conscious. And often there's like a voice inside there that people are almost afraid of finding. So I think, yeah, it's probably, it's up there with the most important things. I find it especially that... that very difficult, and pivotal age. Yeah, it's really important to be a positive... and kind of like, I don't know, it's really hard. It's hard. This is probably, this

is relevant, but, like, as a male teacher, as well, being a positive role model and being a, you know, there's a real that... that line between being professional, caring and positive is so important. So, yeah, I think it's probably up there with being the most important.

MB

How do you find that boundary, creating that boundary of, as you say, that line... of what is professional, but also then that kind of caring... And how have you built that line for yourself? How do you know where to draw that line?

P1

I think having a clear idea always until... until they're of a certain age, where they're organizing their own lessons. So they're like, you know, until you've... I always deal with the parents... I always speak and email, and organize everything via the parents. And, you know, early on, I had a couple of, and still recently, had a couple of issues where it has been sort of almost inappropriate from the other side, if that makes sense? Whenever there's been an issue where someone's like, sent me, I always just go straight to the parents in terms of like, because sometimes, when you've got a positive role model, and as a male teacher and as a teenage girl, that can be like, it can be quite... um, girls... I don't know how to explain it about... you just got to be so, I think, for any teacher, you've got to be so mindful of your position as a as an adult, as a role model, as someone that needs to like, be firm, but also to also create a safe space. And if someone's being really positive, the idea of like, you don't want to... this is the hardest thing about that I've had to deal with. It was, how do I make How do I make... not ruin the whole singing thing for this person by embarrassing them? But how do I make sure that this is really sort of still a safe place and, also safe for me, if that makes sense. So yeah, clear boundaries, always dealing with the parents, if anything's inappropriate within the room, calling it out straight away. Calling out maybe a bit harsh, but just saying, Yeah, actually, that's not acceptable. Or yeah, you know. That's not... and then also... if something is inappropriate or someone's like, because it's happened a couple times, messaged you just saying direct, we're actually not responding to the message, but just contacting their parents. Yeah, I think it's probably something that, I don't know if it's ever happened to you, but it's probably more common with male teachers and teenagers? Yeah, it might have happened.

MB

I think for me, there is definitely a boundary that is important to set. You know, I work with a lot of... especially I find, exactly as you say, that age when the young people begin to separate from their parents, become more independent. So 17/18, year olds... and they look for somewhere else to project...

P1

totally,

Mb

... you know. So there's not that male female dynamic, necessarily, but there is almost a female to female dynamic, slight over sharing, potentially,

P1

Totally, yeah, yeah. I've had it's probably a bit different with the male to male thing, because it hasn't happened in that in that context. But I think the over sharing thing, that's sort of what I mean about inappropriate things. When someone's saying something, it's not always like, what's the word? I think it's slightly different relationship with a male teacher, but it's just about making sure that people... like that they're aware that's not, that's not, that... that's not, not acceptable. Feels like the wrong word, but... it's not the right tone, and it then needs to be a profession-... There's always needs to be a professional. There needs to be a professional distance, yeah, but still a supportive and fun atmosphere. Yeah, I think I've also had quite, like, making sure I was, like, trained in the right sort of way, like safeguarding, little things, like always being the other side of the door, so the door was, you know, to make sure these little things that, if you've got them in your mind, you're always creating a space that feels safe... face-... because also from the other side, you know, I'm always very aware that, if you're a sort of 15 year old child, coming into a space, you know, but with for a one on one lesson with someone, you just need to make sure that that they feel supported, but also really like empowered, almost to like to be in charge of, of, of that space, basically

MB

Something I'm kind of looking at a bit from what you're Saying, talking about the training and the training and the safeguarding thing, because vocal coaching is... pretty much unregulated ...

P1

It's the wild-...

MB

... you know, it's an unregulated profession that is, in some ways, dealing with very high, emotional, vulnerable situations. So, I mean, it sounds to me like, and you're only where you are in your teaching because you've done these trainings, and because you've done that sort of thing. But what things do you feel like are important that have helped you? You know... what train-... I mean, you said safeguarding and stuff,

P1

yeah.

MB

Is there stuff that you would like to know more about, or trainings and stuff that you feel like could help further that progression, that understanding more,

P1

I think I did. So I've done lots of training in, like, you know, vocal training. I never had a pedagogy or pedagogy, or, yeah, pedagogy, pedagogy, yeah. I've done like, you know, your specific anatomy, that sort of stuff. I feel that the thing that I would like to really work on, and it kind of falls on... is some more, like mental health and sort of psychology training, yeah, because often these sessions can feel, you know, when people really open up, because a song has reminded them of something, it's like, that's the difference. That's sort of that

idea of like, and actually a lot of the time, the act of singing is what you need, just being supportive and just kind of, but it can feel that element is something that I'd like to... I'd like to really... yeah, I feel like it's almost that people say, God, this is like therapy for me when they leave, you know? And actually, that's probably one area that... But I do think the... the idea early on, because I started working with adults, I mainly talk... I still mainly do probably, well, yeah, I'd say two thirds of people I teach are adults. But doing this sort of, the safeguarding and the kind of youth training that I did about five, six years ago, and I've kind of topped up, was really useful. But yeah, I'd say anything to do with, like, psychology would be really interesting to sort of... to learn, to kind of, yeah. But I've also one thing that I found really useful recently I did, like, about a year ago, breath work, lots of breath work training. And it wasn't related to... (it was) more diaphragmatical breathing, but it wasn't really related to singing. But I found so many parallels between, you know, space and things that people were doing, to unlock emotions that were really useful when translated back into singing. So, yeah, that's...

MB

Do you find the last question that as those techniques that you are teaching to people in terms of that breath work stuff and those questions, that you find you bring them into your own practice as a performer or as a musician, and you're professional life...

P1

Yeah, definitely. Well, we had, we did that gig the other week, and I couldn't... had a really bad sore throat, yeah, and it was like times like that, where being a vocal coach and working on those techniques so much, that was a good most the time, like when I'm feeling, when you're in the gig, you're just thinking about what you want to do and how you want to how you feel, and just... you know, that's what I always say to people anyway, if you're really working With a technique, you should be able to just express yourself on the day. You should be able to shouldn't be really thinking too much about the mechanics of it. But sometimes when you're not 100%, fitness or vocally, you've got to really rely on the technique. And that was something where it actually used a lot, in that one was just really trying to focus in on the breathing, because I felt like I was riding, riding a tight rope,

MB

Yeah.

P1

So I needed all the space I could get to try and make it a bit safer on the high notes. And so sometimes, yeah, I definitely feel like I wouldn't have been able to do even a couple of years ago. I don't think I would have been able to do that gig. Well, I would have been able to do it would have been horrific for everyone there.

MB

Yeah, nice. Okay, cool. They're kind of all my questions. Is there anything you feel like you wanted to say, or a question you wish I'd asked? Or no, any more points?

P1

No, I think... I think I already said it, but just the idea of, I think one thing I always try and instill on... instill in, students are trying to take it further. Is like... is the idea of broadening their horizons and trying to be more, trying to be able to do more things...

MB

Yeah,

P1

...related to singing. I think that's something that I think is super important for... because I think that sometimes the quality of people's... how people feel in a career in music, can be related to a power and balance of not being able to create situations. So if you can, if you can create, if you're making your skill base around your singing, wider than you're able to have feel less power, because you can feel more power-... empowered to do what you want, to create more things, and to like to feel like you're not having to wait for something else to happen. It allows you to just do things. So that's something I always try and but sort of, you know, if I'm honest, I think I'm quite sort of... a bit, sometimes practically focused in terms of that sort of stuff. So I don't know how helpful it might be, just helpful for me. That might be more advice that's helpful for me rather than helpful for everyone. So I don't know. Yeah,

MB

I think the idea of giving people the tools to build

P1

It doesn't have to be the same tools, yeah, like

MB 1 28:57

... like a portfolio career,

P1

yeah,

MB

it makes your experience as a professional musician... it's the most common experience as a professional musician, right? And if you go into the world prepared for that, yeah,

p1

Totally. We're thinking about like, if you're looking at both of what we what we do, we're doing lots of different things, yeah, but we have a kind of core thing that we do, and then we do lots of things around it that make it work.

MB

Yeah! Cool. All right, thanks so much.

P1

No worries.

MB

Bye.

Appendix 5 – Interview 2

MB

So this is just to confirm that you have signed the consent form.

P2

I have it was exciting,

MB

yeah, very exciting. And you're happy for this to be recorded,

P2

yeah,

MB

perfect. So I've basically been doing some research on singing. Teaching singing is the main, main topic. But focusing on the relationship between the teacher and students' emotional wellbeing. So much research has been done into singing and the benefits of singing for wellbeing on your mental and physical health. But there's also loads of research happening at the moment about how poor musicians' mental health is. Musicians are up to three times more likely to experience anxiety and depression than the general population. So there's a lot of... there's a big paradox there in terms of how singing is used to improve mental health, but those who do it professionally suffer from quite poor mental health. There's also loads of links between depression, anxiety and voice disorders, the impact of stress on the voice. That's something for me, personally, this was kind of the trigger. I've never experienced that myself, but I've seen it in other people, friends of mine, and also in my students. You can see when tension is the cause of a technical problem, and how we manage that as teachers, basically.

P2

Yeah.

MB

And I think the relationship between the student and the teacher is at the heart of that. So my first question is, basically the first level of this is what you would describe the student, teacher dynamic as? How you would describe that relationship, both as yourself as a teacher, but also when you were a student, how you view that relationship?

P2

I think that's an amazing question with lots of levels. And I think I would also probably say that the more I teach, the more I realize that's defined by the student in front of me. More and more, I think when I... if I start from where, when I was the student, I lived, I was quite a grown up child without a lot of parental guidance. And I would say I definitely substituted my sort of singing teachers into that role. So there was a lot of, certainly, as a teenager, up to maybe, maybe when I was 20? Maybe 18? let's say, a lot of kind of going to my singing teacher for guidance and trusting them more than I trusted the scenario at home, and also, like really using that as a vehicle to kind of express some of the anxiety that I think I experienced as a result of my home life that I couldn't, didn't, maybe feel safe to express anywhere else. So I think, on the other hand, that was also I started singing quite young. I knew that was something I could do quite well,

and there were lots of other areas in my life that I wasn't very proud of, do you know what I mean? So not that it was bad as such, but that was something I was proud of being able to do. And so I think it was quite special to be able to hone that with someone that I really trusted. So there was certainly that teacher student dynamic, but I already maybe felt a bit more mature, because I sort of knew I could sing or something like that. And then outside of that, there was definitely a turning to that person for guidance emotionally as well, emotionally, psychologically. Um, I started teaching when I was about 20, and... learnt with a with my old teacher. She sort of thought that would be a good thing for me to do, and so I would teach a couple of young students and then chat about them with her. So that was kind of how that started. And I guess I've always found right from the beginning of my teaching experience that kids, especially teenagers, which is where I probably do most of my teaching, want to share, or it not they want to share what's going on... Or something comes up via exactly what you're describing, a physical tension, or a nervousness to perform, or an anxiety about something that comes up organically in the room and that takes you somewhere else, somewhere more broad. So I think... I'm not sure I'm answering your question, but I guess there's certainly the role of the teacher, obviously, is to teach the student, and I think for us as singing teachers, [a lot of that is about releasing tension and kind of just getting rid of the bad habits that life brings into the room], but then... and finding the music they enjoy, you know, and kind of finding their voices and allowing them to explore that. And then, I guess, but I often find the psychological stuff comes into the room in in one way or another, and it's different now being at a boarding school as well. This the first boarding school I've taught at, and there are some kids. You can really feel... just really need that, like one on one time with an adult once a week, you know? Yeah, might not even be to talk about their problems or anything like that sometimes is that, but it's just to have that, like one on one time. It's almost like they're discovering themselves a little bit in that space you know. Yeah, I don't know. Does that answer your question?

MB

Yeah, very much so. And how do you feel about is there a specific kind of relationship that you have, if you're teaching somebody who, in a way, was kind of like you, has a real skill, an aptitude for singing, potentially wants to see, see it through as a career, or study it further, or go into kind of choral scholarships, that kind of thing. Does that have an impact on your relationship, or...

P2

Great question! Love this! I would say, yes. I think so. Yes, definitely. I think the ones that want to take it to a high level are more invested in our relationship, because they care about that outcome and... and I think sometimes if there is a connection, particular connection between teacher student, I think it's almost like that inspires them somehow to want to take it a bit further. Yeah, I can think of a student who is not a natural singer, but I think because she appreciated the time with me, was determined to all the other instruments dropped, but she wanted to keep singing and, and get her grade 8, even though that was never going to be the path she kind of walked down ultimately.

MB

Yeah.

P2

So yes, I think I don't know. I guess maybe they look more to you for validation, if they if that's something they want to take seriously..

MB

Yeah.

P2

And I think when I feel like they really want to do it, then I'll also go the extra mile for them within the context of, like the working scenario, you know, so if they're still in school, obviously there are lots of safeguarding things that absolutely must be respected. I had one student who left who did a gap year, and when she was on that gap year, I invited her to more of my shows and sort of tried to introduce... I brought her into rehearsals to see what that process is like, which I wouldn't do without seeking permission, I suppose in the appropriate way. I mean, her parents knew, I guess so you could say I was still seeking permission. But... think there are those sort of contracts of safeguarding that to be super aware of as well, well.

MB

And I think that's partly why I'm interested in this singing, vocal coaching is like an unregulated profession. In theory. You don't have to have any qualifications to do it.

P2

Yeah, totally.

MB

And as you say, you're working with people who where that relationship is quite important to them. And yeah, that's kind of part of the part of the research, really.

P2

So I guess my number we've got to do this is just like a conversation, because I just want to now ask all these questions.

MB

Yeah, totally, yeah, because I'm quite I can't. I this is very much about you, so I can't go into... Do you know what I mean? I can't. I would love to, though, but yeah. So my next sort of question is, how you've how you feel about encouraging your students towards a career as a vocalist, and if you have any concerns about that,

P2

Yeah, I've got major concerns about, I mean, I let me not generalize if I think they've got the potential... I think the trouble is, if I'm honest, because... I... it's a very timely moment to ask that question, because the... my first student who went off to do classical singing... got a place at a couple of conservatoires, I... went to Birmingham, dropped out after the first term, because she said, Actually, this isn't for me. I want to be an actress. And it's really interesting to look at what made us because we worked really hard to get her into those conservatoires, and it's interesting that we could get so far down that road, without... I sort of had an inkling about it, but she never spoke up more to say. So I think that would make me even more cautious to encourage people to be vocalists. I think when I see people have real

potential, what I always try to encourage is developing lots of skills alongside that. Because I think there is no... no guarantees in this industry. And I think when kids are talented at a young age, and they get a lot of attention for that. It can be chasing that attention rather than chasing like music or loving music. So I think if they, if they do, tell me that they really love it and that they want to do it, then I would be saying things like... okay, well, you need to take acting classes and drama classes and, sorry, acting classes and dance classes and maybe languages if you want to do the operatic stuff, you know. And so to try and broaden their skills as much as possible. And then, absolutely, if you want to do it, I'll support you all the way. But you need to have lots of things in place to either have a portfolio career as a singer or a vocalist, or to be able to, you know, find a way into something else if you decide at some point that's not what you want. So, yeah, I guess I do have reservation. We just want to make sure that I'm sharing the full picture with them if that's something they really want to do.

MB

And what does that look like for you? What is that full picture?

P2

I guess it looks like a lot of competition.

MB

Yeah,

=P2

A lot of setbacks.

MB

Yeah,

P2

these have really thick skin, which I think often in the private school setting. That's a horrible generalization, but often I see kids who have been really protected in lots of ways. So it's kind of making sure. Do you really know what the reality of not having a lot of money is? You know, doesn't always have to be like that, but often it's. I guess, and also, increasingly, now I don't see, or I see very few people in the industry who don't have a second string to their bow, whether that be doing web design or taking pictures or making recordings or, you know, I think there's like scope for a lot of other things, but I'd really be wanting my student to know that, you have to work bloody hard at the singing. Oh, and by the way, you should probably have a few other

MB

Yeah,

P2

you know, tricks up your sleeve.

MB

Yeah. And what would you ever outwardly, let's say this is a hypothetical here. If a student... you were teaching somebody and no conversation had ever, they'd never come to you with that goal, but you saw real potential in them. I think it's hard... I find... You know... this

is one area where I will speak about my experience. I get so excited when there's a student who is really good,

P2
totally,

MB
and it feels like part of... for me as a teacher, it feels as progress. It feels progression. It feels as kind of low... if I was able to help them get to that place. I've, I've achieved something.

P2
Yeah,

MB
you know, I mean

P2
absolutely

MB
And... but I also share the concerns that you do, and there's... so then how, how do you manage that dynamic? If you see someone with the potential, but fear the outcome of that potential...

P2
yeah,

MB
...is that? Is that something you think about? Or do you just have a blanket rule, or what's your approach in that scenario?

P2
I, definitely, yeah, it's so tough because I got a job recently teaching singing, and I'm sure one of the reasons they were able to give it to me was because I had to put someone into Conservatoire, you know. So there is that element of... as a teacher, if that's a career ambition, you know, you do need to be having those kids or those students meeting those marks, or you can't be taken incredibly in that space. So I think it's like, it's a really tricky sort of conundrum being in between. I suppose, if I heard potential in someone, I don't think I can hide the excitement. Can I really get over excited and, and, and I think that that maybe almost puts the idea in their head without me having to say anything, of sort of thinking, Oh, my God, I have this thing that I can do, and that's special. And I think that's quite intoxicating in a way. Um, so I would definitely, I would definitely say to a student, have you considered this? And if there isn't, oh no, but I want to do X something different, then I would absolutely encourage them, but I would try to encourage them as honestly as possible, as kind of with as much of the detail of the last question of what that reality is, as possible. Because, bottom line, I think, as well as I love my life as a singer, I have no regrets about not... I don't know, who knows what else I could do, but not trying to pursue something else. Do you know? I mean, I love that I'm in charge of my schedule and... and I can do different things here, there and everywhere. I really like that. So I have no reservations about encouraging people into that world, but I would try to be really honest about it, about what it really what that really means, you know, and

then it doesn't mean you get to be a star on the stage of the Royal Opera House.

MB

Yeah, yeah, that there's layers to it.

P2

Yeah,

MB

okay, yeah, that's great in terms of... it's kind of following on to the next bit of the next theme. How do you view your responsibility towards your students emotional wellbeing?

P2

Great question. And I think I take my... the emotional wellbeing of my students, really seriously,

MB

yeah,

P2

and I'm definitely an empath. So when you have someone walking a room and stuff's going on, I think you can sort of feel it, whether they want to talk about it or not. And I guess I feel strongly that my responsibility to my students is to give them space to talk about their emotional well being, if that's what they want to do, and to try not to push them to do that if they don't want to do that. So I think I've had, you know, like suicidal students in the past, and often there it takes a long while for that to come out, but when it does, then it all pours out, you know. But there is always that space leading up to that when you sort of almost just trying to knock at the door and give a little bit of space, for that without pushing, because obviously that's really difficult to have to engage with in. And often, I think things are much better now than they were...sounds at all... back in my day, because I didn't have so much emotional support from school. And I think schools are much better at doing that now. You know kids that are up here that have difficult times. I had a transgender kid who, you know that is a really difficult emotional journey, but I knew there was a team in place to be directly engaging with that. [So when my kids come in, I will always ask how they are, what's been going on, or if they've given me some detail of something. I'll follow up with that. If I remember.]

MB

yeah,

P2

and if that leads us somewhere, then it does.. If it doesn't, then it doesn't. And I just will always report it. But I feel, you know, if there's something that comes up that concerns me, obviously, you pass that on to the right person, [but I do feel like it's really important that that space is there, yeah, in case they need it.]

MB

Do you do any teaching outside of the cons-, context of like, an institution,

P2
yeah,

MB
and how, in that context, where you don't have the kind of institutional support, institutional safeguarding measures, that kind of thing, how do you manage? How do you manage that...

P2
Good question,
MB
in that context?

P2
Um, I don't think that any major safeguarding concern has come up in my private teaching. I wonder if sometimes, if I'm working with student, kind of teenagers, they're often in their parents house, yeah, so I think that that leads to a certain amount of being a bit more closed about that kind of thing. I don't think it's at the forefront. Don't think they feel so open about it. Maybe, yeah, and the adults that I've worked with, or the, you know, young adults that I've worked with, I think, again, it would be the same of I would always try to leave them that space, talk about it if they need to. And then, you know, if I have a, I've never had a, I would try and point them in the direction of something,

MB
yeah,

P2
but I think I volunteered for mental health charity for a while, for a suicidal charity, and in that context, I really learned how, like, there's no... in that space... If something happens, if something's shared, it's never... the people that come and talk to us understand that there is no follow up. So if that's what they want to do, that's what they're going to do. And it's very rarely, that's as far as it goes. But I bring that up because I think it just showed me how much it's rare that people are going to go and do something dangerous. What they want is to be able to talk about it.

MB
Yeah.

P2
And so with some of my older students who have gone through difficult times, I would try and just open that space,

MB
yeah,

P2
for them to use as much as they want. And then I'd say, you know, point them in the direction of a charity or helpline or something like that, if I thought was necessary.

MB
And how much do you think the actual singing, the act of singing itself, is the thing that opens the door for that conversation or for

those conversations? Or do you think it's the one-to-one environment that...

P2

I think both probably... one more great question. I do think that singing connects to something. I think the fact that you're trying to encourage people to breathe in a diaphragmatic way and get the tension out of here and be a bit more grounded and in contact with themselves, certainly opens that to some extent. But I also can think of teachers who would have taught me that and who I would never have talked to in a million years. So I think there's like, I think it's both that there's a dynamic of who I am as a person, or who many singing teachers in my experience are as people, and also that that act of being grounded and trying to be in touch with yourself and kind of reveal the person anymore, I guess. I do really believe in, like, holistic singing, teaching,

MB

yeah,

P2

[and that, if stuff's going on, I would much rather know about it, because then I feel like I know what I'm dealing with, you know.]

MB

And do you feel like you've seen, you've seen that in terms of manifesting in the voice or knowing how to... you have to manage that, yeah, you know, I mean,

P2

yeah, totally things, yeah, yeah. I definitely have had kids with real like, I mean, I'm gonna say, like, problems with their voices, I think. And it makes complete sense to me when you see this sort of psychological picture of their lives, and I go, how could you possibly be, kind of like, all in line, and, you know, pretty big as you need to, and all that sort of stuff,

MB

yeah.

P2

So, yeah,

MB

do you feel, do you feel equipped as a teacher and also a person to hold, hold that space for them? You know, do you. Feel, do you feel both in terms of setting the boundaries? Do you feel like there are boundaries? And if so, how have you established what those are for yourself and for them?

P2

I think I've been guided by safeguarding measures in schools. I think it was helpful that the first substantial teaching that I did was in a secondary school with a safeguarding procedure in place and an area they called the --- where students can go and talk to counsellors if they want to. So I think that encouraged me to feel safe, that if I had the slightest concern, all it took was an email to the to the that team within the school, to say this has come up, and just maybe keep an eye and to feel like I wasn't the only one holding that. I think holding

that sole responsibility is a lot, but I... I think it's I don't, I don't think I've ever felt solely responsible...

MB
yeah,

P2
...for a student, because I know that either there's the safeguarding space in the schools or I can point them in the direction of a charity, or, yeah, someone to call. But I think I also, on a side note, really want to train as a psychotherapist,

MB
yeah?

P2
And I think there's no coincidence that those two things kind of run not too far away from each other,

MB
yeah?

P2
And it feels really important to kind of maintain the boundary of protecting that singing space as well, and for that to be about working at singing,

MB
yeah,

P2
and not just about, you know, engaging with whether... because I think also, like the discipline of doing something and working hard at something can be quite saving from that... from demons anyway,

MB
totally,

P2
you know,

MB
totally.

P2
But I think it's a different... I think it's really important to think more about how we put those things, those boundaries, in place for ourselves. What's the structure, what's the framework? I don't think I really have an official one.

MB
Yeah,

P2
I guess only to work within the confines of other people's and,

MB
yeah,

P2

I think that's a really good thing to be looking into and thinking about doing

MB

And that would be something that you felt would be beneficial?

P2

Yeah,

MB

A framework?

P2

Yeah. So just like, even if it was, kind of comes back to what we were saying initially, you know, about even if it was just about meeting with other teachers to talk about it, you know,

MB

yeah,

P2

just to kind of swap teaching, singing is really lonely, and like, swapping processes or practices or,

MB

yeah,

P2

you know, stories in a way that's sort of confidential, responsible in that way, you know, I think that would be really helpful.

MB

Yeah, it's very interesting. I'm gonna slightly blend in to

P2

love that

MB

complete the circle.

P2

Yes,

MB

in terms of emotional wellbeing, of people, your students who are going into the professional world, into your concept, like conservatoires, or straight into professional world. Is there stuff you feel that you can do to prepare them emotionally for that world, as well as being you've mentioned about kind of being honest about it. But do you feel like there's... it's so important to create the nurturing side of things, but that's conflicting to the industry, as you've said. So how do you

P2

Yeah, I mean, I think there's, I think there's research to say. And I am quoting something that I feel like I read somewhere once, maybe. So

who knows if this is actually true or not, but that you will never, like reinforce a chance development by, you know, like being down on them because the world out there is hard.

MB
Yeah,

P2
so I think I've never felt it my responsibility to get angry with a student or, like, penalize them for not being good enough. I will, certainly, if they want to go into the industry, try to be very exacting and tough on them, if you like, but I would never get angry with a kid.

MB
Yeah,

P2
it would just be like, actually, I, you know, I'm not sure that's good enough. And have you thought about this? And yeah, you know, I would get them to do accountability stuff like practice journals and all those kind of things, so that they're answering their own wants, in that way. Yeah, because if you want to go into the industry, you have to do what you do at such a high level. But then I guess I would try to do things like encourage them to put on their own events, or encourage them to be doing research. Like, you know, you want to go into opera, but the only person you've ever heard sing opera is yourself. Who are you listening to? You know, who's inspiring you, who's exciting you? Because it can't be about you. It has to be about the music. Or you just, you know, that, to me, is quite a important distinction, you know? So just, I guess, trying to reinforce that they need to be really passionate about the whole thing,

MB
yeah.

P2
And then I think I would also try and make sure, if they want to do it professionally, that they go on certain courses so they're meeting other professionals, and they're not just getting my perspective on things. And I try and create as many sort of performance opportunities and master class opportunities as possible. So they're really getting some sense of what training starts to look like. And also they're getting used to that audition scenario where you stand up and sing for five minutes and leave no,

MB
yeah.

P2
So I think, I think that's probably what I would think about in that...

MB
Are there personality traits that you feel are important, or personally, personality traits that are, what's the word I'm looking for, detrimental to achieving? You know, finding that feeling of achievement or success or whatever that you know is,

P2

I guess I'd kind of apathy or laziness would concern me, because you have to be such a get up and go sort of person. But I guess if I felt that from a student, I have felt that from students who want to go into it, I would try and raise that with them. Raise that with them and think about it and see if there's a way in which we can work with that, or they can, you know, organize their own event, for example, so they have to sort of push through that and see that through to the end. Otherwise, I think being a singer is like about working with all of yourself. I guess if someone's being hyper critical with themselves, I would try, I do, try to put them in a performance context and then engage with them about it afterwards. Oh, that was awful. That was horrible. Okay, who's that helping? Nobody. So let's go through and say, if that is horrible, you need to tell me specifically what about it is horrible, so we can work on it together. Or you need to find me at least three positive things to say, even if it's I got up and sang from beginning to end. So I guess, yeah, that hyper negativity would be a bit I try to work with that, but it wouldn't be something that would stop me. I think the apathy thing would worry me more, probably.

MB

Yeah, I think the self-criticism one is, is really interesting as teachers, because you have to encourage your students to look at themselves critically, but do it in a positive.

P2

Yeah totally

MB

Is there anything that you have, or anything that you feel works in that scenario. Or do you think, yeah? Is there anything...

P2

I do think it's like being systematic about it, or at least in my experience, that's been helpful. Of when I tend to find if they want to do it, they're already hyper critical of themselves,

MB

yeah?

P2

So I don't often have kids that want to go into the industry, that kind of imagine they're just going to Swan in and be great. I've got one young one who's very identified with the like clout that she gets from being a good singer at a young age, but when it comes to her actual performance, she then goes, Oh, but that was awful, and that was horrendous, and that was this, and that was that. So it's about breaking that down and trying to make that real, rather than these sweeping kind of yeah indictments.

MB

yeah.

P2

And, and again, I try to be really specific and go, Okay, what are the three negative things in that that you don't like?

MB
Yeah?

P2
And I need positives, yeah, because it's never one thing or another.
And I try to instill really early that perfection doesn't exist, yeah,

MB
yeah, which I guess could be the hard thing,

P2
exactly.

MB
Yeah, nice. I kind of come to the end of all my questions, really. But you know, this is very open, and I'm kind of intrigued. If there's an answer, the answer can be no to this,

P2
yeah,

MB
but if there's anything else that you feel is relevant to the wider picture of what we've spoken about that I've not thought of or not asked you, or if there's something else that you want to say, or, you know...

P2
I wonder if, like, I'm sure this is probably just an interest on my part. I wonder if the difference in genres between like, I don't know I and you and I don't know each other well enough, but I get the impression that you teach more jazz and pop, and..

MB
That's my Yeah, that's my role at ---. Is contemporary,

P2
amazing. And I wonder if, like, whether the contemporary versus the classical allows kids to even be even more themselves, you know, and whether there's a kind of difference in just, I wonder if there's kind of the difference in genre provokes a difference in the kind of emotional response and and the kind of wellbeing stuff from that side, I guess. But it's just a so..

MB
I'm interviewing teachers cross genre, and in sort of... some... not, not really, it feels all kind of,

P2
yeah, yeah.

MB
I think the singing itself brings up. It's the act of it that you know, brings up that kind of thing. And though the you. A kind of situation of the relationship, the one to one context of it, and yeah, what you have to ask your students to help them progress in terms of their singing, you know?

P2
Yeah,

MB
but it's definitely an area that I will look at within when I compare the interviews and see if there's differences or where the similarities lie, that at this stage, yeah, it feels like there's a lot of comparison, even across across the genre.

P2
Yeah, interesting. And I guess the other thing would be like, I think I'd be interested to know why we become singing teachers, because there are some singers that I know who are like, Absolutely not. No, never. Like, can't do it, won't do it, not interested. Whereas, so for me, it was a really obvious thing,

MB
yeah,

P2
to go into. I don't know how you felt about that, but whether there's a relationship to how we, you know, our experience as young singers, and why that, does that take us into teaching or not?

P2
Yeah? Well, and I think, I think that's an, you know, that's a question for that I will, you know, potentially look at later down the line of like, is it the fact I had positive experiences with my singing teachers at the sort of teenage age? Yeah, going into conservatoires, it was good, but I had so many teachers. It was different.

P2
Yeah,

MB
the jazz world that is very different. You don't have one teacher. So I think I had across my four years, maybe eight teachers, wow, no way, some of whom weren't even singers, because you're studying jazz. So
P2
that's cool.

MB
So I had, like piano, like people who were pianists, but working on me with my singing.

P2
Wow, god, that's so cool.

MB
So you didn't have that. I craved that over-... I craved a teacher, though, really had oversight of all of my education, if that

P2
Meg, totally, totally,

MB
you know, five hours with one, with few teachers in a year, and stuff which you're kind of like,

P2

No way.

What actually do you, you know?

P2

And then are they trying to bring you something very specific, like because, yeah,

Speaker 1 32:03

I would go for a very specific thing, improvisation or harmony or right, that kind of knowledge. Wow, that's amazing. But when I look back on it, the teachers that I had the best relationship with whilst I was at conservatoire were definitely my singing teachers, and there are two I can think of in particular, one of whom was really focused on technique,

P2

okay?

MB

And bizarrely, that's the teacher that had the most impact on me, you know? I mean, not, yeah, but

P2

I think, but it's that thing, isn't it? Of like when you offer someone structure and push them to work hard, I think that's often when the emotional stuff comes somehow,

MB

yeah,

P2

which is interest, which I think is interesting. It's not the ones that you kind of go, let's have a cup of tea and have a chat, you know? And I think that's kind of fascinating.

MB

And I think, and I think the bat, and I think the balance of those two things is important, yeah,

P2

and I think that's what I find is, is I'd really appreciate, you know, as a bit of, I mean, I don't, it's not that I feel like I don't do a good job now, or that I, you know, that I don't manage the space for both. But it's certainly something that I've just found on my own. You know,

MB

I was gonna say, is that this is the question I had. Is there any, any areas or any kind of parts of it that you find you wish, I mean, you've kind of answered this already, but that you wish you had more guidance overall, any kind of trainings that you feel you want or need to feel more equipped to deal with it. When you know...

P2

I think the experience that I had at ---, which is this mental health charity, it's called ---, and the idea is, have you heard of it?

MB

Yeah.

P2

So I think the training that I got there, so I think if I hadn't had that, my answer would be yes. I think the training that I got there on something I wanted to volunteer during the pandemic. So that was, was an unrelated thing. I knew that I've always been kind of interested in mental health, but it, that, does also, I'm quite clear that that needs to be separate from singing. But I think what I realized there is that there was nothing that I couldn't hear. And sort of the idea about the listening is you're trained to just basically, it's like, if someone's in a ditch. You're not reaching your hand out to pull them out. You're getting in to know what it feels like. Just sit with them in it, you know. And so I feel quite confident that on the most... for the most part, I couldn't do that, and I know that the responsibility then is afterwards to deal with what I've been told. So sometimes I find it hard to tell a kid. If you're telling me this, I have to pass it on, yeah, but you know, ultimately, you're going to do it anyway. I mean, that sounds like selfish, but it's true.

MB

You have to,

P2

you know, so I always know that I'll pass that on. Sometimes having to tell them that is hard, yeah, so maybe some training around that would be a good thing.

MB

Does it concern you that there are potentially. Teachers who don't have that training?

P2

Yes, definitely, yeah. I think there are real like cowboy. I mean, hopefully the industry improve... is improving, but yes, yeah, I'd say this said to me, and I think that's something that I'm always aware of, because I had a hugely affirming experience as a kid being able to share this stuff with a singing teacher. However, that does not oblige all of my students to share their stuff with me.

MB

Yeah?

P2

And I think there are some teachers who are not clear about that, yeah. Do you know what I mean? And they want that emotional and they need that emotional connection from their students, and that dependence, right? And I think that's

MB

so it's almost, it's not the set, it's not the it's the sense of teachers forcing their children to engage with them emotionally in that way, not that students are wanting to engage with them emotionally, and the teachers aren't equipped to deal with that. That worries you.

P2

I think both, or both,

MB

yeah,

P2

I think both. I think it's like having this, maybe, so maybe the thing is this, maybe it's like having the skill set to know this is how I open that door and you can walk through it or not, and that's completely, completely

MB

up to you,

P2

up to you. And I know that I've been trained in a way that equips me to deal with that. And I think, you know, like touch wood, I think suicide is or suicidality in teenagers, and that dialog around that is really on the rise. So I think if I think of the most dangerous stuff that kids have told me, it's largely around suicide or it's around anorexia, and anorexia scares me, because I wouldn't know how to... but I just know that I would pass that on. And I think --- just gave me the experience to know that the space to talk about serious stuff is helpful for the student, more or less, no matter what. It doesn't really take. It's it's not the guidance that I give, it's the space for them to talk. Yeah,

MB

Very interesting.

P2

I think that's I mean. But again, is it interesting? That's my theory on it. What the fuck do I know?

MB

Yeah, that's what I find so interesting about it all. Yeah, yeah, okay. Well, I think from my end, I've covered everything I need. So unless there's anything from you, any more nuggets, no, I

P2

think that great. Yeah, perfect. Thank you so much. Amazing questions. Super interesting subject. Oh.

Appendix 6 - Interview 3

Unknown Speaker 0:01

There we go. Hello. Thank you for taking part.

P3

Pleasure

Speaker 1 0:05

So the way that this interview will work is that it's semi structured. So I have three, three kind of loose questions, and they sort of have sub questions to them that I've thought about. But the conversation can go anywhere, so don't feel kind of super restricted. I say that, but it would be great if we can keep on the sort of general topic of where... what you've read in the information sheet. So yeah, that's kind of basically it. I've been researching lots of different areas within my masters. Part of it has been about the effects of stress and... on the voice and how that can kind of potentially lead to voice disorders. And a lot of it has also been exploring the kind of paradox that exists between the movement of singing for wellbeing and that becoming widely recognized as being a positive thing for singing. But when you're teaching pre professional and professional people, often, er... that people in that dynamic have in that... sorry... demographic.

Sorry, I was trying to think...

people within that.. demographic ...In that demographic are often very open to having depression and anxiety.

P3

Yeah, very vulnerable to that.

MB

So how does that fit in for us as teachers, when we know about the impact of stress on the voice, but we're trying to push people into a career? So that is kind of the foundation for this research...

P3

Mhmm

MB

...and I'm just interested to know what your perspective as a teacher who teaches professional and pre professional students, how you feel about this topic. And I'm interested to know about what you think as a performer as well, and don't be afraid to use that experience...

P3

To be honest, I don't really teach any professional singers. And that's partly out of choice, in that... for this very reason that I fear, I feel... because my husband's often said to me, oh, you know, you you know, I think that I'm really respected here, and I get a lot of really good pupils, and my husband was like, you should, you know, you should apply to music College. I'm terrified of that, because I know it really matters.

MB

Laughs

MB

Very Yeah, some things, you know, here I feel, you know... I don't feel like completely... as though I can launch these girls 100% I think, because I've had and feel free to stop me if I've just interrupted you, but I'm just, well, I think of things.

MB

No, it's good.

P3

I personally, I've had something like seven singing teachers, because I've had so many that didn't really know how you know, or possibly made things worse for me. And I've had big kind of vocal traumas in my life, excuse me. And so I'm very aware of how it can go wrong. And I therefore feel very scared of making it wrong for other people,

MB

P3

whereas, you know, the majority of my pupils here, so long as they can, the most they want is to sing in ---- Choir, which is already very good. And you know, and I feel I've learned over the years how to guide them a lot. And I've also learned from my own you know... problems, how to stall to prevent some of those, I hope. But the idea of actually teaching professionals, or even at music College,

MB

yeah, that's what they want to do,

MB

yeah,

P3

I feel hugely like that responsibility is too great for me,

MB

yeah,

P3

because it matters so much to them, as I know. I used to cry in my singing lessons all the time because it mattered so much to me. And if it wasn't working then I couldn't bear it, you know. And I used to think, if I can't sing, what's the point of me?

MB

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So would you say, so, this is one of my later questions. But... how... would you teach people going into conservatoire as well... or aiming to...

P3

So I have accidentally so done so. In fact, I had someone here. I've had a couple here who, well, I had one here who wanted to go to music college, and she had lived in Italy and, um, had singing lessons in Italy, and came here and was the complete opposite of what... she wanted to be in ---- choir... was the complete opposite of what they wanted there. You know, what the English choral scene is like. So that was an interesting journey. She came in Year 10, and it was... so I had her for four years, and she was hugely dedicated. She'd be here 8.15 every morning, practicing top D'S and things, you know, she was very high as well. And she actually, and... and the Director of Music, Director of singing, said, 'Oh, she'll never get into music college'. And she got onto the waiting list, and then got in. So she didn't get directly in, but she did so I ended up having, you know, having got some. On interview music College, just about by the skin... you know, and if someone here wants to do that, then obviously I will coach them towards that. And I've had quite a few Oxbridge course scholars

MB

MM

P3

who have gone on to do that.

MB

And I think for the purpose of this interview and for the research, I would consider that pre professional at that kind of exactly. So I think I have had a professional by default, and I think especially within this organization, this institution, you're teaching at that level, even if that's not necessarily where

P3

...and and I was British college scholar, so I do feel I've got quite a lot to very subject to give because I did that, and then I wanted to do opera, and I did do opera, but vocally, the combination can be very difficult to maintain because there's such different ways of singing, and can cause a lot of problems. And the trying at Cambridge to be ultra, sort of quiet and straight, then obviously messes up the voice for trying to do opera. I was very lucky to do both for quite a long time that I then had a point where I couldn't do anything,

MB

Yeah

P3

... and had to restart, yeah. So I know, at least I know that, and I think that's hopefully that has been helpful for teaching, because I can, and that the thing about not wanting to depress them is also comes into this, sorry, I'm just talking...

MB

No, it's good. It's good!

P3

...that part of me wants to tell that the girls in ---- choir who want to do more solo stuff. You know about the dangers?

MB

Yeah.

P3

Then also, don't want to scare them and put them off, because actually, they do sound like they want them to sound in --- choir, but I know that that might cause the problems later down the line if they want to do opera.

MB

Yeah,

P3

so I don't know if there's a solution to that.

MB

Yeah, actually. And then some girls, I mean, there's a girl I know in the profession who could always do everything she sang at 16, and she sings now main roles, main, you know, oratorios at the Met kind of thing. And she just still can do everything she... and she... I noticed when I first met her, she was 19 and I was 28 or something. She was super confident, super confident from day one. And how does... you know that's just... people are just born like that, or it's their parents or whatever, and she's remained super confident, and she's been able to do everything. So I think there is a connection there.

MB

Yeah,

P3

between self confidence,

MB

yeah,

P3

and ability,

MB

yeah,

P3

...obviously, part of its physiological as well. But, and that, of course, as teachers, I'm sure you're the same as me, we the Self confidence is what we're always trying to promote, because it makes such a huge difference to singing and and that's you know, and that all these girls here that you know, they can often be teenagers, teenage girls, and are inherently uncomfortable, and so suddenly we're expected to be child psychologists, which we're not trained to be best.

MB

Yeah, exactly. So I just before we go into that, all of what you've just said into deeper, indeed... in more depth. I kind of just want to start by talking about the relationship that you have with your students and what that dynamic is like... yeah, just going into more detail about what the relationship you have with them is, and also, actually, it's interesting to hear about your relationship with your other teachers, your own teachers in the past, and how that might have influenced how you are with your...

P3

Yes, I do... I don't know if you find this... really interesting... I find myself saying things that remind me of one of my teachers. But what worries me is that I most sound like the teacher that I really liked, but who didn't really help me at all, which always worries me, like, very encouraging, very warm,

MB

yeah,

P3

but she would come out with sort of what I thought of as platitudes that weren't helpful, and then I'd do the same thing. It's like we say the things that we hated our mother say, it's the same sort of feeling... dynamic with my pupils really varied, because it depends on the pupil.

MB

Yeah.

P3

So you've got the very deferential, kind of shy, Yes, miss, No, Miss relationship where there's... it, it's very distant, really, and very formal. And then, and of course, quite naturally. When they're in the sixth form, there tends to be more it tends to be easier. A, they've known you for longer, but B, they're feeling more confident and C they're almost adults and all of that. And I've certainly the ones that are very... again... I don't know if this is right, but the ones that remind me of me when I was 18... similarly, musical, similarly... similar worries. I feel very connected to and I and I do worry about that as well. I think, like, are we meant to be more distant? But I love the fact that, you know, there's nothing inappropriate. But I feel very warm towards Yeah, and I feel like I like... Meet them in the profession, and they'd be friends, yeah, which is still a new idea to me. But I've just, I've got a couple at the moment, that I feel like that about. That I just think, you know, they get music in the same way that I do, and that's just lovely

MB

Mmm

P3

...and the relationship. And I remember, years ago, another teacher here, I probably shouldn't say, but, and he used to talk about his sixth formers like that, like friends, and then they had this really relaxed relationship. And I thought, God, how to do that. Is that right? And now I've got it as well with a few pupils. Just depends on the people really?

MB

Yeah. Do you think because of the one-to-one context, the one to one kind of context of that relationship that there's... that impacts the relationship that they have with you.

P3

I think it's very different from I mean, I've never taught a class, and I'd be very scared to I think it's completely different. I think if you're in charge of a class, you can't really be warm to any of them.

You... you have to maintain that distance. I'm sure lots of music teachers find that the one-to-one relationship does make it different. But for me, it's all... it's the connection of music. If they understand music in the same way as I do, um, then, then I find that there's a connection.

MB

And how do you think they perceive you?

P3

I don't know. Again, really different. So, you know, some very much want to talk about everything in their lives. And some, you know, and sometimes it is too much, like I remember somebody who's left now, but sort of telling me about her boyfriend and stuff... and I... I probably should stop this. And some are very professional and absolutely don't do anything except what's on the page, as it were? Okay, which is a bit boring and a bit, you know, I quite like to have a bit of a relationship with, yeah, I don't know. I mean, who knows how they...

MB

I know.

P3

I think, as teachers, I think of myself as, as, you know, I like to think of myself as a fun musician, but I realized that I'm very much older than them, and I'm a teacher, so yeah, why should they think me anything other of me than a boring teacher? But I remember, actually, I was saying this to one of those nice pupils that I get on really well with that. For me, it was actually my piano teacher at school who was the one... and she was very much an old lady. I remember her little old lady with... with blue set rinse,

MB

Yeah nice

P3

she was lovely, and she and I talked a lot about the music profession and about life and... and she was the one that I felt connected to. I think every one of us that's a performer probably has one... at least one music teacher that we felt close to.

MB

And do you feel like that was an important part of your development as a musician?

P3

I do... I do... You know, when it was 40 years ago or something, I still remember her things, she said, and, yeah, yeah, actually, more than any because I didn't really have singing lessons at school. Yeah, so I don't, didn't really have that. I loved singing in the choir, but I didn't really have that. So my singing thing sort of came later. I was more of a viola player at school... than a second, yeah? Nice. And my Viola teachers sort of varied. Oddly. I didn't have a close relationship with any of my viola teachers... but... but I did with my piano teacher, yeah, which nice, yeah, lovely.

MB

So this is... yeah, this is kind of the big one. How do you feel about encouraging a student towards a career as a vocalist? And do you have any concerns about that?

P3

Well, funnily enough, a lot I have a lot of friends at the Opera House, where I sing in the in the chorus, who also teach, you know... like I do, and we've been having this conversation and with my husband as well, who's a professional singer. Obviously, the world at the moment, or particularly the opera world.. which is sort of what I'm involved with is kind of imploding in this country. There's less and less work available, and people are paid, in real terms, are getting paid less and less. I mean, I'm getting the same for an oratorio now, as I got when I was at music College... the same number and yet, of course, now it's worth half what it was then. So that's depressing. So it is. We do all feel very sad that, you know, and worried. Why are we pushing more and more people into this profession when there's not enough work for them, yeah, so that's difficult. But ultimately, you know, I love working in music, and I wouldn't want to be working in anything else... and I still feel intrinsically, as a teacher, that we need to communicate that enthusiasm.

MB

yeah,

P3

...because that's what, that's who we are, that's... that's what we stand for. And,

MB

yeah, yeah.

P3

So I think we have to be enthusiastic about it and also be realistic, yeah, and tell them. I think since COVID, you know, COVID is obviously a big sort of line through the timeline of, of, life for all of us, and the effect that it had on music is that it... It was devastating at the time, because obviously no one could perform, especially singers. But it also created, and I'm useless at this myself, but in the new generation that was just coming out then, it created an ability, which probably includes you, actually, but it created an ability to tap into whole streaming world and the recording world, and,

MB

yeah,

P3

all of that, and, and they used it. I mean, I remember, I think I don't know if it's Apollo5 or one of these young groups, they did a huge amount of online stuff, which they got revenue. They managed to earn a living...

MB

yeah,

P3

...recreating concerts. They'd go to an empty church, stand five meters apart and sing...

MB
yeah,

P3
...and record it and get paid for people to view it. You know, they tapped into that immediately and worked out how to do it. So that's created a whole new world that can be used, in a world where people are going to fewer concerts, because once they, you know, from the audience point of view, once they got used to the idea they could stay in their homes and drink a glass of wine while they watched a concert... perhaps they won't actually go out and do it, yeah? And that's the same, you know, in the National Theater, things online are fantastic, you know, and it's so much cheaper and more comfortable than actually going to the thing... dare I say it...

MB
yeah,

P3
...but we're battling that as well, but there is that online stuff, which I suppose performers can still be paid for. Yeah, obviously, it's not as fun as being in a live theater. So I don't... yeah, I don't know how we... we do that. We say there is still music. There's still a need for the arts. Some people might need to go abroad more because there's more the opera world is much healthier in Europe than it is here. Then, of course, we've got the Brexit point. So it's really tough on British musicians at the moment...

MB
Yeah.

P3
...Because...

MB
Yeah. So you would, so you, would you ever go out, not go out of your way, but would you ever say to a student, I think you've got talent here, and I think you should audition for Academy or Guildhall. Would you... Would you ever say that without someone coming to you first with that?

P3
Suppose, I've never had that experience. Okay, I've never actually had a pupil where I've felt that. Um... but, yeah, definitely Oxbridge ones. Yeah.

MB
So you would into terms of choral scholars, I suppose...

P3
...maybe because also I went to came up most singers for opera would... would not go at 18, yeah. And I'm only teaching up to 18 years. I mean, yeah. So I have had that conversation that with perhaps the very better ones that they might go to university, not necessarily Oxbridge, but University. And then think about, have it in, in fact, what am I talking about? I am currently teaching a girl, a girl at Kent uni, who is currently applying for music college.

MB

Yeah,

P3

...having said that, I didn't,

MB

so you did-.

P3

...I didn't suggest it because I didn't think she was good enough. But if she had been... yes, I would have suggested it. Yeah, even though it's a difficult world out there, you know, if they... if she'd been really fantastic, the conversation would have come up, I'm sure. But in fact, she was really keen, and she wanted to apply. And I had to keep my face straight,

MB

okay,

P3

"Okay, yeah, yeah. Well, let's look into it". She's got as far as getting... getting auditions from them, for them both, which she's really thrilled about, because not everyone who applies gets an audition. So she's really pleased she's got that far, and we'll see what happens.

MB

Yeah,

P3

You know, I've been surprised both ways.

MB

Yeah,

P3

and you know, just as you are with grade eights and stuff, it's the same with getting into things, you know... people you thought would didn't get into stuff and people you thought it wouldn't did. So it's very, very hard to gauge. And that's another thing I have to say to my pupils. I have to say, you know, I think you're good enough for X, Y or Z, but there are lots of factors, you know. And in I think what I do a lot as a teacher is say, because I am in the profession, so I can say, from experience, I can say, you know, there have been auditions that I thought I would walk and I did get it. And then there were other ones where I really wasn't expecting to get it, and I did. So that's that seems to be part of life, yeah. And in a way, all you can do as a teacher is prepare them, give them the confidence and the strength to take the knocks,

MB

yeah,

P3

because that's what's what's going to be there. Yeah, definitely. Whether it's much harder now than it was 50 years ago, it or 30 years ago may be the case.

MB
Yeah,

P3
yeah, I don't know, but

MB
there's no answers.

P3
Yeah,

MB
So my next question will kind of lead on to a few different other things. And I think this is sort of the big question is, how do you view your responsibility towards your students, emotional well being?

P3
Well, I suppose, as I said at the beginning, yeah, we're... we as singing teachers, particularly need to do anything we can... subtly... without it being obvious, to build up their self confidence, because no one can sing if they're not feeling confident. Yeah, and we can sidetrack that by... by getting them to feel... how do they feel when they're really happy about something, or where is their happy place? Where is that? What, Where did what? Subtly find out, what they do feel confident about and kind of tap into that. I mean, it is slightly cold psychology, but, you know, and again, talk about... so I sometimes, if I'm doing a concert and I'm feeling, you know, unconfident about it, I will visualize myself in my own singing lessons with me, because I now have a singing teacher I do trust. Finally, you know, I've had for 10 years, but if, and of course, that's awkward for me, if I say, but if you feel as you seem to relaxed in your singing lessons, you need to kind of take that feeling into your concert, picture yourself in your lesson singing like you just did just now, if they've just done a great phrase... um... and take that into the exam. So I suppose in that way, but yes, really, I suppose you're leading perhaps to do I feel a responsibility about putting them out into profession. And...

MB
...not necessarily it's... it's as much about, as you said earlier, that feeling of, almost the need to be a psychologist and having... having no training for that, necessarily, it's more tapping into that feeling of, how do you manage that?

P3
I mean, in theory, we have no training, but then we have our own experience,

MB
yeah,

P3

which is very relevant, yeah, I also have the additional help of having had two teenage children...

MB
yeah,

P3
...myself. So I feel now and my... my younger child is, is 19, that I've just been through that whole gamut of 13 to 18 yet. But you know that I know is difficult anyway for human beings without trying to sing as well. So that's been helpful. That's been really helpful.

MB
Yeah,

P3
but yes, I still feel that there's probably some child psychology training that might be quite useful as... as part of our training, as

MB
and how... and do you mean... we talk the conversation about how stress and emotional well being and stuff, can negatively impact your voice, which you mentioned at the start, something that you've... you've experienced. Do you feel like that's something you bring into your lessons with your students in terms of talking about it, or is that something that you deal with as it may come up? Or...

Speaker 2 22:38
Yes. I mean, I wouldn't bring it up early on in a sort of with a pupil,

MB

yeah,

P3
yeah, more if it came up some point. So very beginning, when you start with a new pupil, I'm super kind of bouncy and positive, and try and make them feel as at ease as possible. And try, I think, I suppose the only thing I feel from my cold psychology is being able to relate it to everyday situations. I mean, once I had a child, pupil who was very, very shy and unconfident and, you know, wouldn't sing more than pianissimo. And I have, quite often have these, and I would say, and, but I found this, this girl, quite difficult, like she just was so negative, and so there was just no smiling and no positive reaction to anything. So I got a little bit... and I said, you know, imagine, okay, you've just seen your best friend... She's about to, you know, be rather... she's not spotted a danger. She's about to fall under a bus, you know? Yeah, you raise your voice. You... (loud) "Hey, stop, you know, watch out" or something. And can you do that for me? And I said, Go on now, and she said "mumbles"... and oh... she's gone under the bus. Sorry about that, you know. So that wasn't a hugely successful but usually when I try it with pupils they at least get the message like one another one said the other day, and she's quite a good singer, and I'm talking about crescendo. She said, 'How do I get louder?', And I thought, well, I don't know the physiology of it, but I said... Then I said, But you know, if you want to catch someone's attention over there, you just do it. You go umm, (increased volume)... "Jenny! Jenny!" and you just do it. And they went, of course, it is just, we just decide that we're going

to sing louder, yeah. But there's so much embarrassment in teenage girls. Perhaps you know more in a posh English school than there is in other parts of what I don't know... well I do know. And another thing I talk about is in Italy, when I lived in Italy... they um... they the woman I lived with, this is how I talk, you know, kind of... the woman I lived with, everything was... (*gesticulating and expressive*) "my ---" . Yeah, I can't even do it, but it was really pingy, what we would call pingy. There was lots of... and that's how they talk all the time. And if you're in an Italian place, everyone's really loud voices, and they're great singers, you know, because, and that's... operas is part of their lives. I mean, the bus conductor was singing 'La Donna E Mobile' you know. And I remember being, and this was 30 years ago, and I remember being amazed by that, because I thought, how many British bus conductors would know an Italian opera, and none of them,

MB
yeah,

P3
but it's, but we're also, as British people, we're quite subdued all the time. And then, of course, the whole choral world is often about being very quiet and pure and, yeah, unemotional, actually, yeah. I mean, so that's, that's something else that we're battling with us.

MB
That's a very interesting dynamic, actually, thinking about here, specifically in this country, about...

P3
I think it's... we're... having lived in, in Italy and in Germany, I feel it's... and my father was, is German, what was born German, but is now sort of British, really. And he said about Germans, that they will talk about their achievements. And that's... that's expected, that if you, if you feel proud of something, you'd say it, whereas he found that when he came to England, that it was the opposite, then no one would. He said, it's very hard in a group of men to know who's clever and who isn't, because the Germans will trumpet it, but the English won't. And they may or may not be clever, but you won't find out, because they're not going to say it well

MB
In a performance context, that's very significant, if you know the whole point... as you go back to the confidence thing,

P3
Yeah...

MB
so it's a kind of paradox,

P3
yeah, exactly.

MB
If you can't, as a culture, we're not super open to boasting, boasting and projecting ourselves, and in some ways, that's almost looked down upon. So...

P3

It is. And I had a friend when I was just starting out to sing, when sort of just left college, and he was Australian, and very kind of loud and always, I mean I say friend... he really annoyed me because he was always boasting about himself. And I remember him telling me off and saying, you've got to stop putting yourself down, you know, you've got to show off a bit more. I was like, that's not me. I don't want to do that.

MB

Yeah, and yeah.

P3

And he was doing really well at that time, and really successful. And I was, you know, working my way up, but always struggling with fear and worry and that's the rest of it...

MB

yeah

P3

...all the rest of it, so and again, that's an interesting that's an interesting thing, potentially for us as teachers, in terms of if we're working with someone who does have ambition to move forward within the music world. But we see that, that self-deprecation, that lack of confidence,

P3

finding the right balance between

MB

Yeah,

P3

the confidence that we need, but not in this country, making everybody think you're a awful person. Yeah, you still want to be the kind of nice person that everybody likes.

MB

And how do you... what do you do to build that confidence? Would you say in a young person, if they don't have that confidence already?

P3 stutters

MB

Well, or is that something you've ever had to do?

P3

Yes, no, I think, I think it's in little it's bit by bit. It's, yeah, it's finding in whatever they do in the lesson, finding the positives, and usually talking about the positives first. I mean, this is classic, I would have thought for any teacher, but, you know, going with a, oh, I really like what you did here. But maybe here we can try and do this, you know, rather than saying that anything is wrong or bad, but that's, that's that seems, I think everybody in England would do that. Now, I mean, I had a Russian pupil once who said to me, and maybe I've said to you before, who said, Oh, you didn't shout at me when I got it wrong.

Yeah. And I said, Well, no. And she said, in Russia, they if I play a wrong note that my teacher would bang, wrap my hand. You know,

MB
that's crazy...

P3
I think, well, that is, you know. So it's just that bit by bit thing, I think, trying to build up the confidence.

MB
Are there any... just before we finish... Are there any other personality traits that you think are needed within the professional world as a musician.

P3
So I think it is this paradox. I think you need, ideally, you can get away with being an unpleasant person. There are plenty out there, as we all know, but I would have thought, ideally, we can be someone that's a team worker, people that someone that people like to work with, but has some enough inner self confidence about their performance ability with a singing the performance. In a way, if you don't have confidence, you've got maybe the acting side of things that you can impose. You can be someone else,

MB
yeah,

P3
and then use that yeah to do the confidence thing. I suppose that I hadn't mentioned that before, but I think there is an element of that you often get... classically again. I think it was a famous poem about a clown or something, who was very unhappy inside. But, you know, did that clown... So I suppose as performers, we do. That as well

MB
fake it till you make it

P3
...don't we! Fake it! Exactly, and we've, we've got at least words and a story and a character to tap into, even if we're feeling unconfident ourselves. Yeah. So I think that's really helpful for singers. And I often talk about the words, and, you know, think because often young students, they sing the syllables, but they aren't really connecting with what words are saying at all. And if you tell them to just read them out as, as, as a poet, that makes a huge difference well.

Speaker 1 30:28
And that's that's always something that's interesting in terms of using lyric is different to other instruments, but very much

P3
I mention that a lot

MB
that's an element that other instruments don't have, don't involve, and often that can be a trigger. The lyrics can often be a trigger for emotional experience within a student or whatever,

P3
definitely

MB
which can be a good thing for performance.

P3
But again, that creates a new difficulty. Yes, I mean how they do the emotion of I remember doing 'La Boheme' and every night the tenor would cry at the very end, but he has to sing "Mi", it's the last note, and then he can cry, yeah, but he used to do that last "Mimi" in tears, which was incredible every and we did 20 performances,

MB
yeah,

P3
and, and the girl playing me used to, I'd, she'd say, when I was learning it, I would, we'd start crying. So I had to go through that process and come out the other side.

MB
So there's a level of almost emotional resilience needed, I guess, as well, to manage those things.

P3
Yes, but I do talk about that, it's because I'm always trying to get, usually, trying to get more sound out of pupils here. Yeah, that the emotional thing. When we're happy or sad or angry or anything, any emotion, we automatically have a bit more kind of energy and all the things that we know that we need for singing, but they probably wouldn't have thought that they needed it for singing. But actually it's that gut and I remember somebody saying, gut reaction, you know that it's down here. We talk about our heart, wherever our heart is, but it's not really the heart that's doing anything more emotional. It's actually, literally, our gut and down here, which is an old idea as well, but, but that's what it, where it, where all the emotion is, and the kind of force that comes from that.

MB
nice, I mean, they're all kind of my questions, is there anything that you'd like to say or like to add around this general topic, any other feelings, or it's okay, if you don't,

P3
I think I probably... everything I have to say, but probably think of something else, and I can always email it, yeah, but I think that's yeah, that's it, great.

MB
Well, thank you so much. And as I said, I didn't really go into it right at the beginning, but everything you say will be anonymized, coded and anything, any mentions of people or institutions, I'll

Speaker 2 32:45
just

P3
yeah, not to anyway, but yeah, yeah, I just

UMB
thought, and I'll only, I might direct quotes,

P3
because we don't want to admit our...

MB
Yeah, it won't, it won't come up

P3
...vulnerabilities. Yeah,

Speaker 1 33:00
no, I understand, but great.

MB
Thank you so much.

P3
Pleasure.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>

Appendix 7 – Interview 4

Speaker 1 0:00

Amazing. So I'm just recording now, and yeah! Basically if we... you're happy to start, and then if I receive the consent form after that would be great. And I won't do anything with this until I have that.

P4

Yep.

MB

Perfect so if you've read the information sheet, I'm just going to repeat myself a little bit, but just so that it's all on file that you know what we're talking about. So basically, I'm doing some research at the moment into how teachers view their relationship with their students' emotional wellbeing, because it is important in so many ways. There's links between voice disorders and poor emotional wellbeing. There's also really high rates of poor emotional wellbeing recorded within musicians, and so I'm just kind of curious to know how teachers view their place within that dynamic. There's no right or wrong answers here. It's just about how you feel about it, and then all the different interviews will be collated into a report in the new year. So that's kind of the loose plan, really. It's sort of the start of a longer thing... vision that I potentially have of setting up a sort of framework for teachers in this field. I know it's something that I've struggled... You know, knowing what those boundaries are is a really difficult thing. So yeah, that's kind of my long-term goal, basically, and this is sort of the first step towards that. So yeah! Are you happy if we get cracking?

P4

Yeah.

MB

Do you have any questions before we start?

P4

No. So how do you want to do this? Do you want to ask questions?

MB

Yeah, sorry, this is an important, the important bit. So there's sort of three broad questions. It's semi-structured the interview. So there's three broad questions, kind of, there's a few, sort of two, two within one, if that makes sense. Um, and I'm happy for you to just talk, and I might ask the occasional follow up question, and it's a really open conversation, don't you know? It's not, it's not super structured, it's just the three questions. I have a kind of a guideline for us to follow, but if we branch away from that, and it still kind of... remains within the relevant broader picture, then that's absolutely fine. Any new ideas that come from this is really interesting for me. It might give me something further to explore, basically, so don't feel kind of constrained, if that makes sense.

P4

Okay.

MB

So the first, if you're happy to start the first question is kind of to do with the student, teacher relationship within the vocal coaching one to one dynamic. So how would you describe the teacher student dynamic when teaching pre slash professional level students?

P4

How would I describe it. So I would see a... the singing teacher, student dynamic as more of a kind of partnership. So yes, of course, you are in... in charge of where they're going, but actually you're... I, I like to see teaching as facilitating rather than as being somebody who is... you are reliant upon. Because I think if you, if you make people reliant upon you for everything that they do, they then are unable to... to branch off and do things by themselves and actually think for themselves. Um, as regards the way that they sort of progress into the industry you've really... it is more of a mentorship, isn't it? It's about, um... it's about sort of guiding somebody, not just through the vocal traps, but also through the kind of social understanding that needs to happen, and also the sort of professional understanding that isn't necessarily written down, but that you know happens. So for example, when you go for an audition for one of the colleges, you know that if you haven't got a teacher that perhaps has got a name, or you haven't got... um... the backing of, I don't know somebody who is known or a known quantity. You absolutely know that that student, perhaps does not have the same chance that another student who does have that backing has, and I think it's really important that... that... that people understand that it isn't... I don't think music is a level playing field ever, and people have different understanding of... at different times there are different things that people are prioritizing.

MB

Yeah.

So, for example, if you don't get into something, or you don't win a competition, or you don't whatever, it doesn't actually, necessarily mean you weren't the best. It means that at that particular time, your... what you were offering and what they were looking for, doesn't align.

MB

Yeah, yeah.

P4

So, so, from my... my perspective, I think that, I mean, we sort of... I mean, I wouldn't be recommending anybody to go into the music industry at the moment.

MB

Yeah,

P4

I don't know any musician who would be recommending anybody to go into the music industry at the moment. There's no money in it. There's no... There's no real security in it. Um, the enjoyment, I think, must be significantly reduced, because if you're scrapping around for work, and it's poorly paid and... and I imagine the conditions are much worse. I mean, I worked for English Touring Opera in the sort of early 2000s and I know that... that what I was earning is, I think, more than what they pay people now.

MB

Yeah,

P4

and that's quite worrying, I mean, I could be, I could be wrong, but I do know that the orchestra... the lady who was in the orchestra, is actually ---. Have you met ----?

MB

No, I don't think I have.

P4

No, you probably have in the... the she's a fantastic ----. She was actually one of... she was actually the leader of the orchestra when I was it's...

MB

okay,

P4

and ended up teaching my daughter, but I didn't know her then,

MB

okay,

P4

really weird. But she, she sort of said that... the quality that the... actual contracts, the money, everything has gone completely down. I mean, it was quite a reasonably paid job at the time, but it's it- I don't think it is anymore. I just... Yeah, I mean, it's not a great not a great thing, really. I don't know whether I've given you enough information about your original question.

MB

A lot of actually what you said kind of relates to the next question. So I might just circle back, if that's okay, and I can kind of touch base on that in a sec. So I kind of want to explore a little bit as part of the report, how you feel the relationship between your... you kind of started talking about it as like a mentorship and that kind of thing... If you feel that there's... a level of... I think a lot of research has shown that there's a lot of openness between the student and teacher dynamic, and a lot of times, teachers can become confidants for their students potentially. And I want to know if that's something that you feel like you've experienced in that your students open up to you. They... er... talk about their... their feelings or emotions with you, and how you and if they do, they may not do that. You know, if they don't, then that's... but how you potentially hold that emotional, the emotional kind of wellbeing element of... within that within that mentorship dynamic. If you see yourself as responsible for that or not.

P4

I think that you... It depends very much on the type of student that you have. Because there are people that come in... and they... they sort of, they want to, they come in and they take what they want, and they go away again. And I'm sure you have students like that. Then there's the... then there are the students who there always seems to be an obstacle. There always seems to be a reason why they can't do something. And it normally is a, it normally is an emotional thing. They can't do it. You

know, you say it's, it's normally high notes. Sometimes, it often comes out in high notes, doesn't it? You know, you go up the scale, and then they suddenly get to a certain point, and then they go, "Oh no, I've got, I got, I haven't got any high notes today". And you know that when you've warmed up, you've gone a fifth above what they've just been asked to sing, and they can't sing that note. And you know, you absolutely know that there's nothing physical in the way of them being able to do that note. It's about them telling themselves they can't do it, or there's something going on in their life. Now over the years, I mean, people do tell you things they do share with you, things that perhaps they wouldn't share with other people. Um, and it is an important... I actually feel it's a really important part of the... How can you... I mean, if you view singing as a an outlet of... if you imagine it, it's a kind of an unfettered communication outlet, a stream of... of sound that's coming from you that is... that is part of you. How are you going... if you are carrying with you, that, if you're carrying with you stress and trauma, and you're allowing that stress and trauma to be part of who you are, then that is going to be part of... that is going to be transported in your voice, isn't it? And it does, you know, you... I see it a lot. I see people's personality traits. At the moment, I've got a student who she's got a fabulous voice, and when I... the minute, I say, do it like this, or try it like this, or think about yourself as this, or what have you, she comes up with the sound that you want. As soon as it then becomes part of a whole, or it becomes a, you know, a piece. It goes back to being a piece of music again, where she is in charge of it, and she has to be thinking about those things, it closes up again. But that's partly because that is her personality. She's not somebody who kind of is... is waving in the crowd and wanting everyone to look at her, she's somebody who's quite, sort of quite quiet, really, in a way. So I feel like her personality is reflected in the way that she produces her voice. It doesn't mean she doesn't have the capability to produce a better sound, or to be that waving person in the crowd. She doesn't... she finds that hard... that... that part's a bit hard,

MB

hmm,

P4

yeah,

P4

sorry.

MB

No, carry on. Please. Carry on.

P4

Ask away, because you were gonna say something.

MB

I was, I was just get... so you identified within that scenario that her personality traits get in the way of her producing a better sound. So do you see it as your... as a vocal coach, as someone whose objective is to try and improve your student's sound, and the block is the personality... how or personality traits, or, you know, lifestyle scenario, things that affect emotional wellbeing. How far do you see it as your role and your responsibility to work on them or identify that personality trait with them to... in order to resolve that kind of

circle. Or do you feel like it's not your responsibility at all? Do you feel not... uncomfortable with doing that? Or...

P4

I don't feel uncomfortable with having uncomfortable conversations because I don't, because that's not who I am. I mean. And I think there are, there are singing teachers who have difficulty with having compass-, having really honest conversations, but I'm not one of them. And that actually depends on the kind of teacher you are as well. I do know people who do not like to get involved in the... they sort of, they acknowledge that there is a sort of an issue. Because I don't think it's possible to not acknowledge that there's an issue, but they kind of see it as their way as to... okay, I've acknowledged your issue. Now we move on with the singing. I don't... I think it's important and incumbent upon all of us as educators... to understand that... And... and... and... try and deal in the best way we can with the issues that, as... a student brings, because their voice and them... they are... They are, their voice... They are everything. You know that problem is part of them. Now I wouldn't say that it's incumbent upon me to suggest that somebody changes their personality, but... I would suggest to them that there are way... there are things that they can explore that actually can elevate their singing. And... although their personality is telling them that, actually, I don't normally do this, it's an attractor state. It doesn't mean that they don't have the potential to... to explore other... you know, it's like you might not like to eat broccoli. But one day you try it, and you go, oh yeah, I like broccoli. I'll have some broccoli. It's, it's the same thing. So I think it's about... it's about giving people options. It's about saying, right, okay, if you like this sound, then you have to actually go for this. You have to actually go for this, This, this whole, I don't know way of feeling it. If you... you know... if you're content to sound the way that you sound with... with your closed with your more closed personality. Then, then that's fine, too,

MB

yeah.

P4

But you know, singing, teaching is about improving and about sort of opening up the possibilities and saying, right, okay, here's the whole palette that you have. And you know, you're only using this colour at the moment, and actually I... that that's what I see. Is my... my job to actually just say, right, okay, here are the possibilities. Which possibility do you want? As far as that kind of links into the mental health side of it. I think, I mean, the way I teach, a couple of students have said to me, [this is like 1,000,001(?) therapies in one]. So I have had, I mean, last year at ---, and I assume all of this is kind of everything will be anonymous.

mB

Everything will be anonymised.

P4

Last year at ---, I had a student who, well, during COVID, she got so horribly stressed that she... she would be in the lesson, and she'd be sort of making bird noises, so she would be... You talk to her, and she'd be going (whispering sounds) like that. I mean, horribly stressed, and she was under some considerable sort of counselling. And I don't know whether there was some psychotherapy involved in it... but it was... it was

quite, I mean, it was quite disturbing to be in the room with, actually, now. She did recover from it, and that did stop. But really, from the time that I took that I took her, she... she had serious issues in terms of her reliance on her voice. It... basically she would, she would sing, and then suddenly the voice would either cut out or it would, it would kind of get (recreates husky sound) on the sound. And it was obvious that it was all... it was really all emotionally generated, and it was all coming from some sort of tension. So we did a lot of different we did a lot of different work, and trying to get it better. We went right back to the beginning. We talked about breath... We sort of did breathing. We started... We actually stopped worrying about the sound... we we started the sound from the breath we did. I mean, we used to start the lesson, I used to have a yoga mat in my room. We had, I had her sort of laying on the mat for half the lesson before we started. We had, I actually sent her to see a specialist physiotherapy, --- in London. You know Ed Blake?

Speaker 1 21:44
I don't, no.

P4
No, okay. He, he deals with people who have vocal problems and looks at how they're... how they're working...

MB
okay,

P4
... from a physical point of view,

MB
Yeah

P4
...and yeah. So she went to see him, and it was, I mean, her problem, that her problems were tension, but it did come from, you know, an emotional place and it... and when her mum pinpointed it back to she was asked to sing in a concert at the primary school. And she, I don't know whether she didn't feel fully prepared, or she wasn't ready, or what have you, and she didn't feel that she did very well. And it... from there... That kind of trauma has dogged the like the next four, five years of her, of her kind of singing, which is ridiculous, really. It also resulted in her being entered for a grade eight and her not doing it on the day.

MB
Okay.

P4
She... Yeah, I mean, but she always came to the lesson, and she always, I think the parents always felt that the lesson was something that was keeping her on track with her emotional wellbeing beyond the singing too,

MB
yeah.

P4

I mean, I had a couple of students like that who, again last year, another student who... who was having a hard time... having a hard time emotionally, academic-, everything. But she always came to a lesson. She always brought it to the lesson, and she was always amazing in the lesson. And the parents always said, "actually, do you know what this is? The one thing that's keeping her going?"

MB
Yeah.

P4
So... so I suppose what I... when you break it all down. There are some people who need more emotional support than others. Some people don't need the emotional support at all. Some people don't want the emotional support. Some people want their singing to be quite clinical away from anything else, and that way too, although I feel that that approach is not completely healthy either.

MB
Yeah,

P4
But I, I suppose what I'm trying to say is that emotional wellbeing and singing, teaching are... you-... Are sort of bedfellows, aren't they?

MB
Yeah,

P4
Yeah. I don't think you can get away with away from that, yeah. Really...

MB
I think that's also interesting, I think in terms of now translating all of that into working with students who are potentially thinking of going into... this kind of circles back to what you're saying at the start of this, the interview... linking that in with students who are thinking of going into the profession and read-, you know, at the stage vocally, where they're ready to go into the profession, be that conservatoire level, or from conservatoire level, sort of leaving those two sort of stages in between there, I would say, how? I mean, sorry. Let me just actually get the written question up. I just went on a waffle there! You've kind of answered this already, but how? How do you feel about encouraging a student towards a career as a vocalist, and what sort of do... does their emotional state, their emotional wellbeing, have a have a part to play within that kind of context.

P4
Well, at the moment I have... I have a student who is a lot younger, who is, in my opinion, at the absolutely, the 100% the sort of person that should be making a career. That's because I don't believe they will ever want to do anything else.

MB
Yeah.

P4
Okay, and they come up very few and far between, yeah, those sorts of people. I mean, there are people that could, could do it, and there are

people. So I think there's a if you, if you think of a person as a kind of check box list. So there's the talent there, there's the right attitude, there's commitment, and there's all the kind of social things underneath, and also the sort of the extra star quality thing. And most people who you go down... there, they've got a sort of half tick on something, yeah? So they're not very good at this, or they're not very committed, or they can't learn their music very quickly. Or they can learn their music very quickly, but they're lazy, you know? Or they're academically bright, but they're the memory sh*t, you know, those sorts of things. Well, this girl is absolutely... I would, I would tick every box.

MB

Okay,

P4

okay. Now she is already doing professional work, but she, at the moment, emotionally, it the whole thing doesn't affect her at all. Because it's all she doesn't... it's, it's quite weird, actually, it's... she's a Bit of an old soul, I think, because she she's not pushy, but she somehow gets up the front. She's very and she's extremely giving and generous young person, and she's, I mean, in the lesson, she's an extremely... How can I put this? You know, if I talk about, if I say, Well, what about the other students? Or what about blah, blah, blah... she's never unkind about anybody. And she... and that kind of positivity is... is amazing. She also approaches the lessons... now she's, she's 12, I think, yeah, and I've taught her for since she was nine,

MB

Okay.

P4

And she approaches the lessons in a mark far more adult way than most of my older students. Okay, so she comes to the lesson, and I say to her, 'Okay, you need to do this', and I'll give her some technical advice, she will absolutely listen, and she will try to reproduce it. And it will be, it might not be instant, but it will be by the end of their lesson, she'll have got it. And I feel that because she's because she doesn't put anything in the way of her learning. She doesn't get in the way of her learning.

MB

Yeah,

P4

she comes to the lesson ready to learn. She is able to absorb everything that comes along. But that isn't to say that we don't talk about the way in which the world, the world of music, works. Yeah, that isn't to say we don't deal with sort of more emotional things, and we don't think about more emotional things, but she doesn't seem to require it, because she's such an open book. It's, it's quite weird. I think, in a way, that that open bookness will mean that she doesn't get, she doesn't sort of get embroiled in those, am I good enough? Can I do that? She turns up, does things and she, she doesn't seem to sort of get upset about... oh, that didn't happen for me. Or, you know,

MB

yeah,

P4

That being said, She's extremely successful at what she's doing, you know, so and, you know, she's the whole package is there is, it's, it's quite amazing, really. So I don't know whether that helps? I feel like I've waffled...

MB

no, it's so good! So what would you say... you talk about the full package? And I guess I mean, if we could focus a bit on the kind of emotional traits, the personality traits that you feel create that full package, that would be great. I'd love to know what your... what you identify as those characteristics.

P4

So I think you have to have a basic honesty... about... what... you have to actually have... know your own worth,

MB

yeah,

P4

so that comes in with the honesty. Really, you also have to have a there's there must be a part of you that that cares about what we do, but also is able to let go of that care. So somebody who is... who... who can focus on something and be absolutely installed... but if it doesn't work out, that it doesn't actually have an emotional effect on you. I don't know many people for whom that is true. I think caring too much about what you do can be a big problem actually, in the industry. Certainly, when I think about my own experience, I think if you start caring too much about something, it can actually become, become a bit of a neurosis, trauma thing, because then you're... you're so focused on getting something right that actually you're likely to make yourself get it wrong.

MB

Yeah,

P4

because then it no longer becomes something that flows from you. It becomes something that you are forcing,

MB

Mmm

P4

Um, the... I suppose, the... the... the artists that I prefer to watch are those people for whom their performance is... this... has... it's not just about technical and vocal beauty and... prowess. It has to, it has to have that emotional element. For me... doesn't have an emotional element. Actually... I'm not really interested.

MB

Yeah, yeah,

P4

because I don't enjoy, I mean, it's wonderful listening to somebody who's brilliant, who's got a brilliant sort of technique, okay, for a

minute. And then after that minute, you start thinking, Well, okay, what... it's like... We're looking at a photograph rather than a journey. And I've seen that photograph now I want to see the next bit of landscape, and you're not taking me there, yeah. So those... it's somebody who has the emotional flexibility to take you on that emotional... that emotional journey.

MB
Yeah,

4
And somebody who isn't afraid to take risks, even if those risks don't always come off.

MB
Yeah.

P4
Because I would rather hear somebody go for it and... and make a bit of a mess of a note, then produce a beautiful note that actually just... that emotionally didn't kind of give what, what, What was needed.

MB
Yeah. Yeah, yeah, totally.

P4
And I think you know, that is the X factor for me, when those things, when those things come together, and even if they don't work out, they they sort of come together in a hole that gives you this kind of an ... emotional scape that you know you've been on a journey with somebody, You understand where they're going and what they're trying to deliver really, yeah. I also think it's really important to be an organ-, organized,

MB
yeah,

P4
Somebody who has, and this is something that my son does not have. He wants to, he wants to be. He would love to be a professional trumpeter, okay,

MB
okay,

P4
it has the talent to do it. He has the ability to... he he has the charisma. He has everything musically that you could ask for. He has the the... all of the understanding, but he does not understand time.

MB
Okay,

P4
So he does not understand that if you are doing a performance three weeks beforehand, you need to be ready.

MB

Yeah, okay, yeah.

P4

So he's doing the things that you would be doing three weeks beforehand, a week beforehand,

MB

yeah,

P4

and that is a serious problem, because it means that stuff is never absolutely ready. And that's a... and I feel that that is something that I see a lot in students as well, not just, not just the one we've been talking about, but, you know, we you, you see that they don't realize that actually, if they're not... if they haven't done the work by three weeks before... how they're going to feel comfortable in that exam.

MB

Yeah, yeah,

P4

because they have or you say to them,

"Can you, have you recorded yourself? Have you listened to yourself doing this?"

"No, I haven't done that". So you asked them the next week, "have you, did you listen to yourself?"

"No, I didn't do that". I think to myself, well, these are the things that you can do yourself,

MB

yeah.

P4

And you can listen, and you can go, oh, yeah, that was a bit yeah. You know, there's so many things you can do these days to... to improve your

MB

Yeah,

P4

performance, aren't there? Yeah? So I think you you have to have that kind of... You have to have an understanding of time,

MB

yeah,

P4

and how it affects what you're doing. And you also have to have that kind of by this time, I will have done X, Y, Z, yeah. You've also got to be dogged in your Enterprise, haven't you, and be prepared to only do small bits of your piece. To just go, "Okay, I'm just going to work on two bars".

MB

Yeah, yeah.

P4

So what else would I would say you need to do. You also need to be quite you. You need to be kind of socially literate and able to actually be happy to ask for opportunity. Yeah, because if you don't ask for opportunity, or you're not prepared to put yourself into something, then you're not going to get any work, are you?

MB

Well, and that that links back to what you were saying earlier about the you're kind of the personality trait of knowing your worth. I suppose you know, those two things are interlinked. I would say being comfortable asking for things is dependent on you knowing that you can deliver those things, or, you know, knowing what you're worth, what you deserve.

P4

So I think you know, organization... a bit, you know, and you have to have that honesty with yourself. You've got to be committed, you've and you've got to understand the way. You've got to understand yourself as well.

MB

Yeah,

M

and the work. Yeah. And if you're not good at learning stuff, then you have to start sooner,

MB

yeah, yeah,

P4

and work harder. So I think flexibility is another thing, yeah, is important. And not taking taking stuff seriously, but not taking stuff so seriously, but you actually get take yourself into some sort of trauma land.

MB

Yeah, yeah, I get that. We've got, sort of, we're on 42 minutes for interview. How are you feeling if you've got enough in you for one more? Or do you Yeah? So this is kind of the last question, really. I'm just kind of collating all the things that you've said and so much of what you were saying in terms of what the "it factor" in inverted commas. Talent is part of it, but so many other things are dependent on so much other and teaching vocal coaching is an extremely unregulated profession, you know. So how, how do we as vocal coaches... Or how do you as a vocal coach, feel that you develop the skills and the... Yeah, I guess the skills is the question... how do you have you developed the skills to be able to manage all those areas of things that are required for the effect, if someone comes to you and says, "I want to be a singer", and you have to get them there, not just technically, but with all those other things. What skills do you have you worked on within yourself to help nurture that within a person... and potentially then, do you have any are there any areas that you feel like a lack of understanding in, or something that you would like to have more support in?

P4

Okay, that's quite a big question.

MB

Sorry, yeah,

P4

So I think what I realize is that when I came out of college and you think that you know quite a lot of stuff at the age of 24 or 25 or however old you are... you... I now look back and I realized that I knew very little at all, and actually, the only way that you pick up, I think the only way that you pick up these skills is by working with people with different issues. And I mean, one of one of my students who one of my adult students who I see... one of the things she says to me is that the really nice thing that she likes about the way I teach is that, if she can't get it one way, then I'll find another way for her to do it. Yeah, and I think that that is... [X enters room..."--- back from taking the dogs out."]

M

So I think. What, what I like to feel is about my teaching is that you can... I can see when stuff isn't working. I can see when a student isn't getting something right. I can also see when sort of emotionally something's not... not working as well. So my strategy changes according to what... what that person's bringing to the day. So sometimes it's really important. And I don't think people realize how important it is for you to sort of... for... for there to be a little break, for you to just have a little anecdote in there just for somebody to actually forget the trauma that they were just producing in their sound. So I suppose what I feel is, over the years is I've developed a sort of sixth sense of working out... what... what do you what is it that you need from me today? Do you need some hard love from me, or do you need me to kind of cushion everything as you're going through? Do you need me to try a physical approach to this problem? Do you need me to try a mental approach to this problem? Or do you need me to try a sort of more a visualization thing? So there might be 150 ways of maybe, if we focus on posture, you might stop thinking about this. Maybe, if we focus on movement, you might stop thinking about you might stop gripping. So I... I guess what I feel is that over the years, I've developed a bit of a... there are 101 strategies to try and do something. And when you... I guess, the more people that you work with, the more strategies that you have to try. I mean, I've done quite a few different... sort of courses with Anne Marie Speed. Online ones. I did the Estil, which was over a five day period. Yeah, I've done things like tongue training.

MB

Yeah,

P4

and I've, I've done a sort of, what's the other one I did? I've done another couple of courses with her over the sort of past few years. And I feel that those sorts of things are, I don't feel that they're going to change my way of approaching singing. Because I think, you know, after I don't know, 40 odd or 30 odd years of... of doing things the way that I do things, I think, you know, you kind of, you work out for yourself what... what works? Yeah, but I do feel that there is a lot to be learned from listening to the way other people teach and taking from that. A good friend of mine has just become... she's just qualified as a hypnotherapist, actually. And she's more or less stopped the kind of she was doing lot of singing teaching. And the original reason that she

decided to go into hypnotherapy was to help people with performance anxiety, anxiety. Okay, but she's, she's actually more or less kind of branched out into all kind of areas of hypnotherapy, and decided that that, you know, there are ways to and she's now branched out into sort of, basically, what would you call it? It's self-worth.

MB

Yeah,

P4

That's where it that's where it all comes down to. Okay, and and I feel that. Some, you know, some of the kind of her ideas as well are sort of inherent in in in some of my teaching and that kind of visualization, sort of kind of looking, looking into, how do I want myself to be able to sing this. And to actually see that, because if you don't know where you're leading to, then how do you know? Yeah, where... where you're going. If you see what I mean, yeah, totally. So I feel like I'm waffling, but

MB

no, no, it's very useful,

P4

But I suppose. So let's take it right back down to your question again, what? What do I feel that I need? Do I feel that I need any more training? Do I feel that I... I mean, I think there are a lot more mental issues as a result of the last 10 years. I don't I, I feel that there's an awful lot of... I don't know whether mental health is worse?

MB

Yeah,

P4

Because of, maybe because we're so reliant on phones and not... being I don't know... whether it's because it's everything's online. I don't know, but I feel that there seems to be a lot more people putting their hand up and saying, I've got ADHD. I'm autistic, I'm this, I'm that, I'm the other and sort of expecting there to be this, this... and I don't mean this in a bad way... excuse... for, for, for that person not being able to do something because of a special needs or because of a mental health issue, and I, I just wonder whether or not, whether we could all benefit from some more training about actually, how to spot a real mental health issue.

MB

Yeah.

P4

From, from somebody just saying, I can't do this, yeah, or whether is a mental health issue in itself, yeah. Do you understand what I mean?

MB

Yeah, totally, definitely.

P4

I mean, I'm sure you've got students who, for whom, they sort of give you excuse after excuse after excuse, and you think actually to stop giving me the excuse. Just get on and do it.

MB

Yeah and Yeah.

P4

I think it would just be, I don't know whether or not, the I mean, I'm thinking about this mental health issue is like, sort of like a sort of net... where you could tread on something, and the whole thing sort of goes, I, I just think there's we as teachers, and not just singing teachers, but singing teachers, because we are at the forefront of people wanting to share with us. I just wonder whether or not we could all do with a little bit more help with spotting what potentially is more serious issue, from an issue that isn't really serious at all,

MB

yeah?

P4

And that just needs someone to say, look, just come on, get on with this. You can do this. Yeah,

MB

yeah. I totally... Yeah. No, that's great, yeah. Thank you so much. I am gonna have you got anything else you wanted to add? There's no pressure to you. I've got loads of stuff,

P4

I guess. I guess that. I think that singing, teaching is, is very cheap therapy. It's you. I mean, I don't think, I mean, there are some students who at school... who come in and they, they, they, they... they are consumers. It like they come to the they come to the counter, and they take their lesson and they go away again. But the vast majority of people who choose to come to lessons after... you know, if you... after the fact, if you see what I mean, yeah, and these are generally adults that come back. To it. Those the people that they come to the lesson, and you can see their eyes light up by the time they've left, and maybe just the, I suppose, just the fact that somebody is hearing you for an hour.

MB

yeah, yeah.

P4

It doesn't matter that you're not saying anything, but somebody is hearing your voice for that hour and... and spending, I suppose, it's a bit like having a pedicure, isn't it? Yeah, you know, it's someone's kind of going, "oh, let's beautify this bit. Let's, you know, that's that's scrub off that bit. You know, this is the technique you need to make your... your voice sound better". And it is a life skill, isn't it? You know, learning how to use your voice properly, learning how to be happy with what you you're producing, and being able to be flexible with what you produce, whether it be just to be able to be heard in a large room, or to actually think about the way in which you deliver your... your work. Um, it doesn't have to be just basic to singing, does it?

MB

No.

P4

So, yeah. So there you go, I've waffled on!

MB

No, that's... Thank you. No, it's great. Thank you so much. I'm gonna, I'm gonna pause the recording and...

Appendix 8 – Interview 5

Unknown Speaker 0:00

It's just really slow. My phone, cool.

MB

So this will be semi structured, so I've got three questions, basically, and then it's just your opinions and like your thoughts as a performer and teacher as well be they can, yeah, those things, and we can go off piste, whatever comes up. So as in the project, in the information sheet you saw, I'm basically researching, there's a bit of a paradox that's emerged within the research at the moment about singing for wellbeing and then musicians wellbeing and scenes used to improve, wellbeing, whereas musicians, very depressed. Generally within the wider kind of industry, there's a lot of reasons for that. That's financial and the pressures of I'm sure you'll be familiar with those things. So I'm just kind of exploring what teachers how much teachers feel that, or how they approach that, or if that's something people are unaware of, or and just generally, how you feel best to prepare those students, especially a kind of pre professional level, who you're sending to conservatoires, or who are at conservatoires, how you best feel to care for their emotional wellbeing, basically for the future. So that's what I'm looking into the topic. So my first question is, how would you describe the teacher, student dynamic when teaching pre/pre professional level students, the relationship that you share with them?

P5 Oh, I mean, they, you know, they grow towards me, you know, sort of, you know, it's really nice to work with, you know, with kids who are about to go to Conservatoire, because either so much more you can share with them. You know, as a performer, I can just, I mean, you know, I've just got access to so much material that that we can share and enjoy. Yeah, and it's great because... it's really good, and also it kind of feeds, feeds into what I do as a professional musician, because more often than not, I end up showing the stage with them, you know, three or four years down the line and, you know, and in it, I remember I had a concert recently where I was doing exactly that, but then there were two or three kids in the audience who are on their way, you know. So it's almost like a revolving door. And I'm actually, I'm actually amazed that the kids are aren't more discouraged, given the state of

MB

okay,

P5

of the business is just horrendous, yeah, you know. And, and the fact that cost of living has gone up, and concert fees just haven't. The only thing that has is teaching, you know. And, you know, seeing services in some church in London, you know, because those tend to go up, but in concert fees,

MB

yeah. And do you feel that's a conversation that you have with them. Oh yeah, the state of the industry

P5

Oh, very much so. But I've always, you know? I mean, I'm never, I'm never going to pretend to anyone that this is an easy job,

MB
yeah,

P5
It's hard, yeah. And also, the other thing is a young person's job, you know, I'm 52 and... and there's just no way I could, I could live out of a suitcase and do all those miles. And I just, I yeah, I burn out so quickly. I mean, it's one of the reasons I, I went into teaching because I just, you know, I was really struggling to... to do it all, and, you know, have family life and that kind of stuff, you know. But, but yeah, I mean, you know, people are just as enthusiastic about it at that age. And I have to be careful to, you know, not to discourage them too much, but also to provide a bit of realism.

MB
And how, how far do you feel like your students listen to you in that in that way? Do they? Do they hold on to your every word? Or are they? Are they more kind of, do they ignore the kind of more realistic aspect of what you talk about.

P5
Well, I mean, the thing is, is that it's difficult, because a conversation is very difficult to have a conversation with someone about the next that stage in their lives when they find it quite difficult to imagine what that stage would be like.

MB
Yeah. Yeah. You know, you.

P5
And so you know, when we do broach it, we, you know, we do, we do talk about it, and I do, you know, reminisce and, you know, but it's, I suppose, because I'm not, I'm not looking after kids who are about to go into business. I'm looking after kids who are about to go into higher education and then into the business. So really, that's what they're focused on. They're focused on that step. But at the same time, you know, there's a real blur. The lines get blurred. You know, what point to become professional musician? You know, for me, it was while I was at university, I became a professional musician. I was, you know, most of my money I was making as a professional musician, I wasn't, you know, waiting tables and..

MB
yeah,

P5
employed like that. I was gigging.

MB
Yeah, interesting. So this next, this next question is a biggie, how do you view your responsibility towards your students well being.

P5
Oh, well, that's, I mean, that's, that's a that's written in stone. I mean, you know, it's written in stone by the school. It's, that's, that's part of your training. And yeah, and yes. And, you know, here at this place we, you know, we're optimized to get the best, the absolute best, out of the pupils, and you can't do that if they're under loads

of pressure. You know you can't do that if they're not relaxed, happy and enjoying life and... and then there's a certain colour on that at this particular school, which is one of the things that kind of one constraining feature is that they need to be happy and productive and successful academically, in order to be able to access what we offer fully. So, you know. So my responsibilities as a teacher go... extend well beyond the confines of this room, you know. I have to think about, you know, about their exam pressures, you know. And I have to be entirely understanding at the fact that my fifth... and then they won't do any practice for me, because it's just, you know, they do GCSEs. I mean, so horrendous, you know, 10 of these things. Mean, you know, I suppose it's very good preparation for, for, for A Levels, because the GCSEs are invariably more stressful than a levels. But you have to, you know, you have to look at the wider, at the wider picture... in ways that you know my teachers at University and beyond didn't... didn't need to. You know you have that you have that you have that extra responsibility, and you have to... to do that effectively. You have to be able to communicate very well. And, you know, and not ignore things, and you know, share what's going on here with my colleagues, you know. And it's just that

MB

You say, you mentioned about how, in the way that when you were university, your teachers didn't have that no oversight for and do you feel like that was something that you lacked as a student? And do you feel that or or not particularly?

P5

no, okay, no, I was, you know, I was, I've moved on, and because of things I didn't really, I mean, the school, school, when I was at school, was very different school what it is today. You know, if things didn't go very well, you just had to suck it up. I suspect universities changed. Has changed an awful lot,

MB

yeah,

P5

since I since I was there. But, yeah, I mean, you know, the learning to be independent is, is, I think it's probably a little bit more of a challenge in the current environment than it used to be. We do spend a lot of time thinking about them, looking after them, and, you know, you know, supporting their mental wellbeing, rather than being them being left to their own devices and learning how to cope by themselves. So it's, you know, is this? There's a there's, there's two sides to it.

MB

No, yeah. So where's the the balance?

P5

There's the happy medium. Yeah. Well, every kids different, okay, yeah, I mean, and that's what I love about my teaching, especially is, you know, training voices. I've every every single voice is different. Every single voice got their own challenge and and every single person has, they got their own unique set of ears, you know, they unique outlook, their unique interests, their unique setup. You can't... No, you there's the last thing you never do. So this is how I teach this is how

I do things. Because it just changes from minute to minute depending on who's in front of me.

MB

Yeah, very true. Do you feel that the voice then has to be at the center of preparing them for the next stage. Obviously, the voice does have to be at the center of that. But is that the only area of preparation? Or are there other areas of preparation in terms of that resilience and that cope-, those coping mechanisms that you bring into this space? Or is that something that you think they need to learn independently?

P5

Oh, no, you know, you know, you teach kids how to you teach kids how to cope and and you do it very, very different ways. I mean, for instance, there's this girl, ---, who, you know, she came through the door and she said to me, you know, the whole stack of finsy and Gurney and is, like, properly, properly into her, her, her singing. And she said to me, but you know, that's... this.... there's one thing, there's one thing you can never ask me to do, and that's to sing in front of anybody else. It just has to be here between you and me, and that's it. Because I can't, I mean, I can do it in choir, but I'm not. Don't ever ask me to stand up sing solo. Ever. Was fine, and I broke that by, in a quite in a rehearsal. Well, I was terrible at pianist, much, much better pianist than me. I was having terrible trouble with the altos, and I just needed someone to play the bass part because they weren't there. So I just have just sit down, just, just the bass. Just play the bass parts. Play the best part. So she did, and within a page, all the parts appeared, and the whole place just erupted when we got to the end of the piece, because, and that was the beginning of her transformation. And within 18 months, she was singing solos in the Serenade and, and um, but that's, you know, and I've had other people like her, but the path is always slightly different. Teaching people not to worry about making mistakes is really hard in a place where you know, if you get something wrong with your maths, you get a red you get a great red cross next to your work. And that's bad. I'm trying to say people actually know it's good. You know, you know learning, learning music is there's a mistake driven...

MB

yeah,

P5

...Enterprise... exercise, that's quite a challenge.

MB

so I'm just gonna have a get my next questions up. Yeah, lovely stuff. How do you feel about encouraging your students towards a career as a vocalist?

P5

Oh, I don't. I tend not to

MB

Okay. And why is that?

P5

Because I know... No, because it's it's because it's so hard, yeah. And you know, if no, I've never encouraged someone to this is this, this is what your focus should be, unless it's just bleeding obvious that that's what they should do. Because invariably, there's something not quite right with the setup. You know, you've got to have a voice that that is working technically, or you can make good progress with, and I've got loads of those, but have they all got the right aural ability? You know that that's... that's much rarer. And then if you've got the right temperament, well, we just don't know, because I'm, yeah, grown up, yeah, when I kind of get, like, have an idea of it... But, but it's not... it's invariably, it's the other way around. It's them coming to me and say, This is what I want to do. I need you to help me with it. And then we talk about it. I never, ever, ever turn around to a kid say, oh, you should be a professional singer. I've never done that, not in my 20 years as a teacher have I ever done that. Yeah, and I never will. I never would, because it's, it's...

MB

What would have to change to make you feel like that was something you could say?

P5

Well, big... no, they... decided that's what they want to do, and I would and, and if I felt that they could do it, I would say, but I'm not... I'm not... I'm not in the business of telling people you can become a professional singer if they haven't, if it's not, you know, you know, it's not like... it's not essentially. Have you considered engineering? You know, you're good at maths. Oh, yeah, I could consider being an engineer. It's just, it's just not like that, because it's such a, you know, I mean, music such a personal thing, and, and, and it's very, very difficult to... You know, the musicians are the most difficult... They're the most difficult people to manage, because you're only as good as your last gig. I'm sure that's got an awful lot to do with the fact that, you know, musicians get depressed because they're not quite performing. It's really freaking hard. It's really hard. And, you know, and I mean, the most important thing for me is that they continue to enjoy their music, and if they fall into the profession, well, like I did, because I had no intention of becoming a professional musician, I just fell into it. I just, like, arrived in London, and, you know, I've just sucked into it. And I really liked it, but I had, you know, there was never that was never planned,

MB

Yeah.

P5

You know, you know, the number of people I know who carry on performing, and they carry on doing their music, but they're, you know, they're, they're gainfully employed doing other things, they tend to enjoy their music tremendously. And then the thing that gets in the way of that is having kids, you know, something's got to give. And invariably, it's, it's, it's that... and... and then they come the out of the other side of that. It's really good friend of mine,---. Have you heard of ---? He's one, he's one of the top ---, and he specializes in voice,

MB

Okay.

P5

And he left, he was in same years me, and he left, left ---, and he got married, and he had kids straightaway, and he then became an empty nester very quickly. And now he's, he's hot on ---, you know, doing top (within career). But he's also sang tenor in all sorts of ensembles and doing his music again, you know, which is, which is great, yeah. But yeah, I mean, that's, you know, unless you're, you know, the only, the only way to to maintain it, yeah, in that scenario, really, is to be doing it.

MB

Yeah. You mentioned earlier about temperament, someone having the right temperament, yeah, What? What? What does that look like for you? What is the right temperament?

P5

Oh, um, yes. Enormous confidence.

MB

Okay,

P5

I mean, to... to... to do what I do, all right, especially girls. I mean, how they do that? How does a soprano stand in front of --- and give him what he wants, just without batting an eyelid, because he's got the best ears in the business, you know, and he it's just under the, you know, everything has to be So...just... I just don't you have... you have to have... you have to have it all from a from a musical point of view. And you've got to have the confidence to execute. And the thing is, is that, you know, the... the kids that I work with. I mean, there's some wonderfully advanced musicians, but they're incredibly fragile as people. You know, confidence is, is, is really 90% well it's not 90% of it, because you got to have everything else in place, but you can't be a performer unless you have the confidence to be one. And that can only be gained through experience. But also, there's some people for whom it is just, you know, yeah. I mean, I can set the piano and I can play, I can, you know, get my violin out, and I can play it, and it's a... but, but also, some of the best musicians I've ever taught here just don't have that. They can, they can only ever be amateurs, because it's just too it's too much, too much pressure.

MB

And if there was, if there was someone who came to you with the perfect voice, for example, the desire to do it. Yeah, I want to do this, but they

P5

What, be a professional musician?

MB

They didn't have and they didn't have that confidence. Do you feel like there's tools and strategies that you might have to build that within them, or do you think it's just getting them to perform?

P5

See the problem with that is that people. People tend not to come. The reason people tend not to want to do that because they lack the confidence.

MB

Yeah. So you feel the people that come to you with that question are often the people who are they? They can, they can do it, best prepared to do it, yeah,

P5

or have done it before. So, you know, I've got a lot of kids who who've been through the whole Cathedral Choir system and have stood up in front of 1000 people, and some, you know, Spartas and Messiah, for instance,

MB

yeah,

P5

Well actually not the Messiah, because they're... they're too high, but certainly the St John Passion, you know, all of those soprano Arias are accessible to really strong trebles. And we got several of them who've done it, you know, so they've got that kind of colour on it.

P5 Speaker 21:03

But you know, even then, you know, it's, it's often, it's often on other instruments. You know, it's often, you know,

MB

So a lot of them will play other instrumetns.

P5

Yeah, so, you know, they'll come in for their singing lesson, and we'll spend quite a lot of time, you know, singing, and then they'll sit down and play for me.

MB

Okay, yeah.

P5

And I'll throw things at them that I think will be good for them, yeah? And try and teach them how to make mistakes without being noticed, and what to prioritize and all that kind of stuff. You know...

MB

Yeah.

P5

...the one thing you can't teach them is, is, you know what it's like to depend on it financially, yeah? And that's that that you can only experience

MB

Yeah, with that, yeah. I understand that. I'm just going to circle back a little bit... sorry to the kind of first question about the relationship. Do you feel the one-to-one dynamic of your lessons?

P5

Yeah,

MB

creates a unique relationship with a young person in which they're more open with you, perhaps, about their feelings. Shall we say. Their emotions? Or do you feel, is there a boundary that you feel that you have to set to protect this space and ensure that this is about singing nice room?

P5

No, I don't need to do that, because invariably, they come through the door then to leave the maths behind. Yeah, they leave... **They leave all their other bits and bobs behind**, and they just come in because they just, they just need it is they need to be fed.

MB

Yeah. Okay.

P5

And so, for instance, you know, what... a kid who came this morning is, you know, he's quite, he's a treble, he was a fabulous treble. But, you know, his... the voice. His two voices are starting to separate. And so, you know, we just, we just found that an aria from the Christmas Oratorio was very comfortable range, and he just, you know, somebody was on fire again, because he's, you know, I can do this technically. And the challenge was that, you know, it's like, you know, doing the crossword, trying to figure out how to... figure out that diminished seventh. And then, you know, and you know, some nice Bach aria full of... that was... it actually didn't have one with the breath. And it was just technically, absolutely perfect, and gives him what he needs from a brain perspective. And then just they're happy,

MB

yeah?

P5

They don't need anything else.

MB

So actually, for you, the singing, the singing itself, acts as the the emotional wellbeing, kind of medicine,

P5

Yeah, it is, yeah. And, but I've got another kid who's, he's a wonderful singer, but he wants to be a pianist,

MB

yeah?

P5

Okay, so we do some singing, you know, and then, and then, and then he sits down a place for me and... and, you know, into a bit of that. And, you know, you want, he, and he's going to be, he wants to be a professional pianist. He, sometimes he just, you know, look, it's someone. Then they tell you, can you use me? So what I'm going to do? And it's fine, great play for my rehearsal on a Thursday afternoon. Sit down and do it. And yes, you got to prioritize the bass part and... and

so the journey continues. But yeah, I mean, if the lessons finished before it started, and they've left with a spring in their step, you know, you've won.

MB

Yeah, yeah, totally, that's great. Okay, thank you so much. I think, is there anything else you wanted to say, or I'd know about teaching? Yeah? Yeah Or Yeah within this kind of remit, or anything that's okay if there's not.

P5

Yeah, it's, it's all about confidence, and it's... and 90% of the time, it's more than just music. You know, you trying to help people, trying to trying to convince people that they can actually do things,

MB

yeah,

P5

okay. And trying to convince people that, that it's getting things wrong is isn't, isn't bad, and it doesn't really matter. And actually, you'll find that, you know, if you if you get stuck in, you make a mistake, people will, you know, they're not, they're not laughing at you. Yeah, no one's good. No one's laughing. And also is creating that the right atmosphere in the school and...in rehearsals, being really, really careful that when people are getting things wrong, you know how to how to get them to ask you for help in a way where they don't feel like they're undermining themselves.

MB

yeah? So that's, that's actually a really interesting point about getting them to ask for help, as opposed to automatically jumping in with what it with the feedback?

P5

Yeah, yeah. So you know what, I've got my ---, and they were singing one to one. Yeah, the people who've just been appointed will sit there not knowing quite knowing what to do, and doing a very good job, but just, you know, and... and then the the more experienced ones, the ones I've had for a year or two, well, stop and say, Look, can you, can you help me with this? No, can you help me with that? And that's fine. And someone's having a bit, you know, that's a bit tricky, you know. And then they're, they're asking me, Can we go back over that? And, you know, if I say, you know, run through something so that, you know, any, any, any requests. And there must be one or two say, Oh, yeah. Can we just go back with page eight? But that requires confidence and, you know, but also, when the young people coming in and they don't do that, they learn how to do that.

MB

Yeah, I feel like the type of confidence you're talking about is a very unique type of confidence as well. Yeah, internalized, internalized confidence, as opposed to projecting confidence.

P5

Yeah? Oh, yeah, totally, you know, you know. Because I mean, what I what you know, my skill is, you know, the you know, what you know is ensemble singing. I'm not the instrument, ensemble as the instrument.

And so you know... is, you know, ensemble, ensemble, you know changes. It's a lot of it's a negotiation people performing. So it's not necessarily projecting your confidence, but just having confidence in that the person on your left is gonna do, gonna do it, and the person on your right, and things get very awkward when that confidence breaks.

MB

Maybe it could also be described, like, as a self-assuredness.

P5

Yeah, as well. Like, yeah. Well, I'm sure you've been in situation where suddenly the person your left isn't giving you what you need, and you just be having to shut down and right, well, I'm just gonna have to do this by myself. Yeah? And, you know, go to drawbridge, get the job done.

MB

Yeah, yeah, totally,

Speaker 1 28:41

definitely cool. I think we've got loads there. Thank you so much.

Appendix 9 – Interview 6

MB

Um, okay, cool. So just to confirm that you're happy for me to audio record this.

P6

Very happy Thank you.

MB

And everything you say will be anonymized within the interview. So don't worry about that... your identity will be protected and coded and stuff. So yeah, the sorry again, if you hear chatting, I'm in a similar scenario to you... nowhere to hide!

P6

Nowhere to hide!

MB

So yeah, so the interview is semi structured, so I have sort of three to five questions that I've written down, but I'm quite happy to the conversation can kind of go anywhere. So I might ask you a question and you might give me an answer, and I might follow up and stuff like that. So don't be afraid to...

P6

If I go off on... go off on a tangent as well. I won't be offended if you say, let's get back to this topic.

MB

So I might, I might need to round us back, just purely because we aim to do this within like, 30 minutes, for 30 to 40 minutes. So yeah, I might kind of slightly bring us back round. But...

P6

you know what you need to hear at the end of the day, if it's not relevant?

MB

Yeah, exactly. But I am also, I am also, I am also interested to hear new ideas or things that I haven't heard yet. So I don't want you to feel like you can't go somewhere, but if you do, I might circle us back, but that's only for the interest of this paper, not because I'm not interested generally.

P6

Okay, great.

MB

So as I said, the this piece of research is exploring vocal coaches attitudes to their students' emotional wellbeing. And there's a slight context to this research in that we're looking at kind of more ambitious students, professional/pre-professional, anyone who has an aim to kind of make some kind of living off their voice, whatever age that is. That's one element of the context, and it's also an element of the context at the moment where singing for wellbeing is widely considered to be a positive thing for emotional and physical health,

but vocal, professional vocalists and musicians are really suffering from poor mental health. They're like three times more likely to experience anxiety and depression than the general population. So it's just kind of about exploring where singing teachers roles fit within that, if there's some sort of framework that might be useful for teachers in terms of safeguarding emotional wellbeing, if that's something you think is necessary or not. So that's kind of the general picture. So my first question is basically, what is the student teacher relationship, and what is that dynamic? Is there anything unique about that, or does it kind of marry to the traditional student teacher dynamics in other subjects? Or...

P6

I'm kind of torn into minds... I am a Holistic looking person, but therein also lies the need for regulating how close you get to a student and how involved you can be, because that could potentially get you in hot water. You know, in one way, I think I have been a therapy room for my students, but I'm also very mindful that they're paying for a singing lesson, and I have known some teachers to be so involved in the kids' lives and their students' lives that they don't get the singing bit done, or enough of it, but at the same time, you can't divorce someone's emotional feeling away from their voice, because it shows up so much. So if they're emotional, if they've had a bad day, if they're hormonal, especially with teenagers, and their hormones are going crazy, that obviously affects their voice. So obviously it will have a knock on effect. Um, being physically ill, being physically tired, will affect the voice in a way that it won't with another instrument. So yes, you might get, you know, feel a bit tired, not be quite on the ball with piano, with all these other things that involve a very external instrument. Being an internal instrument, preaching to the converted, It you are so at the at the mercy of your emotion. And playing out and stress playing out in the voice, in a physical outworking of the voice. So I'm always mindful with teenagers, particularly of hormonal influences, stress influences on the voice, if they're having a bad day, I might, I really might tailor the lesson to be a bit kinder to them. In regards to right, we're not going to do anything really big and belty today. Or if they're very emotional and raw, they might actually need a big emotional piece to kind of bring stuff to the surface. I've often found that, if I say, what if it's your choice, what you what you would like to sing today are pieces. It may be that they just want to have something crazy and just sing their heart out with something mental, you know. Put a bit 90s emo Rock on, or something, rather than one, a beautiful classical piece or something I have to do. But, so if you disregard the mental and emotional impact as a singing teacher, you... you know you wouldn't, you'd be doing them a disservice entirely. [But then also, on the other, on the flip side, if it just becomes a ther-, therapy session, then you're not doing your work as a singing teacher and providing a service...]

MB

Yeah

P6

...For them, and I have known that I spoke to someone quite recently around in a conversation, she said, Oh, if I told her how I was, she'd just go straight into it, and I'd waste half my singing. This is just telling her how I am, and I might needed to have gone blah, but I'm not paying my singing teacher to be my therapist.

MB

Yeah, yeah. How did you? How did you feel like you developed that boundary for yourself, or that kind of where's the line? How do you How did you establish that line?

P6

I've been teaching for over 30 years. Figured out. So I think I learned the hard way that I think there have been times when, um, like before, like when I started teaching, they had... they didn't have any of this safeguarding stuff in place. And because you are, like in ----, for example, you're a one-on-one teacher in a very achieving school, and the kids didn't used to get any adult ear properly listening to them. I think things have changed hugely since I first started teaching them when I was 20, I'm 45 now. And when I was 20, I was practically their age. So of course, they're going to open up to me because I'm like that big, big sister or, you know, and then grew into a bit of a parent role. And if you're teaching kids that don't have parents around, also you're not considered staff. And in those days, we weren't... if something was disclosed, I didn't know that you could tell anyone. Yeah, I had kids disclosing all kinds of things to me that now I would totally know need to be shared on a wider level, but honestly, 20 years ago, it was like, "Okay, you said that with me. I'm just going to be listening and advise you to come and speak to someone", but there was nothing to feedback on and so, but then I suppose part of me thought, well, their parents aren't around, so I better do their job for them, honestly, yeah. But of course, the last 15 years, it's been very, very different, yeah. And then so attitudes have changed to looking after staff in giving us really rigorous, rigorous training in safeguarding what is ours to just listen to, what is ours to hold on to, what is ours to make sure... So from that point of view, I've learned a lot. And just I

Child interrupts..

P6

I I have had, I have had a pupil. Let's say it was quite a long time ago. I was just I was in my mid 20s, and I taught someone who came to me in their 50s, and they had been told as a very young person in your 12/13, "Oh, shut up. That's awful singing that's just terrible", and by a teacher that, "oh no, you're too out of tune to join the choir", all that kind of stuff. And she came to me, and she had the most divinely beautiful instrument. She knew how to use it. She could sing, but she'd been so shut down because of these voices in her head that we needed to get our way out of that. So in order to really open that voice out and help us in, we had to discuss the mental blocks as to why she wasn't opening her mouth. She couldn't engage her core. Her voice was shaking so much so all of those ways... there are physical reasons so physical, external things that needed to address the mental reasons as to why she couldn't push through that. And it just we needed to go back to those childhood traumas in a gentle, gentle way to unlock her stress. And post-traumatic stress over these, these things in order to unlock the voice. So from that point of view, I most definitely needed to go there. But thankfully, in my 20s, I had early counselling training,

MB
Okay

P6
And I went and, of course, I wanted to do counselling,

MB
okay.

P6
And I think by then I'd had the kind of early, you know, the opening, kind of qualifications for counselling, where you read the books and you just learn how to listen well, and stuff like that. So I had some good things in place to be able to, gently, as far as I can tell, unlock those kind of things. And I said very much...

Interruption

...so from that point, of view, with her, it was necessary, but thankfully, I'd had enough of early training, because you... you could start unearthing some really personal and personal things that would be dangerous for someone who doesn't know what they're doing to attempt to do. I felt at the time that I had enough skills to be able to go there, but if it was anything more traumatic than just those words, you know you could get people that try and do things that might mentally and emotionally hurt someone.

MB
Do you think that your... your your role as a singing teacher, is unique in that you in order to improve someone's singing or improve their vocal technique, you have to access often... You have to access, or go through, as you mentioned in that scenario you spoke of... you have to talk about things that have happened, or traumas and stresses, and you have to bring those into the room. Is that a unique thing, do you think? to singing or other instruments? I mean, it's hard to know if you don't teach other instruments, but...

P6
I mean, certainly I'm a drama teacher as well, and that's the same thing if you're accessing your voice. Yeah, improvisation. So on the drama perspective, I, you know, I teach young people drama as well at the weekends, from a performing arts point of view. So I suppose it's not unique to singing, but it is in a more technique way with singing, but emotionally as a drama teacher, and going into the realms of drama school. Now that's where things can get even more muddy, because I do know of many people who have been traumatized by drama school, and what people say and do and, you know, going into deep, emotional, you know, I remember like things, or they're talking about rape, they're talking about things with big trigger implications, and young people that could have traumatic pasts and things, and treating it almost glibly, or just imagining that everyone's gone through this kind of stuff. And mind you, this is long time ago, and they did shows they made... Made them go never I'm so glad that I was on the music course doing drama, not in the drama course, doing the musical theatre. So we got saved a lot being on the musical... on that musical side, rather than drama. But you know, they had full nudity, full nudity plays to go through improvisations where they would simulate sets and simulate rape scenes

and all kinds of things. And even when, as a performer, when I was doing Phantom of the Opera, for example, and Les Miserables, I was playing prostitutes and going into the in-depth part of your characters. So as a singer, as a musical theatre performer, and singer. So yeah, it's with drama. The dramatic element that you wouldn't necessarily get just playing the violin. You have to access emotions with the violin, but it's much more abstract. It's much more divorced from maybe that same visceral, real-life scenario than if you're doing like a rape of Lucretia or so, yes, yes, I would say it is a more unique scenario than any other instrument.

MB

Yeah.

P6

That I can think of the top of my head.

MB

Do you think as well? I mean, I'm... I'm kind of piecing bits together from what you've said. You mentioned as well about how, for some... for your this student, Student X, we can call them, who came to you and hadn't sung for so long because of something a teacher had said... Do you feel that there's, and I guess within the drama school setting as well, the weight or the impact of what we can say as singing teachers can be... have a huge impact, not only on the person, but on the instrument as well.

P6

Massive. Yeah, absolutely massive. I can speak so much into this, yeah. I mean, when I did my undergrad, was going to go to the ---, and then I changed my mind last minute, and I went to ---- because it was cheaper. It was three years instead of four. I could save myself money and not live in ---. So I went over to ---, and in there I had one of the kindest and loveliest teachers, but there was another teacher. We shall call her Singing Teacher X. I could name and shame her, but I've forgotten her name. She was a dragon. I was talking to her... I did an opera, operatic song with a friend of mine a few weeks ago. Mental, crazy, crazy gig. I did queen of night ARIA on top of a tower...

Phone call interruption...

...this singing teacher had people crying in their lessons daily. And I knew someone who was with her...

MB

Yeah.

P6

...at a different Conservatoire. And she also taught at the Academy for a while she taught at other places. And my lovely friend ---, a beautiful opera singer, she ended up being in Phantom of the Opera with me, and she was playing Carlotta. And I was Christine at the time, and she... suffered so badly from stage fright, and she puts it down to this teacher, just that she would just be so self-critical, and she would just have this teacher just in her head, and it... it meant that she lost her job because she was under study. She didn't go on all the time. Most phenomenal voice. My goodness, phenomenal voice. She died,

unfortunately, a few years back, heart cancer, which is out...no... that's by the by, but she had to go into therapy and talk out what this teacher had done to her to make her so nervous. She was a constant young performer, and this teacher tore her apart. I was talking to this other girl who'd also been taught by her, ---, and... and how that just made them into the most nervous self-critiquing, unhealthily self-critiquing singers...

MB
Yeah.

P6
...you've ever met, and it's like she might have got amazing work out of them but left them as such broken people that couldn't really work some of them wild, just very sad. Yeah...

MB
It's crazy. How, how do you then following on from that, bearing all that in mind? How do you then view your responsibility towards your students, emotional wellbeing. I guess we've kind of touched on this already a bit, but I guess you can kind of.. Yeah. I mean, let's go with that question. People. Sorry, let's kind of go with that question for now. I think we have sort of touched on it already, but I'm kind of intrigued to see if you have any more to say on it...

P6
Yesterday. Point in question yesterday, I've got a lovely young man who I spent a whole year just teaching singing in tune.

MB
Yeah.

P6
He could not pitch. He could not pitch. I mean, at all. So [*singing*] "sing that note", [*sings different note*].

MB
Yeah.

P6
[*singing*] "Sing that note", [*sings different note*]

MB
Yeah.

P6
And now he can sing in tune. It's taken a year, but getting that balance of, oh, let's, let's gamify it. Let's make it into a game. "Oh, yeah, you've got that, you've got that. Oh, brilliant. That's in tune". And then let's sing a song. It might not be anywhere near in tune, but we're still working on diaphragmatic control, holding notes, whilst we're learning pitch, and it's like that juxtaposition of you just want to say, "oh my goodness, these kid can't sing". You want to boot them out the door, but that's what all the other teachers did, and I've learned that you can teach people to sing, if you have enough patience

and with absolutely anything... the second you get critique in there... that they're gonna bolt, critique, criticism. So I try and just go for "Yeah, that was brilliant. Yes, you got that? Oh, let's work on that bit again". Let's do it five times, see if your muscles can, you know, and like, always end on a positive... if they don't walk out of that room in a better mood from where they walk in, actually, I've not done my job because music should be free. Sometimes they're going to be frustrated with themselves, of course they are, and with how they're feeling. **But I always try and leave on a positive note**, let them walk out the door feeling like they've achieved something, even it's the smallest amount of something, even if, like, "Oh, you're so tired. Let's just sing something really gentle, really fun". You know, because some of them come in and they are exhausted, or they've just broken up with their boyfriend or whatever, and this young man came in and he loves music. He responds to music so well, but he just wasn't feeling it. And he is doing this for fun, where actually he's doing this because his mum made him, that's another thing altogether. But he has persevered with singing in tune, and now he's really enjoying it, so much so that he's joined a choir... that was unheard of.

MB

Yeah.

P6

And this young man came in and it was singing a bit of Elvis, and he's just like, I don't want to sing. I don't know what to sing. I said, "Well, should we do this?".

"Yeah, okay, all right."

And he sang it in the Middle East, in the most lackluster... nothing was there. Nothing's going on. And I had to stop and say, "I think you're having a bit of a funny morning?".

MB

Yeah.

P6

...and you don't have to tell me what's going on, but it's affecting your singing and like, "are you tired? Are you coming down with something? Are you feeling stressed?". And he's like, "No, yeah, but you know, same as normal, yeah.". I didn't ask the questions. I said, I think it's either one of these, yeah? And he said, Yeah, probably a combination. I said, So what do you want to do? Because I can drag you into a place where you... where you want... where you will sing. But is that going to benefit us? What's going to benefit you the most? Do you need to take a break? Do you need to reconvene on this another day? Do you want to just sing a couple of Christmas songs...

MB

Yeah.

P6

...and just take your mind off it. In the end, we sang three songs, and he wasn't in the mood, but we did have a discussion on how it affects him. He says, "I'm exactly the same in sport. If I'm not feeling basketball..."...he's an amazing sport... "If I'm not feeling the basketball, I'm just not going to do a good job. I can't fake the effort.". And I said, "Well, that's a very unique position to be in, because as a singer, I've had to sing things I don't like, I've had to sing when

I've got a headache, to sing when, actually I should be in hospital, and they make you sing. So, you know, you're not in a position where I'm not going to force you to do anything if you're not in the... you know... your parents are paying for this lesson, but at the same time, you know what do. What do you feel you need to do at this moment?". And he said you're right, the parents are paying for this lesson. I said, "so let's sing something, because that keeps your muscles going". But I did give him the autonomy as an 18 year old to make his decision as to what he wanted to do. And I think that's right, yeah. It may be that that was the wrong call to make because he's not paying for the lessons, but he's the one that has to take them.

MB

Yeah, yeah. I mean, and I think this kind of leads on to my next section. I know that that student doesn't necessarily have ambitions within music, but as you say, we as singers, you have to sing when you don't want to. You have to sing when you can't. You have to sing, you know... when you're working with pre professional, such professional people, how do you respect their needs in terms of their emotional wellbeing, that kind of thing, what they need, whilst also building the resilience and the strength to send them off into the professional world, knowing so that They can work effectively, because that's what the world requires.

P6

Yeah, I did a bit of time depping In ---. Do you know performers can be okay? Yeah, it's the one of the --- ones in ---. So these are young, 18/19/20/21, year olds doing performing arts, but they are dancing through pain. They're doing all these things. They're making them belt up to D's and E's with no technical background. I mean, what they expect them to do in some of these colleges is not realistic. Yeah, it's not good. And then it's only the cream of the cream that are good enough anyway, that may get the jobs and get the gigs, because they're not really preparing them very well at all. And they don't get enough singing teaching, full stop, actually, you know, they get one singing lesson, one terms worth of singing lessons, and that's it for their degree course.

MB

Mental.

P6

Yeah, crazy, doing the three year performance musical theatre course, and you get one term of group singing. It's just a one they do group singing, but one term of private singing lessons, it's just the joke,... crazy... a joke. So being in that situation. I know not all the colleges are like that, but I'll dep for them occasionally, if they desperately need it. I wouldn't want to do that. I can't, in all consciousness, send people out into the real world. With that, I've taught young people, and I do get people ready for auditions.

MB

Yeah.

P6

And having done so many auditions West End, we're talking West End most of my... opera as well. Yeah, opera and West End auditions. Most of my professional... I've done enough of them. Yeah, and for movies and film as well, for film and television... so cut throat, so cut throat. And the words of directors can carry more weight than teachers.

MB

Yeah.

P6

And when I was very when I was a much younger performer, I had people say things and just treat me appallingly, and it did have a massive impact on me as a performer and my output and vocally, my health and my my emotions. So I suppose that is why I'm very attuned to other people's emotional wellbeing and how that reflects on their voice, and preparing people, in a way, to rise above anything that is thrown back at them is it's all about their output. It's all about their characterization, or about who they inhabit as their character. And so if they besmirch them, I often say, "okay, they're talking about your character. They're talking about your portrayal of that person. Don't take it personally. It's your interpretation of that character, and you can put any negative thoughts that people say and how they treat you, it's not you, it's your portrayal of that person who might not be the person to carry that.". So, particularly in casting, when they will just pound something home - no. "Do that again. Do it this way. Do it that way. No, sorry, cut next, next,!". And don't even tell you why. Don't even give you feedback. Half the time you don't even want feedback. They can be so cutthroat. And I often will tell people just how to rise above that. Yeah, you've got to, because otherwise they'll fall apart.

MB

Yeah, yeah, we've got three. Do you mind if we log out of this one and come back in with the same code. I'll send you the WhatsApp of the code. Just because the meetings only got two minutes left. I think there's only, like 5/10, minutes more talking to do. But is that okay? Yeah, I just don't want to get caught off. I'll WhatsApp you the meeting number. Okay, cool.

Zoom interruption

MB

Okay, cool. So I guess we can kind of my last sort of question, I guess is...

P6

Are you recording?

MB

I am. Yeah, yeah. How do you feel about encouraging a student towards a career as a vocalist, and do you have any concerns about that?

P6

Absolutely, absolutely. I had a very nervous girl last year, and she just insisted on going. She was she went for ---, ---, ---. She went for these main... just even if she got in, she's not going to make it. She's just not good enough. Can you still hear me?

MB
Yep

P6
Okay, cool. Come up. And I just thought I wanted to be realistic and but I wanted her, she insisted on auditioning. And I said, you sure it's what you want to do? Okay? You can go for it. I said, there's very, very high standards. And, you know, I did a little bit of caveat. That I could... but she was going... going for it, and she was so nervous, you know, she... I thought it would have to be a miracle for her to get in..., in fact, I'd wanna know what she was doing.

MB
Yeah.

P6
But she was going through these things would come back crying, and it's just like, it's okay that, you know, you could, you can? I just encouraged her. I said, even if you don't get into to drama school, even if you get through drama school, there might not be work. It's really not a solid job. It's even if you love it with all of your heart, you might not get work in it. So I had to be really honest with her, but I didn't say it about her ability. Yeah, I just framed it as it's so cut for out there, the quality is so high they could pick from any number of people, and it's not a reflection on your beautiful voice, but it might, it might be that they've got five ---girls that year. Yeah, they don't want another ---, but you have... you do... I didn't want to tell her that you're just not good enough. Yeah, I never did. I don't, maybe I should have, but I just reframed it so she wasn't going to get her hopes... "Oh, yes, you're amazing. You'll get out". Yes, I've had pupils who are really good and totally could walk onto a West End stage, and I've still had to be realistic and say you can be the best and the best... I was only lucky and I got my foot in the door because they needed someone short. Leading man was really short, they could have had 10 other people playing that role.

MB
Yeah.

P6
...but I happen to be a five foot one. You have to be realistic that there are so few jobs and so many people that want them. To be realistic with people and they're being accepted by the by the top conservatoires on two courses and churning out people year after year. And that's where it's unfair.

MB
Yeah.

P6
Unfair. They're taking people for these courses, knowing full well, not the jobs for them.

MB
Yeah, yeah.

P6

It's ridiculous that they're not even good enough to even get a full rest roll on a cruise ship. These days, we've got the top triple threats can't get work. So where is their moral backbone? You know?

MB
Yeah.

P6
Does that answer...

MB
That does answer. Yeah, that does answer my question. Do you feel... we can kind of wrap up after this... But do you feel that if you were a pro-, if someone came to you with the talent to... to make it but hadn't thought... Had didn't realize it was something they could do. Would you encourage them, or suggest that to them, or would you not? And if you did what would what other things would have to be in place to make you feel comfortable doing that?

P6
They would have to have it all for me to encourage them in every area, because I've had people that have been amazing singers, but they can't act, or they don't have the stamina, or they're a beautiful actress, but the vocals just quite aren't there. And it's like... it's really hard. I've taught people... going on to the profession and people that have just come out. One girl that I taught just came out of ---. She gave some lessons, and she's just not good enough.

MB
Yeah.

P6
And they gave her a degree, she got a good mark in her degree, and she's auditioning, and she's out there doing it... I wouldn't even give her a solo in my choir.

MB
Yeah.

P6
I did give her a solo in my choir, but I because I thought she was just, she was just one of the...

MB
Yeah.

P6
But she said "just finished at ---!".
"Oh, wow. She's done a degree in this?". She had tuning, absolutely lovely tuning, lovely personality, but she's so much missing, and you have to have it all,

MB
Yeah.

P6

In that side of the business, you've got to be not just being triple threat. You've got to be immensely good in all areas. I mean, I, I'm a I'm a very good actress and a very good singer, but I'm not a dancer.

MB
Yeah

P6
So I, I knew exactly what I Was auditioning for, and what I wouldn't audition for.

MB
Yeah.

P6
I have a lot of self-awareness, yeah, and that there's so many people out there they don't have self-awareness.

MB
Yeah.

P6
They don't know that they're not good.

MB
And do you think, is that a character trait that you think is needed to make a successful career for yourself, or

P6
they will just be hit by disappointment when they go these auditions. They will audition. They will audition. They try and get an agent, try and they just won't get one.

MB
Yeah.

P6
and if they're lucky enough to get the agent, they won't get the job.

MB
Yeah.

P6
And they'll have to do something else. And it's really sad, because they have talent, but this is where amateur dramatics comes in. This is where karaoke down the path. We need these outlets without having to be perfect. We need people to enjoy singing, enjoy performing without having to be perfect.

MB
Yeah, yeah. I get you. I think from my end, that's kind of all the questions that I've got written. Is there anything else that you wanted to say on the topic, or thought I should ask...

P6
TW
Mental health. I do a whole thing on a Friday morning singing for health. So from that point of view, and I have some amazing singers in there, and some that can't sing the toffee, but the mental action kind

of things, mental health side of things, so, so important as a singer.
Yeah. Yeah.

MB

Yeah, I will, I will let you...I will let you...Yeah, I'll let you. I'll let you go. But thank you so much for this, and I'm sure I'll catch up with you soon.

P6

Cheers. Thank you. Yeah, cheers, thanks, bye, bye

Appendix 10 – Interview 7

MB

Hello. So if you're happy for this to be recorded,

P7

Yep

MB

and this is just to confirm that everything that you say will be completely anonymized,

P7

yeah,

MB

so no one will know who you are in this interview. So just to start, I've been doing some research, kind of around a few different topics that all kind of congregate. The first thing is about exploring levels of anxiety and depression amongst professional musicians.

P7

Mhmm

MB

There's been recent reports that have shown that it's really high, basically three times higher than the general population, and also the impact of like stress and anxiety on the voice itself, and how that can lead to voice disorders and issues with like the instrument itself, um, which has kind of led me to think a bit about how we as teachers look at our students wellbeing, and how far we're responsible for that, especially when there's a crossover with the voice what those boundaries are and how we set them. So there's a few questions. This is a semi-structured interview, so I've kind of got three or four questions, but don't be afraid to kind of go off on tangents if you want to. And I will ask questions. I might, if we're moving too far away, I might interrupt and just bring us back in, but I haven't had to do that yet. But yeah, so that's kind of where we're at. Does that all make sense?

P7

Yep,

MB

perfect. So the first kind of question is looking at the relationship between the student and the teacher itself. And I'm kind of just interested to know how you would describe that dynamic. We're kind of looking especially at students who are professional, or pre-professional, kind of looking to go into the industry, or in this, you know, in your case, potentially going into study, choral scholarships, that kind of thing. So potentially focusing in on those students. But if you go beyond that, that's but,

P7

yeah,

MB

just how you describe that dynamic, especially within the one to one context, and that kind of thing.

\P7

Well, singing is is interlinked with your... your... emotional wellbeing. So if somebody's under stress, you hear it in their voice. So you're trying to constantly encourage them to find the freedom in their instrument, so that they're not gripping their... their technique, they're not pouring anxiety into their sound and then getting more and more frustrated by... by what they're doing. So um yeah, you are trying to unravel their... their tensions and anxieties.

MB

Would you describe the relationship as unique or special? Or do you think it kind of sits within the normal student teacher dynamic, if you were to look at a maths teacher student relationship? Or...

P7

No, I think it's much more personal than that, and actually you find that the kids will will open up to you about things completely unrelated to singing, um, because you have that one on one connection. You're talking about emotions, you're talking about the context of the music and what it means to you, and how to get under the skin of the composer and the liberatist. So there's a lot going on that can feed into other people's day to day lives, and they draw on experiences. And also the a lot of the problem is they... they don't have the experiences when they're young. So you're teaching them the song, and it's very much about the breakup of a relationship or... or death and... and they haven't got those things to draw on. Or they've got those things to draw on, and they haven't processed it themselves.

MB

Yeah,

P7

so you can hit a nerve sometimes and not realize why. Suddenly someone is very emotional in your class,

MB

and when that, when that happens, what, what do you do? Or how do you feel about that? How do you relate to that? In those moments,

P7

I tend, I tend to probably go down the same route as a as a counsellor, in that you don't really try and step in and solve their problems for them, but just sit and listen and let them, let them say what they want to say, and... and try to try to be supportive, but without being overly... forcing your own ideas on them. "Well, you should do this, or you should do that. Have you thought of this"... just... just let them let the steam out, really.

MB

And do you see that as part of your role as a singing teacher? Or is that something that has sort of happened by an accident? Or how do you view that kind of thing?

P7

When I was at ----, we had some classes at... About teaching. And not once was it ever mentioned at all about this aspect. It was all about how to deliver the technique and the structure and everything else. And it sort of springs on you by... by accident, as you start taking on students, uh, suddenly you realize, oh, it isn't that I've got one who's particularly emotional, or one who's got some issues. Actually, everyone who comes and starts trying to explore their voice and their instrument, they all realize that it's connected to who they are as a person, and some of them embrace it more easily than others.

MB

Do you feel equipped to deal with that, to deal with that, like emotional response?

P7

(Hesitates) Probably not in a professional sense, but as a as a human and a caring person,

MB

Yeah

P7

and as a parent, yeah? And as a husband with a wife who's got mental health issues, I've been through quite a lot,

MB

yeah,

P7

so probably I do feel relatively okay dealing with it, but, but I wouldn't be... you know, diagnosing or anything like that.

MB

No, do you feel that having kind of some sort of framework, or do you feel like there are things that you would like support with, beyond... teaching, is a very solitary profession that requires very few qualifications, actually, some contexts... zero qualifications. Do you feel like there would be some sort of training or something like that that would benefit? Or do you feel like your experience as a human being is enough to deal with those situations?

P7

I think... I think they're enough to deal with the situations within the classroom. My own feeling would be that if the situation was beyond what you would experience in a... in a... in a friendship with somebody. So if you, if you had a friend with... with issues, you would, in a very similar way, talk to them, support them, encourage them, but you wouldn't be diagnosing them or telling them you should do this or do that. If somebody in the class is really in distress, then it's not your place, I feel, to take things further, maybe to suggest that they themselves take things further. And I guess it's supposed it depends how... how in tune you are with you, with your own emotions. Because if you're, if you're a pretty tight, tightly bound person and not very open yourself, you're not going to be very well equipped to deal with somebody else who's got... got those issues in front of you, so you need to feel quite comfortable in your own skin. I think,

MB

yeah, do you feel confident in other vocal coaches and teachers... to manage that well? Does it make... does it make you feel nervous, or whatever, that there aren't those kind of qualifications. There aren't those industry standards potentially. Or do you have confidence that most singing teachers are pretty good at that?

P7

Well, I wouldn't say that most singing teachers are pretty good at it, in the same way that not every mechanic is good... good at fixing a car.

MB

Yeah,

P7

we've all got our own back story. So we're all going to be on a on a different wavelength. So so in that sense, you could say, if you're looking at music lessons or singing lessons as being part and parcel of also offering some sort of emotional support, there may be some... some some sort of standard or some sort of training could be very useful. But in the same respect, the person isn't coming to you necessarily for that. They're coming to you for the singing lesson. And that's, I hate to say the word a byproduct... but it's, but it's something that comes with somebody, but it isn't necessarily your... your thing to actually deal with.

MB

This is a slight sidestep. Yeah, I think we might kind of it might kind of circle back eventually. How do you feel about encouraging students towards a career as a vocalist or musician. Do you have concerns about doing that?

P7

Yeah, I do have concerns. Um... I, myself, am no longer actively, oh, I do sing, but I'm not actively singing in the way that I thought I would be because the... the industry was just so... so difficult, and there's so many unpredictable factors, so many stresses and strains, that it's not an easy profession. So you really got to really love it and be able to put up with everything else that comes with it. Or, I think for a lot of my colleagues that I studied with, it does chew you up and spit you out in a way. So yeah, it's a hard one, the actual process of singing, the joy of singing is a fantastic thing. And I think having that in your life, and an ability to... to let your... your emotions pour out through... through music, is a fantastic thing. But the pressure of doing it as a career, just from the unpredictability side of things, you you know, you go and you train to be a doctor or a mechanic, and you can be pretty much the worst mechanic or the worst doctor going, but you're still a doctor, you're still a mechanic, you still go and get a job, whereas you... you're a singer. And you said... Most singers themselves will say, Well, I only really seeing maybe a third of the time, because I have to go and do X, Y and Z to pay the bills. So you can't devote as much time as you want to to your instrument once you've left your training and you're actually out in the big, wide world. So then things slide, and then suddenly you think, I can't take that job on because uh it's not paying very much, and then I'm going to have to lose this. And if I lose that, I can't afford to pay for this. So actually, no, I'm not going to take that. And you never know that could have been the one where you're going to meet the person who turned around and says, Oh, actually, I've got 10 concerts for you. So...

MB

So if would, if you had a student who showed real potential vocally and in any other way that you feel they might need to, would you ever actively say to a student this is something you should consider? Would you or would you consider this as an option?

P7

I, if, if a singer is good enough, I would tell them they're good enough, and if they themselves had the power, the passion within them, that it was their thing, and they really wanted to drive towards it, I would encourage them, and I would support them in every way that I could. And I'm not somebody who would put my own issues and anxieties onto somebody else, but I would also explain to them, it's not a bed of roses. You know, there are sacrifices, but like anything, if you want something that's really high end... competitive, then, yeah, you have to sacrifice in order to make it work. Really... look at politicians. They really have to sacrifice family. They have to sacrifice their privacy. Everything's there to do that to for everyone to pick over. And being a singer is no different, in that sense, because everyone's picking over everything you do. The audience are listening to you, the audition panel's listening to you. All your colleagues are listening to you, waiting to just sort of step into your shoes the moment you fumble. So

MB

Do you think there's anything in terms of personality traits or character traits that would... suggest to you that a student is... would add to that talent, that kind of idea of you can make this, or this is something I believe that you could do, or... or emotion, sorry, personality traits or character traits that you think would block someone from... it's finding success in inverted commas, because

P7

it's an odd one there, because in my my own personal feeling is the people that often make the best singers are the people that are the most vulnerable and are those who are the most unsure of themselves, but they're not the people that can survive in the career. So people that are prepared to open themselves up and get inside the character and get inside the music, they're the ones I want to listen to, but they're the ones that really get trodden on. The ones that are quite, quite resilient, and, and really, just... I don't know, the Teflon coated almost. They just walk through life and, and they don't really take too much notice of what anyone says about them. They don't take themselves too seriously. They seem to... to coast through quite, quite calmly, because they they don't, I don't think they take on board all the things that are going on around them. They feel comfortable in their own skin. They feel quite calm with what's going on. And...

MB

yeah,

P7

...I had a singing teacher who said... he said the best singers are normally quite stupid. And I said, What do you mean? He said, What... Because they just, they don't think about all the all the bits and pieces that get glued together to make what's happening happen. They just go and do their thing.

MB

Yeah! So if you how, then do you, if you've got a great singer, how far is it your responsibility to work with them, to build the other bits around... that Teflon coatedness, so that then, when you put them into an environment, a professional environment, or that world, that they're ready for it.

P7

Yeah,

MB

Is that your responsibility? Is that something that is possible to do, or is that not poss-? Is that just... you can't change person? It's not our responsibility to do that.

P7

I think you can't. You can't change the person you can't... you can advise and you can point out, but you can't change the person's character. It's that, it that's their their journey. I think I'm as a singing teacher. You're the guide, and so you point them in the right direction, give them the things they need to go on the journey, but they're the ones who have to actually go on that journey. At some point. I had a teacher who I didn't last with very long. I won't mention names because it's been recorded, but his ethos was to be as brutal as possible to you in the lesson, because his feeling was the business was so cutthroat that if you couldn't cope with real criticism and really be under the caution the lesson, You were never going to survive in the industry. And um, maybe he was right in one sense, because I didn't survive in the industry, but I didn't survive in his lessons either. I was there for two terms, and I thought, I'm not learning anything here. I need to leave and change teacher, and that's what I did. Um, maybe the reality of the situation is that you need to be able to deal with that to get through the profession. Whether that's right or wrong, I don't know, but it's a tough one.

MB

What would your what would you say then? I mean, you've kind of answered the question, but looking at the role of the singing teacher. I think that's something that I'm interested in exploring, especially when... you know, in a lot of other teaching professions, there's a clear end goal of what you're trying to achieve.

P7

Yeah,

MB

so much of like lessons that you know, if you take the grade exams out of it, which I guess, that you know, they kind of are part of and part of the process. But what are you trying to achieve with your students? What's that- What are the aims? What are the what are you looking for to give you job satisfaction as well?

P7

Yeah, you know, well, for me, I think the main thing I'm looking for is, is for them to get joy from the singing. And I teach kids, I'm sure you're the same that I've got very limited vocal abilities, but they really love singing, and so I almost get more satisfaction out of somebody like that, that I'm teaching and and they just have a tiny

breakthrough, or they get a song, and you see the joy in their face. And for me, that's that's the main thing I'm after. But from a technical point of view, the thing I'm always looking forward to make sure that they're singing healthily so... so that I want to make sure that they understand how to use their voice in the best possible way. Get as much from their voice as possible, but without putting their voice in this... in a compromising place and... and to get great joy from what they're doing. I think that that's, that's my job. Really, I've got have all the... all the bits and pieces of information to help them to improve this and fix that and those things. But the underlying thing is, enjoy what you're doing and do it as safely as possible.

MB

For the love, yeah.

P7

Yeah, yeah, absolutely

MB

I get that, yeah. So in terms of the health thing, it's kind of interesting thinking about some of the other stuff we've been speaking about in terms of the effect of tension on the vo- on vocal health, and how that can impact it.

P

Yeah,

MB

When you see that scenario, what...What do you do? Or is that actually, let's before we go there. Do you see that scenario a lot?

P7

Yeah, yeah, you see a lot of a lot of kids who can't fully release their voice because they're frightened of getting things wrong, they're frightened of making mistakes. They're frightened of looking ridiculous and being in a position where somebody can point at them and say, "Well, that wasn't very good". So they're not, they're not prepared sometimes to risk... they're not prepared to... to try something new, simply because they're frightened of failure. And so a lot of what I do in the class is try and make this a safe place for them, and I do ridiculous things. So, you know, I'll sing along, and I'll start yodeling and cracking and making a fool of myself so that they feel that it's not "if I get it wrong, if I get that note wrong", everything's... everything's out the window. It's not that at all. And you can't then sing properly, as you know, unless you actually have the freedom to feel that you can just go for it and make a mistake. Yeah.

MB

Do you think there's stuff that could be done in a professional environment, and feel free to draw on your own experiences, like as a performer here as well, that could help kind of recreate that environment in... in a more professional context.

P7

in the sense of of them feeling relaxed about...

MB

creating in a profession, maybe, again, maybe I'm jumping ahead too far. Do you feel that that is something in professional context, that conductors or band leaders or whatever... do they Is that something that happens within the industry? Or do you feel that when you're in a more kind of professional environment, let's include conservatoires, as well in those environments. Is that? Is that what the aim is? Or is the aim different? Is the environment different?

P7

I think once, once you're out of the conservatoire and you're in in the real, real world, so to speak, they... they expect you to be fully formed and... and fully hardened and, and that's it. So you turn up on day one. You know you. You know your music. In my scenario as an opera singer, you turn up. You've got to be off score on day one you, er, you're getting pulled and pushed in different directions because the conductor wants one thing, the director wants. Director wants something else. You've got the all the issues of the your colleague on stage, some of them more easy to deal with than others, and it's all happening in a very quick, concentrated period of time, so there isn't much time devoted or... or there for, other other things, like, what can we talk about this? Or don't feel comfortable doing that?

Unknown Speaker 23:25

So and would you say that is the environment in a conservatoire as well? Or is that

P7

Yes and no. I think it depends on the on the individual. When I started at ----, we... we had a teacher who encouraged us to... to actually have some counselling. For no other reason than the awareness of how important is for you to feel comfortable in your own skin if you're going to really explore what you can do physically and vocally. So we had that side of things, but then we also had another... another teacher wasn't interested in that at all. You just get on and do it. And if you're not good enough, well, that's it, you know, find one singing teacher said to me, Do you know how to drive a car? I said, Yeah. He said, Well, perhaps you should think about being a taxi driver. So, you know, you get that side of things. I had a director who thought it was quite comfortable for me to be a be a table with a soprano sitting on me while she sang her Aria!

MB

Yeah, and which was the more effective way of getting you to sing your best?

P7

The ones that encourage and the ones that, again, they want you to... to give your best in a way that you feel comfortable doing it. Yeah.

MB

And do you feel that standard within the industry?

P7

No

(both laugh)

P7

is the short answer. Yeah, no, I think it's very rare that you end up again, in my situation, in the opera world, it's very rare where... that you end up in a situation where you feel comfortable working with the people that you're working with, able to approach them and and there's a collective camaraderie. You're all on the same page. You're all trying to work to the same end goal. And in fact, within the industry, the higher up the tree you went, the less likely you were to find that scenario. A lot of the small companies that you would start working with as you left college were far more open and accommodating, the further off you went, No, the more resilient you had to be, yeah.

MB

Yeah... so interesting, isn't it? So how do you do... you know, do you feel like, is there a way as teachers, we can look at bridging that gap. Is it our responsibility? Do we sacrifice the joy in advert, the joy to prepare people for that, or do we just lean in to the well being Joy side of it and let that other bit go?

MB

Yeah...

MB

You don't... I'm not... There's no right or wrong.

P7

No No, and it's almost an unsol-... unsolvable situation, because there are so many aspects involved in putting something together professionally, within music, whatever, whatever it is you're doing, so you have to try and hope that via some sort of osmosis, everyone who's full of goodwill and full of the joy of singing, gradually begin to more and more feed into the environment, um, and push that side of things and then push aside The other aspects, but there are a lot of big egos. There are a lot of, um, people with insecurities that they use as a as a sort of weapon, almost to browbeat other people. So it is really hard, really hard... and it's extremely competitive. So that's also a downside. The people that can... can deal with it. Get on there. Get on with it. Do it. No bother, no hassle, no issues. In you go. They're going to get lots of work because they don't need anything else. But ironically, in my business... maybe the same in yours. Sometimes there are people with... with huge affectations and issues that get to the top of the tree and then create merry hell, almost. Because they've got 101 demands, and everyone has to run around and... and deal with... with their individual issues and problems. So I wouldn't say it's a case of people with no issues get to the top. Is maybe people with... with the right issues.

MB

There's a level of demandingness that you have to have...?

P7

Yeah. And maybe it comes into that, that Teflon coated business, again, that you're not only unaware of what people are directing at you, but you're also unaware of what you're directing at other people. Yeah, very interesting.

MB

It's fascinating stuff. I've kind of covered all my questions. Is there anything that you wanted me to ask or feel that you could say to add to what we've already spoken about? There's no pressure to if you feel like you've said everything that you want to...

P7

I don't know really, I wasn't really no too sure what to expect anyway. So yeah, I don't know it's I think I would say that people come to singing for different reasons. And some people it's just for the joy of singing. Some people it's for a need, a need to express themselves and find an outlet and a way of doing it.

P7

Some people, it's their way of actually fighting against their own insecurities and their own issues. There's, there's like a little kernel of... of something and... and they're, they're almost fighting to come out of this restrictive life, and you do see sometimes that that metamorphosis, that that caterpillar turning into a butterfly. So that's why it's very rewarding, in a way.

MB

Great. Okay, thank you so much. You.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>

Appendix 11 – Information Sheet and Consent Form

Dear

I am writing to you with information regarding my current research project with the University of Wales, Trinity St David and The Voice Study Centre. The aim of this study is to explore voice teachers' attitudes to their students' emotional wellbeing.

Over the past few years, there has been a great deal of research into both the physical and mental health benefits of singing. However, in 2016, Help Musicians developed a report which showed how musicians' mental health is suffering; results showed that musicians were 3 times more likely to have experienced depression or anxiety attacks than the general population. This leaves teachers with something of a paradox. There is an enthusiasm to encourage our students to maintain their practice, but, given the reports of poor mental health within professional musicians, it would be natural for teachers to have some concerns. Your input into how you view, and possibly attempt to resolve, this paradox would be incredibly significant within the wider research surrounding this issue.

There are two elements to this research both involving 5-7 participants.

- **Interview:** 30–45 minutes, in-person or via Zoom. Here, I hope to gain an insight into your attitudes and strategies, how you view your responsibility for students' emotional wellbeing, and your thoughts on encouraging students toward the professional industry, and any concerns around that.
- **Focus Group (75–90 minutes):** This will be conducted via Zoom and will delve deeper into strategies for addressing the paradox between promoting students' professional aspirations and supporting their mental health. We will draw on your experiences as both a teacher and performer in this discussion.

You're welcome to participate in one or both. Anonymity will be maintained, and participants will be asked to keep everything discussed confidential. You are, of course, welcome to refuse participation or to withdraw at any stage of the process without penalty.

If you have any questions about this research, at any stage of the process, then do feel free to contact me via the details at the bottom of the page. If you are happy to participate, then I would be grateful if you could fill out the consent form attached with a digital signature. I will also provide you with the final report at the point of completion (Feb 2025).

As this study discusses sensitive topics related to professional musicians' emotional wellbeing, we acknowledge that it may trigger personal reflections on mental health. If you find that discussing these issues affects your own wellbeing, please feel free to contact the following support services:

- **Music Minds Matter** – 24/7 confidential support for musicians: [0808 802 8008]
 - **Music Support** – Confidential support: [0800 030 6789]
- (For more information, please follow this [link](#)).

Many thanks,
Meg

Consent to take part in research

Research title: *'An exploration into vocal teachers' attitudes towards their student's (pre-/professional) emotional wellbeing.'*

- I X..... 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 an interview and/or (*please select*) focus group.
- 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 final report of the research which may, in the future, be published in academic journals or presented at conferences.
- 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 a password protect laptop until 17th March 2025.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years (until November 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

Researcher: Meg Bird (megbirdmusic@hotmail.com)

Supervisor: David Cane (david@voicestudycentre.com)

Signature of research participant

X

Signature of participant Date

X

Signature of researcher

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

Signature of researcher Date
