

**A Participatory Action Research Project
Exploring Potential Strategies
Intended to Build Self-Efficacy and
Reduce Music Performance Anxiety in
Contemporary Commercial Music Singers**

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Research Question

- How do Self-Efficacy and Music Performance Anxiety relate to each other, and what strategies may work to raise the former and reduce the latter in adult CCM Singers?

Abbreviated Terms

- **CCM:** Contemporary Commercial Music
- **MPA:** Music Performance Anxiety
- **SE:** Self-Efficacy:
Perception of one's ability to carry out specific tasks

Justification and Context

- The **prevalence of problematic MPA** experienced by singers I work with as a CCM Singing Teacher.
- To **explore the relationship between MPA and Self-Efficacy (SE)** (Kantor-Martynuska and Kenny, 2018).
- The **research gap in MPA for singers** generally and adult CCM singers specifically (Henshaw and Collyer, 2022).

Objectives

- To **better understand** adult CCM singers' experience of MPA and their SE beliefs.
- To **test out interventions** to see what tangible and perceived impact they have on raising SE and/or lowering MPA.
- To **inform my practice** as a Singing Teacher working with CCM singers.

Design and Methodology

- Pragmatic paradigm
- **Mixed methods** convergent parallel design
- Participatory Action Research design
- Literature review

Design and Methodology continued

- Interventions:

1) Box Breathing

(Spahn, Walther and Nusseck, 2016)



2) Visualisation

(Henshaw and Collyer, 2022)



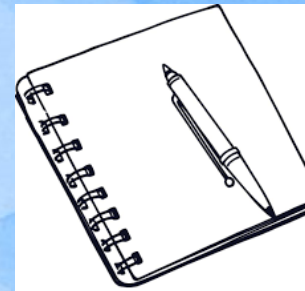
3) Vocal Improvisation

(Heasman-Cossins, Winter and Juncos, 2025)



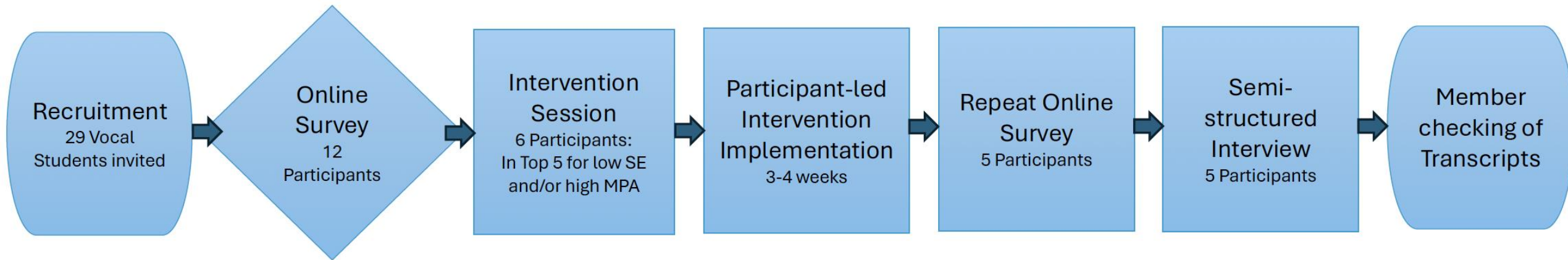
4) Expressive Writing

(Tang and Ryan, 2020)



Data Collection and Analysis

- **K-MPAI-R scale** (Kenny, 2009) for MPA
- **NGSE scale** (Chen, Gully and Eden, 2001) for SE



Data Collection and Analysis continued

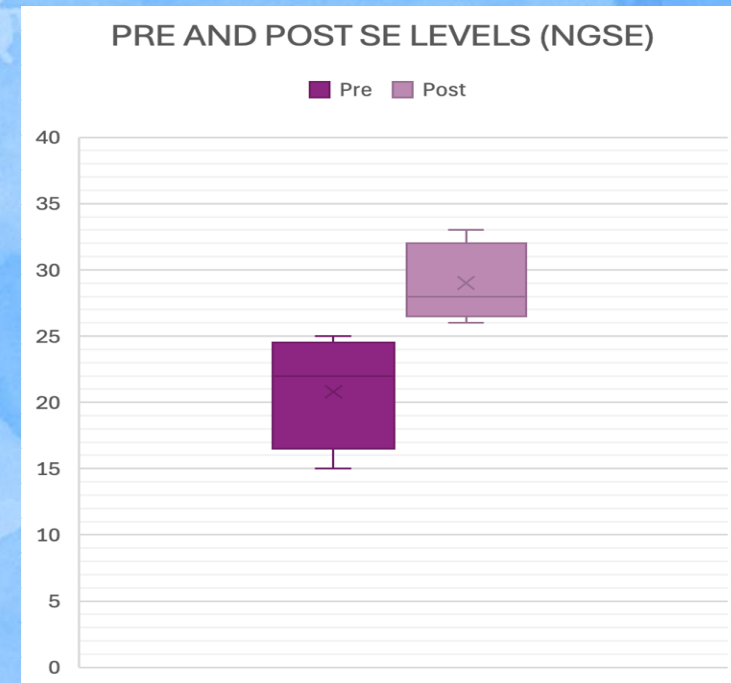
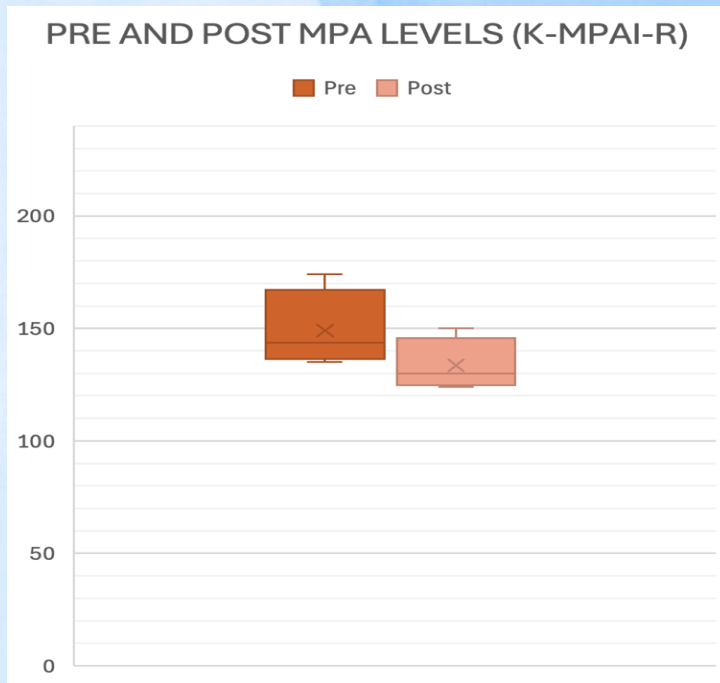
- Quantitative:
 - Jamovi software for statistical analysis of survey data
- Qualitative:
 - Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of interview data

Ethics

- Care around possible Emotional and Psychological distress.
- Kept within the scope of my role as Singing Teacher.
- One instance of adjustments within the interview to mitigate potential distress.

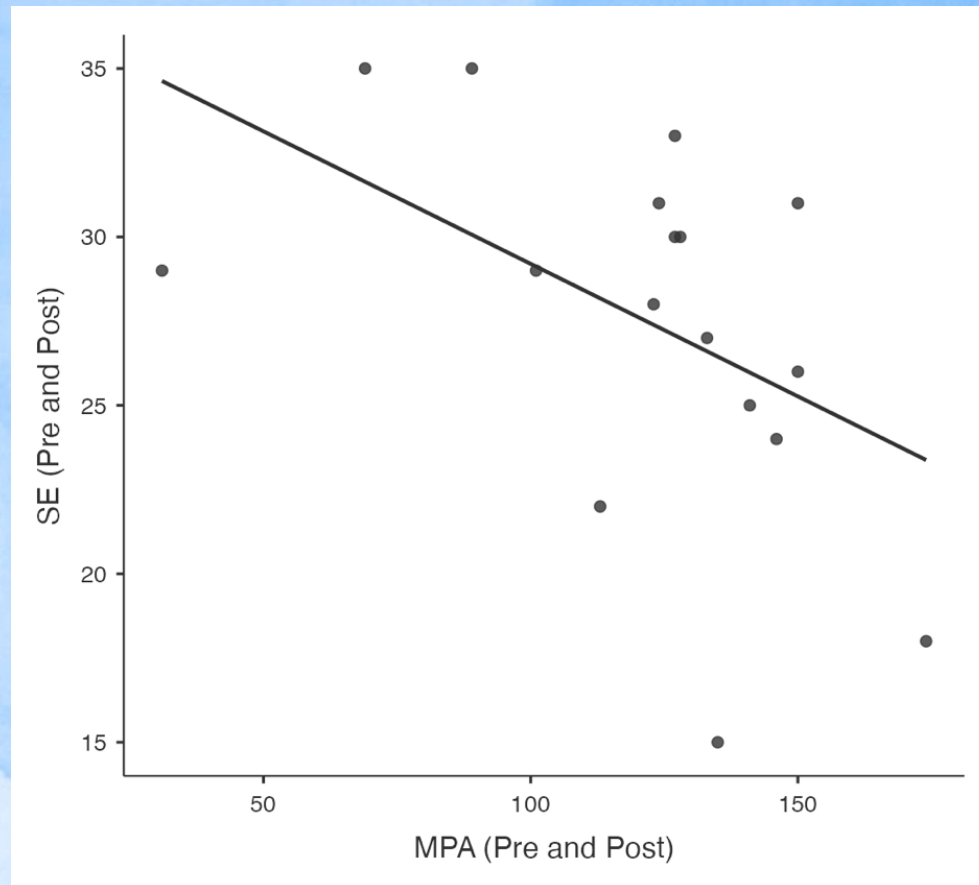
Findings

- **MPA: Statistically significant improvement** ($p = 0.019$, $n = 4$).
- MPA: pre- $\bar{x} = 149$, post- $\bar{x} = 134$.
- **SE: Statistically significant improvement** ($p = 0.333$, $n = 5$).
- SE: pre- $\bar{x} = 21$, post- $\bar{x} = 29$



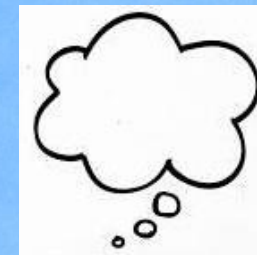
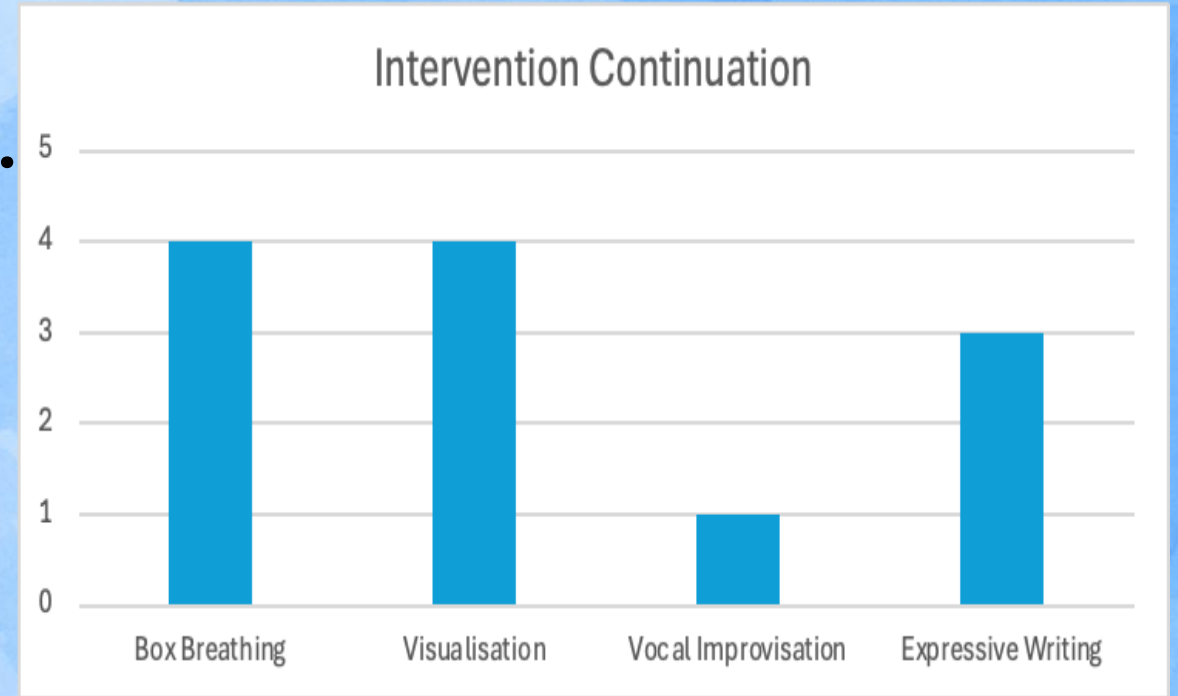
Findings continued

- Moderate negative correlation between SE and MPA.



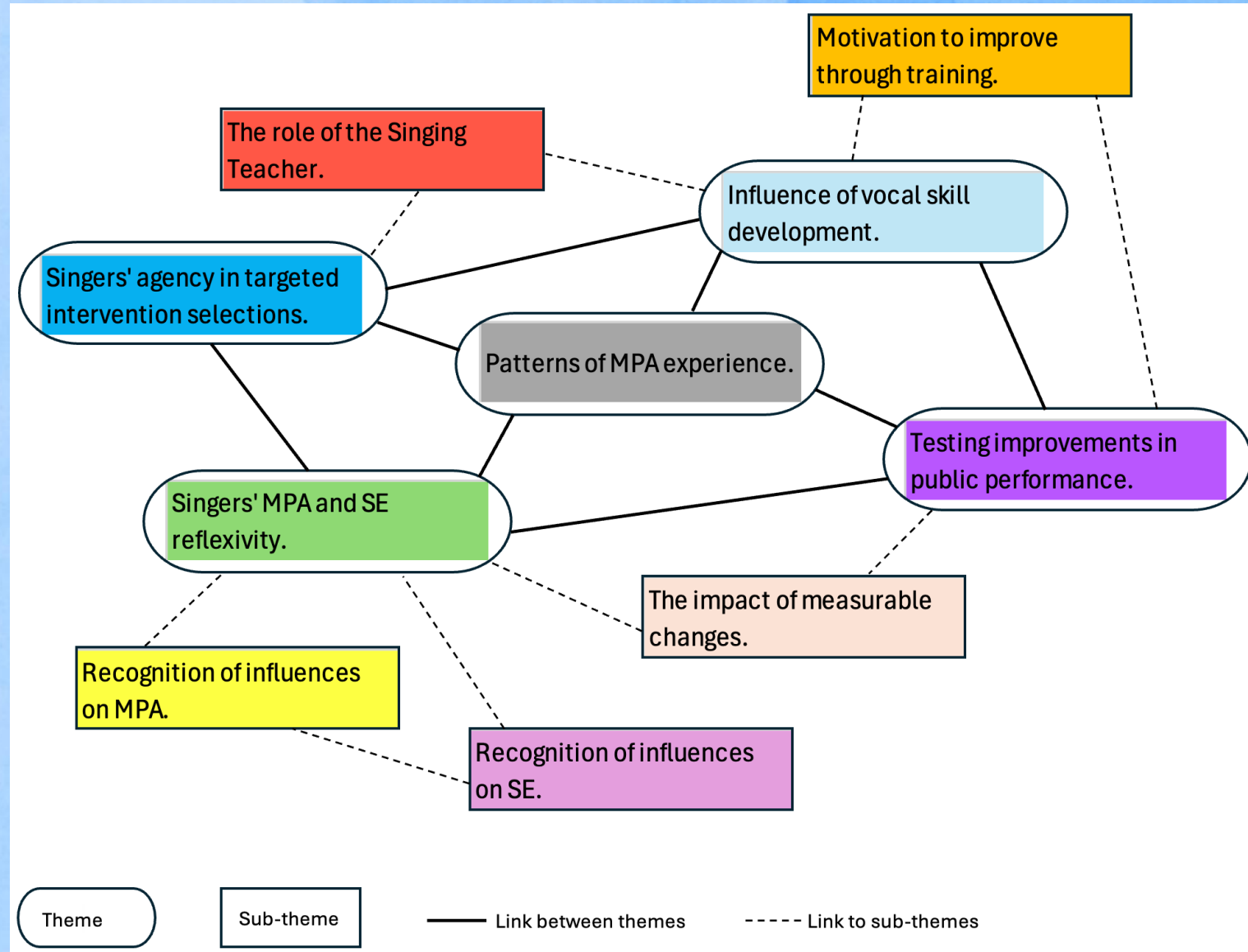
Findings continued

- Most popular to continue:
Box Breathing and Visualisation.
- Favourites:
**2x Visualisation and
1x Expressive Writing.**
- All selected at least 2.



Findings continued

- Reflexive Thematic Analysis:
5 themes and
5 sub-themes.



Discussion

Patterns of MPA experience.

- “Always” nature of MPA within the sample.
- Physical, cognitive and behavioural symptoms (Kenny, 2010).
- Patterns can be influenced.

Discussion continued

Patterns of MPA experience.

- MPA for singers:
“There is something oddly more vulnerable about the fact that I’m making the noise.” (Participant E, interview)

Discussion continued

Singers' agency in targeted intervention selections.

- Multiple interventions (Spahn, Walther and Nusseck, 2016).
- Individual reasoning in intervention selection and application.
- Space for the singer's agency to be used/developed.

Discussion continued

Singers' agency in targeted intervention selections.

- Applying interventions:
“Expressive writing, maybe I'll do that when... feeling particularly nervous about something, and I just... couldn't talk through it.”
(Participant F, interview)

Discussion continued

Influence of vocal skill development.

- Skill building and encouragement build SE, leading to reduced MPA (González, Blanco-Piñeiro and Díaz-Pereira, 2018).
- The role of the singing teacher.

Discussion continued

Influence of vocal skill development.

- Positive change in scores:
“not just through the interventions... [but] doing the lessons, being in a more encouraging environment... seeing tangible improvements.”
(Participant E, interview)

Discussion continued

Testing improvements in public performance.

- Reassurance of a singer's improved scores matching their improved MPA experience.
- Lower pressure performances (Macafee and Comeau, 2023).

Discussion continued

Testing improvements in
public performance.

- Testing change in MPA:
“I was doing breathing all the time before [performing]... and it calmed me down... I didn't have sweaty hands. I think that's a big one for me... I wasn't so nervous.”
(Participant K, interview)

Discussion continued

Singers' MPA and SE
reflexivity.

- Older singers may have more self-developed reflexivity and coping strategies.
- MPA and SE are influenced by emotional regulation/variability, self-talk, performance exposure, and social support/judgment.

Discussion continued

Singers' MPA and SE
reflexivity.

- Reflexivity example:
“Then I thought, I'm literally setting myself up to fail if I'm visualising myself doing it negatively, whereas if I visualise it going well, then that kind of removes that initial sort of self-doubt.”
(Participant F, interview)

Reflection

Research Process:

- Interviewing the participants was enjoyable and informative as an insider researcher.
- Analysing the interview data and the short timeframe were the most challenging parts.
- Confidence and understanding of theory was built by the practice of conducting primary research.

Reflection continued

Professional Practice:

- Deeper understanding of MPA and SE and the role of the Singing Teacher in addressing these.
- Implementation of interventions with other students.
- Fits with my student-centred approach.

Conclusion

- Significant improvements in MPA and SE were made using the interventions.
- A multimodal strategy can apply to singers (Spahn, Walther and Nusseck, 2016).
- Singing Teachers: engage a singer's agency and reflexivity in SE building and MPA reduction.
- Limitations: small sample size and short timeframe.
- Further research: larger samples of CCM singers, greater performance exposure and longer-term impacts.

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