Module 3: BMPF7326D

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Music Literacy and Aural Training effects on Australian Musical Theatre tertiary students: self-efficacy in the areas of repertoire learning and performing.

Research Question: *To what extent does undertaking musicianship training affect self-efficacy in learning and performing new repertoire in Australian tertiary musical theatre students aged 18–22, and how do they perceive its value in relation to their musical theatre education and future careers post-intervention? A pilot study.*

Word Count: 6,593

University of Wales, Trinity Saint David
November 2025

Module 3: Work-based Independent Research Project

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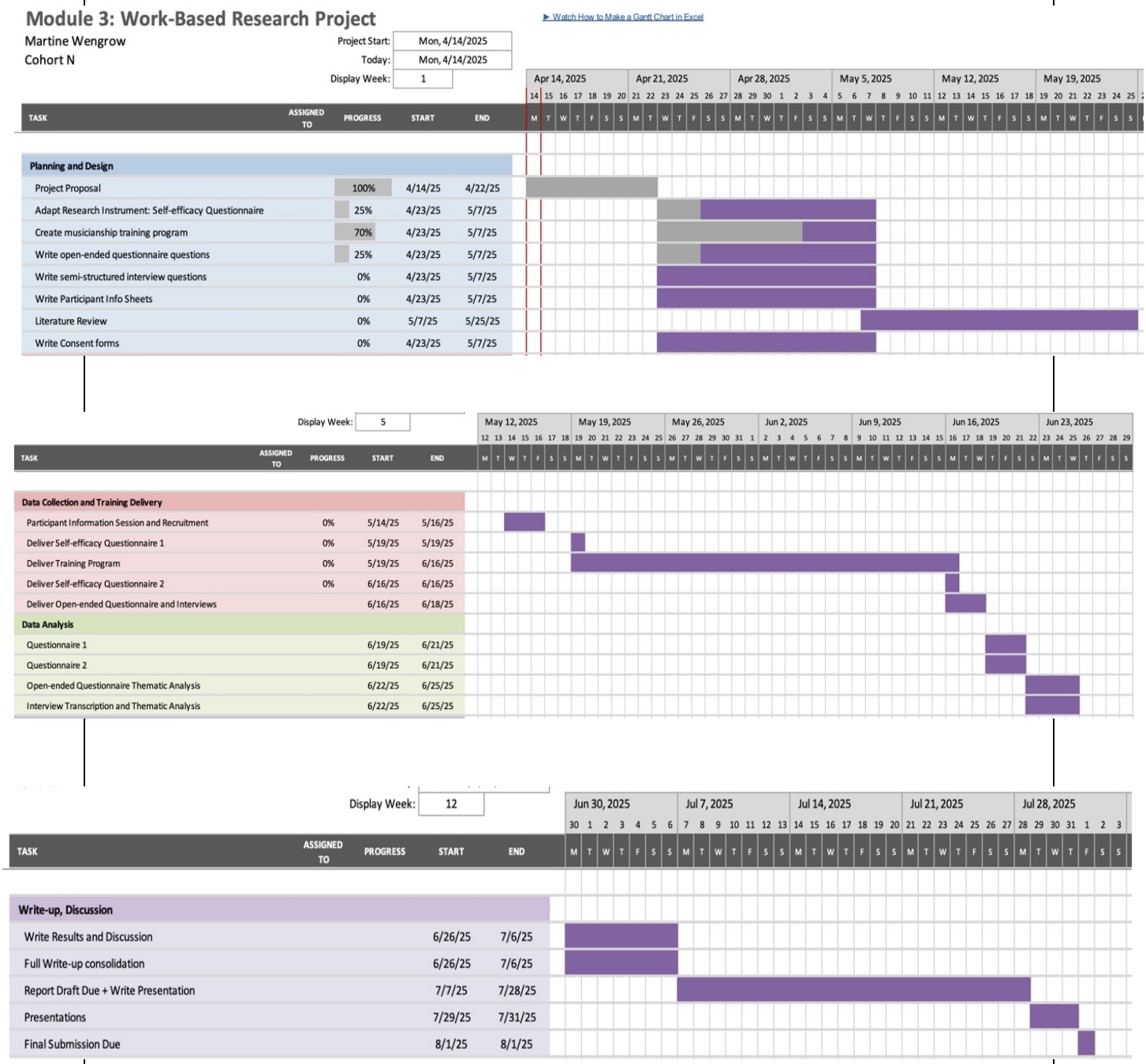
Project Proposal

Project Title: Music Literacy and Aural Training effects on Australian Musical Theatre tertiary students: self-efficacy in the areas of repertoire learning and performing.
Context: Self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to successfully execute specific tasks to produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997), is shown in the context of music to contribute significantly to quality and success of performance (McCormick & McPherson, 2003). Research into factors shaping undergraduate music students' self-efficacy in learning and performance is growing, but there is no literature focused specifically on music theatre (MT) students. As a lecturer in MT voice and a musical director, I am interested in developing the musicianship component of tertiary MT curricula, toward best preparing students for the industry. This pilot study aims to investigate whether musicianship training has any effect on self-efficacy in tertiary-level MT students at Patrick School of the Arts (PSA) in Melbourne, Australia.
Justification: Hendricks (2016) posits that higher self-efficacy leads musicians to actively manage and direct their musical development. MT students are rarely foremostly considered musicians (Rivera et al., 2024), and whilst initial curricula reviews show that limited musicianship training is included in most Australian MT tertiary courses (Griffith University, 2024; Elder Conservatorium, 2025; Victorian College of the Arts, 2025), investigation into whether undertaking this training affects student self-efficacy levels in key music skills has yet to be undertaken.
Intended Impact: I aim to add research-based insight to the discussion of the importance of musicianship training within MT tertiary curricula by investigating whether building this skill set may influence participant self-efficacy in learning and performing repertoire, and delving into student views about its value in their education. This research may form a basis for deeper study, potentially informing future refinement and standardising of tertiary MT musicianship curriculum.
Methodology, research design and methods: In alignment with a Pragmatic paradigm, I will use an explanatory-sequential mixed-methods methodology. Utilising a quasi-experimental design, I will firstly deliver an MT-specific adaptation of Ritchie and Williamon's (2010) Self-efficacy for Music Learning and Self-

efficacy for Musical Performing scaled questionnaires (see **Appendix B**). A short, four-session musicianship training intervention will be delivered, after which the self-efficacy questionnaires will be repeated to compare participant scores (McCormick & McPherson, 2003). Statistical analysis will inform items for further qualitative inquiry through an open-ended questionnaire. Text from these will undergo Positivist Thematic Analysis to elucidate broader themes, potentially illuminating if and how changes of self-efficacy have occurred.

Timeline:
Figure 1: Timeline Gannt Chart



Ethical Implications and Insider Research:

Being an insider-researcher (IR) conducting a study within my own professional context requires rigorous interrogation of associated ethical issues (Costly, Elliott & Gibbs, 2010). Although prior knowledge may enhance and benefit data interpretation (Fleming, 2018), I must remain reflexive throughout to avoid shaping results to fit preferred patterns (Fleming, 2018), despite debate around the extent to which true objectivity is possible (Brannick & Coughlan, 2007).

To minimise any perceived favouritism or power imbalances arising, participants will not be drawn from my own cohort. Teacher-student power dynamics and pre-existing student interrelationships may otherwise influence consent and validity of responses (Lewis & Quinnell, 2024). Clear communication will ensure participants understand the research is being conducted independently and that participation will not affect their diploma grades.

Transparency is also essential in facilitating informed consent regarding data storage and confidentiality, mitigated by providing detailed information on the participant information sheets before recruitment.

This project has passed UWTSD Ethics Board review.

Individual Learning Outcomes:

- Build understanding of statistical analysis methods relevant to analysing quantitative data.
- Build skills in coding and thematic analysis of qualitative data.
- Learn to use Excel to present graphic data.
- Improve time management of study processes

Music Literacy and Aural Training effects on Australian Musical Theatre tertiary students: self-efficacy in the areas of repertoire learning and performing.

Introduction

Musical theatre students and performers reside in a multidisciplinary world that demands not only exceptional proficiency across acting, singing and dance, but also the ability to interpret and analyse repertoire, learn vast amounts of material quickly, and perform consistently at the highest level upwards of eight times per week (Moore & Bergman, 2008; Thomas & Alexander, 2025).

My work as a tertiary MT voice lecturer, musicianship (music literacy and aural skills) educator, studio teacher, and professional musical director encompasses the branches of vocal proficiency, musical analysis, and performance of this artform. My experience of how well students and practitioners in both educational and professional settings manage the intense demands of MT training, rehearsal and performance, along with documented higher prevalence of mental health challenges across the performing arts sector (Shorter, O'Neill & McElherron, 2018) leads me to consider curriculum structure and values in MT tertiary settings. There is need for tertiary syllabi that not only focus on practical skills building but also emphasise the psychological aspects that contribute to efficient learning, higher resilience, and supports the likelihood of consistently successful performance (O'Bryan & Harrison, 2025). Unfortunately, psychological areas of training are seldom prioritised within Australian MT tertiary curricula (Curtis, 2019), nor are training the musicianship skills pertinent to competency in the music-related realm of the artform (Blustein, Gerbi & Rifkin, 2021).

In the past forty years, a pertinent psychological area of enquiry into student development has been the effect of self-belief on performance (Zimmerman, 2000). The term *self-efficacy* (SE) was originated by Bandura (1977) to describe the belief in one's ability to successfully execute specific tasks to produce a desired outcome, and is shown in the context of music to contribute significantly to learning process, perseverance in the face of adversity, and quality and success of performance (McCormick & McPherson, 2003; Ritchie & Williamon, 2010; 2012). It might follow that tertiary MT training, designed to prepare performers to meet the complex physical and metaphysical demands of a competitive and ever-evolving industry (Thomas & Alexander, 2025), might seek to actively foster students' SE and support best practice in both practical and psychological skills training. This project considers whether musicianship training could provide an avenue toward achieving both these ends.

This study was undertaken toward refining my own pedagogical approach, along with creating a basis for larger-scale future research and curricula evolution. This paper outlines a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design that measures student SE questionnaire scores before and after a limited musicianship training intervention and explores broader impacts and perceptions of musicianship through themes identified in an open-ended questionnaire.

Personal learning outcomes for this study include building understanding of:

- Statistical analysis methods relevant to analysing quantitative data
- Thematic analysis of qualitative data
- Utilising Excel to present graphic data
- Improving time management of study processes

Literature Review

Overview

SE beliefs play a key role in guiding decision-making and behaviour (Ritchie & Williamon, 2010), “the types of outcomes people anticipate depend largely on their judgements of how well they will be able to perform in given situations” (Bandura, 2002, p. 95).

In pedagogical contexts, SE is considered central to a student’s confidence, motivation, perseverance, goal setting, emotional regulation, and overall performance (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000). It could be considered that the multidisciplinary artform of MT, requiring refined competency across singing, acting and dance, brings a higher level of complexity both in skill acquisition and performance readiness. Thus, understanding how SE affects both learning behaviours and performance outcomes could inform pedagogical strategies that foster more empowered, capable and psychologically resilient performers (Pajares, 1997; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008).

This literature review will explore studies relevant to the intersection of SE and MT music learning and performing, with consideration of theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and pedagogical implications. Though no research exists explicitly exploring SE within tertiary MT contexts or the effects of musicianship education on SE, links could be drawn between studies using SE scales in tertiary music education. My search strategy included referencing seminal SE articles dating from 1977, and utilising a pearl-growing strategy to find music-related SE studies. Only peer-reviewed research from within twenty-five years was included, focussing on Western high school and tertiary-aged musicians who use similar musical skills to MT students in learning and performing repertoire

I. Theoretical Framework of SE in Performing Arts Education

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) and his revised book*, Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (1997), serve as the primary theoretical foundations for understanding and promoting SE in educational settings (Artino, 2012). In the context of performing arts education, high SE can help students stay motivated during extensive or rigorous practise, manage performance anxiety, and remain resilient after receiving critical feedback or a failed performance (Pajares, 1997; Arbinaga, 2023).

SE is described as task-specific and context dependent (Pajaras, 1996; Bandura, 2006), and one may hold different SE beliefs within the one skill domain (Ritchie & Williamon, 2010). For example, an MT performer may hold different SE beliefs about singing classically-based music and rock music.

In the context of MT education, SE for *learning* refers to a person's beliefs regarding their capacity for acquiring a new skill or knowledge required to perform a task, whilst SE for *performing* relates to one's beliefs around being able to apply a learnt set of skills to successfully achieve a task (Schunk, 1996; Ritchie & Williamon, 2010).

Bandura (1997, pp.79- 113) identifies four major sources that shape both the development and strength of SE beliefs. In order of importance:

- **Mastery Experience (Performance Accomplishments)**
  SE is based on direct evidence of capability. Personal success in executing a task strengthens SE.

- **Vicarious Experiences (Social Modelling)**
  Observing others (especially peers) succeed at a task can strengthen one's belief in their own ability to achieve similar outcomes.

- **Verbal Persuasion**
  Encouragement or constructive feedback (particularly from mentors and peers), can boost an individual's belief in their capabilities, motivation, and perseverance toward succeeding.

- **Physiological and Emotional States**
  Physical and emotional arousal affects SE beliefs. A positive mood may enhance SE, whilst fatigue or stress might reduce it, affecting performance.

To reliably measure SE, Bandura (1997) posited questionnaire assessments. He argued that questionnaire items should focus on how confident a person feels about performing a specific task within a particular domain, to accurately reflect the predictive power of SE for specific behaviours. Bandura later added that items must also be designed to reflect challenges of varying difficulty within the domain (Bandura, 2006). SE questionnaires typically ask respondents to rate confidence in a particular task on a scale of 0 -100 or Likert scale (Bandura, 1997, Ritchie & Williamon 2007).

II. SE Studies In Music: A Basis for Investigation Within MT

McCormick and McPherson (2003) originated applying Bandura's framework to music learning motivation within an Australian private music education assessment context. Using a single question as a measurement basis, they established a direct link between the degree of agreement with a statement and performance outcome in an examination.

Their subsequent 2006 study acknowledged the need for a more specific, task-targeted set of questions relating to the performance context to increase validity. A broadened five-item questionnaire was delivered to 446 candidates before undertaking an Australian Music Examination Board instrumental examinations. SE scores were found to be a strong predictor of achievement in these examinations. The researchers acknowledged the high demands placed on performers seeking to achieve at a high level and emphasised that developing strong SE beliefs is critical for students to persist with learning complex repertoire, cope with performance pressure, and be willing to engage fully in artistic expression (McCormick & McPherson, 2006). This notion is reinforced by Ritchie and Williamon (2007; 2010) and Hargreaves et al. (2002), who found that tertiary music students with strong SE around music learning and performing engage more readily in rehearsal and creative risk-taking, appropriately handle mistakes, handle criticism constructively, and perform with greater expressiveness and emotional control. These elements are particularly transferable to MT students, who encounter vast amounts of repertoire, and rehearse and perform regularly in front of peers and mentors.

These researchers studied SE levels either just prior or relating to, a single performance. Thus, there is a need for further research investigating SE levels before, during and after

such occasions to gain insight into the changeable nature of SE beliefs (McPherson & McCormick, 2006). This notion has formed the basis for my experimental approach to measuring SE beliefs before and after an intervention.

In other educational settings, high SE is shown to correlate with essential self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and reflective practice (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008). These traits were evident in McPherson, Miksza and Evans (2018) study which found that collegiate music students with high SE invested more time in deliberate practise and reported higher satisfaction with their learning process.

Toward developing higher SE levels, course structure is an important factor. A study by Welch et al. (2011) found that when instructors scaffolded difficult material and provided clear learning objectives, students' SE increased and led to more successful repertoire preparation. This is pertinent in MT education, in that musicianship often intimidates MT singers who may have no formal music training background when they begin tertiary studies (Blustein, Gerbi & Rifkin, 2021). Therefore, formal research into how musicianship is taught within MT diplomas may provide insight into developing SE in these key areas.

III. Refining the Measurement Tool

In later studies, Ritchie and Williamon (2010) acknowledged that to more robustly establish the relationship between SE and music learning and performing, a generalisable and validated empirical measurement tool was required. They developed two questionnaires: "Self-Efficacy for Musical Learning" (SEML) and "Self-Efficacy for Musical Performing" (SEMP) with the aim of forming a standardised basis for SE measurement within music fields. SEML and SEMP required the respondent to recall a specific performance context before answering twenty specific questions directly related to confidence about issues surrounding preparation and performance. Not only did Ritchie and Williamon (2010) prove the internal reliability of their scales, through their questionnaires they reinforced that confidence in live performance is both a product of preparation and a reflection of SE.

Although this study focussed only on the current views of students without intervention, their questionnaires provide a reliable and valid basis for which items may be adjusted and measured, tailored to the musical requirements of MT students within my quasi-experimental context. The performance elements listed in SEML and SEMP are similarly prominent concerns for MT students, thus I employed these as a basis for my longitudinal quantitative enquiry.

IV. Musicianship for MT: Textbooks and Tertiary Curricula

Musicianship education is an under-researched component of MT training (Blustein, Gerbi & Rifkin, 2021). These skills directly underpin a student's ability to interpret scores, communicate with musical directors, and find expressive performance, yet there exist only four MT-specific musicianship instructional texts (Bell & Chicurel, 2008; Franceschina, 2015; Gerle, 2018; Riley, 2020) and no literature on how musicianship is taught in Australian tertiary institutions.

Most leading Australian tertiary MT-institutions have now begun to formalise and expand the role of musicianship within their curricula. A review of current offerings from Griffith University (2024), Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (2024), Elder Conservatorium (2024a; 2024b; 2025), and the Victorian College of the Arts (2025) suggests a strong trend toward progressive music literacy and foundational skill development, contextual analysis and applied musicianship. However, these courses offer no more than 1.5 hours per week of music literacy, aural, and musical analysis skills, with the private MT diploma at my institution Patrick School of the Arts (PSA) offering no separate musicianship component (2025). Furthermore, there appears to be no regulation or standardisation between courses or educational resources, resulting in varying musicianship learning outcomes across institutions.

Given the limited contact hours and unregulated syllabi across Australian institutions, more empirically evaluated curriculum models are needed, particularly those assessing outcomes through SE levels. My research may form a basis for further investigation into time allocation and curriculum development in the subject.

Aims of this study

Given the integral role of SE in learning and performing success across similar performing arts fields (Ritchie & Williamon, 2007), MT educators should adopt strategies that actively foster SE across all areas of this performative artform's disciplines. Musicianship training is one such area, yet it often receives limited or no time in tertiary programs – perhaps due to already crowded curricula, a lack of research-based pedagogical frameworks and inclusive resources, or funding constraints.

This research examines one potential contributor to student SE in two areas central to MT practice: new repertoire learning and performance. It was hypothesised that participants

would demonstrate increased SEML and SEMP scores following limited musicianship training, and that post-intervention qualitative feedback would yield insight into the program's impact and the perceived value of musicianship skills in MT education and future careers.

Methodology

To examine SE patterns and individual perspectives within the artistic world of learning and performance, I drew upon cognitive psychology and educational research, which commonly use mixed-methods to elucidate both measurable outcomes and contextual insights (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Aware of my bias, being an experienced musicianship teacher and insider researcher (IR), I adopted a primarily quantitative design towards reducing interpretive influence (Greene, 2014). A deductive approach, replicable design, and a standardised survey tool supported objectivity and transparency (Mujis, 2010), whilst statistical analysis helped mitigate inclusion of personal axiology and promoted self-reflexivity during subsequent qualitative analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

To date, published mixed-methods studies combining the use of SE scales before and after intervention with qualitative feedback are sparse, and do not focus on tertiary music learning and performing tasks specifically (Clark & Williamon, 2011; MacAfee & Comeau, 2020). These studies do however provide a framework for investigation of ties between SE scores and intervention, triangulated with qualitative feedback through an open-ended questionnaire.

Participants

A non-probability sample of 9 undergraduate PSA MT diploma students aged between 18-22 years were recruited. Gender impact was not considered. Beyond convenience of student access, this sampling approach was chosen as involvement required a significant time commitment during a particularly busy university study period, thus self-selection likely indicate a considerable intrinsic motivation.

The PSA MT course offers no musicianship component, and it was felt that students in these cohorts presented the best baseline for measuring the effect of this intervention.

Over the course of the study, 3 participants withdrew resulting in a total of 6 candidates completing the intervention (n = 6, mean age = 19.5 years). Participants were enrolled

across 1st, 2nd and 3rd year diploma levels, though none were members of my own teaching cohort. This was an important consideration in alleviating influences due to my IR position.

Participants were recruited based on having little to no prior musicianship training to effectively mitigate the impact of prior knowledge on the intervention's effect on SE levels, together with levelling out any potential outward degrees of confidence within the student dynamic during the intervention.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

	Age	Gender	MT Year Level
MT1	22	M	1
MT2	18	M	1
MT3	18	F	1
MT4	19	F	2
MT5	20	F	2
MT6	20	F	3

Materials and Data Collection

An explanatory-sequential mixed-methods design was employed to facilitate a longitudinal investigation of SE level changes, and subsequent student perspectives about the value of musicianship skills. Data collection occurred over three weeks on campus, after university hours (see **Figure 2**).

Deliberate and context-specific consideration was given to ethical issues prior to and during the study (Cohen, 2017). Prospective candidates were informed of the voluntary, financially uncompensated nature of participating. They were notified that participation would have no bearing on their diploma grades. Whilst the study was considered as low emotional risk, candidates were provided Arts-specific helpline details as well as access to confidential conversation (Miteu, 2024). Confidentiality would be maintained through anonymisation, with data security practices adhering to the Commonwealth Privacy Act (1988).

Ethical approval was confirmed by the UWTSD Ethical Board (**Appendix I**). Participant Information and consent forms were completed before the first session (**Appendix A**).

Part 1

A quasi-experimental approach was employed whereby initial SEML and SEMP questionnaires were delivered in-person to establish baseline SE scores. The intervention

consisted of four, 45-minute musicianship fundamentals training sessions, after which the questionnaires were repeated in-person.

The intervention served as the independent variable (IV), with participant SE scores the dependent variable (DV). A moderator variable was the unusually high amount of course contact hours occurring at the time of the study, which may have affected participant fatigue and attention levels, and therefore information retention and interest levels.

All materials for the training were provided to facilitate equitable and easy access to the content. Training sessions consisted of two sessions in the first and second weeks, respectively. Material was curated from several sources. Alongside my own music literacy worksheets and pictorial resources that I had created during my many years of tertiary MT teaching were various exercises from Tomasz Spiewak's *Aural Training for Musicians and Music Students,* alongside various MT repertoire excerpts (used in accordance with the Commonwealth Copyright Act, 1968).

Training was designed to reinforce Bandura's (1997) four primary sources of SE. **Mastery Experience** was encouraged through clapping and singing rhythmic and melodic exercises and repertoire examples after learning the supporting theoretical concept. **Vicarious Experience** through instructor-modelling and watching fellow participants make mistakes, then self-improving. **Verbal Persuasion** and management of **Physiological and Emotional States** was practised through comparative metaphors linking learning to dance (a skill participants were more familiar with) to learning a new music skill, along with friendly language, humour, and affirmations in the face of challenges.

Two SE questionnaires were adapted from Ritchie & Williamon's (2010) music-centric SE questionnaires, SEML and SEMP (**Appendix B**). The first addressed attitudes toward repertoire learning and the second, performance. Utilising a Likert-scale rating range between 1 (not at all sure) to 7 (completely sure), 11 and 9 statements respectively were presented. Items were made task-specific by asking respondents to recollect a recent MT performance setting (such as a mock-audition class or gig), imagine they were required to again perform in a similar context within a few weeks, and respond to each statement in relation to this task. The summed points from SEML and SEMP provided scores ranging from 11 to 77 and 9 to 63 respectively, or a combined score between 20 and 140. In keeping with Ritchie & Williamon's original wording, six items on each questionnaire were reverse-coded (SEML items 2, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 11, and SEMP items 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8), whereby the

reverse numerical values were taken to maintain positive direction (Ritchie & Williamon, 2007). Higher scores indicated higher levels of SE across tasks.

To best maintain the internal reliability and robustness of these preexisting questionnaires, minimal wording changes were made to adapt the context toward tertiary MT-related repertoire learning and performance settings (**Appendix C**). Alterations included swapping the words “practise” and “play” for “rehearse” and “sing” and further specified the individual learning nature of repertoire acquisition in the diploma course by adding the words “on my own” to a statement.

Part 2

Statistical analysis of the initial questionnaires informed follow-up questions presented in an open-ended questionnaire.

Originally, an invite-only semi-structured interview was to form the qualitative research method; however, due to availability issues, an open-ended questionnaire was emailed to all participants in the third week of the study instead. Three candidates returned a written response or a self-generated transcription of a verbal response if they were not confident in writing.

Each item on the questionnaire was designed to elucidate further factors that might affect student confidence in learning and performing new repertoire, their views on the training they’d received, and their views more generally about the value of musicianship in their education and future careers.

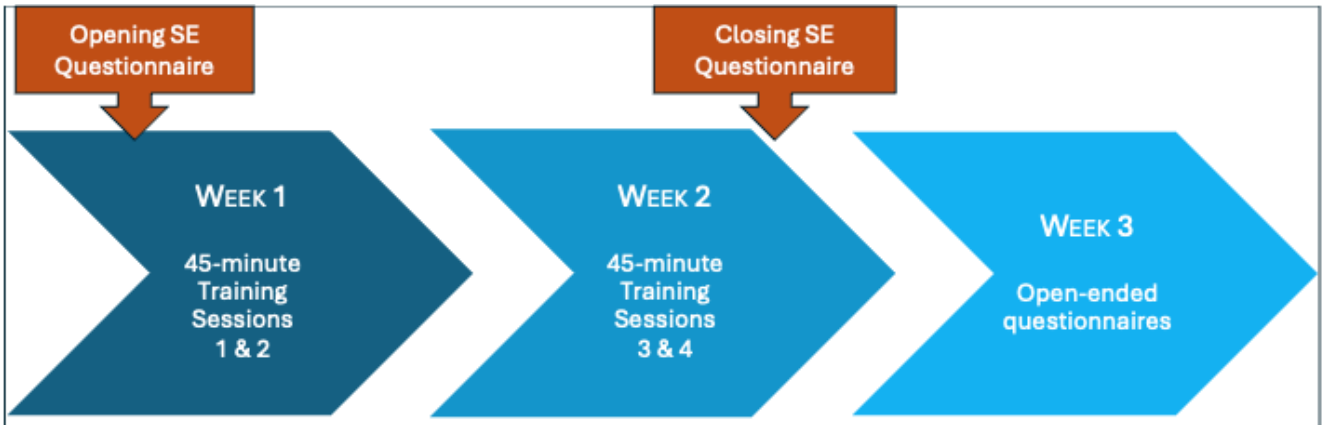


Figure 2: Process of data collection

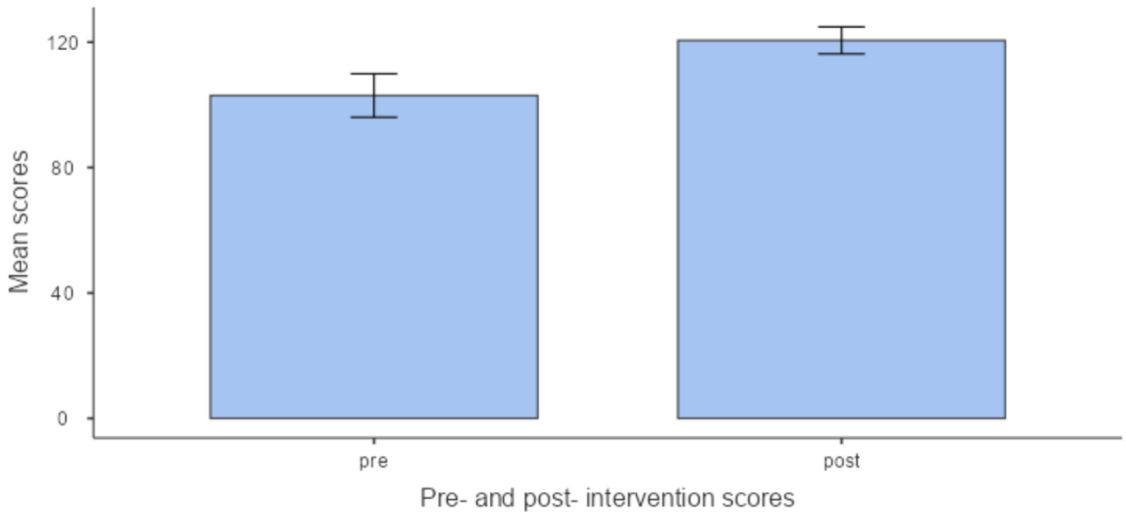
Data Analysis and Discussion

1. **SE Questionnaire Data**

Summed SE scores were calculated on the pre- and post-training questionnaires (PRTQ, POTQ). Significant differences were measured PRTQ (M = 103, SD = 17) and POTQ (M = 121, SD = 10.6). A Shapiro-Wilk test demonstrated overall scores were approximately normally distributed (W = 0.854, p = 0.168), thus a paired-sample t-test was undertaken, yielding a T-statistic ≈ 2.75 and P-value ≈ 0.021.

The mean difference between PRTQ and POTQ was 17.6%, with error bars not overlapping further evidencing a statistically significant difference between scores (see **Table 2**). Lastly, a Cohen's D test produced a very large effect size of 1.26, with an enhancement of statistical power occurring with only minimal addition of participants (n = 9).
All statistical analyses led me to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis; musicianship training may contribute to MT student SE in the areas of learning and performing new repertoire in a statistically significant manner. However, the small sample size, collected from a single tertiary institution, limits the generalisability of these findings, and future studies would benefit from a broader reach and larger sample to confirm this finding.

Table 2: PRTQ and POTQ Mean Scores



A Crohnbach's Alpha test was not conducted as the SE questionnaires were adapted only minimally from previously validated, reliability-tested questionnaires (Ritchie & Williamon, 2010).

All but one participant returned higher POTQ scores than PRTQ scores, with the remaining participant having missed answering one question (MT5: SEML Q5) on their POTQ which may have influenced their final score by up to 7 points. However, this addition would still not have returned a higher POTQ. See **Appendix E** for completed questionnaires.

Table 3: PRTQ and POTQ scores

	Year level	Pre-training Scores (PRTQ)			Post-training Scores (POTQ)		
		SEML (/77)	SEMP (/63)	Combined (/140)	SEML (/77)	SEMP (/63)	Combined (/140)
MT1	1st yr	50	44	**94**	69	53	**122**
MT2	1st yr	66	60	**126**	77	62	**139**
MT3	1st yr	44	36	**80**	63.5	46	**109.5**
MT4	2nd yr	55	48	**103**	66	56	**122**
MT5	2nd yr	61	58	**119**	58	53	**111**
MT6	3rd yr	46	50	**96**	63	57	**120**

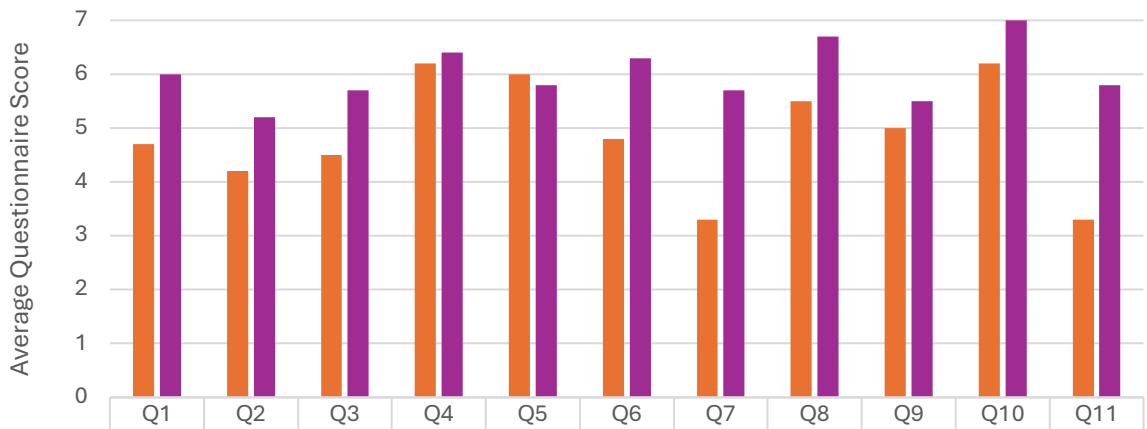
Median of two adjacent numbers chosen to provide balanced representation of participant's indicated range (Joshi et al., 2015)

Missed answering Q5

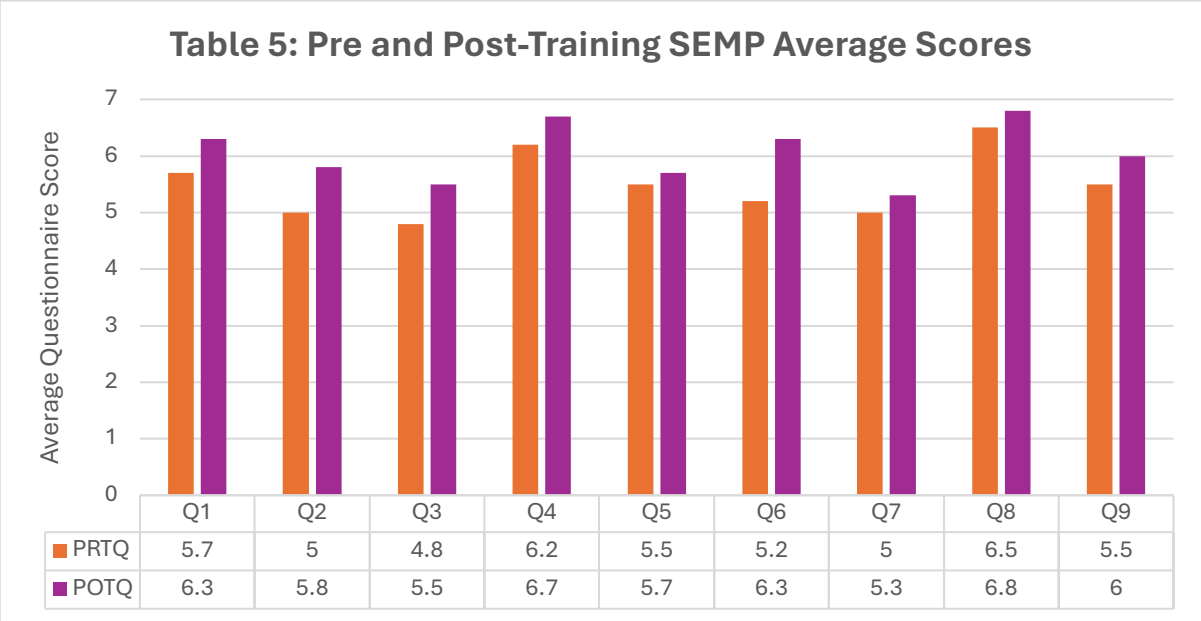
Toward uncovering deeper areas for the qualitative portion of the study, I took a more detailed perspective to individual question data.

Average scores for every question on SEML and SEMP increased between PRTQ and POTQ, apart from one item which showed a slight average decrease (see **Tables 4 and 5**). This was likely due to Q5 being missed by MT5, which had they answered similarly to their PRTQ, would have seen a Q5 average increase to 7.

Table 4: Pre and Post-Training SEML Average Scores



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11
PRTQ	4.7	4.2	4.5	6.2	6	4.8	3.3	5.5	5	6.2	3.3
POTQ	6	5.2	5.7	6.4	5.8	6.3	5.7	6.7	5.5	7	5.8



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
PRTQ	5.7	5	4.8	6.2	5.5	5.2	5	6.5	5.5
POTQ	6.3	5.8	5.5	6.7	5.7	6.3	5.3	6.8	6

Larger score changes occurred overall on the SEML, especially for Q7 ("When I decide to do this performance, I go right to work on the music.") and Q11 ("I am not capable of dealing with most problems that may come up when working on this music on my own."), with average increases of 2.4 and 2.5 points respectively.

The Q7 increase may indicate that a lack of knowledge surrounding the reading and interpreting of sheet music plays a role in procrastination, avoidance, or fear of starting on a new piece (Zimmerman, 2000). Here, even limited scaffolded training focussed through Mastery Experience and Verbal Persuasion (encouragement) may increase confidence in being able to understand and execute some part of music-reading, in turn affecting motivation to more readily begin repertoire learning (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000).

Question 11 speaks to one's capability to alleviate barriers in music learning readily and independently, challenges of which MT students find daunting, often seeking assistance of a voice teacher or coach to demystify (Flynn, 2025). This score increase suggests that even limited musicianship knowledge may increase SE for repertoire learning, which Bandura (1997) argues translates to lower anxiety, and higher motivation and persistence in engaging independently with the activity.

2. Open-ended Questionnaire Data

With an overarching trend toward higher SE scores post-training, five questions were developed to gather deeper insight into three main areas: the effects of the training undertaken, post-training views about how musicianship training and other factors affect confidence in learning and performing new repertoire, and perspectives on the role of musicianship training in MT education and careers.

These questions were ordered to mitigate the influence of earlier responses on subsequent answers (see **Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Open-ended Questions

1. **What are some of the factors that affect your confidence when faced with learning new repertoire?**
2. **How do you feel the information presented in the training sessions has affected your understanding of how to read and interpret music?**
3. **What kind of value do you personally think musicianship training (music theory and aural training) brings to a Musical Theatre (MT) performer?**
4. **In what ways do you think that musicianship training should or should not be included in tertiary MT education?**
5. **In what ways do you feel your tertiary teachers could better support you to better understand your music?**

Three participants (MT4, MT5, MT6) provided responses (see **Appendix F)**.

Themes were identified using a hybrid approach incorporating both inductive and deductive thematic analysis, which was useful in providing rigour to the qualitative section analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

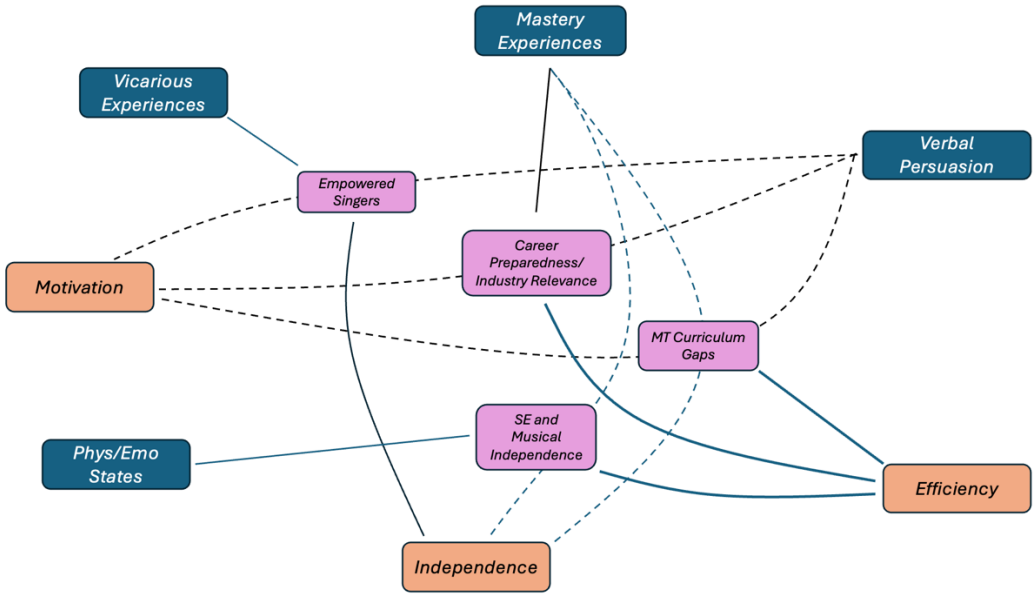
Firstly, fifteen codes were interpreted through the deductive lenses of Bandura's Four Primary Sources of SE (1997), along with three foundational constructs of SRL: motivation, independence and efficiency (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008). (See **Appendix G** for full code and thematic breakdown).

This analysis yielded the generation of four key inductive themes relating to students' perceptions of the value of musicianship training:

1. Empowered Singers
2. SE and Musical Independence
3. MT Curriculum Gaps
4. Career Preparedness/Industry Relevance

Figure 3 presents an integrated visual map illustrating how the theoretical elements of SE and SRL underpin and interact with the four emergent themes.

Figure 4: Thematic Map
(Dotted through-lines indicates relationship between interpretive lenses and themes)



Quantitative findings indicated statistically significant increases in SE scores following the intervention. The results below provide interpretive depth, illustrating how and why such increases may have occurred, and how they relate to broader dimensions of SE building.

1. Empowered Singers: Reframing the MT Performer's Identity

Prior to the interventions, participants reported internalised beliefs that singers were not generally expected to read or interpret notation – indicative of a potential socialised division within tertiary training between 'singers' and 'musicians' (Rivera et al., 2024).

"[…] it didn't even occur to me to, like, do a note bash myself with the melody because I thought 'oh, singers aren't supposed to do that.' […] after three classes and watching other people it's like, oh singers can learn how to read music." (MT5).

Following the intervention, respondents described a shift in self-perception from being 'just singers' to more empowered and informed musicians with technical agency.

"I am much more confident in reading and interpreting music […] While it's not something that many of us often think is valuable, after progressing my understanding, it has shown how important it is." (MT4).

This reorientation can be interpreted through Bandura's (1997) concepts of Mastery Experience and Verbal Persuasion. Throughout the practical elements of training the instructor's explicit encouragement, along with collaborative peer feedback, provided repeated opportunities for verbal encouragement. This may have translated into greater confidence and higher SE. In addition, observing and supporting peers' successful engagement with the same tasks created positive Vicarious Experiences, further reinforcing participants' beliefs that musicianship skills were attainable. Thus, any musicianship training in MT contexts would likely benefit from further ensemble tasks and peer-modelling to normalise and support skill acquisition.

Within Zimmerman and Schunk's (2008) SRL lens, these identity shifts correspond to increased independence and motivation. As participants began to perceive musicianship skills as both relevant and achievable, intrinsic motivation potentially replaced their initial apprehension.

"(The training) *made it more clear and cemented in my brain how I can, like, read the note values… it allows people to feel more confident with their approach to reading sheet music, makes them not feel helpless [...]"* (MT5)

This sense of empowerment aligns with what Pintrich (2000) and Zimmerman and Schunk (2008) describe as a transition from external regulation to self-regulation, in other words moving from "I have to learn this" to "I want to learn this because it helps me perform better".

Overall, this theme proposes that musicianship training does more than improve technical skill, it may contribute to reshaping how MT students conceptualise their professional and artistic identities. It therefore encompasses the psychological shift that may occur when MT students internalise musicianship skills as central to, rather than separate from, their craft.

2. SE and Musical Independence

All three respondents described feeling more confident and autonomous in their approach to musical material following the intervention, particularly in the absence of aural learning aids.

"I have not been previously confident enough in my abilities to be able to learn the song completely with sheet music as my only resource […] Getting even this baseline understanding has allowed me to have a greater understanding of music, and I will be able to continue this learning on my own." (MT4)

Respondents attributed this confidence to their concrete skill development. Not only was this skill building considered essential for participants' future practice, but it exemplifies the most influential of Bandura's (1997) SE sources, Mastery Experiences. Successful completion of scaffolded musicianship tasks such as rhythmic recognition or solfege exercises may have reinforced participants' beliefs in their capacity to succeed in more complex musical tasks. This aligns with McPherson and McCormick's (2006) evidence that task-specific SE is an important driver of performance achievement. Higher task-specific SE post-intervention may therefore have contributed to the 17.6% increase in POTQ scores.

Moreover, the training also appeared to reduce anxiety in two out of three respondents. This addressed Bandura's fourth source, Physiological/Emotional Arousal, by replacing stress or self-doubt with familiarity and control.
Whereas MT4 and MT6 expressed "overwhelm" or feeling "helpless" without having music literacy, possessing these skills would bring certainty and qualification.

Participants' growing SE supported their independence and fostered SRL behaviours (Zimmerman, 2000). This not only encouraged their motivation to engage more confidently in self-directed learning, but improved efficiency and time taken to understand the written and aural material central to their craft.

The link between SE and independence was further evident in participants' increased willingness to volunteer to demonstrate and take risks and tolerate errors during training sessions, both essential traits of adaptive learning (Bandura, 1986; Zimmerman, 2002).

The development of SE through Mastery Experiences appears to prompt self-regulatory processes, in turn helping transform the way students approach musical preparation.

3. MT Curriculum Gaps

A recurring subtheme was participants' views surrounding deficiencies in how musicianship skills are taught (or not taught) within their tertiary MT program, indicating the value they attribute to this area post-training. Respondents consistently expressed frustration that musicianship training was not prioritised in comparison to acting, dance, or performance technique.

MT5 expressed, *"*(Teachers) *don't talk about how to understand music"* remarking they could better support them by *"explaining terms that come up in sheet music."*

There was also an observation that these skills are often assumed, or *"expected to be learnt in your own time […] but students often lack the resources or need a teacher's guidance to understand..."* (MT4).
This theme reflects a lack of structured Mastery Experiences within the existing curriculum. Ritchie and Williamon (2010) noted that musicians' SE fluctuated across training and was strongly influenced by structured learning environments. Without consistent opportunities for guided learning, MT students do not necessarily have the chance to develop the repeated, incremental successes that underpin the building of SE in this area (Bandura, 1997). Further, the absence of explicit verbal reinforcement or modelling (Verbal Persuasion and Vicarious Experiences) may mean that students have fewer external sources supporting the view that musicianship competence is achievable and valuable.

From the perspective of Zimmerman and Schunk (2008), this lack of scaffolding hinders both motivation and efficiency. Pintrich (2000) notes, motivation is closely tied to perceived future application, with learners investing more effort when they see a direct connection between skill development and future success. Participant comments suggest the current curriculum neither illustrates nor supports this connection.

All three respondents proposed solutions that align with best practices in SRL environments including dedicated classes and teachers providing formative feedback on progress. Whilst these responses may have been inspired by the style of this intervention, these suggestions highlight participants' views post-intervention about the high value of these skills, and increased motivation to continue learning.

This theme underscores that the development of SE and SRL behaviours requires intentional and ongoing curriculum support. Short-term interventions like the one delivered in

this study may spark confidence, however institutional reinforcement would be necessary for any long-term impact.

4. **Career Preparedness/ Industry Relevance**

Beyond purely personal or academic development, respondents viewed musicianship as a tangible and essential professional advantage. They associated musicianship skills with improved rehearsal efficiency, ensemble cohesion and performance, and employability.

"It's a lot easier to pick where you are in the sheet music when you can effectively read it... Being more sensitive to all the elements that make up a piece of music and where you fit within in is going to be most beneficial […]" (MT6)

Post intervention, participants reported feeling more capable of contributing meaningfully during rehearsals, aligning with Bandura's (2002) notion of SE as a social construct: confidence gleaned not only from individual mastery but also from perceived value within a collective context. This was reflected in their motivation to continue musicianship learning and application, potentially even functioning as a metacognitive tool for future navigation of collaborative settings.

Participants' repeated success with the presented tasks (Mastery Experiences), affirmed by both facilitator and peers (Verbal Persuasion), may have not only reinforced a sense of professional readiness, but also fostered the belief that technical literacy can serve both creative expression and employability.

"*People are able to learn music faster […] things are accomplished faster [...] it's a cool thing to bring to the table for others and for yourself."* (MT5)

This theme therefore reveals a bridge between personal SE and broader industry expectations, positioning musicianship as both beneficial psychologically and toward professional competency.

Limitations

The small respondent group yielded limited qualitative data, with all participants exhibiting a strong bias toward the positive aspects of musicianship training. Combined with the higher PRTQ and POTQ scores, this aligned with my own bias toward the high value of MT musicianship instruction. However, despite completing the questionnaires independently, participants may have hesitated to express negative views due to my previous relationship

with them. Future studies may mitigate these influences by ensuring no prior researcher-participant relationship, recruiting larger cohorts across multiple institutions, and integrating qualitative data collection throughout the process to better track shifts in perspective. Further, external stressors, including unusually high university contact hours during this study, may have affected open-ended questionnaire respondent numbers and quality of responses. Increasing fatigue from mounting assessment pressures was evident throughout the intervention and likely influenced willingness to complete the qualitative survey. Future studies might consider university timetables and avoid high-pressure periods to maximise participation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to investigate whether limited musicianship training impacted current tertiary MT students' SE when learning and performing new repertoire, and student views about its value within their education and future careers. With SE shown to be a powerful predictor of performance and achievement (McPherson and McCormick, 2006), this project sought to elucidate whether focussed musicianship training could provide an avenue to promoting SE development in this under-prioritised area.

Both sets of data indicated that musicianship training may act both as a cognitive and affective intervention and was seen to build not only technical literacy (mastery) and SE, but also reduce anxiety and foster autonomy (SRL).

From a pedagogical perspective, results suggest that even brief musicianship training can significantly influence student SE and SRL behaviours. These findings provide a basis for further research around the importance of prioritising musicianship training within tertiary MT programs, not only for academic development but also toward performer-identity evolution and long-term career readiness.

Recommendation outcomes include:

- Curricula include dedicated class time to musicianship training.
- Critical need for repertoire teachers to have competency in musicianship themselves.
- Teachers be trained in giving targeted and detailed feedback.
- Incorporation of progressive, scaffolded mastery tasks alongside instructor or peer-modelled tasks.
- Inclusion of graduated tasks that encourage movement from directed learning to independent practice

- Theory should consistently be linked to real-world applications

This mixed-methods project has been rewarding, though likely too ambitious for a first research attempt. I have achieved my personal learning outcomes by maintaining a self-devised writing schedule, improving my Excel skills to analyse data, and learning to input and interpret statistics with Jamovi. As someone predisposed to quantitative reasoning, I found the thematic analysis component the most difficult and time-consuming element of the study.

This project required learning a wide range of research skills, involved multiple drafts, consulting of literature, and revising my work. In this respect, my reflection aligned primarily with Schön's (1992) "reflection-on-action" model, with Gibbs' (1988, p.30) statement, "after this experience I will be able to…" helping sustain motivation through challenges. The process felt isolating at times, highlighting that I would benefit from collaborating more with peers (Solomon, 1987). Overall, this pilot study has deepened my interest in this topic, and I hope to extend this research into my practice and future projects.

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