Final M6 Project Draft – BMPF7329D

Worldview and Spirituality Affecting Career Motivation and Artistic Expression of 20th Century North American Classical Singers

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Part One: Project Proposal

1. Context: Worldview and Spirituality Affecting Artistic Identity and Career Path

The research explores the influence of worldview and spirituality on career drive and artistic expression of professional classical singers in 20th-century North America. The investigation focuses on how these aspects intersect with external factors and the social context to shape motivation and creative output. Since important life decisions are made based on individual understanding or worldview (Steiner, 1983), it is hypothesized that worldview influences career motivation and spirituality nurtures artistic expression. Career and employment choices often reflect intellectual and religious frameworks (Ayob & Mohd Nor, 2022), and artistic output tends to mirror the artist's spiritual values (Paintner, 2007; Binder, 2016). The research questions were:

1. What impact do worldview and spirituality have on motivating a singer's career?
2. How do worldview and spirituality inform a singer's artistic output?
3. How do worldview and spirituality constrain/focus a singer's career motivations and creative output relative to broader cultural, political, or socio-economic factors?

Five qualitative semi-structured interviews will be analysed and compared with five biographical case studies. These will be contextualized by content analysis of 134 classical singer biographies spanning the 20th century, highlighting significant similarities or differences pertaining to the research questions. The interview questionnaire will be tested beforehand with a pilot study.

2. Justification

This study of 20th-century North American classical singers aims to identify and interpret insights from their professional and personal beliefs, proximally relevant to the 21st century. Understanding values and beliefs shaping the emotional and spiritual dimensions of singing experiences can inspire one's own artistic endeavours (Bozeman, 2019), as singing has been described expressively as the mirror of one's soul (Sundberg, 1998). By discerning the motivational, intellectual, artistic, and spiritual qualities of exemplary singers, singers in training can find inspiration for their own artistic journey and gain clarity for potential future singing careers.

3. Intended Impact

This study examines how worldview and spirituality influenced 20th-century North American classical singers' careers and artistry. Analyzing biographical surveys, interviews, and case studies, it identifies trends and historical insights to inform teaching and performance. By emphasizing the role of worldview in career aspirations through academic dissemination, it deepens understanding of singers'

professional paths and encourages integrating one's voice through emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual resources.

4. Outlined Intention

The research focuses on how singers' motivations and artistic output are influenced by worldview and spirituality, exploring the process of expressive singing and what is subjectively felt at physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels. The study involves a mixed methods framework (Denzin, 2010):

1) Collecting 134 biographies of North American classical singing professionals in the 20th century to identify and quantify trends within relevant categories (Day, 2016). This data will be quantified and aggregated to contextualise qualitative interviews and cases studies.
2) Selecting case studies of singers which mention how worldview or spirituality influenced their career and art to explain these factors in similar instances (Ndame, 2023).
3) Designing an interview questionnaire leveraging insights from the MUSE questionnaire that combine cognition with emotion (Chin and Rickard, 2014), and findings from neuroscience (Beauregard and O'Leary, 2007; Gaw, 2019). Collaborate with a musical colleague to clarify terminology.
4) Conducting a pilot study interviewing three singers to test the efficacy of the questionnaire, focusing on its answerability and responses offered by participants that can steer the horizons of the investigation (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).
5) Contacting, obtaining consent, and video recording interviews with 3-5 singers professionally active in the late twentieth century to uncover and construct participant understandings of experiences relating to the study objectives (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Kutsyuruba and Mendes, 2023).
6) Transcribing the interviews and providing opportunity for member checking (Guba, 1981).
7) Coding and analysis of collected data with NVivo14, guided by Saldaña' s (2016) coding manual to categorize themes and insights. Compare the interview data with case studies, and biographical survey.
8) Reporting and submitting findings.

Gantt Chart for M6 Final Project

TASK	Jun 2024	Jul 2024	Aug 2024	Sep 2024	Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025
Finish Ethics and Research Proposal											
Contact and Interview Participants											
Collate Historical Biographies											
Code Member-checked Transcripts											
Write Literature Review											
Write Methods											
Interpret Themes and Write Findings											
Draft Deadlines										Mar 17 Mar 31	
Presentation											Apr 7

A mixed methods study will gather data from deceased singers and historical records, as well as conduct interviews with living icons, exploring the impact of worldview and spirituality on singing careers. Singers' biographies will be contextualised and categorised, identifying knowledge gaps later addressed in case studies and participant interviews. Qualitative data from these interviews will be coded and analysed using NVivo, guided by Saldaña's (2016) extensive coding manual. Focusing on the latter half of the 20th century, where dynamic, "living" data can be collected, will better impact singing practice today in terms of integrating worldview and spirituality.

5. Ethics and Insider Research

My investigation indirectly examines my own practice, distancing my teaching and performing from my dual role as researcher and practitioner (Hanson, 2013). Passionate about the intersection of spirituality, worldview, and singing, I engage both as a performer and teacher. Exploring how professional classical singers navigate this interface fosters my professional and pedagogical growth (Costley & Gibbs, 2006). The inherent subjectivity and potential bias of insider research (Mercer, 2007) are mitigated through triangulation of insights from case studies and biographies of 20th-century singers, providing historical distance that ensures my insider position does not detract from addressing relevant issues and findings (Greene, 2014). Reflexivity (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) and member checking (Guba, 1981) help address over-familiarity with mentors and colleagues and ensure research validity (Curtis, Murphy & Shields, 2013).

Ethical considerations in hermeneutical research with interview data must ensure informed consent, privacy, anonymity, care with sensitive information, and confidentiality (Paterson and Higgs, 2005). The material should be represented with integrity, without misrepresenting the interview results. Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 290-297) provide a synopsis of key ethical questions:

- ⇒ Worthiness of the project: Will the research significantly contribute?
- ⇒ Competence boundaries: Do I have the expertise to carry out the study?
- ⇒ Informed consent: Are participants fully informed about the study?
- ⇒ Benefits, costs, and reciprocity: Do participants gain equitably from their investment of time, energy, and expertise?
- ⇒ Harm and risk: Might this study hurt people?
- ⇒ Honesty and trust: Am I trustworthy and am I telling the truth?
- ⇒ Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity: How identifiable are the individuals?
- ⇒ Integrity and quality: Was the study conducted carefully, thoughtfully, and correctly within reasonable standards?

Several of the interview participants are too well-known to maintain anonymity. All participants may consent to be identified in the study, but details will be anonymised in the body of the work, maintaining distance between the researcher and the subjects' data.

6. Expected Learning Outcomes

The study will enhance my performance and teaching by integrating historical insights into motivation and student development. Positioned as a singing teacher rather than a historian or musicologist, I use these lessons to expand students' perspectives, deepen artistic expression, and refine their self-conception. Spirituality spans from mystical experience without content, to experiences based on logocentric belief. My worldview, shaped by logocentric messages and transcendence, was more abstract and theoretical than practical. Engaging with other singers' perspectives allows me to explore spirituality as a space for deepening my musical journey and enriching my students' growth.

Through the study I will:

- ⇒ Gain insights into singers' struggles, professional tensions, and cultural expectations throughout the 20th century.
- ⇒ Acquire perspectives on fame, talent, and spiritual beliefs from biographies of artists, such as Jon Vickers (Williams, 1999) and Mary Garden (Turnbull, 1997).
- ⇒ Discover personal beliefs of late 20th singers through interviews.

Part Two: Project Report

1. Introduction

Classical singing is a multifaceted art form that integrates physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual faculties to convey musical literature authentically (Jahn, 2013). This study investigates the role of worldview and spirituality affecting the career paths and artistic expression of professional classical singers in 20th-century North America. It examines how these internal influences interact with social and external factors to drive motivation and creativity.

While much research focuses on the physical and psychological aspects of singing (Sundberg, 1987; Miller, 1996; Woody and McPherson, 2010; Helding, 2014; Erickson, 2023), the influences of worldview and spirituality on singers' careers and artistic expression remain relatively unexplored. This report surveyed the impact of these elements on 20th century North American classical singers, considering how socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors interact with personal beliefs to shape career motivation and artistic performance. Worldview guides major life choices (Steiner, 1983), naturally connecting to career decisions, while spirituality often informs artistic expression (Kwak, 2008). Research suggests that professional and artistic paths align with intellectual and religious perspectives (Ayob and Mohd Nor, 2022) and that creative work frequently reflects an artist's spiritual beliefs (Paintner, 2007; Binder, 2016).

A comparative analysis of early, mid, and late 20th century singers highlighted the continuities and discontinuities in cultural trends, aesthetic preferences, technologic advancements, institutional structures, and economic conditions. Content analysis of 134 singer biographies, qualitative examination of six case studies spanning different periods, and five semi-structured interviews with late 20th century singers comprised the primary data for the study. Validity was enhanced through triangulating five interviews with five case studies within the larger biographical and socio-cultural contexts.

The objective is to understand the role of spirituality and worldview in artistic expression and career trajectory, providing singers with greater clarity and direction (Van Dyke, 2024). A more comprehensive framework for expressive singing would include physical, neurological, psychological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual components. By tracing spirituality to an implicit or explicit worldview, an integrated understanding of its impact on motivation, artistic vision, and performance can be understood and applied in vocal pedagogy. Integrating these elements into instruction may enhance authenticity and career fulfillment. Ultimately, this research aims to inspire further study on how worldview and spirituality influence singers' experiences and professional journeys.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Review of Methodology

Refining the research questions led to selecting a narrative review, which enables an in-depth exploration of relationships between variables while synthesizing findings chronologically or thematically (Kitson et al., 2013). This approach offers a broad thematic overview without requiring an exhaustive search, making it well-suited for interdisciplinary research in social sciences, education, health, and cultural studies.

2.2 Research Context

The twentieth century contains the horrors of two world wars and technological advances that changed both life and the singing profession in profound ways. Vocal performance and pedagogy were influenced by recording technology and the phonograph (Glasner, 2019), which were marketed for mass consumption and public broadcasting over radio, television, film and live streaming. The compression of time and distance accelerated pedagogy and performance, enhancing access to recordings, improving vocal analysis, and offering new performance platforms (Hoch, 2019).

Italian and German opera was in mainstream North American culture in the 19th and early 20th centuries, seen in Tin Pan Alley tunes incorporating Wagner and Verdi into hummable street melodies (Turner, 2015; Hamberlin, 2011). French opera arrived in 1907 when Oscar Hammerstein built the Manhattan Opera House to rival the Metropolitan Opera and commissioned Mary Garden to be his star (Turnbull, 1997b). Culturally, people were ready to hear European art forms, and opera tickets were relatively inexpensive (Turner, 2015). Early divas like Geraldine Farrar and Mary Garden captivated audiences by emphasizing acting as much as vocal beauty, unlike the purely vocal appeal of European stars Luisa Tetrazzini and Nellie Melba (Croan, 2004). European tenor Enrico Caruso indulged New York Met audiences by favouring vocal histrionics over refinement, shifting from *bel canto's* seamless registration and head-dominance (Stark, 1999), to the emotional realism of *verismo,* demanding more vocal weight (Lewandowski, 2009; Gentili, 2021). Key to the verismo transformation of operatic performance and pedagogy was American vaudeville singer and Met soprano Rosa Ponselle, who navigated between *bel canto* roles such as Donizetti's Lucia and Bellini's Norma, and Puccini's verismo roles in*Tosca* and *Madame Butterfly* (Jennings et al., 2010).

Until the mid-20th century, North American classical singers trained in Europe to achieve international success (Potvin, 2007). French-Canadian soprano Emma Albani (1847–1930) was among the early North Americans who followed this path. However, institutional support grew with the establishment of the Canadian Opera Company in 1950 (Schabas & Morley, 2000), coinciding with the Metropolitan Opera's transition from Canadian-born director Edward Johnson (1935-50) to Austrian-born Rudolf Bing

(1950-1972). The largest arts organization in North America, The Metropolitan Opera of New York (The Met), established in 1883, went through administrative reforms under Bing, such as including Black singers Marian Anderson and Robert McFerrin in 1955 (Kolodin, 1966), for which Bing received racist hate mail (Burroughs, 2004). Cultural diplomacy after World War II promoted American artists in European opera houses, including George London's 1956 performance in the reconstructed Vienna State Opera (Siefert, 2004). This exchange exposed racial disparities; Black singers like Marian Anderson, Mattiwilda Dobbs, and Leontyne Price achieved fame in Europe before performing at the Met—if at all. *Porgy and Bess,* America's most internationally recognized opera, was not staged at the Met until fifty years after its composition (Siefert, 2004). Nonetheless, opportunities occasionally arose, as when Herbert von Karajan selected Price to cover Aida, prompting her remark: "My career was launched on the appendectomies of Italian sopranos" (*Time*, 1961, p. 63, in Siefert, p. 310).

Classical vocal performance evolved alongside technological, institutional, social, and economic changes. Recordings and contracts through companies like Columbia and RCA Victor, which incorporated the 1901 Victor Talking Machine Company in 1929 (Bayly, 1973), boosted singers' exposure and income. In 1935 Edward Johnson began the Metropolitan Auditions of the Air, superseded in 1958 by the current Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (Villamil, 2004). By mid-century corporation-sponsored radio and TV broadcasting such as The Voice of Firestone (1928-1963) featured lead singers such as Eleanor Steber, Robert Merrill, Richard Crooks and Rise Stevens (Cox, 2005). Opera became democratized through public tours and English surtitles, beginning in 1983 with the Canadian Opera Company (Mansouri, 2011). Under director Jospeh Volpe, the Metropolitan Opera developed "Met titles" in 1995 and arts enterprise software "Tessitura" to manage client relations (Ravanas, 2007). English translations of opera texts helped counter perceptions of classical music as elitist and outdated, addressing declining audiences in the late 20th century (Stephens, 2023).

2.3 Research Gap

The research questions seek to address the gap between worldview and career trajectory/motivation, tracing the link between spirituality and artistic expression. Do artists think explicitly from abstract theories about the world and their place as an artist, or bottom up from subjective feelings and experiences? How do they deal with external pressures in relationship to inner motivations?
The research questions are:

1. What impact do worldview and spirituality have on motivating a singer's career?
2. How do worldview and spirituality inform a singer's artistic output?
3. How do worldview and spirituality constrain/focus a singer's career motivations and creative output relative to broader cultural, political, or socio-economic factors?

2.4 Key terms and concepts

Worldview, a framework of beliefs that shapes human thought and behaviour, is often articulated verbally, providing a structured and meaningful perspective of reality (Van Dyke, 2024a). It prescribes beliefs and values that establish criteria for self-worth while providing coherence, purpose, and a lasting interpretive framework (Vail et al., 2012). For music professionals, worldview shapes professional practice, influences musical interpretation, and guides the search for personal meaning (Tkach, 2020). Worldviews, explicit or implicit, generate the emotion of ordered complexity within theoretical understanding (Friesen, 2021). As Peterson (2024) explains, every idea worthy of consideration describes itself, "…as a personality with an aim, a viewpoint, a world gathered around it, and a full panoply of emotional responses and associated ideas" (p. 83).

Spirituality exists on a spectrum from nonphysical, contentless, mystical experience to logocentric understandings of the nonphysical (Van Dyke, 2024). Musical expression can be a deliberate act conveying intended messages or arise spontaneously, reflecting broader social and intellectual patterns (Rosenboom, 1997). Film director Ingmar Bergen described music as "messages about there being other realities" (Swedish Radio Broadcasting, 2004, in Gabrielsson, 2011). Often associated with personal exploration of reality or transcendence (Bogdan, 2010; Lassere, 2024), this study defines spirituality as the intangible essence singers convey through music that transcends words, physical experience, and culture, envisioning other realms. Rooted in worldview and verbal explanations of reality, spirituality extends beyond language and the material world, often experienced through music and evoking powerful feelings, a sense of the Divine, or deep connection and transformation (Gabrielsson, 2010).

Motivation is shaped by worldview and spirituality intersecting with external influences, as seen in Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory or Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory. Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2015) distinguishes autonomous and controlled motivation, highlighting autonomy's role in enhancing behavior, experience, and well-being through intrinsic aspirations, competence, and relatedness. On the other hand, self-discrepancy theory views motivation as the drive to reconcile the actual and ideal selves, shaped by cognitive constructs like self-efficacy, goal setting, and locus of control (Higgins, 1987). Neurologically, self-efficacy and competence stimulate positive dopamine emotional and motivational signals (Bromberg-Martin et al., 2010). Zelenak's (2024) meta-analysis of self-efficacy and music performance, based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, highlights self-efficacy as a key determinant of intentional actions, effort, and resilience, formed by mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological states. However, this framework lacks the intrinsic motivation emphasized by Ryan and Deci (2000), who argue that competence integrates emotional satisfaction rather than reliance on external cognitive

appraisal. Due to the personal demands of singing, this study prioritizes intrinsic motivation through self-determination theory, with social context as secondary.

2.5 Research Methodology in other Studies

Siefert's (2004) meta-narrative study, relevant to this study's survey of 134 singer biographies, examines how American opera singers achieved "greatness" in a European art form through magazine cover stories. Sampling 146 singers from *Current Biography Yearbook (*1940–2000), Siefert found that *Time* and *Newsweek* published most solo articles (114 out of 129), with Met performances as a key criterion—aside from notable exceptions like Bethany Beardslee, Beverly Sills, and Mary Garden, who gained fame outside the Met. There articles contrasted the American diva ideal, portraying Sills as virtuous and family-oriented against the tempestuous "mother hating" Maria Callas (Time, Oct. 29, 1956, in Siefert, p. 309). Sills, crowned "America's Queen of the Opera" after her NYCO Donizetti triumphs, famously declared, "I made it without the Met. I am a revolutionary" (*Time*, Nov. 22, 1971, in Siefert, p. 311), despite major European performances. Likewise, Renée Fleming, celebrated as a great Manon and devoted mother, exemplifies the modern American diva, balancing opera, jazz, and family life with a "really nice personality" (*Time*, Nov. 17, 1997, in Siefert, p. 312).

Pecen et al. (2018), examine challenges, coping strategies, beliefs, and support preferences of pre-elite, transitioning elite, and elite performers to inform learning settings. Elite singers cited emotional strain, competition, and stress as threats to well-being, but viewed adversity as fostering artistic growth. High-performance "stayers" cite internal motivation—self-initiative, passion, curiosity, and a drive for discovery and aspiration—unlike "quitters" (Hatfield, 2024). Recognizing singing as the unity of body, mind and soul, Anderson (2009), integrates traditional vocal techniques and spiritual practices through self-knowledge. Self-critical, developing singers sustain self-efficacy and meaning by shaping personal histories into worldview-forming narratives (Dunn, 2022). Established elites take a philosophical view, linking music to other fields, while pre-elite and transitioning performers focus on the commercial industry (Pecen et al., 2018). This broader perspective aligns with artists like Jon Vickers, who engaged deeply with psychology and personal projects beyond opera (Albright, 2001), and Ben Heppner, who prioritized family and faith (Opera Canada, 1995).

Emotional support is crucial for elite performers, often provided through mentorship (Burke & McKeen, 1997). UBC Opera Director Nancy Hermiston highlights the vital role of mentors, stressing that their belief and support before a performance can profoundly shape a singer's career (Abbasi, 2006 in Weaver, 2008). Mentors guide singers in career decisions, as seen when Marilyn Horne advised Renée Fleming against singing *Norma* early on or when Jan De Gaetani encouraged her to study in Germany rather than take a lead role (Fleming, 2004). Similarly, Bill and Dixie Neill helped Ben Heppner navigate

his first *Tristan* in Seattle (1998), making strategic cuts that protected his voice before he became a leading interpreter of the role (Heppner-Int).

3. Methodology & Methods

3.1 Introduction

The current study on 20th-century classical singers stems from the researcher's preference for sacred oratorio and concert repertoire, prompting an exploration of singing as spiritual expression. A critical case that beckoned was Jeannie Williams' biography of Jon Vickers, *A Hero's Life* (1999), which explores this topic. Other significant cases were Mary Garden, Marian Anderson, Eleanor Steber, and Frederica von Stade, enriching perspectives in comparison with interviewees Ben Heppner, Martha Howe, Benjamin Butterfield, Ingrid Suderman, and Ian Funk. The interviews feature more international and regional singers, with one elite heldentenor, Ben Heppner. More interviewees were Canadian men, while more case studies were American women. This could be considered both a design strength and weakness.

An initial survey of 134 biographies spanning the twentieth century provided a socio-cultural and economic framework to situate themes found in the qualitative semi-structured interviews. Interview transcripts were analysed and compared with five relevant case studies, highlighting significant similarities or differences pertaining to the research questions.

3.2 Paradigmatic Framework

The methodological assumption underlying the study's mixed-method approach is philosophical pragmatism, but it is not specifically problem-focused, producing a "everything-is-okay-as-long-as-the-work-gets-done" approach (Gibson, 2016). Pragmatism integrates multiple methods for practical outcomes, requiring high standards for both objective (positivist) and subjective (constructivist and interpretivist) research designs, data analysis and justification of knowledge claims (Sol and Heng, 2022). Quantitative content analysis from singer biographies contextualizes the triangulation of qualitative data from five semi-structured interviews and five case studies (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). Aimed to provide robust conclusions from the data stories, the interview transcripts were coded first, and then the case studies and news articles, layering descriptions and patterning the data (Rheinberger, 2011).

Alignment of values, worldview, and direction of the interview inquiry recognizes the ontological realities of the participant (Willis, 2007). Buys et al. (2022) found semi-structured interviews with academic colleagues satisfying due to rigorous research methods and theoretical frameworks. Similarly, this study explicitly defined spirituality, worldview, and motivation to interviewees, focusing not on these

constructs themselves but on their interaction with singing and motivation (Van Dyke, 2024b). The method of analysis for the semi-structured interviews was first descriptive coding, *in vivo* and process coding (Saldaña, 2016) with thematic analysis in the final iterations (Braun, et al., 2019). Content analysis was used for the biographies within a pragmatic constructivist research paradigm to best address the research questions (Giacobbi et al., 2005).

3.3 Research Procedures

The initial phase of the project resembled Siefert's (2004) meta-narrative study, which surveyed 146 singer biographies from magazine covers to highlight the cultural politics between American and European singers. The biographies contextualized five semi-structured interviews with singers from the late twentieth century. The basis for the interview questionnaire leveraged understandings from the MUSE questionnaire (Chin and Rickard, 2014), incorporating cognition and emotion, as well as findings from neuroscience (Beauregard and O'Leary, 2007; Gaw, 2019). Collegial collaboration clarified terminology, and a pilot study with singing colleagues checked the questionnaire's efficacy (Malmquist et al., 2019; Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The processes and influences upon the manifestation of the art were explored. How expressive singing is processed and what is subjectively felt at the neurological, psychological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels was discussed. Five relevant case studies from the span of the twentieth century triangulated with the interview findings.

3.4 The Pilot

The pilot tested a semi-structured interview questionnaire of classical singers. The design followed Castillo-Montoya's (2016) four-step interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework for 1) aligning interview questions with research questions, 2) constructing an inquiry-based conversation, 3) receiving feedback on interview protocols, and 4) piloting the interview protocol. Ten interview questions were designed around the three research questions and aligned with an interview protocol matrix adapted from Castillo-Montoya (2016) to determine validity and help identify misunderstandings, gaps, or repetitions (Appendix 2).

Three pilot participants were selected based on their classical singing expertise and shared knowledge and activity with the researcher (Schegloff, 2007). Ten interview questions covered four themes (Appendix 1): background and introductory questions; transition questions into career-mindedness; relation of career motivation and artistic process/output to worldview and spirituality; and closing reflections. An inquiry-based conversation, academic jargon was avoided (Brinkman and Kvale, 2015), allowing interviewees to associate different meanings to technical terms such as "worldview" and "spirituality".

The pilot interviews clarified the conversation necessary to systematically explore artistic motivation and experience. One participant preferred “musical journey” to “career” and questions about worldview and beliefs caused another participant to “dig deep” and “talk in new ways”. Questions about worldview stumped participants, revealing that singers may not always express worldview in explicit terms, and questions about motivation and career overlapped those on artistic process. The pilot helped refine the conversational interview questionnaire informed by Ryan and Deci’s (1985, 2000) self-determination theory (Appendix 3).

3.5 Data Sampling – Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The researcher compiled 134 biographies of North American classical singers from Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, selecting those with significant careers at major opera houses like the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, and Chicago Lyric, or internationally. Sources included *Grove’s Encyclopedia* (Macy, 2008), *The Metropolitan Opera from 1883-1966* (Kolodin, 1966), Hine’s *Great Singers on Great Singing* (1982), Steane’s *Singers of the Century* (1996), *Canadian Encyclopedia*, Bruce Duffie interviews (1985), and news articles. Biographical content provided context for exploring the intersection of worldview, spirituality, motivation, and artistic output in the qualitative interviews and case studies. Singers with chorus or *comprimario* roles were excluded, as were immigrants born outside North America—apart from Mary Garden and Florence Easton, who significantly impacted singing in North America.

Interview participants were singing professionals with careers spanning from 10-40 years, covering regional to international and elite artists. Recruitment involved a perceived sense of interest in the research questions and the researcher’s access to these professionals. Canadian baritone Bill Reimer and soprano Edith Wiens were not included, as Germany was their primary field. Interviewees included were Canadian soprano Ingrid Suderman (1944-) a friend and mentor, American contralto Martha Jane Howe (1955-2024) a teacher and dramaturge, Canadian baritone Ian Funk (1965-) a pastor-singer, Canadian heldentenor Ben Heppner (1956-) contacted through a mutual friend, and Canadian tenor Benjamin Butterfield (1964-), who kindly responded to my email. All consented to be named in the study.

The case studies represent the span of the 20th century and were chosen for their relevance to the research questions in triangulation with the interview data: Scottish-American soprano Mary Garden (1864-1967), American contralto Marian Anderson (1897-1993), American soprano Eleanor Steber (1914-1990), Canadian heldentenor Jon Vickers (1926-2015), and American mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade (1945-).

3.6 Ethics and Insider Research

The study's purpose was explained to participants via a participation information sheet for informed consent (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Privacy was ensured, with each participant agreeing to be named (Patterson and Higgs, 2005). To minimize insider research bias, transparent methods, large data sets, and triangulation were used (Mercer, 2007). Validity was prioritized in accurately reflecting participants' constructed realities (Burke, 2016). One interviewee passed away before data analysis, but full consent had been obtained.

Potential conflicts within the project include personal mentorship of the researcher by two interview participants, presenting validity challenges (Curtis, Murphy and Shields, 2013). Participants were invited to member-check transcripts for accuracy (Guba, 1981), but only the two who mentored the researcher did so, partly addressing insider research concerns. Like the researcher, all participants began singing solos in church, potentially fueling expectations in the interview, a pitfall avoided by reflexively examining insider and outsider research positions (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

3.7 Data Analysis and Coding

Singer biographies were collected and analysed for specific content categories to contextualize the semi-structured interviews. Numerical data from these 134 biographies focused on background and training, career trajectory, career transitions, personal life, and legacy. Qualitative data from five personal interviews and their biographies, and five biographical case studies were coded using NVivo14, following Saldaña's (2016) coding framework. Coding categories were aggregated and separated for thematic comparison and triangulation.

The interviews were video recorded on Zoom, transcribed, and coded descriptively and thematically using NVivo14 software. Following Miles and Huberman's protocol (1994), interview transcripts were initially reviewed for first impressions and summaries of primary data sets (Harding, 2013 in Saldaña, pp. 229-230). Participants' biographical data were also coded to confirm themes in the interviews. Case studies from online interviews (Duffie, 1987), news articles, and books were analysed with existing interview transcript codes, enriching the data. Relevant words, phrases, actions, and relationships were identified, generating NVivo14 query results, charts, tables, diagrams, and memos, which were coded to enhance coherence between raw data and interpretive analysis.

The interview transcripts, participant biographies, and case studies underwent four cycles of coding ensuring rigorous analysis (Winter, 2024). The first two cycles allowed the narrative to emerge (Reissman, 1993), incorporating inductive methods, including descriptive, *in vivo*, value, and process coding to develop conceptual and interpretive categories (Scott, 2024). Integrating direct *in vivo* quotes

enriched the interpretative framework. Subsequent deductive cycles categorized codes into themes, balancing data-driven insights with theoretical constructs (Tavery & Timmermans, 2014; Pringle-Nelson, 2023). Utilizing holistic process coding, thematic analysis, and adapted contextual coding, the third and fourth coding cycles interpreted latent meanings and re-categorized data within theoretical frameworks (Saldaña, 2016). Thematic analysis provided insights into participants' perspectives, values, attitudes, and beliefs, aligning findings with research questions. Self-reflection safeguarded awareness of researcher assumptions and alternative interpretations (Saldaña, 2016).

Final coding iterations alternated between inductive and deductive approaches, refining theoretical frameworks within four overarching thematic categories: Background and Training, Artistic Identity and Vision (worldview is a sub-category), Career (motivation is a sub-category), and Spirituality (Figure 1). Coded interview transcripts are in Appendices 5-9, case study data in Appendices 10-14, and codebooks in Appendices 15.

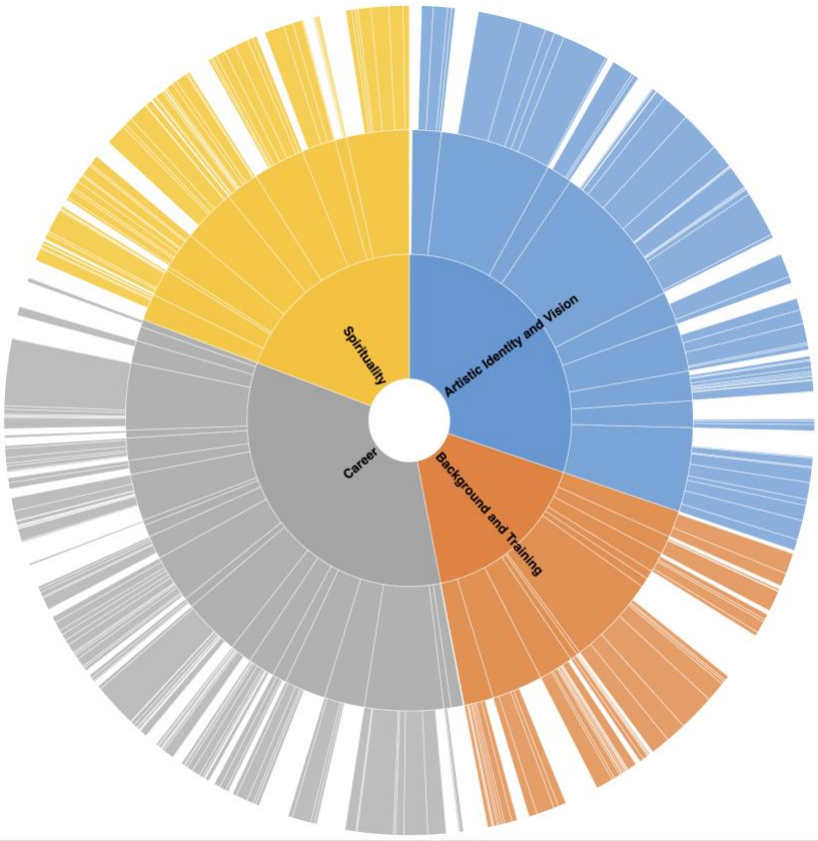


Figure 1 - Themes of Interviews and Case Studies

The final coding process cross-referenced themes from interviews, case studies, and singer biographies (Saldaña, 2016) using an inductive-deductive approach to distinguish empirical from actual realities (Maxwell and Mittapalli, 2010). While codes indirectly addressed research questions, no overt

deductive categories were imposed. The NVivo14 codebook was analysed with ChatGPT to help identify historical continuities and shifts in vocal training, pedagogical frameworks, career trajectories, media influence, opera house trends, aesthetic preferences, and repertoire choices. Thematic codes layered individual and institutional factors, contextualising singers' training and career challenges within the evolving twentieth century North American music industry.

Part Three - Findings and Discussion

A. Biographical Content Analysis

Biographies from 134 classical singers were analysed across ten categories, including cultural background, education, career, repertoire, transitions, collaborations, recordings, beliefs, and legacy. Biographical data contextualized interviews and case studies, highlighting comparative causes between data sets (Howe, 2012). Selection criteria included Met performances with exceptions for concert singers and Beverly Sills. The sample comprised 109 American, 24 Canadian, and one Mexican tenor, with 56 sopranos, 20 mezzos, 6 contraltos, 22 tenors, 5 heldentenors, 1 countertenor, 16 baritones, and 8 basses.

Siefert's (2004) survey of 146 singers, constituting 62% women (47% sopranos), and 19% tenors, realistically reflects this study's ratios, also biased towards sopranos. Siefert's sample divided Americans (64) and Europeans equally, except for a bulge in Americans after WWII. Europeans were 11% Italian, 11% UK, 7% German, and 7% Scandinavian. American profiles were 75% white and 25% Black, over twice the proportion in the American population, possibly linked to the Harlem Renaissance (1918-mid-1930s). Black prominence in singing roles suggests spiritual emancipation (Spencer, 1994). This uplift helped popularize Spirituals, performed by artists such as Evanti, Anderson, Bledsoe, Hayes, and Robeson (Schenbeck, 2012). Reflecting the unique classification of Black singers, Marian Anderson appeared in *Time Magazine's* 1945 edition under "religion" rather than art or culture (Siefert, 2004 p. 301). Jewish backgrounds were rarely mentioned (Siefert, 2004, p. 304), despite figures like Estelle Liebling, Richard Tucker, Jan Pierce, and Beverly Sills shaping North American classical music.

1. Early Twentieth Century North American Classical Singers (1900 - 1940)

The height of the American Renaissance (1876-1917) promoted nationalism, modernism, and classicism in architecture and the arts (Diller, 1998). Aesthetically, audiences desired cultural uplift, spectacle, and vocal prowess (Smolov Levy, 2014; Turner, 2015). Singers learned roles by rote (Mould, 2021) and were admired for their vocal virtuosity and acting ability, epitomized by opera divas Mary Garden and Geraldine Farrar. Boiling with competing egos, gossip, and prejudice, operatic theatre in Europe and America fueled media speculation about the personal lives of opera stars (Opstad, 2009). The contrasting personas of Garden and Farrar are seen in their autobiographies, where Garden

(1951) dismisses Farrar's vocal abilities and theatrical instincts as merely publicity-driven, and Farrar (1938) cites a competitive performance atmosphere with differing artistic philosophies, preferring American cultural relevance to Garden's Parisian sophistication.

The early 20th century witnessed the invention of the phonograph and recording devices, making music more accessible to the public, and promoting singers' brands. Record companies like RCA Victor, Edison, and Columbia publicised singers with handsome contracts, which provided supplementary income, as in the case of the tenor, Charles Hackett (1889-1942).

Of the 134 biographies surveyed 41 were from the early twentieth century.

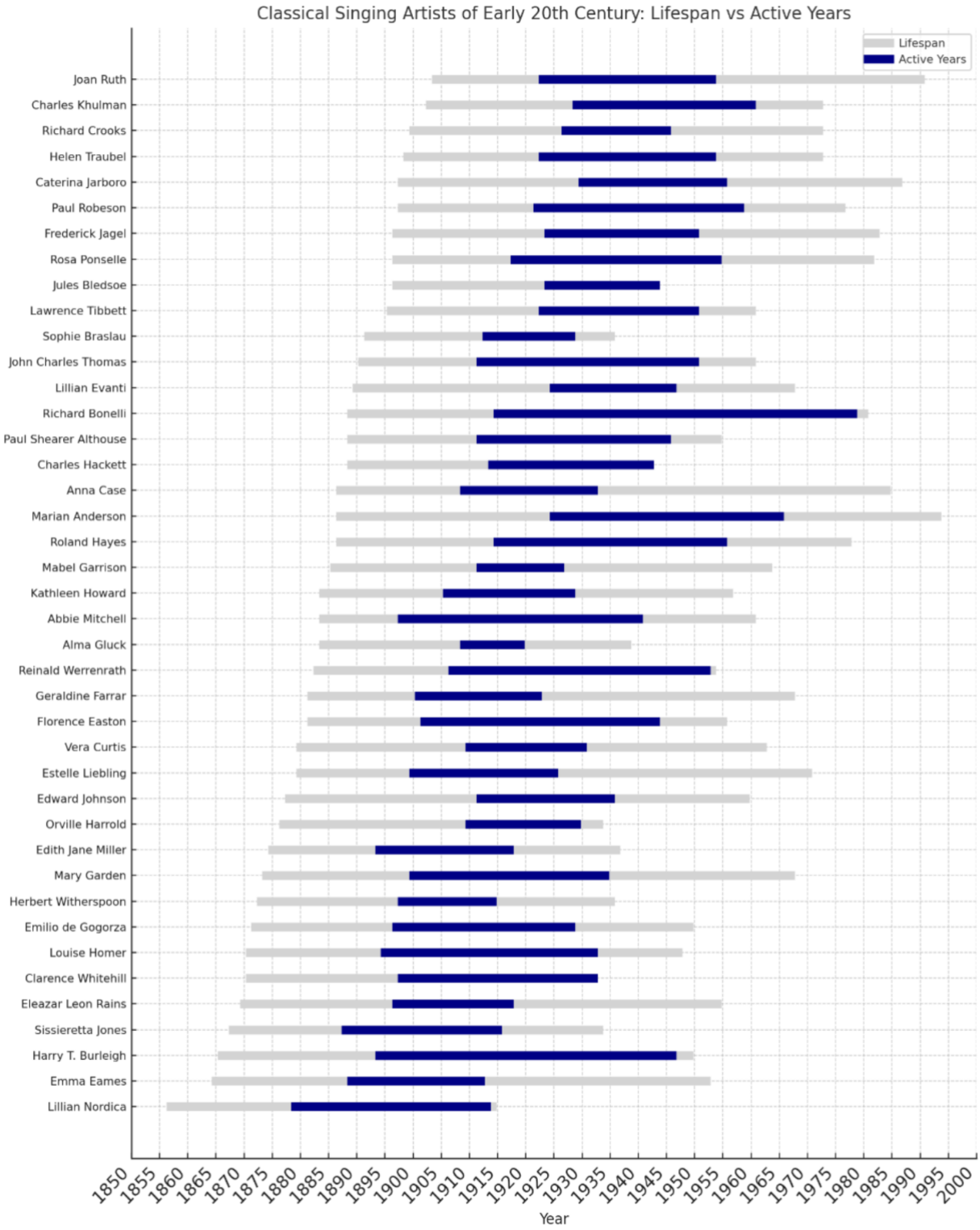


Figure 2 – Early 20th Century Classical Singing Artists Lifespans and Active Years

2. Mid-Twentieth Century North American Classical Singers (1940-1975)

The post-World War II classical singing aesthetic differed from that of previous decades, favouring intense emotional vocal delivery over more subtle, introspective qualities. During the 1950s and 1960s opera was fashionable with the upper middle class and elite (Brooks, 2005). Subscriptions at the Met were robust, maintained by Rudolph Bing after the Edward Johnson era (Kolodin, 1966). Canadian and American operas premiered, including Bernard Turgeon's 1967 debut of Harry Somers' *Louis Riel* with the Canadian Opera Company (Schabas and Morey, 2000) and Eleanor Steber's 1958 debut performance of Samuel Barber's *Vanessa* at the Met (Black, 2008).

North American support for classical singing grew through new organizations and programs. The Metropolitan Opera expanded after its 1883 founding, while the New York City Opera emerged in 1943, with Beverly Sills as a star (1955–1980) and later general director (1979–1989), following the example of Mary Garden at the Chicago Civic Opera (1921–1922). After retiring from singing, Blanche Theobom founded the Atlanta Opera in 1980. Young artist programs began with Santa Fe Opera (1956) and San Francisco Opera's Merola Program (1957). The National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), founded in 1944, serves voice educators worldwide (Hoch, 2019). In Canada, the Canadian Opera Company (CoC) launched in 1950, followed by the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957 (Schabas and Morey, 2000). Canadian singers gained international recognition, including Maureen Forrester, Jon Vickers, Teresa Stratas, and the soprano-tenor duo Pierrette Alarie and Léopold Simoneau, many starting at the CoC.

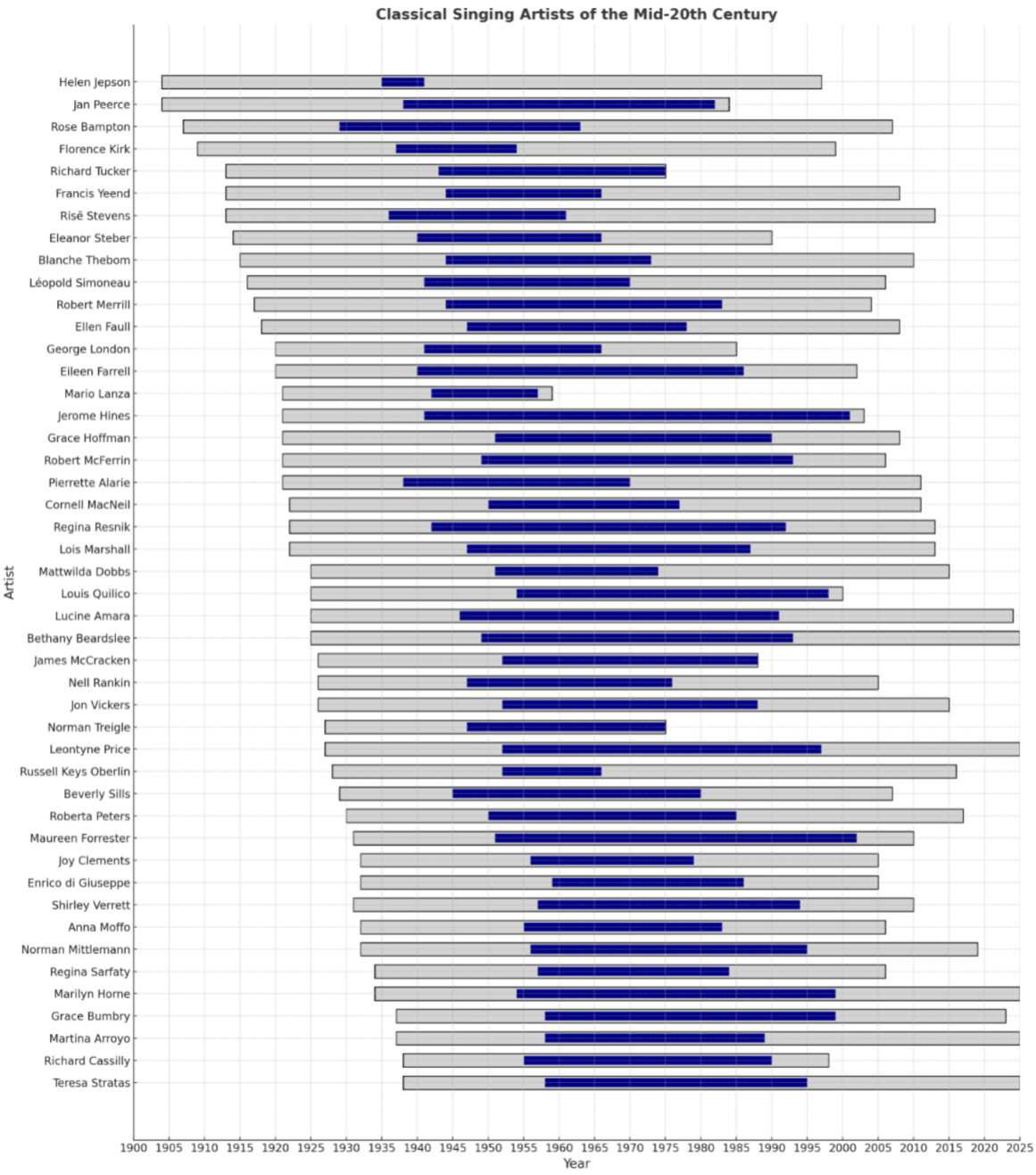


Figure 3 – Mid-20th Century Classical Singing Artists Lifespans and Active Years

3. Late Twentieth Century North American Classical Singers (1975 – 2000)

Late twentieth century singers navigated various external pressures in their careers, one of which was the turn towards director's opera, or *regieoper*. Emerging in Europe during the mid-1970s, director's opera refers to experimental stagings of canonical operas interpreting the composer or librettist's stage directions/intentions non-literally (Rothe, 2019). European critique of radicalism, provocation,

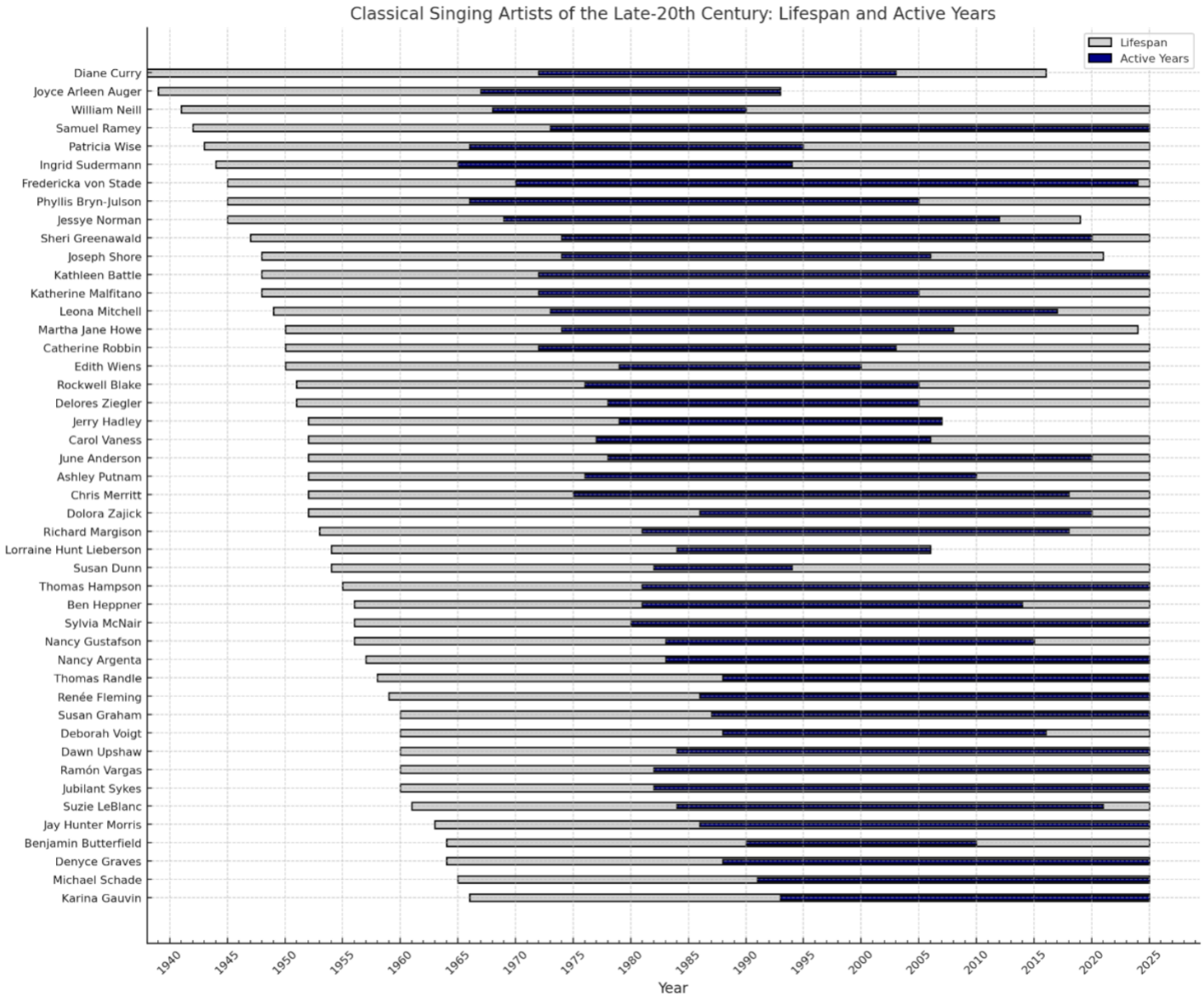


Figure 4 – Late 20th Century Classical Singing Artists Lifespans and Active Years

and disregard for traditional binaries followed Philip Stölzl's 2007 *Benvenuto Cellini* (Salzburg), where he reimagined the Pope as a pop idol with a pink limousine, parodying the popemobile and blurring the sacred with the profane (Yaskecitch, 2020). This new aesthetic may have challenged singers with traditional backgrounds to face conflicts between personal beliefs and career demands (Willis et al. 2019). For example, American soprano Arleen Auger, a pastor’s daughter, left the Vienna State Opera in 1974 to focus on concert singing and teaching, possibly due to changing operatic landscapes and radical stage demands.

In New York and Los Angeles *regieoper* is driven by directors like Peter Sellars, Barrie Kosky, and James Darrah, whose productions often deconstruct or re-contextualize operatic narratives. However, *regieoper* also provides new artistic avenues. Directed by Sellars, The Los Angeles Philharmonic's 2004 semi-staged *Tristan und Isolde*, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen and starring Ben Heppner, featured Bill Viola's abstract video projections to convey the characters' psychological and emotional states and engage new audiences (Ginell, 2022). When Heppner rose to prominence in the 1990s, aesthetic tastes had shifted toward more nuanced, controlled, and technically refined singing, rather than the raw vocal power exemplified earlier by Jon Vickers (Levine, n.d.).

4. Significance of Early Influences on Career Motivation and Spirituality

Despite declining church, synagogue, and temple attendance in late-twentieth century North America (Bibby, 1995; Brenner, 2016), the trends in the first and seventh categories of Figure 5 show a higher percentage of singers with traditional religious backgrounds, departing from the cultural norm. Music and religion have long been connected (Gabrielsson, 2011). As opera and classical singing decline in mainstream North America, singers seek spiritual content to shape their technique and artistic expression, often finding it in formal religious settings, as the survey suggests.

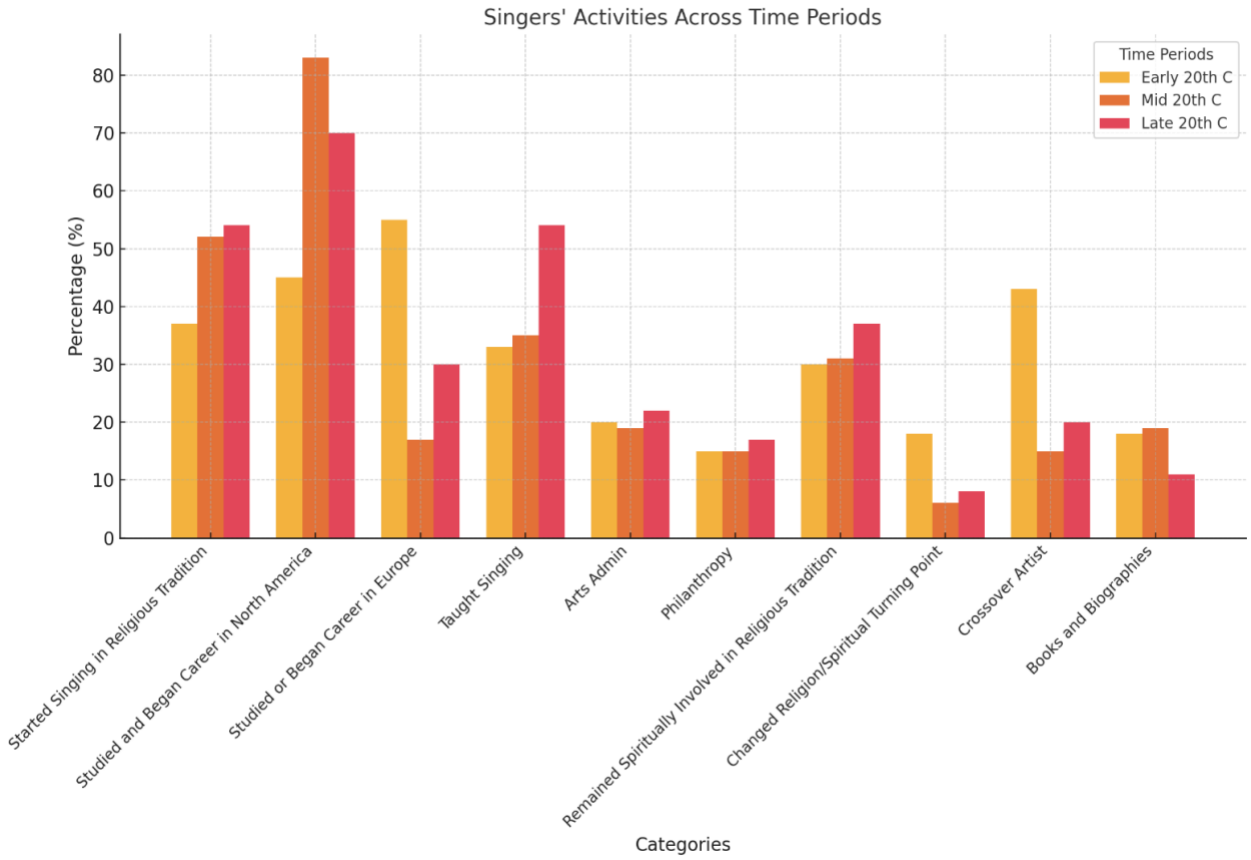


Figure 5 – Singers' Activities Across Time Periods

After WWII, European teachers and singers, including German soprano Lilli Lehmann, immigrated to North America European (Potvin, 2007). In 1947 Lehmann co-founded the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, where she taught notable students like Grace Bumbry and Marilyn Horne. By the mid-20th century, the U.S. led in vocal pedagogy, influenced by works from Lehman (1945), Liebling (1956), and Vennard (1967). Liebling brought Garcia's and Marchesi's *bel canto* method to North America, training diva Beverly Sills. This shift is reflected in the changes between categories two and three in *Figure 5*.

Beginning a career in Europe was more prevalent in the beginning of the century, particularly for Black American singers avoiding racism, such as Lillian Evanti, Roland Hayes, Jules Bledsoe, Marian Anderson, and Mattiwilda Dobbs. Even mid and late twentieth century icons like Leontyne Price, Grace Bumbry, and Jessye Norman faced racism, recalling Grace Bumbry's 1961 debut in Bayreuth as the "Black Venus" in Wagner's *Tannhäuser,* a role traditionally reserved for white European sopranos (Innaurato, 2001). Black American classical singers often crossed over into spirituals, gospel, and jazz, and artists like Rosa Ponselle switched from vaudeville theatre to opera (Jennings, 2010).

B. Analysis and Discussion of Interview and Case Study

1. Key Findings

Interviews and case studies highlighted themes of background, training, artistic identity, career, and spirituality, revealing how worldview and spirituality shaped career and artistic expression. Interview citations from 2024 are noted as (Surname-Int). Background and training aligned with career, while spirituality complimented artistic identity and vision. Family and community played a key role in artistic identity and decision-making. Case studies, reflecting elite performers, emphasized societal impact and public acclaim. Career motivations included refining one's craft, supporting a family, and making pivotal choices. Three Mennonite participants integrated faith with singing, prioritizing personal commitments over career. Others experienced spiritual turning points through Divine surrender and emotional depth in role interpretation, echoed in case studies.

2. Background and Training

As with the biographical survey, the largest influences on background and training were family and community, with all interviewees raised in musical families and singing in church. Two were of Mennonite faith, one of Mennonite background but affiliated with the Pentecostal, Missionary Alliance, and Presbyterian denominations, one Presbyterian, and one raised going to church for cultural reasons rather than from religious persuasion. In church singers had a ready audience and freedom to grow and learn in a supportive environment. In one Presbyterian church, a 10-year-old made her solo debut

singing from the pulpit, while in a Sunday school class a 3-year-old sang *Away in a Manger* solo during a Christmas concert. Of this latter experience the artist said, “I loved singing and singing was part of my DNA, so when they said, ‘Sing!’ I sang” (Suderman-Int). At the same tender age, a young tenor stood up in a church pew, adding his voice to the special music provided by his family. This young soloist, nurtured by his church community, overcome the nervousness that caused his larynx to jam up against his uvula (Heppner-Int). Similarly, Marian Anderson sang alto, soprano or tenor in her Union Baptist Church Choir, often filling in for missing soloists and receiving the choir’s financial backing while studying with Joe Boghetti (Schenbeck, 2012). Anderson (1956) writes,

> “The minister would always recognize my voice and make some comment about it. That was my reward. I became convinced that my presence in the senior and junior choirs was not only a duty but a necessity for the church and me, and I never missed a Sunday. The congregation made me feel that I was an indispensable part of what went on there. It was a stimulating experience” (p. 24).

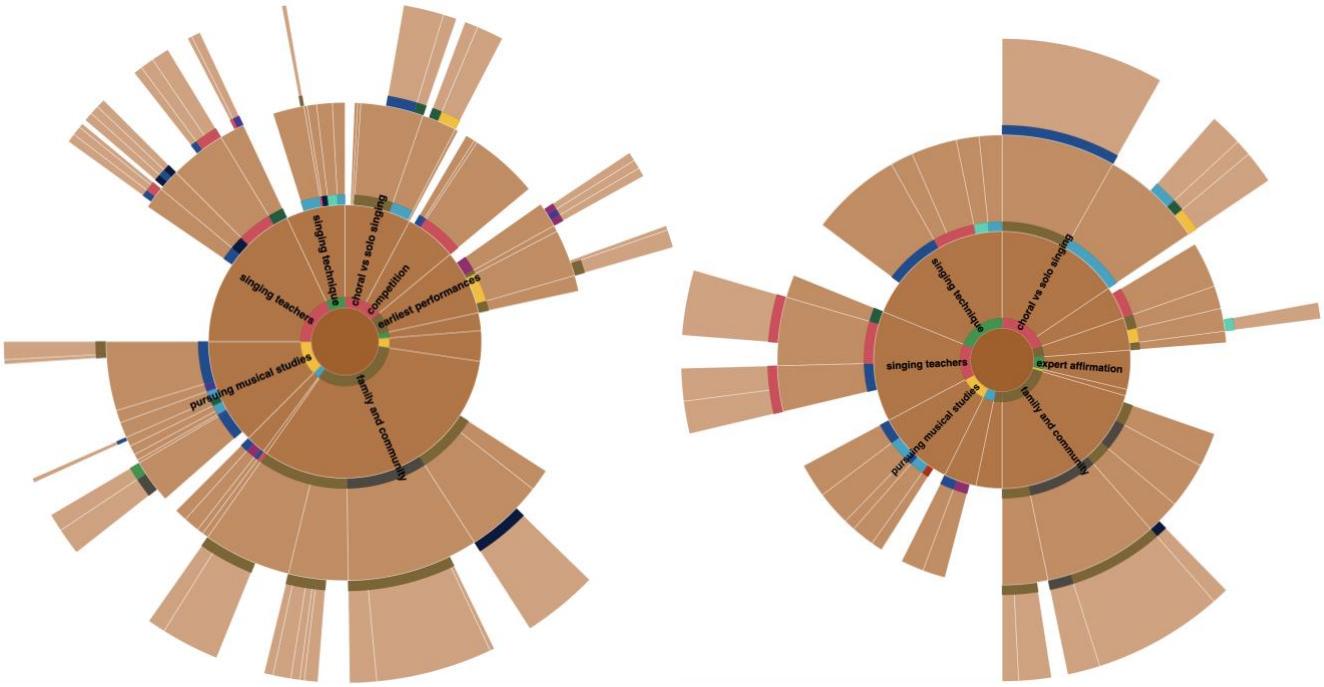
The affirmation Anderson received from her church community prepared the outworking of her faith through her singing, of which Harlem Renaissance patron, photographer, and critic Carl Van Vechten commented on her 1951 spirituals recital that listeners were uncertain whether they had enjoyed an aesthetic or religious experience, “so completely fused are the two ideals in this great artist's own nature” (Sterkens, 2014).

Key to the development of singers is nurturing instruction, both at home and in the teaching studio. Urged by his mother, Benjamin Butterfield learned piano, violin, and singing in Victoria, along with his brothers (Butterfield-Int). Eleanor Steber’s German grandfather told her stories of the *Ring of the Nibelung*, and her singing mother gave Eleanor a college education from her performance earnings (Bernheimer and Blyth, 2008). Two interviewees had varying experiences with singing teachers, doubly referencing the topic. Both participants described nurturing relationships with their first singing teacher, encouraging further studies, with mixed results. One described studying with a territorial teacher, who played favourites, imposing her own vocal production on her students. Transfers to better teachers encouraged her vocal training, finally bringing her to “the source” as one of the last students of Maude Douglas Tweedy. Of this experience she states,

> “She was in her nineties when I got to New York… and I was one of her last students. And she… basically by that point she just wasn't explaining anything…she would just go through all of these different exercises. And through…a little bit of this, a little bit of that… suddenly my voice would be totally aligned, and everything would be brilliant” (Howe-Int).

The other participant cited conflict in aligning his inner motivations to the operatic career-mindedness of one of his university professors, leading him to seek more sympathetic instruction with famed Canadian

teacher Selena James, who understood his inner artistic vision. His instructors' expectations that he inhabit operatic roles without personal meaning left a destructive mark on his psyche. At the Banff Centre for the Arts, he learned industry skills and received affirmation from Glyndebourne coach Martin Isepp to launch a short performing career in Toronto, where he sang in the trenches for new chamber opera compositions, concerts, and lieder recitals, rather than the entertainment glitz of the opera stage. A personal triumph while singing Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* prompted the conductor to say, "Yeah, I'm never going to hear it the same again" (Funk-Int).



Interviews *Case Studies*

Figure 6 – Background and Training - Comparison of Interviews and Case Studies

Pursuing further musical studies replaced external motivators with intrinsic motivation. Case studies highlight development from expert affirmation, whereas external expectations stimulated interview participants. A classic case, Eleanor Steber, mentored by Edward Johnson, Canadian tenor and Met general manager (1935–50), won the Auditions of the Air in 1940, earning her association with "the Johnson kids" and leading to title roles (Black, 2008). External expectations encouraged others, like Butterfield, prompted by his mother to practice and perform in choirs and Victoria community events (Butterfield-Int). In a 1975 performance of *Le Roi David* he sang the boy solo, petrified at the front of the cathedral in his older brothers' Eaton suit. He mused, "I can't say I enjoyed it, but I certainly had a great sense of satisfaction at the end of it that I'd presented something, and somebody was content with what I did" (Butterfield-Int). Internal motivation awakened when Butterfield left a linguistics degree in 1986 to

follow his teacher, Selena James, to Banff, launching his performance career in Toronto two years later. Similarly, after finishing with French Tickner at UBC, Ben Heppner studied with Jan Simons in Montreal and Mary Morrison in Toronto, describing himself as an “outpatient” from the Eastman School of Music with John Maloy, who helped him access his higher range (Heppner-Int). This brought “ping” to Heppner’s voice, later earning praise from Birgit Nilsson for a slender line that carried well (Gurrewtich,1998) and perfected through opera coaches Bill and Dixie Neill who “put his fingers in the fire” with loving demands that gave him a career (Heppner-Int).

Elite singers were more likely to discuss their technique, with American soprano Eleanor Steber attributing her flawless *bel canto* to William Whitney's advice on "mounting the breath", bringing support up under a phrase and keeping it there so that the sound is riding "on the breath" (Black, 2008, p. 2). While singing in the San Diego Opera Chorus in 1974 with Joan Sutherland as *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Martha Howe had the opportunity to ask Sutherland about her technique, “Oh, dearie, there are two sets of muscles…and they push against each other” (Howe-Int). Due to corsets, Martha took nearly 30 years to fully understand Sutherland's breath technique, avoiding a “breathe-set-sing” approach that could freeze the breath mechanism (Howe-Int). Reflecting, Heppner said, "I learned to sing with more support and not just rely on the vocal cords. If anything, I sing the German repertoire with an Italian legato, more lyrically than when I was a lyric singing Mozart!" (Opera Canada, 1995). These insights align with Pecen et al.’s (2018) findings that elite performers adopt a more self-reflective and philosophical approach to their art.

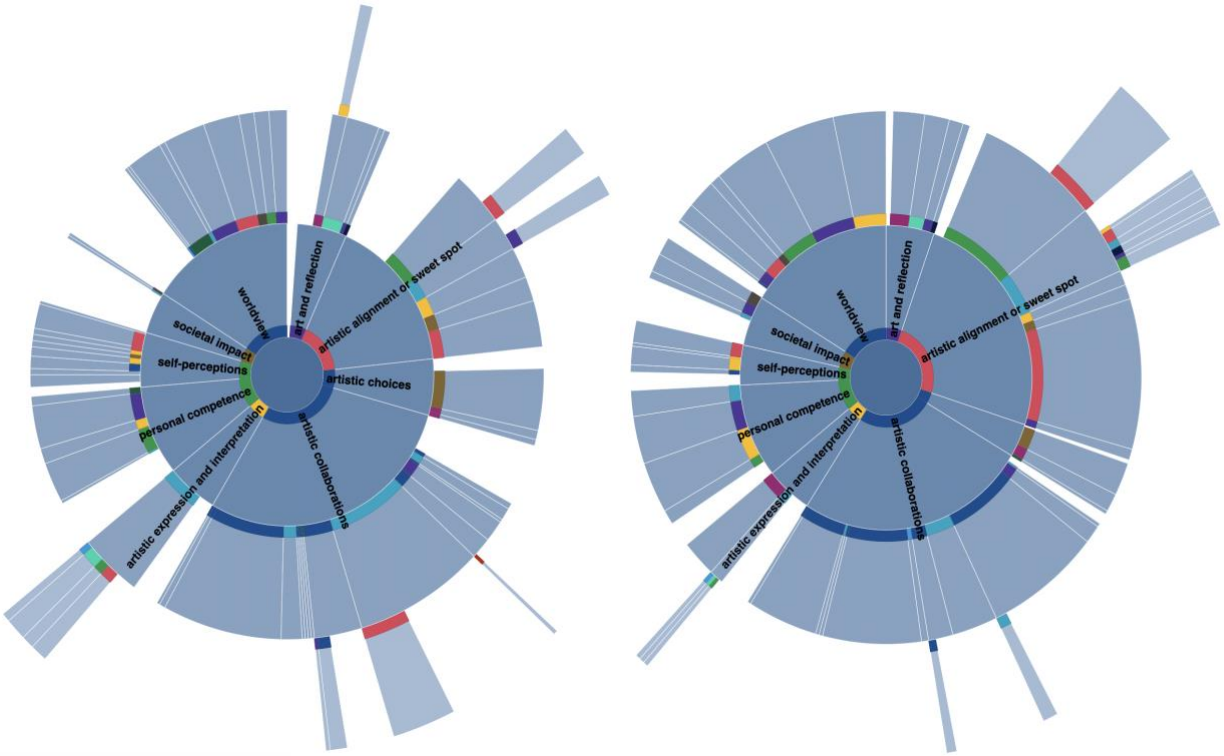
3. Artistic Identity and Vision

Artistic identity and vision encapsulate the larger conceptual framework on which an artist builds a sense of self, including artistic choices, alignment of repertoire, role interpretation and expression, reflection, and personal competence (Tkach, 2020). Self-perceptions varied from sensing a Divine calling, following a forebear, and expanding vocal possibilities, to feeling anonymous and navigating vocal limitations. This category also included worldview and societal impact, considering justifications for performing as a singer, artistic collaborations, and audience connection.

3.1 Self-Perceptions and Singing as a Calling

Many singers view their talent as a divine gift, positioning their artistic expression as a spiritual vocation above being a profession. Viewing singing akin to prayer, Frederica von Stade sees sharing music as vocation before career (Guinther, 2017). One soprano valued personal convictions over pursuing a career, viewing her singing as “a gift from the Lord”, freely birthing an aesthetic flowing from her heart (Suderman-Int). After finishing as a finalist at the Met Opera National Council Auditions in 1971, Suderman found her artistic niche singing oratorio, concert repertoire, and songs of faith, appearing in

the first *Messiah* Christmas Day broadcast from Vancouver in 1973, and compiling three sacred recordings with continued social impact: “People would write me from across Canada saying, ‘You sound like you believe every word you are saying.’ Well, I did. I have simply sung what is in my heart” (Suderman-Int).



Interviews *Case studies*

Figure 7 – Artistic Identity and Vision - Comparison of Interviews and Case Studies

This priestly or prophetic posture leads some artists to see their work as ministry, offering comfort or transcendence. Ben Heppner’s voice in its prime conveyed generosity and joy, creating an ecstatic operatic frisson (Wasserman, 2007), while others described his singing as sincere and heartfelt (Opera Canada, 1995). Another artist connected spirituality, integrity and singing with one’s true self and calling, involving technical mastery, meaningful material, and surrender, viewing breath as a function of the soul (Funk-Int). Likewise, Marian Anderson’s perceived role as the “high priestess of song” since her historic appearance at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939 evoked awe and transcendence, solidifying her as an American icon (Steane,1998).

Adopting a more prophetic role, Jon Vickers, despite facing resistance from his mother in pursuing professional singing (Williams, 1999), felt called by God: “I sang because I had to sing. It was part of me… an absolute necessity, fulfilling some kind of emotional and even perhaps physical need in me” (Vickers, 1969). Vickers challenged himself, his colleagues, administrators, and audiences to a high

standard of artistic beauty, truth, and love, matching his twin interests in art and its salvation, and Jesus and the salvation of the world (Williams, 1999, p. 299). Jon Vickers felt called to the operatic stage before he got there, through the encouragement of his father's friend (Williams, 1999). His successor in Canadian heldentenors, Ben Heppner, realized his calling during his career (Canadian Bible Society, 2023), recalling the beckoning voice of his forebear singing Tristan on CBC on New Year's Day in 1986 while making a pivotal decision with his wife Karen to seriously pursue singing (Heppner-Int).

Some singers express that singing brings them spiritual pleasure, reinforcing a sense of divine purpose in their career. One participant drew an analogy from himself to Eric Liddle of *Chariots of Fire*,

> "God made me to sing, and when I sing, I feel his pleasure." And that's, that's what kept me. I loved the feeling of singing. I didn't care about the accolades, about the applause, if as it were. I was, just loved singing! And that's what propelled me forward" (Heppner-Int)

Other cases where singing is enjoyed for its own merits include Eleanor Steber, whose agent Bill Judd described her voice as carrying a profound truth, emphasizing that, more than any singer he knew, she loved singing as much as breathing (Black, 2009, p. 52).

Some artists like Steber, Vickers, Heppner, and Howe stretched the boundaries of their voice by moving into heavier, Wagnerian roles. One day after an exhausting coaching, Martha sang Fricka's solo and everything fell into place effortlessly, reenergizing her. She looked at her coach and exclaimed, "Oh! I'm a Wagnerian!" (Howe-Int). Others like Garden, Anderson, Suderman, Funk, Butterfield, and von Stade specialized in repertoire suited to their voices, avoiding singing outside its parameters. In the words of the world's best-loved Cherubino, Frederica von Stade,

> "I have a lyric voice, and that's it. That's the bottom line. It's ridiculous to think of me doing Verdi, and I never will" (Duffie, 1987).

Describing himself as a "recreative artist" rather than a creative one, Heppner worked to coalesce the music, words, and drama together in a performance that made sense and had emotional and dramatic validity within himself (Heppner-Int). Heppner has been described as an "imaginative artist" in reference to his Wagnerian portrayal of Siegfried, where his blend of *bel canto* smoothness and emotional subtlety carried quiet pathos and radiant reflection (Freeman, 2006). This self-deflection may be humility stemming from his Christian faith and Mennonite background, and a hesitation to compare himself with Jon Vickers' intense interpretive power (Heppner-Int). Heppner speculated that Vickers' textual changes in *Peter Grimes* stemmed from insecurity and that Britten avoided homosexual themes until *Death in Venice* (Heppner-Int). However, Vickers saw *The Borough* as a study in universal rejection, and director Tyrone Guthrie, aware Britten's themes would not resonate in America, made the textual changes with Britten's approval—not Vickers (Halperin, 1993; Williams, 1999b).

3.2 Worldview and Personal Belief: Navigating Art and Ethics

A singer's worldview influences their role choices, musical interpretations, and balance of personal values with professional demands. Interviewees used terms like 'point of view', 'attitude', 'perception', and 'pursuit of truth' instead of 'worldview', reflecting its complex, multidimensional nature (Heidegger, 1995). Emphasizing how worldview shaped personal branding and presentation, one artist sought divine guidance for repertoire choices and performing opportunities (Suderman-Int). When character portrayals or thematic content conflicted with beliefs, ethical dilemmas could result. Having heard Heppner sing the small part of Walther in Peter Sellars' 1988 *Tannhäuser* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, director Ardis Krainik cast Heppner for the lead role in the 1992 premiere of Bolcom's new opera *McTeague* opposite Catherine Malfitano (Williams, 1991). In rehearsal, Heppner struggled with McTeague's swearing but reconciled his moral dilemma upon realizing the blasphemy was a narrative shortcut (Heppner-Int). In a later interview, composer Bill Bolcom reflected that he had rarely encountered such moral integrity—except in his own father (Heppner-Int).

Similarly, Vickers wrestled with himself and his convictions while weighing the moralities of his business and artistic dealings (Williams, 1999). Vickers insisted on projecting the moral dimension in his roles (Braun, 2015), based on his belief that each person possesses capacity for good or evil, exaggerating those facets within himself to become the character from the inside out (Bocking, 1974). His dismissal of *Tannhäuser* in 1977, citing Wagner's mockery Christ's redemptive power and his lack of connection to the role, earned the criticism of many of his colleagues, who surmised that Vickers' lack of facility in his high register had caused his refusal (Williams, 1999).

Worldview was indirectly expressed as a justification for singing. One soprano stated that if what she sang was from her heart, it was acceptable (Suderman-Int). The tension between entertainment and meaningful art has led some artists to elevate performance with deeper artistic and spiritual significance, distinguishing true art—culturally enriching and inspired— from low art, which focuses on profit and entertainment (Funk-Int; Turner, 2015). Struggling with guilt over performing, Vickers preferred the idea of farming or preaching, so he chose and interpreted roles with deep meaning (Williams, 1999). The impetus for singing was described by others as having a story to tell, moving audiences to see beyond the mundane (Butterfield-Int).

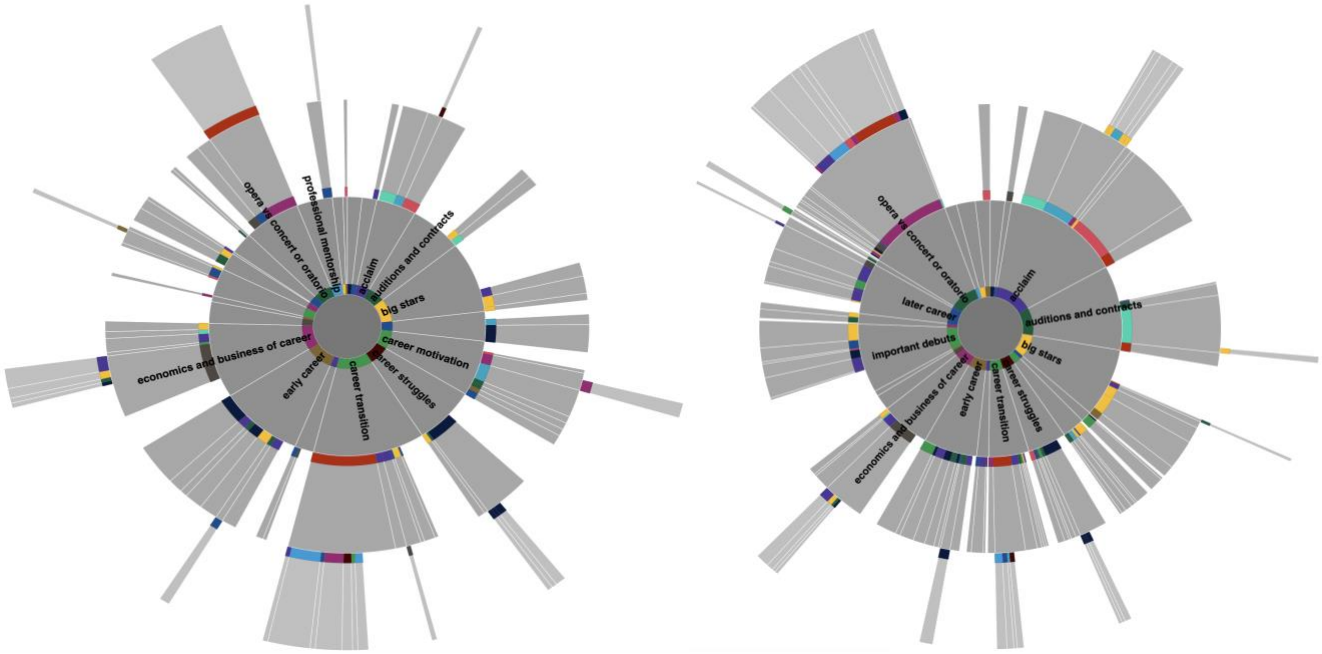
4. Career

The interviews highlighted aspirations of honing one's craft, supporting a family, and making pivotal career decisions. The elite case studies placed more prominence on auditions and contracts, repertoire, and public acclaim. Both categories emphasized the economic realities, struggle, and

vulnerabilities of the career, with more focus on early career in the interviews, and later career and legacy in the case studies. The interviews provided more insights into career motivations and transitions across the span of elite, international and regional performers.

4.1 Career Building and Motivation

Building a classical singing career in the late twentieth century was challenging, with the population of performing artists between 1970-90 increasing by 40% in the US with fewer jobs (McCarthy et al., 2001). When asked about the impact of worldview and spirituality on their career, one singer debated that the career and surrender to the Divine guided her, rather than abstract conceptions (Howe-Int). This approach worked because she endured for the intrinsic love of singing (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Others shaped their careers with self-determination (Evans & Richards, 2022), specializing in roles suited to their voices—von Stade's Cherubino, Steber's Mozart and Verdi roles, Suderman's oratorio work, Butterfield's evangelist and Mozart roles, Heppner's Wagnerian heroes, and Anderson's powerful rendering of spirituals. Voice type played a key role, and for those overcoming vocal challenges mid-career, like Martha, the journey could be unpredictable.



Interviews *Case studies*

Figure 8 – Career - Comparison of Interviews and Case Studies

Perhaps contraltos were misunderstood, Howe stating that opera directors didn't know how to cast a contralto, "Either I'm hired to sing my Rock Stallone low notes or to play some psychotic. Then, when I sing a character role, they pay more attention to how I act than to how I sing" (Herman, 1988). With

more performance opportunities in New York, Howe intermittently studied with Jane Randolph in San Francisco, where she optimized her breath and resolved Joan Sutherland's paradox of "two sets of muscles push against each other":

> "When I finally really figured that out [the breath], then then my whole top jumped in. And I had always had a flute register, where I could do Queen of the Night in flute register. But… I always figured that that had nothing to do with my voice. And when Jane...in those first couple of lessons with her, where…I demonstrated the flute and stuff like that. And she said, "Oh, okay, we'll just get that connected" (Howe-Int)

Stabilizing the connection with her breath enabled Martha to eventually cover the role of Clytemnestra with the Chicago Lyric.

Covering roles remained a crucial career step, as in Ben Heppner's earlier-than-expected debut at the Met in 1991, replacing an indisposed Pavarotti in *Idomeneo* (So, 2015). Covering roles is also common for established elite singers, as was the case for Jon Vickers, who stepped in for Richard Cassily in the CoC's second staging of *Aida* in 1964. With just an hour's notice, Jon Vickers replaced the accident-prone Richard Cassilly as Radamès, and delivered a solid performance (Schaabas and Morey, 2000). Similarly, Martha Howe substituted for Leonie Rysanek's *Clytemnestra* at the Chicago Lyric's donor's dress rehearsal without an orchestra rehearsal. Director Ardis Krainik (1982-1997) reminded Martha just before the performance that it had to be good, as important donors were waiting and the cover budget was on the line (Howe-Int). With Divine surrender and lessons with Jane Randolph, Martha sang successfully, with approval from co-star Eva Martón boosting her confidence; however, no future contract followed, reinforcing her view of the career as cruel and arbitrary (Howe-Int).

4.2 Economics and Business of Singing Career

A sustainable singing career requires early support, perseverance and strategic decisions. After winning the CBC competition in 1979, Ben Heppner sang with the Canadian Opera Company and relied on the support of family and friends during the "lean years" of his career (Heppner-Int). Exiting the profession to take a church job, Heppner relaunched his career in 1986, making a breakthrough with the Birgit Nilsson Prize in the 1988 Metropolitan Opera National Council competition (Heppner-Int). Adied by a Canada Council grant of $20,000 a year earlier kept him in the business just before his meteoric rise (Williams, 1991). Benjamin Butterfield's career progressed smoothly from a strong community foundation, leading to international opportunities after securing a Toronto agent (Butterfield-Int). Avoiding self-promotion or joining an opera company, Ingrid Suderman chose a regional career, balancing local performances with family and a faculty position at Trinity Western University during the 1990s for stability (Suderman-Int). Supporting a family in Toronto, Ian Funk carried mail and taught while performing but, lacking business motivation, transitioned to church pastoring (Funk-Int).

While Canada Council grants steadily increased (Harvey, 2011), the US National Endowment for the Arts, founded in 1965, halved its budget in the mid-1990s, shifting arts funding toward private endowments (McCarthy et al., 2001). Despite this, Met competitions continued to inspire singers. After moving from San Diego to New York in the 1980s, Martha Howe took temp jobs between singing contracts. She joined a law firm, Reboul, MacMurray, Hewitt, Maynard & Kristol, which employed opera singers, including Renée and Rochelle Fleming, as in-house temps. This setup provided financial stability, audition opportunities, and time off for gigs (Howe-Int). Howe called it a perfect match—opera singers thrived under corporate pressure, while the firm saved on temp agency fees (ibid). Still, financial strain led many singers to leave the profession.

At the upper echelons of the career, singers could set their fees, such as Jon Vickers charging $25,000 for a concert in 1985—a hard sell for Toronto-based General Arts Management (Williams, 1999). By the 1990s, fees climbed higher, with established soprano Cathy Malfitano making eight times more for singing *McTeague* at the Chicago Lyric than Ben Heppner, who was one of three people who could sing it (Howe-Int). Fees are not set according to effort or talent but are earned by having sung at big houses and garnering support and clout from your agents (ibid).

4.3 Threat of Vocal Failure

Great singers need great faith in two small ligaments in their larynx, that they will hold out and provide them with a sustainable career. Jon Vickers emphasized that singer's career hinges on the voice, making even a minor cold devastating. Despite months of preparation, an illness can derail everything, affecting not just performances but also financial stability and future security—all dependent on two tiny vocal folds in the larynx (Bocking, 1974). When artists must cancel engagements due to bad health, it can be alienating, so when Ben Heppner injured his voice due to complications with blood pressure medication in 2001, he offered to talk about it (Siff, 2005). A model of artistic courage, he overcame this setback, returning stronger with a 2006 *Ring* excerpts CD and a 2008 *Siegfried* performance (Wasserman, 2007). Similarly, Marian Anderson underwent a dangerous operation in 1948 to remove a malignant growth threatening to damage her voice. For two months she was prescribed complete vocal rest, unsure if she would ever be able to sing again, but her voice returned free of damage (Anderson, 1956).

4.4 Balancing Art, Life, and Values

To singers from backgrounds such as Mennonite traditions, singing is like breathing, and everyone sings (Suderman, Heppner, and Funk Interviews). They often express a preference for humility, community-driven music-making, and reject egocentric artistic culture, particularly when remaining

within a Mennonite faith community. Overcoming challenges, whether technical, psychological, or career-related, is often framed in terms of faith and perseverance. For example, when Ben Heppner lost performance opportunities after a vocal injury in 2001, he was tempted to pull back and lower family expenses, but his wife Karen convinced him to keep living life with faith that the money would be there every month, and it was (Siff, 2005).

Singers often navigate career choices where artistic ambitions clash with personal ethics, spirituality, or family. Internal conflicts can arise between a singer's onstage persona and private self, causing some to transition to teaching or pastoring (Funk-Int). Illustrating extreme career attrition, American tenor Jerry Hadley, never ascending the glittering pinnacle of the opera world, drove home one day and shot himself (Wakin, 2007). Some artists prioritized family or faith over professional opportunities, with one interviewee recounting, "I promised my kids I would be home on that day, and I am going to be home on that day!" (Heppner-Int). Others embraced smaller, more meaningful careers, rather than sacrificing their integrity and homelife for fame (Suderman-Int). Based on integrity, Benjamin Butterfield refused early performing opportunities to learn fundamentals and engage offers that were timely and right for him (Fusco, 1995).

4.5 Career Transition

Interviewees Martha Howe, Ingrid Suderman, Ian Funk, and Benjamin Butterfield, along with case study subjects Mary Garden and Eleanor Steber, transitioned from performing to teaching. Mary Garden, French opera expert, coached Helen Jepson as *Thaïs*, praising her "spiritual feeling" but clashing with Met manager Edward Johnson over costume choices (Duffie, 1985b). Martha Howe made the shift in 1998, relocating to Vienna to run an international studio (Howe-Int). Transitioning to teaching signals an identity shift, the end of a career, and perhaps an unfinished one. After Met manager Rudolph Bing sidelined her over personality conflicts (Black, 2008), Eleanor Steber concentrated on teaching, leading the Cleveland Institute's voice department (1963-72) and joining Juilliard in 1971 (Bernheimer and Blyth, 2008). Known for her drinking, she encouraged her students to loosen up with alcohol (Rubenstein, 1990), a habit that likely affected her career longevity despite her denial (Duffie,1985a).

Career transitions involving teaching music and voice benefit from the formation of an interdisciplinary and professional worldview (Teach, 2019). Easing into teaching, Benjamin Butterfield continued performing when entering the voice faculty at the University of Victoria and attaining full professorship in 2016. He carries the inspiration of his teacher Selena James with him while teaching students and instilling artistic reflection about the human condition through community outreach concerts, such as marking the 100th anniversary of the Armistice (Butterfield-Int). Butterfield links vocal study to the

human condition through culture, history, and physiology, finding truth through breath and song, and a clear mind to passionately connect things (Opera Canada, 2019).

5. Spirituality

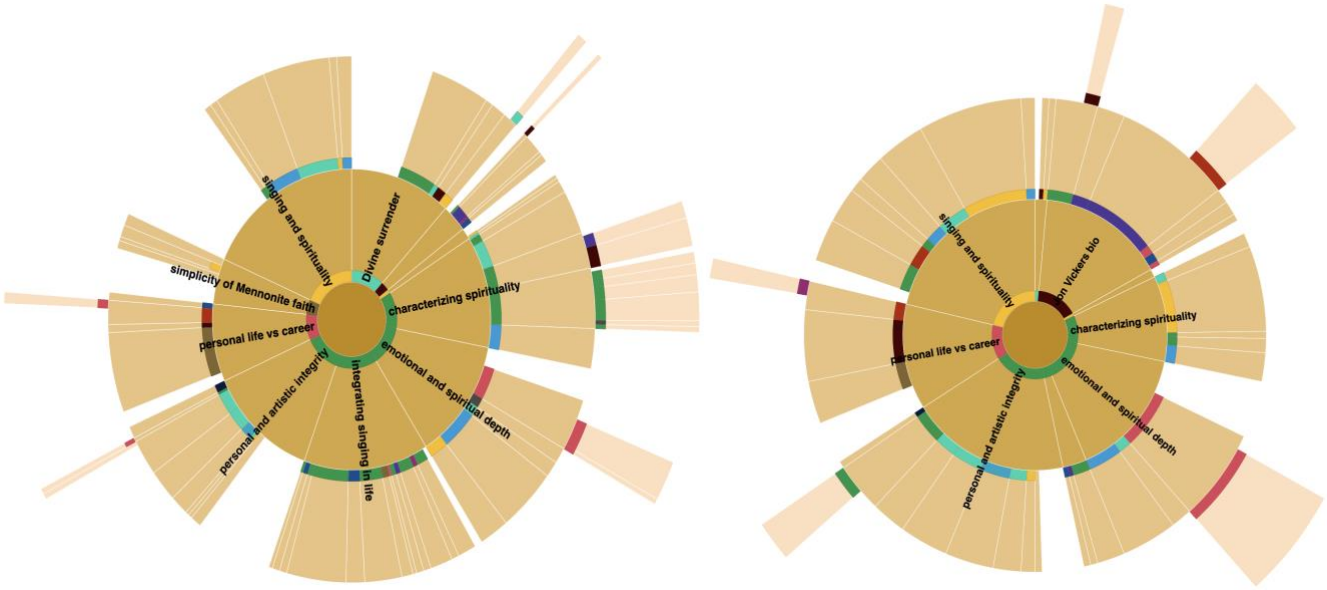
Conceptions of spirituality from interviews and case studies covered 30% of spirituality references exploring distinctions between spiritual background, religious doctrine, and spirituality as self-determination. Singers drew on faith, philosophy, and personal conviction to pilot their careers. One participant initially denied a spiritual framework but later revealed career decisions guided by strong spiritual boundaries. Ben Heppner, for instance, declined a La Scala offer to honor a promise to his children (Heppner-Int). Another singer viewed spirituality as a singers' individual relationship with God, helping them navigate the opera career independent of doctrinal impositions (Howe-Int). Being "dug in with a certain doctrine" was seen as limiting authentic storytelling and artistic expression of the human condition (Butterfield-Int).

From the case studies, Mary Garden's self-determined spirituality propelled her to the forefront of musical interpretation and expression in Debussy's *Pelleas et Mélisande* (1902), pioneering in art, music and psychology (Turnbull, 1997b; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Raised Presbyterian, Mary Garden did not operate her career from doctrinal faith, but from knowing her purpose and artistic destiny, expressing deep emotions of the human spirit (Garden, 1951). When interpreting Mélisande, Garden pursued artistic truth yet played a character whose words deceive—raising the question of whether artistic expression stems from inner feeling rather than abstract theory, making the artist ultimately captured by their art (Abbate, 2012; Roberts, 2011).

5.1 Emotional and Spiritual Maturity

Given that the opera world is physically and emotionally demanding (Sadler, 2000) and much like a cauldron (Williams, 1999), classical singers must develop emotional, spiritual and intellectual fortitude. Emotional and spiritual maturity tends to be forged through hardship, as expressed by Canadian heldentenor Ben Heppner:

> "I consider those [desert years] the most important years of my career, when I didn't even have one!…I matured emotionally, and… spiritually, so that when the actual moment finally arrived, me singing at La Scala, and then the whole… career mechanisms getting into gear, I think that kept me safe from.. this equilibrium…that one needs in the career. I felt that that was part of those desert years" (Heppner-Int).



Interviews *Case studies*

Figure 9 – Spirituality - Comparison of Interviews and Case Studies

Recognition of vocal emotion through intonation matures from early to late adolescence (Morningstar et al., 2018), with research suggesting a female advantage (Turkstra et al., 2020). Singing directs pitch, loudness, and tempo, with sadness and tenderness featuring lower dynamics and perturbation variance, while anger, joy, and pride show higher levels (Scherer, et al., 2017). Psychologist and neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017) argues that emotions are constructed through an interplay of brain, body, and culture, rather than hardwired, while social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2006, 2012) asserts that basic emotions are universal, influenced by social evolution and moral foundations. While Barrett's psychological constructionism challenges Haidt's universalist view of emotions, their theoretical incommensurability suggests a need for integration. Rolls (2023) further complicates the debate by challenging Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis, showing that emotions, though initially rooted in physical sensation, can function independently of it. This underscores the complex interplay between innate mechanisms and constructed experience in emotional experience.

For many singers, music is a deeply spiritual act—an expression of devotion, prayer, or transcendence. Frederica von Stade described *Ah! Non credea mirarti* as one of the greatest arias for the spirit (Duffie, 1987), while viewing singing as a function the soul helps singers communicate emotion and meaning, viewing art as transcending the individual (Funk-Int). Eleanor Steber describes, "For me singing is life! When I am singing, then I am a unified spirit… it is the only way I can fully share what I am" (Davis, 2003). Spirituality and faith form vocal technique, interpretation, and stage presence, creating an

authentic, spiritually aligned identity that is often kept private. One singer noted that spirituality is essential for good art, though most singers manage this aspect without discussing it, due to varying personal beliefs (Howe-Int). Expressions like "letting go," and "singing with freedom" were seen as spiritual experiences overcoming perfectionism (Suderman-Int). Divine surrender or yielding to an external force is central to artistic confidence and trust (Howe-Int). Male interviewees focused more on artistic reflection, meaningful material, and joy in singing (Butterfield-Int, Funk-Int, Heppner-Int). Jon Vickers viewed his career as a Divine calling he managed rather than surrendered to (Albright, 2001), and Frederica von Stade described singing as a vocation that connects deeply with God and prayer, arising from deep within (Spoto, 2000).

5.2 Artistic Expression and Role Identification

The ability to convey deep emotions is central to artistic expression, requiring singers to navigate the balance between professionalism and identifying with their characters. Jon Vickers completely immersed himself in roles like Peter Grimes, Tristan, and Othello, embodying their emotions from the inside out (Williams, 1999). While Vickers' emotional intensity and vocal force echoed Mary Garden's dedication to authenticity, their approaches differed in style. In keeping with aesthetic tastes at the beginning of the century, Garden's interpretations were marked by psychological delicacy and internalized spiritual connection (Turnbull, 1997), while Vickers' mid-century portrayals featured externalized physicality and dramatic intensity (Williams, 1999). A late century operatic hero discusses role interpretation as follows,

> "I often am not able to articulate the nuance of emotion and feeling about the role I'm singing, but I feel it. And I feel that I can… emulate the emotions that I'm feeling using my voice. But I think your inner self generally shows through when you sing" (Heppner-Int).

Authenticity reveals the spirit, though it's not a substitute for spirituality. Heppner, performing heldentenor roles, cautions that focusing too much on drama can alienate the audience; instead, the drama should emerge from the music, allowing the audience to share in the experience (Siff, 2005). Heppner's spirituality in singing emphasizes non-verbal expression, while Vickers' character portrayals reflected his own persona and worldview, authenticating his roles.

Performers can lose the boundary between personal emotion and professional responsibility. Ingrid Suderman, deeply moved while singing *La Voix Humaine*, wept so intensely that she forgot to drop the phone on cue, incurring the director's disapproval (Suderman-Int). After several mishaps singing at relatives' funerals, she learned to separate her emotions from the performance (Suderman-Int). This distinction between personal and performing personae contrasts with singer-actors like Vickers or Garden, who fully identified with their roles. Spirituality implies being guided by something beyond self, which can overwhelm emotion and self (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2013). Garden, in a 1915 interview,

explained how she didn't merely perform Mélisande but became her: "Mélisande is a woman of mystery. I never acted her—I became her" (Garden and Biancolli, 1951).

5.3 Transformative Experiences

Those who challenge societal norms or live in the "crunch zone" of societal splits often experience transformative artistic and spiritual growth (Pizzolante et al., 2024). For example, opera director Peter Sellars directed Heppner's 2005 *Tristan* in Paris to give King Mark a ten-second kiss, which Heppner found uncomfortable but dramatically effective (Heppner-Int). Martha Howe, facing the "cruel arbitrariness" of opera, shifted her focus from securing contracts to serving Divine purposes, leading to a transcendent performance supporting Jane Eaglen in her first *Götterdämmerung* at the Chicago Lyric, despite no orchestra rehearsal (Howe-Int).

Others found moments of integral alignment with their art and person, described by Suderman as singing effortlessly during three performances of Richard Strauss' *Four Last Songs* at the Queen Elizabeth theatre in 1981 as Evelyn Hart danced with the Winnipeg Royal Ballet on tour in Vancouver (Suderman-Int). Her experience was not only authentic, but also her spiritual side flowing freely. Fully inhabiting one's aesthetic was identified by Heppner in the role of Lohengrin, a Christ-like ascent archetype, and Walter in *Die Meistersinger*, an outsider entering the world of music and opera (Heppner-Int).

Twentieth-century classical singers, like my American mentors Joseph Shore and Martha Jane Howe, were pioneers in spirituality but faced frustrations in reaching their ideals. Martha struggled with the "cruel arbitrariness" of opera (Dunn, 2022), while Shore's heart issues cut short his Met career and work with Jerome Hines' opera troupe (Hines, 1982). After teaching at UBC, Shore objected to faculty hired for performance over teaching expertise. Spiritually, Martha shifted from Christianity to functional Buddhism, focusing on energy and breath, while Shore moved from Christianity to occult mysticism, influenced by A Course in Miracles (Shore, 1990). These examples show how the desire for spiritual experience can transcend specific doctrines (Watts, 2017), explaining the diverse worldview responses. Both sought to live authentically in their art, integrating their beliefs through their voices, artistic expression, and teaching.

Conclusion:

Summary of Results

The impact of worldview and spirituality in motivating a singer's career and informing their spiritual output was the intent of the study. The varying responses indicated that singers, even from the same faith tradition, viewed worldview and spirituality differently. This apparent disconnect can be viewed as

a finding when two ways of going beyond physical existence are differentiated, that of having nonphysical experiences (spirituality) and verbally explaining the physical (worldview). Successful singers can effectively perform spiritual and religious themes without personal belief, acting through compelling interpretation (Butterfield-Int). For most singers, spirituality guided artistic expression, dependent on aesthetic preferences of the time and the artistic identity and vision of the singer. The interpretation of roles by Jon Vickers or Mary Garden involved complete self-identification, while the more careful portrayals of Ben Heppner or Frederica von Stade maintained a boundary between self and the role. This spiritual distinction could stem from an implicit worldview of submission to the authority of the composer or the music, fostering humility and resisting the grandiosity of fully "becoming" a character.

Examining singers' backgrounds, beliefs, and artistic visions revealed that worldview and spirituality seeded and shaped their careers, aligning with psychological motivations. Biographical content analysis showed formal religious backgrounds became more common among classical singers later in the century, contrary to societal trends. Spiritual turning points reveal need and fulfillment patterns: Martha Howe sought autonomy and a sense of self apart from a cruel and arbitrary career through Siddhi yoga and ashrams in NYC (Howe-Int), while Butterfield found purpose and a meaningful point of view singing *Messiah* after confronting his own beliefs (Butterfield-Int). Their experiences ally with self-determination theory, where autonomy, competence, and meaningful connection drive motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Worldview is apparent in singers' artistic alignment to roles. For example, Ben Heppner enjoyed singing *Lohengrin* from a theological standpoint, and Walter in *Die Meistersinger* from a personal perspective, suddenly finding himself in the inner circle of Wagnerian fame. Regionally successful, Ingrid Suderman rejoiced in God-glorifying soprano concert repertoire, aligning with her Christian faith. Ian Funk, now a pastor, chose faith over a public baritone career, integrating his singing expertise into meaningful storytelling while balancing performance with authentic expression. Like Heppner and Suderman, Funk stays true to his Mennonite faith, but its emphasis on self-denial limits exploration of ontological questions central to artistic identity (Josephson and Peteet, 2004).

Socio-political and economic factors alongside worldview and spirituality shape a singer's career motivations. Ben Heppner set spiritual boundaries, prioritizing family over important auditions. Economic conditions, like the NYC law firm employing opera singers in the 1980s and 90s, enabled Martha Howe's international career, while Canada's economic downturn in the 1980s led Ingrid Suderman to teach at Trinity Western University alongside performing. Politically, the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall opened Eastern European stages for Suderman and Trinity Western. Culturally, a shift from

religion contrasted with singers' biographies, in which over half in the latter 20th century began singing in traditional religious settings, including Benjamin Butterfield, whose family attended church nominally.

Study Limitations

While progressing with the study, the vast amount of material was challenging to collect, organize, and decipher meaningfully. The researcher admits the project was almost too much to handle, if not for it being a labour of love. It could take a lifetime to pursue these questions fully, and this exploratory foray into the topic provides guideposts for future analysis. In the final leg of the project, I had to switch from NVivo14 to NVivo15, which took time to learn. Therefore, the final deductive coding cycle was short-changed but provided acuity for parsing the data in the future.

Not all participants consciously factored worldview into career decisions, misunderstanding interview questions at times. One participant argued that career choices arise from concrete experiences rather than abstract ideals. However, results suggested artists implicitly align decisions with personal values. While not identical to worldview, these values often reflect a view of the world and oneself in it (Bichanga and Nzinga, 2024). Although not connected to religious background *per se*, participants with religious backgrounds were more likely to have an explicit guiding worldview.

Personal and Professional Development

Working on this project while teaching in my home studio has been rewarding, fostering balance between performance and pedagogy. I explored 20th-century North American socio-cultural, economic, and arts institutions, particularly the Metropolitan Opera's global influence. Insights from interviews and case studies enrich my understanding of vocal technique and expressive performance, treasured in a storehouse of curated advice. Singing, both spiritually and psychologically, reveals endless possibilities towards multiple meaningful possible worlds, shaped by time and attention. My goal is to become a well-rounded singer-artist, equipped to address unmet needs in vocal pedagogy.

Future Recommendations

From here the data can continue to expand and be parsed in a variety of ways, including more triangulation between the case studies, interviews, and biographies. Future studies could analyse how artists perceive the relationship between worldview and spirituality (Holmes et al., 2021) using discourse analysis to identify inner thought processes involved in forming beliefs and intentions. This analysis would enable clearer connections between artistic expression, motivation, and career management. Subsequent study would also benefit from the inclusion of 21st century singers, connecting them with the past in meaningful ways (Halperin, 1993).

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