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The purpose of this essay is to reflect on the notes I have taken in my notebook regarding the opportunities I had to explore, analyse, rehearse, and perform various theatre styles during last term's sessions, which have expanded my understanding of theatre's history while applying research to reinforce my learning. The research conducted by Esslin-Peard, Shorrock, and Welch (2016) indicates that written reflection, combined with maintaining a notebook each term, is likely to motivate students to contemplate their practice, cultivate independent learning skills, and gain insight into metacognitive practice strategies. To ensure I remain focused on the reflective process that informs my work (Oxbridge Essays, 2024)., I will utilise Gibbs Reflective Model (Gibbs, 1988). The aim of this module is to study and analyse a mix of different musical genres and put on short viewing showcasing our work and knowledge of the MT industry

During the first term of MT Laboratory, we looked into the genres of Golden Age and pop/Rock. I was familiar with the Golden age genre, but I conducted further research to familiarise myself with this genre (Pattera,2025). Rodgers and Hammerstein officially launched the Golden Age with their trailblazing Oklahoma! in 1943. The musical, which is considered Broadway's first blockbuster, ran for an unprecedented ~~at the time~~ 2212 performances and triggered a change in musicals that would remain for decades to come.

While I was familiar with the Golden Age songs, one of the songs we were going to be learning was 'Holiday' by Green-day. This song was in the style of pop/rock.

I was unfamiliar with the pop/rock genre so to help me gain a better understanding I completed research on the topic (Discogs, no date) Pop Rock is a style of Rock with a strong commercial slant (and associated radio exposure). It emerged in the late 1950s, to an extent taking over from the earlier Rock and Roll style. There is some overlap with the 1960s Beat style. This term can be used to describe rock music that follows the traditional "rock".

Throughout the learning progress leading up to the performance, I would listen to my harmony, study the music and lyrics. This helps me to understand when I need to accentuate end letters of words, remember cut offs and where I need to increase/ decrease my volume. According to Hajithomas, 2024

Lyricism and music have a close relationship, they provide precise verbal representation to the emotions and narratives that the music expresses, forming a partnership that enables a deeper level of engagement with the audience.

This term, I had the chance to perform a duet alongside a co-student. Performing "Somebody to Love" from 'We Will Rock You', this was enjoyable yet challenging. One aspect I found difficult was stage presence, portraying confident body language and maintaining eye contact while singing. Research by Thompson, Graham, and Russo (2005) indicates that strong stage presence can improve audience engagement and the overall quality of the performance. I struggled to remain expressive and connected with the audience while concentrating on my vocal delivery. This experience underscored the significance of non-verbal communication in musical theatre and highlighted a crucial area for my growth as a performer.

As a performer who typically sings in a legit or contemporary singing style, I had to adopt mixed belt technique in order for me to be able to sing the songs (O'Connor, 2022). 'Belting' is a contemporary singing technique that produces a high intensity, 'big', 'powerful' (e.g., loud) vocal sound (O'Connor, 2022).

Participating in my first lab project performance with my peers was an excellent learning opportunity. We collaborated effectively, blending our ideas and skills to produce a refined and expressive presentation. I really enjoyed the rehearsal process, particularly witnessing how our performance evolved with each session as we grew more confident and connected. Performing in front of an audience enhanced my stage confidence and provided me with a deeper insight into ensemble work. One area I want to improve for the next lab project is facial expression. I aim to be more expressive and authentic in my character to better convey the story to the audience. Additionally, I'd like to focus on making my transitions between songs smoother and more natural. These enhancements will aid me in becoming a more confident and captivating performer. Overall, the project was both challenging and fulfilling, and I'm eager to continue honing my skills, especially in preparation for upcoming live performance experiences.

In my second term of Theatre Lab, we focused on the works of Stephen Sondheim and the songwriting duo Pasek and Paul. Exploring Sondheim's complex, character-driven compositions helped me develop a deeper understanding of lyric interpretation and emotional nuance. We worked on pieces from musicals such as Sweeney Todd, which

challenged me to connect more honestly with character motivations and storytelling through song. In contrast, studying Pasek and Paul, known for their contemporary and emotionally resonant work like *The Greatest Showman*, pushed me to embrace modern vocal styles and vulnerability in performance. Their music often focuses on real, relatable emotions, which helped me improve my authenticity on stage. This term allowed me to experience two different musical theatre styles, one rooted in tradition and lyrical complexity, the other in modern emotional storytelling broadening my skills and deepening my appreciation for musical theatre.

While rehearsing 'The Ballad Of Sweeney Todd' I had to think of using articulation, this is because the lyrics are intricate and fast-moving, so clear enunciation is essential to tell the story effectively as well as this I had to think of using tone and colour as it has a darker, more ominous tone to match the mood on the other hand, as I was rehearsing our medley from 'The Greatest showman' which has a more modern vocal style I had to think about using a strong vibrato and making it sound bright. (Jennifer, 2023) states that "Singing with dynamics brings 50x more beauty to your performance. Professional singers use dynamics to create interest and intensity in their songs".

During this term, I was assigned to sing with the altos and soprano 2s in specific songs, which was a challenge for me since I have always performed with soprano 1s. I dedicated myself to learning new harmony lines by actively listening and practicing with recordings outside of class. I concentrated on isolating my part and singing along repeatedly until I felt assured. In rehearsals, I remained mindful of the other vocal lines so I could blend while maintaining my harmony. Additionally, I used sheet music to visualise and hear my part. It required patience and repetition, but I enhanced my ear and learned to trust my voice within a group setting. This experience has made me a more competent ensemble singer.

Performing in my second Theatre Lab project was a valuable experience that helped me grow as a singer and ensemble member. Through consistent rehearsals and focused practice, I became more confident in holding and switching between different harmony lines. I learned how to listen closely to other vocal parts while maintaining my own, which strengthened my ability to blend and stay in tune. This experience gave me the skills to adapt quickly when harmonies changed or layered in complex ways. Now, I feel much more capable of singing multiple harmony lines, and I enjoy the challenge and musicality it brings.

Upon reflection, I now recognize that Theatre Lab has played a crucial role in my development as a performer. Throughout the two terms, I have acquired important skills in vocal technique, character portrayal, harmony, and teamwork. Engaging with works from

composers such as Stephen Sondheim and exploring various genres like pop and rock pushed me to dive into new styles and emotional nuances, encouraging me to step beyond my comfort zone and enhancing my versatility. I have learned how to collaborate effectively, accept direction, and utilize feedback to enhance my performance. These experiences have not only heightened my confidence but also improved my adaptability and discipline. The skills I've acquired, including harmony singing, clear diction, and emotional storytelling, are applicable and will serve me well in other areas of study, whether in acting, voice work, or upcoming musical performances. Theatre Lab has provided me with a solid foundation, and I now feel more equipped and eager to tackle new creative opportunities in my training.

Bibliography

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