On Teaching Musical Perfectionism:
An outlook on the adversities of systematic teaching and its ideologies

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ABSTRACT

This paper challenges how music institutions, whether university, conservatoire, or summer program, constrain creativity in performance training. Three principles will be discussed: 1) **performance as failure**, 2) the **power relations** within the private music studio, and 3) **stereotypes and objectification**, specifically of students completing a voice performance degree. This research will be based on my own experiences and observations as a voice major, as well as the findings of scholars including, but is not limited to, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, Kim Burwell, Raluca Matei and Jane Ginsborg, Nicole Denise Jordan, and Dianna T. Kenny. Issues such as mental illnesses diagnosed in university music students such as anxiety disorders and the negative social division of specific groups of students will be discussed. Sensitive topics including the marketability and degradation of music students, especially those studying voice, experienced within an educational setting will also be considered. Methods of analysis will include Kim Burwell's system of power dynamics (power to, power over, power with), Barlow's "model of anxiety", and field interviews. These methods will help confirm the existence of these creative boundaries within larger educational institutions. Ultimately, this research seeks to clarify the challenges facing these institutions and its student body. Several solutions will be offered to alleviate the repercussions felt by young musicians. These suggestions include the incorporation of courses focusing on interpretation, in-house counsellors geared towards performance students, and the integration of a pass-fail grading system.

On Teaching Musical Perfectionism: An outlook on the adversities of systematic teaching and its ideologies.

"Do it again, but do it better."
– University Voice Professor

Over the course of my musical studies, I have often questioned why my peers and myself have at times resented music and its performing facet. From a very young age, with my little feet dangling from the piano bench, I remember finding comfort and joy when performing, whether it was through showcasing my own compositions or participating in my local music festival. Yet later, when I began my university studies, I noticed that many of my colleagues were attending counselling on a regular basis in order to assist them in their musical and educational paths. For a long time, I wondered why this was the case. At times, I also carried the sentiment of failing my art, and thus myself, to the point where I started questioning my own career path as a performing artist. In truth, these uncertainties largely developed when I began my masters in voice performance in the UK, studying with well-respected artists and mentors. One could say that I had been quickly introduced to the business of music, shining light on all its angles. In this research paper, I wish to bring these doubts back to the surface and reflect on their possible origins. I will argue that a certain amount of reputable conservatoires and universities have been and continue to implement creative boundaries and stereotypes whilst adopting three dominant behaviours and practices 1) **treating performance as failure**, 2) **power relations** within the private music studio, and 3) the division of Musicians and Singers through **stereotyping and objectification**. Keeping these issues in mind, I pose the following question: at what point do these principles cross the line – when do they no longer cultivate the creative interpreter, and begin negatively influencing her? There is already a significant discussion in the literature that tackles these matters: through the lens of performance anxiety and stage fright (e.g. Patston 2014; Kenny 2006), the power relations in

private music studios (e.g. Fernández-Morante 2018; Burwell 2023), or the classical singer's body image and identity (e.g. Smeltzer 2017; Jordan 2010). By reflecting on my own experiences and those of my peers in relation to this literature, this essay exposes these social principles and will help uncover in which way these beliefs may unconsciously or nonchalantly be employed within music education programs. My goal is not to criticize every musical institution and their methods of teaching, but to help clarify and alleviate doubts which may have at one point impeded the creative voice of musicians who have completed their studies through major institutions.

Daniel-Leech Wilkinson refers to the culture of classical music performance as a failure. He states: "The notion that to perform is always to fail".[2] To help his claim, he alludes to Theodor W. Adorno's *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction* and paints an absolute picture of the ideal, unachievable performance us musicians are all craving to attain.[3] In fact, with the evolution of video and audio recording technologies, this has allowed performers and teachers to build a repertoire of traditions and rules, creating the illusion of an idealistic performance, with its existence solely residing in one's creative mind. With each recording trying to outshine its previous one, Leech-Wilkinson clearly views these tools as an opportunity for comparison, a never-ending competition, and the pursuit of a perfected musical accuracy, making every performance close to an exact replication; leading us to the famous composer-performer stereotypical relationship, in which case the performer is viewed as a "slave" to the composer's notations, resembling a quasi-religious exchange.[4] Leech-Wilkinson even goes on to say that certain musicians hum the same melody: "Composers are godlike in their genius; their instructions must be faithfully followed; performers are the composer's loyal servants; the composer's intended performance is the ideal

[2] Leech-Wilkinson, "Towards a Practice of Musical Performance Creativity," 89.
[3] Leech-Wilkinson, 89.
[4] Leech-Wilkinson, 92 & 88.

model for all and for ever […]".[5] Furthermore, he addresses the popular opinion which regards performers and performances which do not follow this expectation as "Other", intrusive, and out of place.[6] In fact, the number of musicians that have challenged this belief and have succeeded in doing so can be counted on fingers. Surprisingly, many still believe that a performance cannot be respected if it is not faithful to the score; the untouchable *Werktreue*.[7] Because of this assumption, musicians and artists are then propelled into a world of comparison; who can execute the most faithful interpretation?[8] Being a singer at first, and then a composer, I understand this concept. However, I believe many contemporary composers would be able to see through its many faults. Having performed the works of many student composers throughout my undergraduate and master's degrees, most were often open to contrasting interpretations. This is why I agree with Kim Burwell in her article "Power relations in the music studio". Burwell mentions that the "Conception of students being "slaves to music" […] is a bit outdated […] but still there and 'pervasive'".[9] Due to this constant search for the "unachievable performance" and its inevitable sense of failure, musicians are most prone to suffer from mental illnesses such as anxiety disorders, low self-esteem, and imposter syndrome. In reality, classical musicians are those who are most prone to suffer from mental illnesses, whether psychological or physical, when compared to musicians of other genres.[10] Leech-Wilkinson specifies that it is due to the constant repetition of "simply sounding the system" and getting one's artistry and identity questioned and lost along the process.[11] One may argue that these difficulties do not simply arise from the feeling of failure

[5] Ibid, 94.
[6] Ibid, 94.
[7] Ibid, 94.
[8] Ibid, 92.
[9] Kim Burwell, "Power relations in the music studio," *British Journal of Music Education* 40, no. 3 (2023): 352. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051723000220.
[10] Leech-Wilkinson, 92.
[11] Ibid, 93.

through performance; there is much more which contributes to these challenges. Raluca Matei and Jane Ginsborg elaborate on this point by stating that music involves many other facets other than its performance. It involves: 1) competition, 2) criticism, 3) suboptimal social support, 4) high job demands, and more.[12] Musical institutions also highly prioritize talent over academic success and mainly provide authoritarian teaching approaches.[13] Interestingly, the number one reason for students seeking counselling in university programs is low self-esteem and confidence.[14] In a study conducted by Matei and Ginsborg at a UK conservatoire, it was evident that students studying voice were the group most likely to attend counselling.[15] One may assume the reason behind this particularity is the large focus on physicality imposed upon these students. This matter will be discussed in more detail in the penultimate paragraph of this essay. Another cause for such distress is the conception of "talent as a mysterious possession" associated with hysteria and artistic genius, according to Burwell.[16] Quoting Harald Jørgensen, she establishes that performance anxiety is manifested by the narrow-mindedness of musicians and institutions, chiefly focusing on producing a singular outcome: "the performer of high quality".[17] Intriguingly, psychologist Dianna T. Kenny affirms that "High levels of self-reported performance anxiety were also related to lower levels of confidence".[18] Therefore, it is appropriate to assume that most music students seeking counselling for low self-esteem and low-confidence also experience a considerable amount of performance

[12] Raluca Matei and Jane Ginsborg, "Why Do Music Students Attend Counselling? A Longitudinal Study of Reasons in One UK Conservatoire," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 71, no. 4. (2023): 419. https://doi.org/10.1177/00224294231168622.
[13] Matei and Ginsborg, "Why Do Music Students Attend Counselling? A Longitudinal Study of Reasons in One UK Conservatoire," 419.
[14] Matei and Ginsborg, 428.
[15] Ibid, 429.
[16] Burwell, "Power relations in the music studio," 351.
[17] Harald Jørgensen, *Research into Higher Music Education: An Overview from a Quality Improvement Perspective* (Novus, 2009), 179.
[18] Dianna T. Kenny, "Music performance anxiety: Origins, Phenomenology, Assessment and Treatment," *Journal of Music Research* (2006): 54.

anxiety. To fully understand the reasons behind the need for such counselling in a university setting, it is important to understand what these students are experiencing on a daily basis, whether physically or mentally. Kenny describes performance anxiety as a "general term for a group of disorders that affect individuals in a range of endeavours, from test-taking, mathematics performance, public speaking and sport, to the performing arts of dance, acting and music".[19] In addition to this, having experienced performance anxiety myself, I can attest that such bodily and mental distress can become debilitating. As adrenaline is pumping through the entire body 1) the diaphragm substantially stiffens, making the breath a laborious task for singers or wind instruments, 2) essential parts of the body become numb, cold, or sweaty, 3) one may experience "the shakes" as they are so-called, and 4) a most vigorous state of fight or flight is entrenched. This last symptom is often felt by many who suffer from anxiety disorders and not only by musicians. The fight or flight notion, which was firstly established by Walter B. Cannon is described by David K. Spierer et al.: "[…] a mechanism designed to get the body 'ready.' It is this branch (sympathetic) of the human nervous system, which greatly influences hormone levels in the blood to increase heart rate, blood pressure and body temperature, not to mention several other bodily functions."[20] Nonetheless, few steps have been taken to address this issue as it has yet to be accepted and recognized by musicians and larger institutions.[21] One solution I believe could greatly alleviate these feelings goes hand in hand with Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's suggestion. Leech-Wilkinson believes the score should be considered as "material for interpretation", where it is simply the starting point to generate an artistic experience.[22] He also believes our focus should

[19] Kenny, "Music performance anxiety: Origins, Phenomenology, Assessment and Treatment," 52.
[20] David K. Spierer et al., "Fight or Flight Measuring and understanding human stress response in tactical situations," *The Tactical Edge*, 2009, 30.
[21] Leech-Wilkinson, 98.
[22] Ibid, 96.

be geared towards a "sequence of feeling-experiences".[23] Similarly, in his essay, "The Work of the Performer", John Rink views the score as a "script" in order to produce a "reorientation of the relationship between notation and performance".[24] Whilst students and teachers should approach each performance with regards to its effectiveness, I suggest offering an interpretation class offered through the institution where many audio and video recordings of the same piece would be presented. Students would then be asked to elaborate on what they enjoyed or disliked. This would allow and reinforce the student body to form opinions based on their initial reaction rather than with repertoire traditions in mind. Such a course could also help musicians step away from the score and focus on the performance itself and its multiple interpretation possibilities. Although, as mentioned by Leech-Wilkinson, it is evidently difficult to form an opinion when musicians have been trained through a specific set of beliefs from a very young age.[25] However, such a course could be the first step towards leading our focus towards a performance's genuineness. A second solution could be to hire in-house counsellors which can help address the conservatoire's social culture which Matei and Ginsborg characterize with "pressure, competition, socially prescribed perfectionism, and a celebration of "star" players [...]".[26] When discussing this matter with a former high school classmate who attended a rigorous and demanding professional choral program, she said:

> "After I graduated, my mom recommended I go to therapy. At first, I wasn't sold because I thought, well I made it through and now I'm done. But she tried to explain to me that, no it wasn't fine or a normal experience to go through, especially in high school. But I think,

[23] Ibid, 97.
[24] John Rink, "The work of the Performer," in *Virtual Works – Actual Things*, ed. P. de Assis (Leuven University Press, 2018), 92.
[25] Leech-Wilkinson, 95.
[26] Matei and Ginsborg, 432.

> deep down, I thought it would make me weak to seek out help and talk to someone about it. I ended up going and when I talked about my experience over six years of high school, it felt validating to have a licensed professional assure me that what I experienced was definitely not a normal high school experience. I'd say it also affected me physically, in a sense, since I was constantly sick, mostly from lack of sleep and not eating well and virtually no exercise. It felt like every month I'd lose my voice after having a sore throat."

Matei and Ginsborg reinforce this solution by firmly stating that universities should employ great pedagogues over famous performers.[27]

The second concept often adopted by universities or musical institutions are the amplified authoritarian power relations found in the private music studio. As Kim Burwell has observed, many famous movies have been based on this very stereotype; she mentions movies such as *Whiplash* or *The Pianist* portray these extremes.[28] Although many movie directors have represented these power relations through a screen, not many institutions have tackled the elephant in the room.[29] Perhaps the reason behind this avoidance is the resulting consequence of a professor's concerns for their own egos and career advancements rather than focusing on benefiting the success of their own students.[30] When asking a former student of the Laurentian undergraduate music program if these power dynamics had affected her education, she responded:

> "I have this thirst to impress and it kills me when I have a teacher who won't acknowledge when they're impressed or are just eternally unimpressed by things [...] I like seeing when professors are using that power to uplift students [...] I think when power dynamics are

[27] Matei and Ginsborg, 433.
[28] Burwell, 351.
[29] Ibid, 351.
[30] Ibid, 353.

> working appropriately, a mentor [...] will make the effort to understand you, uplift you, and use their position of power to grant you power."

Another high school choir student had a different approach to this question:

> "He (choir director) was definitely on a power trip with us and used it as a fear factor to get his results. In retrospect, it definitely wasn't healthy since I was always afraid of making him angry over the littlest of things (ex: missing class for any kind of appointment, being sick, prioritizing other classes versus this one). I would say that the power trip helped us be exceptional for performances, but at the cost of our mental health and well-being. I think if they treated us with a little more respect or could've been a little less harsh (after all, we were just kids at the end of the day), it would've made the experience a lot more enjoyable."

In her research, Burwell speaks of three categories of power within the studio: 1) *power to*, 2) *power over*, and 3) *power with*.[31] In my experience, the last two categories are those I find most prevalent within the music studio. When teachers are acting within the "power over" parameters, students often feel compelled to follow their authority in order to feel that they are progressing.[32] Yet, more interestingly, Burwell often considers these power relationships as a two-way street. This is where "power with" comes in. She quotes author Monika Nerland: "Students who share the teacher's way of thinking and are familiar with the dominant discourses (are) likely to benefit more easily from the teaching".[33] In contrast, students may be demanding harsh criticism and discipline from their mentors. This may lead mentors to incorporate this strict method of teaching with all students, rather than a singular one. In response to this, Burwell offers a similar solution

[31] Burwell, 354.
[32] Ibid, 355.
[33] Monika Nerland, "One-to-one teaching as cultural practice: two case studies from an academy of music," *Music Education Research* 9, no. 3 (2007): 413. https://doi.org/10.1080/14613800701587761.

to the one provided by Leech-Wilkinson. She suggests "an element of negotiation where interpretation or expression is involved […]".[34] Yet, this does not exclude the challenges of comparison between peers and the sense of competition within one's studio. Simply put, as Burwell states it: "The tradition of classical music draws on a network of hierarchies, including standard skills, attitudes of perfectionism, family trees from great figures of the past, performance subject to examination or professional criticism, and competition for performance platforms."[35] Some may argue that comparison can often create healthy competition and help motivate students to work harder, achieve their goals, and instill discipline. However, the adverse effects of comparison in an educational institution can be detrimental. Inserting students in a non-realistic or uncommon performing scenario, such as the enforcement of a grading system, can be crucial to their self-confidence. Speaking from my own experience, I have performed in many non-realistic performance scenarios. For example, I have performed in large halls with only two panelists and a video camera, whilst each member of the jury meticulously followed the score without batting an eyelid, eagerly waiting to assign a number to the sound they have heard. One could argue that this setting would resemble the process of a professional audition. Yet, I would dispute that audition panelists are hoping and working towards finding a candidate to fill a position, leading to a potential future opportunity. In the case of a jury, it seems to be the most convenient grading setting, with no other outcome than the opinion-based number assigned to the student in question. I would be curious to know if this is why so many artists and performers despise the process of auditioning as it is not a natural environment for music-making, bound to inspire creativity, but it

[34] Burwell, 357.
[35] Burwell, 356.

is rather a game of comparison. When asking the same former Laurentian undergraduate if this was the case within her schooling, she responded:

> "We were in situations all the time where, you're number one, you're number two, you have the highest grade, you have the scholarship, those kinds of things were very attainable if you were the best […] I don't think it was the performance's fault that made us compare each other. I think it was the culture of criticism that was cultivated by the people in power."

Such settings can lead to the constant search for perfection – a personality trait that has been, surprisingly, poorly evaluated in musicians according to Kenny.[36] In fact, many musicians do not aim for perfection, however, when asking the same colleagues to define what "perfectionism" represented, they all responded with a different definition. According to Joachim Stoeber and Julian H. Childs:

> "Perfectionism is a personality disposition characterized by striving for flawlessness and setting excessively high standards for performance accompanied by tendencies for overly critical evaluations (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). It is a disposition that pervades all areas of life, particularly work and school, and may also affect one's personal appearance and social relationships (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009)."[37]

Unfortunately, these types of events and scenarios have been proven to potentially trigger certain anxiety disorders within students attending a musical institution. In her essay, "Music performance anxiety: Origins, Phenomenology, Assessment, and Treatment", Kenny emphasizes that performance anxiety is a learned behaviour. She explains that young children very rarely

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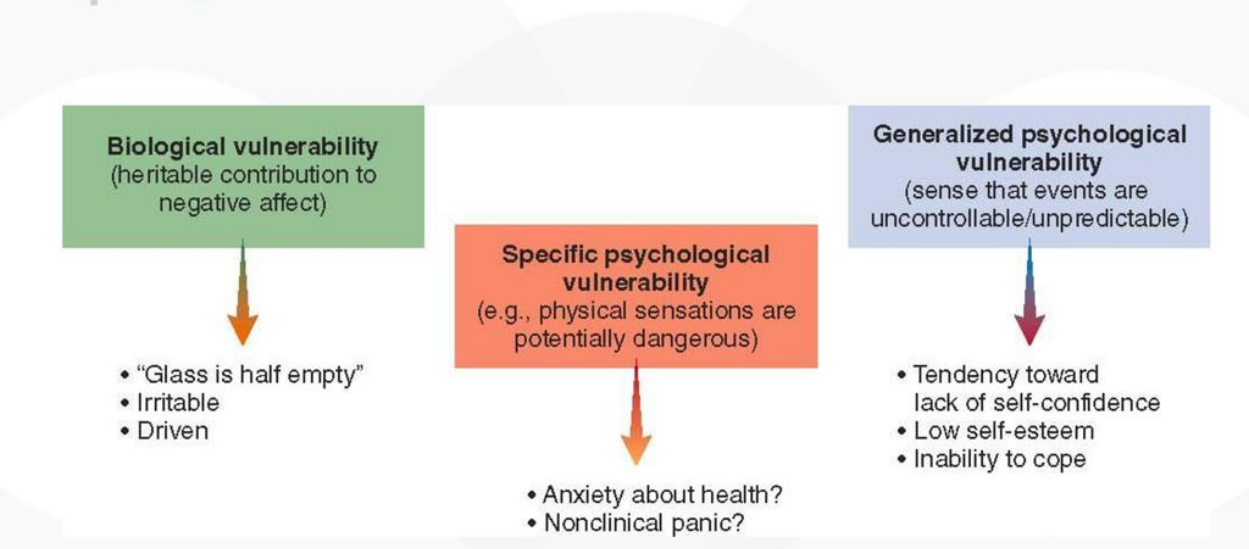
[36] Kenny, 55.

[37] Joachim Stoeber and Julian H. Childs, "Perfectionism." *Encyclopedia of Adolescence* (2014): 2. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1695-2_279.

experience such type of anxiety and that it is commonly seen in older individuals having had triggering experiences.[38] David H. Barlow's "Model of Anxiety", also known as the "Triple Vulnerability Model", is helpful in understanding this issue.

Figure 1: David H. Barlow's "Triple Vulnerability Model"



Within his model, Barlow establishes three vulnerabilities: 1) biological vulnerability, 2) specific psychological vulnerability, and 3) generalized psychological vulnerability.[39] The third vulnerability, the one most relevant to the matter at hand, focuses on learned anxiety from a specific event or an accumulation of events. When describing this ultimate vulnerability, Kenny states: it is "a more specific psychological vulnerability whereby anxiety comes to be associated with certain environmental stimuli through learning processes such as respondent or vicarious conditioning".[40] A feasible solution, one that has in fact already been adopted by several educational systems, is the integration of a pass-fail grading system in place of a score grading

[38] Kenny, 52.
[39] David H. Barlow, *Anxiety and Its Disorders: The Nature and Treatment of Anxiety and Panic* (The Guilford Press, 2002), 252.
[40] Kenny, 53.

one. In fact, many will argue that "music" cannot and should not be graded. In reality what is being assessed is everything in its surroundings: expression, communication, musical technique, language, pronunciation, score accuracy, stage presence, overall presentation, audience engagement, etc. To grade "the music" would be to grade creativity and instill interpretive opinions and boundaries. Many music teachers' approaches to their instructions are largely based on the way they have been taught.[41] This is why I believe institutions hesitate towards the alteration of their ingrained marking scheme. In response to this proposition, one may ask in which way higher education institutions will discern which student is better suited and most deserving of financial help and scholarship. To be clear, my recommendation does not constitute the abolishment of all grading systems for all educational purposes. Rather, I hope to see this shift in assessment within performance classes exclusively, where one's musicality, creativity, and expressivity is the subject being evaluated. When applying for a performance degree, whether at the undergraduate, masters, or doctorate level, each student is generally expected to undergo the process of a live or recorded audition in front of faculty members. It is in this instance that music schools and programs should base their decision, in lieu of founding their verdict on a biased, frequently meaningless numeral score. Evidently, grading systems and its logistics have been discussed by many scholars over the past decades. In a trial conducted at the Mayo Medical School in Rochester in 2006, a comparison of two groups of medical students, one with a 5-interval grading system and the other with a pass-fail one, were compared using the *Perceived Stress Scale*, *Profile on Mood States*, *Perceived Cohesion Scale*, and *Test Anxiety Inventory*. Results have shown that the group of students who

[41] Scott D. Harrison, et al., "Making music or gaining grades? Assessment practices in tertiary music ensembles," *British Journal of Music Education* 30, no. 1 (2012): 30. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051712000253.

were evaluated using a pass-fail system had less perceived stress and greater group cohesion.[42] Therefore, the pass-fail grading system could be applicable to fields requiring any sort of performance. Moreover, authors of this trial also believe a numbered system to be detrimental to the progress of students: "They specifically cite that 5-level, A through F, grading systems as creating a competitive environment that promotes anxiety and peer competition rather than collaborative learning."[43] Many authors have discussed the importance of such appropriate grading systems within higher education institutions. "Assessment is the single most powerful influence on learning in formal courses and, if not designed well, can easily undermine the positive features of an important strategy in the repertoire of teaching and learning approaches" emphasizes David Boud et al.[44] Music students are also very often placed in group settings and their musicality is repeatedly assessed within these arrangements (e.g. choir, chamber ensembles, duos, etc.) Scott D. Harrison et al. are one of few who have discussed this matter at large in their article "Making music or gaining grades? Assessment practices in tertiary music ensembles". One may wonder how students can be assessed when they are constantly in conversation, responding to the creativity and expressivity of others. Inevitably, they are reliant on one another, whether they intend it or not. Therefore, a numbered mark would nevertheless be influenced by one's musical entourage.

Finally, considering my own background as a classically trained singer, I aim to address the Singer-Musician relationship and stereotypes that have been observed by myself and other scholars within a university setting. In her text, "Musical Identity of Classical Singers: Musical

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[42] Daniel E. Rohe et al., "The Benefits on Pass/Fail Grading on Stress, Mood, and Group Cohesion in Medical Students," *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* 81, no. 11 (2006): 1443.
[43] Rohe et al., "The Benefits on Pass/Fail Grading on Stress, Mood, and Group Cohesion in Medical Students," 1443.
[44] David Boud, et al., "Peer learning and assessment," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 24, no. 4 (1999): 413. https://doi.org/10.1080/0260293990240405.

labels, stereotypes, and behaviour", Nicole Denise Jordan shares her own experience, having been a music undergraduate studying voice. She says:

> "It occurred to me during my undergraduate years as a voice major, that singers were perceived negatively. [...] Instead of being an anonymous squeak in a huge sea of voices in the concert choir, I registered to join the concert band. The head of the department of music told me that it was 'Very unusual for a singer to want to join in with the musicians.' When I arrived at university I knew nothing of these stereotypes. I didn't behave like a 'typical singer' because I didn't know that such a thing existed. I learned what being a 'singer' meant during my time as an undergraduate".[45]

Most interestingly, in Jordan's research and interviews of university music undergraduates, it became obvious that there were "negative attitudes and beliefs associated with the Singer label [...]".[46] This was mostly due to the belief of the poor musical abilities related to being a singer.[47] This points towards Jordan's idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy; singers may excuse their lack of studying and practicing due to this stereotype, therefore reinforcing the negative beliefs related to being a singer. When attending a choral conducting class at the university level, I have observed this self-fulfilling prophecy take place. As one of the sopranos was asked to identify the quality of a specific chord in the given music and was unable to do so, she justified this by expressing that singers only focus on one note at a time and explained that she should not be expected to know the chord quality by simply listening to it. In addition to this, it is often only the singers who are expected to enroll in "voice studies" classes which focus on stage presence, acting, storytelling,

[45] Nicole Denise Jordan, "Musical Identity of Classical Singers: Musical labels, stereotypes, and behaviour," (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2009), 79, https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/14650/.
[46] Jordan, "Musical Identity of Classical Singers: Musical labels, stereotypes, and behaviour," 57.
[47] Jordan, 57.

costumes, stage attire, movement and dance classes which primarily focused on the body, making it obvious that much more importance is being attributed to the voice students' physique when compared to the instrumentalists' course requirements. This is very much the case with students studying operatic roles. Costumes, make-up, wigs are all a part of the preparation towards a successful performance. In addition to this, many universities and conservatoires resort to employing non-faculty stage directors, praised for their success in professional productions. Yet, when working with such acclaimed directors, some may tend to forget that they are interacting with young, inexperienced singers in the midst of being carefully sculpted. Having worked with many professional directors over the course of my schooling, I have experienced this situation when performing the role of Concepción in Ravel's scandalous *L'heure espagnole* as a course requirement for our operatic scenes. I knew the demands of her suggestive character and I was more than prepared to act out this feisty role. However, on the day of the performance, only a few hours before the opening of the curtain, the stage director asked for me to strip down my original costume, leaving me in a sheer nightgown. It was something I was unwilling to do in an educational setting and refused her request. When receiving her feedback, I was surprised to read her negative comments, having been penalised for refusing this suggestion and was said to be difficult to work with. In any case, the social separation between Singers and Musicians within the university context can certainly pose a hindrance to any student's self-confidence and contribute to elements of social anxiety. In my own experience, I was often told to wear knee high dresses and heels. I was told that if I did not wear nylon stockings during audition panels, I would automatically be turned away. I was told that I had not won a certain competition due to my dress not being revealing enough. I have attended masterclasses where the main focus was on the singer's weight and proportions. I have been graded on the color of my heels. Like Jordan, I also had not known what

it meant to be a "marketable singer" before entering my undergraduate studies. To reduce the emphasis of a singer's physique, combat stereotypes, and decrease the separation between Singers and Musicians, I suggest the following: require all students, whether singers or instrumentalists, to attend classes where music performance is not the sole focus. All students should attend a public speaking class where attire, stage presence, and communication are discussed and workshopped. This would help lessen the physical focus merely imposed on voice majors and include all students in what I consider to be a course which teaches essential skills needed to establish a strong and meaningful musical career. It is important to note that perfectionist personality traits have been associated with a strong fear of public speaking. According to Roseanne Aiken, "Perfectionism is speculated to influence the severity of speech anxiety, given that those high on perfectionism may worry about falling short of some idealized standard of evaluation. [...] People striving for excessively high standards generally place exaggerated importance on mistakes, a basic feature of perfectionism."[48] In addition to this, when speaking with instrumentalists or singers that have not attended a university or conservatoire in pursuit of a music degree, they have conveyed a bigger sense of performance anxiety during public speaking compared to the act of a musical performance. Many webinars and external tools on public speaking are offered to musicians, but I have yet to encounter a required class at the university or conservatoire level which encompasses these skills, involving all music students.

In the end, these points are only a few challenges that face faculty members and their institutions on a recurrent basis. Perhaps many of these issues have yet to be addressed due to them being unnoticed by the larger academic system or simply because of the strict adherence to

[48] Roseanne Aiken, "Perfectionism and Public Speaking Anxiety: Social Self-Efficacy and Proactive Coping as Mediators," (M.A. Thesis, York University, 2008) 17-18.

tradition that follow many musicians in the same way many bow down to the notes on the page, the almighty *Werktreue*. These three principles: 1) performance as failure, 2) power dynamics within the studio, and 3) stereotypes and objectification of singers, have only been largely discussed by scholars within the last two decades, but are issues that have been encountered for a long time. Whether it is offering interpretation classes to all music students or implementing a pass-fail grading system, I believe these solutions can be applied to any style of teaching, whether through a university setting or a small locally owned music school. I am also convinced that if these propositions were to be applied towards students from an earlier age, a greater outcome would be perceived. It is crucial to begin addressing these issues within our higher education settings and implement solutions which will most likely not resolve the matter at hand, but certainly aid many of those who have felt or continue to feel the repercussions of these doctrines.

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