A RECONCEPTUALISATION OF MUSIC PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

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Abstract

Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) refers to the potentially debilitating anxiety experienced before and/or during the public performance of music, despite adequate preparation. MPA is generally treated by means of drug therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, psychoanalysis or various relaxation techniques.

This research aims to present a different approach to dealing with MPA, based on a reconceptualisation of the concept. As a result, it attempts to unpack all three concepts inherent in the term from both a psychological and philosophical viewpoint.

The study used autoethnography as a methodology, as I wished to explore my own lived experience of MPA and anxiety in general, in conjunction with that of my two participants, two other student Western Art music performers, and how our methods for confronting MPA within the performance context itself suggests a more complex understanding of performance and MPA than is reflected in the current literature. Thus the data was collected from two first-person interviews as well as a self-reflective written account.

The results of the analysis were that existential anxiety is potentially a contributing factor to MPA, and that performance itself can potentially provide the very means for overcoming not only MPA, but all forms of anxiety, due to the cathartic quality of music as well as performance, especially when the liminal or interstructural, nature of performing and its ritualistic function is explored. This exploration reveals the world and self-disclosing nature of agency and Play, or the potential within experiences to resolve conflicts and reveal otherness. This requires a degree of existential courage, or an affirmative response to the unknown, which is more relational than the definition suggests.

In conclusion, this study reconceptualises MPA as a potentially potent existential experience, and that the anxiety in response to it is considered as a reaction to the catharsis inherent in being an agent, rather than merely as an obstacle to be controlled.

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

> "You commune not just with the composer but with the inner world of the audience. You have to let go, and something new happens – and that is what makes it all worthwhile".
>
> (Helene Grimaud, concert pianist, on performing) (Culshaw, The Telegraph, 2002)

1.1 Background and rationale

Performance anxiety is defined as the experience of potentially debilitating apprehension about performing in a public context despite adequate preparation (Salmon, 1990). Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) refers specifically to performance anxiety which is experienced within the context of a musical performance. Current research describes the concept of MPA from a psychological viewpoint (such as Kenny, Ching, Reubart, Salmon, Klickstein and Csikszentmihalyi), whereas this research aims to incorporate a philosophical understanding of music, performance and anxiety by drawing from various philosophers and philosophical theorists, whether on anxiety, performance, music or the performance of music (such as Grosz, Dewey, Phelan, May, Sartre, Heidegger, Kramer, Langer, Macquarrie, Reimer and Cassirer) and thus explores existential anxiety as a potentially contributing factor in the experience of MPA. The existential, as described by these philosophers, is a philosophical concept pertaining to the fact of being and one's relationship to that fact.

For the purposes of this research, I will focus on the performance of Western Art music, as that is my area of expertise, and since I, myself, am one of my research participants, and my experiences are of performing this genre of music, this necessitates choosing other participants who perform the same genre. In addition, research has revealed that performers of Western Art music experience more negative emotions than performers of other genres (Perdomo-Guevara, 2014) and as such seem more directly associated with experiences of MPA.

Philosophical literature suggests that all art forms possess transformative potential (Swanwick, 1994; Kramer, 1995; Williamson, 2004; Reimer in Campbell et al., 2008) and have the power to reveal self and world as both other and as more authentic (Cassirer, 1953; Heidegger, 1953;

Macquarrie, 1972). Furthermore, music, in particular, has the potential to restore depth and otherness to reality (Grosz, 2005) and is a powerful means of communication (Dewey, 1934; Langer in Elliot & Silverman, 2012). Thus anxiety in response to musical performance is potentially more than the psychological anxiety triggered as a result of projection, as it is generally considered to be (see list of researchers on MPA in above paragraph), but also the existential anxiety (Sartre, 1938; May, 1959) in response to agency as well as an uncertain attitude towards self and other in the context of expressing emotions not revealed in an everyday context.

Current treatments of MPA are influenced by the aforementioned emphasis on psychological anxiety in a musical performance context to be found in current literature. This research attempts to explore an alternative approach to the phenomenon based on the incorporation of a philosophical understanding of anxiety, as well as philosophical concepts such as agency, or the ability to act, ritualization of experience, liminality, or the interstructural situation and Play, or the creative attitude.

The rationale for this research was my own struggle with MPA since childhood, and was developed through a recent experience when I was asked to perform a series of four performances as an accompanist on the Arena programme in the National Arts Festival (NAF) in 2018. I suspected that the repeat performances as well as the fact that the music was very technical and not entirely within my comfort zone were factors which could potentially prevent me from accessing the ecstasy I needed in order to overcome my MPA, as it would be more difficult to control my mood as a result. This proved to be the case during the first performance, in which my anxiety was so severe that I found myself having to stave off thoughts of stopping half-way through the performance. I managed to control my thoughts enough to get through the performance, despite finding it extremely emotionally taxing. Upon realising that the audience had thoroughly enjoyed the show despite my inability to feel and express any form of ecstasy, I gained enough confidence in myself and the audience to relinquish my anxiety in the subsequent three performances and found them to be truly life changing experiences. During the performances it became evident that the means for overcoming my anxiety lay within the performance context itself. This notion was such a revelation to me that it altered

my understanding of musical performance as well as my self-perception, from that of someone with a precarious grasp on agency, to a feeling of being able to be a responsible agent.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) I decided to investigate other student performers' experiences of MPA, as well as their perspectives on the parallels between their performance anxiety and anxiety experienced in an everyday context. This research hopes to provide some new insights which consider the complexity of MPA, and as a result view the existing treatments in a more critical way. The findings of the research will shed light on the three terms inherent in the concept Music Performance Anxiety, and suggest alternative methods of treatment than currently advocated by professional practitioners and performers. My ontological framework is closely aligned with contemporary existentialism, especially the philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy (2007; in Wardle, 2016) whose anti-nihilistic attitude towards the revelation of meaning emphasizes its dependence on a radical exposure to the interpersonal.

1.2 Aims of the research

This research aims to explore the possibility of a performance context itself as providing the means for overcoming Music Performance Anxiety (MPA). Furthermore, it investigates parallels between anxiety in performance and anxiety in an everyday context.

This research also reviews the positive and negative aspects of current treatments of MPA.

1.3 Research question

The main research question is:

How do the lived experiences of performing music alleviate anxiety and thus suggest a more complex approach to interventions for Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) than exists in the current literature on MPA?

1.4 Methodology

This section presents a brief overview of the methodology selected for this research. Chapter 3 contains a more comprehensive account of the methodological procedure.

This research is a qualitative study based on the Interpretative research paradigm. Autoethnography was selected as method. Autoethnography is a methodology that draws from autobiography and ethnography and has close ties to phenomenology and hermeneutics (Ellis, 2011). It allows the researcher to insert their voice into the research in such a way as to include their narrative in the data being analysed (ibid.). Although this methodology usually involves solely autobiographical data, it is possible to include other interviews in the analysis (Wall, 2016), which I chose to do for the reasons previously mentioned.

1.4.1 Data collection and analysis

Three participants took part in this study: a third year student, a fourth year student and myself.

I conducted two Interactive, semi-structured interviews, making my methodology dual-method, in other words analysing my self-reflection with interviews conducted with individuals who have had similar experiences and are known to me (Wall, 2011). The interviews took place in an informal environment.

I transcribed the interviews myself and analysed the data immediately thereafter through employing bracketing and empathy (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999) as well as adhering to the tenets of the hermeneutic circle, in which texts are compared and then re-analysed (in Beachman, 2018). I used Thematic Analysis in this comparing and analysing of the interview texts, which is a method of exploring similarities and differences between interviews through generating and interpreting themes (Nowell et al, 2017). I continued with these techniques when discussing the data in conjunction with the literature. The themes generated were inductive, in other words using specific instances to enlarge theoretical concepts (ibid).

1.4.2 Research participants

The research participants were both student performers of Western Art music with recent experience of professional performances. One participant was a male pianist and the other participant was a female singer. I had worked with both – the singer in the NAF production and the pianist in an exam performing a two-piano piece the year before the NAF production.

1.5 Interview questions

I developed my interview questions in such a way as to ascertain the degree of MPA experienced by the participants as well as the levels of anxiety experienced in an everyday context. I was aware that both participants had recently gained in confidence and as a result felt confident in asking the question pertaining to overcoming MPA. I explained trait and state anxiety before asking the questions referring to those concepts.

What has been your experience of Music Performance Anxiety since childhood to the present day?

Do you think you suffer from any form of trait anxiety?

What effect do you think overcoming performance anxiety/state anxiety has on trait anxiety in an everyday context?

1.6 Chapter outline

Chapter 1 introduces the research and includes the background, aims and research questions. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature relating to the concepts inherent in the term Music Performance Anxiety; in other words music as an art form, and performance and anxiety, from both a philosophical and psychological perspective, as well as the current literature on MPA and treatments thereof. In Chapter 3 I present the methodology and research design for the study. Chapter 4 analyses my self-reflection and the two interviews conducted. Chapter 5 discusses the research analyses in relation to the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and

introduces new philosophical concepts. Chapter 6 provides a summary of the research, limitations and recommendations for further research as well as presenting my findings.

1.7 Ethical considerations

As my participants are both adults there are no ethical considerations other than anonymity, coercion and allowing them to ask for the removal of any material they are not satisfied with. Both participants signed an informed consent form to this effect, an example of which appears as an addendum in this research. They were aware that they could withdraw at any stage if the interview made them uncomfortable. My research was approved by the departmental ethics committee.

Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the literary context for my research. It provides a brief overview of the three concepts inherent in the term Music Performance Anxiety – music as an art form, the concept of performance and insights into anxiety – as well as the concept of agency, from two viewpoints, namely the psychological and the philosophical, after which the phenomenon of Music Performance Anxiety itself is discussed and a thorough overview and analysis of the current methods of treatment is presented. A short summary concludes the chapter.

2.2 A philosophical and psychological appraisal of Music Performance Anxiety

In order to fully understand the complexities of the phenomenon Music Performance Anxiety (MPA), this research begins with an in-depth overview of the concepts that constitute the term as well as the concept of agency. For the purpose of this research, these broad concepts are investigated from a psychological and philosophical viewpoint. Since there is no literature that I am aware of that a) considers MPA in terms of both existential and psychological anxiety and b) explores their potential alleviation through performance, I have sourced a variety of literary resources which supports these possibilities. Current literature on anxiety in general is usually dealt with from only one position, rather than a combined viewpoint, even in the case of Existential Psychology, which is a branch of psychology that views anxiety from a purely existential perspective, in other words deals with being-in-the-world exclusively (Needleman, 1963). This research attempts to link the disciplines of psychology and philosophy in order to attain a more comprehensive understanding of both anxiety in general and MPA specifically. As a result I have not delineated the two disciplines too emphatically.

2.2.1 Music as an art form

Music, as one of the arts, is an *expressive* as opposed to an *instrumental* skill (Cskszentmihalyi, 1990). This implies that it is able to convey emotional as well as intellectual qualities, such as imaginative evocations. Juslin (2019) defines emotions that are induced through music as musical emotions, which tend to be more complex, nuanced and indefinite than those

experienced in an everyday context. From a psychological viewpoint, the emotional impact of music lends it a potentially cathartic quality, as listening to or performing music has the potential to experience emotions outside of an everyday context and in addition to filter or transform them (Foxcroft, 2014). They may not even be recognisable as emotions as such, but as intuitions or qualities (Grosz, 2005). Allers (in Swart, 2016) maintains that music influences mood and hence influences the development of the mind. From a neuroscientific perspective, this cathartic potential is enhanced by the fact that musical information bypasses cortical functioning in the brain and enters directly into the emotional centres (the orbitofrontal, entorhinal and dorsolateral prefrontal cortexes) before conscious processing (Montello in Swart, 2016).

Philosophically, whereas science and practical skills explore reality in its actuality, art is seen as being able to restore depth to reality and in so doing acknowledge its capacity to be and to become Other. This form of 'otherness' is not that of the 'subaltern' or disempowered position referred to in much postmodern literature (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999), but that which is regarded as outside of the dominant narrative (Grosz, 2005). This otherness may be a more actual rendition of reality than that revealed through traditional science or even psychology, one more akin to the mysterious, intuitive, emotional quality of lived experience outside of reflection (ibid.).

The existential urge to restore depth to reality suggests that it is not always self-evident, that it is possible to live a life almost entirely superficially. This restoration of depth is thus potentially transformative, especially since, as Bergson (in Grosz, 2005) suggests, intuition is not possible without depth. Art's capacity to express this transformative, intuitive impulse makes it a very unique form of communication. The philosopher John Dewey (1934), in fact, regards art as the most effective form of communication that exists, since it is a mode of revelation of the hidden aspect of life that cannot be experienced in any other way. Art reveals the otherness of life, and is transformative because, as Lawrence Kramer (1995; 38) points out, "by dwelling with the other, mingling with it in an interplay at once inspiriting and threatening, the self can appropriate the fullness, density and specificity it would otherwise lack" . He regards music as an example of that which is other and when heard "makes the self vibrate and throb as something other" (ibid.; 56).

The philosopher John Macquarrie (1972) views this Other as reality itself, other because obscured. But according to him reality is not the routine, established everyday world which is defined largely through manipulation, but a world in which we are able to notice features of things and experiences that had hitherto been concealed or obscured. Heidegger (1953), likewise, articulates "authentic existence" as a modified form of everydayness. Thus the idea of what reality is becomes expanded, and we become, through the medium of art, receivers of reality, rather than simply immersed in it and thereby exploiting it for our gain, to conform to our own expectations. This makes art, to quote Ernst Cassirer (1953; 8), "not imitations, but organs of reality". And music, particularly, according to Nancy (2007; 66, 67) is potentially an "opening of a world in resonance", a resonance which "hold[s] and open[s] the instant".

Music as an art form is quite particular in its potential as such an 'organ of reality'. Out of all the arts it is most able to transport its audience (Langer in Elliot & Silverman, 2012). Suzanne Langer suggests that this is due to the fact that, through music, the audience is given a wordless knowledge of emotional and perhaps even organic experience which is, as a result, not only for satisfaction, enjoyment or pleasure, but enhances conceptual awareness (ibid.). The jazz musician and physicist Stephon Alexander (2016; 189, 52) discovered that our physical world is in fact musical by nature, as revealed by string theory, and originally postulated by Pythagoras. He maintains that "complex structures such as stars, galaxies and planets arise from sound waves in the primordial plasma" and that the universe functions like an enormous instrument, a "symphony of vibrating strings". This, he suggests, is why music has the ability to evoke a sense of purpose and wonder.

The music philosopher Bennet Reimer (in Campbell et al. 2008) sees music as leading to self-knowledge, a form of self-knowledge which is not to be found in conversation or thought processes, but, as Keith Swanwick (1994) suggests, is rather a discourse in which we become more like the music in order to integrate it. Thus what is revealed is not only the otherness of the world, but the otherness of the self. Edwin Williamson (2004) refers to this potential within art as a "gnosis of the self", which he views as entailing a form of salvation. This other, latent self revealed through gnosis was most famously articulated by Jung (1963), who referred to it as Personality No.2, described as akin to an opening onto a landscape which was suddenly

illuminated by sunlight, a self which can hold its own against darkness. D.H. Lawrence (1921), likewise, referred to the two selves as the 'day-self' and the 'night-self'. This self is potentially that which emerges when the everyday self re-shapes (Swanwick, 1994). Music, through the medium of time, thus appears to hold the listener as well as the performer in attention and draws them into a reality which, because not visual, partakes of the same quality as the more hidden aspects of self and reality.

2.2.2 Performance

Musical performance, ideally, is a public form of self-expression which elicits a shared enjoyment of excellence (Green & Gallaway, 1986). As it relies on a degree of ego involvement (ibid.) it is also, to some degree, a public display of the self, a form of expression that cannot be taken back once expressed (Kenny, 2011). As a result, it is a rare opportunity to exercise agency in its most immediate and vital form.

From both a psychological and philosophical viewpoint, performance is viewed as a very healthy form of expression. This is due to the importance of the sharing that is inherent in all cultural experience. This form of public sharing goes a long way in alleviating the 'unknown' and 'unfound' nature of the self, the well-documented alienation of Individualist societies (Winnicott, 1982). It is an opportunity to nourish what Peter Sloterdijk (2016; 55) regards as a form of freedom of the personality, in other words "the potential for a behaviour that…is generous and self-possessed". Nancy (in Wardle, 2016; 345) regards this sharing as the "existential exposure to the world" which requires an implicit belief in its intrinsic and potential meaningfulness.

Winnicott (1982) views cultural life as an important intermediate area between dream and reality, where there is no sharp distinction between explicit and tacit communication. As such, it has the potential to stir unconscious material in the performer (and audience). In addition, the presence of another, in this case the audience, is crucial in releasing repressed energies (Swart,2016). Performing music thus, according to James Ching (1947; 20), "provides a convenient channel of escape for many of the different types of primitive emotional

drives…[which] are constantly struggling for expression" and can find their expression through performing to an audience.

However, that which cannot be taken back is also cause for potential feelings of shame and humiliation, shame being a feeling of exposure, whether in one's own eyes or of others, and the wish to be hidden. That which is hidden, and then publicly exposed, is a perceived failing of the personality (Auerbach in Kenny, 2011). Anthony Giddens (1984; 55) describes this exposure as the experience of the failure to achieve certain aspects of performance by being "caught out" in some way, the shared enjoyment of excellence horribly transformed into a sort of public hanging, from agent to interloper. Thus performance harbours within it the potential for either empowerment or disempowerment.

Philosophically, performance in its ideal, empowered form, is viewed as a means of acquiring knowledge that cannot be acquired in any other way. Helen Phelan (in Bowman & Frega, 2012) regards this knowledge as "performed wisdom", affording its performer a degree of insight into human life. She suggests that developing the intuition and skill necessary in order to perform generates a particular form of illumination. This, in conjunction with sharing an artistic intention, is potentially a uniquely potent experience. This illumination is also as a result of the varied modes of being inherent in such an act. She refers to performance theorist Richard Schechner's (in ibid.; 66) definition of performance as "a combination of 'being', 'doing' and 'showing doing'". For her, the element of "being" is what makes performance existential. The "doing" is the act of agency, and the "showing doing" is the deliberate sharing or the need to be relational (ibid.). The combination of inhabiting an existentially charged experience through agency and at the same time relating and sharing with others generates a particular attitude towards relatedness. Classically, existentially charged experiences were always viewed as solitary experiences, set apart from the domain of social relations, and usually not involving direct agency (May, 1950). Contemporary existentialism, however, acknowledges the importance of the interpersonal in generating these experiences and answering the call which they represent (Nancy, 2007; Wardle, 2016).

The existential, as well as the relational elements of performing require a large degree of existential courage. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this is viewed as the ability to face novelty with confidence, in other words without fear (Mazlow in Schneider & May, 1985), or, perhaps, despite fear. This could transform the performance experience into what Winnicott (1982; 76) refers to as contrived undertakings providing the conditions in which an individual can consolidate themselves into an expression of the state described as 'I AM'. From such a position, according to Winnicott, everything is creative. Thus existential courage allows an experience of Heidegger's (1953) notion that anxiety is the freedom to be either authentic or inauthentic.

As discussed in the previous section, the nuanced emotions potentially experienced and expressed through musical performance are developed through a natural transformation of everyday emotions, being "filtered" through the music (Foxcroft, 2014). Thus, what is unconscious and perhaps undigested becomes more self-reflexive (Juslin, 2011). In order to experience and convey these profound elements in performance, however, a performer needs to perform with a certain receptivity, which, Dewey (1934) points out, is not passivity, but rather perception. By passivity he is referring to a falling back upon a previously formed creative idea. Performing according to this kind of established idea is not enough to arouse a conscious awareness of the experience, undermining its existential import as well as the creative potential in performance. Similarly, Elizabeth Grosz (2008; 4) writes of the production of "artistic commodities", which direct themselves to pre-experienced emotions known in advance, guaranteed to affect in specific ways. For her, art should not just satisfy, but also intensify – to "resonate and become more than itself", so that what is produced are not just effects, but the actual material of art itself. This is even more important in an age where near perfect versions of musical pieces exist as recordings to be enjoyed at the push of a button. Performing a piece as a commodity rather than as an organic unfolding in that context becomes even more redundant than in the past, as the audience is already able to listen to the piece at any time outside of the performance setting. Interpretation becomes paramount, and, in my opinion, no interpretation can be better than that which manages to surprise itself and the audience during a performance. In order for novelty not to become yet another commodity, however, it would need to arise to some degree spontaneously out of the performance setting.

This spontaneity occurs most notably during the well-documented performing peak known as a state of 'Flow', a term coined by Mihaly Csiksentmihalyi (1990). Flow occurs when an individual's skillset and the challenge of a particular task are perfectly aligned. The resultant state is characterised by a merging of action and awareness through total absorption in the task, a feeling of spontaneity in which there is a sense of timelessness and an opening up of the lived moment. According to Csiksentmihalyi, it can be experienced through a trusting, open, curious mindset in which judgement is suspended and perfectionism relinquished (ibid., Singer, 1990). Dale Reubart (1985; 47) describes it as a form of passive attention which requires more strength and courage than "aggressive self-assertion". Thus performing may seem effortless, although requiring highly disciplined mental and physical activity. It appears that performance anxiety and Flow are to be considered mutually exclusive and that the experience of Flow is a huge incentive to eliminate performance anxiety as much as possible (Chirico et al., 2015). However, as Gerald Klickstein (2009) points out, in order for Flow not to become a form of escapism, it is necessary to keep in mind that it is not the only worthy performance experience, rather what is most worthy in performing, and indeed in all experience, is the capacity to be open to the new since, to quote Grosz, (2008; 77) "art…is not made for an already constituted audience, but in fact calls its audience into being". I would suggest that, in the case of music, it calls the performer into being as well.

In the current world of information overload and social media in which we live, the ability to nourish the Real, in other words that which is not operating merely along previously established ideas (Needleman, 1963; Butler, 1999), becomes all the more crucial in order not to live a life without depth and substance. Failing to do so could result in falling into what Franco Berardi (in Lubczonok, 2017; 836, 898) describes as the incarceration of the inner life, which has to align itself with the clearly delineated social structures and modes of being of the "cyber-capitalist machine" in a form of "techno-social domination". Despite the obvious advantages of the technological age, it presents potential dangers of a most pernicious kind. Robert Colvile (in Lubczonok, 2017) refers to the contemporary enslavement as resulting in 'The Overwhelm' in which excitation becomes the constant human condition and there is little time for recuperation. Lubczonok (2017) likens the technologically addicted self as similar to the 'porous' self of the Middle Ages (a term conceived by Charles Tayler), which lacked boundaries and thus was in a constant state of low-level anxiety. In this state of affairs, performance which is not enslaved to anxiety, but manages to transcend it, becomes an almost

sacred space, a potential to slow down the lived experience of the moment and open up its potential as Reality.

Certain philosophical concepts could potentially imbue performing with a degree of philosophical earnestness which could elevate it in the way suggested. The first of these is the concept of Liminality, which is an anthropological term pertaining to a stage in a ritual between other stages, in which there is a cessation of momentum in favour of consolidation (Brillenburg-Wurth, 2009). The term has been appropriated in literature discussing art from a philosophical viewpoint and is common in Postmodern literature when referring to a mode of being which is less heroic and more nuanced and inclusive (Freeman, 2010). The liminal can be articulated through an essay by Jun'ichiro Tanizaki (1977; 15) on the Japanese aesthetic, as opposed to the Western one. In terms of crockery he compares ceramic bowls to lacquerware thus:

> "Remove the lid from a ceramic bowl, and there lies the soup, every nuance and substance of its colour revealed. With lacquerware there is a beauty in that moment between removing the lid and lifting the bowl to the mouth when one gazes at the still, silent liquid in the dark depths of the bowl, its colour hardly differing from that of the bowl itself. What lies within the darkness one cannot distinguish, but the palm senses the gentle movements of the liquid, vapour rises from within forming droplets on the rim, and the fragrance carried upon the vapour brings a delicate anticipation. What a world of difference there is between this moment and the moment when soup is served Western style, in a pale, shallow bowl. A moment of mystery, it might almost be called, a moment of trance".

Where human agency is not directly related to survival there is fertile ground for the development of self-awareness. As such the arts are not merely an expression but a cultivation of our ability to live in a profound, in other words rich, nuanced and meaningful way. This extending, exploring and celebration of human agency in the ability to both create and discover meaning is what art does best. Grosz (2008; 6) sees it as having the potential "to slow down chaos… to harness and develop it…[so as to] exceed the bare requirements of existence". Thus art can act as a refuge, a doorway into the healing arena of duration. I use the term in the way Grosz (2005) uses it to refer to the "field" in which both Becoming and Being are revealed and in which they transform themselves, the slowing down of lived experience to allow for the New, to where life and chaos exchange qualities and time becomes an encounter with that which is Other. The cultural anthropologist Victor Turner (1987) regards the confrontation of

opposites found within the liminal arena of art as being capable of producing the highest degree of self-consciousness. It is an opportunity to consolidate, and can achieve what is usually regarded as only accessible through meditation or prayer, in other words what D.H Lawrence (1921; 149) describes as a “way out” of the vicious circle of anxiety, namely “not to rush around on the periphery, like a rabbit in a ring, trying to break through, but to retreat to the very centre, and there to be filled with a new strange stability”.

Susanne Langer (1948) describes musical duration in particular as a passage which has a different structure from practical or scientific time. As such it is set aside from everyday life in the same way that rituals are. Thus the second concept to be kept in mind when regarding performance philosophically is ritual.

The renowned conductor John Eliot Gardiner (2013; pxxxiv, 522), writes that playing music has the effect of entering an entirely different reality in which the act of interpretation ‘beckons’ to the listener and draws him into a responsive, complicit dialogue which turns the performance into a “communal rite” involving trust. This communal, ritual element of performance is often overlooked in the pursuit of perfection for its own sake. When acknowledged, preparations undergone prior to performance are best seen in the light of preparations for a *ritual.* An unsuccessful performance then becomes less of a devastating social failure and viewed instead as an opportunity missed. The opportunity to perform therefore has the potential to provide not only personal enrichment and the enrichment of the audience, but also allows the music to be the ‘organ of reality’ that evokes the Real (Cassirer, 1953; 8). The philosopher Charles Taylor (1985) holds a similar view of artistic creation. He asserts that what is revealed is not primarily the self, but a world. The creation of such a world is deserving of a ritualised mode of being. As Grosz (2008; 23) puts it:

> “Art engenders becomings, not imaginative becomings – the elaboration of images and narratives in which a subject might recognize itself, not self-representations…, confessions, testimonies of what is and has been – but material becomings, in which these imponderable universal forces touch and become enveloped in life… in which each changes some elements or particles with the other to become more and other”

This of course stands in contrast to traditional psychotherapy, where the narrative and confession is all important. In contrast, art, existential courage and the creative attitude presents the potential for a less solipsistic, and more integrated approach to healing. As a result "there unfolds both the becoming of the subject and the happening of the world" in which "chaos is both forestalled, framed and welcomed through a regulated, tolerable, if perhaps bracing and transformative dose" (ibid.; 8, 21) and the subject is both opened up to and co-creator of the New, both actor and initiate. This interplay between Reality as both new and discovered, the co-presence of Being and Becoming, is what makes experience and indeed life exhilarating in a true, not hyperbolic sense.

It is this 'performed wisdom', to return to Helen Phelan's (in Bowman & Frega, 2012) notion, that requires and creates the ritualisation of duration. Ritual is acknowledged to be vital for the healthy functioning of any society (Small, 1986). This emphasis on ritualisation, however, is in direct contrast to the way in which music is generally taught. We lack not only the intention to ritualise experience, but the ability to play with symbolic structures, to refer back to Csikszentmihalyi (1990). The final concept which I suggest is worth considering when viewing performance philosophically is that of Play.

The concept of Play is defined by Ellis and Singer (in Sutton-Smith, 1979) as the creation and subsequent resolution of uncertainty in a self-generative process which produces a certain attitude of open-mindedness, and by Sutton-Smith as the potential to creatively adapt (ibid.). Gardner (in ibid.) highlights the importance of Play to be linked to a skill so as not to become merely superficial. Like performance, it is viewed by psychologists as extremely health-promoting. Winnicott (1982), although not referring to 'liminality' as such, does refer to art and 'imaginative living' as an intermediate form of experience which is akin to play. He notes that Play written with a capital letter denotes a form of play which facilitates growth. He maintains that it is a form of therapy in itself. In this classic psychological context, Play is an opportunity for exploring vital cultural and emotional archetypal experiences. Singer and Singer (1979) suggest that Play strengthens furtiveness, a quality which is vital in maintaining a robust internal life, one which is threatened by mere compliance. As Winnicott (1982) notes, the fate of the internal life and its mode of relating to the outside world through compliance is what defines the difference between a healthy and a neurotic human being, ranging from over-compliance to neurotic omnipotence. In addition, Taylor (1985; 159) sees Play as vital in terms

of “transcending one’s predicament, which can also alter this predicament; either because we may come to see and feel it in a different way, or because [it]…may allow us to work through the predicament and come to terms with it…not, in other words, to remain inextricably trapped in the primary experience”. Thus Play not only strengthens the liminal quality of experience with its healing associations, but also the development of the self. Its deterioration results in an increase in neurotic behaviour – the very antithesis of true creativity (Winnicott, 1982). Turner (1987) sees liminality as always involving a form of Play, while at the same time existing within relatively stable systems. He notes the importance of ritual in creating the environment within which work and play overlap.

A remarkable example of this is found in Csikszentmihayli’s (in Singer & Singer, 1979; 215-216) psychoanalysis of concentration camp survivors. He discovered that there were numerous cases in which the ability to survive was directly linked with a creative stance towards life. He reports that

> “there were people who remembered the concentration camp as being the high point of their life…because there they were able to transform the situation in terms of their own rules…They had periods of storytelling, riddling, poetry reciting; remembering a poem was one of the greatest resources that any person could have in that situation”

The ability to create meaning in devastating circumstances through the Play experienced via art was so significant that it not only allowed these individuals to *survive*, but, despite all expectations, to *flourish* emotionally. For Csikszentmihayli this was an indication that retrieving these symbolic structures and playing with them must be something that we are severely lacking.

2.2.3 Anxiety

The word ‘anxious’ is derived from words meaning ‘strangling’ and ‘constriction’, suggesting an inability to move freely, and originally denoted sadness and disquiet (Kenny, 2011). David Barlow defines anxiety as a cognitive-affective defensive structure manifesting as a fight, flight or freeze response to sense of uncontrollability (in Kenny, 2011). Kenny et al. (2014) add that it is a response to external threats or internal emotional conflicts which are not threatening in objective terms, but rather, as articulated by Rollo May (in ibid.), to a value deemed essential

to the personality. Furthermore, anxiety can be distinguished from *fear,* as while fear is a response to a real, objective threat, and therefore easily resolvable (Reubart, 1985), anxiety is experienced in degrees proportionate to the subjective meaning a situation holds for an individual, and the reasons for his/her anxiety are usually unknown (Horney in ibid.).

Anxiety is either *psychologica*l (discussed in psychoanalytic literature), which exacerbates negative response to external stimuli, or *existential* (discussed in philosophical literature and existential psychology) (ibid.; May, 1950). The latter, also known as Urangst, persists throughout life and is regarded as a 'normal' anxiety, as it is not learned but intrinsic. Existential anxiety is regarded by philosophers as an awareness of non-being, an understandable reaction to the mystery of life, self and others, the anxiety inherent in the freedom and possibility revealed by the unknown (Sartre, 1943; May, 1950; Yalom, 1980). This freedom and possibility is heightened when confronting one's own agency (Sartre, 1943; Kierkegaard in May, 1950; Yalom, 1980). It is generally thought to be alleviated through existential courage, which (to add to the previous discussion of the concept) is an affirmative response to the shocks of life, which must be borne for the actualisation of the self (Goldstein in May, 1950). Through existential courage, freedom becomes the freedom inherent in the experience of unaided confrontation, a positive as opposed to a threatening stance (Sartre, 1938). Existential anxiety may be heightened depending on the society in which an individual is situated, for instance Individualist societies' emphasis on individual freedom commodifies the self, leading to a free, yet alienated individual (May, 1950). In addition, the discordance in the unity of modern culture since the Renaissance, namely the anarchy of completely opposing dominant viewpoints, has exacerbated the alarming prevalence of the ontological unknown (ibid.). Thus what makes the 'free' self anxious is "being-in-the-world as such" (Heidegger, 1953), because of the fear of "a separation from the very *possibility* of being placed…of being entirely at home" (in Abram, 1996; 196).

Existential anxiety is not dealt with psychoanalytically except within the branch of psychology known as Existential Psychology. Anxiety is, in this context, always existential, in other words psychological anxiety is always viewed existentially (Needleman, 1963; Yalom, 1980). Although this may seem over-simplified it presents an interesting perspective on the human experience. According to Existential Psychology, anxiety comes about as a result of the horizon

of experience being enlarged too rapidly, in other words the structures that maintain an individual's notion of the world being altered. Whether or not these structures are defensive is seen as irrelevant. What is emphasised is the anxiety inherent in being forced to come to terms with that which alters the perception of the world fundamentally (Needleman, 1963).

Psychological anxiety is viewed as learned anxiety, and seen to occur as a result of infant and childhood emotional trauma and uncertainty (Ching, 1947; May, 1950). It results in anxiety responses which are *neurotic*, in other words the uncreative anxiety in which an individual is unable to be an agent. Neurotic anxiety responses can lead to a neurosis, which is defined in psychoanalytic literature as an inner conflict involving both fear and desire (Freud, 1936). This is viewed by most psychological literature as stemming from a 'startle pattern' in infants which turns to anxiety through primarily ambiguous parental relationships (May, 1950). This occurs because the real fear, for instance, of rejection, is supposedly repressed and replaced with a set of defences. The interplay between the fear and the defences leads to a neurotic or compulsive reaction to situations. The uselessness of the defences results in helplessness, which exacerbates the situation. This is as a result of having to deal with threatening situations at a life stage when he/she was not capable of coping with them constructively (May, 1950; Ching, 1947). In addition, repression leaves behind particular associations. When these are encountered, they trigger neurotic symptoms such as neurotic anxiety, which is a defence against having to engage with the trigger in a meaningful way (Ching, 1947). James Ching (1947) also suggests that performing music requires the expression of spontaneous emotion, whereas this expression is largely repressed due to the nature of Individualist societies, resulting in another potential cause for neurotic anxiety.

Psychological anxiety is a form of trait anxiety, or anxiety which develops in infancy and childhood as opposed to state anxiety, which is momentary and more akin to fear, as it is situational (Brooker, 2018). William et al. (in Kenny, 2011) define the difference between the two types of anxiety as fundamentally a difference between context dependent anxiety and habitual anxiety. Trait/habitual anxiety affecting performance is felt to be caused by parental inconsistencies and expectations, those of peers and other significant others and/or negative performance evaluation from self and others. High levels of trait anxiety can increase the

experience of state anxiety as well as effect the way in which it is dealt with (Brooker, 2018). Existential anxiety could arguably be seen as a form of state anxiety.

Anxiety, whether psychological or existential, can seem to be an overwhelming cause of inner adversity. However, it is viewed by many philosophers as an indication of new possibilities for the development of the self, if not simply avoided. In the case of neurotic anxiety, this would no doubt involve a large degree of patient, intelligent awareness, despite psychic resistance. Not doing so could result in atrophy (May, 1950). The philosopher Rollo May (1950) suggests that selfhood depends on overcoming anxiety and, for Kierkegaard (in ibid.; 128), "in running from anxiety one loses one's most precious opportunity for education as a human being".

2.2.4 Agency

Ritualising performance not only enhances its potential for revealing and eliciting selves and world, but also for containing the potent experience of being an agent. In music, this not only involves creating a performance that would not exist otherwise, but also involves interpretation, or the act of making the music one's own.

Agency is regarded by the existentialist philosophers as "the alarming possibility of being able" (May, 1950; 82), in which, through one's potential as an active agent, the terrifying potential of actions becomes apparent. Agency can, however, alleviate existential anxiety if engaged in – as Dewey (1934; 165) points out, "Man finds himself more at home, since he is in a world that he has participated in making". From the point of view of psychological anxiety, it results in "a mode of expression that cannot be hidden or taken back" (Kenny, 2011; 79) and, again, can cause state anxiety and trigger trait anxiety. However, the act of agency in a performance context is psychologically viewed as one of the essential means of overcoming the alienation of not being able to share vital aspects of the self (Winnicott, 1965; 187). The move from experiencing agency as terrifying to enlivening requires existential courage (Schneider & May, 1985) as well as a healthy "desire to be relational" (Phelan in Bowman & Frega, 2012; 73).

In order for agency to be enlivening in the ways discussed it is not necessary for it to be significant outside of itself – performing well is a successful example of agency. However, it is essential that performance involves Play as well as an openness to "become more than itself", not just satisfactory (Grosz, 2008; 4), so as to be able to step outside of the ego fulfilment associated with agency lacking in depth. As Claude Barbre (1994; 177) suggests, in the uniqueness of each individual ability to be an agent, there exists "the potential that includes the irrational forces of lived experiences where human creativity and self-expression transcend the universalized interpretations of human behaviour".

This sense of personal liberation and strengthened relatedness experienced when overcoming anxiety through agency is explored in depth by the biological scientist A.D.M. Rayner (1997, 2004). He views evolution as not determined by the heroic 'survival-of-the-fittest', but rather through adaptation and transformation as a response to discovery, referred to as "evolutionary creativity". This distinction reveals a different concept of subjectivity – not as discreet entities fighting for survival, but as interconnected, even interdependent and compassionate identities. For him, uncertainty and frailty can lead to the realisation of the necessity to adapt and transform, as opposed to a "false positivism" which excludes it. He views play as essential in allowing this openness towards uncertainty and discovery and sees it as being of evolutionary importance. Again, play is to be seen as Play, in other words stemming from a profound curiosity, not just for the sake of enjoyment. The agency involved is not heroic, but "a dynamically balancing, intermediary agency" (Rayner, 2004; 70). Thus, to quote Dewey, "equilibrium comes about…out of, and because of tension" (in Leonhard & House, 1952; 90) since "through resistances encountered, the nature of the self is discovered" (1934; 292) and what is undergone is adaptation through expansion rather than simply contraction and accommodation (ibid.).

The relational nature of true agency is revealed by D.H. Lawrence (1921), in his essay on the Unconscious, as stemming from the experience of the child in the womb and extends beyond birth until the mother is consciously recognised as a separate entity. It is retained as a potential for relatedness and self-awareness that is healing and authentic, a "response from the deep dynamic centres [resulting in a] nourishing creative flow between…[one]self and another or others" (ibid.; 142, 246). This form of agency is in direct contrast to the classic disengaged

image of agency in which man achieves liberation and autonomy through action (Taylor, 1985) and can potentially be activated through the relational form of agency that is performance. As mentioned earlier, the profundity inherent in action rooted in relatedness is acknowledged by contemporary existentialism (Nancy, 2007; Wardle, 2016).

2.3 Music Performance Anxiety

Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) is defined as "the experience of persisting, distressful apprehension about and/or actual impairment of performance skills in a public context, to a degree unwarranted given the individual's musical aptitude, training and level of preparation" (Salmon, 1990; 3). Physical, cognitive and emotional effects are, as in most cases of anxiety responses, summarised as the physiological effects of adrenaline and the interplay between negative thoughts, such as fixating on failure or insecurity, and emotions, such as fear and humiliation (Ching, 1947; Salmon, 1990; Kenny, 2011). MPA can be focal, in other words only occurring during musical performance, or else occurs comorbidly with other anxiety disorders (Ortic Brugues, 2019).

Anxiety associated with performance is considered an intrinsic part of performing Western Art music, which calls for high levels of co-ordination (Ching, 1947) and is usually not severe enough to impact performance. In fact, a certain degree of anxiety is considered essential for optimum performance (Kenny, 2011). If levels of trait anxiety are already high, however, the performance setting can elevate anxiety to a debilitating degree (Kenny, 2009), or, at the very least, lead to defensive as opposed to creative playing (Fogel in McGrath, 2012). Performance anxiety is considered to be a defence, not merely a reaction (Kenny et al., 2014). What is defended against are the emotions such as guilt or a fear of abandonment that are triggered through projecting onto the performance situation, resulting in the manifestation of the trait anxiety most readily associated with the trigger (ibid.). The two types of trait anxiety that have been most commonly linked to MPA and performance anxiety in general are perfectionism and narcissism (Kenny, 2011). Perfectionism is a "striving for flawlessness" (Hewitt & Flett in McGrath, 2012; 31) and is viewed as the belief that a perfect solution to human problems exists and not discovering it will have catastrophic consequences (Cupido, 2018). In the context of performing it is the belief that a less than perfect performance constitutes performance failure

and a loss of self-worth, with the associated feelings of guilt and shame. It is differentiated from high standards in terms of mastery in that it is based on attempts at protecting a low self-esteem and is thus a form of anxiety. The availability of perfect recordings is regarded as fuelling perfectionism in those vulnerable to it (ibid.). Narcissism is the related experience of an inflated self-image masking low self-esteem marked by the anxiety related to exposure during performance, which can result in feelings of fraudulence and hence increased anxiety (Kenny, 2011) and is related to underdeveloped ego boundaries (Swart, 2016). Swart (2016) regards developing healthy ego boundaries as essential in order to overcome anxiety associated with musical performance. Trait anxiety is commonly treated through psychoanalysis or CBT approaches (Kenny, 2011). Aside from trait anxiety, the elements of personality associated with self-regard are also seen to be contributing factors, namely self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to achieve, and self-esteem, or the belief in one's innate worth (Sinden, 1990). These are also classically treated in the same vein as trait anxieties (ibid.).

The literature on MPA views anxiety from a psychological perspective (McGrath, 2012). It is not generally viewed philosophically as a potentially cathartic confrontation with agency and relatedness, but merely as an obstacle to be overcome, even if the overcoming of such an obstacle is potentially life-changing (Ching, 1947). MPA is, however, a very complex experience, more so than the manifestation of trait anxiety as it is considered to be (Kenny, 2011), as the interplay between performing and anxiety can evoke a very powerful response of both existential and psychological anxiety. From a philosophical perspective, performance in general provides an opportunity to connect with the world in a meaningful way without eliminating one's individuality, akin to the experience of love (Fromm, 1942). As F. von Schiller (1974; 28) writes, the performing arts restore "the gift of humanity" to the performer.

Ching (1947; 91) articulates the importance of working through the anxiety that occurs in response to performance and the resultant effect on our capacity for agency and situatedness thus:

> "Only in this way can we hope to achieve that sense of security and well-being which springs from co-operation rather than conflict between the different forces within us, to feel that sense of power and confidence which comes when we know we can face the world with all

> sides of our personality forming a united front, when we know ourselves to be free from the threat of a hidden 'fifth column' within, a fifth column which is liable to threaten us even in our moments of greatest triumph".

Due to the enigmatic nature of music, as well as the profundity inherent in the act of sharing with an audience in a public space while potentially engaging with unconscious triggers, musical performance can be regarded as, to quote Keith Swanwick (1994; 37), "a significant symbolic form…[masking a] hidden curriculum…[namely] personal and social enrichment". Not doing so runs the risk of maintaining what Baudrillard (in Smith, 2010) refers to as 'hyperreality', a paradigm that tricks consciousness into removing itself from genuine emotional engagement, such as technological addiction, or superficiality. This paradigm runs the risk of exacerbating anxiety, which is philosophically viewed as enhanced through experiencing the self as inauthentic (Macquarrie, 1972). MPA should be dealt with from this basis in order not to undermine the intricacy of the performance experience. Performing music is potentially an example of such an intricate experience and, in the culture of technologically based social engagement, such experiences become access points to more authentic experiences of self, other and the world. Thus sharing a musical performance has the potential to be a profound and rewarding experience if, and perhaps precisely because, one can overcome the anxiety inherent in it.

2.4 Synopsis

Music, being an expressive, as opposed to an instrumental skill, is considered capable of expressing emotions. It is thus potentially transformative on a personal and ontological level. The emotions expressed are not necessarily everyday emotions, but more nuanced, even more akin to intuitions or qualities. Thus they harbour the potential to reveal a different experience of reality and a different self from those experienced in an everyday context. Hidden aspects of everyday reality are brought to light, aspects that cannot be manipulated or exploited.

Performance, as a public form of self-expression, has a number of uniquely positive aspects, including being a means of alleviating alienation through sharing. It can also, however, cause distressing emotions such as shame and humiliation should this sharing fall short of what was intended, leading to a perceived sense of failure, even a failing of the actual self. However,

combining the usually solitary existential experience of encountering the self in a particularly self-conscious mode with the relational element of sharing may generate a particular form of knowledge about self and other. This requires a degree of existential courage as well as a certain receptivity towards the new, in self, other and world. It also requires a philosophical view of performing which could be acquired through considering the role of liminality, ritual and Play in performance.

Anxiety is a cognitive-affective structure which functions as a defence against loss of control and a perceived threat to the personality. It is differentiated from fear in that it is not easily resolved, nor is the cause objectively threatening. It is either psychological or existential.

Agency is an important experience whereby a dynamic, relational form of empowerment is expressed in such a way as to transform potentially anxiety-inducing confrontations into expressions of personal interpretation and meaningful action.

Music Performance Anxiety is anxiety with regards to performing music despite adequate preparation. Performance is both psychologically and existentially challenging, uncovering the trait and state anxiety inherent in any socially exposing situation. In addition, music is emotionally evocative. Thus the combination of music and performance is potentially a trigger for anxiety. However, performance can in fact be used to alleviate anxiety, as it provides a channel of escape for various emotional drives and requires a degree of courage which results in a form of sharing which is highly rewarding. Thus MPA indicates new potential in terms of understanding self and world, if moved through, not simply managed.

2.5 Methods of treating Music Performance Anxiety

Treatment for MPA can be divided into interventions that treat either the physical effects of adrenaline or the psychological manifestations that cause it (Reubart, 1985). This section provides a theoretical overview of these two approaches and discusses the benefits and limitations of both approaches to treatment.

2.5.1 Physical treatments

The fight/flight response associated with anxiety produces the chemical *adrenaline*, which causes a number of unpleasant physiological symptoms, such as an accelerated heartbeat, sweating and shaking, which in the context of performing music can be detracting to the quality of the performance as well as to the performance experience (Kenny, 2011). Holistic treatments are available, such as breathing exercises as well as relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation (Yueh, 2015; Kenny, 2011). The most common treatment, however, according to recent research, is drugs, and the most common of these are Beta-Blockers, with an astounding 80-90% of musicians taking them before auditions (Yueh, 2015). Beta-Blockers are a class of drugs commonly prescribed to patients with cardiovascular problems and high blood pressure. They slow nerve impulses to the heart, counteracting the effects of adrenaline, as well as lowering heart rate, reducing tremors and thus producing a calmer state of mind (Kenny, 2011; Yueh, 2015). They are reported by many students and musicians as being an important 'safety net' when there is concern that the physical effects of MPA will have a debilitating effect on performance (Klickstein, 2009). Klickstein (2009) suggests that they are effective as a last resort, as long as they are prescribed by a doctor. He warns, however, that they should not replace attempts to deal with the underlying causes of MPA nor interfere with the early stages of acquiring performance skills.

As with most medications, Beta-Blockers may produce a number of physiological and psychological side-effects. Physiological side-effects include insomnia and visual disturbance as well as mild psychiatric complications (Kenny, 2011). Prolonged usage slows and weakens heart rates, reduces circulation and narrows airways. They also have a high instance of psychological dependence. Thus long-term use is viewed as maladaptive (McGrath, 2012). But even in terms of once-off usage, they have been reported by some performers to cause a loss of performance intensity and mind-body awareness (Yueh, 2015). Classical violinist Austen Yueh (2015; 62) describes the experience of performing without Beta-Blockers in the following way: "Every passionate, adrenaline-fuelled solo becomes a testament to the power…gained in…pushing [one's]…capabilities". This brings more gratification as neither performer nor audience are cheated of "a soulful, genuine human performance".

Hanoch and Vitouch (in Kenny, 2011) suggest that this is because, in terms of evolution, high arousal states allowed humans to have a more rapid response rate. Thus, by slowing down the ability to respond, Beta-Blockers may dull the passion and expressivity of the performance. Kenny also points out that they protect anxious performers from the cathartic experience of re-conditioning emotional responses in problematic situations by dulling their ability to experience those emotions (Kenny, 2011). The prevalence of Beta-Blockers as treatment do indicate the importance of feeling in control of the physiological effects of adrenaline from the outset.

2.5.2 Psychological

In considering MPA from a psychological point of view, two schools of thought can be distinguished: the behaviourist model, which is concerned primarily with the observable symptoms of anxiety rather than causes outside of the immediate situation, and the psychodynamic model, which views understanding as vital to any attempt at combating anxiety in the long term (Reubart, 1985).

2.5.2.1 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a highly popular intervention developed in the last three decades based on both Cognitive and Behavioural theories of psychology (Harvey & Watkins, 2004; Kenny, 2011). Both theories share the same view of the human psyche as does Naturalism, in other words that it can be largely understood through science (Taylor, 1985). This view was largely a reaction against the introspection of psychoanalysis (ibid.). Behaviourism is primarily concerned with how individuals are conditioned to experience negative affects, relying on scientific methods of inquiry, and Cognitive Psychology is focused on faulty cognitions (Kenny, 2011). CBT, by combining both approaches, relies largely on controlling and replacing negative thought patterns referred to as cognitive-restructuring (Reubart, 1985; Harvey & Watkins, 2004). It is a form of ego psychology, in other words focuses primarily on a patient's ability to adapt to reality (Prince, 1999). It relies on a therapeutic technique known as Exposure, which, as the name suggests, involves being exposed to the stressful stimulus while relying on a set of techniques. Therapists give clients out-of-session activities and the therapy is psychoeducational, in that it aims to teach more adaptive

behaviour (Kenny, 2011). This, I maintain, is an advantage over psychoanalysis in that an alternative is offered, whereas the end result of a psychoanalytic session or process relies on the client's interpretation. In addition, it provides tools for potentially re-conditioning emotional responses, as discussed earlier. In terms of MPA it also has the advantage of focusing the performer on the music and away from themselves (ibid.). CBT is future-oriented, and as a result can help increase feelings of optimism, control and joy. Its focus on thought processes is health-promoting as this has been proven to temporarily alleviate emotional distress due to the amygdala, a subcortical brain structure, being associated with both emotional and cognitive function – thus focusing on one lessens the intensity of the other (ibid.).

CBT, however, not only focuses on thoughts but aims at suppressing them. This can be very useful in performance settings where thoughts are overwhelmingly intrusive. However, long-term effects of these techniques have been largely unsuccessful (ibid.), perhaps because, as research into Ironic Process Theory has discovered, the more you try to suppress thoughts or behaviours, the more prevalent they tend to become (Kenny, 2011; Burkeman, 2012) due to the fact that the thoughts and their associated emotions are not analysed with a view to genuine understanding (Kenny, 2011). Jacob Needleman (1963) points out that in order for any form of psychology to exist as a natural science it would need to preserve the meanings of the thoughts and manifestations it attempts to explain in order to gain sufficient understanding of the phenomenon.

CBT has been adopted by a branch of psychology specifically geared towards enhancing performance, known as Performance Psychology. It is largely used to treat sport performance anxiety, but is also applied to MPA. Aside from using techniques based on CBT, Performance Psychology also considers elements such as personality types and motivation, as well as social learning theory and attribution theory (Weinberg & Gould, 2011). This form of psychological intervention has been proven to be effective in the field of sport, but there is cause for concern in the direct comparisons made in most Performance Psychological literature between sport and musical performance, which can result in an over-emphasis on the 'athletic rigour' of playing music (Wilkinson, 2016) and also confuses the distinction between an art and a craft, which is unhelpful in terms of addressing MPA (Swanwick, 1994). Thus the equating of sport with music undermines the balance between Aristotle's notions of *techne*, or excellence in skill,

and *phronesis*, or excellence in wise practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002), which is the interpretative element of performing music.

Performance Psychology is strongly influenced by Positive Psychology, which is a form of humanistic (as opposed to psychodynamic) psychology using CBT techniques with an added emphasis on the benefits of positive emotions. It is aimed at enhancing well-being, consciously shifting the emphasis away from alleviating dysfunction (Boniwell, 2006). This is revolutionary in the field of psychology, as is its emphasis on relationships and accomplishments (Seligman, 2011).

Positive Psychology provides the theoretical framework for what is known as 'self-help' books, which are geared towards helping people who don't necessarily feel that they need therapists or coaches (Eirenreich, 2010). Examples of popular self-help books used in treating MPA are B. Moore's book Playing Your Best When It Counts: Mental Skills for Musicians (2010), which promotes the development of mental skills and positive thoughts and images, and The Inner Game of Music by Green and Gallway (1986), which suggests viewing negative thoughts as an inner opponent to "bypass" in order to reach one's potential in both life and performance. Books such as these have been reported to be inspirational to many people, including performing musicians who suffer from MPA, in that they offer tools to be used as soon as performance anxiety occurs. They can also serve as essential forms of inspiration and often fulfil the function of religion in its absence. The popularity of these books reveals the need for guidance in contemporary culture.

A number of writers and philosophers, however, have levelled critiques at self-help books as well as at Positive Psychology. Self-help books are a form of advocacy, which Bowman and Frega (2012) suggest runs the risk of becoming a political tool, rather than philosophy proper, as it instigates conformity to societal norms. Advocacy also encourages compliance, which is psychoanalytically regarded as creating and maintaining a false self (Winnicott, 1965). Ironically, the false self is regarded as depending on impingements and stressors in order to sustain itself, thus advocacy can exacerbate the anxiety it attempts to overcome (ibid.). Katrina Forrester (2015) suggests that all three (CBT, Positive Psychology and self-help books) form

part of the "new therapeutic practices of the happiness industry", which largely ignore the reasons behind unhappiness, aiming instead to simply enable people to be more productive. Barbara Eirenreich (2010), in addition, argues that positive thinking and the thought control employed by CBT is a "mass delusion" arising from Calvinism with its emphasis on productivity. For her, happiness simply replaced productivity as a goal that eclipsed the complexity of lived experience. Ian Craib (1994; 158) describes this eclipsed complexity as an "easy, 'optimistic' and…glib view of life" which is particularly dangerous as it can lead to the atrophy or even absence of the development of an inner world.

These critiques seem to warn against a notion of maturity or 'happiness' that focuses on success and less on, to quote the psychologist Elaine Schwager (1999; 197), "a capacity for paradox, involving owning one's dark side and transforming it to a place of dignity, [which] seems to value the 'pleasure principle' more than developing strength of character and compassion". Eric Wilson (in Eirenreich, 2010; 134) blames the self-help movement specifically for attempting to "commodify experience" and, according to Bowman and Frega (2012), commodify philosophy. In terms of the former, Walker Percy (in Smith, 1982) argues that when individual sanctity is turned into a 'value' it automatically devalues.

This critique of CBT principles and its influence was prefigured by philosophers and psychologists writing before the advent of these movements, who sensed a dangerous potential for superficiality in psychology. Otto Rank (in Barbre, 1999) warned against the use of knowledge for the purpose of controlling as well as predicting behaviour, as opposed to addressing the lived emotional reality of the individual. The philosopher Martin Buber (1937; 60-61) suggested that being overly driven towards one specific goal, as CBT and Positive Psychology instigate (and self-help books advocate) is to cease to listen to what emerges from oneself and become merely a "self-willed man" who continuously interferes with his own experience until he inhabits "a mediated world cluttered with purposes" which perpetually has the quality of the unreality. In addition, he warned against a psychology that involves a form of "magical thinking" whereby individuals desire to achieve effects without relatedness, which Craib (1994; 73) views as an extension of and regression to the infant's sense of omnipotence before the necessary reality-testing and therefore asks the question, "When is it a matter of personal growth and when is it a tantrum?"

Aside from being ontologically problematic, CBT and Positive Psychology embrace science as a valid means of securing support for their arguments. This in itself is not cause for concern, but, as Smith points out, science is limited in very important ways: it deals with instrumental values, but not intrinsic ones, it cannot encompass *meaning*, and is unable to deal with the qualitatively unmeasurable. To make matters worse, much of the research in this form of psychology is alarmingly spurious and inappropriately applied to unobservable phenomena, which results in a kind of omnicompetence, whereby psychology encourages an ideology of scientism (Taylor, 1985), or, to quote Brown et al. (2014), a "Romantic Scientism", which involves a simple scientific explanation of very complex phenomena as well as a lack of appreciation regarding the degree of empirical confirmation that is a requirement of genuine science. In addition, viewing the unconscious as unscientific (as CBT does) is a Newtonian, rather than a modern scientific paradigm, as modern science recognises indeterminism, contingency, the probability theory and the uncertainty principle (Reubart, 1985: Talbot, 1981).

Although CBT and the recent trends in psychology that draw from it are invaluable tools for overcoming negative habits in the short term, the relapse rate is too high to suggest a significant long-term solution to MPA (Kenny, 2011: Brookner, 2018). Furthermore, the world view from which such approaches stem can in fact increase anxiety by encouraging repression without sufficient understanding and increased productivity as an end in itself.

2.5.2.2 Psychodynamic

Psychology as a discipline began in earnest with the advent of psychoanalysis in the early twentieth century. The tenets of psychoanalysis are that human beings have an unconscious realm of awareness which is created from forgotten and repressed memories and experiences (Reubart, 1985). The memories and experiences are largely derived from childhood and their repression results in emotional patterns of behaviour. In terms of anxiety, it is believed that emotional processing of the anxiety is required in order to alter and alleviate it (ibid.).

In contrast to CBT, psychoanalysis focuses more on emotions than on cognition as well as placing a greater emphasis on self-reflection. It is believed that self-referentiality, or the tendency to relate experiences to the self, is a subconscious process which can be brought to

consciousness in order to achieve a higher degree of self-awareness (Strijbos & Glas, 2019). Treatment involves extended periods of discussing memories and emotions with a therapist in order to better understand the reasons for neurotic or dysfunctional behaviour. Insights are generated through interpretation in order to be able to make use of real feelings within relationships and experiences in a constructive way. Thus there is an element of 'narrativisation' of experience, which would otherwise traumatically lack meaning (Kenny, 2011). There are a variety of psychoanalytical subgroups, such as Freudian, Jungian, Existential, Art and Music Therapy. Most of these are geared towards uncovering information hidden from consciousness and enabling a unification of the self, because it is believed, as Jung suggests, that over and above alleviating symptoms, only a unified personality is able to fully experience life (Brooke, 1991). Existential Psychotherapy is the only branch of psychoanalysis that is not past-oriented and that actively includes existential concerns (Yalom, 1980).

Research by Lazarus and Abramovitz (in Kenny et al., 2009) suggests that many people suffering from performance anxiety reveal underlying psychological conflicts which need to be identified and resolved in order to allow their symptoms to abate in a more in-depth way than the application of short-term solutions allows. According to the psychiatrist S. Weisblatt (1986), anxiety occurs because the performance setting stirs unconscious conflicting desires from childhood. The audience, unconsciously, is viewed as a prominent figure, or representative of a general set of expectations from one's childhood. Prominent psychoanalysts, likewise, suggest that the influence of family socio-dynamics on infancy and childhood cannot be underestimated as a determinant of performance anxiety and that anxiety suggests a threat to the values which are originally the security patterns that exist between the infant and its significant others (May, 1950; Reubart, 1985). As Freud (1936) observed, neuroses and defences are adjustive, thus not necessarily integrative, in other words they don't permit the further development of the individual. These neuroses and defences can only be modified by an understanding of the purpose they originally served and a re-evaluation of their role within the present situation. Thus, the musical performer who wishes to be able to perform successfully should attempt to understand their own unconscious processes as fully as possible (Ching, 1947). In this way, the capacity for confidence, if lacking, can be rediscovered (Winnicott, 1960). In so doing, past experiences are neither dismissed nor dwelled amongst, but transformed through acts of agency. This would perhaps raise concerns regarding Existential Psychotherapy's neglect of this area of experience.

Psychoanalysis is not only invaluable in terms of uncovering material that is not accessible to consciousness (Lionells, 1999) but also as an important social activity in which cultural issues are addressed (Jacobson in ibid.). Critiques of psychoanalysis, or the psychodynamic basis of psychology, are less geared around ineffectiveness and more around their time-consuming methodology. In terms of MPA, Ching (1947; 84) suggests that part of overcoming nerves and developing existential courage is often the development of "an innate, dogged courage" which can seem contrasted to the sense of gentle unfolding implicit in the process of psychoanalysis. There are 'Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy' treatments (ISTDP) available for specific areas such as performance anxiety, although research into the effectiveness of these is not yet sufficient to deliver clear results (Kenny et al., 2014). Of the one or two high quality studies conducted, the results were modest to moderate and treatment delivery and quality seem as a whole to be unassured (Kenny, 2011). In essence, however, they are intended to focus on a particular critical moment in order to get the individual 'back on track', as opposed to the sustainable character change and increased emotional maturity aimed for in long-term therapy. This type of therapy is not intended for patients who suffer from depression, because of the level of optimism required. It has been critiqued within the field for endowing the therapist with too much power, whereby they are cast as a "magical expert". However, in its ideal form it is intended to provide patients with the opportunity to reassess their lives in order to embrace, mourn and to accept them (Critchley-Robbins, 2004).

ISTDP would not escape the critique posed by Positive Psychology, however, that the psychodynamic approach is too concerned with dysfunction and does not raise the bar in terms of what can be expected from an individual life (Seligman, 2011). There are also critiques that it (the psychodynamic approach) is vulnerable to a danger of falling into Cartesianism, whereby human experience is separated from the environment in which experience occurs because the psyche becomes the only meaningful reference point and, in a failed therapeutic outcome, can exacerbate a narcissistic retreat (Brooke, 1991). Binswanger (in ibid.; 8) describes this dichotomy as "the fatal defect of all psychology". Craib (1994; 165), likewise, warns of the danger inherent in a therapy that relies on extended use of verbal analysis in creating "internal scripts" and thus exacerbating the potential to create an "intellectual false self", in which the phenomenological experience of being is kept at bay. Lisa Beachman (2018; 27) regards this

tendency within psychoanalysis as a form of conceit, whereby language is regarded as the primary attribute of consciousness, rather than merely a function of explicit, as opposed to implicit knowledge. She notes the value in "perform[ing] an emotional experience" rather than narrating one.

In addition, the standard notion of the unconscious is a theoretical, inferential construct serving to explain certain psychic phenomena and as such runs the risk of advocating an incomplete view of the self (Needleman, 1963). Existential Psychology maintains that it also creates a biased distortion of the world as an *a priori* entity outside of the meaning it is imbued with (ibid.) As Sartre (in ibid.; 138) points out, psychoanalysis has "decided upon its own irreducible [value] instead of allowing this to make itself known in a self-evident intuition". Both CBT and psychodynamic methods fall prey to the contemporary critique levelled at psychology, that "[the] part of the self that is not a product of history, social interaction, biology, or culture but a conduit to another realm…is not explicable or interpretable by psychoanalytic theory" (Schwager 1999; 198). This opens up the potential for exploring such an aspect of the self, outside of the narrow confines of psychology, in the world of agency and relation.

2.5.3 Limitations of current treatments for MPA

The current methods for treating MPA fall short in that practitioners view it as a problem to be managed rather than as an opportunity for growth and development. Drugs such as Beta-Blockers only alleviate symptoms, not causes, and may be physically and psychologically addictive. Furthermore, they may be detrimental to the performance, both physically and in terms of delivering an emotionally-charged performance. Psychologically, treatments are divided into two approaches – Cognitive Behavioural Therapies and Psychodynamic therapies. The former involves thought control and suppression in order to control unhelpful cognitions which are believed to lead to negative affects. Its focus on reality-acceptance has led to other branches, such as Positive Psychology. Although CBT methods and Positive Psychology, are very popular, they do not reveal long- term effects as they do not address causes in any extensive form, and some of the methods used are ineffective, despite attempts to appear scientific. Psychodynamic therapies focus on uncovering unconscious material within the therapeutic setting. They are considered more effective as they do address the causes for anxiety. However, they are very time-consuming which makes them unpopular and are

critiqued for an over-emphasis on dysfunction as well as potentially separating the human psyche from lived experience.

Neither CBT nor psychodynamic approaches address existential anxiety, with the exception of Existential Psychotherapy which, however, fails to address defences originating in past experiences.

Treating the physical symptoms of MPA with the use of drugs is by far the most common form of therapy. However, considering the side-effects of the drugs used and the relapse rate for CBT, as well as research indicating that MPA often has a psychodynamic basis, there appears to be the need to introduce psychoanalytic principles into treatment which are neither simply glib advocacy, nor too laborious and time-consuming, which may not appeal to many professional musicians. In addition, the emphasis on enjoyment, as opposed to simply alleviating anxiety, as proposed by Positive Psychology, should be kept intact in order to avoid the kind of critiques levelled at traditional psychology. Striking a balance between depth and lightness is no easy task, and should be approached with a philosophical earnestness.

This research will attempt to provide a theoretical argument in favour of the healing potential within the existential courage and relational agency inherent in musical performance. This healing is not only with regards to MPA, but anxiety in general, both psychological and existential.

2.6 Conclusion

Music Performance Anxiety appears to be a complex phenomenon. As both music and performance exist outside of everyday experience, the anxiety invoked through performing music is indicative of both psychological and existential triggers. Current methods of treatment appear to be limited in terms of reflecting a deeper understanding of the condition. This research aims to suggest an alternative approach to Music Performance Anxiety, drawing on a combination of psychological methods of treatment and a philosophical understanding of the experience.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss my choice of methodology as well as the process of collecting, analysing and discussing the data. This process was in itself as cathartic as any performance, not only because it involved interviewing myself in an autobiographic way, but due to the process of comparing my story with others', which was a relational act, as was finding my own voice within the academic context.

3.2 Autoethnography as method

Methodology, as defined by Jayne Pitard (2017; online), is "the strategy…for undertaking research, including how and what data are collected and analysed". The methodology that is best suited to this research is qualitative in nature, employing an interpretive paradigm, which takes the ontological stance that there is an internal reality to subjective experience, as I am dealing with personal experience as opposed to numerical data (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The type of research that will be generated as a result is both strategic and evaluative, as I will be arguing for certain problems within my field of study as well as evaluating current interventions (ibid.).

I initially chose a methodology that relied on conducting a large number of first-person interviews, but then decided on a methodology that would also incorporate my own experience as I felt it was an important story to tell and would be valuable as a text to align with the stories of my participants. It also allowed me to interview performers with whom I had worked personally and in whom I had witnessed a transformation in terms of confidence and professionalism. I found the possibility of studying our experiences together very stimulating from both an academic and personal perspective.

The methodology I have chosen is autoethnography. It is defined as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to

understand cultural experience" (Ellis, 2011; online), and "endeavours to…scrutinize… dominant narratives, suggest alternatives and proffer viewpoints previously discarded as unhelpfully subjective" (Denshire, 2014; 831). As such it is an avant-garde methodology (Wall, 2016) which aims to disrupt the dualism of science and art (Ellis, 2011; online) as well as that between reader and author, attempting to elicit certain emotions in the reader, potentially sparking a journey of collaboration as opposed to a dry, objective reading (Stinson, 2009). As the name suggests, it draws from both autobiography and ethnography. Autobiography assembles memories using hindsight, especially memories perceived to have had significant impact on the trajectory of a person's life. Thus the researcher 'interviews' him/herself in order to explore his/her own lived experience. Ethnography is a study of a culture's relational practices, their common value systems and their beliefs and shared experiences (Ellis, 2011; online). As such, the autobiography is analysed in order to better understand certain cultural phenomena, even if culture is loosely understood to mean shared phenomena or the "sociological knowledge" that can "illuminate those small spaces where understanding has not yet reached" (Wall, 2016; online). The dual-method approach I have chosen, in other words combining autobiography with third person interviews (Wall, 2016), emphasises this ethnographic element. In my study I have chosen to interpret culture in this broader sense and not to delve into the Western culture of which the participants and I are part. I do, however, reflect on the cultural elements inherent in Western Art music.

Autoethnography has close ties to phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenology attempts to gain access to direct experience by examining an experience in the way that it occurs and in its own terms (Smith et al., 2009). Thus it prioritises reflection as its primary mode of inquiry, in other words an individual's own understanding of a lived experience (Foxcroft, 2014). It also concerns itself with "the existential situatedness of experience", the fact that all experience is subject to the dilemma of being in the world (Brooke, 1991). Hermeneutics "is the nature and means of interpretation" (Stinson, 2009; 36). Modern hermeneutics is largely based on the philosophy of Heidegger, who views experience as never entirely subjective, but always profoundly connected to reality, while postmodern hermeneutics draws more from social constructionism, whereby all experience is rooted in interpretation (Beachman, 2018). Ricouer (in ibid.; 7), as a theorist who represents a middle ground between the two, developed the notion of "the hermeneutic circle" to refer to "the recursive flow between…individual texts and understanding gleaned from other texts" during interpretation. Thus one "return[s] repeatedly

to the phenomenon itself so that it may show itself in ever deeper, richer and more subtle ways" (Brooke, 1991; 31). For Ricouer, the very nature of the self is hermeneutic as it is created through interpretation, both privately and intersubjectively. Thus he views the self as a "narrative self", and narratives as essential not only in creating the self, but as the only way in which human beings relate to time. This helps to clarify why Lichtenberg maintains that narrative is "the best paradigm for understanding how we give meaning to our experience" (Beachman, 2018; 28).

From a psychological perspective, the process of sharing a story produces a 'witnessing self' that is "able to integrate and articulate a comprehensible and nuanced testimony to their experience". This has been revealed to be a function of the right brain, being involved in creativity, distinct from the left brain 'interpreter function' that Gazzaniga (in ibid.; 35) suggests holds a 'running narrative' in order to maintain a sense of cohesion. I would suggest that not all story sharing automatically produces a witnessing self, but that the ability to experience an event as a story worth sharing, and more importantly as a story which is hermeneutic in nature, in other words has echoes beyond itself, is already an indication of a developed witnessing self. The telling of a story from the perspective of this self would strengthen the 'self-reflective function', which Beachman (2018; 3) suggests "underpins our capacity to understand the past, consolidate a personal identity and heal from trauma". In addition, it brings us into 'reciprocal engagement' with other cultures as well as our own, thereby enriching the environment in which we evolve through bringing together culture and self (ibid., 30). In selecting my participants for this research I looked for individuals who I felt had a strongly developed 'witnessing self' as well as a strongly developed self-reflective function, which I had noticed when conversing with them. I also feel that in sharing a story effectively, especially the kind of co-creation expected from the dual-method autoethnographic methodology, it is essential for participants to have a genuine curiosity about self and other as well as a certain emotional generosity in terms of an understanding, however unconscious, of the necessity of shared understanding and insight. In terms of writing my autoethnography I feel that I, myself, have also developed both of these characteristics to a degree which feels sufficient for the purposes of this research, namely sharing my experiences in an intelligent way which leaves room for interpretation and does not leave me feeling too vulnerable.

There are two schools of Autoethnography, the Evocative and the Analytic (Wall, 2016). The former is more purely phenomenological, more emotionally engaged and less linked to theory (Chang, 2008), invoking "an epistemology of emotion, moving the reader to feel the feelings of the other" in which "the narrative text refuses to abstract and explain" (Anderson, 2006; 373). The latter is more hermeneutic, thus more critical, and reaches beyond self-experience to engage with other texts and theories. As such it is usually dual-method, as my study is, combining autobiography with case studies or other interviews with individuals from the same cultural and experiential framework (Denshire, 2014; Pitard, 2017). I tend to agree with Wall's (2016) more balanced and moderate approach that takes a middle ground position between the two approaches. It is my opinion that phenomenology was an invaluable contribution to the study of the human experience, but I feel that simply immersing oneself in experience runs the danger of becoming disconnected from others and from a certain lightness of touch which always seems life-giving in comparison with the potential heavy-handedness found in emotional earnestness. I also agree with Kelly (in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; 400) that "the apparent distancing from experience…is essentially productive in the disclosure of meaning", a distancing which, to quote Bullough (in Langer, 1948), "does not imply an impersonal, purely intellectually interested relation…[but] a personal relation…of a particular character". As such, the "Personal Knowledge", to use a term coined by Michael Polanyi (1958; 67), or "inarticulate manifestations of intelligence by which we know things in a purely personal manner" that is shared through autobiography, is rescued from being merely subjective. This pure subjectivity is what Henry James (1956; pxi) refers to as "newspaperism" which always runs the risk of eliciting a 'so what?' response from readers (Wall, 2016).

This distancing is akin to Heidegger's (1953; 227) notion of Care, in which presence is always related to its "potentiality-of-being", in other words self-awareness in time. This opening up of experience in terms of temporality can only be made richer through the enlargening that occurs through comparing and interweaving autobiography with other, similar stories as well as texts. Erich Fromm (1942; 222) regards "the respect for and cultivation of the uniqueness of the self" as "the most valuable achievement of human culture", but sees the self as needing to be fundamentally related to the world in order to overcome the loneliness associated with solipsism. Charles Taylor (1985; 5), likewise, cautions against falling prey to the view espoused by Naturalism of the "disengaged image of the self" which is cut off from its community and hence its creativity. As a result of my understanding of the dialectic between

personal experience and interpretation gained from these writers as well as my own experience, I agree with Ricoeur (in Wall, 2016) that raw experience is less interesting than a degree of shared understanding gained from the combination of empathy and distanciation. In terms of autoethnography, in particular, Cozolino (in Beachman, 2018; 30) points out that the drive to share stories comes from the understanding that without securing the help of a diverse range of other individuals in the construction of new narratives, our personal stories "become closed systems in need of new input". I feel that this takes on an added significance for me being an only child and having spent so much time on my own. The ability to share and find enjoyment in shared understanding with others has been hard won. My inability to do so in the past resulted in a certain stilted quality to my emotional experiences.

My choice of methodology is thus not only practical, but personal. I feel that the healing and insight gained through sharing my story and allowing others to share theirs is invaluable, as well as the insights I have begun to glean from the culture of performing music, which until now has felt rather opaque. Each performer, including myself, seemed to find shared joy only at times of performing successfully, and not in unpacking the insights gained from overcoming the emotional hurdles to do so (or not). Autoethnography is known to be researcher and reader friendly, ideally enhances a cultural understanding of self and other, and is potentially inspiring and motivational (Chang, 2008). I can confirm this through my experience up to now.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

I conducted two Interactive, semi-structured interviews, in other words collaborative interviews with people with whom I already have an established working relationship, involving music and performance (Ellis, 2011; online). One was male and the other female so as to eliminate gender from the conversation. They are both involved with performing Western Art music and are both racially identical to myself, in other words Caucasian, so that I am free to explore our shared cultural conditioning as well as eliminate race as a topic.

I asked both participants the same question, in other words, "What has been your experience of performance anxiety since childhood?" Other questions arose out of the interview itself and were used to gain clarity, insight and depth as well as to keep the interview moving forward.

The only other structured questions I made sure to ask were "Do you feel you have any trait anxiety, in other words anxiety derived from your childhood?" after explaining the concept of trait and state anxiety, and "Do you feel that performing has had an effect on this anxiety in any way?" I reworded the questions to fit into the emotional tone of the interviews.

I conducted the interviews in a private setting in which the interviewees felt comfortable and created a tone of mutual intelligent conversation as well as empathy and analysis. In a qualitative methodology setting, empathy is defined as the ability "to understand a human phenomenon as it is lived in its context" (Kelly in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; 399). In an autoethnographic context, however, I would add that the more classic understanding of empathy is also applicable, in other words to feel the emotions of the other as though they were one's own, as I will have first-hand experience of the topic under discussion. The danger here would be to over-identify and not remain alert to all the differences between my own experiences and those of the interviewees and to allow this to cloud my ability to analyse the interviews effectively, as well as listen accurately, and lead the discussion into areas and conclusions it would not have naturally gone. In order to avoid this I employed bracketing during the interviews and subsequent data analysis. Bracketing is a term used in phenomenology to refer to the ability "to give up manipulation of the phenomenon in favour of allowing…[it] to show itself by an intimate communion with it", which brackets out our preconceived notions (Kruger in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; 140). As such, a more interesting collaboration becomes possible, an enlarged understanding, not just affirmation of preconceived ideas (a phenomenon known as "the vicious circularity of understanding" (ibid.; 424).

I wrote my autobiographical self-interview with feeling, but was also aware to only write about insights and experiences I felt were valid and appropriate. As such I made an attempt to employ the kind of artistry akin to writing literature, in which I kept the reader in mind at all times. This also helped me not to feel overexposed. I attempted to maintain this tone in my interviews so as not to probe unnecessarily, but maintain a level of Socratic dialogue at all times. By so doing I attempted to employ, as far as possible, the middle ground between subjective and objective I referred to above. This also allowed me to adhere to one of the basic tenets of the hermeneutic circle, which is key in any form of interpretation, namely that "interpretive

accounts should never be completely denuded of context, and details should never be presented without being positioned in relation to the overall structure of understanding" (ibid.).

I attempted to adhere as closely as possible to Bogden and Biklen's (2007) criteria for qualitative data collection, namely limiting my investigation (to only two participants and myself), refining and developing the questions, guiding data collection by prior observations (in this case choosing participants I had worked with and felt had a strong sense of self-awareness), taking note of observations not part of the planned interviews to aid analytic thinking, and trying out thoughts and topics on the participants (however, I chose to do this only obliquely, so as not to create an overly intellectual tone to the interviews). I also made notes about the learning process, as suggested, and steeped myself in the literature before conducting the interviews (ibid.).

I decided to transcribe the interviews myself so as to almost re-live the interview experience and feel connected to the participant when doing the analysis, which I did directly after. This helped enter their life-world, which I found essential not only in terms of providing a more correct analysis, but also in feeling that they would agree with my interpretation. I am aware that this is not necessary from an ethical point of view, but I felt it to be essential, in that I wanted to maintain the collaborative quality of the interviews and not feel like or come across as an objective eye imposing a reality onto the situation which the participants would have been entirely unaware of. I felt that it was important to feel that my interpretation was an extension of the insights gained by both myself and the participants during the interview. The novel elements were postponed until the discussion, where the interviews would be linked to the literature, creating an element of novelty which I felt uncomfortable to impose otherwise.

In interpreting both my own experience and those of the interviewees in the discussion I again needed to employ both empathy and bracketing when developing themes during the process of elaboration (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). I had to ensure that I struck an appropriate balance between theory and empathy so as not to undermine the very particular nature of the experiences analysed in favour of the 'case study' approach whereby they merely serve to highlight certain theoretical ideas. Rather, I needed to allow the experiences analysed to steer

the theoretical ideas in certain directions as well as vice versa. Again, this adheres to one of the tenets of the hermeneutic circle, namely that detail and difference should never be sacrificed in favour of abstraction (ibid.). I also used my own experiences of working with these performers to lend depth to my ability to analyse their stories with empathy. I again turned to Bogden and Biklen's (2007) criteria, in this case for analysis, and made clear choices regarding when to distance myself from the text and begin interpreting, as well as try to recognise similarities and correlations. In order to do the latter I used Thematic Analysis, which is a method for generating themes through comparing interviews (Nowell et al, 2017). The themes were generated inductively, through specific examples in combination with literature (ibid).

I employed active reflexivity by noting my responses to the interview and analysis process. I noticed that I enjoyed what I felt to be the most interesting element in interpretation, namely "the liminal aspects of spoken narratives" (Beachman, 2018; 51), which Speedy (in ibid.; 54) refers to as "the pivot points of new understanding and potential change". Although the potential for these kinds of observations excite me very much, they also make me nervous, as they can lead to a presumptuousness on my part. I had to acknowledge the flawed nature of interpretation in order not to become paralysed by my fear of distorting the truth and trust in the participants' generosity in allowing the hermeneutic quality of all three texts to work together to hopefully create something inspiring and helpful.

3.4 Summary

Autoethnography is a methodology that allows the researcher to insert their voice into the research to the degree that their narrative forms part of the data. It is informed by phenomenology, in other words an approach to experience that highlights personal meaning-making and insight, and hermeneutics, which is an approach to research that emphasises inter-textually based interpretation. The two schools of autoethnography are informed by each of these to varying degrees – the Evocative embracing a purely phenomenological standpoint and the Analytic being predominantly hermeneutic. I tend to situate myself between the two positions.

Data collection involved writing an autoethnographic interview and conducting two Interactive, semi-structured interviews. I employed empathy and bracketing when conducting, analysing and discussing the interviews. In terms of the latter, I was careful to not use the interviews to merely confirm previously established arguments, but adhered to the hermeneutic circle through which each text has an equal influence on the other, thus allowing the interviews to themselves disclose arguments and ideas which I had not considered before as well as being open to the possibility of not having my ideas confirmed.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS

4.1 Autoethnographic interview

In analysing my own personal experience of music performance anxiety I miss out on the value in having an objective eye analyse my experience. I will have to rely on the discussion in the next chapter, in which I compare the three interviews and link them to the literature discussed in the second chapter, to benefit from telling my story in any dramatic way, but the simple act of formulating my experiences into narrative form already strengthens the sense I have developed of being part of something that is unfolding, rather than at the mercy of a recurring compulsion. I feel it will also prove invaluable in terms of laying bare my ideas around performance anxiety to have them exposed rather than latent when analysing the interviews with my participants so that I can enter their life-world more fully rather than using it to confirm or express my unarticulated opinions.

4.1.1 Synopsis

My story begins with my first memory of performance anxiety around the age of five in which I was part of a carols by candlelight event and found that I didn't have a candle when on stage. I ended up asking the audience for help and that feeling of breaking the divide between audience and stage felt humiliating and made me feel out of control. This set up a very clear visceral notion of what was possible in a performance setting.

I learned to play the recorder shortly after that and because I enjoyed it and practised a lot I felt in control and as a result did not experience performance anxiety. However, a few years later when I began studying the piano my old sense of loss-of-control resurfaced as I found myself playing an instrument which required a much larger degree of co-ordination as well as being universally viewed as a concert instrument capable of being played at a very high level of technical proficiency. This undermined my belief that I was a master of my craft and the ensuing insecurity led me to feel anxiety when performing.

I did, however, have certain experiences with the piano which were encouraging and as a result helped me overcome my anxiety and motivated me to persevere. I found that I was very good at sight-reading and the almost magical feeling of being able to hear the music for the first time as I played it felt like ecstasy. I was able on occasion to feel the same ecstasy when performing, which all but eliminated my performance anxiety and I found that certain factors contributed to this. I found that a feeling of love set me up to enter that ecstasy and assumed therefore that musical flow and love must have certain similar emotional qualities. I also found that enjoyment of the piece, which required feeling technically in control and emotionally in tune with it, was able to get me to that point, as well as a certain freshness and being able to see the piece in a new light. I was able to employ all these 'techniques' when studying and performing again in 2017 and had rewarding performance experiences as a result. However, the following year I was invited to accompany an opera student and a professional cellist on the Arena programme at the National Arts Festival and my anxiety became rather severe as I was not convinced that the repetitive nature of performing numerous times nor the fact that I had not chosen the music myself would allow me to employ my methods for overcoming performance anxiety and I had not developed other adequate methods for dealing with it. I was encouraged to take Beta-Blockers but was concerned that this would create a disconnect with the audience. As a result I experienced severe performance anxiety in my first performance, to the point where my mind was trying to convince me to stop playing or at the very least extricate myself from future performances. My only recourse for overcoming the anxiety was to focus on the responsibility I had towards the other performers and the audience. I did make one or two mistakes and as a result believed that none of my friends or family were coming backstage after the show because of my poor performance, only to find that they were waiting for me in their seats and had thoroughly enjoyed the performance and had genuinely not noticed the mistakes. This relief freed me from the perfectionism that masked a feeling of inferiority compared to the more accomplished musicians I was working with and led me to the realisation that I had something to offer even in a bad performance. As a result the other performances were highly enjoyable. This experience helped me to overcome the feeling of being at the mercy of performance anxiety although I do still experience it on occasion.

4.1.2 Analysis

My experience of listening to classical music as a child, which I mention in relation to learning the piano, set up in me a strong association with music and ecstasy, especially as I was an only child whose experiences were unhindered by intrusion from the outside, so that the music could entirely transport me into a seemingly different realm. I was also prone to anxiety as a result of feeling the need to ward off chaos, which I mention as stemming from "unreasonable emotional demands coupled with a lack of structure". This led to "a perpetual feeling of uncertainty and isolation, and an anxiety which staved off feelings of guilt and failure". Any form of ecstasy, therefore, would be a welcome escape, and sight-reading on my own could give me the feeling of actively partaking in that world of order and emotional clarity which classical music is known to elicit. In addition, playing music well was clearly pleasing to my mother, who loved classical music as well, and in this one instance I was able to please without ambiguity. Playing the piano, however, could not be as pleasing as I was comparing myself to the piano music we both listened to and would always fall short.

Performing always brings other people into play and as a result I was not able to use music merely as an escape. I was not only receiving an experience, but giving one, and this would by association make me feel the anxiety associated with "unreasonable emotional demands". In addition, I mentioned feeling like an imposter "in dealing with 'normal' people who could just get on with things" and performing must have felt like I would be exposed by trying to reach out to them in sharing something which I felt to be precious, that somehow we did not share a common ground, or that the performance would finally be the moment in which I would fall apart and as a result be exposed as someone who can't "just get on with things". My begging for help from the audience at the age of five as well as my mind trying to get me to stop playing during the first performance of the National Arts Festival concert could also be seen as cries for help from someone whose parental demands were so unreasonable that there must have been the constant need to beg for mercy, to be let off the hook, either through asking for help or through a complete collapse and breakdown. The horror of breaking down the barrier between audience and performer to ask for help that I had experienced in early childhood always felt like an absolute loss of control, no doubt because the unreasonable parental demands stemmed from, as all inappropriately intrusive parental behaviour does, a lack of boundary between parent and child. This theme would have been strengthened through not

being given the usual healthy structures that 'normal' people had in place which would, again, have felt like a chaotic lack of boundaries.

My way of overcoming these potentially overwhelming feelings (which are no doubt quite common among only children and exacerbated in my case by my unstructured upbringing) was to focus on love and enjoyment, which emphasise unity and are common to all people as well as being incompatible with feelings of anxiety. Re-interpreting the music in a new way and feeling technically and emotionally competent were essential in embodying that emotional state. My method was, however, put to the test when I had to perform as a semi-professional working with musicians more accomplished than myself and having to perform four days in a row. My feelings of love and enjoyment were overshadowed by feeling inadequate and resulted in my experiencing severe performance anxiety in the first performance. However, in realising that the music had 'shone through' despite my anxiety, it seemed less like an evil demon and lost its importance in the experience, being replaced by the joy of knowing that I was part of something which could give pleasure, that I was not re-enacting the childhood trauma of never being able to fulfil emotional demands that were unreasonable because they were inappropriate and unfulfillable. As such, the experience was not only helpful in terms of performance anxiety and my relationship to musical performance, but also healing in general as I felt "united with others through our common appreciation of beauty and emotional integrity", which forged the longed-for link with the 'normal' outside world, leading me to feel "less isolated and more in touch with the shared emotional landscape of others". I was also finally capable of taking on responsibility and could feel up to the task without succumbing to the feelings of inadequacy and guilt that certain demanding responsibilities seemed to elicit.

4.2 Interview 1

My first interview was with a third year voice student with whom I had worked in a show on the Arena in the National Arts Festival. I had found her to radiate confidence and she never seemed to display any form of performance anxiety whatsoever. She was a talented performer who seemed to enjoy performing and was, in my opinion, very musical as well. I had the distinct impression that she knew how to preserve and nurture her art form so that its value could be shared with an audience in a meaningful way.

4.2.1 Synopsis

She began her story in childhood since I asked her how her experience of performing had changed since childhood. She had begun performing when staging plays with children of her parents' friends and had experienced no performance anxiety as she didn't take it seriously and felt she could simply improvise if she made mistakes. She felt mild performance anxiety when performing at school, but this was helped through techniques she learned in drama involving embodiment and attention as well as exposure (through performing many solos in the choir). Her anxiety was also never severe as she always enjoyed performing because it was something she had always wanted to do, and had learned to hide her mistakes so that they were not noticeable to the audience as well as to just "mission through". Her enjoyment of performing was also because she felt that people listened to her more when she performed than when she spoke and because she could express her "extrovert" side as well as "embody different aspects of womanhood" through playing different characters. At university she was behaving like a semi-professional from second year, staging productions and creating a brand. This led to performing on the Arena programme at the National Arts Festival in 2018. She hopes to potentially join an opera company and employ someone to take over the administration around developing her brand name so that she can focus solely on performing.

She found that she experienced noticeable performance anxiety when the songs she had to perform were technically demanding as well as when she had to play from memory as she found this very 'exposing' due to there being no physical barrier between herself and the audience. She felt that having one's instrument as a part of one's body was more anxiety provoking than for musicians with an external instrument because of the lack of control over how stress or illness would affect the sound. She also felt that she was prone to an inner pressure as a result of perfectionism due to having a 'good girl syndrome' whereby she always wanted to please her parents and tended to take on too much responsibility. She felt that this developed as a result of her parents being very hardworking and having an office at home and so being preoccupied a lot of the time, as well as being kept back a year at school and as such being unable to relate to her younger classmates and relating instead to her parents, which caused her to miss out on a rebellious teenage phase. As a result she "never want[s] to do wrong, never want[s] to mess up". However, she feels that she is learning how to tone down the amount of work she takes on and would like to "allow…[herself] to be helped, to be able to be helped" in

practical ways. She also feels that through performing she can “release a lot of baggage and release it into the song[s]”, such as her rage and sadness at having “inherited…[that syndrome] from…[her] experiences” and that through performing she can explore characters who express emotions that are the opposite of what is expected from the ‘good girl’.

She feels that performance anxiety can be overcome through eventually feeling “like you belong, like…[it’s] your space, your niche, and that you’re allowed to occupy that space and that niche and that people respect you in that niche”.

4.2.2 Analysis

My overriding sense when interviewing this participant was that of control, in other words a very controlled inner life. She would answer questions from a largely practical point of view and would only delve into emotional issues when explicitly asked, even though the ‘good girl syndrome’ is something she has only been coming to terms with in the last year and so must be quite conscious of, especially since she has been researching it. I am hesitant to take the psychoanalytic view that this is an indication of defensiveness, especially because when probed she was eloquent and informative about her ‘trope’. Certain factors I can pick up from the interview which might have contributed to this is her statement that she is an ‘ambivert’, in other words both introvert and extrovert, with the extrovert aspect emerging more when communicating/performing and the introvert aspect emerging when alone and being thoughtful and introspective. So the ‘good girl’ realisations may have occurred when in introvert mode and there may be quite a divide between the two modes, thus not coming up when being extroverted in the context of answering questions in an interview. Defensiveness and repression would, however, be classic ‘good girl’ behaviour, keeping things light and not delving into emotional issues easily, so this is also a distinct possibility.

This form of control would certainly result in less performance anxiety because anxiety generally occurs through feeling out of control. But as she points out, “it is a very unique pressure from a perfectionist”, and this kind of pressure, although generally positive in terms of work ethic and emotional control, can potentially have long-term effects if not monitored. This is unfortunately outside the scope of this thesis, but an interesting topic nevertheless.

There were one or two instances when I noticed this perfectionism, namely when she was discussing her tendency towards introversion and interrupted me to point out that she can socialise, in case I mistook her for anything other than socially competent, because being a 'good girl' by necessity would involve a high degree of social competence. Also her critique of the Grahamstown music festival, although potentially correct, did seem very lengthy and could be interpreted as mildly defensive as it was the explanation for the only performance failure that she mentioned as having had. I quote it almost in full:

> "I was preparing for festival and I had just done a concert and the Grahamstown music festival was four days long and you are singing for four days straight and it is hectic on your voice. Instrumentalists can do it because if they get sick it doesn't affect the way their instrument sounds, maybe the clarinet a little bit, but you can still get the notes out, it won't sound squeaky and crackly, but by day four which was the finale, it was the third round, I got up on stage, I had been drinking tea all day, med lemon and things like that to try and help my voice cos I felt like something was off, something was not happy, and I got on stage and I sang a song that the day before I had sung to the best of my ability and everyone was, like, they loved it, so they were very excited to hear it again and from the first note I was, like, this is not going to happen….Oddly enough I still got placed third, so I still got a placement and people, the audience was very sympathetic, they came up to me afterwards and said, like, I know your voice didn't happen tonight, but you've been phenomenal the whole time and we really really like that piece and – so the audience was nice afterwards, but…people's faces…changed from smile to shock [during the performance]...But it taught me a lesson not to over tax my voice and not to take part in things that actually don't take vocal health into consideration, because it is a thing that is very particular to singers and I found out subsequently that the Grahamstown music competition focuses a lot more on instrumentalists and puts them on a pedestal a lot more than singers, they don't consider these things, because it's basically always judged by instrumentalists and you probably only have four or five singers, whereas the rest of the participants are instrumentalists, so it's actually not worth it for singers. If you were a mature voice, um, and you've been singing for ages and ages and ages your voice can sustain that kind of taxing because you're used to doing opera roles, but young voices can't handle that...And afterwards I went back to Miss Jo's place and she has a friend who's a very good masseuse and she is also a healer and she was massaging my neck and she said, good grief this is inflamed and, um, it made me feel very awful that my voice had got to that extent publicly, so yeah…"

She managed her mild performance anxiety with tried and tested methods in keeping with what would be best suited to an ambivert, as she terms herself. She used a method learned from drama whereby she would start off having approximately a half a metre imaginary circle around her, which was all that she would give attention to, and would then slowly enlarge it to include the audience as she became more comfortable on stage. This would have created a non-traumatic shift from introvert to extrovert. She also learned to embody a character or mood,

which would have helped with her sense of being exposed in front of an audience due to her instrument being internal – embodying something other than her usual mode of being creating the necessary 'barrier'. In addition, she was conscious of the fact that people listened to her more when she performed than in her everyday life and this would naturally shift the attention away from fear to enjoyment and connection with the audience. She had also developed the conscious ability to hide her mistakes and "mission on", which would have helped her to feel confident and in control. All of these techniques could only have enhanced her enjoyment of performing.

She acknowledged the healing potential in performing music, as she felt that she was able to express emotions and character traits that she felt uncomfortable to express fully in her everyday life and as a result could release some of the negative emotions accumulated through her trait anxiety, in other words the 'good girl syndrome'. This gave her the feeling of being a 'whole woman', which she may not have been ready yet to fully embody in her everyday life. I would add that, when she says "you get to a place where you feel like you belong" that would have been healing as well in terms of her claiming to only get along with children or adults and rarely her peers, and then to feel she legitimately belongs without having to compromise anything, to have carved out a 'niche' for herself.

4.3 Interview 2

The second interview was conducted with an Honours piano student and an accompanist at Rhodes University with whom I had performed part of a two-part piano piece in an exam when studying in 2017. I had always found him to be a competent accompanist but had only really noticed his musicality when rehearsing and playing with him myself. Although the performance itself was not memorable due to lack of time on my part spent preparing the piece, I found the rehearsal sessions to be extremely invigorating and inspiring as he played with great competence and musicality as well as showing a love of nuanced interpretation and collegiality.

I had noticed a definite improvement in his performance anxiety as an accompanist (observed when sitting in performance class) which used to manifest as nervous fidgeting and even hair pulling on occasion before he had to play, but seemed to disappear, at least in its outward

manifestations, by the end of the year. I heard from other students that his ensemble performances the following year were of a very high quality as well.

4.3.1 Synopsis

The participant has no memory of performance anxiety before high school and recalls his first experience of it as being when his teacher forced him to play in assembly in Grade 8. He made many mistakes and was very nervous as he was aware of "a school of a thousand people staring" at him. He never managed to control it while at school, despite being forced to perform, only playing well on the odd occasion which felt more like chance than anything else.

The first time he felt an improvement in his ability to control his performance anxiety was in his gap year when he was employed as a school accompanist. He found that the exposure in terms of multiple experiences of being on stage was very helpful in feeling less afraid of performing. However, he found that this was merely a superficial confidence because when he had to audition to get into university the following year he was so intimidated by the presence of a teacher whom he admired that he suffered his worst bout of performance anxiety yet, in which he could hardly keep his hands on the keys. His usual method of pushing on regardless of mistakes, which is what he had been taught by his strict school music teacher, was also not sufficient. After this he felt he regressed to the point that he would shake in every lesson. He took Beta-Blockers which helped the shaking, but not the nerves. He found it to be worse when playing a slower, more expressive piece as he would then have more time to think "of everything but the music".

Then in his third year he was offered the job as accompanist at the university and "everything changed completely". It was not an ego boost as such, because he saw it as being employed because he needed work rather than because of his ability, but it meant that he "had to find a way to cope" because he could not only lose his job, but be responsible for the performance breakdown of other students. He developed a method that seemed to arise naturally out of working with others – talking to other people backstage beforehand about everyday topics such as their lives, and then suddenly finding himself onstage almost by surprise when the time came. This method, as well as preparing even more thoroughly than before because of the

awareness of what was at stake, created a situation in which he felt ‘absolutely fine’ and in control, in other words ‘able to perform’. For him this meant:

> “…of how it’s supposed to be and not sound like the person is on the edge the whole time, wondering whether they are gonna being able to go on stage and portray the music successfully so that the audience can receive it. And it can receive it as, sort make it through, are they in the right passage, are they losing their memory, you know that type of thing... It’s about being able to go onstage so people can enjoy the music and relax and just listen and feel great afterwards… and also where I feel like I can also let myself go to a certain extent.”

As a result he now experiences performance in a completely different light – whereas before he had viewed the audience as “almost waiting for…[him] to make a mistake”, he now would “feed off the audience” in other words “them receiving and then you receiving them”. He felt that this is a profound experience and has resulted in his belief that “this is what…[he] is meant to do with…[his] life”, that he is “in the right field” and a “well-respected person” in that field and is “making a difference”.

When asked whether he felt his newfound control over performance anxiety could have a positive effect on any general anxiety, he expressed the belief that in his case it has made a huge difference in his general confidence and anxiety around groups of people, which he feels developed during his school days, that he is now “able to do a lot more”.

4.3.2 Analysis

There is something initially rather confusing about this participant’s insistence that his harsh school music teacher’s approach of forcing him to perform “benefited…[him] hugely” and that there were no negative repercussions, especially since he did not manage to overcome his performance anxiety until so late in life and since her advice to “just go and do it” didn’t stand up to the high pressure situation of, for instance, an audition. Also, the “no time for…anxiety” attitude seemed to create a situation in which pausing for thought, even merely in the context of a slow piece, would result in “thinking too much” and hence an undoing of what seemed like, and no doubt was, an extreme form of emotional repression. However, when hearing his story to the end it starts to make sense. He admits at the end of the interview to always being a

"scared person", for reasons outside the scope of this interview. As a result he would no doubt not have performed at all without her attitude of "just get up there and do your thing". His fears abated every time he was not alone onstage, in other words when he was an accompanist in his gap year and since being employed as an accompanist by Rhodes University. In this context her advice proved invaluable, as he really had to take on that attitude or risk being fired or jeopardising other students' performances. When performing alone there is always something no doubt artificial about the "just get on with it" attitude, because there is nothing really practical or necessary about performing in that context. But that advice surely comes into its own when doing a literal job which has to be done well, and the hard attitude he admired in his teacher must have come to life really for the first time in that context, in other words doing the practical, no-nonsense (paid) job of accompanying other people. He may not be able to be a solo performer, but has found his way into "the main part of…[his] life", which is music.

The newfound confidence of doing a job well, making a difference, "having everything under control" and being respected transformed the stage from a place of social terror to "the one space where…[he's] not scared", where he feels no anxiety about what people think of him. Instead he feels that he is "meant to be" there. In addition, because he has conquered his overwhelming performance anxiety through his own hard work, he feels that he can "get through anything", he is "not doubting…[himself] anymore". As a result, it has made him a "more confident and positive person". Although his teacher never revealed to him the nature of performing, he worked it out for himself. As he accurately points out: "You are not truly performing if you are not feeding off the audience, I mean what is it then? I don't know". For an only child (which he is) this realisation is huge, and the move from lonely coping to shared enjoyment surely momentous. This is, however, no doubt a universal example of profound and healing transformation, merely magnified in the form of an only child breaking through the barriers of his isolation. Performing alone on stage can be exposing in a particularly lonely way, and his way of overcoming it is particularly inspiring and very human, not necessarily through blind perseverance, but to adapting to what made sense to him and finding the form of performing that worked best for him.

4.4 Conclusion

The three interviews make for a very interesting comparison. As an example of the fascinating differences between people, I never mentioned my numerous early childhood plays which I staged with friends until about the age of ten, although that was a large part of the first participant's story. Likewise I omitted how becoming an accompanist two years ago affected my performance anxiety, whereas this was the crux of the second participant's story.

The degrees of performance anxiety can probably be compared in the following order: the second participant's having been the most severe, then mine and lastly the first participant, displaying hardly any at all. Our methods for overcoming the anxiety can be summed up as follows: mine were largely emotional, and the two participants' were more practical. However, the second participant would have found the most relief from a change in method of performing, in other words from soloist to accompanist, with the practical methods being secondary. This is not technically merely a practical method, but has a strong emotional component. They both took adrenal suppressants, although the second participant found them ineffective in the long run, and the first participant uses a mild, herbal variant.

My story and the second participant's show a very clear linear development towards a state of greater control over performance anxiety and a more positive approach to life, ourselves and other people in general. The first participant's story is more a general portrait of someone who has always had a high degree of emotional control, but then reveals a hidden element of rebellion which is managing to escape and find expression through the music despite the amount of control that the medium always requires. In all three cases we feel that we are managing to fulfil our musical and emotional potential despite obstacles from our past and in all three cases performing music is one of, if not the only means of doing so. There is always more to be done in the realm of Western Art music, but in all three cases we are content with where we are at the moment and feel that we are learning through performing.

The relationship to music as expressed through the three interviews is, of course, not exhaustive, not only because no articulation of emotional experience ever is, but especially because music is a very profound and mysterious medium of expression. However, it can be

summed up (as expressed through the interviews) as follows: For the first participant, music was an expression of excellence, as she was always doing solos in the choir, as well as being strongly linked to her acting, which was also a subject, as singing also requires addressing an audience vocally and embodying different characters through the spoken word. Thus music becomes more expressive of character than, say, for a non-singer and especially a non-actor. This gained special significance when she consciously used her musical roles to release certain emotions (involving her trait anxiety) over the last year. In my case, music was initially an expression of excellence, but when I found it hard to maintain that level when changing instruments, I associated it more with ecstasy, feeling alive and escapism. This eventually changed to a mode of sharing with and receiving from an audience. In the case of the second participant, music must have initially been less of an expression of excellence, and more a form of personal enjoyment, since he seems to love Western Art music so much, and through performing may have become a means of overcoming his general fearfulness, the ability to go onto stage and perform despite error. Eventually he found the means to express and share his private enjoyment with an audience and now it seems to be an expression of excellence and an enactment of a shared enjoyment in which there is no room for anxiety.

The participants both expressed feeling that the stage is the equivalent of a safe space – for the first participant it is where she is really listened to and for the second participant it is where he doesn't feel anxious about what people think of him. This is in keeping with their respective forms of anxiety – in the former case being listened to would heal the absence of a preoccupied mother and the latter case being a successful accompanist who is not the main focus of the performance would alleviate the fear to be found in all forms of social phobia that one is being judged and doesn't belong. I think that the reason I didn't mention that in my self-interview is not that I don't feel it to be true (that the stage is a unique and healing space) but that I feel I need to maintain a certain fear of the stage in order to feel the kind of bracing existential encounter which is the very reason I perform, the healing that occurs in spite of that being all the more comforting as a result. I may need an objective eye at this stage to surmise a reason for this, but I would venture that it is a way of re-enacting the existential anxiety I felt as a child without the usual protection afforded through the boundaries usually set up by parents, and then feeling the comforting support of the audience and the very human form of courage which manifests in shared joy and appreciation. A kind of performance of light overcoming darkness, as it were.

I feel that all three of us could learn from each other – I certainly find the “get out there and do your thing” attitude of the second participant’s teacher to be necessary at times as well as his notion of not thinking about it too much. In the latter instance this would dilute the oppressive feeling of needing to fulfil an outward expectation and even my own expectation of what is constituted as a profound experience. I think the first participant’s controlled expression of carefully thought out emotion in her songs as well as her embodying different characters could be inspiring to the second participant in providing more of a focus on emotional storytelling, which is the opposite of the “just get on with it” approach – variety is always necessary to keep things interesting, no doubt. I think my and the second participant’s focus on “feeding off the audience” as he puts it could be inspiring to the first participant as her method for coping with anxiety has been to initially screen off the audience and as a result makes her feel exposed without a physical object between herself and the audience when she has to perform from memory. However, it is hard to compare, because as she points out having an internal instrument is very different to having an external one. I imagine it could certainly be helpful in terms of toning down her perfectionism, as feeding off the audience results in each performance being slightly different, and this almost living and organic form of interaction with an audience could diminish any compulsive quality that can come from perfectionism.

In all three cases, MPA, whether manifesting as anxiety or perfectionism, was overcome through the performance context itself and this had a positive impact on everyday levels of anxiety.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the analysis of the interviews in relation to the literature so that each informs the other. I have added additional subheadings or altered the headings of the concepts slightly in order to discuss the literature according to that which was most prevalent in the interviews. A short summary concludes the chapter.

5.2 A philosophical and psychological appraisal of Music Performance Anxiety

5.2.1 Musical ecstasy and expressivity

I have changed the title of the first concept from ‘music’ to ‘musical ecstasy and expressivity’, since this is the theme that emerged most clearly in the interviews with regards to music.

Musical ecstasy, the emotional high which may be experienced while performing and listening to music, is an experience which has been articulated in poetry and prose since the time of ancient civilisation. D.H. Lawrence (1964; 943) in his poem The Piano describes it as follows:

> “Softly, in the shadows, a woman is singing to me…The full throated woman has chosen a winning, living song, and surely the heart that is in me must belong to the old Sunday evenings, when darkness wandered outside…A woman is singing me a wild Hungarian air, and her arms…and the whole of her soul is bare…”

The experience of this form of ecstasy may be as a result of its being an expressive skill (Czsiksentmihalyi, 1990), resulting in a transformation of everyday emotions into more nuanced emotions (Juslin, 2011), thus restoring depth to reality (Grosz, 2005). Czsiksentmihalyi (1990) observed in his work as a psychologist that art is a means by which to flourish, as opposed to merely survive. My autoethnography is a very personal account of the experience of musical ecstasy as a means by which to flourish.

Out of the three interviews, mine was the only one that delved into the feelings of ecstasy elicited by music. It is true that my questions did not probe into this area. If this discrepancy was not only as a result of the way my questions were formulated but because of a different degree of emphasis, then it could stem from the need to escape from the stressful emotional atmosphere of my youth. The need for escape into music as opposed to another art form such as literature (although I was an avid reader, it never induced the same level of ecstasy), could be multifaceted. Firstly, music is not only intellectual or emotional but meditative, allowing for the pleasurable appreciation of abstractions such as harmony and tone in a context that is changing and thus more engaging on a meditative level than other art forms, enhancing its relaxing quality. Secondly, as Juslin (2011) observed, everyday emotions are transformed and filtered through music, resulting in a more complex and nuanced emotional landscape, expressed in my reflections on music as having "a particular emotional quality different to everyday emotions" (self-commentary, February 2019). In a childhood dominated by excessive parental neediness and therefore bombarded with the almost constant stream of resultant negative emotions created through excessive expectation and anxiety (such as disappointment, fear, resentment and manipulation from the parents and guilt and confusion from the child), the emotions elicited through and expressed in music provided not only an escape but an alternative emotional landscape. Through music, sadness is not hopeless, but transformative, while joy is not in response to some complicated fulfilment, but in and for itself, the music as an enactment, not a reaction.

My experience of ecstasy was far more intense when playing the piano than the recorder, no doubt because the piano is a solo instrument, so sight reading as well as performing a full piece, left and right hand together, would have felt more miraculous than doing so on an instrument that only produces the melodic line. The primary reason, however, is that I believed that "the emotions I felt I could elicit in myself and others seemed to partake of the heights I experienced when listening to piano music and were more complex than the pure lyricism of the recorder" (ibid.) because, of course, it was the same instrument I was accustomed to listening to, but also due to the fact that it was a concert instrument and as a result could conjure the full emotional landscape I had escaped into as a child. This landscape included ethereal emotions that could be described as elevated or mystical but defied definition, the emotions that I would feel when looking at trees and clouds. I would feel at times that nature and classical music spoke the same language. In this sense, music not only revealed emotions that were purer and less burdened by

association, but a different, almost non-human world. As I later understood, this world was also human, just not in the way I understood humanity to be in my childhood, as something from which I needed to escape.

This world, as Macquarrie (1972; 65) suggests, is in fact reality revealed in its profundity, thus escaping into it is not escapism as such. It is not "the routine everyday world…[with its] attitudes of manipulation and exploitation" but a world composed of that which is not noticed, or which is taken for granted in the everyday world. Thus art, and in this case music, becomes an "organ of reality" rather than a means of evasion (Cassirer, 1953; 8). This would explain why my 'escapism' was not a quest after a transitional object, and thus abandoned in favour of other, more 'real' pursuits, but was itself a means of contacting a more profound experience of reality. As I articulated in my self-reflection, "[music] existed in a different frequency to other experience" (self-commentary, February, 2019).

The everyday emotions I associated most with the emotions elicited through music were not exactly everyday but hard won, and "existed within that mysterious frame of mind" (ibid.) which is reality revealed in its profundity, namely love, the kind of enjoyment which comes from kinship with what is conveyed, and fresh understanding or insight. These emotions, when genuine and not contrived, could allow me to experience musical ecstasy in a performance context.

5.2.2 Performance

In the next section I will first discuss the ecstasy experienced while performing with a specific reference to music. The emphasis in the previous section was on emotion, whereas the emphasis here is on relationality. Thereafter, the subheadings that emerged in Chapter 2 are combined into one, as they were revealed to be highly interrelated after analysing the interviews.

5.2.2.1 Performance ecstasy

The first participant described the emotions experienced and expressed while performing Western Art music as akin to raw everyday emotions such as anger, although this is not to say that she did not experience more nuanced musical emotions. This could largely be as a result of her being a singer and expressing music in words, which are more literal in expressing emotion than music alone. She must have felt music to be more suited to her aim of speaking "about a whole lot of different issues" and "embody[ing] different aspects of womanhood" (interview 1, 2019) than drama, however, as this is the field she pursued after studying both. She may have felt the potential in music to filter and transform emotion. It would also have seemed less exposing emotionally than acting, since she revealed herself to be suffering from a "good girl syndrome" (ibid.) and so always being aware of not doing anything socially inappropriate. Although she doesn't explicitly mention the enjoyment to be found in performing, she does articulate the benefit in being able to "release a lot of…[emotional] baggage" (ibid.). This is in keeping with the notion that performing "provides a convenient channel of escape for many of the primitive types of emotional drives… [which] are constantly struggling for expression" (Ching, 1947; 20), particularly in the case of someone with a 'good girl syndrome' (I would suggest that in other cases they may provide a channel of escape for less primitive and less definable emotions as well).

In the case of music, particularly, research conducted by Sloboda (2005) indicates that the two main reasons people engage with music is its ability to act as an agent of change (through, among other things, inspiring, relaxing, comforting and sharing) in addition to its ability to promote the intensification or release of emotion (as discussed in the previous paragraph). In line with this, this participant mentioned that she is able to perform being a "whole woman" as well as having the feeling that she belongs, that she has found her "space", her "niche", the combination of which (emotional release, embodying a feeling of wholeness and a feeling of belonging) would no doubt produce a form of ecstasy at times, akin to Kramer's notion of the self's appropriation of the "fullness, density and specificity" it lacks to become more fulfilled (Kramer, 1995; 38). In addition, she admitted to feeling like she was "listened to" (interview 1, 2019) more when on stage than in everyday life, not only because of the fact that she had an audience who couldn't "close the door on her", but also because, as Dewey (1934) suggests, art is the most effective mode of communication there is. It also has the potential to draw its

audience into a more profound form of being (Grosz, 2008). The kind of attention received from an audience during a successful performance is not simply the indulgence of a distracted or busy parent, but that of an other who is open to the new, in both performer and themselves, and this could be a balm for anyone who has suffered under the strain of parental expectations. In her experience of performance breakdown she could see the look of confusion on the faces of audience members, but even then found them to be kind and trusting after the performance, not hopelessly disappointed as is often the impression of a child with stressed and unavailable parents. Performing can then be a way of feeling less alone (Winnicott, 1965), by sharing music as a mode of being in the world. Not surprisingly she views performing music as her "main form of communicating with the world" (interview 1, 2019).

The other research participant does not mention any specific emotion conveyed or felt when playing or listening to classical music, but he must have related to it very strongly as he refers to it as "the main part of…[his] life" (interview 2, 2019). He and I both explicitly mentioned the ecstasy to be experienced through performing, but whereas I was always eager to find the best way to experience it as quickly as possible, he would not allow himself to consider any performance worthy of enjoyment until he felt that he had developed a rock solid control over his anxiety. This resulted in a long, courageous journey towards a goal which was indeed fulfilled. This unfortunately reveals me to have been more interested in pleasure than enjoyment, in other words, restorative order as opposed to a stretching of the self (Csiksentmihalyi, 1990). However, I was finally forced to push myself and found the deep satisfaction in having discovered enjoyment, which is not simply in order to restore, but in order to 'find one's space' and develop responsibility.

For this participant this hard won ecstasy manifested in a transformation of the audience from a critical mass to a group of people "receiving and then you receiving them" (interview 2, 2019). He expresses it by saying "It's amazing, I love it" (ibid.). In my case I felt it from an early age, as being good at the recorder allowed me to feel confident and able to bring out the best from the instrument, which resulted in being able to "pleasantly surprise" the audience (self-commentary, February 2019). Thus my pleasurable feelings of satisfaction were largely a form of ego fulfilment. This had to evolve when I started playing the piano, because ego satisfaction was not so easily achieved on that instrument. My solution was to elicit the kind of

ecstasy I felt when sight-reading and practising during performance by encouraging certain emotional states. This was not only in order to motivate myself, but to ward off the MPA that had developed as a result of the challenges the instrument posed. This form of ecstasy had to evolve, yet again, into a deeper, more mature fulfilment when performing in a professional production due to the repeat performances and the very high stakes. This more profound ecstasy was experienced as viewing music as "a form of self-expression", an enjoyment of being part of something meaningful, and of learning and enacting a "new, healthier way of being in the world", which differed slightly in every performance, as well as feeling connected to others through our mutual enjoyment of what the music offered (ibid.).

Performance ecstasy is generally considered to be synonymous with a state of Flow, or a sense of timelessness and spontaneity engendered through comprehensive preparation and a relinquishing of perfectionism (Csiksentmihalyi, 1990; Bates, 1986; Singer, 1979). The second participant may have experienced this while still at school as he refers to one performance in which everything went really well and he felt at ease. However, he did not put much store by the experience as he was aware that he was not yet in control as a performer. The more sustained ecstasy he experiences now as an accompanist is not what would always necessarily be termed Flow, but the fulfilment that comes from knowing that one is a performer and in control, and as a result can sustain a reciprocal relationship with the audience. I, myself, experienced Flow many times in performance, but my MPA was so severe that if I was not in a Flow state I would battle during performances to the point of near breakdown. I had to embody the role of a performer in a similar way, which felt like a more mature fulfilment, in order to experience Flow from a position of control.

In all three cases, performing was experienced as more than ego fulfilment (in the end) and even more than the usual accomplishment of a Flow state, but resulted in a development of a sense of agency and courage as well as a healthier relationship with the world and a profound affirmation of self, where performing created "highly specialized conditions" in which "the individual can come together and exist as a unit" (Winnicott, 1982; 76) as well as enact the desire to be relational (Phelan in Bowman & Frega, 2012). To quote Winnicott (1982; 76): "From this position everything is creative". This is the 'definition' of performance ecstasy as expressed in these interviews.

5.2.2.2 Liminality, Performance as ritual and Play

It is interesting how the first participant began her story with the play of a young child – putting on plays, dressing up. She in fact continued this theme into adulthood by bringing acting techniques into operatic roles to best embody different characters and thus emotional states. This form of art-as-adult-play to be found in the act of performing particularly, and in the case of role play no doubt most notably, is viewed by psychologists as Play, and as potentially a therapy in itself (Winnicott, 1982). This is not only due to the emotional release and exploration mentioned earlier, but also because Play strengthens furtiveness, a way of both revealing and concealing the self, which is viewed as the antidote to over-compliance, a characteristic of being too 'good' (Singer & Singer, 1979), and as essential in maintaining a robust inner life. Furtiveness also encourages the right balance between originality and acceptance, which is psychoanalytically viewed as an example of "the interplay between separateness and union" (Winnicott, 1982; 134). Performing non 'good girl' roles would have been a very potent creative experience for this participant for all these reasons and no doubt contributed towards creating enough of a therapeutic outcome to have the courage to acknowledge her 'syndrome', both privately and in the context of the interview, as well as to consciously express the negative emotions elicited through this realisation in her musical performances.

Both participants and I used ritualisation combined with Play to overcome our anxiety. The first participant ritualised her operatic performances through costume and role play as well as a serious performance mindset. She then employed a form of Play to experiment with emotions that she felt she needed to release as well as the experience of being more multi-faceted than she allowed herself to be in everyday life so as to help her overcome her habitual repressive defences in a safe yet powerful way. The second participant ritualised his performance by building a sense of shared humanity with the other musicians, a form of Play in which he would conjure ordinary, human discourse before performing and then extended this through the liminal mode of 'feeding off', or receiving emotionally from the audience and giving them an experience in return. I used ritual to overcome the extreme performance anxiety experienced in the specific NAF performance by focusing on my role within the group and the formality of the occasion. When the success of this self-restraint became apparent to me, I used the confidence thus gained to Play in my performances, so that I discovered something new in each performance through the liminal nature of my own agency – an ability to share with an audience

in one performance, an extension of my self-perception in another, and more nuanced realisations involving self and world such as can only be gained through experiences and retained as growth and maturity.

5.2.3 Anxiety

This section focuses on anxiety within the context of Music Performance Anxiety. The two broad subsections of anxiety discussed in the literature review, namely psychological and existential anxiety, frame the discussion.

5.2.3.1 Psychological Anxiety

The first participant displayed a very marked difference in her manifestation of state and trait anxiety. Her state anxiety was very mild, manifesting in her youth as "butterflies" (interview 1, 2019) and a slightly elevated heart rate, and easily resolved through breathing, visualisation and training her attention on an object. Her state anxiety was largely eliminated by adulthood, by which time she felt very comfortable performing in front of an audience. She did, however, express "the fear that people will not like the sound that is coming out or that something major will go wrong on stage" (ibid.). Her trait anxiety, on the other hand, was significantly more pronounced. This was described as "perfectionism", classically described as "a striving for flawlessness" (Hewitt & Flett in McGrath, 2012; 31) resulting from a struggle with feeling that she always had to be seen to be doing the right thing. This link with outside perception was what differentiated her perfectionism from simply having high standards in terms of mastery, as perfectionism is linked to defensiveness (Cupido, 2018). This was described as coming from assuming too much responsibility when young, feeling alienated from her peers, skipping out her teenage years and having parents who worked from home and so were theoretically always available, but due to work stress were never fully emotionally available. Thus a syndrome developed in order to get attention and win favour. The emotions she described as being opposite to the "good girl", in other words emotions that would have been repressed, were "desperation", "worry", "mourning" and three-dimensionality, or complexity as well as the ability to develop and change. This would suggest that the "good girl" must have been a defence against these emotions, as well as a form of compliance into two-dimensionality in order not to tax overstressed parents.

The connection between her mild state anxiety and more intense trait anxiety is not initially evident. Her trait anxiety did not lead to neurosis in the classic sense, typically an inner conflict involving both fear and desire. However, the element of a neurosis which is derived from the interplay between a fear and the defences against it (May, 1950), in this case the fear of rejection and the resultant perfectionism, created a form of neurosis which manifested not in classic anxiety but rather in repression. This is the standard effect of perfectionism, which generally leads to excelling onstage (McGrath, 2012). The emotional control necessary for performing at a high level could have played very conveniently into this tendency towards repression. Her musical ambition, likewise, must have provided the perfect channel to play out her tendency to "take on too much responsibility" (interview 1, 2019), as she admits to sabotaging her ability to cope by taking on too many projects. However, these manifestations of her perfectionism would have had to contend with the very real experience of performing, with its potential for encountering the New (Grosz, 2008) and were in the end used in the service of a more complete and less neurotic means of communicating with the world. What she communicated was not her syndrome, but a call to fullness, which was the opposite of the desire for acceptance which had fuelled her perfectionism. She was able to enact a more three-dimensional self and express hitherto repressed emotions which, by being repressed, had caused her to remain emotionally stifled. Thus her trait anxiety provided the very means for overcoming itself.

In my self-reflection I delve rather extensively into the anxiety experienced around performance. The state anxiety would have been as a result of feeling out of control, for instance not having a candle in a carol performance or feeling out of my depth in a professional production playing technically challenging accompaniment. My trait anxiety pushed this normal anxiety to a level where I experienced severe panic, expressed as horror, desperation, terror and intense apprehension in the face of a terrifying and unstable experience, which felt like a staving off of a descent into humiliation, like struggling to keep chaos at bay. This felt nerve-wracking, leaving me emotionally exhausted, especially since making just a few mistakes would feel like an exposure of my anxiety and hence as proof of my being a failure and a fraud. This was less perfectionism and conforms more to narcissism because of the underlying fear of exposure, and the association with low self-esteem (Swart, 2016). This situation was described as resulting from my childhood, in which unreasonable emotional demands coupled with a lack of structure had created a perpetual feeling of uncertainty and

isolation, and an anxiety which staved off feelings of guilt and failure. I had been aware that this was not the common experience, and since music represented an ideal, I must have felt like a fraud in attempting to convey this ideal, that I was not the right person, that I was in fact an imposter in my dealings with 'normal' people who seemed to be able to just get on with things, and would despair of ever being able to forge a link with the everyday world. As has been observed in the literature on MPA, a feeling of shame is directly linked to a sense of exposure, which is viewed as an exposure specifically related to a perceived "failing of the self" (Auerbach in Kenny, 2011; 78). The fear of shame and humiliation is normal in performance situations, but magnifies to the level of an actual failure of the self only in the presence of a neurosis, which is fundamentally an unstable defence against repressed fear, causing trait anxiety of varying degrees of intensity (May, 1950; Ching, 1947; Kenny, 2011). In my case performing triggered my trait anxiety with its neurotic fear of exposure and humiliation and became what Ching (1947; 91) refers to as "a fifth column which is liable to threaten us even in our moments of greatest triumph".

In addition to the fear of being a fraud was the secret belief that the dangerous-seeming chaos I experienced from anxious, overbearing parents had somehow been contagious, that I myself harboured the learned ability to inflict chaos on a wonderfully ordered experience, that the audience was there to receive the ordered joy associated with music, but would instead experience the disorientation of unfiltered emotionalism and terror. In this case the audience members were not only demanding, unsatisfied parental figures as they are generally assumed to be in the psychological understanding of MPA (Ching, 1947), but were in fact primarily myself, openly waiting to receive love, and my anxiety was as a result of attempting to ward off enacting the destructive learned behaviour of my parents. In other words, the performance situation felt like an enactment of two situations simultaneously, one in which the audience were my demanding parents, and one in which they were myself and I was my parents – the former was triggered when the audience felt threatening, and the latter when they were seen as loving. I felt that if I allowed the latter situation to unfold, in other words experience performance breakdown, it would be a negative public display of self, not only as a failure in the face of demands, but as a successful agent of chaos, a painful self-actualisation that could not be concealed or retracted (Kenny, 2011). This played itself out in the NAF performance in which my collapse would have done the most damage and hence my terror at self-exposure in both senses almost self-fulfilling. Only by experiencing first-hand the rewards of not

succumbing to my fear of failure could I move forward and become able to perform. This echoes the second participant's process. I thus experienced the insight gained through experiencing my anxiety to the full without any external means of controlling it and in so doing could witness for myself the irrationality of the extent of my terror, while gaining insight into its origins. This is in keeping with an existentialist understanding of anxiety (May, 1950). I witnessed a very clear inner conflict and could appreciate in contrast the mature ecstasy which resulted from managing to create a situation of what Ching refers to as inner cooperation (Ching, 1947). I feel that if I had not exposed myself to that situation I would have, to paraphrase Kierkegaard, lost one of my most precious opportunities for education (in May, 1959). My ability to control my MPA became synonymous with release from a neurotic relationship towards other people. Thus controlling my anxiety in a performance setting had repercussions in my everyday life, since the anxiety experienced in both settings came from the same source. Even if the neurosis is triggered in future, whether in performance or everyday life, the experience serves as an embodied understanding of its illusory quality, a realisation which I believe could not have been genuine without pitting it against agency, without the intuition necessary in order to perform, as well as the wisdom generated through performance (Phelan in Bowman & Frega, 2012).

The second participant experienced performing as virtually synonymous with psychological anxiety until very recently. He described his feelings of anxiety as "freak[ing]…out", losing control, shaking and being "very nervous", which resulted in his feeling that it was "too much" and as a result "hated…going on stage" (interview 2, 2019). He admits to having trait anxiety which stems from his childhood, especially school, which was a stressful time for him and thinks that "a lot of…[his] performance anxiety comes from there", and that he would have managed it better had it not been for his already high levels of anxiety. It seems that the normal state anxiety of performing in public would not have been so bad as to make him afraid of performing and to cause his MPA to become debilitating in later years. His anxiety was so severe that enjoyment was out of the question, and the only means of performing was to be "forced" into it, so that he feels that he "thrive[s] in situations in which…[he doesn't] have a choice", where "you either make it or you don't". For him "thriving" could be simply "get[ting] up there" and "plonk[ing] any notes", because in retrospect he no doubt realises that without that attitude he would have given up performing, he "wouldn't be here without [it]", so the concept of thriving would be relative to the debilitating nature of his anxiety (ibid.).

His anxiety manifested not only in physical and emotional symptoms, but cognitively, in terms of a "focus on future threats [or] danger" (Kenny, 2011; 22), which he describes as thinking "How am I gonna get through this passage?" and "Where are the mistakes gonna happen?" or "Oh my word, is that gonna happen?", that he "used to think…a lot about what [he]…was gonna do onstage". This was so extreme that he would choose to play fast pieces to avoid "allow[ing]…[him]self too much time to think" (interview 2, 2019). Kenny (2011) suggests that this manifestation of anxiety is fuelled by a fear of not being able to control outcomes, which comes both from an external threat (state anxiety) or emotional conflict (trait anxiety), or in this case, as in most cases, both. This fear is no doubt linked to a fear of humiliation, which this participant expressed as "anxiety about…what…[people are] thinking of [him]", which would intensify the meaning the situation had for him, and thus his anxiety (Reubart, 1985). The state element is described as the "nerve-wracking" quality of performing classical music, which is "always judged" (interview 2, 2019). This is in keeping with the general view of Western Art music as being technically demanding (Ching, 1947; McGrath, 2012) and more anxiety-inducing to perform than other musical genres because it calls for an extremely high degree of co-ordination (Ching, 1947). The trait anxiety which fuelled it is no doubt linked to a general sense of insecurity related to low self-esteem (Sinden, 1990).

It seems almost miraculous that someone could overcome such an extreme form of performance anxiety without some form of intervention. That he did so is a huge testament to the power of tenacity and determination. It is also an indication of the power inherent in situations themselves – that simply changing from being a solo performer to an accompanist could engender not only a more relaxed approach to performing but also the necessary rigour to feel prepared. This combination gave him the confidence to allow the strategic solutions to almost present themselves, as he suggests that accompanying itself taught him "how to connect with people" and thus come up with the idea of talking to fellow musicians backstage before performing about "everything but the performance" in order to distract himself out of anxiety. This allowed him to experience the "profound" nature of performing which became a goal in itself, and he noticed that anxiety and over-thinking would result in a "detached" performance in which he was not present (interview 2, 2019), what is known as defensive as opposed to creative playing (Fogel in McGrath, 2012). Thus the focus shifted from a "just get on with it" (interview 2, 2019) attitude, to an attempt at a profound, shared experience, the shared enjoyment of excellence (Green & Gallway, 1986) in which art not only satisfies (or not) but

also intensifies (Grosz, 2008). Thus this participant truly seems to have experienced von Schiller's assertion that art restores humanity to the performer (von Schiller, 1974).

5.2.3.2 Existential anxiety

Existential anxiety is a concept only discussed in philosophy and not generally dealt with in psychology outside of Existential Psychology. As a result, it is rarely mentioned in connection with MPA. However, I myself had direct experience of its effect on my performance anxiety and as a result would like to begin with my autoethnography as a starting point for analysis and develop the theme from there.

My first experience of performance anxiety with the missing candle was largely existential in nature. I distinctly remember feeling that the unknown and terrifying nature of life had suddenly revealed itself publicly. I had experienced this before in private, where my parents' anxiety and over-permissiveness had provided no barrier to it, had not created the impression of meaning or order, but its emergence in so public an environment and only with regards to myself had me begging for help from people who seemed able to direct me to some kind of ultimate solution (the candle would be found, they had things under control) but instead seemed as bewildered as I was. I was thus left with the impression that order was an illusion that was very frail and easily destroyed, in this case by me. The anxiety inherent in the freedom and possibility of the unknown (May, 1950) as articulated by existential philosophers, left me feeling utterly helpless and confused about being-in-the-world (Heidegger in ibid.) because of the fear of the impossibility of ever being placed (Abram, 1996), both within a secure sense of self and a secure sense of the world. This is what is referred to in Existential Psychology as a sudden expansion of the horizon of experience, in which the structures by which one's idea of the world and one's place within it fall away (Needleman, 1963).

I found that security in Western Art music, and when I performed the recorder I did so with the utmost earnestness. I felt that I was able to share this order with a frail world, that I had become the ideal audience member at my carol service, the one who was calm and helpful, who could set things right. This feeling was shaken when I started playing the piano because of the increase in technical demands, but also because there were concert pianists who were able to

fulfil this function better than myself, being technically more proficient. As a result I felt vulnerable for the first time, where the audience did not need me, but it was I who needed them – it became an ego affirmation as opposed to an act of generosity. This left me in that frail world yet again, where order felt extremely tenuous. This was when my MPA manifested for the first time. However, when I had the experience of performing while in love for the first time, I found a release from that rather dark enactment of dread. I found that I was able to share the ecstasy I felt when sight reading and listening to Western Art music on my own because the feeling of being in love spilled over onto the audience and the entire performance became an act of love. I had finally exited that endless play of meaningless platitudes and humiliations I had been experiencing as a performer grappling with existence, and found reality. The difference was palpable. Order was no longer a frail illusion, but a tangible, robust quality of existence connected to the experience of love. I was not merely evading MPA, or distracting myself from it, but discovering an ontology that was the antithesis of anxiety.

So extreme was my existential anxiety as a child, that anything less than this ecstasy would have exacerbated it to an almost unbearable degree. My own experience had led me to realise that conveying a robust emotional quality required a degree of perfection which increased my anxiety, in that it drew attention to the fragility of order, making it seem illusory. When performing in a state of love, however, the music seemed to create itself and mistakes could be absorbed without trauma. When considering existential anxiety, this experience has the added capacity to actively engage with existence by slowing down experience to allow for the New, so that the performance becomes a 'field' in which Becoming and Being "lives and plays itself out" (Grosz, 2005; 4), where "these… universal forces touch and become enveloped in life" (Grosz, 2008; 23).

The first participant was shielded from the experience of existential anxiety onstage by being taught thorough techniques for keeping her attention away from the audience and focusing on her sense of security as the element of control which allowed her to only allow them in when she felt secure. Thus security and control were integral to her experience of performing from the outset. Since she has recently discovered that she suffers from what she terms a good girl syndrome it would be interesting to see what effect this realisation will have on her confrontation with the unknown, whether such thorough control at all times would effectively

keep existential anxiety at bay or make it appear even more threatening when experienced. It could even be a mode of liberation, since such emotions are not interpersonal and thus less associated with guilt than other non 'good girl emotions'. Being a 'good girl' no doubt helps alleviate existential anxiety in adults, as they are not obliged to confront the strangeness and uncanniness of the other, preventing them from gaining the benefits of "moving through not around" the anxiety (May, 1950; 128).

The second participant admits to always having been a fearful person, but there is no indication as to how much of this is personal and how much existential. The fact that his performance anxiety improved whenever he performed as an accompanist as opposed to a solo performer, however, suggests that existential anxiety could have played a role, because it is known to be exacerbated when feeling isolated (May, 1950; Macquarrie, 1972). However, social phobia is also exacerbated by situations which appear to be isolating and judgemental (McGrath, 2012) and he no doubt suffers from this to some degree, as suggested by his claims of being scared of people and not to like crowds, although for existentialist writers there is an overlap between the two forms of anxiety (May, 1950). The mere presence of other performers allowed him to develop the ability to "feed off the audience" (interview 2, 2019) in a mutual exchange rather viewing it as threatening, as well as to be placed in the world, suggesting the development of a security through human connection.

In view of this, I suggest that human connection is the antidote to existential anxiety, although the generally accepted approach is existential courage, or "an affirmative answer to the shocks of existence" (May, 1950; 97). Although this is certainly the case, I maintain that this is unlikely to be anything other than merely heroic if it doesn't stem from the strength gained from genuine human connection, with performing being a potentially potent example.

5.2.4 Agency

In my self-reflection I reveal an attitude towards agency that was initially terror, then pleasure and then a combination of the two. I discovered that both musical and performance ecstasy (often experienced as a result of extending other forms of ecstasy, such as love) could diminish the terrifying element of agency and thus strengthen its rewards. However, when performing

in the NAF production I could no longer rely on ecstasy as there were repeat performances and the pieces were not of my own choosing, so I had to take the leap and become a true agent, in other words employ existential courage and the need to relate in order to eliminate the terrifying potential within the situation. This did lead to a form of ecstasy, but it was a by-product of my willingness to be an agent, not the reward. As a result of my experience I felt less alienated from others and more able to negotiate between my ecstatic experiences and my everyday mode of being.

The second participant experienced only the terrifying side of agency until he took the pressure off himself by becoming an accompanist. This allowed him to be an agent both in his method of overcoming his anxiety, in other words not simply taking the advice of his teacher but using his understanding of himself and the nature of performance to create his own technique (that of talking about everyday topics backstage), and as a performer, as he discovered the rewarding nature of sharing with an audience. He also could "find…himself more at home [in the world] since he…[was now] in a world that he [had]…participated in making" and hence felt that he had found his place. This reduced his general anxiety in everyday life as a result.

The first participant seems to have had a very strong sense of herself as a successful agent from an early age – as a child she would stage plays with her friends of which she would be the director and main character as well as being a soloist in the school choir. This contrasted markedly with her relative lack of agency at home in which she had to repress her desire to open her parents' closed office door, and in which her impulses for rebellion seem to have been repressed in order to gain favour and not feel to be taxing in any way. Performance provided the perfect environment to regain the agency she relinquished, in other words the emotional agency of being able to express socially undesirable emotions within a context devoid of consequence. This seems to have led, like the second participant, to her feeling more at home onstage where she was able to portray an array of emotions and character types that were part of the larger world of Reality, unlike the stifled emotional landscape experienced through succumbing to her defences.

Through the process of identifying and engaging positively with our own anxiety, both participants and I were able to experience performing in a meaningful and potent way. The second participant maintained that anything less than a meaningful performance felt like he was disconnected and not present, akin to the attitude he had been taught by his teacher. The first participant was able to evolve from a simple continuation of her easy ability to perform to an engagement with herself and her emotions. This would not only have added depth to her performance and her experience as a performer, but to her life as a whole. In my case, it similarly resulted in a move away from the easy ego satisfaction of my childhood performances on the recorder to having to engage with the music in such a way as to experience it as meaningful. It also resulted in true sharing, as opposed to simply pleasing, which created a healthier attitude towards others.

5.3 Synopsis of the interviews in light of the literature

In this section I will summarise my discussion of the above themes with specific reference to each participant, including myself.

The first participant attributed her enjoyment of performing to the fact that it was her primary form of communication since it allowed her the space to communicate from a whole self and express emotions she may not be able to in her everyday life. She experienced very little performance anxiety and her trait anxiety manifested in repression and perfectionism, alleviated through consciously exploring a different range of emotions in performance through Play. This affirms her agency as a complex identity, capable of emotional expression beyond the stifling confines of compliance and platitudes.

The second participant experienced performance ecstasy only very recently when he became an accompanist and was able to develop his own techniques for overcoming his MPA through Play. He was thus able to explore the liminality of self-awareness and shared enjoyment in performance. His trait anxiety, which manifested as a form of social phobia, resulted in his having experienced severe performance anxiety up to that point. Both his general and his performance anxiety have improved greatly as a result of discovering a musical identity more

suited to him and consequently a more attuned form of agency, and he has become more confident in general as a result.

I experienced both psychological and existential anxiety as a child and in a more subtle form as an adult, with the personal exacerbating the existential. This resulted in occasional severe experiences of MPA which only abated as a result of a certain generous attitude towards the audience and sense of profound enjoyment. Although the ritualisation of the repeat performances and the high calibre of the NAF performances enhanced my MPA, I was able to enter a liminal mode in which I could access the New – a more robust understanding of my own agency and a more generous and less neurotic relationship with others. These experiences have begun a process of connecting me with an ontology which I had hitherto suspected to be the real one but had never experienced, in other words a world in which meaning is not illusory but self-evident.

5.4 Synopsis of the literature in light of the interviews

Music, as potentially an 'organ of reality' can both reveal the nature of Reality and co-create it, thus being both active and passive, or involving both Being and Becoming. The co-presence of these states is an opening which is referred to in this research as 'liminality'. This is a term referring to a stage in a ritual, and indeed ritualising the performance of music, in other words setting it apart from everyday experience and viewing it as valuable, would encourage this opening in which Reality is revealed.

The potential for performing as a means of overcoming anxiety is, it would seem upon reflecting on the analysis of the interviews, due to the liminal nature of art. Art can act as a refuge, a doorway into the arena of 'duration', the slowed down present which both reveals and elicits. What is revealed is a world and what is elicited, a self. Both are viewed as mysterious from the position of the everyday world and the everyday self. It is potentially this other self that performs and this other self that listens as an audience. However, this otherness is in fact illusory. Embracing it results in a more complete self with a healthier attitude towards others, situated in a world in which one has a place, in which one is not adrift in an existentially alienated and neurotically stifled state of stagnation. Thus the "intensified form of experience"

that reveals the self and world as mysterious is united with the everyday modes of being and cannot be understood in isolation (Dewey, 1934; 2). This is articulated by Heidegger as the realisation that authentic existence is not set apart from everydayness, but is rather a "modified grasp" of it (Heidegger, 1953; 172). Thus the participants and I did not partake of something purely mystical through performing, but indeed were ushered into a healthier mode of being in the world.

What was additionally revealed through the interviews is that the musical performance that is an "intensified form of experience", rather than just pleasurable, requires an element of ritualisation. This is not only the usual formal mode of ritualisation, but the kind of ritual akin to Play, in other words the creation of an arena in which experience can exist as an unfolding. When children play they are aware of the fact that what they are doing is not practical or necessary and as such it can acquire a certain degree of timelessness within which elements of the world and the child's own self are revealed to be other than what they were assumed to be. This "performed wisdom" is underestimated in adulthood, but regained in the experience of performance. From the point of view of existential anxiety, Play connects selves to others as well as other aspects of themselves and the world and in so doing is meaningful in a potent and indirect way. It produces a certain open mindedness (Sutton-Smith, 1979) which is not terror. From the point of view of psychological anxiety, Play is viewed as therapeutic due to its combining inventiveness with tradition and thus facilitating the exploration of agency within a safe context (Winnicott, 1982). This results in a deeply transformative experience, one which offers profound opportunities for overcoming MPA as well as general anxiety (both psychological and existential).

5.5 Performance as therapy

In light of the phenomenological and hermeneutic findings of the analysis, it becomes evident that a performer's agency should not be undermined, but rather encouraged. It is the argument of this research that traditional methods of treating MPA run the risk of encouraging compliance through advocacy, or entrenching the notion that anxiety during performance is unavoidable or, conversely, meaningless. They also run the risk of maintaining an inner dialogue which may not be negative as such, but rather wedded to the everyday mode of being at the expense of the existentially charged. In all three cases the methods used, if any, were

secondary to the complex reality of the unfolding of the process of understanding that resulted in a richer experience of performance and self.

I used no recognised treatment or techniques for my MPA other than wishing to re-enact certain emotional states that I felt had enhanced my performance experience. The second participant used Beta-Blockers for a brief period, but maintained that they only helped his physical symptoms, not his nerves, as well as a form of exposure, which although helping him to not give up performing, did not alleviate his MPA. The first participant used herbal relaxants and concentration techniques to maintain her composure onstage, which worked to make her feel more secure. However, she did not suffer from debilitating MPA and these relaxation methods had no effect on her trait anxiety. This manifested in a deeper form of anxiety which could only be targeted through a conscious employment of the performance space to engage with agency, self and other simultaneously and in a meaningful way. She emphasised that what she has learned from her engagement with the performance space enabled her to move beyond her anxiety in this way, as opposed to any ad hoc methods. She consciously used the anxiety, played with it during performance, in order to transform it in real time. These are examples of the complexity of the human experience and how profound and subtle the means of overcoming limitations are when they are given the time to present themselves. Performing music in all three instances increased MPA but was in fact the means for overcoming that very anxiety as well as anxiety experienced in an everyday context.

In my review of current treatment methods for MPA in Chapter 2 it appeared that drug therapy and cognitive behavioural methods did not seem to have long-term effects as they do not address the causes for anxiety in any depth. Psychoanalysis, furthermore, revealed itself to be potentially too time-consuming, limited and detached from the experiences it chooses to analyse. However, there is a suggestion in current literature on psychoanalysis that it may transform itself towards strengthening the capacity for creativity and a sense of aliveness as well as the ability to love (Barbre, 1999; Newirth, 1999). Caroline Grey (1999; 242) suggests that psychology's status as a scientific discipline suffers when it clings to the dichotomies between the intrapsychic and interpersonal as well as between self and culture. No wonder, then, that Winnicott (1982; 138) suggested that "the time has come for psychoanalytic theory to pay tribute…to cultural experience". Cultural experience, especially involving performance,

can develop all of the capacities that psychoanalysis aims to develop in its most ideal and contemporary form, as is evident through analysing these three interviews. This in itself can transform the predicament of "the primary experience" as the philosopher Charles Taylor (1985; 159) suggests performance can. Performance is thus potentially powerfully therapeutic.

The psychologist and philosopher Binswanger (in Frie, 1997; 133) refers to "the disclosure of world through attunement" which he suggests is possible through love. Binswanger compares love to music and art. The attunement required to disclose the world and the self was indeed revealed through this research to be akin to love and music, and performing music is therefore potentially one of the most potent experiences of such an attunement. Existential Psychology, of which Binswanger was a proponent, regards this attunement as not a passive activity, but involving choice, or agency (Needleman, 1963). Thus it can only be effected, to quote Sartre (in ibid.; 131, 132), "by means of a radical transformation of my being-in-the-world…of my…choice of myself…by an abrupt metamorphosis". This transformation is as a result of the narrowing of possibilities, a commitment that is not the reductive explanatory system of the neurotic or a methodology of advocacy (ibid.) but a "gain of actuality" (ibid.; 144). Performing music becomes a means by which to not only heal anxiety, but extend the horizon of experience in such a way that it is not overwhelming, but empowering. This can result in a form of freedom that is not the freedom of endless possibility or isolation, but of responsible, reciprocal commitment to the Real.

5.6 Summary and conclusion

Performing music can elicit anxiety. However, when the experience is used to enact a more fully developed self, one that is situated within a relational mode of being, it becomes a healing experience, both personally and ontologically.

After analysing the three interviews, three philosophical concepts were revealed to have potentially played a role in the overcoming of MPA, namely Liminality, Play and ritual. In psychoanalytic theory, Play, or the intermediate area of experience in which conflicts are worked out indirectly, is a form of therapy in and of itself. Performance is viewed as an example of Play in adulthood and acknowledged to be underrated within the field of psychology. The

three narratives analysed as part of this thesis highlight the importance of Play in performing as creating the arena for overcoming stagnant, destructive patterns of behaviour. Other therapeutic methods used to assist this process served as a form of control when symptoms of these patterns threatened to undermine the performance experience. The real transformation occurred, however, through actively engaging with the task at hand in such a way as to overcome personal limitations in a meaningful, relational way, which led to a profound engagement with self, others and the world. This was as a result of the nature of music as well as the liminal, ritualised mode of being that is performing. Thus agency is revealed to contain within it the New, and I suggest that this discovery transforms musical performance into a healing experience.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This research aims to explore the potential healing effects of performance in relation to Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) and general anxiety. Chapter 1 presented an introduction to the research and introduced the background, main aims, key concepts and definitions relevant to the research, and the research question. Chapter 2 discussed the literature on music as an art form, performance, anxiety, agency and MPA from both a psychological and philosophical viewpoint, as well as discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the current methods of treatment for MPA, which were divided into physical and psychological, with the latter being further divided into cognitive behavioural and psychodynamic. Chapter 3 presented my choice of methodology and discussed the research process in terms of data collection and analysis. Since my methodology is Autoethnography I included my own experiences of anxiety and performance as one of the three interviews conducted. Chapter 4 provided a detailed analysis of the research data. Chapter 5 presented a discussion of this analysis in relation to the literature. Chapter 6 summarises and presents the conclusions of the research. The main research question is addressed in this chapter.

6.2 Addressing the research question

The main research question is: How do the lived experiences of performing music help alleviate anxiety and thus suggest a more complex approach to the interventions for Music Performance Anxiety than exists in the current literature? This question was answered through the following findings:

6.2.1 The relational element of performance as a means for overcoming anxiety

It is the finding of this research that performing music can heal dysfunctional attitudes towards others due to the sharing inherent in the act of performing. The healing potential of sharing within a performance context has been discussed in psychoanalytic as well as philosophical literature as being necessary in order to alleviate the isolation inherent in Individualistic societies as well as share hidden aspects of self in a non-verbal way. However, my research

brings together both disciplines in order to attempt a more complete understanding of what is involved in this process and suggests that this healing potential is profound enough to alleviate both Music Performance Anxiety and general anxiety. This was experienced rather dramatically in my own experience as well as that of the second participant.

6.2.2 The potential within performance as a platform for expressing repressed emotion and embodying complexity as a means for overcoming perfectionism

The literature on performance, both psychological and philosophical, suggests that performance is an opportunity to embody and express repressed emotional content and ways of being. Again, my research brings these disciplines together to apply to the notion of the alleviation of perfectionism. The initial title of my research revolved around the relationship between trait and state anxiety in performing music. This, however, had to be radically altered when, after analysis, it became evident that the first participant experienced very little state anxiety in response to performance. Thus she had never suffered from Music Performance Anxiety proper. She had, however, discovered that she suffered from a form of perfectionism, and found that she could use musical performance as a means of overcoming it. She achieved this by consciously expressing a full range of emotions and embodying aspects of womanhood that she had hitherto repressed during performance. There is no such correlation in the literature on perfectionism that I am aware of.

This ability to use performance to overcome anxiety was not only particular to her experience, but was discovered to be a common theme throughout all three interviews. I used musical performance to alleviate the existential and psychological anxiety I had experienced as a child through entering an ecstatic state and sharing this with an audience. This was developed further when performing in a professional production, which I have elaborated on as my second finding. The second participant experienced the relational element of being an accompanist, both between himself and the other musicians and himself and the audience, as having a very positive impact on his general self-esteem and feeling of purpose.

6.2.3 *The anxiety inherent in agency signals the necessity to move from discreet passivity to active embodiment*

Upon analysing my experience of performing music I was able to articulate the profound effect that performing in a professional production had had on my general levels of anxiety. Whereas before I had used musical performance as a means of experiencing a particular form of ecstasy elicited through music, I was unable to overcome my Music Performance Anxiety through this method when performing professionally due to the repeated nature of the performances and the high standards expected. As a result I had to simply observe the cognitions brought on by Music Performance Anxiety initially and then use the confidence gained through this form of control to allow me to learn through the subsequent performances. This learning through action resulted in gaining an understanding of what it means to be a responsible, trustworthy, capable agent engaged in a healthy act of relatedness with others, in which anxiety seemed irrelevant. There is much in philosophical and psychological literature written on the bracing and healthy quality of anxiety if engaged with and not repressed. However, anxiety as a signal to move from passivity to active embodiment has not been suggested other than the vivid philosophical notion that performance can call not only the audience but the performer into being.

6.2.4 *Existential anxiety is a contributing factor in MPA, thus alleviating it requires a degree of existential courage, which should be more relational than current definitions suggest*

Agency is philosophically regarded as triggering existential anxiety as it brings to the fore the possibilities inherent in being an agent. This is not directly incorporated into the current literature on Music Performance Anxiety, in other words not referred to as existential by nature. However, my autoethnographic interview revealed that the existential anxiety I had experienced as a child was a factor in my experience of MPA. Overcoming it was thus an existential transformation involving existential courage. The other two participants, likewise, felt that successful performance experiences resulted in a feeling of belonging and increased fulfilment. This research argues that the ability and desire to be genuinely relational should be incorporated into the definition of existential courage. Both require crossing a threshold, an extending of the self, but without the relational element, courage runs the risk of becoming too heroic, with all the associated negative repercussions as well as potentially exacerbating anxiety by emphasising the negative aspects of anxiety as opposed to the potential within it. Unsuccessful performances would have an existentially anxiety-inducing effect, and thus

performing should not be underestimated as a potent existential experience and thus a means to experience a more robust and profound self and world.

6.2.5 The tacit knowledge acquired through performing music can alleviate MPA as well as anxiety experienced in an everyday context

The philosophical literature on performing, especially performing music, suggests that it is a means of acquiring tacit knowledge. This form of knowledge is potentially a form of wisdom which can be incorporated into life outside of the performance setting. It is an argument of this research that this wisdom alleviates MPA during performance as well as anxiety experienced in an everyday context. The second participant developed the ability to learn what entailed being a performer, that it was relational as opposed to merely technical. This allowed him to feel less socially threatened in general. In my case, performing music conveyed not only an alternative emotional landscape, but also an opportunity to observe my fears and defences in action and revealed a different aspect of self and world. This, likewise, had a profound impact on my general levels of anxiety. In all three cases it created the opportunity to enact a meaningful relation to the world and self which developed not only a sense of belonging, but also a connection to a richer reality.

6.2.6 Performing is an opportunity to Play and Play is a means for overcoming anxiety

Performing can create the environment within which to Play, in other words resolve uncertainty through creative, imaginative action. The first participant extended her childhood play-acting into her operatic roles as a means of overcoming her perfectionism by embodying and expressing aspects of womanhood and emotional expressions that she had denied herself in her everyday life thus far. The second participant used Play to develop his own methods for overcoming anxiety backstage before performing. I, myself, had always used Play to overcome my MPA through being aware of how various emotional states affected my anxiety during performance and then attempting to recreate those in performance. This form of Play, however, was forced to mature when performing at a higher level to involve an active learning about my own defences and fears during performance. Thus performance created the environment within which to Play and this, in turn, created the means for overcoming anxiety and thus turning the performance into an opportunity for genuine self-expression and self-understanding.

Play is discussed in psychoanalytic and philosophical literature as being psychologically healthy and performance is mentioned as a platform within which to explore it. Certain self-help books directed at performance skills also mention the importance of maintaining the ability to respond creatively during performance. Play, however, is not mentioned as a way of overcoming anxiety.

6.2.7 Performance as a potentially liminal act and therefore not compatible with anxiety

Play has a dialectic relationship with liminality, or a period of marginality which results in an encounter with that which is Other, or not seen as part of the everyday self or world. It allows for a confrontation of opposites and a heightened self-consciousness. Performance itself is philosophically and psychoanalytically viewed as a form of liminality, especially if it is considered as a ritual. The confrontation between public/private, structure/freedom and known/unknown inherent in liminality allows alternative aspects of the self and the world to emerge. These confrontations as well as the resultant relationship between the everyday self/world and the Other self/world are explored and managed through Play. Similarly, Play itself creates the arena within which liminality can exist. Thus performance is potentially a powerful opportunity for an opening up of experience. The way in which the participants and I explored Play opened up the potential for the liminal, in other words an exploration of different, more profound aspects of self, performance and human relatedness. The potentially liminal nature of performance itself, likewise, allowed for this form of Play to develop. The experience of Play and liminality deemed anxiety irrelevant.

Liminality is an anthropological term which has been appropriated by philosophy and is discussed with reference to art and performance, but not to my knowledge with the aim of overcoming anxiety.

6.2.8 Ecstasy during performance is an effective means for overcoming anxiety, but should ideally be replaced by a more mature form of relational identity and confidence

As revealed in my self-interview, ecstasy during performance acquired through both contrived and spontaneous means, is an effective means of overcoming anxiety during performance and

is a worthy performance goal. However, it should eventually be replaced by a more mature musical identity involving responsibility and confidence in order to truly be in control as a performer and in order to truly alleviate not only MPA, but anxiety in an everyday context as well.

6.3 Summary

Anxiety can become the fuel for engaging with performance in a more meaningful way, which then opens up its potential as an engagement with the Other, in other words more profound and complete, aspects of self and world. This both alleviates the existential anxiety associated with alienation and meaninglessness and the psychological anxiety associated with stagnant emotional patterns. Although treating anxiety as a symptom to be controlled is an invaluable tool in managing MPA, it should not impinge on the ability of an individual to discover the potential for surmounting it themselves through the profundity inherent in the act of agency in a performance context. This results not simply in a form of control with more or less predictable outcomes, but in an act of courage which opens up the full potential within performance, and thereby life as well.

6.4 Limitations of the study

This research provides some initial insights into the healing potential within performance, both existentially and psychologically, and therefore a more complex view of what is referred to as Music Performance Anxiety. A number of limitations became evident during the research process.

Firstly, the research focused on the experiences of three student musicians and therefore does not represent the experiences of professional performers. Further research involving such participants is required to ascertain whether parallels can be drawn between student and professional performers.

Secondly, the research does not consider musical performances in genres other than Western Art music and as a result further research involving other genres is required to gauge the extent to which these experiences are cultural.

Thirdly, the research focused on a South African context, therefore the findings cannot at this stage be generalised as global.

Also, my conclusions involve a degree of philosophical earnestness which may not be compatible with a more spiritual or more practical viewpoint.

6.5 Recommendations for future research

Firstly, an exploration of a broader and more musically diverse sample of participants would expand on this research's initial understanding of the relationship between performance and anxiety.

Secondly, a comparative study with other performing art forms would potentially enhance the understanding of this research's findings.

6.6 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to suggest a more philosophical approach to Music Performance Anxiety through exploring the healing potential within performing itself. The findings of the study suggest, first, that the relational element of performance is a means for overcoming anxiety; second, that the potential for performance to be a platform for expressing repressed emotion and complexity is a means for overcoming perfectionism; third, that the anxiety inherent in agency signals a necessary shift towards active embodiment as opposed to passivity; fourth, that existential anxiety is a contributing factor in MPA, thus alleviating it requires a degree of existential courage (which, it is suggested, should involve a relational element); fifth, that MPA can be alleviated through the tacit knowledge gained through performance as well as its being an opportunity to explore Play and liminality; and lastly, that ecstasy during

performance is a means for overcoming anxiety but should ideally be replaced by a more mature, relational musical identity.

In conclusion, this research provides a new perspective on Music Performance Anxiety (MPA) by suggesting that performance be viewed as an important ritual, and that even anxiety itself within that context can be utilised for knowledge about self and world, especially when its potentially existential quality is recognised. Thus MPA becomes an experience not simply to be managed, but to be learned from.

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Addenda

Addendum i: Interview 1

Addendum ii: Interview 2

Addendum iii: Consent form

Addendum iv: My personal experience of music performance anxiety

Addendum i: Interview 1

Researcher: So I was thinking of asking first about your experience of performing in general and how it has changed from when you were a kid to an adult, firstly, and secondly how it's changed from being a student to more of a professional.

Participant: Yeah. Well I suppose the first thing would be that as a kid it wasn't as serious, I didn't take it as seriously, performing, like if I made mistakes it was fine and, um, if I forgot things I just sort of started improvising…

Researcher: OK…

Participant: As a kid we always had, like, friends come over for Sunday lunches and things like that and they always brought their kids with them and I would be, like, we would always put on a play…

Researcher: Oh sweet.

Participant: We would make it up on the spot, we would have, like, half an hour after lunch to prepare it, and I was always the director and the main character [smiles]

Researcher: [laughs] Same here, we would also put on plays and I would be the main character and director.

Participant: We were quite strict about dressing up, we had this dress up box and would always make these fabulous costumes

Researcher: Oh wow

Participant: But, yeah, there would always be an element of improvisation cos someone would forget something, or they would forget what came next so then we would just sort of go with it.

Researcher: Yes, that kind of spontaneity is rather fun, isn't it?

Participant: It *was* fun, we were quite good at sort of getting up and making things on the spot, yeah. And then getting older, I suppose when I started training more formally in terms of the singing – cos I've done drama and music…. So in matric I did drama cos music and drama were on the same line, and I think drama helped a lot in terms of making me feel comfortable on stage

Researcher: OK, in what way?

Participant: Embodiment.

Researcher: OK…

Participant: Embodying a character or, um, a certain mood.

Researcher: Right…

Participant: So I could take that training into my music performance.

Researcher: How?

Participant: OK, so I kind of, I used Stanislavski's "circle of attention" method, we were trained in that in high school and matric, and basically it's a circle of attention where you start off with a bubble around you, an invisible bubble that is, like you only have half a meter where you give attention to people. Beyond that circle you kind of block out the audience.

Researcher: I see…

Participant: And then as you get more comfortable doing your piece or singing your solo that bubble stretches and eventually it includes the audience.

Researcher: Ah, OK…

Participant: So that helped me establish myself and get more comfortable on stage, but then eventually I didn't need that because I'd been doing so much performing since school – all the drama training and all the choir training made me very comfortable, kind of, like second nature.

Researcher: So you never really went through a phase of having performance anxiety?

Participant: Um, I did, I would always sort of feel butterflies in my stomach as the choir was sort of singing the end of one piece and preparing to go into my solo, I'd always get a little bit of butterflies and my heart would start racing a little bit, so I'd take several deep breaths, and then I'd usually, like when I was starting the solo I'd watch the conductor first as my circle of attention and then stretch it out as I got more comfortable.

Researcher: Right…

Participant: But because performing was always something I wanted to do I think that lessoned the stage fright somewhat.

Researcher: So you felt like it was *your* thing

Participant: Uh-huh. And also I've always felt like people listen to me a lot more when I sing and when I perform than when I speak.

Researcher: Ah ha…

Participant: I felt like it was my main form of communicating with the world and it was where I became extrovert, because I'm an ambivert

Researcher: So you're both?

Participant: Yes, I can lean quite heavily towards introversion, I like to spend a lot of time by myself, I'm very reflective and things like that…

Researcher: So do you –

Participant: Though I can socialise

Researcher: [smiles] Oh I know…

Participant: [laughs]

Researcher: Do you find performing quite healing, not necessarily healing as such, what's another word…

Participant: Therapeutic?

Researcher: Therapeutic, yes, for that reason?

Participant: Yeah, um, it makes me feel that I have a platform to say what I want to say, um, and that I can speak about a whole lot of different issues, because, like the different characters of opera allow me to embody different aspects of womanhood cos I've played so many different female characters, so I can be, like, the naïve person, and then I can be the Queen of the Night who, like, knows everything and is furious all the time, and then I can be someone who is sick and heartbroken and then another who is telling her lover who's been, who's committed infidelity – is that the word?

Researcher: Yes

Participant: To, sort of, sod off [laughs]

Researcher: [laughs]

Participant: So I can be anything I want in that moment, I can be many things in one performance.

Researcher: That's great. In terms of stage fright, do you feel more nervous to perform pieces that are well known, such as The Queen of the Night?

Participant: Yeah, definitely the ones that are more technically demanding I'll have a lot more anxiety for, like, particularly this year I had to learn two very famous Arias and with the one I have been having some trouble getting the patterns in my head, because they have the same words but the tune is completely

different and it's so difficult keeping in my head which order the pattern is. And then you are trying to act as well, but how I got comfortable with it is – basically the character is a doll and I would become the doll, I would have my arms up like a ballerina and I'm allowed to be stiff, which – usually your body stiffens up when it's tense, so I could use it to my advantage. I also get carried onto stage so you can be all floppy and then breathe and then get put on stage and then you're all stiff, but, yeah, I haven't mastered it yet, I'm still messing up the patterns.

Researcher: But you are confident that you have the ability, that you will be able to pull it off when the time comes?

Participant: Yes, yes. And even, I've learned that even if I make a mistake I carry on. Like the last time I performed at the lunch hour concert I skipped a little short section and luckily my accompanist caught me so, um, it wasn't noticeable and I've learned not to make my mistakes noticeable, I just carry on, mission through.

Researcher: Great. So I know that you take those herbal relaxants

Participant: Yes

Researcher: Why do you feel they are necessary? What do you feel would happen if you didn't take them?

Participant: I have actually not taken them before and, um, I take them to stop the shaking…

Researcher: Why do you think that happens, why do you think you shake?

Participant: I think it is a psychosomatic reaction to performance anxiety, basically.

Researcher: Why do you think that happens?

Participant: I think when you are in a space where you're anxious and tense it has to come out somewhere.

Researcher: But why are you anxious and tense?

Participant: Because you are going to be performing in front of people. And because you have to be off book as well. I am much more nervous when I have to have a piece memorised than when I have a book, because when you have a book there is this barrier between yourself and the audience and it is this kind of barrier you can look back to and ground yourself on and then look back at the audience etcetera but when you're off book it's just you and the audience

Researcher: And why do you feel that that's nerve-wracking?

Participant: Well, just because there isn't a sort of middle person or middle thing between you and the audience

Researcher: Why is that nerve-wracking?

Participant: [laughs]

Researcher: [laughs]

Participant: Yo, I'm trying to put it into the best words, um….It's exposing.

Researcher: OK…right…

Participant: You feel exposed, yes, um, there's no sort of protection or barrier, like you are one hundred percent exposed, your voice – and there is something very very nerve-wracking about your instrument being internal

Researcher: Right, yes

Participant: Whereas musicians have an external instrument on which to play, whereas for a singer if you're stressed it goes to your throat, if you're sick it goes to your throat, so there's always that kind of anxiety that, oh my gosh am I gonna get so nervous that I'm not gonna be able to sing.

Researcher: Yeah. And hypothetically if you knew that everything was going to be perfect then you could rely on that audience relationship to be a good and healthy one, where they are happy and you are giving them a gift or something, but if something went wrong then the audience could change into…what? What would they become in that situation?

Participant: Well I can think back to an example. The Grahamstown music festival last year – I was preparing for festival and I had just done a concert and the Grahamstown music festival was four days long and you are singing for four days straight and it is hectic on your voice

Researcher: Gosh

Participant: Instrumentalists can do it because if they get sick it doesn't affect the way their instrument sounds, maybe the clarinet a little bit, but you can still get the notes out, it won't sound squeaky and crackly, but by day four which was the finale, it was the third round, I got up on stage, I had been drinking tea all day, um, med lemon and things like that to try and help my voice cos I felt like something was off, something was not happy, and I got on stage and I sang a song that the day before I had sung to the best of my ability and everyone was,

like, they loved it, so they were very excited to hear it again and from the first note I was, like, this is not going to happen, and my voice was strangled, it was squeaky, I could barely get notes out, it was almost hoarse, um…

Researcher: And how did that make you feel while you were performing?

Participant: Very, very vulnerable, I was trying not to cry

Researcher: Gosh

Participant: It was hectic. Oddly enough I still got placed third, so I still got a placement and people, the audience was very sympathetic, they came up to me afterwards and said, like, I know your voice didn't happen tonight, but you've been phenomenal this whole time and we really really like that piece and – so the audience was nice afterwards, but, um, there were, like people's faces that were, like, kind of changed from smile to shock

Researcher: That's the horror, isn't it?

Participant: Yes, the thing is the fear that people will not like the sound that is coming out or that something major will go wrong on stage. But it taught me a lesson not to over tax my voice and not to take part in things that actually don't take vocal health into consideration, because it is a thing that is very particular to singers and I found out subsequently that the Grahamstown music competition focuses a lot more on instrumentalists and puts them on a pedestal a lot more than singers, they don't consider these things, because it's basically always judged by instrumentalists and you probably only have four or five singers, whereas the rest of the participants are instrumentalists, so it's actually not worth it for singers. If you were a mature voice ,um, and you've been singing for ages and ages and ages your voice can sustain that kind of taxing because you're used to doing opera roles, but young voices can't handle that.

Researcher: Yeah…So when you had had that experience and the audience came up to you afterwards and were nice and sympathetic did that help you to feel-

Participant: It did, but I still felt like I'd somehow failed…

Researcher: OK…

Participant: And afterwards I went back to Miss Jo's place and she has a friend who's a very good masseuse and she is also a healer and she was massaging my neck and she said, good grief this is inflamed and, um, it made me feel very awful that my voice had got to that extent publicly, so yeah…

Researcher: So as you could gauge from the title, my research deals with state and trait anxiety, so I'll tell you what that is: so trait anxiety is anxiety that comes from childhood, usually from parents, or from negative experiences and state anxiety is only from the exact cause that is happening at the moment. So obviously there is an overlap

Participant: Yes…

Researcher: So I don't want to pry too deeply, but do you feel as though you have any trait anxiety, in other words anxiety that is linked to your childhood?

Participant: Mmmm…I think I have always struggled with being the archetypal good girl, um, there's, like, a lot of psychological studies behind that. Um, I think it comes from partly taking on too much responsibility too young…

Researcher: OK…

Participant: I was always very close to my parents, um, as a younger person, um, because especially because when I repeated grade 4 there was a huge maturity gap between me and the rest of my grade and so I got even closer to my parents, they became sort of my best friends, but the result was that I basically skipped out an entire period of my life, my teenage years, I just went from being a child to being adult-minded in one quick step

Researcher: Oh wow

Participant: So I have always felt a slight disconnect with people my age, so I can either communicate with kids really well, I'm like a child magnet, or people far older than me.

Researcher: OK…

Participant: Yeah, so that and then the good girl trope is – there are psychological studies that, um, it can happen because of a parent being absent or something like that and, um, I mean my parents had a home office and there was a period when- they were under a huge amount of stress and also during the day when my sister and I were younger we couldn't, you know, just go into the study and talk to them, like they had to actually close the door and it had to be a separation so that they could do the work that they needed to do and it instilled in me a very very strong work ethic, but at the same time it started – I started to become a parent pleaser

Researcher: OK, to get attention a little bit?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, and also academics particularly, that was the thing I kind of really wanted to excel at cos my mom was an academic, and I only kind of really realised and picked up on this in the last year, like, my habits, but I have a fear of, like, and this is from the good girl trope, not performing well at something

Researcher: Uh-huh

Participant: And doing something my parents dislike and being overly reliant on my parents' permission to do things, so yeah, it's quite hectic, I mean it's not – I don't feel like I begrudge them at all, but I didn't realise that it kind of prompted a behavioural trait in me which isn't always good cos it means that I'm a perfectionist, never want to do wrong, never want to mess up etcetera.

Researcher: That can also have a good effect, though, I guess, in terms of work ethic, right?

Participant: Yeah, it does mean that I can survive a lot of pressure

Researcher: Yeah, but obviously one has to watch that kind of thing as well

Participant: Yeah, because you could actually self-sabotage

Researcher: Yeah, go into overdrive

Participant: And not allow yourself to be a human being

Researcher: So how do you feel this could lead to state anxiety, in terms of putting pressure on yourself?

Participant: I think it is a very unique pressure from a perfectionist, um, for instance there have been times when I have taken on way too many projects at once and then wondered why I've been getting emotional or tired, like even now I just auditioned for an opera company, I have a concert on Sunday, then a week later I have another concert and another just after that and a week later my exam, whereas the rest of my peers have kind of slowed down on the extra-mural performances for exams, but it's again like skipping phases because from second year I wasn't behaving like a music student, I was behaving like a semi-professional performer, I was trying to make opportunities happen for myself, which is good cos it puts my name out there, but it is also a helluva lot of pressure managing your own brand, um, putting professional productions on festival, um, learning how to approach fellow musicians as sort of semi-professionals, things like that

Researcher: So do you think one day you could have both, so one day if you've reached a point in your career where you're kind of happy, do you think your trait anxiety

could relax to the point where you could start looking after yourself and saying no to certain things? Do you feel that that's a possibility?

Participant: Um, I do, yeah, and I have been trying to practise that, so I, um, so I got an email asking me to compete in the Grahamstown music competition and I just said no, not happening, and it wasn't simply because of my bad experience, it was just because I've realised that this is not vocally healthy for me and because it coincided with festival, and because this year's festival show was such a big project, I mean it took up six months, I spent the first semester preparing for it. I feel that I am going to reach a point, and this is why I auditioned for the opera company, that I can step back from doing, from being the administrator behind a production and just be the performer

Researcher: OK…

Participant: I need a space where I can just develop myself as a performer and throw myself into a role, a single role, not several items of standard repertoire, not being the brand manager and the performer etcetera etcetera, and I think that the time will come soon when I will probably employ someone to be my kind of brand manager that I can kind of leave that side to someone else to do and allow myself to be helped, to be able to be helped, because I know that these things cost money

Researcher: Well that's great…The last thing I want to ask you is – I suffer from performance anxiety as you know, this whole experience performing with you was really helpful to me and really healing, it was great, so my whole thesis is about the fact that performance can be healing and that state anxiety can actually heal trait anxiety in a way-

Performer: Yeah, it can

Researcher: So what are your thoughts on that?

Performer: I think every time you do it a little bit of that anxiety gets chipped away and comfort seeps in more and more, um, and you just get to a place where you feel like you belong, like that's your space, your niche and that you're allowed to occupy that space and that niche and people respect you in that niche

Researcher: Thank you, that's so true

Participant: And also because some of the pieces that I sing are so kind of expressive emotionally I can also release a lot of my baggage and release it into the song

and not hold it in my body, so I often draw on personal experiences, they were not necessarily exactly what's in the opera, for instance there was a piece that moved from sorrow to rage and when I realised the sort of good girl tendency there was an element of, um, sadness that I'd sort of inherited this from my experiences just with mum and then rage that I had become this and I didn't feel connected to her at a point in my life etcetera, so I used that and put that in the song and it means that and it means that every time I sing it – and yesterday I auditioned it – I can feel the tears in my eyes, every time without fail

Researcher: Wow

Participant: And every time I sing it a little bit more of that emotional stuff comes out

Researcher: Amazing, well that is my point, that there is a lot of potential in performance, it's never really spoken about

Participant: Yeah

Researcher: Are you ever tempted to take on an opposite of good girl role?

Participant: Oh definitely, definitely, I mean I've been lucky that I've been given roles like that, I mean Cleopatra is the strong woman and good girls are also very good at being strong [laughs] but the subtext of the character – there are things you only find out – the emotions come out very subtlety, like desperation

Researcher: Oh, that's a good one because I imagine that that's the very opposite of the good girl, desperation

Participant: Yeah, so it's desperation, it's frustration, then it's mourning and worry

Researcher: Sounds very healthy

Participant: Exactly, and with the female characters they develop, they change-

Researcher: And that's very important, isn't it, to grow?

Participant: So it's not a two-dimensional stereotype, you don't just have to be a sexy woman or a little mouse of a woman, you develop and grow-

Researcher: A full woman

Participant: Yes, you are full, you are everything

Researcher: That's it, thank you for doing this

Participant: A pleasure

Addendum ii: Interview 2

Researcher: So tell me about your experience of performance anxiety from when you were small.

Participant: I think…I mean I can't really remember when I was sort of in Prep school days, but I can remember performance anxiety starting in high school, grade eight cos that's when I started performing the most

Researcher: OK…

Participant: Um, my first experience was probably when I had to, when my teacher forced me to play in assembly, that was very hairy for me…

Researcher: Did you make mistakes?

Participant: Lots. It's because I was so nervous. Having a school of a thousand people staring at me and you are on the stage, you know, it's too much. So that's where it started.

Researcher: OK…

Participant: Yeah, it was too much….I had a very strict teacher in high school and she always used to tell me I have to do it and she used to force me to do these things as much as she knew I hated it, going on stage. So I didn't have a choice, ever.

Researcher: Was that stressful?

Participant: It ended up being a good thing for me.

Researcher: How?

Participant: Well, I just realised I obviously thrive under situations in which I don't have a choice, you know like where I have to do it and you have to try get your mind right.

Researcher: So how exactly did you thrive?

Participant: Well I just started slowly realising and speaking myself through my own anxiety, type of thing, and telling myself I don't have a choice, So it's either you make it or you don't type of thing. You can freak out or you don't.

Researcher: OK…

Participant: So that's how I dealt with it then. And also she was just mad, she was, like, "you stupid boy, you just carry on", you know, so it was very intense, it was a very strange situation.

Researcher: So she had no time for your performance anxiety?

Participant: Never ever. No, she was just, like, you go do it, I don't care type of thing.

Researcher: What were the pros and cons with that type of strict attitude? I mean there were obviously pros…

Participant: Definitely. I just think it benefited me hugely.

Researcher: Were there any cons?

Participant: No, I don't think there were any. She was an amazing person and she changed my life, so I think I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for her.

Researcher: OK, wow

Participant: So that's pretty much how I got through that stage of my life with performing, thank god, it was just, like, "you just go and do it, I don't care, just get up there and do your thing". And she would say, "I don't care, just plonk any notes", she said

Researcher: [laughs]

Participant: "Just play wrong notes"…So I would try and get into that mindset of "whatever I play, just keep playing".

Researcher: So the whole emphasis was on "just do it", not –

Participant: Not on how good it is or how many mistakes you make, just play.

Researcher: And in that space did you have any performances that you felt were really amazing?

Participant: Mmmm, I'm trying to think, was there? Maybe, let's say it wasn't solid, I wasn't sure how to control my anxiety back then, so it wasn't like I had – it just happened suddenly on stage that it went well. I think it was in my grade eight eisteddfod recital I think that's when it did go well. But it wasn't because I was under control, it was just because I went up there with the usual "just go and do it" and it just sort of by chance went well that day.

Researcher: OK…

Participant: But I do remember that was the only time, and it wasn't, like, this made me play well, this whole process.

Researcher: Right…

Participant: So then I came to university and I accompanied a bit for a year which also helped, obviously, when I worked for schools in my gap year I split between the high school and the prep school and accompanied the choirs and stuff and

that helps because it is just experience going up and more time on stage, you know…

Researcher: Yes…

Participant: And when I went to university I always wanted to study under Catherine, always, it was, like, my dream, so she came to my audition, and because I was so nervous because I had to play in front of her I lost all control, like I shook so much and I couldn't even take that with me, the "just do it", I just couldn't even keep my hands on the piano, it was, like…I've never experienced nerves like that before. And then throughout first year it was quite bad, like every time I went to a lesson I would shake like that or I would be very nervous and performances were really bad. Then I almost went back again, like I couldn't get past this nerves about getting on stage…

Researcher: Did you try different things?

Participant: Well…so the first thing that helped me was I started taking Beta Blockers, which didn't take away the nerves, it sort of just stopped the shaking. So that was a big thing that helped, obviously, to go on stage, but I was still very nervous.

Researcher: Would your nerves affect your ability to interpret the music how you wanted to?

Participant: Oh completely, completely. And I would say that lasted throughout my degree, I was always nervous to be on stage and I had this incredible anxiety about going on stage…

Researcher: Did you ever analyse it? Did you ever ask yourself, "why am I so anxious"?

Participant: You know, I think it really is just the classical music thing, I think playing classical music is extremely nerve-wracking, it's almost like it's always judged, it's so intense to have this huge audience that is sitting almost waiting for you to make a mistake.

Researcher: And did you choose pieces you enjoyed? Did you feel you were up to the level of technicality?

Participant: Oh, I always chose technically demanding pieces, always.

Researcher: Why is that?

Participant: That is just what I enjoyed playing, I enjoyed pushing myself.

Researcher: Did you ever choose slower, more expressive pieces?

Participant: I did once play a piece like that, yes.

Researcher: And what difference did you feel?

Participant: I suppose the feeling of performing it wasn't as scary, although it's strange because it was the one I ended up messing up the most.

Researcher: Really?

Participant: And I think it's because I allowed myself too much time to think, whereas I find that if I play something technically challenging or fast, you know, it kind of doesn't give you the time to think too much about where you are or what you're doing, about everything but the music.

Researcher: Do you ever feel that having a teacher who pushed you emphasised coping rather than focusing on sharing?

Participant: Maybe. That's so interesting, I don't know. Um, I wonder….I'll have to think about that, that's very interesting.

Researcher: OK, so carry on with your story.

Participant: So it was in in third year that I was offered the job as accompanist and that wasn't because I was OK on stage, it was because I needed a job, so they decided to take me on. And that's when everything changed completely, in a whole other direction now…

Researcher: OK…

Participant: Now I can walk onto a stage and I'm fine, absolutely fine.

Researcher: OK, so why?

Participant: I realised I had to perform a lot, I mean I had to perform in performance class all the time, I had to do all the concerts, auditions, whatever the singers were doing – their exams, so I really had to find a way to cope with this no matter what, if it's hard, easy, whatever the music is, you know, I've got to be able to do this. So that mindset already, just the thought that I've got to do this, and I'm almost in the position of, like, jeopardising somebody else's performance changed me like that.

Researcher: Ah, OK…

Participant: And the other thing I have found over the last two years is – cos the worst part for me was always being backstage just before you go on, I used to always think "how am I gonna get through this passage"? you know, "where are the mistakes gonna happen"?, or somewhere where I used to make a lot a lot of

mistakes I used to think "Oh my word, is that going to happen"?, you know I used to think such a lot about what I was gonna do onstage, and then I just decided not to think about the music at all before I go on, so now what I do is – I think people get very irritated with me – but I talk a lot backstage and I talk about everything but the performance, so I'll be asking about people's lives and whatever, whatever, and then suddenly the door opens and then you're on stage and you bow and then I'm absolutely fine.

Researcher: So do you think talking to other people backstage helps you to connect more with people and the audience so that you're less focused on anxiety?

Participant: It's also what the accompaniment has taught me – I know how to connect with people now and I think all that of that plays into that whole thing, you know cos I gotta work with people, that's all I do these days.

Researcher: That's so interesting. So the whole idea of going out on stage and being alone obviously exacerbates anxiety-

Participant: It does

Researcher: And then when you're in a situation where you have to work with other people and your mode of performance is interacting with other people then you can let go of that whole lonely, anxious state

Participant: I still feel anxious if I think of having to go up and play a solo exam or a solo performance

Researcher: If you did have to do that how would you incorporate this experience into that, or could you?

Participant: I would find it very difficult because I would be waiting backstage without anybody, so that mechanism of talking backstage and not thinking would disappear, so it's difficult to say, but I suppose I would just try and think about other things, I would think about life and not about what I have to go and play now. But I feel that these days I am a lot more prepared than what I used to be, I don't know if I work harder or what the story is or I've just learned a lot more in the last two years or – I don't know what it is, so I would probably be a lot more prepared which would help a lot as well now if I had to go and play a solo

Researcher: OK…

Participant: I like the idea that you get out there and you have to only start thinking about it as you get to the piano, not, like, pre-think all these things, you know

Researcher: Do you find performing to ever be profound?

Participant: Yeah, it definitely is a profound experience.

Researcher: Maybe that also helps to maintain that profundity?

Participant: Definitely. And then I realise that when I actually have a profound experience on stage is when I go on stage like that. You know, like for my recital I did that the other night. It went well and I felt amazing when I went onstage, absolutely amazing. As I walked on I felt, like, "I am meant to be on this stage right now and this is what I'm meant to do with my life".

And what I find is going into exams with people who are unprepared or we are not so sure because not everyone's together then I think about things too much and then I don't have that experience where I walk on stage and I'm, like, "this is where I'm meant to be", and I said to Catherine after the first and second year exams, I mean we played – it was eight students so it was a lot of playing, and I was so out of it the whole time, but now I do know how to cope, I mean I can do it, but I'm not there, you know, I feel a bit detached, like I'm completely not in the music and I'm just playing the notes to try and get through, you know, so yeah, that's when I have the most profound experiences, when I just walk on stage and I'm confident and I obviously know the stuff very well, but haven't thought about it or pre-thought about it, I just walk on and then suddenly you've got to do it.

Researcher: Right…

Participant: And also I find also the difference in settings, so for instance an exam setting compared to a concert is always different to me and I find when there's lights on the stage and a whole audience then I'm also more – it's like I also feed off the audience, that's also when I have the best experience, you know.

Researcher: So why are you now feeding off the audience now whereas before you thought they were waiting for you to make a mistake?

Participant: Because I think I got my nerves under control and now I am able to perform, that's what I think.

Researcher: And then what is performance for you in that context?

Participant: What is it? Well, for me performance is about being able to go on stage and portray the music successfully so that the audience can receive it. And it can receive it as, sort of how it's supposed to be and not sound like the person is on the edge the whole time, wondering whether they are gonna make it through, are they in the right passage, are they losing their memory, you know that type of thing.

Researcher: Yes…

Participant: It's about being able to go onstage so people can enjoy the music and relax and just listen and feel great afterwards, that's what performance is for me, and also where I feel like I can also let myself go to a certain extent and I'm feeding off the audience and all of that, whereas for me you are not truly performing if you are not feeding off the audience, I mean what is it then? I don't know.

Researcher: Yeah, then it becomes more like a one man show

Participant: Yes, whereas performance is them receiving and then you receiving them, it's amazing, I love it.

Researcher: Oh wow. Now your experience with overcoming performance anxiety, has it affected any general anxiety you may have experienced in your life? Assuming that everyone experiences some degree of anxiety

Participant: You know I think it has. I have felt a change in myself since I've started having successful performances, since I've had everything under control… because I feel a lot more confident in what I'm doing and it has overflowed into my life, I'm just feeling a lot more confident and I'm not stressing about "Am I doing the right thing in life"?, you know, I'm not doubting myself anymore, I feel like I can get through most things if I can get through this and I'm in the right field and I am a well-respected person for what I'm doing and I'm making a difference, you know it's working, and because it is such a big part of my life, I mean it's the main part of my life, I'm very one-direction, and that is music, and so it's definitely made me a more confident and positive person.

Researcher: That's so great. Do you think if you had to go and see a psychologist and you were dealing with anxiety from your childhood, parental issues or whatever,

do you think this positive effect can extend as far back as that, to heal those kind of issues?

Participant: Completely. Well, you know, I know a lot of my performance anxiety comes from there, it comes from childhood, like school and it wasn't a great time for me, so because of that I've been a very unconfident person and a very scared person – that was always the thing, when I had that teacher who was always so hardcore she always used to say "stop saying you're scared all the time" and I was very scared, you know, of everything, of people, and I still have a bit of that where I don't like crowds of people, I always feel strange or whatever in front of people, but… I think I've been able now to walk onstage and I'm not scared of the people, and that's the one space where I'm not scared, I don't feel any anxiety about, like, "what are they thinking of me"? or whatever, whereas when I walk around in the street or wherever I still have that feeling, but not as intense, and I do walk around a little more confident these days and I'm able to do a lot more than what I was able to. So I think it can definitely heal stuff that happened back then, because it has, it has in many ways. Obviously not completely a hundred percent, but there's a huge change. Because I know all of it comes from that, otherwise I would have probably been better with performance anxiety had I not had that bad time. So I think it can, definitely.

Researcher: You have been amazing, thank you.

Participant: Oh, is that it?

Researcher: Unless there is anything else you would like to add?

Participant: No, I don't think so. OK, great.

Addendum iii: Consent form

EXAMPLE

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title:	
Principal Investigator(s):	

Participation Information
• I understand the purpose of the research study and my involvement in it • I understand the risks and benefits of participating in this research study • I understand that I may withdraw from the research study at any stage without any penalty • I understand that participation in this research study is done on a voluntary basis • I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will remain anonymous and no reference will be made to me by name or student number • I understand that XXX (other data collection requirements particular to this research, e.g. test results, personal information, video recording) may be used • I understand and agree that the interviews will be recorded electronically • I understand that I will be given the opportunity to read and comment on the transcribed interview notes • I confirm that I am not participating in this study for financial gain

Information Explanation
The above information was explained to me by: (XXX Researcher)
The above information was explained to me in English and I am in command of this language:

Voluntary Consent	
I, hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the above-mentioned research.	
Signature:	Date: / /

Investigator Declaration	
I, (XXX Researcher), declare that I have explained all the participant information to the participant and have truthfully answered all questions ask me by the participant.	
Signature:	Date: / /

Addendum iv: My personal experience of Music Performance Anxiety

The first experience of performance anxiety I can remember was in fact musical by nature. I was around the age of 5 and had practised holding a candle and singing in front of an audience with a group of children. When the time came to perform I was struck by a feeling of panic and horror as I realised that there were not enough candles. I started desperately asking members of the audience whether they had seen my candle but no one could help me. I don't recall what happened after that, just the seemingly terrifying experience of a reversal of roles, from intending to please to begging for help. This sudden descent into humiliation stayed with me as a latent potential within any public shared experience and informed my perception of agency.

My first instrument was the descant recorder. I practised religiously and always felt very confident. This probably stemmed largely from the fact that it was an instrument unencumbered by grandiose expectations – I knew I was pleasantly surprising an audience by bringing out the best from it. I grew up listening to piano concertos and sonatas, so when I started playing the piano, however, at the age of ten, I had the feeling that I was entering a world of high expectations, a bar that had been set almost impossibly high. This resulted in my first experience of Music Performance Anxiety proper at the age of twelve. I was performing in an eisteddfod and experienced such intense apprehension that the piece completely fell apart. I remember the look of horror on my teacher's face. This time I couldn't ask for help from the audience (not that I would have wanted to after the previous disastrous attempt) and was left performing my humiliation. From that point on I became intensely aware of the impact of anxiety on my ability to perform. I wished to recreate the years of intense joy I had experienced performing on the recorder where I was utterly confident and knew I was sharing something of beauty with an audience. This, however, proved to be very difficult – the more demanding the pieces became the more I struggled to keep chaos at bay. My brain had more to worry about since I was using both my hands as well as my feet, and there were far more notes to play and hence miss. A schism developed between what I wanted to convey and what I was able to do. This in itself was not traumatic, as it created a healthy incentive to work, to spend my time on a difficult project with all the rewards that such labour can bring. But it was a move away from a certain almost heavenly sense of agency, far removed from the unstable experience of my fifth year, which was becoming uncomfortably all too familiar again. I discovered, however, that if I was in the right frame of mind I could sight read even quite difficult music, and this always felt like a miracle. I then realised that if I was in that same frame of mind when performing the piano I could even transcend the ecstasy I had felt with the recorder. The

emotions I felt I could elicit in myself and others seemed to partake of the heights I experienced when listening to piano music and were more complex than the pure lyricism of the recorder. This frame of mind is hard to articulate, other than as an immersion in the world of music, as though it existed in a different frequency to other experience, or had a particular emotional quality different to everyday emotions.

At the age of eighteen, in my last performance at a school concert I spent the hour before the concert with my then boyfriend in a state of heightened emotional warmth and entered the stage feeling very much in love. My performance on that occasion was one of the best I have ever given, and some of the audience members were moved to tears. This was an eye opener for me as it confirmed something I had always felt to be true with regard to music, that the emotions it engendered were not unlike love, that they both existed within that mysterious frame of mind. Love became my first technique for overcoming performance anxiety.

The next eye opening performance experience I had was in university. I participated in a music competition and played two pieces – a slow Prokofiev miniature and a movement from a Beethoven sonata. The Beethoven was not entirely ready yet, but I didn't believe that two or three Prokofiev miniatures were enough to give me a chance of winning. I did not enjoy the Beethoven, however, and a friend commented that it had felt like hard work. The student who won the competition, ironically, played technically undemanding miniatures on his guitar in an unassuming manner, but with musicality and enjoyment. It was almost a masterclass in integrity. From that experience I realised that unless one is a professional, dedicated entirely to one's instrument, it was best (to my understanding) to perform only pieces that one feels one can enjoy, and to be flexible enough to prioritise that at all costs. The very next week I had to play the Beethoven movement for an exam. The day before, I read up about the sonata and read the literary reference which led me to view the sonata in a new light. This brought an earnestness and freshness to my performance which, again, resulted in one of the best performances I had ever given. It is possible that renewed interest and being in love allowed me to enter into and share the particular frame of mind discussed earlier, or that they were entirely different emotional states which enhanced my performances for different reasons. I didn't want to analyse it too thoroughly for fear that the "miraculous" nature of playing and performing would be compromised. I realised, however, that enjoyment was key. Without it, anxiety would set in and the performance would become a potentially hellish experience.

After university I didn't give any significant performances until I started studying music again in 2017. This time I used what I had learned before to give myself optimum performance experiences. However, in 2018 I had the opportunity to perform in the Arena programme at the National Art's Festival (NAF). I was accompanying an opera singer and the accompaniment was technically demanding. I was also playing a movement from a sonata with an accomplished cellist. I was aware that I was moving into the realm of a professional and was filled with both excitement and terror. This time I could not choose the pieces I wanted to play, and there were to be four performances, which concerned me, as I was not convinced that I would be able to control my mood every time and was worried that exhaustion would throw me off as well. I was encouraged to take Beta Blockers, but felt that this might cause a disconnect with the audience. My first performance was incredibly nerve-wracking. I made a few mistakes and instantly felt like a failure. I had an overwhelming desire to stop playing. I had to focus on the disastrous consequences for the other performers should I stop, on my sense of responsibility, in order to overcome these insane thoughts. Realising defeat, my mind turned to devising ways to get out of future performances. I got through the show without too many mistakes and was emotionally exhausted. Compared to the other two consummate performers I felt like a fraud. I realised that my sense of being "the best" had often boosted my confidence enough to allow me to choose performing as a mode of self-expression, but when performing with better musicians than I was, the ensuing sense of fallibility made me vulnerable to almost debilitating anxiety. I had been analysing my occasional performance anxiety over the years and had realised that it, of course, stemmed from my childhood, in which unreasonable emotional demands coupled with a lack of structure had created a perpetual feeling of uncertainty and isolation, and an anxiety which staved off feelings of guilt and failure. I would also feel like an imposter in my dealings with 'normal' people who seemed to be able to just get on with things, and would despair of ever being able to forge a link with the everyday world. This all engulfed me during the first performance, especially because I was able to inflict chaos on a wonderfully ordered experience, which was what I had always feared my upbringing would result in. After the show I believed that no one I knew was coming backstage because I had performed so poorly. When I realised that in fact they were waiting for me to come out and had genuinely not noticed the mistakes, I felt a cathartic relief. Through a simple act of self-control I had partaken in something meaningful, not just evaded catastrophe. After that I felt far more in control of the situation and enjoyed the subsequent performances immensely. In each one I felt I was learning something new. Every time I felt I was enacting a different, healthier way of being in the world, in which I was united with others through our common appreciation of

beauty and emotional integrity, and in this common experience neuroses were irrelevant. As a result I feel I am healed to a large extent in terms of not being enslaved to the chaos of the past. I still feel performance anxiety, but feel more confident in my ability to overcome it. I also feel less isolated and more in touch with the shared emotional landscape of others. I feel very grateful for the opportunity to overcome my general neuroses through the medium of musical performance.