

Approaches to performance: A comparison of music and acting students' concepts of preparation, audience and performance

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ABSTRACT: Live performance is seen as a crucial part of being a professional musician and a performer's comfort in front of an audience often determines the success and longevity of a career. This article aims to contribute to the study of performance by looking at how music students conceptualise performance and comparing their concepts with those of acting students who took part together in two devised projects. It shows that music and acting students give contrasting accounts of preparation, audience and performance, and that concepts of performance inform pedagogical practices, preparation habits and how students conceptualise their relationship with the audience.

KEY WORDS: performance, music pedagogy, preparing to perform, audience

INTRODUCTION

Live performance is seen as a crucial part of being a professional musician and a performer's comfort in front of an audience often determines the success and longevity of a career. Whilst music students can be confident performers, the literature on performance anxiety and anecdotal evidence suggests that many find public performance problematic. Although music students are expected to perform in public, they do most of their training outside the context of performance, receiving one-to-one instrumental lessons that focus on the mastery of technical and musical challenges of repertoire, or engaging in solo practice. This might be seen as the traditional way of developing music students' ability to perform. More recent approaches include methods such as mental skills training designed to equip students with further tools to enhance performance (e.g., Clark & Williamon, 2011).

This article aims to contribute to the study of training for performance by looking at music students' accounts of preparation, their relationship to audience and performance and comparing these with those of acting students who took part together in two devised

projects. It shows that the music and acting students conceptualised performance in different ways and that this informed their concepts of preparation and audience.¹

The immediate impetus for bringing together music and acting students was a staff initiative at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (see Sloboda, Burgess, Dolan et al., 2011), whereby students in an acting class and students in a music improvisation class came together with the tutors of the two classes. The initial project having been undertaken, the acting tutor was keen to repeat it, so a second project was carried out with the same acting students and a different cohort of music students. The comparison between the acting and music students was justified on pragmatic grounds, since the two groups – as well as their tutors – found it a productive and enjoyable experience. It was also justified in terms of research, since there is comparatively little evidence of the effects of cross-disciplinary work in the context of conservatoire education, although collaborative work is often advocated (e.g., Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013). The rationale for comparing students of music and acting, however, needs further explanation as there are obvious differences between the two. Orning, for instance, offers some cautions:

Several aspects of the realm of theatre have no obvious relevance to music, notably the more direct and even physical interaction between performers and spectators. The most significant discrepancy lies in the use of text and human gesture as carriers of meaning. Theatre refers to life, and while music certainly can refer to specific phenomena, generally speaking, most instrumental music has no such aim. Excluding singers, musicians also have a physical instrument through which they perform. Perhaps it is not entirely safe to draw direct parallels between an actor acting a role and a musician playing a score (Orning, 2012, p. 25).

In their different ways, however, human gesture in theatre and playing an instrument both use “shared vocabularies of body idiom” (Goffman, 1963, p. 35), or “techniques of body management” (Scott, 2011, p. 67), which, although familiar to us – particularly in the case of acting, which often aims to represent ‘life’ thus hiding the artifice involved – are examples of what Scott describes as “performative acts which depend on the training and practising of culturally acquired skills” (ibid). The pedagogy of the acquisition of musical skills has already been compared not only with other arts, but also sciences, sport and games (Ericsson, 1996). While skill acquisition is common to the learning of all crafts (Sennett, 2008) there is a further similarity between the crafts of the actor and musician, which differ from others in that both acting and music performance take place in front of an audience and usually consist of an interpretation of a text or score, or the realisation of an improvisation by performers according to specific traditions.

Having established some parameters for a comparison of music and acting as social and artistic practices, I now review the literature. The review draws on descriptions of normative practices, popular pedagogical guides and the academic research literature on performance in both artistic disciplines in the following areas: format and goals of training and concepts of audience.

¹ With thanks to Paul Dowling at the Institute of Education for suggesting ‘performance’ as a core category. Thanks are also due to John Sloboda and Ken Rea for reading early drafts and to Jane Ginsborg for forensic copy-editing.

Format of training

Although music and drama are both performance arts, there are major differences between, first, pedagogical practices in the two disciplines and, second, the ways the formal training of musicians and actors are described. Musicians are taught through one-to-one lessons with a principal study teacher (Gaunt, 2010) whilst actors are taught in groups (Merlin, 2010). For musicians, despite the emphasis on solo tuition, it is expected that improvement and consolidation of learning happens in daily solo practice, rather than the weekly lesson (e.g., Johnston, 2007; Lehmann, Sloboda, & Woody, 2007). Although musicians do play in ensembles, they are expected to arrive at the first rehearsal having practised their parts; music students often do the majority of their practice for solo pieces requiring piano accompaniment and even duo repertoire on their own, particularly when access to pianists is restricted.

The reverse is true in acting training where students train and rehearse together as a company. In practical guides to acting, much of the writing describes or assumes a group rehearsal process, and rarely mentions personal practice. Although actors are expected to develop aspects of their technique on their own, for instance through vocal exercises that are often taught in classes (see, for instance, Merlin, 2010, p. 37), the majority of time spent preparing for performance is likely to take place as an ensemble.² Thus the main activity when preparing for performance consists of group rehearsal for acting students and solo practice for music students.

Goals of training

The format of tuition is related to the goals of preparing students to perform. The music psychology literature advocates efficient learning as the desired result, where practice is seen as a problem-solving exercise (Jørgensen 2004; Hallam, 1998), with musicianship divided into discrete skills (e.g., technical and interpretative) and musical texts broken down into manageable chunks for learning (e.g., by structure or complexity). Practical guides to performance emphasise consistency and accuracy as the object of practice (Johnston, 2007). Accordingly, solo practice provides the student with the time and space to develop a strong individual focus on attainment of skills, and the achievement of reliability and control in performance. It is no coincidence that 'peak' musical performance is described in terms of "mastery" (Gordon, 2006) or "excellence" (Williamon, 2004), rather than, for instance, artistic experimentalism or spontaneity of affect.

Actors' group work, by contrast, achieves more than just the mass training or rehearsal of individuals. Instead, there is an emphasis on developing an awareness of the self in relation to others in a performance space. Whether technical work is being undertaken or repertoire rehearsed, the emphasis is on building interpersonal relationships between performers. Merlin, for instance talks of developing "dynamic listening", a way of paying close attention to the ensemble's words, body language and actions to determine one's own contributions (2010, p. 96). Matthews notes that ensemble exercises build the "relational framework for the communication of understandings" (2011, p. 121) and Morrison talks of the rehearsal process as "a collective work of creativeness" (2003, p. 99).

² This is the UK norm. In the US, one-to-one acting lessons and solo practice appear to be more common. Compare, for instance, Merlin (2010) and Sloan (2012) for UK and US points of view, respectively.

In focusing on the role not of the individual but of the collective, it becomes apparent that actors cannot rehearse successfully on their own, hoping to bring their individual offerings into a group process. The format of acting training thus supports the goal of training, to develop performers' awareness of each other.

Audience

The audience is not seen as necessary to music performance, given the performer's concentrated focus on his or her own actions in the one-to-one lesson and solo practice, and the amateur tradition of performing for oneself or fellow performers. Although the distinction is often made between practising a piece of repertoire and using specific strategies to prepare for public performance, it is notable that many of these strategies are for managing anxiety rather than enhancing the relationship with an audience. Either audiences are referred to in the context of damage limitation, so that "the audience never suspects there was a mistake in the first place" (Johnston, 2007, p. 244), or they are cast in a non-interactive role as the recipient of one-way messages (Jørgensen, 2004, p. 95), "projected" by the performer (Snell, 2006, p. 128). Such views on the role of the audience have been described as "extramusical" (McPherson & Schubert, 2004, p.70).

By contrast, an acute awareness of the implications of the audience's gaze has long been an important feature of the theatre performance studies literature (Schechner, 1977; Blau, 1990). Freshwater notes that "the audience provides the theatre event with its rationale. The relationship is indispensable" (2009, p. 2). The audience features early in Morrison's chapter on rehearsals, ahead of the director, the production team and the process of rehearsal characterisation (2003, p. 100). This focus on the audience also tells us that actors rehearse primarily for performance; there is no situation in which actors will be rehearsing together without performance in mind. One can speculate that this might be a factor as to why performance anxiety – or 'stage fright' in the acting literature – does not occupy as prominent a position in guides to acting as it does in those to music performance, even though accounts of its physical and mental effects do exist (e.g., Merlin, 2010).

This comparison of the literature on preparing to perform in the disciplines of music and acting shows that obvious differences exist between the format and goals of the two kinds of training, and the perceived importance of the audience to performance. The literature on music performance advocates one-to-one lessons and solo practice to promote the individual mastery of skills and repertoire, with mental skills training recommended as an additional technique, primarily for managing anxiety rather than enhancing performance. The literature on acting emphasises inter-ensemble dynamics through group teaching and the recognition that the audience is an integral part of performance. While references are made to the potential for music performance to involve an interaction between performer and audience, it is not clear from the literature how this can be realised during preparation other than by the student visualising the audience while practising.

The aim of the present study was to describe the divergence between pedagogical practices in the two performance arts, using data from two projects, *Storytelling* (ST) and *Circus* (C), undertaken at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in 2010. *Storytelling* was based on folk tale narratives, while *Circus* involved physical theatre on the theme of 'Burlesque'. In both projects, each of which lasted for 12 weeks and culminated in a performance to peers and teachers, music and acting students trained, improvised and

rehearsed together. The projects represented a compulsory and timetabled course for acting students but a choice of elective for music students.

At the beginning of the projects, the acting teacher led a workshop for the music students and the music teacher held an equivalent session for the acting students. Thereafter, the majority of the rehearsals involved both groups, together, the music students being asked to undertake the acting students' training and rehearsal process. After acting warm-ups and exercises designed to encourage experimentation and risk-taking, the students were asked to devise short scenes. For example, the acting teacher would set students 'devising tasks' on a given theme to be accomplished in a short timeframe e.g., 30 seconds on one topic, then 1 minute on another, then 3 minutes on yet another, and finally, students were asked to combine the material from the previous 3 sketches to devise a 5 minute scene. The music students worked alongside the acting students, aiming to use their bodies and instruments in the physical space as well as musically.

The sketches would be performed to the rest of the group, and feedback was offered by students and teachers, thus emphasising the development of performance material and rehearsal techniques as a company rather than individually outside the rehearsal space. Through a process of creation, feedback and revision, the short sketches were developed into longer scenes for the final performance. The students were interviewed and from their accounts it is apparent that there was an element of spontaneity and improvisation in the final performance itself; although scenarios, musical style and structure had been worked out beforehand, the performers were, to a certain extent, free to change words and/or music during the performance.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The study used a grounded theory methodology, a pragmatic approach chosen to allow conceptual categories and their properties to emerge from evidence. Consistent with Strauss and Glaser's (1967) exhortation to approach the empirical setting without preconception, coding categories used to analyse the data were developed *in vivo* directly from the data rather than pre-existing theories. The full research design evolved in response to the preliminary coding of data from the *Storytelling* project. The decision to collect more data from the *Circus* project and integrate them with the *Storytelling* data was made in response to the need to test the initial coding against further examples, using the constant comparative method. The coding gave rise to three categories: performance (the 'core' category), preparation and audience (categories informed and maintained by performance). Once these categories had been identified the literature review was conducted.

The data were treated not as providing verifiable descriptions of the practices which they describe, but as recontextualised accounts of practices produced in the context of the research interview for the benefit of the interviewer (Dowling & Brown, 2010). This approach acknowledges that different data may have been obtained if the participants had been observed as they prepared for performance, for instance, rather than being interviewed. Similarly, the participants' observations about the audience revealed only how they constructed the audience, not the views of the audience members themselves.

Participants and procedure

The same acting students took part in both projects; they were first-year undergraduates when they took the *Storytelling* course and in their second year when they took *Circus*. By contrast, different music students took part in the two projects, as each one formed part of a one-year course on classical music improvisation, available only to postgraduate students.³ A total of 13 music students and 14 acting students were interviewed, with participants chosen for their availability and to ensure roughly equal numbers of men and women. Table 1, below, sets out how many participants were interviewed at each stage and the questions asked.⁴

Table 1: Interviewees*, timing of interviews and questions

Timing of interviews ⁵	Acting Students (A)	Music Students (M)	Questions
Storytelling, Before	6 individual interviews (ST.B.A1-6: Storytelling, Before, acting students 1-6)	4 individual interviews (ST.B.M1-4: Storytelling, Before, music students 1-4)	How do you prepare for a performance in the long term and on the day? What comes to mind when you think of the audience? Does it matter who is in the audience when you perform?
Storytelling, After	6 individual interviews with the same students as outset. (ST.A.A1-6: Storytelling, After, acting students 1-6)	3 individual interviews with the same students as outset; one dropped out owing to inability to find a mutually convenient interview time. (ST.A.M1-4: Storytelling, after, music students 1-4)	How did the performance go? How did you perceive the performance? Were you expecting the audience's reaction?
Circus, 3 months after	-	4 individual interviews with different students from the focus group. (C.I.M1-4: Circus, individual, music students 1-4)	Do you think of the Circus project any more? If so, in what respect?

* denoted in the Results by the emboldened codes, e.g., ST.B.A1)

The initial *Storytelling* interviews were designed to gather accounts of participants' recent performance experiences, whilst the interviews at the end of the course elicited participants' experiences during the project and final performance. Initial coding of the *Storytelling* data informed two further phases of data collection following the *Circus* project.

³ The age of the individual participants was not collected as the education level – taken as an indicator of exposure to formal pedagogy – was seen as more relevant.

⁴ In the Results and Discussion section, participants will be referred to as 'music students' or 'acting students' when it is necessary to distinguish between them.

⁵ With thanks to Mirjam James who conducted the *Storytelling* interviews, both before and after, and to John Sloboda who assisted me with the FG interviews.

Immediately after the performance of *Circus* a set of focus group interviews took place that were designed to gain insights into both projects while they were still fresh in the participants' memory. Four music students who had not taken part in the focus group interviews were subsequently interviewed, some three months after the final performance, to enquire about any long-term effects.

The interviews were transcribed and the computer software program NVivo was used to aid sorting the data into emergent themes arising from *in vivo* coding rather than *a priori* existing theoretical categories. In the early stages of data collection categories were developed which were then compared and tested against further data as it was collected. From this process of recurrent comparative analysis, organising categories were developed and a core category was identified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three categories were chosen to make sense of the data: preparation, audience and performance. Each category is illustrated by quotations below, largely from the interviews conducted at the start of the *Storytelling* project, although some quotations from subsequent interviews are included where appropriate, and normative concepts that make up the categories for music and acting students are compared. Then the music students' concepts of the three categories following the projects are reported and discussed.

Preparation

Music students were asked how they prepared for performance, both in the long term and on the day itself. The four music students' responses were similar in that they all focused on the repertoire to be performed, for example:

ST.B.M4: long-term preparation is getting to know the notes, muscular memory, and all that.

ST.B.M1: I was just practising when I could and I was rehearsing with a pianist, that sort of thing. But I wasn't really bringing into my preparation anything other than things directly related to the piece itself.

When asked in a follow-up question whether they did anything specifically to prepare for the act of performance, the music students' responses were all different. It was clear from these responses that their preparation was not teacher-led, unlike their focus on repertoire. Left on their own, each student chose idiosyncratic strategies – or none at all – and in this respect preparation for performance was weakly institutionalised. Whether music students did anything other than learning the repertoire in preparation for performance depended on the individual rather than his or her teacher or the curriculum; indeed some music students remarked that they did not often discuss matters beyond repertoire-learning with their teachers.

One music student talked of carrying out activities unrelated to the repertoire to be performed with the aim of addressing performance anxiety, such as meditation or taking time on the day to feel comfortable with the instrument rather than practising the programme. Another strategy of this student was to simulate a performance context such as visiting the performance space in advance or visualising the performance. With the exception of the practice of meditation, these activities were carried out near to the time of

the performance and were not embedded in everyday, long term practice.

These findings reflect recommended approaches as described in the research literature on managing performance anxiety in both the activities the students engaged in (see also Williamon, 2004, on mental skills training) and in their informal, individual approaches (for instance, Papageorgi, 2008, suggests that whilst performance anxiety “is a normal experience for musicians [...] strategies for coping with the demands of performance should be person- and performance-specific” [p. 1]).

In contrast to the music students’ descriptions of their practice routines, the acting students’ accounts described practising on both the day of performance and in the long term. They talked of focusing on group rehearsal, both for the learning of repertoire and for preparing themselves physically and mentally in a general sense for performance:

ST.B.A6: our director, he took us through [...] doing facts and questions, where you go through every scene and you write down all the facts in the scene and all the queries you have about anything that happens as well, which will help to get into the world of the play as well.

ST.B.A2: on the day itself, we as a group, as an ensemble, we warmed up together as well as individually, because we all got different strengths and weaknesses and we know what we need to do.

ST.B.A3: And then we did a bit of rehearsing of the scene, but not too much, and then we went into the room with the director, just about half an hour before the showing began, and he just got us up in our pairs and did a bit of space work, running around space, tried to get different rhythms going, so I might have a fast rhythm and my scene partner would have a slower one.

All the acting students interviewed described preparation as involving a great deal of extra-repertoire practice in the form of relaxation exercises. For example:

ST.B.A6: By the time you get to the performance we're pretty established, so all we have to work on is just being relaxed on stage, really. On the day I just did lots of breathing exercises because I find if I'm tense the way to release that is by all the breathing, lying on the floor, getting my breath down.

One interviewee reported not having experienced this emphasis on performance preparation before embarking on formal higher education training (and this is likely to be typical since many acting students begin their undergraduate studies without having had years of formal acting lessons):

ST.B.A5: Before I came to Guildhall, I knew nothing of voice or movement or really warming up before a performance. Because I came from [...] amateur dramatics and it was just a lot of people just having fun, really, [...] so coming to Guildhall it's amazing how much work needs to be done, which I didn't realise before, and I suppose that is quite a chunk of how I prepare.

Preparation for performance was described as teacher-led and as a consequence, there was a high degree of consistency in the acting students’ accounts of how they prepared for performance both in the long term and on the day itself. Thus, the acting students’ preparation can be said to be institutionalised through a pedagogical practice that emphasises performance as a goal of rehearsal. By contrast, pedagogical practices in music seem to privilege technique and the mastery of repertoire. Whilst the non-repertoire-related work that prepared acting students for performance was described by them as

embedded in their daily individual and group practice of warming-up, music students were left to pursue their own strategies, which were not embedded in their daily instrumental practice but carried out as separate exercises.

Audience

The participants conceptualised the audience in a number of ways. Audiences were either seen as an intrinsic part of the concept of performance, with the capacity to change the way the participant performed by their very presence, or as an external element having no bearing on the outcome of the performance. All the acting students talked of engaging the audience as an integral part of being a performer. For instance:

ST.B.M2: So my job as an actor [is] to bring [the audience] in.

Similarly, a music student explained that the presence of an audience made the performance:

C.I.M2: It's like when you're just practising there's something missing and you need an element of you, the audience and the music – you need the three.

These participants conceptualised the audience as an intrinsic part of performance by contributing something to the performer that altered the performance. The performer's relationship to the audience was conceived as a two-way interaction.

Other participants, however, conceptualised their relationship with the audience differently. When asked “when you prepare yourself, how important is it for you to know who the audience is going to be, who is going to sit there [...] children, grown-ups, these sorts of different kind of audiences?” most music students responded immediately that it was not important. For instance:

ST.B.M3: I'm just trying to play the piece how I think it should be played or how I think how I should play it. I don't try and be condescending and play it in a sort of more popular manner.

C.I.M1: I've talked with a friend of mine who is a conductor – he doesn't think it's a good idea – he says “I'm just doing my thing, I'm just conducting or playing and the audience can pick up whatever they want.”

The music students above described retaining authority over their performances, regarding the audience as irrelevant. The first student appealed to the authority of established performance tradition (how it “should be played”) and both referred to the authority of the charismatic performer (“how I should play it”).⁶ A relationship of interaction with the audience was ruled out through equating audience with populism and condescension in the first instance, and relinquishing any ability to respond to the audience's response in the second. Instead the relationship could be conceptualised as a one-way presentation.

Both music and acting students tended to describe their relationship to the audience as a presentation if they constructed the audience as judgemental. When asked to describe the audience, a music student said:

ST.B.M2: judgemental people or potential people to communicate something that they maybe don't know about, a piece that they don't know about or to try and show them a

⁶ St.B.M3's wording is ambiguous; I have interpreted it here as ‘how I think it *should* be played’ or ‘how I think I should play it’, that is, that the two parts constitute a distinction rather than a repetition.

new perspective on the piece.

Conceptualising presentation seemed to be a self-defence strategy:

ST.B.M1: Because I think, there is a danger as you start a performance you look to see who is there [...] It can kind of distract from perhaps if you've got yourself into your desired state of mind, there's a danger that you'll be taken away from that [...] It's kind of defence really [...] You have to take your mind completely away from that and onto delivery in the best possible way of the music.

Although acting students did construct the audience as judgemental, one student represented this phenomenon as a projection of an internal judging voice rather than a property of the audience itself:

ST.B.A3: I may get confidence, for example, if I think the audience is really listening to me, or I may get discouraged if I don't get a laugh where I think I should, where I would like to, but I think that can be a killer as well, because then the audience becomes a symbol of your self-critical awareness, which is not always helpful.

Self-defence of a different kind was a common theme with music students who talked of using their instruments to protect or hide them from the audience:

ST.B.M4: To be honest, as long as I've got my [instrument] there I feel like I've got a comfort zone, it's like a shield ... if you asked me to go and sing or to speak in front of an audience, that would probably be outside my comfort zone.

C.I.M1: I think it's the same thing as being inhibited by the audience, so you're trying to hide from them somehow, to think that it's you and your instrument on stage rather than displaying your art, so you're trying to kind of put your head inside your instrument, not seeing anybody.

That these students represented their instruments as a form of protection or barrier to separate them from the audience is in contrast to research on the perceived role of the instrument by professional performers. For instance, Nijs, Leman, & Lesaffre (2009) argue that the instrument is seen as an extension of the performer's body, so that the musician is communicating through the instrument with the audience. Thus, it can be speculated that the music students taking part in this study had a different notion of performance to professionals, and this will be discussed at the end of the article.

It is also worth noting that the acting students' experiences of performance at the time of the Storytelling interviews were atypical in terms of professional working conditions in theatre; the first year performances were not open to the public – only other students and teachers – and they took part in a large studio where the physical proximity of the audience, on the same level as the performers, would have been much closer than in an average sized proscenium theatre. That postgraduate music students – supposedly with greater performance experience – talked more frequently than first-year acting students of needing protection from the audience could have partly been a product of the different conditions in which they performed at the Guildhall School.

Whether venue or familiarity with a particular audience played a role or not, when the acting students' responses did not mention perceived judgement, they constructed a model of interaction with the audience:

ST.A.A2: it's not about being centre of attention [...], I love being up there, I love giving when I have the feeling [...] it's been received [...]

The relationship appeared to be interactive in that the actor described provoking a reaction in members of the audience who in turn gave out signals that the actor then interpreted. Some acting students talked of influencing an audience through attempting to ‘read’ the audience’s mood and then making an active decision to change it:

ST.A.A2: Sometimes you can feel when you lose them, and I think our piece definitely had bits where you kind of feel [...] the dip and you have to kind of bring them back up with us

Interviewer: how do you do that?

ST.A.A2: You can just like feel an energy in the room and then [...] I think through eye contact, through kind of not pushing, because the tendency then is to just shove it down people’s throats, like ‘come on, listen to me’ when in actual fact [...] really connecting with them and really getting with them ‘come on, come on you here as well, come on, come on’ and then carrying with the story with a faster pace, maybe....

If the acting student’s description of how to “really connect with them” seems a little vague, the account of the music student who tried to explain the principles underlying ‘reading’ the audience was even more so – perhaps because of the convention that audiences of classical music listen in silence:

ST.B.M3: I feel, I don't know it has something to do with the silence, or somehow, I don't know how people sense these things, but they just actually sense just the general feeling.

Despite all the acting students describing their job as engaging the audience in performance, when talking about their own experiences, a few downplayed their active focus on the audience, instead describing it as a peripheral awareness. In some respects acting students’ descriptions could be said to be similar to music students who talked of presenting to their audiences without concern for their response. Despite this similarity, acting students still conceptualised what they did in terms of interaction; however, rather than interacting with an audience, they emphasised interacting with their fellow performers on stage:

ST.B.A6: I think if you’re just focused on the play and the other actors on stage, and the Guildhall is going on about the ensemble, if you are focused on the ensemble, and the others in that sense, I think, you draw the audience in anyway.

By contrast, music students who described presenting to an audience cited only “the music” as the focus of their attention:

ST.B.M2: I don't think I tend to think about the audience when it’s going really well, because you just focus on the music, really, so it feels like almost you are the music.

Performance

Different concepts of performance existed amongst the participants. Only one, a music student, referred to performance as a ‘normal’ state:

ST.B.M4: I try just to treat it as a normal thing, 'cause if you think 'oh, this is something different', then you stress yourself out about it.

All the other participants, as described above, talked of performance as different from practising because of the presence of an audience. Despite this similarity, there was a tendency amongst music students to conceptualise performance as a reproduction of a pre-planned event, not much different from the experience of the practice room:

C.FG.M2: when we play a concert like a recital you have to go and kind of deliver a piece. You have been working on a piece and then you have to go and deliver it. There is no interaction from different people and everything is quiet. [...] You have to go and do something that, everything has been prepared for many hours of practice.

The justification for meticulous preparation was made by a music student who stated:

C.FG.M5: in classical performance, perfection is everything.

In comparison, the acting students saw performance as an act of re-creation:

ST.B.A3: I mean I think that's the best you can do on the morning of a performance, everything else in terms of character should really be looked at beforehand, and then you hope you rediscover it ... in the actual run through.

ST.B.A1: we are just showing or sharing this piece of work. It's quite helpful not thinking of it as a performance because what the acting teacher was telling us 'think about it as just, you're there and just give it a go'. And in a sense there is never an end point to it because you can never like master a character or really perfect your Hamlet, you know it's kind of a bottomless pit of lots of things that you find out.

Here, a particular performance is seen as a single event in a longer process that undergoes change over time; performance is not seen as the presentation of a timeless ideal rendition to be reproduced. For acting students, this concept of performance was facilitated by their teachers who encouraged them to substitute the word 'performance' for 'sharing' or 'showing', thus implying an ongoing process rather than presentation of a finished product.

Performance as the key to concepts of preparation and audience

Links can be drawn between participants' concepts of performance, preparation and their relationships to audience. I will argue that the concepts of performance as reproduction or re-creation can be said to form and maintain practices of preparation and concepts of relationships to the audience amongst music and acting students, and also account for differences in pedagogy of these artistic disciplines. To generalise, music students described performance as an event that delivered a reproduction of what had already been rehearsed and perfected in the practice room. Their one-to-one instrumental lessons and individual practice was ideally suited to crafting technical and interpretative perfection of their repertoire. Most music students described their relationship with the audience as a one-way presentation of their reproduced practice room ideal and they talked of attempting to minimise the presence of the audience by attempting to 'hide' or 'shield' themselves behind their instruments.. By contrast, acting students talked of performance as an act of re-creation. This was described as an open-ended process that could not be perfected as it was constantly changing, contingent on in-the-moment audience or ensemble reactions. Their preparation through group learning emphasised strategies for enhancing performance as well as learning repertoire and developing ensemble dynamics. Acting students described performance as either an interaction with the audience or fellow performers on-stage.

Music students' concepts of preparation, audience and performance following the projects

This section describes music students' accounts of preparation, audience and performance after taking part in one or both of the projects, using data taken from the interviews that followed the performances of *Storytelling* and *Circus*. Although participants in *Circus* were

only interviewed after the course had ended, and not before, they were asked to reflect on the *Circus* performance in comparison with their usual preparation and performance experiences.

The process of preparation for music students in these projects where they had taken part in acting students' exercises for devising new work was obviously different from their usual process of preparation. In this case, the goal of preparation was the devising and performing of a new work rather than the refinement, both interpretative and technical, of the performance of an existing one. One music student noted that acting students 'seem to consider kind of a spectrum of issues' in preparation, contrasting this with her norm of 'technique and music' (ST.A.M1). Predictably, however, the music students did not talk of repertoire in their preparation for this project; instead their focus of preparation had shifted onto the ensemble dynamics through their experience of the devising process that took place during the group rehearsal sessions. For example:

ST.A.M3: In terms of characterisations and things like that, we were kind of discouraged [from pre-preparing], so it was most of that kind of stuff was left to the actual rehearsal days and we would usually watch the other actors, most of the time, and just each time try to make it fresh.

The music students also acknowledged that spontaneous decisions about content could happen, live, in performance:

C.FG.M3: I didn't have anything prepared because actually [my ideas] were modified sometimes [...] [you] don't know musically what you are going to do, but you know the structure. I never wrote it down but you actually know if you look at the actors, you feel like they can do it even differently from what they did in the rehearsal.

In describing their work with acting students, music students started using acting students' concepts, such as performance as an interaction between the members of the ensemble on stage.

C.I.M2: you're more aware of everything which happens around [...] so that was a big change. Really listening to what's happening around, if we're playing with the orchestra, it's not me and them, we have to play together. We really interact with them.

C.I.M2: we often had a loose plan, but we had to react in the moment in order for it to be successful.

They described their relation with the audience as a two-way dynamic:

C.FG.M1: [Collaborative work] is more interactive, both to performers and to the audience, it's a closer connection because we're not only a performer, we respond to the mood of the audience as well, so it's kind of, we are almost part of the audience looking back to our performers [...]

Music students also became concerned with how to interact better with an audience, seeing a need to 'open up', 'communicate' and 'project'.

C.I.M2: it was very obvious as a musician to see these actors with very little self consciousness [...] It was a reminder for me about the need to open up on stage.

C.I.M3: musicians tend to be very inward as people and when you compare them to the actors, there's an even bigger contrast.

Interviewer: what's the problem with being inward?

C.I.M3: well if you have to be communicative and play for the public and you're too shy then it doesn't get through, and that's very, very often the case for people who study music in a conservatory and maybe we don't have so many chances to really perform and I would say 95% you play/practise alone in a room and that makes it very difficult to project.

In contrast to the idea that performance involves reproducing a pre-prepared interpretation and that the performer can shield themselves behind their instruments whilst doing so, performance is now recast as something that the performer actively projects outwards. However, it is not clear from the data what is being projected outwards; perhaps, in the absence of repertoire, one could speculate that the participants had shifted their concept of performance from presentation of pre-prepared repertoire to performance as projection of self.

It is hard to evaluate the impact of the projects on music students' standard concepts of preparation, audience and performance, as these projects with acting students not only introduced music students to interdisciplinary ensemble work, but also to performance where there was no prescribed work to be performed. While the data suggest that the music students were influenced by working with acting students to focus on ensemble rather than thinking of performance as delivery of something prepared in advance, this is not surprising since they were performing a work devised in rehearsal. Similarly, though they may have expressed a greater awareness of the ensemble and audience in these projects, causing them to reframe performance as interaction rather than presentation, this conclusion would have to be tested in the context of a performance given under more formal circumstances, perhaps in a larger venue with an audience perceived by the participants as potentially judgmental.

Nevertheless, when four of the Circus participants were interviewed three months later, two of them said that they had retained in their studies of classical music the spirit of their work with the acting students – particularly the need to focus on ensemble and to embrace spontaneity during performance. One reported that he had brought a sense of experimentation into his preparation of repertoire. The other said that whilst he had prepared in the usual manner, he had decided to take risks during his performance. A third student said that he thought that music students could benefit from lessons with acting staff on matters relevant to performance such as stage presence and communication. Although it may be difficult to evaluate the efficacy of this particular set of projects in the long term, these comments from music students show that further research could usefully be undertaken to determine the potential impact of adopting acting students' pedagogy and concepts of performance in the teaching of classical music.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, some practical implications of the findings will be considered.

1. Context of performance preparation

Although ensemble work is of crucial importance to professional musicians (very few will perform exclusively as soloists), music students do not experience or simulate performance involving ensemble or audience when they undertake solo practice. Even when they do rehearse as members of an ensemble, they will have a stake in what they have already

practised individually over many hours. By contrast, acting students embed ensemble practice into their training providing both ensemble skills and the sense of always performing to an audience made up of the other members of the ensemble. Arguably, many aspects of ensemble training and performance skills are embodied knowledge passed on unconsciously through tacit means; certainly, participants found it hard to describe how, for instance, they might gauge and respond to an audience's mood. Acting training, which simulates the context of performance, enables students to learn and practise such embodied skills, whereas music training, by ignoring the context of performance, leaves students to learn for themselves. In many cases, frequent concert performance experience is only gained when embarking on a professional career. Perhaps this accounts for the different notions of the role of the instrument in performance between music students and professionals (see also Nijs, Leman, Lesaffre, 2009); the latter have learnt on the job tacit context-dependent knowledge about relating to an audience through their instruments, which was not taught through formal education. There may be a role for rethinking aspects of conservatoire training so there is greater opportunity for students to perform to audiences, either through group training where the rest of the class becomes an audience, or by encouraging students to find ways to play regularly in front of audiences, real or simulated.

2. The pedagogy of spontaneity

The finding of this comparison between music and acting students' training that spontaneity is taught to and rehearsed by acting students may seem counterintuitive. However, given calls for greater risk taking in classical music performance (see for instance, Sandow, 2007) it could be argued that instrumental/vocal tutors should adopt a similar approach by addressing performance matters to a greater extent in lessons. Institutions could also do more to encourage and support students to embed the development of their performance skills in their everyday practice.

Changing a few selected pedagogical practices may have limited effects given the argument that the way performance is conceptualised influences the way it is taught. For instance, conservatoire technical exams and recitals adjudicated by critical teaching panels rather than the public encourage students and teachers to view performance as a reproduced event as a strategy of survival and success. To align assessment with a different concept of performance would require criteria to be rethought (for instance some conservatoires are now including 'risk-taking' in their criteria), or the format of final recitals to change (for instance, some degree courses require final performances to take place in public venues e.g., jazz clubs or unadjudicated recital halls, once examination requirements have been met elsewhere). Anecdotally, I am always surprised that 'accessing the composer's intentions' is still most undergraduate music students' standard response for what they are trying to do in interpretation. Although this aspiration is ingrained in many a classical musician's psyche (or is used as an alibi to justify current performance trends; see Taruskin, 1995), it is not one shared by the acting profession, which foregrounds the performance of the actors and the director's production over a faithful reproduction of the text (see Ford and Sloboda, 2013). The implication for classical music is that there is a 'right' way to perform a work, which once found must be adhered to within a narrow set of parameters. For pedagogy to change its practices, it surely must adopt different goals.

3. The audience as impetus for a shift from performance as reproduction of a pre-planned event to performance as a spontaneously re-created event

Although the present study did not try to find out what audiences thought of the performances that took place, several recent strands of research suggest that the majority of people who make up audiences, unless they are musical connoisseurs, go to concerts because they are viewed as 'events' offering one-off experiences, not for the works being performed (Sandow, 2007). Apparently, audiences also value a perceived connection between themselves and performers (Dobson, 2010). Clearly, there are problems with conceptualising classical music or theatre as completely spontaneous events; aside from free improvisation in a venue that would allow for audience participation, performers in both music and theatre are regulated to different extents by the score/text, conventions of performance practice, audience behaviour and venue. However, music students' conceptualisation of performance as the reproduction of an ideal developed in the practice room, though understandable in the context of their student learning, could potentially be missing opportunities to reach out to new audiences for classical music.

It is impossible to gauge the extent to which a performance might be constructed as a spontaneous event or interaction by both the performer and the audience, unless the researcher collects data from members of the audience. Nevertheless, it is worth considering whether it is continued exposure to audiences that makes professionals' concepts of performance different from those of students who in their conservatoire environment are more often exposed to one-to-one lessons, solo practice, and when public performance does take place, expert audiences of fellow students and teachers than lay audiences. Equally, the mismatch between music students' conception of performance – perhaps reinforced by their pedagogy and preparation habits – and that of their future audiences deserves to be investigated further.

It is hoped that this study of the differences between music and acting students' concepts of preparation, audience and performance will contribute to the development of tools for the further examination of what it means to perform, how performance is taught, and how performers relate to their audiences.

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