Background

Performance anxiety is a widely researched topic. Musical performance anxiety, however, receives approximately fifty percent of the attention that anxiety among public speakers, actors and athletes receive. But, in multiple studies musicians show more psychiatric pathology than other performers. In the medical journals to explain musical performance anxiety, there are passages of text about other professional areas that do not address it scientifically. This is an important and recent development in the musically related fields, the canon of knowledge is greatly lacking in specifics to singers. After exhaustive research, this study was based on the convenience of the subject. It was based on the subject's proclivity toward stage fright and the consequences of those symptoms in performance. It is a voice educator's responsibility to recognize a particular student's proclivity toward stage fright and make performing more enjoyable and make performing more enjoyable and consistent.

Methods

The primary conclusion is that, based on the data, demographic information, personality factors, past experiences with anxiety and limited to the most accurate predictors, MPA can be forecasted in singers with a large degree of accuracy. The symptoms that arise when a singer experiences MPA occur in their physical, behavioral, and cognitive. Each of these symptoms can be treated through a variety of methods based on the type and severity of the manifestation. Proactive treatments are possible and preferable as they can prevent the singer from experiencing the various symptoms and the consequences of those symptoms in performance. It is a voice educator's responsibility to recognize a particular student's proclivity toward stage fright and guide that student to a method for finding treatment. By recognizing the likely manifestations, these symptoms can be proactively treated by the voice teacher or, in extreme cases, by a medical professional, proactively treated by the voice educator or, in extreme cases, by a medical professional, and make performing more enjoyable and consistently confident.

Results

A consolidation of information about prevalence, predictors and manifestations of MPA led to creation of the Musical Performance Anxiety Diagnostics Questionnaire (MPADQ). A citizen students at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music were recruited to participate through word-of-mouth, voice teachers, and a department-wide email sent to students requesting volunteers. An appropriate mix of gender, age, degree programs and voice types was represented. Volunteers took the MPADQ, including demographic information and a series of over 100 statements with Likert scale responses. Each respondent had as much time as desired to complete the MPADQ. At the time the participant completed the diagnostic questionnaire, base heart rate and respiration rates were measured.

For each of the participants, the author made predictions based on the known predictors of MPA regarding the severity of anxiety the volunteer would experience, and the type of symptoms that would occur surrounding a performance.

Those volunteers who ultimately gave a degree recital during the same academic year were followed through the rest of the process. There were six case studies: subjects A-F.

As the recital of a subject neared, the Anxiety Questionnaire (AQ) was administered to the subject roughly 2 weeks prior to the recital, between 1-2 days prior, one hour prior, immediately prior, and immediately after completion of the recital. Each time the subject completed the AQ, his/her heart rate and respiration rate were also measured. The exact day and time that the AQ was administered was based on the convenience of the subject.

Information gathered from the AQ, was compared to the author's predictions.

Sample Musical Performance Anxiety Diagnostic Questionnaire (MPADQ) Statements:

1. I consider myself to be a good musician.
2. I consider myself to be a perfectionist.
3. I feel like I belong in my teacher's studio of students.
4. I fear the future.
5. I have other activities I take part in and enjoy besides singing.
6. I believe that, even if I don't sing for a living, I will be happy.
7. I am an extroverted individual.
8. I have a method for coping with stress that works.
9. I am good about setting boundaries and not taking on too much.
10. I often have low self-esteem.

Sample AQ Statements:

1. I'm breathing faster than normal.
2. I'm not as good as I should be at this point.
3. I'm having trouble sleeping.
4. I chose pieces that are too difficult for me at this point.
5. My teacher doesn't think I am singing as well as I should be.
6. I'd rather be singing this in a practice room than in front of people.

Predictor Categories:

1. Student-Teacher Relationship
2. Sense of Belonging at School
3. Generalized Anxiety and Stress
4. Perfectionism and Self-Criticism
5. Self-Concept of Performance Ability and Confidence

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