

What can studies in psychology tell about artistic development among singers?

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Psychological problems



- How high achieving persons feel, think and act when they are constrained in their artistic development in contrast to how they feel, think and act when they are free to unfold their potential
- The professional musicians have extensive experiences of playing, training, performing, being evaluated, adapting to work conditions
- To be constantly exposed to social evaluation strike deeply
 - *self-evaluative emotions in focus*
- The fear of being evaluated is deeply rooted in us
- Personality
 - In a meta-analysis by Feist (1989), artists were characterized by neuroticism, openness and non-conformity
- The inner life

Emotions
Thinking
Behaviour

Does personality aspects matter?

Definition of personality

Personality is a particular pattern of *behaviour, emotions and thinking* that prevails across time and situations and differentiates one person from another

The Big Five or Five Factor Model (e.g. Costa & McCrae, 1997)

Openness Reflective, curious - narrow minded

Conscientiousness Organized - sloppy
Responsible - irresponsible

Extraversion Sociable - withdrawn
Talkative - silent

Personality as the cause
of an outcome

Agreeableness Caring - irritable
Tender - harsh

Neuroticism Tense - relaxed
Easily distressed - stable

Studies on personality aspects among musicians

<i>Instrumental groups</i>	<i>Personality aspects</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>
Strings	+ Shy, aloof	Kemp, 1989
Strings	+ Neuroticism, conservative, conscientious N	Bell & Cresswell, 1984
Woodwind	+ Shy, self-sufficient, radical	Kemp, 1989; Bell & Cresswell, 1984
Singers	+ Neuroticism N	e.g. Marchant-Haycox & Wilson, 1992;; Sandgren, 2005 (only men)
Orchestral musicians	Violonists > brass, wood wind + Conscientiousness N	Langendörfer, 2008
Popular musicians	+ Neuroticism, psychoticism	Wills, 1984
Rock musicians	+ Neuroticism, openness - Agreeableness, conscientiousness N	Gillespie & Myors, 2005
Music students in three genres	No differences	Sandgren, 2013
Instrumentalists and singers (music students), control group	Singers > control group + Extraversion, agreeableness, openness No differences in self-esteem N	Sandgren, 2013

Note. The sign of '+' means increased level and the sign of '-' means decreased levels

Why inner pressure and anxiety?

- Previous developmental processes
 - Example with Jussi Björling, Maria Callas
- Stressful life situation
 - Professional challenges, few relations, travelling etc
 - Often a combination of above and below aspects
- Vulnerabilities such as;
 - For social evaluation
 - Guilt-proness
 - Aggressivity
 - Maladaptiveness
 - Depressivity etc

Anxiety cannot be avoided in life, yet we can learn more about our pattern of reactions and come to terms with our vulnerabilities to attain desired hopes and goals

Personality and biological characteristics

These two personality aspects appear to be controlled by neural systems related to reward, punishment and arousal (Zuckerman, 1995)

Personality traits	Biological characteristics
Extraversion	Sensitive to rewards
Neuroticism	Sensitive to punishment

A more extraverted singer would be fairly optimistic and expect a good outcome;
- *“I do not think about the audience, all that matters is my experience, what I feel on stage”*

A more neurotic singer would be anxious and fear failure;
- *“I really want to play well, I don’t want to mess up, I don’t want to make any mistakes”*



Opera singers, exposure and voice

High artistic competence and performance during a long career

- Technical, expressive and interpersonal abilities etc
- Lifelong relation and use of the voice
- Being in focus of others' attention

Vocal function and exposure

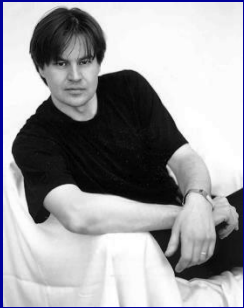
- Worry about others' opinion
- The performance may become a stress factors

"It is very important that someone comments on my performance afterwards"

"I worry about not being good enough"

"To work as an opera singer means that the whole 'me' is being judged"





Opera singers and their voice



Vocal focus

- To test the vocal function and the existence of the voice
- Strong correlation between testing and worry about others' opinions

"When I awake in the morning, I test the voice immediately to see how it is"
Women > men

"I test the voice several times per day to see if it is there"
Men > women

"How I take care of the voice depends on my health"

The inner life and how to deal with goals

- The purposive, goal-driven nature
- Individuals differ in goal pursuit
- Goal = internal representation of desired states
- How to reach goal, self-regulation matters

- The actual self (actual behaviours and attributes)
- Goals or standards (influences motivation and emotion)
- The ideal self (hopes, wishes, aspirations)
- The ought self (obligation, duty)

Patterns between these self-state representations indicate the individual's progress toward personal goals

The inner life and how to deal with goals

Discrepancies between the actual self and goals/standards

- Lead to negative emotional states; sadness, disappointment (failure to attain a hoped-for state)
 - Singers might think after the performance that “I did not do as well as I hoped for”

Discrepancies between actual self and ought-self

- Lead to agitation, worry, guilt (failure to live up to responsibilities or obligations)
 - Singers might think after the performance that “this and this went wrong, how could I be so xx, I have to prepare better next time, how could I etc etc”
 - Opera singers have a tendency to ruminate, being wind-up and worry => “something might go wrong”

The inner life and how to deal with goals

Promotion

- Concern with advancement and progress
- Based on nurture needs and strong ideals (strong hopes and aspirations for oneself)
- *'Making goods things happen'*
- Situations are framed: presence or absence of positive outcomes (gain/non-gain)
- Happiness
- Sadness, disappointment

Prevention

- Concern with protection, safety and responsibility
- Based on security needs, strong oughts (duties and responsibilities, 'musts')
- *'Keeping bad things from happening'*
- Situations are framed: presence or absence of negative outcomes (loss/no loss)
- Relief, contentment
- Agitation, worry, anxiety