

Becoming a Triple Threat Essay

- Sam Field

Introduction

To be a professional performer... it's the dream for so many. The big lights, the roaring applause, the standing ovations. But let's be real: the competition is fiercer than a prima donna who gets cast as the silent role. So, just how do you rise above the rest? You become the fiercely named "Triple Threat". That's right, a performer who doesn't just act, or sing, or dance, but one who can slay all three. Because why settle for one spotlight when you can have the whole stage?

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
Acting	2
Singing	6
Dance	15
Healthy Living	19
Wider Vocational Roles	25
Life In The Industry	27
Case Studies	28
<i>Conclusion</i>	31

Acting

The joy of acting is to have the opportunity to embody a character who you can't necessarily be in real life.

The Art of Acting

Actors are storytellers. Storytelling is art. The scientists will tell you that acting is merely speaking memorised lines, but it's more than that – it's about bringing a character to life. An actor must capture **emotion** because it's emotion that is the core of storytelling. Real emotions make characters feel authentic and relatable. If an actor's emotions are not genuine, their performance can seem forced or robotic. The compellingness of a story often relies on a character's emotional journey. Great actors need to be able to convincingly express a wide range of emotions, from happiness to deep sorrow. Actors such as Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks, & Denzel Washington are praised for their ability to show deep, layered emotions in every role. Emotional scenes often become the most iconic moments in films and plays. This is because audiences love the relatability of imperfect characters, they watch plays, musicals and films to experience emotions – joy, sadness, fear, loss, embarrassment, excitement. A powerful emotive performance will leave a lasting impact. But without authentic emotions, performances feel flat, and the audience struggles to connect with the characters. In order to convey emotion, an actor must be **expressive**. Often the most expressive moments aren't spoken. Think about it: a single tear running down a cheek can say more than an entire speech. Expressions can be vocal, facial, or expressed through body language. Johnny Depp is a very expressive actor, for example his character Jack Sparrow has quirky eye movements, hand gestures, and posture, which made the character unique and unforgettable. Different genres require different levels of expressiveness. On the stage, expressions need to be bigger, and more dramatic to ensure the distant audience can see. On film however, where the camera is capturing an actor close up, expressions should be subtle to ensure the performance is authentic. **Body Language** is a powerful expressive tool for an actor. Body language can be used to echo the expression in dialogue, or to express feelings that are not spoken in dialogue. If used effectively, body language can tell a story of its own. A powerful example of body language being used to tell a story is in the final scene of *The Phantom of the Opera*. In this moment, Christine realises the Phantom's deep loneliness and pain, and rather than responding with fear or hatred, she expresses empathy and sorrow through her body language. Her gentle movements, hesitant but compassionate gestures, and the way she looks at him convey a profound shift in her emotions - one that words alone could never fully capture. Simultaneously, the Phantom's breakdown is another masterful display of body language. As he comes

to terms with the truth that he has been deceiving himself about Christine's love, his entire posture changes. His body stiffens, then collapses into despair. He clutches at his face, stumbles back, and his hands shake as he realises the depth of his isolation. His physical unravelling mirrors his emotional turmoil, making the scene all the more heartbreaking.

Techniques

There are a multitude of techniques that actors use to act, each providing their own strengths and weaknesses, but ultimately it's down to the actor's preference as to which technique takes their fancy. **Method Acting** is a technique in which an actor immerses themselves in their roles by drawing from their own emotions and experiences. Often they purposely inflict the experiences of their characters onto themselves in the real world to experience the genuine emotion that their character would. Famously, when preparing for the role of the Joker in *Batman: The Dark Knight*, Heath Ledger put himself in solitary confinement for weeks to purposely drive him to insanity in order to master the mannerisms of a lonely psychopath.[42] He kept a diary of his feelings and experiences. [42] Clearly, his method was a great success, as his performance as Joker is one of the most memorable, revered and iconic performances of all time, even earning him an Oscar. Method actors often stay in character even when off-camera or off-stage, to fully embody the emotions, behaviour, and mindset of their roles. Method acting has many strengths, for example, it creates an authentic performance as actors are pulling from real experiences. The method expresses genuine emotion due to the real-life experiences the actors have had. It also encourages spontaneity and natural reactions as actors are deeply in the moment and so immersed in their character. However, method actors can be emotionally draining for actors, as inflicting harm on oneself in preparation, or constantly reliving intense emotions can take a serious mental toll on actors. Going back to Heath Ledger, he reportedly suffered from insomnia and mental exhaustion while playing the Joker. [42] The method may also negatively affect relations with cast and crew as staying in character at all times can make it difficult to separate the role from real life, meaning that some actors can become isolated or difficult to work with. For example, Jared Leto allegedly sent bizarre, disturbing gifts to co-stars while playing the Joker in *Suicide Squad*. [43] Method acting is also very time consuming, as actors often need months, or even years of immersive preparation. The **Stanislavski Method** is a realistic acting technique developed by Konstantin Stanislavski, a Russian actor and director. [44] The method requires actors to emotionally connect with their character by drawing from personal experiences, understand their character's motivations, use physical actions to trigger emotions, and immerse oneself in the role. [44] The method has been practised by actors such as Robert De Niro, Meryl Streep, & Al Pacino. [44] The method is strong

in the sense that it creates realistic and emotional performances by requiring actors to draw from personal experiences. The consideration of character motivation creates a deeper level of understanding of character. And it works to harmonise physical and emotional acting by using physical actions to trigger authentic emotions. However, as with method acting, Stanislavski's method can be emotionally draining for actors as it requires them to dig deep into past experiences and emotions. It could also cause actors to become overly self-conscious, as focusing too much on character emotions and motivations from a character analysis can make performances feel overly calculated or unnatural. The **Meisner Technique** is an acting method developed by Sanford Meisner, a student of Konstantin Stanislavski. [45] The Meisner method emphasises reacting truthfully to a scene and other actors in the present moment. [45] The goal is for actors to be fully engaged in the scene, responding naturally to what is happening rather than relying on pre-planned emotions. [45] The technique is comprised of the following principles: repetition, emotional preparation & Improvisation and Spontaneity. [45] For repetition, actors should repeat lines or phrases back and forth, focusing on their partner's tone, energy, and subtle emotional shifts rather than the words themselves. [45] For emotional preparation, actors should imagine emotional scenarios that help them feel the right emotion for a scene. [45] Improvisation and spontaneity requires actors to stay in the moment, encouraging a more natural performance. [45] The Meisner technique is strong in the fact that it encourages a natural performance as actors are reacting to their scene and fellow actors rather than following rigid emotions. It can lead to less predictable moments as actors are reacting to fellow actors as opposed to acting out memorised reactions and emotions. However, the method is not ideal for scenes requiring precise choreography. It can also lead to shallow performances, as the technique does not focus on understanding the emotions, backstory or motivations of a character.

Skills

Memorisation is an important skill for an actor, since they must accurately memorise scripts. One can improve their memorisation by breaking scripts into smaller sections to focus on memorising small chunks at a time. One could utilise a visualisation strategy whereby one imagines a scene in their head whilst learning lines. One may wish to take advantage of muscle memory by associating lines with physical actions. It's also very important to practise lines aloud with a partner who can cue you. An actor must also demonstrate **emotional expression** as acting is all about conveying emotions in a way that feels real and connects with the audience. In order to improve one's emotional expression, one could practise emotional recall by reflecting on personal experiences to tap into real emotions. A nice way to perfect emotional expression is to experiment with different emotions in front of a mirror to

gauge an appropriate level of expression. An actor must also utilise **body language**. This includes movement, posture and gestures to enhance a performance. Body language can reveal emotions that words can't. Similar to body language, another physical skill and actor should exude is **facial expressions** which involves using the eyes, eyebrows, & mouth to convey feelings and emotions. An actor must be able to **control their voice** to convey emotions, deliver lines with clarity, and project their voice when performing in theatre so that an audience can not only hear them clearly, but inherit the emotion of the character. Good voice modulation prevents monotonous and unengaging performances. In order to improve one's vocal control, it's a good idea to practise speaking more slowly, purposefully and clearly to improve articulation. One could also record oneself and listen back to it to identify areas to improve. Not every scene always goes as planned, so an actor must be able to **improvise** by reacting naturally when the unexpected occurs. In order to react to what's happening around them, an actor must possess strong **listening skills**. Active listening helps actors stay in the moment and respond naturally instead of simply waiting for their turn to speak. An actor must also be able to deal with **criticism**, as acting on this feedback should lead to a better performance. It can be hard to take criticism as it can seem like an attack on one's performance, however it's important to listen with an open mind, seeing criticism as a way to improve and grow and remembering to separate personal feelings from the performance as criticism is about the role, not you. If an actor can act on feedback in real time, directors will really appreciate and admire you more. An actor must also be **confident** as confidence allows an actor to fully embody their role without hesitation. Confidence will increase naturally with experience. In order to come across as confident on stage, an actor should maintain a strong posture and hold their head high.

Singing

What would a musical be without singing? A play. (YUCK) People have been singing since before the dinosaurs. Singing is everywhere and has been all throughout history: from the battle cries of war to the war chants of football fans; from the anthems of countries to the karaoke bars of Greece; the churches to the tribes; the Go Compare adverts to my very own shower. It was inevitable that someone would have to come up with incorporating singing with a play. There's nothing more pleasing to the human ear than the sweet sound of our fellowmen effortlessly excreting poetry as a melody. According to the book of all words, Singing can be defined as: "*the activity of making musical sounds with the voice, usually a tune with words*"^[1] It would seem that the encyclopaedia of vocabulary has done what it does best: reducing the gloriously beautiful eminent art of singing to nothing more than a sentence of pure obviousness. Singing is so much more than that. Anyone can make musical sounds with their voice, but not everyone can sing with the angelic, or anger, or passion, or fear, or excitement, or longing or any of the profuse emotions that musical theatre requires. Singing for musical theatre is so much more than making sounds with one's voice. But never fear, for Sam is here - allow me to break it down:

Vocal Technique

Technique is important in many different things, especially in singing. A good technique can enhance one's voice immensely. Don't believe me? Take a listen to the difference between Ramin Karimloo (using great technique) and Nick Jonas (who is by no means a bad singer, just using poor technique) in the Les Misérables 25th Anniversary concert:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@mcvocalstudio/video/7277270233646140705> Where Ramin's technique of supporting his voice with his diaphragmatic support, larynx positioning, sound placement, resonance, vowel modifications to name a few, he overshadows Jonas extortionately. In musical theatre a good singing technique is of paramount importance. **Posture** is an important technique in singing. Correct singing posture starts by keeping your head level, your chest high and shoulders back, and ensuring that your abdomen is flat. From there, relax your hands and keep them on your side. Be sure not to lock your knees, and keep your feet shoulder width apart. ^[2] The posture described allows for easier expanding and contracting of the lungs, diaphragm, and throat and will help to maximise one's airflow and pressure which is key while singing. Good posture can also relieve tension. While this posture is great in an ideal world, Musical Theatre isn't always an ideal world. There are times when

performers are required to sing in situations where this posture is not possible, like in the song “Serious” in Legally Blonde which requires performers to sing sat down, leaning over a table or in Valjean’s Soliloquy of Les Misérables where Valjean is on his knees, often in a position of prayer, and of course, there’s all of the times that performers are required to sing whilst dancing! **Diaphragmatic Support** is another important factor of singing technique. As a biology student, we look at the respiratory system in great depth, which has given me a great appreciation and understanding of the role of the Diaphragm. The Diaphragm is a major muscle, located just beneath the lungs. When it contracts, it increases the volume in the lungs, therefore decreasing the pressure in them, creating a vacuum (as air pressure in the lungs is less than that outside of them) which is what causes air to move into the lungs. When the diaphragm relaxes, the opposite occurs: the volume of the lungs decreases, increasing the pressure in lungs, causing air to leave the lungs. A great representation of how the diaphragm causes the lungs to inhale and exhale air is the Bell Jar model, which (I’m not trying to brag) I have actually used in real life!!! If you’re intrigued by this cosmopolitan piece of technology:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYT0qIKwHul>. Engaging the diaphragm when singing as opposed to singing solely from the shallow breaths of the throat can create a louder, richer, more-weighted and resonant sound. It also allows singers to hold sustained notes for much longer and much easier. In order to actually engage the diaphragm when singing, one should use correct posture, exhale fully and inhale deeply. [3] **The Positioning of The Larynx** is crucial when singing. The Larynx (or in my English: The Voice Box) is the area of the throat containing the vocal folds. [4] Muscles in the larynx bring the vocal folds together which interrupts air escaping the lungs. The number of times they interrupt the airflow per second creates the pitch. [5] The Larynx is able to move freely up and down the neck. [6] The position of the Larynx affects the shape of the vocal tract changes voice quality and affects the efficiency of the vocal folds. [6] The cleaner and more efficiently the folds vibrate, the clearer and healthier the sound. [6] The specific position of the Larynx leads to a different type of sound produced. A low larynx produces a deeper, more hollow sounding sound along with a rounder tone with a more emotive, atmospheric touch. [7] A neutral Larynx position is the natural position that the larynx adopts when completely relaxed. [7] Singing with a neutral Larynx creates a free and easy way of singing. [7] A high larynx can create a lighter, higher, airier sound but singing with a high larynx is generally discouraged as the larynx will often raise when attempting to reach higher and higher notes which become more and more fretful so the larynx will raise to “reach” the note, and usually as a singer you’ll feel the muscles around the larynx squeeze to try and help. [7] This can result in a squeezed, strained and shouty sound that can often take a singer off-pitch and be extremely uncomfortable to sing with. [7] It can result in vocal fatigue and in more severe cases vocal injury. [7] So, how does one actually control the position of their Larynx? The larynx will more often than not position itself appropriately, and will naturally lower when a singer breathes in. In order to actually control the movement of the Larynx to

optimise one's vocal technique, one should engage in exercises that naturally move the Larynx, such as pitch gliding, whilst being hyper-aware of the positioning of the Larynx. **Belting** is a technique used by singers to produce powerful, forceful, loud, and resonant sounds in the chest register. [8] Belting is very common in Musical Theatre, especially in epic and emotionally intense songs. In order to belt, one should ensure good posture, use diaphragmatic breathing, relax, open the mouth wide and sing as loudly as possible. [8] Consistent practice will help to develop a strong belting technique. Consider recording yourself and listening back to identify areas for improvement going forward. Always remember that belting should feel easy and effortless – it shouldn't strain your voice or feel painful. [8] **Resonance** uses the vocal tract's resonating spaces to amplify and enrich a sound. [9] There are four different types of resonance, each of which produced in a different part of the body and each of which producing a unique sound appropriate for different repertoire in Musical Theatre. [9] Nasal Resonance is created by the nasal cavity and sinuses, it creates bright, ringy and twangy sounds. [9]

In conclusion, vocal technique is an essential foundation for successful singing, especially in the demanding world of musical theatre. Proper technique not only enhances the quality and richness of one's voice but also ensures vocal health and longevity. A strong vocal technique is the cornerstone of a singer's ability to perform with power, precision, and endurance, ultimately elevating their artistry and performance.

Vocal Expression & Interpretation

In musical theatre, performers can't just sing a song, they must perform it, adding characterisation, emotion and emphasis to the song. **Phrasing** is the way in which a singer shapes a musical passage, choosing to put emphasis on certain words to convey meaning and emotion.[31] It also involves decisions about where to breathe and how to use dynamics and timing to enhance the storytelling aspect of a song. [31] Effective phrasing will ensure that a performance is expressive and engaging rather than monotonous. **Articulation** is the clarity with which a singer pronounces the lyrics and notes. [32] Good articulation allows the audience to understand the lyrics and dialogue.[32] In musical theatre, where storytelling is paramount, effective articulation is essential for conveying the narrative and emotions of a character. Performers must deliver their lines and lyrics with clarity to ensure the audience comprehends the story and the character's intentions. Moreover, musical theatre often involves complex lyrics and rapid-paced songs, making precise articulation crucial to maintain intelligibility. **Enunciation** refers to the clarity and precision with which a performer pronounces words, ensuring that each syllable is distinctly articulated. In musical theatre, enunciation is important for all of the same reasons as articulation. [33] **Diction** refers to the distinctness with which a performer pronounces words, encompassing both articulation and enunciation. [34] **Emotional Expression** refers to the singer's ability to use their voice to convey the intended feelings and nuances of the character they are portraying or song they are singing. In musical theatre, emotional expression aids in characterisation and story telling and makes the narrative more impactful. Emotional expression is also very engaging for an audience, in fact a study on musical theatre performance emphasised that "*the audience is more concerned about the emotional experience being portrayed than the quality of voice.*"[35] **Rubato** is an Italian musical term which in English means "Stolen Time".[36] It refers to the expressive alteration of tempo within performance of a song.[36] In musical theatre, by manipulating tempo, singers can emphasise critical moments in a song, thereby enhancing the storytelling aspect of their performance. **Accent** refers to the distinctive way in which lyrics are pronounced, often associated with a particular geographic region, culture, or social class. [37] In musical theatre, using the correct accent is important for character authenticity and aids in storytelling. By accurately adopting a character's accent, actors can convey background, upbringing, and social status. **Timbre** is the characteristic that distinguishes different sounds from each other, even when they have the same pitch and loudness. [38] Timbre encompasses the unique qualities of a singer's voice, such as its warmth, brightness, nasality, or breathiness [38]. These qualities are influenced by factors like the shape of the vocal tract, vocal chord tension, and resonance. [38] In musical theatre, understanding and utilising timbre is crucial for performers because it allows them to convey a character's emotions, personality,

and background more effectively. Using timbre, singers can also differentiate between characters, express various emotional states, and adapt to different musical styles within a show. For example, a performer might use a bright, clear timbre to portray an innocent character, while employing a darker, more robust timbre for a villainous role.

Vocal expression and interpretation are greatly important skills in musical theatre as they bring depth, emotion & authenticity to a character portrayal. Techniques such as phrasing, dynamics, articulation, & timbre can convey the nuances of a character's emotions and intentions. Effective vocal expression and interpretation will also connect with an audience, being more engaging and believable.

Vocal Ranges & Registers

Each person has a limited amount of pitches that their voice can produce, known as a person's vocal range. It's important to know one's vocal range in Musical Theatre as different characters and their songs are suited to certain vocal ranges and voice types. A voice type is a label given to the range of pitches one can sing in their chest register. Male singers can fall into 1 of the following voice types: A **Bass** singer is generally considered as a male with a vocal range of E2 – E4. [10] In Musical Theatre, bass singers are useful in ensemble or choral numbers providing the foundation of the harmony creating a fuller and more balanced sound. Their low notes add weight and stability. Many authoritative & villainous characters are written for bass voices. Examples include: Javert in *Les Misérables*, Hades in *Hadestown*, Judge Turpin in *Sweeney Todd* & Caiaphas in *Jesus Christ Superstar*. A **Baritone** singer is generally considered as a person with a vocal range of A2 – A4. [10] In many classical and contemporary musicals, romantic leads or heroic protagonists are written for baritones because their voices carry warmth, strength, and maturity. Like the Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*. Baritones can also often portray complex antagonists or morally grey characters. Examples include Scar in the *Lion King*, Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*, the Phantom in *Phantom of the Opera* & Sweeney Todd in *Sweeney Todd*. **Tenor** singers are generally considered as a person with a vocal range of C3 – C5. [10] Tenor voices often carry emotion, passion, and intensity making them perfect in Musical theatre for a romantic hero or the young, passionate lead because their higher vocal range conveys youthful energy and emotional vulnerability. The tenor range also allows for soaring high notes that convey deep emotion, whether it's love, desperation, or triumph. Examples of Tenor characters in Musical Theatre include: Marius in *Les Misérables*, Raoul in *Phantom of the Opera*, Evan Hansen in *Dear Evan Hansen*, Tony in *West Side Story* & Michael in *Be More*

Chill. A **Treble** is generally considered to be a male singer who can sing A3 – A5.[10] The Treble voice type is common in young males whose voices have not yet broken which makes them perfect for innocent and authentic child characters such as Oliver in *Oliver Twist*, Gavroche in *Les Misérables*, Gustave in *Love Never Dies*, Chip in *Beauty and the Beast* & Michael Banks in *Mary Poppins*. Such things as a **Countertenor** also exist. A countertenor is a male singer who can sing low in chest register, but mostly sings in a falsetto-dominant voice, reaching notes as high as sopranos. Countertenors appear rarely in Musical Theatre, however some adaptations of the *Phantom of the Opera* have a countertenor play the role of the Phantom which compliments the character's otherworldly, mysterious, and seductive quality. For women, the lowest voice type is a **Contralto**, generally considered as a range of E3 – E5.[10] As contraltos have the lowest female voice range, they add a dark, rich, and resonant quality to musical theatre productions. Their lower registers can stand out in a way that adds contrast to the typically higher-pitched soprano and mezzo-soprano voices. Contraltos are often cast in powerful, authoritative roles as their deep voices can convey strength, wisdom, and emotional gravity. For example: Ursula in *The Little Mermaid*, Miss Trunchbull in *Matilda* & The Witch in *Into the Woods*. An **Alto** voice type is generally considered a female who can sing F3 – F5.[10] Altos are often cast in supporting roles, which require a strong, grounded voice, portraying characters that are typically more mature, stable, or nurturing. The characters associated with an Alto voice range from nurturing mother figures to sassy best friends or even comedic roles. These roles often require a vocal quality that is strong, grounded, and sometimes a little sassy, giving the singer versatility, just like Tonya and Rosie in *Mamma Mia*. A **Mezzo-soprano** voice type is generally considered a female who can sing A3 – A5.[10] Their range gives them the ability to sing both lower and higher parts, making them flexible enough to perform a wide variety of characters and songs. Elphaba in *Wicked* is an example of a mezzo-soprano voice. A **Soprano** is the highest voice type for women, ranging from C4 – C6.[10] Their voices offer brightness, clarity, and power. Sopranos are often cast as the central romantic leads because their higher range and pure, bright tones are often associated with youthful, innocent, or idealised characters. They bring energy and charm to the stage, especially in shows with romantic or fairy-tale themes. Examples include Johanna in *Sweeney Todd*, Christine in *Phantom of the Opera* & Cosette in *Les Misérables*. Notice how I said 'generally' in relation to the specific pitches within a voice type. This is because some voices can be just slightly lower or higher in range than that specified, but not high or low enough to constitute a different voice type. Opera actually has many more voice types to facilitate this: Basso Profundo, Dramatic Bass, Lyric Bass, Bass-baritone, Dramatic Baritone, Lyric Baritone, Dramatic Tenor, Spinto Tenor, Lyric Tenor & Leggero Tenor. Whilst these aren't as commonly recognised in Musical Theatre, knowing one's operatic voice type will aid in role selection. Note that each voice type has a dramatic and lyric classification. A lyric voice is characterised by a light, smooth, and agile sound with a warm and expressive quality. [11][12] Lyric singers often have clear, bright tones and

can easily navigate fast-moving passages (coloratura) and legato (smooth, connected notes).[11][12] These voices are well-suited for youthful, romantic, or innocent characters in musical theatre. Marius in *Les Misérables* is a Lyric Tenor, as is Raul in *Phantom of the Opera*. A dramatic voice is powerful, rich, and full-bodied, often with a darker, heavier tone and strong projection. [11][12] These voices are suited for intense, commanding roles that require emotional depth, sustained power, and sometimes a heavier vibrato. [11][12] Dramatic voices are often associated with strong-willed, heroic, or villainous characters. Javert in *Les Misérables* is a dramatic baritone. Female voice types also have lyric and dramatic classifications. Christine in *Phantom of the Opera* is a Lyric Soprano, whereas Elphaba in *Wicked* is a Dramatic Soprano.

Knowing your voice type in musical theatre is crucial because it helps you choose roles that suit your natural vocal range and timbre, ensuring you can perform comfortably and with the best vocal quality. Understanding your voice type also allows you to select songs that showcase your strengths, avoid strain, and prevent vocal damage. It also helps casting directors match you with roles that align with your vocal abilities, allowing you to fully embrace the character and deliver powerful performances.

Different vocal registers can create unique styles of singing. Each vocal register produces pitches by a particular vibratory pattern of the vocal folds, resulting in a distinct sound quality.[13] These registers originate from the laryngeal function, as the vocal folds can produce several different vibratory patterns.[13] Each pattern appears within a particular range of pitches and produces characteristic sounds.[13] The register that produces the lowest pitches is the **Vocal Fry Register** which produces a creaky, popping sound. It occurs when the vocal folds are relaxed and vibrate at a low frequency. While Vocal Fry is not commonly used in musical theatre, its rougher and grittier texture can be used to create unique sounds for enhanced characterisation. The sound that Vocal Fry produces could be associated with fatigue, sadness, tension, or sultriness, making it a great tool for portraying emotions like exhaustion, despair, or seduction. Vocal Fry could also be used by performers to sing pitches lower than their chest register could if the song requires. The **Chest Register** is the most common register used in both singing and speaking. It encompasses a wide range of pitches and is characterised by a rich, resonant & full sound.[13] In this register, the vocal folds are fully engaged, vibrating along their entire length. [13] In musical theatre, chest voice can provide power, depth and emotional intensity making it essential for belting, projection and strong character expression. Chest voice is also the most natural and comfortable register for singers to sing in. The **Falsetto Register** produces a high-pitched, light & airy sound. In Falsetto, only the edges of the vocal folds vibrate, and they do not close completely, resulting in a breathy tone. [13] It allows singers to access higher notes with a light,

airy quality, helping to convey emotion and vulnerability, like in the songs: 'Words Fail' from Dear Evan Hansen, 'Bring Him Home' from Les Misérables or the 'Masquerade' reprise segment from 'The Final Lair' in The Phantom of The Opera. Falsetto also allows singers to sing pitches higher than they can in Chest voice, effectively expanding their vocal range. The **Whistle Register** is the highest register of the human voice, the whistle register produces a very high-pitched, whistle-like sound. [13] It is achieved when the vocal folds are tightly closed except for a small opening, allowing air to pass through at high speed.[13] This register is most commonly associated with certain female singers who can reach extremely high notes, although some male singers can access the whistle register (such as myself). Most singers who can access the whistle register can only sustain individual notes rather than sing multiple pitches, let alone sing an entire melody in it. The whistle register is so hard to sing a melody in because the vocal chords are very tight, meaning there is a lack of flexibility, and the fact that whistle tones require high breath pressure with precision. [13] In musical theatre whistle voice is very rarely used, however, whistle is used in Chritine's final sustained note in 'Phantom of the Opera' from The Phantom of the Opera, and in some adaptations, Johanna sometimes inserts some whistle into 'Green Finch & Linnet Bird' in Sweeney Todd, and Glinda's final sustained note in 'No One Mourns the Wicked' from Wicked.

An understanding of vocal registers is crucial for musical theatre performers because it allows them to sing with control, versatility, and emotional depth while maintaining vocal health. Musical theatre often demands a wide range of vocal styles, from powerful chest voice belts to delicate falsetto moments, and even occasional use of whistle register or vocal fry for dramatic effect. Knowing how to transition smoothly between registers helps performers navigate demanding roles, avoid strain, and adapt to different musical genres. Mastering registers also enables actors to express emotions more effectively, making their performances more compelling and authentic.

Vocal Exercises

Vocal exercises involve producing certain sounds to train the voice, strengthen vocal muscles to aid in singing and gain more control over one's voice. There are many different exercises one can do in regards to the voice. **Lip Trills** involve gently pressing one's lips together while blowing air through them, causing them to vibrate. [39] This can be combined with a hum or buzz sound to produce a motorboat sounding noise. [39] While maintaining this lip buzz, one should hum scales or sirens, gliding smoothly from one's lowest to highest comfortable pitch. [39] Doing these lip trills will help to relax the facial muscles, and encourage breath support. [39] **Humming** involves closing one's lips and humming.[40] One should feel vibrations in one's lips and face. One should explore one's range by sliding the pitch of the hum

up and down gently.[40] Humming warms up the vocal cords gently, enhances resonance, & promotes nasal airflow, which is essential for clear tone production.[40] **Sirens** are the smooth gliding of a sort of 'ng' sound from one's lowest to highest note and back down again, emulating the sound of a siren.[41] Sirens improve vocal range, smooth out register transitions, and enhance control over pitch. [41]

Dance

Call me controversial, but I believe that dance is less important than Acting and Singing in Musical Theatre. You can't have a musical without acting or singing, but *(fortunately for me!)* you can have one without dance. In fact, none of the best musicals feature dance: Les Misérables, Phantom of The Opera, Sweeney Todd. So for someone like me, who couldn't dance for toffee (not that I like toffee anyway) being a "Triple Threat" is not necessarily the be-all and end-all. That said, I do appreciate dance within musical theatre. Not only does it provide something fun to watch, adding a visual energy to a production, but it also aids in the storytelling aspect of a show, allowing characters to communicate their personalities and motivations as well as expressing relationships be them intimate or violent.

Dance Technique

Posture is the way in which a dancer holds themselves, whether they are standing up, sitting down or lying flat.[70] Good posture is very important for dance as it helps a dancer to move and look better.[70] For good posture, your shoulders should be relaxed and level, the head held up and the spine straight.[70] However, not all dance must be conducted in this 'good' posture, especially in musical theatre as unconventional postures can aid in emotional expression and storytelling. Dancers have to learn to **spot**, which is focusing on an object while turning.[70] One can learn to spot by looking at a fixed point.[70] One should focus on it for as long as possible during a turn before whipping one's head around to look at it again.[70] Spots are used to maintain a pathway, direction and to combat dizziness.[70] A dancer must also learn the correct way to **jump**. When landing from a jump the tips of the toes should touch the ground first.[70] The sole should touch the ground next and the heels of the foot last, and the knees must bend to take some of the weight and this also makes the landing smooth and quiet.[70]

The **Graham Technique** is a dance technique developed by Martha Graham.[50] It emphasises the use of contraction and release, focusing on the core, spine and expressive movements.[50] Contraction and release means engaging the abdominal muscles to contract the torso, followed by a release to a neutral position.[50] The technique is great for enhancing core strength and flexibility and improving body awareness and control.[50] However, some movements can be physically demanding and may lead to strain if not executed properly. And in addition, the intensity of the technique might not be suitable for all dancers, especially beginners.

Dance Technical Skills

A skilled dancer needs a combination of technical abilities to execute movements with precision, control & artistry. A dancer must possess good **balance & control** to be able to maintain stability in various positions and movements. Dancers should conduct various exercises in order to improve their balance and control, such as: planks, relevés, & core workouts. [65] A dancer must also have good **coordination** to synchronise movements of different parts of the body seamlessly. Dancers should be **flexible** to ensure fluidity in movement, and also prevent injury. Flexibility can be improved by stretching exercises. Dancers must also be **strong** to perform jumps, lifts and holds. Strength can be improved by weight training, push ups & lunges. **Posture** is also important in dance for aesthetics and also injury prevention. **Musicality and Rhythmic** abilities are also important in dance to understand timing, phrasing & dynamics in movement.

Dance Styles

Jazz dance is a dynamic and expressive form that blends African-American vernacular dance with other styles. [66] It consists of energetic movements, syncopated rhythms, and improvisational elements.[66] Its strengths include versatility, allowing for a wide range of expression and adaptability across various musical genres, and its capacity to convey emotion and storytelling through movement.[66] However, jazz dance can also present challenges; its improvisational nature requires dancers to possess strong technical skills and a deep understanding of rhythm and musicality.[66] Additionally, the high-energy movements can pose a risk of injury if not executed with proper technique. [66] In musical theatre, jazz dance has been prominently featured in productions such as Chicago, West Side Story, and Cabaret, where it is not only a treat for the eyes, but enhances character development and propels the narrative through its expressive choreography. **Ballet** is a classical dance form originating from the Italian Renaissance.[67] It uses precise and formalised movements, including techniques such as turnout, pointe work, and high extensions.[67] Its strengths lie in its emphasis on discipline, flexibility, and strength, which contribute to the development of a dancer's overall technical proficiency.[67] However, ballet's demanding nature requires significant physical and mental commitment, which can be challenging for some individuals.[67] In musical theatre, ballet has been effectively utilised to enhance storytelling and emotional depth. Notable examples include the "Dream Ballet" sequence in Oklahoma!, which uses dance to explore the protagonist's subconscious, and the ballet in the "Hannibal" sequence from Phantom of the Opera. **Contemporary** dance is a versatile and expressive form that blends elements from various dance styles, including modern, jazz, and classical ballet.[68] It emphasises fluidity, improvisation, and emotional expression, allowing dancers to explore a wide range of movements

and themes.[68] One of its strengths is its adaptability - contemporary dance can convey complex narratives and abstract concepts, making it a powerful medium for storytelling.[68] However, this flexibility can also be a weakness, as the lack of standardised techniques may lead to inconsistent training and performance quality among dancers.[68] In musical theatre, contemporary dance has been effectively utilised to bring depth and innovation to productions. Examples include *Matilda* and *Dear Evan Hansen*. **Ballroom** dance encompasses a variety of partner dances, such as the Waltz, Tango, Foxtrot, and Quickstep, each characterised by structured techniques, precise footwork, and an emphasis on partner connection.[69] One of its primary strengths is the enhancement of social interaction and cooperation, as it requires synchronised movements and non-verbal communication between partners.[69] However, its structured nature can be a limitation, potentially restricting individual expression and creativity.[69] In musical theatre, ballroom dance has been effectively utilised to enrich storytelling and character development. In musical theatre, ballroom dance has been effectively utilised to enrich storytelling and character development. Notable examples include: "Ten Minutes Ago" from *Cinderella*, which is a romantic waltz that highlights the budding relationship between the protagonists. "Masquerade" in *The Phantom of the Opera* which is a lavish ballroom waltz, symbolising mystery, illusion, and the hidden identities of the characters. The Masquerade Ball in *Sweeney Todd*, which although not a traditional ballroom number, this scene features partner-based choreography that adds an eerie, theatrical effect. The Ballroom Scene in *West Side Story* which acts as a pivotal moment where Tony and Maria first meet, featuring a Latin-inspired ballroom dance that highlights the contrast between the rival gangs. "Beauty and the Beast" in *Beauty and the Beast* is an iconic waltz which symbolises love and transformation, where Belle and the Beast share their first dance. And Marius and Cosette's Wedding in *Les Misérables* which features a joyous, celebratory ballroom dance to mark the resolution of the musical's dramatic conflicts. These examples demonstrate how ballroom dance can convey elegance, romance, social status, and emotional depth within theatrical productions.

Emotional Expression Through Dance

Expressing emotion in dance is essential for storytelling and connecting with the audience. A dancer should dance with appropriate facial expressions, body language, posture, dynamics, tempo & rhythm to convey emotion through dance.

Healthy Living

Physical Health

Performing is a very physical act. As a physical act, one must have good movement and flexibility. **Movement** refers to the ability to control and coordinate your body in space. [51] **Flexibility** refers to the range of motion in your joints and muscles. [52] In performing arts, movement allows performers to execute actions like dancing and acting moves with precision and grace, and flexibility helps performers stretch and reach positions with ease, reducing risk of injury and enhancing overall physical performance. In order to improve one's movement and flexibility, one could engage in dynamic stretching exercises. These are controlled movements that gently stretch muscles through a full range of motion, often used as part of a warm-up.[53] Examples include leg swings and arm circles.[53] Dynamic stretching increases blood flow and muscle temperature, preparing the body for performance. [53] Static stretching is another exercise that can improve one's movement & flexibility. This involves holding a stretch for 30 seconds after physical activity to help increase flexibility.[54] It's important to perform these stretches after your body is warmed up to avoid injury.[54] Focus on major muscle groups, like the hamstrings, shoulders, and lower back. [54] Yoga and Pilates both incorporate flexibility and mobility training while strengthening muscles and improving core stability.[55] Yoga, in particular, improves flexibility through poses that target different areas of the body. [55] Foam Rolling and Massages help to release tight muscles, break down scar tissue, and improve circulation, which can enhance flexibility over time. [53] Improving one's movement and flexibility achieves an enhanced range of motion, allowing performers to move freely, as well as improving precision and expression in dance, and in acting. Regular stretching routines will help to avoid muscle strain and injury, ensuring longevity in performance careers. It will also promote physical awareness, and control which is key for mastering choreography and physical roles. A performer should also have a high degree of strength and conditioning. **Strength** refers to the building of muscle power through exercises like weightlifting, resistance training, and bodyweight exercises. [56] **Conditioning** refers to exercises that improve stamina, cardiovascular fitness, and endurance.[56] In the performing arts, strength is important as it helps performers develop the power they need for dynamic actions, such as jumps, lifts, or strong vocal projection. Similarly, conditioning allows performers to sustain energy throughout long performances or physically demanding routines. If one wishes to improve their strength and conditioning, one could engage in compound movement exercises. These are exercises like squats, deadlifts, and bench presses that engage multiple muscle groups and improve overall strength. [57][58] These movements are great because they mimic real-world physical activities, making them highly functional for performers who need total-body

strength.[57][58] Plyometric exercises, such as jump squats and box jumps, improve explosive power and fast-twitch muscle response, which are critical for dancers, singers, and actors requiring dynamic physical control. [59] Core Work such as planks and other core exercises are essential for building stability and reducing the risk of injury.[60] A strong core supports movement and flexibility, which are crucial in performing arts.[60] Improving one's strength and conditioning will also aid in injury prevention as stronger muscles and better conditioning supports joints and improves posture, making it easier to manage the physical demands of performing, especially for dancers and actors involved in intense movements.[58] Improved strength enables more controlled and powerful movements, enhancing body language and stage presence for actors and facilitating dynamic choreography for dancers. Enhanced conditioning boosts cardiovascular fitness, enabling performers to maintain energy during long rehearsals or performances. This is especially crucial for singers and dancers who must perform at high levels without fatigue. With the art of performance being so physical, injuries are not uncommon. **Injuries** refers to physical harm or damage to the body, often affecting muscles, ligaments, joints, or bones. [61] **Injury Prevention** encompasses strategies and practices aimed at reducing the risk of injury. In the performing arts, injuries are common due to the physical demands of dancing, acting, or even singing. Dance moves can lead to joint and muscle strain. Actors performing physical stunts or fight choreography are also at risk for sprains or falls. Singers can experience vocal strain. Therefore injury prevention is crucial for longevity and performance quality. To prevent injury, one should engage in the exercises mentioned above: strength training, conditioning, & flexibility training. A warmup is indispensable for preventing injury. A warmup increases blood flow to muscles, improves joint flexibility, and prepares the nervous system for physical activity.[62] It also raises the heart rate gradually, easing the body into more intense exertion.[62] This helps to reduce muscle stiffness, enhance movement control, and lower the risk of strains or sprains, ensuring safer performance.[62]

Mental Health

Performing can be stressful. **Stress** refers to a response to any overwhelming demand or pressure. [14] The physical demands of the performing arts coupled with long rehearsals can result in both physical stress on one's body (leading to injuries) and mental stress. **Anxiety** refers to a feeling of persistent worry, fear, or unease about future events. [15] It's a type of situational anxiety that many performers face. The fear of making mistakes, being judged, or underperforming can manifest itself into symptoms of physical and mental stress symptoms, which could also have a

negative affect on one's performance. Pop singer turned movie-musical performer Arianna Grande said, "*I've always had anxiety.*" In reference to performing [16] which just goes to show that no matter how big of a star you are and how much experience you have, it's normal to feel anxious about performing. Managing stress and anxiety is not always easy, but some things that may help include: listening to music, avoiding unhealthy habits & talking to people. Listening to music is an effective way to manage stress and anxiety. Choosing calming genres like classical or ambient music can promote relaxation.[17] Music can act as a distraction and take your mind off your problems. Upbeat and empowering music can make you feel brave by boosting mood and confidence. [17] Music can trigger the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure, thereby alleviating feelings of tension and improving overall emotional wellbeing.[17] Soothing music can also slow heart rates and reduce cortisol levels, further promoting a sense of calm.[17] Avoiding unhealthy habits is also important in managing stress and anxiety. One mustn't rely on alcohol, smoking and caffeine as your ways of coping. They might provide temporary relief, but in the long term, won't solve your problems. [18] They'll just create new ones. It's best to treat the cause of the problem. [18] One could also talk to someone who they are comfortable with about their problems, making sure to be honest and open. A good support network of colleagues, friends and family can ease one's work troubles and help you see things in a different way.[18] Talking things through with a friend may also help one find solutions to one's problems.[18] One could also talk to charities (eg: Mind). **Mental Resilience** refers to one's ability to adapt, push through and recover quickly from stress, adversity, or setbacks. Mental resilience is essential for performers as they often face immense pressures such as auditions, demanding rehearsal schedules, & the vulnerability of live performance. One needs to be able to manage performance anxiety, cope with criticism, & maintain composure under stress. A **Work/life balance** is about managing time and energy to meet professional demands without compromising personal well-being. For performers, maintaining a healthy work/life balance is crucial due to irregular hours, high stress, & physical demands. Ensuring a healthy balance prevents burnout, supports mental resilience, & sustains physical health, helping performers to deliver consistent and passionate performances. In order to maintain a healthy work/life balance, one could: establish boundaries, prioritise self care, & engage in hobbies and social connections. Setting clear boundaries between work and personal life is crucial. This might mean designating time each day to "unplug" from work communications and dedicating it to relaxation or personal interests. [19][20] This helps performers to prevent burning out by creating a mental separation from work responsibilities. [19][20] Prioritising self care includes regular exercise, nutritious meals and adequate sleep.[20] Making time for these basics can improve focus, energy, and emotional balance, all of which contribute to a sustainable career in the arts.[20] Engaging in non-work activities and building connections with friends, family, or colleagues supports emotional well-being and provides a necessary counterbalance to the often demanding nature of performing. [19]

Nutrition

Balanced nutrition is essential for sustained energy & performance. When fuelling one's body, there are several macronutrients that one should ensure they are consuming. **Carbohydrates** will provide steady energy throughout demanding routines and performances.[21] Foods rich in Carbohydrates include:

- Whole Grains (Oats, Brown Rice, Whole-grain Bread – Rich in complex carbs)
- Fruits (Bananas, Apples, Oranges – Rich in natural sugars and fibres)
- Vegetables (Potatoes, Corn, Chickpeas – Rich in complex carbs)
- Dairy Products (Milk, Yoghurt, Cheese – Rich in lactose) [22]

Proteins aid in muscle repair and recovery.[21] Foods rich in protein include:

- Meats (Chicken, Beef, Turkey)
- Seafood (Salmon, Shrimp, Tuna)
- Eggs
- Nuts & Seeds (Almonds, Chia seeds, Pumpkin seeds) [23]

Omega 3 Fatty Acids reduce inflammation in the body, which is valuable for muscle recovery and preventing injuries after intense rehearsals or performances.[21]

Omega 3 Fatty Acids also support brain health and mood stability, which can improve focus, reduce anxiety, and help manage performance-related stress.[21]

Foods rich in Omega 3 Fatty Acids include:

- Seafood (Salmon, Shrimp, Tuna, Seaweed)
- Nuts (Walnuts, Pecan, Pistachio)
- Seeds (Flaxseeds, Chia Seeds) [24]

The meals that a performer consumes before and after a performance are also of great importance. A balanced pre-performance meal, ideally consumed 2-3 hours beforehand, includes carbohydrates for quick energy, moderate protein, and minimal fat to prevent sluggishness. [25] This meal helps fuel the body and prevent fatigue during physically demanding activities. [25] Post-performance meals are equally important for recovery, as they help replenish glycogen stores and repair muscles. [25] A mix of protein and carbohydrates, ideally within an hour after finishing, supports muscle recovery and restores energy levels, enabling performers to maintain strength and reduce the risk of injury over time.[25]

Hydration

Water is essential for performers to maintain energy, mental clarity, and physical endurance.[26] Even mild dehydration can reduce focus, impair coordination, and increase fatigue, making it challenging to deliver a strong performance.[26] Proper

hydration helps with muscle function and prevents cramps, which is crucial for performers engaged in physically demanding activities like dancing, acting, and singing.[26] Water also aids in joint lubrication and nutrient transportation, supporting overall physical well-being and performance sustainability.[26] For singers and vocal performers, hydration is key to vocal cord health, keeping them lubricated and reducing the risk of strain.[26] Adequate hydration helps protect the voice from overuse and maintains vocal clarity during prolonged performances.[26] Other types of hydration (ie: not water) can have many drawbacks on singing, such as **soft drinks**. The caffeine in many soft drinks acts as a diuretic, which increases water loss.[27] Vocal cords rely on hydration to stay lubricated and flexible, allowing for clear sound production.[27] Dehydration from soft drinks can dry out the vocal folds, leading to strain.[27] Soft drinks increase mucus production due to their high sugar content and carbonation.[27] Excessive mucus buildup can lead to congestion in the throat, making it harder for performers to project and sustain notes.[27] The acidity in soft drinks can be harsh on the throat lining and vocal cords.[27] Carbonated beverages can contribute to acid reflux, where stomach acid moves up into the oesophagus and potentially irritates the vocal chords.[27] This irritation can lead to inflammation, resulting in a raspy or weakened voice.[27]

Rest & Recovery

Sleep is crucial for **muscle recovery**, as it supports processes that repair and strengthen muscles after physical exertion.[28] During deep sleep stages, the body releases growth hormones, which are essential for tissue repair and muscle growth, helping performers recover faster and maintain peak physical performance.[28] Adequate sleep also reduces inflammation and restores energy levels, helping performers avoid fatigue and injuries over time. Sleep also aids in **mental processing** as it improves mental clarity and focus, which is essential for concentration during demanding rehearsals and performances.[28] During sleep, the brain processes and consolidates new information from the day, storing it in long-term memory - a crucial benefit for performers learning choreography, scripts, or lyrics & music.[28] Sleep also strengthens neural connections that aid complex thinking, which is essential for interpreting roles and delivering nuanced performances. [28] Deep sleep aids in **emotional well being** as it helps regulate mood by balancing stress hormones, promoting calm and resilience, which can be vital in high-stress performance environments. [28] For a performer wanting to improve their sleep, a **consistent sleep schedule** will help to regulate the body's internal clock, or circadian rhythm, making it easier to fall asleep and wake up at the same times each day.[28] For performers, this consistency means the body is trained to enter and complete all sleep cycles efficiently, allowing for restorative sleep that aids physical recovery, mental focus, and emotional balance.[28] Regular sleep times also help optimise hormone release (such as melatonin for sleep and

cortisol for wakefulness), reducing instances of insomnia and improving overall sleep quality.[28] This regularity is particularly valuable for performers who face demanding schedules and need to maximise rest during limited hours.[28] **Reducing screen time** before bed improves sleep by limiting exposure to blue light, which is emitted by phones, computers, and TVs.[28] Blue light interferes with the production of melatonin, the hormone responsible for promoting sleepiness.[28] When melatonin levels are suppressed, it becomes harder to fall asleep and stay asleep, disrupting the natural sleep-wake cycle and lowering sleep quality.[28] Reducing screen time also helps the mind unwind, preventing overstimulation from social media, emails, or other digital content, which can cause stress or anxiety and make relaxation more challenging before bedtime.[28] **Active recovery** is a muscle recovery method that involves gentle movements, such as walking, yoga, or light cycling, which increase blood flow to the muscles without causing additional strain. [29] This helps clear out metabolic waste products (like lactic acid), reduces muscle soreness, and restores flexibility, making it a valuable approach for performers who need to maintain mobility and prevent stiffness between intense rehearsals or performance. [29] Rest days are designated days without structured exercise or physical training, allowing the body and mind to recover from the stress of intense activity. For performers, rest days are essential as they provide time for muscles to repair and rebuild, which helps to prevent injury and reduces the risk of burnout. By pausing physical exertion, performers can also improve their long-term endurance and performance quality. Rest days allow the body to replenish energy stores, such as glycogen, which is critical for sustained performance over time. [30]

Wider Vocational Roles

There's more to the art of performance than meets the eye. Behind the scenes, an army of skilled workers exercise their unique talents, skills and visions to enhance the outcome of a production.

Directors

The big boss, the director is responsible for leading and shaping every aspect of the production and its final outcome. Directors bring a writer's words to life by analysing a script to understand the intended themes, characters and messages, decide the tone, style and mood of the production, cast actors, plan and facilitate rehearsals, collaborate with other members of the production team, block the actors movements, oversee technical rehearsals like sound and lighting, and provide feedback to performers.[46] There are no specific requirements or qualifications to become a director, but some courses that could be useful are: directing, acting, theatre studies, English literature, & drama studies. [46] In order to create a masterpiece, directors should possess the following skills to enhance a production: creative vision, creative thinking, artistic sensitivity, leadership, researching skills, problem solving, time management, and organisation. [46]

Musical Director

The musical director is responsible for the musical aspects of a production. They lead a cast, and group of musicians during performances. They select the musical arrangements and compositions to be performed. [48] Their main responsibilities include collaborating with the director and choreographer, studying the script and music, be present in auditions to evaluate vocal performances of auditionees, teaching the music to the cast and musicians, attend rehearsals, and lead vocal warmups. [48] No formal qualifications are technically required to become a musical director, but obviously a deep understanding of music is.[48] Courses in composition, orchestration and conducting would be beneficial as well as training in musicianship, voice and acting.[48] A musical director should also be able to sightread music, write music and play musical instruments. [48]

Choreographer

The choreographer designs steps, movements and dances, usually to music, for dancers and actors to perform.[47] A choreographer must consider how to express the required amount of emotion through movement. To do this, they must read the script and listen to the music to create a routine that interprets the story through

dance.[47] The choreographer must also teach their choreography to the company of dancers. They must also work closely with the director to ensure that their visions coincide. A formal qualification is not necessary to become a professional choreographer, however taking certain courses will help build knowledge and experience, such as those in: dance, choreography, physical theatre, directing, creative arts, theatre studies & acting.[47] A choreographer should also possess skills in the following: rhythm & musicality, creative mindset, time management, teamwork & teaching.[47]

Wardrobe

Wardrobe assistants and their boss, Head of Wardrobe, are responsible for maintaining the costumes of a production, ensuring they are looked after, washed, and fitted well to a performer. [49] The main responsibilities for members of the wardrobe team include: altering or mending costumes, cleaning and ironing, fitting costumes onto performers, and the storing costumes. [49] Qualifications are not necessarily required for this role, however useful courses include: costume design, fashion, dress making & textiles. [49] Useful skills of a wardrober include: knowledge of costume construction and care, sewing & organisation. [49]

Life in The Industry

Getting into and being in the professional performance industry is an experience that is not for the faint of heart, but a rewarding experience for those who dare.

Schools & Training

There is an abundance of performance schools and colleges, as well as university courses on the subject. The choice of which route to take lies on personal preference. A university course will be more academic based than a performance school or college course. If one is uncertain about going pro into the performance industry, university is probably a safer option, as one graduates with a degree, meaning they can still undertake a variety of unrelated jobs if they decide not to go pro. One could also join a club. Many such clubs exist and range from theatre, to drama, to dance & to choir. Clubs can be attended in addition to other commitments, such as secondary school. Clubs are great for building skills and gaining experience.

Routes In

The industry can seem very hard to break in to, and the competition is fierce (and as such, becoming a 'Triple Threat' will increase one's chance of breaking in!). Open casting calls are a great way to get recognised and break in to the industry. Open casting calls allow any old random geezer to attend an audition to demonstrate their skills to a panel in the hope of being cast in a role. Open casting calls can easily be found advertised online, especially on social media. One could also get themselves an agent, a person whose job it is to find work for a performer. To get an agent, one will need to apply with a headshot and CV and some other personal details.

Life Once Employed

So, your audition was successful and you got the role and the chance to earn a living by doing what you love most. Now, you get to live like a real performer. Performers dedicate extensive hours to rehearsals, often working second jobs to support their passion.^[63] Rehearsals typically span about a month, followed by the show's run, with performers sometimes rehearsing during previews and maintaining their roles through understudy practices. ^[63] The lifestyle demands flexibility and resilience, as shows can close unexpectedly, prompting performers to seek new opportunities.^[64] Financial stability varies, with income fluctuating based on the length and success of productions. ^[64]

Case Studies

Katy Read – Vocalist

Katy Read is professional soprano singer. She has a wealth of experience and a beautiful voice. More recently, she teaches singing to students in multiple schools. **Education wise**, she has a Masters of Music majoring in Vocal Performance from the Royal College of Music in London. She also has an Artist Diploma in Opera Performance from the Vancouver Academy of Music, and a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Vancouver Academy of Music and Thompson Rivers University. She's also engaged in other courses, such as: Estill Vocal Technique, as well as two summer courses in Janice Chapman's Classical Vocal Technique and Teaching. She's trained with TES in London for classroom teaching. She's also a member of AOTOS (Association of Teachers of Singing) and does regular training with them. Katy says she's been singing informally since she could first speak, eventually progressing to choirs around age 8, before beginning private voice lessons at age 11. All in all, she reckons she's been singing for over 30 years! Katy has a wealth of **performance experience**, performing in over 30 operas including: Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni by Mozart, and Die Fledermaus by J. Strauss and La Boheme by Puccini. On the side, she's done a lot of contemporary classical singing and collaboration with living composers which she insists was really rewarding work. With so much singing, Katy's voice could be more susceptible to injury, but she has many ways of ensuring **proper vocal health**. She mentions that a warmup is paramount, as is resting and hydrating between performances. She also stresses the importance of proper vocal technique. As for tips for **getting into the industry** as a singer, she says to be open to every opportunity and to try one's best in all classes and performances, as you never know where they may lead. She stresses the importance of persistence and hard work are often just as, if not more, important than talent, as these will get you the gigs and roles you want. As for rejection, she says that in the industry, rejection is more common than success, but it's important not to take rejection to heart, and to learn from criticism and just keep going.

My Conclusion

Katy's extensive career as a professional soprano singer and educator highlights the importance of both technical skill and perseverance in the performing arts. Her background, which includes advanced degrees and diverse training in vocal performance, underscores the significance of formal education in honing one's craft. Her experience in a wide range of performances, from opera to contemporary

classical music, demonstrates the versatility required in the industry. Her focus on vocal health, through warm-ups, rest, hydration, and technique, contrasts with the often-overlooked side of performance - the maintenance of one's instrument over a long career. Katy's approach to teaching and advice for aspiring singers reflects a philosophy of resilience and dedication, where persistence, hard work, and openness to opportunities can lead to success. This contrasts with the notion that talent alone is sufficient to succeed, emphasising that the journey to a successful career is often shaped by perseverance in the face of rejection and ongoing personal growth. Her insight into rejection in the industry is especially valuable, teaching that setbacks should not be taken personally but rather as opportunities to refine one's skills and approach.

Niall Johnson – Director

Niall Johnson is a film writer and director. His work includes 'White Noise', 'Keeping Mum' & 'Mum's List'. He started his career at 13 years old by participating in a local drama group. He began by making short films with his brother at home. His big break came from his feature film, 'White Noise' which got noticed by Hollywood Studios leading to him receiving agents and contacts in major production companies. He says that he always **listens to actors' ideas and opinions**, highlighting that collaboration is important. In his words, "being a director is essentially like being a cheerleader for the production, and in order to do that you must never remove the innate quality of what the actor envisages their character to be like. If the actor has a different interpretation from you, listen to them and try their ideas, but always be honest because at the end of the day being the director means helping the actors to see your vision." When asked how to support actors when they are not listening, he says to assess the situation, be understanding, and remember that being honest with your actors achieves the best outcome. Niall highlights that the best rehearsals are the ones with experimentation as opposed to being strict.

My Conclusion

Niall Johnson's approach as a film writer and director showcases the importance of collaboration and flexibility in the creative process. His emphasis on listening to actors and considering their input reflects a democratic style of directing, which contrasts with more authoritative approaches where the director's vision is strictly enforced. Johnson compares his role to that of a "cheerleader" for the production, stressing the value of fostering an environment where actors can freely express their interpretations while still guiding them toward the final vision. This approach in the performing arts highlights a deep respect for the actor's craft and an understanding

that collaboration can often lead to more organic and authentic performances. Again, Johnson's perspective contrasts with traditional, more rigid directing styles, emphasising experimentation and adaptation in rehearsal, which can lead to a more fluid, creative atmosphere compared to the more controlled environment seen in some theatre or dance practices. His commitment to honesty and understanding when resolving issues with actors also mirrors the type of supportive relationship that performers often seek in a collaborative environment.

Hannah Filer – Choreographer

Hannah Filer is a dance choreographer. She has a PHD in Dance and has choreographed several performances. Her roles as a choreographer include: working collaboratively with performers, creating a comforting rehearsal space, building trust with performers, & being firm with conduct when necessary. When asked if she thinks that listening to actor's ideas for choreography is important, she says that she prefers to stick to her pre-choreographed movements and routines due to the speed and efficiency required for the rehearsal process. To support people who are struggling with the choreography, she strives to foster a friendly environment in which performers feel comfortable to reach out for help. She may also refine the routine if necessary.

My Conclusion

Hannah's approach highlights a blend of both firm leadership and sensitivity toward performers' needs. While she values collaboration, particularly in creating a supportive rehearsal environment, she also emphasises the importance of adhering to pre-choreographed movements to maintain efficiency. This balance of trust and discipline is crucial in the performing arts, where the choreography's integrity must be maintained, but performers also require a space that fosters creativity and open communication. The comparison of her approach to other choreographers who may prioritise input from performers shows a contrast in rehearsal dynamics, where Filer leans toward structured choreography while being open to refinement if necessary. This case emphasises the role of a performer in a setting where trust, comfort, and adaptability intersect with the necessity for discipline and adherence to direction.

Conclusion

In the entertainment industry, the concept of a “triple threat” performer refers to an individual who is highly skilled in three disciplines: acting, singing, and dancing. While mastering these three art forms undeniably increases a performer’s versatility and marketability, it is not necessarily required in order for one to excel in the industry. The necessity of being a triple threat largely depends on the type of career one aims to pursue, as well as the specific roles and projects involved.

A ‘triple threat’ performer is defined by the following skills. Acting is crucial, as it enables performers to convincingly portray characters, evoke emotion, and connect with audiences. Singing skills provide the ability to deliver powerful vocals in various musical genres, often enhancing performances in musicals, films, or other stage productions. Dancing, similarly, can be a valuable skill for live performances or roles that require physicality and choreography.

While these three skillsets are highly regarded, they are not the only pathways to success in the entertainment industry. For example, in film and television, acting often remains the most dominant skill, with casting directors prioritising strong acting abilities over the need for singing or dancing. Performers like Meryl Streep or Denzel Washington may not be triple threats in the traditional sense, but their strong acting abilities have made them household names. Although of course, Meryl demonstrated her impressive singing abilities in the Mamma Mia films! On the other hand, performers such as Arianna Grande or Jennifer Lopez have built careers where singing and dancing are essential components of their artistry, yet they are also skilled actresses who excel in film and television.

In Musical Theatre, being a triple threat is significantly more critical. Musicals like Legally Blonde or Footloose require performers to juggle acting, singing, and dancing seamlessly. Actors such as Lin-Manuel Miranda and Idina Menzel, who possess all three abilities, have been able to make lasting impacts in productions that demand versatility. In these environments, versatility is a unique asset, and performers who can adapt to various roles may be more likely to secure a wider range of opportunities.

However, if we contrast this with a performer specialising in one field, such as a seasoned opera singer or a Broadway dancer, the scope of their work may be more limited but still highly lucrative. Opera singers might not need dancing skills to perform effectively, and dancers who focus solely on movement and choreography can excel as well, as seen with legendary figures like Misty Copeland or Bob Fosse, who have shaped their respective fields through singular expertise.

Additionally, not all musicals feature all three mediums. Some of the biggest and most successful musicals: *Les Misérables*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Phantom of the Opera* do not feature dance. Performers who aspire to perform in these musicals may not necessarily need a great deal of dancing ability.

The importance of the skills required for success in the industry varies. Acting remains a foundational skill, as it is crucial in almost all performance-based careers. Singing can be pivotal, especially for performers seeking work in musical theatre or music-based entertainment, while dancing opens up avenues in theatre, film, and live performances. Ultimately, each skill complements the others, and an individual's focus should align with the demands of their career goals. Networking, industry knowledge, and the ability to adapt to different genres and mediums are also vital for sustained success.

To conclude, while becoming a triple threat performer can significantly increase one's career opportunities, it is not absolutely necessary to excel in the entertainment industry. Success can be achieved with a deep specialisation in one discipline, as long as that skill is in demand. Performers must assess the nature of the industry they wish to enter and develop the most relevant skills for their desired path, whether they are looking to work in film, television, theatre, or music. Ultimately, the most important asset a performer can have is a combination of talent, dedication, and the ability to continuously evolve in a competitive and ever-changing industry.

Indexes only apply to the one sentence preceding them.

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