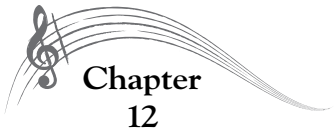

Reflective Journaling in the Singing Studio

Cathy Aggett

This chapter investigates the effectiveness of reflective journaling as a pedagogical learning and teaching tool for use in the singing studio. The chapter has three parts. It begins by discussing reflective practice, reflective and reflexive journaling, and describes the author's reflective journaling process for a musical performance. The second section presents writing from a mezzo-soprano and a soprano's (the author) viewpoints when engaged in short and long-term reflective journal writing during the preparation of Australian art songs for public performance. Entries from the journals are given to show aspects of different levels of critical thinking present, and related to musical examples from the repertoire. The entries are analysed using categories of reflective thinking based on Mezirow's (1991) levels of reflection (adapted by Kember et al., 2000). The third and final section focuses on aspects of reflective journaling relevant to the singing studio and a pedagogical approach to learning repertoire, discussing how the analysis of different levels of reflection can encourage deeper learning in the studio context and details some of the drawbacks of reflective journaling. A range of questions are posed to stimulate all levels of reflective action that can be applied to assist the learning and teaching process in the singing studio.

In her article, "Making a reflexive turn: Practical music-making becomes conventional research", Jane Davidson suggested that:

> … in the western art tradition performance is typically a more presentational than a reflexive activity … [urging] practitioners to begin to consider their own musical and performance processes and examine why certain elements which contribute towards creating a

> rehearsal or performance occur and how they may be different. (Davidson, 2004, p. 134)

This chapter considers the process of preparation for vocal performance by investigating the effectiveness of reflective journaling as a pedagogical learning and teaching tool in the singing studio through a review of the practice of two singers involved in research into Australian art song. Reflective journaling is being used as an educative tool by practitioners in many fields including pre-service teaching, nursing, clinical and psychological practice, all providing enhanced potential for learning and teaching. The results are applicable in the one-to-one environment of the singing studio. As a practitioner–researcher with a passion for Australian art song and an interest in finding ways for singers and singing teachers to learn and perform the repertoire more easily and effectively, I believe reflective journaling has played an integral part in my own teaching and learning process. This chapter has three parts. It begins by discussing reflective practice, reflective and reflexive journaling and the reflective journaling process of the author for a musical performance. The second and main section presents the viewpoints of a mezzo-soprano and a soprano (the author) who engaged in short and long-term reflective journal writing during the preparation of Australian art songs for public performance. Entries from the journals are given to show aspects of different levels of critical thinking present, and related to musical examples from the repertoire. The entries are analysed using categories of reflective thinking based on Mezirow's (1991) levels of reflection (adapted by Kember et al., 2000) as a means of discussing focused practice-based journaling for performance. Finally, the chapter draws together the earlier sections by proposing a model of reflective journaling that could be used by both singers and singing teachers when approaching the discovery of new song repertoire. This is undertaken by examining how such an approach can assist performers and studio teachers through a pedagogical frame that encourages reflective journaling and discusses how the analysis of different levels of reflection might encourage deeper learning in the studio context. It is hoped these preliminary findings may act as a means to spark discussion amongst the singing community in the area of reflective practice through reflective journaling.

Reflectivity

Reflective thought is considered to constitute "… active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge, in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933, p. 9).

As a practitioner–researcher, my own reflective writing over the past four years has taken the shape of writing a reflective journal in which I have recorded my thoughts, reflections and ideas for improvements on my rehearsals, recordings and subsequent performances of more than 33 Australian art songs. Initially, I began journaling because I was asking students in my music studio, including singers, to journal. Since that time, reflective journaling has become integral to my rehearsal process, the constant cycle of practicing, journaling, recording, reflecting, practicing, journaling and reflecting (the process of which is graphically presented in Figure 12.1), with much of the writing having a reflexive focus, informing my final performances. McPherson and Zimmerman (2002, p. 237) described this type of self-regulation as cyclical, as feedback obtained from prior performance helping the learner (performer) to adjust their performance and future

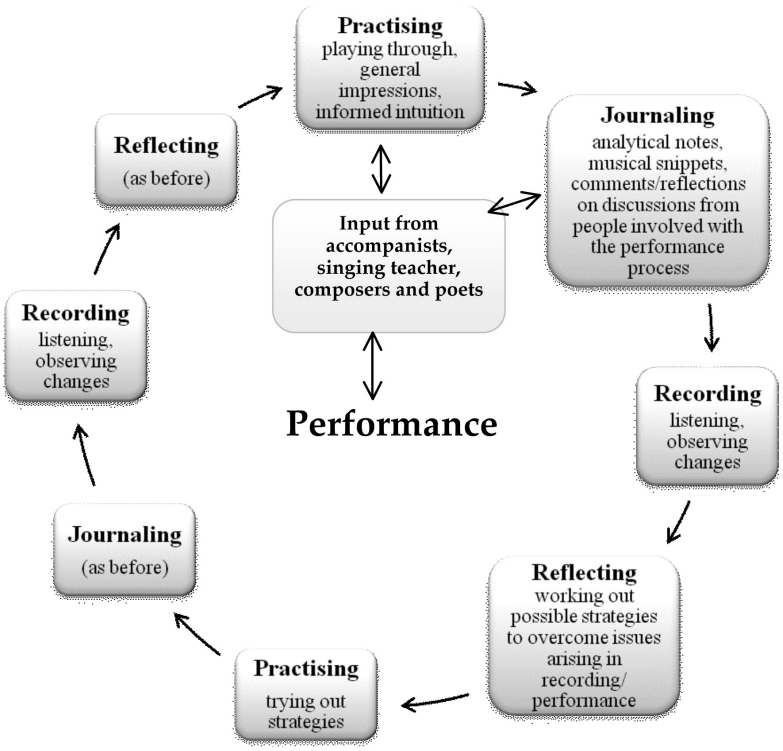

FIGURE 12.1

A graphic representation of Aggett's (a soprano) cyclical reflective journaling process in preparation for a musical performance.

efforts. This approach has strong resonances with the establishment of Rink's (1990) notion of informed intuition, which guides the process of performance analysis by "accru[ing] with a broad range of experience and … [that which] may exploit theoretical and analytical knowledge at the 'submerged level of consciousness'" (p. 324).

In the research environment, the result is practice-based research from both reflective and self-reflexive perspectives, using journaling to inform the performance process. In the studio, a similar multifaceted approach can be a strong teaching and learning tool. Reflection is involved with the notion of learning and thinking, where "we reflect in order to learn something, or we learn as a result of reflecting" (Moon, 2004, p. 186). Reflective journaling about one's practice can be viewed as a learning exercise in self-assessment (Gillian & Hendrika, 1995; Paris & Paris, 2001).

Journaling and Reflective and Reflexive Professional Practice

The terms "reflective" and "reflexive" are both used in the literature, in some instances interchangeably, yet it can be useful to understand the difference between the two terms. "Reflective practice" is used by Schön (1987, 1991) to depict practitioners reviewing their actions and the knowledge that informs them. The terms "reflection-*in*-action" and "reflection-*on*-action" were coined by Schön, the former occurring during rehearsals when strategies were suggested by either performer and enacted upon, and the latter when a singer is reviewing journaling entries plus recordings and performances. Reflective journaling is used by practitioners in the fields of preservice teaching (Francis, 1995; Hourigan, 2009; Towell, Snyder, & Poor, 1995), library students (Tilly, 1996) and music therapy (Barry & O'Callaghan, 2008, p. 59), as an educative tool to investigate the way in which they practice their craft. Journals are used as a means to foster self-learning and encourage the development of the reflective practitioner (Lyons, 1999). The idea of reflective journaling as a pedagogical strategy to effectively enhance self-awareness was introduced by Hampton and Morrow (2003) when teaching civil engineering in a United States military academy, integrating its use throughout their courses.

In music education, singer and teacher Lotte Latukefu (2009) fosters peer learning and self-reflection through the use of journaling in a tertiary music setting to teach classical singing in groups. Students are encouraged to become self-regulated learners by using journals to reflect on their vocal development over a period of three years, with the singing and spoken voice lecturers providing the transfer of knowledge and peers offering additional feedback in classes. In research focused on Australian art song, singers have detailed their performance preparation through a combination of reflective

journaling on recordings of rehearsals and performances to inform the reflection process, including the application of practical strategies (Aggett, 2009b, 2010). Reflective practice is enhanced through self-assessment comments from contemporary tertiary music students in journals in a tertiary setting, devised to provide students with the means to become their own teachers, with situations similar to Latukefu's work where peers are involved in the feedback process (Lebler, 2007). To encourage engagement with Asian-Pacific music, composer Diana Blom with classroom teacher Anne Bischoff involved a class of upper primary students in a focused composition module over a term, which included the use of a shared student process journal, with entries by all students, designed to encourage reflective thinking (Blom & Bischoff, 2008).

Reflexive journal writing is used to generate and integrate new understandings and extend practice by music therapists working in an oncological clinical placement. These include seeking an understanding of contextual influences on practice, connecting theory and practice, self-evaluation and supervision, and understanding the usefulness of music therapy (Barry & O'Callaghan, 2008, p. 59). These authors believe reflexive journaling can help to "develop insight, self-awareness and analytical thinking" (p. 61).

Reflexivity is focusing on one's own actions and their effects on others, situations, and professional and social structures (Bolton, 2005, p. 10); it is about understanding how research is affected, in terms of outcomes and process, by one's own position as a researcher (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007, p. 186). In the singing studio, the singing teacher is acting as the researcher, reflecting on his or her singing as a professional, extending the knowledge drawn from this reflection to students, other professionals or performers involved in the performance process. My own role in this article is exactly this — a singing teacher and singer who is using reflective thinking to research the topic, with this same reflexive activity, as encouraged by the teacher's students, to be expanded on further. Researcher reflexivity can be further explained as "the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts inform the process and outcomes of inquiry" (Etherington, 2004, pp. 31–32).

My work as a researcher–practitioner is reflexive in two ways. First, a large part of my research has involved reflection and reporting of other singers' reflections, responses, performances, interviews, feedback and work relating to their preparation of 20th and 21st century repertoire, including Australian art song (Aggett, 2008a, 2009a, 2009b). The second aspect of reflexivity is about my own vocal preparation work in this process (Aggett, 2007, 2008b, 2008c, 2010). While it is impossible to be totally impartial in one's views when reporting on such issues, especially when there is an emo-

tional connection as a performer and as a teacher of performers, the constant struggle of which other reflexive researchers and practitioner–researchers report is always present in that one constantly seeks to find a balance between being self-aware and self-indulgent (Fox, Martin, & Green, 2007, p. 189).

Analysing Reflective Thought in Journal Entries

Reflective journal entries are a large body of text that usually require guidance and analysis to help draw out the key knowledge. As a means to assess whether students were engaging in reflective thinking during their courses and the depth of that reflection, Kember et al., (1999) used seven categories of reflective thought based on Jack Meizrow's (1991) work on reflective thinking. Six of these have been illustrated in Figure 12.2. The level of reflective thinking represented in the diagram increases from bottom to top, with categories shown on the same horizontal level regarded as being equivalent in reflective thinking. Meizrow separated non-reflective action from reflective action (Kember et al., 1999, p. 22), with non-action falling into the three areas of habitual action, thoughtful action and introspection (shown in Figure 12.2, shaded in grey).

Habitual action is action that has been learned before and can be performed automatically or with little conscious thought. These actions are usually not recorded in journals. An example of habitual action for a singer might be an effective breathing technique, once learned, even though a singer's breathing technique needs to be applied to each song and each phrase in a song.

Thoughtful action directs our attention to action that draws on previous meaning or learning schemes and can be described as a cognitive process. In a thoughtful action, such as playing a musical instrument, a performer may be drawing on such aspects as prior knowledge, analysing, evaluating, making

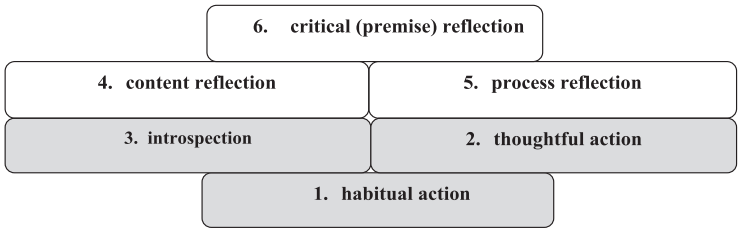

FIGURE 12.2

Categories of reflective thinking, increasing in reflection from bottom to top, with categories shown on the same horizontal level regarded as being equivalent in reflective thinking. Based on the work of Mezirow, adapted Kember et al., 1999, further adapted by Aggett (with permission).

judgements and discriminating, becoming what Schön called "knowing-*in*-practice" (Schön, 1991, p. 61). Through reflecting on knowledge-*in*-practice, a performer develops a greater understanding of an issue, trying out possible strategies in rehearsal by articulating feelings they have about it (p. 63). Introspection refers to an awareness of thoughts or feelings about ourselves. As there is no attempt to re-examine, test or validate previous knowledge, introspection is considered a non-reflective action (Mezirow, 1991, p.107).

Reflective action (which combines the final categories of Content, Process and Critical Reflection) is described as making decisions or taking action based on insights as a result of reflection, dividing reflective thinking into the three areas of content, process and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991, p. 108). Content reflection is *what* we perceive, think, feel or act upon (p. 107). Process reflection is *how* we perform these functions of perceiving, thinking, feeling or acting and an assessment of our effectiveness in performing them. Premise (critical) reflection is where we become aware of *why* we perceive, think, feel or act as we do and the possible consequences of those actions (p. 108). Changes in perspective in the writing need to be noted for writing to be coded as premise reflection. If we accept that many of our actions are governed by a set of beliefs and values that have been unconsciously learnt within a particular context, then premise reflection requires a critical review of beliefs from conscious and unconscious prior learning and their consequences (Kember et al., 1999, pp. 23–24). As Kember et al. also decided, the political overtones of Mezirow's original interpretation of premise reflection are irrelevant in this discussion and have therefore not been considered. Reporting on work carried out to create a questionnaire to measure reflective thinking, Kember et al. adopted Dewey's definition and used the term critical reflection to replace premise reflection as the term has been more commonly used for this level of profound reflection and the term has also been adopted in this frame.

Approaches to Journaling — Short- and Long-Term Journaling

A practice-led project involving three singers (Aggett, 2008b) — a soprano, mezzo-soprano and a baritone — in the preparation and subsequent performances of specific Australian 20th and 21st century art songs required the singers to record their practise sessions, keep and reflect on practise journals, while choosing and adopting appropriate strategies as a means of improving their performances. The following discussion relates to the short and long-term journaling of two of the singers from the project — the mezzo-soprano and soprano (the author) — highlighting the reflective journaling undertaken.

Journaling During the Learning and Performance Stages — Long- and Short-Term Journaling

The mezzo-soprano's journal was written in two distinct sections over a six-month period. It detailed the preparation of five songs with a general focus on overall strategies to learn the songs. The entries in the first section of the journal had an emphasis on pitch, whereas the second section mainly contained strategies on the text and meanings of songs, with reflections to deal with these topics. As with many students who have participated in reflective journal writing exercises in different disciplines, including music, and discussed earlier, one of the biggest drawbacks of writing a reflective journal is the time it takes. While the mezzo-soprano's journal was brief, her entries showed an increase in the type of reflective writing from her first entries compared with those in the second section of her journal.

My journal (the soprano) detailed the preparation of 30 Australian art songs by 11 composers. When learning these songs for two major recitals, I decided to deliberately journal the journey, largely because I had found this approach to be helpful in the past. Initially, my journal entries were haphazard, other than including the date of entry, but as time progressed, the writing became more structured. Over a four-year period, the reflective nature of the entries developed as I became more comfortable writing my thoughts down and a structure emerged in the journal. The writing showed a gradual development in journaling to include analytical notes, personal comments, musical snippets, trials of appropriate techniques suggested by other singers and in the literature, and analyses of the songs where it helped to enhance the understanding. Also included were comments from discussions with people involved with performance process, including from my singing teacher, several accompanists and composers involved in the performance process.

Analysing Categories of Reflective Thinking in the Journals

As a means of discussing the content of the journals, Meizrow's (1991) levels of reflection, adapted by Kember et al., (1999) (see Figure 12.2) were adopted to analyse levels of reflective thought within the journals and how they relate to the music being prepared. The proposed journaling model (see Figure 12.3) that emerged and subsequent musical examples seek to give a reflexive perspective by linking the action (reflection) with the resulting process (practising, with the application of strategies) and outcome (performance) to provide an understanding of how writing and thinking, that is, research, can be affected by one's own position as a teacher and performer in terms of outcomes and process (Fox et al., 2007, p. 186). Kember added a sixth level of reflection to his model — content and process reflection —

however, this level of reflection has been removed in the model of analysis proposed in this chapter, as there was no evidence of joint content and process reflection found in the presented journal entries. Possible levels of reflection throughout the reflective journaling process can be seen graphically represented in Figure 12.3.

Writing any kind of diary or journal is a very private activity. Issues surrounding journal writing, therefore, include who the journal is for. Who will see it? Will it be marked? The author of any journal needs to feel free to express themselves in whatever way they choose, or there is no purpose in keeping the journal in the first place. The journal entries of the two singers presented in this chapter were not written to be marked or viewed by the public, so no preliminary ground rules were set with either author before

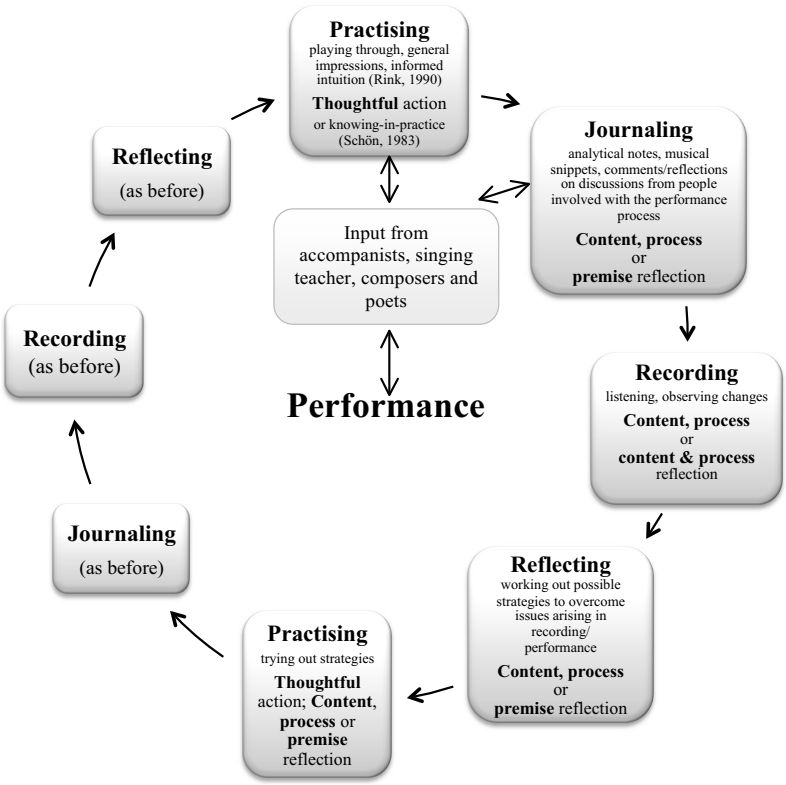

FIGURE 12.3

In this model of Aggett's cyclical reflective journaling process, Mezirow's (1991) levels of reflection (adapted by Kember et al., 1999) have been applied to each of the steps in the cycle. When practising, informed intuition (Rink, 1990) and "knowing-in-practice" (Schön, 1983) may also be used.

beginning the project, the journals were being written primarily for self-assessment. This is a different approach from that of many of the examples present in the articles previously discussed about journaling (e.g., Hampton & Morrow, 2003; Kember et al., 1999).

In the two singers' journals, Habitual action was not identified. This is performed automatically and was therefore less likely to appear in the journals.

Thoughtful action was recorded by both singers in the journals, particularly in relation to the cognitive processes evident during the experimentation, implementation, adaptation and subsequent reflection on the development of strategies applied in the learning of repertoire.

The mixed metre of Margaret Sutherland's song "You Spotted Snakes" (1940) — the first section (bb1–7) being in quadruple metre and the second section (bb8–15) alternating between quadruple and compound duple metre (see Figure 12.4) — caused the mezzo-soprano to reflect on its irregularity:

> … in the $^{5}4$ time, [which is] quite irregular, … a temptation [exists] to give the bar 6 beats, but you've got to keep going. [I] sang through … both verses, taking care with vowels and consonants.

The mezzo-soprano wrote in her journal that she "… needed rhythm strategies to assist with this challenge", these thoughtful actions involving

> … speaking the text in rhythm, while tapping the beat and singing the song slowly, gradually building up speed.

The similarity was noted twice in her journal between Sutherland's song and a song by Peter Warlock, titled "Sigh No More, Ladies" (1928, OUP), as both have a text by Shakespeare and alternating meters between $^{5}4$ and $^{6}4$.

Also thoughtful actions, the mezzo-soprano identified "our fairy queen" (bb6–7, Figure 12.5) as a section containing "difficult intervals" and "repeated [the section] over and over" again as a strategy to master it. The same section in the second verse, "do no offence," gained attention to:

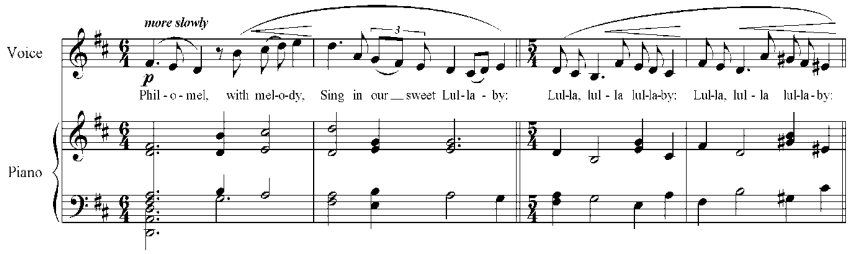

FIGURE 12.4

"You Spotted Snakes" from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Margaret Sutherland, text by William Shakespeare, bb 8–11. © Antony Bunney.

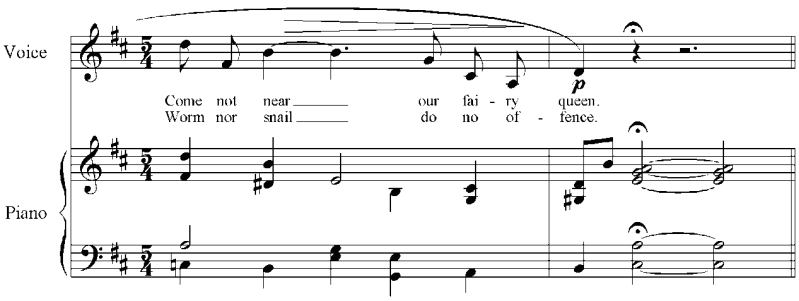

FIGURE 12.5

"You Spotted Snakes" from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Margaret Sutherland, text by William Shakespeare, bb 6–7. © Antony Bunney.

> … distinguish the vowel 'o' between 'no' and 'offence' — especially with [the] low interval/change of register.

Another thoughtful action recorded by the mezzo-soprano was in relation to a strategy used by both singers, in this case in reference to the initial exploration of Martin Wesley-Smith's song "Climb the Rainbow" (1976, rev. 1992), text by Ann North, to "play a skeletal accompaniment while sight-singing the vocal line".

The soprano devised strategies to assist in the learning of the difficult rhythmic and atonal song "I'm Nobody" from Frogs by Nigel Butterley (2006), the composer describing its tonality as being "purposefully astringent," referring to the atonal melody that "clashes" with the accompaniment (24 October 2007). Aside from learning the pitch, which was the singer's (my) responsibility, rhythm was tied to the diction and ensemble in the song, making it an issue for both singer and pianist. Both found it easier to rehearse this together, prompting my thoughtful action comment that "… it's an organic thing, the more you get together — an osmosis. It takes time for things to grow … you can't practise this on your own".

A strategy occurring out of this process was to play all notes in a section/passage/beat as a chord while holding the sustain pedal down to familiarise the singer with the tonality, while singing the passage very slowly. This has become a favourite strategy of mine, whether the music is tonal or atonal. As example of how this was applied to the first three bars of the song is given in Figure 12.6.

Two instances of introspection were recorded by the soprano in the preparation of Betty Beath's cycle Towards the Psalms (2004). The first refers to the different tone colour being worked on for "The Lament of Ovid", where a "… different thought process" was explored to achieve the vocal tone (Figure 12.7).

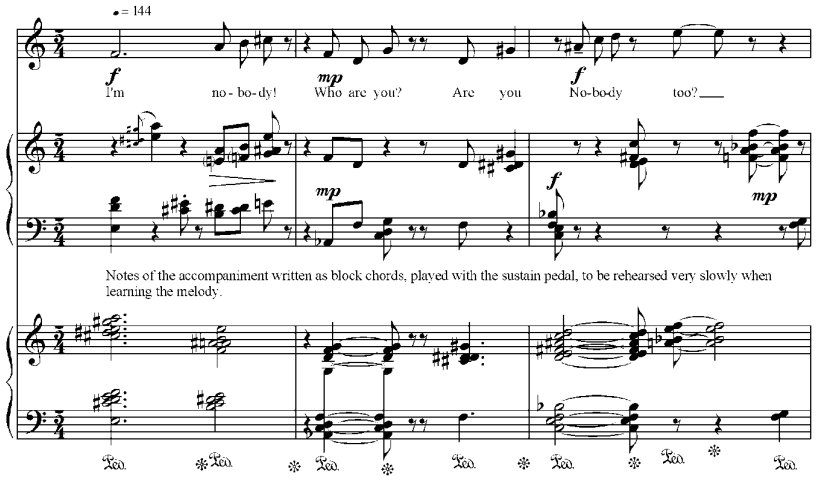

FIGURE 12.6

"I'm Nobody" from *Frogs* by Nigel Butterley (1995). © Wirripang Pty Ltd, 2006. Text by Emily Dickinson, bb 1–3. Adapted by the composer with permission. Suggested chordal strategy to rehearse these bars written on the staves underneath the piano accompaniment.

Different vocal tones were explored on this note, both in rehearsal alone and with the accompanist, with reflective comments made on recordings of these sessions to "get in the zone," not only for this note, but for this whole section of the song.

The second introspective reflection refers to a register issue at the end of Beath's "Love Makes You See a Place Differently …", "…the last phrase is *so* hard for me — sits low in the register and is supposed to have a diminuendo on the last note — dreaming!" (see Figure 12.8).

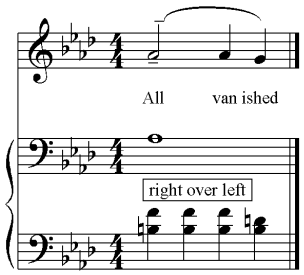

FIGURE 12.7

"The Lament of Ovid" from *Towards the Psalms* by Betty Beath, text derived from the novel *Fugitive Pieces* by Anne Michaels. b23. © Wirripang Pty Ltd, 2004.

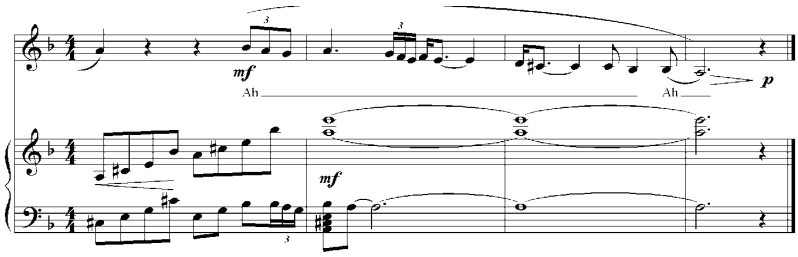

FIGURE 12.8

"Love Makes You See a Place Differently …" from *Towards the Psalms* by Betty Beath. © Wirripang Pty Ltd, 2004. Text derived from the novel *Fugitive Pieces* by Anne Michaels. bb 48–51.

The mezzo-soprano identified some early content reflection in her preparation of Margaret Sutherland's "You Spotted Snakes" when she journaled of her preparation of some tricky intervals, "Sang through with full voice — perhaps too heavy … Then sang with lighter sound — better for song".

This kind of reflection on the quality of the sound while practising reinforces the vocal quality that best suits the singer's voice and the music. The more specific you can become about your own sound and the qualities you want to express in music, the keener the ear becomes at analysing the quality of voice's timbres.

The mezzo-soprano found much to reflect on in "Climb the Rainbow" by Wesley-Smith, despite it being one of the easier songs in her repertoire for the recital. The following content reflection reveals a dialogue she journaled on the meaning of the text of the song and its connection to the variation in tempi:

> There was a lot of variation in dynamics and tempo in the song even though it seems so repetitive. My mind started to wonder what that's all about. It seems to be a journey of a relationship with someone — perhaps a lover or a partner. Each time the journey is taken (to climb the rainbow) is a different stage of the relationship. Rainbows are elusive, beautiful and intangible — it is impossible to climb, except in the imagination. So it's a metaphor for achieving a feat or a pleasurable experience.

Variation in tempi and dynamics occur throughout and within "Climb the Rainbow". The example in Figure 12.9 shows the climax of the song, the loudest section, with the signature glissando used throughout the song seen on the word "slide". Two versions of the song exist — an unaccompanied, solo version (the original, 1976) and this accompanied version, both of which require the singer to explore the contrasts the mezzo-soprano speaks of in her journal.

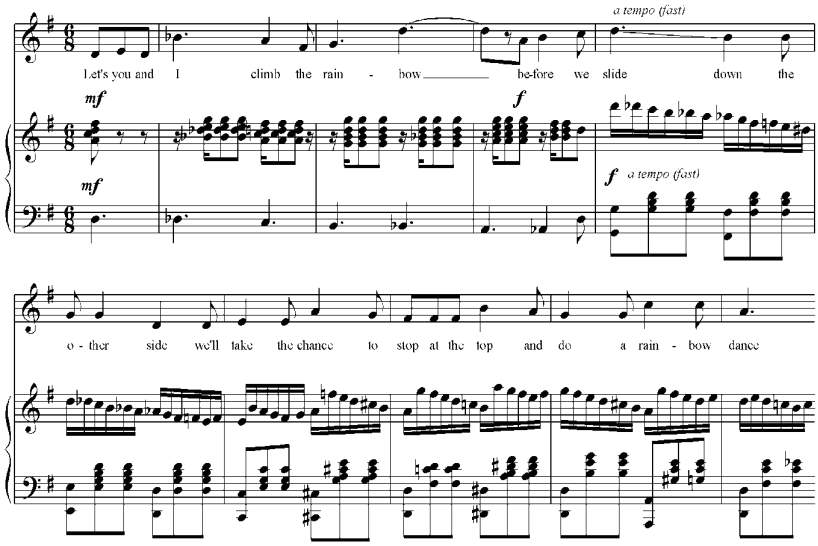

FIGURE 12.9

"Climb the Rainbow" by Martin Wesley-Smith (1976, rev. 1992). © Martin Wesley-Smith. Lyric by Ann North, bb 24–33.

Examples of content and process reflection occurred in the journaling by the soprano of Diana Blom's "Willow Flowers" from *Four Korean Songs (Sijo)* (1974). The song has a relatively constant high *tessitura*, beginning on a repeated F#5s and in the following two phrases (see Figure 12.10), where I found it:

> Very hard to 'drop down gently!' from F#4–A#3 pp … You want to/need to go into a heavier voice … Will need to work on that.

Working on enunciation of "willow flower drops" and the word "silent" prompted the entry "Think of the legato line, but the consonants are on that line too", both of these reflections being content reflection.

To achieve the goal of pitch security in the performance preparation of "Willow Flowers," the following thoughts expressed process reflection:

> I think it's one thing to sing these pitches in abstraction/by myself … I need to get with Diana … So more work with the piano, getting the notes that 'distract'!

Many of the songs I have performed in relation to my research of Australian art song often sit more in the range for a mezzo-soprano, despite the fact the scores may state they are written for a soprano, with little of the repertoire using the full soprano's range. Having said that, I blame myself for not having made wiser choices selecting repertoire or not refusing to sing some

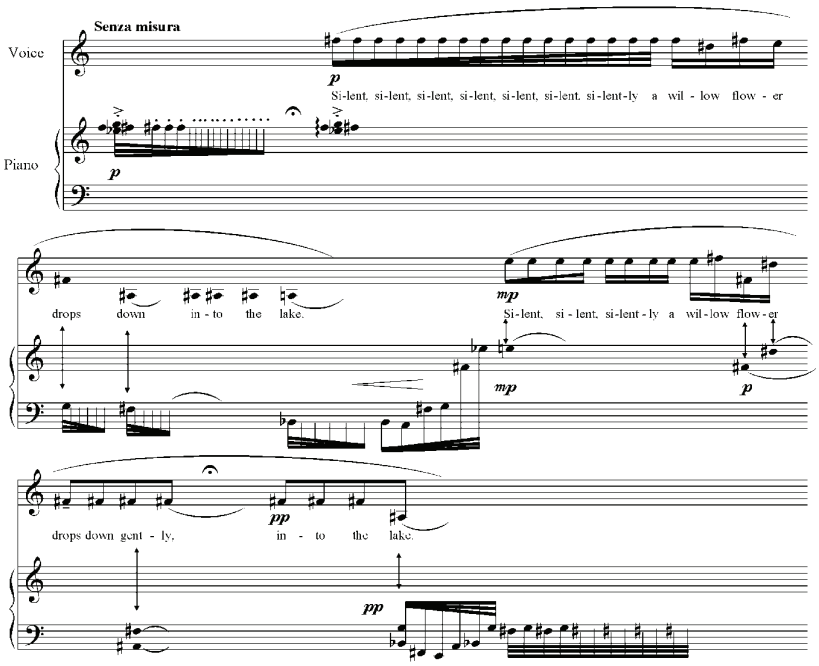

FIGURE 12.10

"Willow flowers" from *Four Korean Songs* (Sijo) Systems 1–3, by Diana Blom. © Diana Blom. Poem by Yi Py nggi. Performed a tone higher than the original.

of the lower songs, simply because the notes were in my range — a common mistake of singers I often warn my own students against.

That little story precedes the one critical reflection found in either journal, in this case, the soprano's, following the performance of Diana Blom's "The Window" from *Four Korean Songs (Sijo)*. "The Window" is sung "senza misura" to the rhythm of the text, as it is in "Willow Flowers". The accompaniment is sparse and getting your notes is sometimes a challenge. It would be fair to say you feel very exposed in this song. The song was transposed up a tone from the original to accommodate my range, but even so, it really sat too low for me (Figure 12.11). I had wanted to do well in this particular performance, but physically, I wasn't well. Whether that was stress or nerves — I'll never know — all I do know is that my performance on the day was way under par:

> I think I learnt with the performance of this song that despite the fact you can sing the notes of a song, if they're *not* in your comfort range, you should listen to your heart/head and not perform them in public.

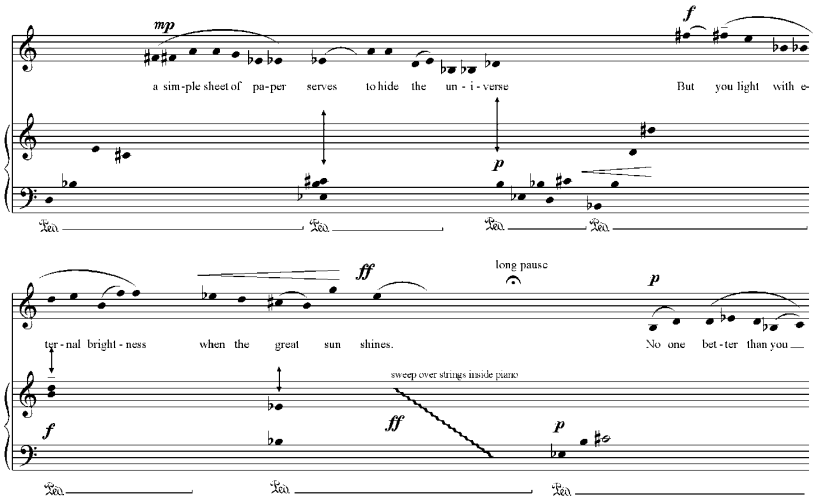

FIGURE 12.11

"The Window" from *Four Korean Songs* (Sijo) Systems 2 and 3 by Diana Blom. © Diana Blom. Poem by Yi Py nggi. Performed a tone higher than the original.

> Have enough professionalism to say, "no — this isn't right/doesn't suit my voice". Deep down in your heart, you *know* if the song is right for you and if you flirt with danger, one day — such as this — you're bound to be burnt. I think lessons were learnt here. I've made a promise to myself never to sing outside of my range again.

There are times as a performer when you would like to do the performance all over again. Of course, you cannot. What you can do, as both performers and teachers, is learn from the experience.

So What? Implications for Learning and Teaching Singing — A Pedagogical Frame to Assist Performers and Studio Singing Teachers

So is reflective journaling something you would do or implement as a performer or as a singing teacher in your singing studio? Do you need any special skills? The positioning of reflective journaling within a musically pedagogical frame to offer performers and studio teachers to assist in the learning of repertoire is the aim of this final section of the chapter. Guidelines will be proposed for those interested in implementing reflective journaling within their studios, the benefits and drawbacks of which are also outlined.

In the many references consulted on journaling, there was no shortage on suggestions as to how to begin to journal, recommending where you

wrote on a page, how many pages, what kind of a book to write in, and so on. Unless there are reasons for prescribing a particular format, I would advise leaving it up to the performer/student as to what medium they wish to record their thoughts in. There are advantages in having an unstructured format, and perhaps even a loose-leaf arrangement, which can be portable, removed, or even torn out (something to be avoided). Hard-covered journals that free the writer to seek other surfaces to write on will also last much longer than flimsily covered journals (Moon, 2006, pp. 95–96). All of the literature is in agreement about one thing, however, that writing your thoughts down about an activity will enhance the learning (and reflection) process. You don't need any special skills to be able to journal — just the courage to put your thoughts down on paper and then come back and do it again. One of the most difficult things is probably that first entry you make. The reassuring thing about journaling is there are no mistakes and there are no rules. It's your journal, your writing and you can do what you like in it — say what you like in it. Once you understand that, there is a freedom that comes over you and you begin to write.

Conclusion

This chapter has positioned reflective journaling in a solitary (performer) and one-on-one (student–teacher) paradigm, compared with the documented classroom/tertiary /clinical/community practice so often reported on in the literature. Being able to control, monitor and decide on how you go forward with your preparation can be such a freeing experience — I highly recommend it to everyone. The models suggested in Figures 12.1 and 12.3 offer starting points for performers and teachers to begin and develop the process of reflective journaling.

In my own studio, reflective journals are used to assist students in their journey to self-awareness of their own ability of their singing (and in the performance of piano and violin, the other instruments I teach) and in taking ownership of their learning, guiding me to the areas they feel they need most assistance with. While it is impossible to be prescriptive in the way all songs are approached and having said there are no rules, the following aspects are identified as being helpful when using reflective journaling as a pedagogical tool in the singing studio and are given only as a starting place or guideline:

- four pages assigned for a song, beginning with its title; if used, start another four;
- include the date for every entry you journal;
- general impression of song recorded on first playing/singing, identifying any possible issues that might cause concern;

- sections journaled identified by bar numbers;
- where possible, solutions to problems or the steps in a process recorded along with any associated impressions;
- record (and video if possible) sessions regularly and reflect in the journal to inform the reflection process; and
- start by using a music exercise book as a journal, with the normal note pages on the outside to write reflections in and manuscript paper on the inside to jot down any notation/musical thoughts. This needs to be covered, though, as its flimsy. There are fancier options, of course, and I do own some — it is up to the individual.

As a performer, the journal then becomes a tool that can be used to hone and refine their performance, focusing on issues of concern, recording possible ways to overcome problems, reflecting on the success or not of an approach. If reflections of recordings are also added to the reflection process and these are also kept and looked back on, the performer has a stronger aural sense of their own sound.

For the singing teacher, journaling becomes a tool in the singing studio to assist singer and singing teacher to better communicate what is going on between lessons, what issues the singer is finding difficult and needs most help with and conversely, what aspects are working for them. As a teacher, we need to find ways to help the student overcome their difficulties and ensure that indeed, the aspects a student thinks they are doing correctly are indeed, being performed with no strain or stress. For those students who take to journaling and use it on a regular basis, the journal can reduce the amount of time spent by the teacher in the lesson trying to work out where the student is having problems and needing help. You can simply ask for the journal, check out what areas need your assistance and less time is wasted in the lesson — the journal becomes the "prescription pad" for the lesson!

As a means of giving the performer and singing teacher a guide to exploring and encouraging student use of journal writing, Mezirow's (1991) levels of reflection offer an understanding of different ways and levels of reflection that can be used. This method of analysis is not prescriptive; rather, a suggestion of how such an approach can be applied to journal writing. It would be rare that a studio teacher would set out to mark a student's journal unless written for a specific course or the teacher was linked to a conservatoire or teaching institution. As an independent studio teacher, I set my own goals and assist students in their goal setting, which will never include marking! Having said that, it is not about the marking of journals at issue here; rather, it is about equipping studio teachers with knowledge about reflective practice and, specifically, about reflective journaling, so they can best guide their students in their quest for more effective and higher goals in performance. Having an understanding

of Mezirow's levels of reflections, and deliberately journaling at all of the levels, performers and teachers can either assist themselves or their students in the learning process, setting goals where they need to go in their learning/ teaching with the next step of the performance process. Each level of reflection has its own inherent pedagogical implications for the teacher, and knowing where a student is at with their performance preparation can only help to enhance their teaching and their relationship with their student.

One way to encourage an exploration of all levels of reflection is through questions. For example, a question such as "How are you standing?" requires examination of a habitual action. The cognitive processes of thoughtful action may be stimulated with questions such as "Why are you performing the melody that way?" or discuss a recording of your performance and how prior learning can be implemented to improve it. Questions exploring the emotional connection of the singer to their performances may enhance introspective reflection. Content reflection may be stimulated by questions such as "How did you feel about your vocal technique in that phrase you just performed?" or "What do you think is the best way to approach … in your singing?" To stimulate the method or manner in which students think — process reflection — questions such as "How do you think/feel/ when you perform x in the song?" may assist. While you cannot change a person's perception about an issue, to encourage them to become aware of why they think, feel or act a certain way — premise or critical reflection perhaps questions why they are thinking or feeling about a situation in a certain way — will stimulate some beginning thoughts.

The short-term journaling as detailed by the mezzo-soprano in the preparation of Australian art songs over a six-month period showed a gradual development in reflective writing to incorporate the application of overall strategies found to be most helpful to the singer, displaying thoughtful actions and content reflection in her journal entries. The soprano's journals, detailing the preparation of Australian art songs over a four-year period, focused on holistic impressions of songs, textual issues and strategies to address specific technical concerns within the repertoire. Thoughtful action, introspection, content reflection and critical reflection were all part of the journaling of the soprano, most likely a result of the longer time spent to develop the skill.

For performers considering implementing reflective journaling into their performance preparation, the benefits can include greater self-awareness, a deeper understanding of their performance practice, a greater understanding of their craft, targeted goal setting with measured outcomes and self-directed performance goals. For the studio teacher implementing reflective journaling in their teaching of singers encourages students in a greater self-awareness of their abilities; sets singers on a path towards self-education, with your guidance, with the teacher as mentor — the facilitator, if you like — may improve

the performance output of students and may give insights into a student that have not been revealed in a lesson. Journaling can be a valuable reflective and reflexive tool when preparing difficult 20th and 21st century songs outside of the regular rehearsal techniques at a singer's disposal.

I have found reflective journaling to be of great benefit as both a practitioner-researcher, and as a studio singing teacher and teacher of other musical instruments. The lessons I have learned about myself as a musician, performer, singer and teacher through journaling have convinced me that reflective journaling is a very worthwhile pedagogical tool.

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