

Singing for performance

Tutor: Natalie Duncan

Date: 11/09/20

Practicing from home

Hello! Today I'm going to talk about how to practice and what to practice from home.

Luckily, practicing is often done as a solitary experience from home and currently, we are all spending a lot more time at home.

For me personally, traditional forms of practicing my instrument or my voice has always felt like a chore and a struggle!

I find it difficult to sit and repeatedly play scales on the piano or to vocalise scales, for much longer than ten minutes.

Some people love practicing in this way! And if you do, there are plenty of amazing musical

resources and exercises available out there for you.

But I'm going to talk about my own non traditional form of practicing.

I have always found, throughout my professional career as a musician, the times in which I have taken huge leaps in progression are the times that I have had a deadline to meet. For example, an upcoming gig that requires me to learn 50 songs that I've never heard before, or in a genre that I'm not immediately adept with.

Learning music on an instrument or with your voice, is sort of akin to learning another language. It takes a while before you become fully fluent.

So using that knowledge, I do exactly the same thing. I still sit and learn entire songs that I've never played or even heard, but I remove the deadline and I only choose to study the songs that I **enjoy**.

It might sound obvious, but so much of our perception of practicing is that it *must* revolve around arduous and boring scales and melodies. It must be very methodical, it must be for 5 hours a day and you shouldn't be having any fun!

If you abandon this narrative and decide to get stuck into a song that you love listening to, the experience will be enjoyable and in turn, easier.

The effort it takes to hit that note, or to perfect that vocal run, will ultimately be more rewarding because it is music that you love.

Begin by choosing a song that you love listening to but you might think, *I could never sing that, it sounds too difficult.*

Now, your challenge is set. You're aspiring to achieve something beyond where your current level is

Start by breaking the song into chunks.

Begin by listening to the first couple of lyrics and learn them. Don't just listen to the words but focus on the delivery of those words. The dynamics, the vocal texture and register (are they using chest voice or head voice) and closely study the melody until you can match it correctly. Now try singing along with it.

Continue working on each section, 2 or 3 lyrics at a time, listening then repeating.

Studying a song that you love in this way will give you the opportunity to hear those tiny hidden details in the music that you probably didn't even hear before. Maybe there's a soft rhythm guitar in the background or a little string line. Or maybe even unusual quirks in the vocal you hadn't noticed.

Doing this will in turn, develop your ears. The better your ears are, the better a singer you will become.

Practicing your vocals or instrument is very similar to doing exercise. Some people prefer

to play a game of football for 60 minutes than to run on a treadmill for 60 minutes. They're getting exactly the same benefit and results but it feels much easier because it's more fun.

