CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The final matriculation examination for high school students in the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia, is the Higher School Certificate (HSC). Students choose from a range of subjects which they study in their last two years of high school. In NSW, music is studied in two components: Preliminary in Year 11 and Higher School Certificate in Year 12. This study investigates the performance requirements for mid-adolescent singers in the HSC Music Courses in NSW, Australia. During a two week period, usually late August into early September, all music students are required to give a performance as part of the music course. In this examination they will perform with their chosen instrument between one and six pieces that demonstrate their chosen topics of music study and their technical grasp of their instrument. This study investigates the criteria by which repertoire is selected for mid-adolescent singing students in Years 11 and 12 who are enrolled in this examination.

There are three major groups of people involved in the choice making procedure, namely the private singing teachers, the school music teachers and the singing students. This study endeavours to ascertain not only the criteria employed by these protagonists but to discover if these criteria are complementary. The study also seeks to identify Australian vocal repertoire that fulfils the criteria deemed necessary by the three participant groups.

To fully understand the constraints which guide the selection of appropriate repertoire for the HSC music examination, an outline of the course prescribed by the New South Wales Board of Studies follows, with attention paid to the Music 1, Music 2 and Music Extension courses, the core topic and to the manner in which musical concepts are studied in the classroom. This is followed by an overview of vocal pedagogical issues relevant to mid-adolescent singers and the constraints these issues place upon appropriate repertoire selection. Finally a brief discussion of the availability of Australian vocal repertoire concludes this introductory chapter.
An overview of the music courses available in Years 11 and 12

The New South Wales Board of Studies offers three courses of study to students enrolled in music for the HSC. They are Music 1, Music 2 and Music Extension (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999a; 1999b). These courses are a continuum from the Mandatory Course of music and the Additional Study Course of music that may be elected for study during junior secondary school (Stages 4 and 5 Syllabus, New South Wales Board of Studies, 1994). All students electing to study music in Years 11 and 12 should have completed the Mandatory Course of music in junior secondary school. Music 1 does not have any further requirements; it builds upon the skills and knowledge of the Mandatory course and accepts students with both informal and formal musical backgrounds (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999a). Whilst it is not a prerequisite, it is preferable that students electing to enrol in Music 2 will have studied the Additional Study music course, as Music 2 assumes a higher degree of musicological, analytical and compositional skills than will have been achieved from the Mandatory course alone. Music 2 also assumes that students will have a formal musical background (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999b). Although it does not state this specifically, this is generally interpreted as indicating that the student will be undertaking a regime of private lessons on their chosen instrument, in this case, voice lessons. Students enrolled in Music 2 may also elect to enrol in Music Extension, which is generally studied in Year 12 and assumes a high level of musicianship, analytical, compositional and performance skills (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999b).

Musical concepts

The course of study for Music 1 and Music 2 requires that students study six “concepts of music through the learning experiences of performance, composition, musicology and aural within the context of a range of styles, periods and genres” (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999a, p. 10; New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999b, p. 12). Students must demonstrate in the performance component of the HSC that they are able to communicate utilising these six concepts: duration; pitch; dynamics and expressive techniques; tone colour; texture; and structure. Throughout Years 11 and 12, the students are trained to analyse a wide variety of music using these separate components. Ideally the repertoire mid-adolescents singers select should demonstrate a diversity of tempi, sound lengths and rhythm
associated with duration, a broad vocal range to accommodate the concept of pitch, contain contrasting dynamics and display students’ thorough understanding of the musical style.

Texture is usually demonstrated by the arrangement and instrumentation of the accompaniment creating interplay between the layers of sound in each composition. Tone colour, as defined by the New South Wales Board of Studies, has a different connotation than that used by singers. The *Stage 6 Syllabi for Music 1 and Music 2* (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999a, 1999b) describe tone colour as an aspect of sound allowing the listener to identify its source. Singers use the term “tone colour” or “word painting” to describe the manner in which specific words or phrases are interpreted vocally as part of their skill in performance (Miller, 1996). Both the vocal technique of students and their comprehension of the six concepts as they demonstrate them in their choice of repertoire are important in the HSC performance examination.

*The core components*

All voice students must perform at least one song as part of their HSC performance component. This song is used as partial assessment of core or elective topics. The Music 1 course has no mandatory topic for Year 12, but 21 topics are offered from which the students must choose at least three topics. The Music 2 course has a mandatory topic in Year 12, “Music of the last 25 years (Australian focus)”, and students are required to choose one additional topic from a selection of eight topics. It is worth noting that nowhere in the Music 2 Syllabus does it state that music of the last 25 years must be “art music” as opposed to “popular music”.

As stated in the section on *Musical Concepts*, the music courses offer learning experiences incorporating performance, composition, musicology and the development of aural skills. These are the four core components and students must therefore be assessed in all these areas. Music 2 students must present the mandatory topic for their core performance component; Music 1 students nominate their core component in relation to the three topics they have chosen to study. At this point the two courses diverge as the different elective choices are

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1 Art music (as distinct from traditional and popular music) (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999b, p. 26).
considered. Music 1 students have a choice of three electives which can entail any combination of performance, composition or musicology; they may perform between one and four pieces including the core performance component. Music 2 students have one elective component of performance, composition or musicology; if they choose the performance elective then two additional pieces are required. Music Extension students may also choose between performance, composition and musicology. If performance is chosen then students must present three contrasting pieces, one of which must be an ensemble piece. Hence Music Extension students may perform one, three, four or six pieces, depending upon their elective choices.

**Vocal pedagogical issues relating to mid-adolescent singers**

Repertoire selection for any performer is always an ongoing and evolving process. Finding appropriate repertoire for developing voices and voices in the mid-adolescent age group (ages 16-18) is fraught with questions of range, tessitura, emotional connection and technical demands (Boardman & Alt, 1992; Cooksey, 2000; Gackle, 2000; Willis, 1994). Many texts and papers have been published giving broad guidelines to assist in this process as the singing teacher community becomes increasingly aware of pedagogical research and studies involving voice maturation throughout adolescence (Spiegel, Sataloff & Emerich, 1997; Thurman & Klitzke, 2000).

In the year of the HSC, many singers find that their voices suddenly lose tonal quality in a small part of their range and that ease is lost in some areas but gained in other areas of their voices. This can be disconcerting for the student, especially as the examination requires performance of the selected repertoire and yet the raw material, the voice, continues to change. From the onset of puberty the effects of growth destabilize the larynx and the vocal folds. Whilst this is audibly obvious in males, the results of this destabilization can also be heard in females. Even though most growth has ceased by the ages of 15 and 16, it takes until the age of 21 before the minute muscular adjustments around the larynx are integrated and the voice becomes stable. Generally mid-adolescent voices should not be made to sing overly loud or spend too much time at the extremities of their vocal range, or to sing for longer than half an hour in a session. The maturation process also limits the technical development of young singers. They will be technically behind their instrumental peers; this
can often become a source of conflict for the student and create unnecessary comparison by those with rudimentary or no vocal pedagogical knowledge.

There still exists a viewpoint that private singing tuition is not ideal for adolescents, even though the previously held view that no vocalising should be attempted by males during the period of voice change has now been challenged (Cooksey, 2000). The “magical” age of 17 is often given as the ideal time for mid-adolescents to commence singing lessons, but this is less than ideal if the 17 year old is planning to present a successful performance for HSC. If mid-adolescent singers have had singing lessons over a period of years prior to the HSC, then they will presumably have a wealth of repertoire from which to select material for performance. If mid-adolescent singers have not had these singing lessons prior to Years 11 and 12, then they will be more likely to rely upon the input or least approbation of their school music teachers in the selection of repertoire. Some singing students will have attended school choral groups where they will have been exposed to a range of differing musical styles and genres chosen by the school music teacher.

In fact, most of the research in the field of the vocal physiology of mid-adolescent singers has been directed through the school choral tradition, with little research specifically investigating the vocal needs of solo singers in the mid-adolescent age group. Discussions regarding repertoire choice and selection have therefore primarily been directed towards the school choral conductor, who, it is assumed, makes repertoire decisions for the budding soloist. Cooksey (2000) and Gackle (2000) have done their research primarily in the United Kingdom and the United States of America in schools and environments that have a strong choral tradition. Whilst this choral tradition does not currently appear to be as well upheld in Australian schools, whether through the medium of a choir or through classroom listening experiences, school music teachers exert a vital musical influence upon mid-adolescent singers.

School music teachers, unless they have trained as singers, are not versed in vocal pedagogy or the aspects of vocal physiology pertaining to mid-adolescent singers. Conversely, being a singing teacher does not necessarily convey knowledge of vocal pedagogy or vocal physiology, especially concerning the changing and mutating voices of mid-adolescent singers. The Music Teachers Association of Australia (MTA) and the Australian National Association of Teachers of Singing (ANATS) offer many opportunities and courses for the
dissemination of vocal pedagogical knowledge. However, there still exist large numbers of singing teachers who do not belong to either association or do not avail themselves of the knowledge made available through the various courses or reading matter that has recently been published on these subjects. Regardless of the training or lack of training of voice teachers and school music teachers in mid-adolescent vocal physiology, they all are called upon to find or recommend suitable Australian vocal repertoire for the HSC performance examination.

**Australian vocal repertoire of the last 25 years**

Because the mandatory topic for Music 2 in Year 12 is “Music of the last 25 years, (Australian focus)”, it is relevant to discuss sites and associations that promulgate Australian vocal repertoire in notated or recorded format. There are two Australian websites that specifically list repertoire appropriate for the Music 2 mandatory topic. The Australian Music Centre (AMC), the major dissemination source of compositions and recordings in Australia, has created lists that “include repertoire suitable for performance in the NSW HSC mandatory topic of Music of the Last 25 Years (Australian Focus)”, ([www.amcoz.com.au](http://www.amcoz.com.au), 2006). An independent publisher, Australian Composers, has a “Schools Music” section that includes Australian repertoire composed within the last 25 years ([www.australiancomposers.com](http://www.australiancomposers.com), 2006).

The examination syllabi of the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB) and Trinity College, London, are valuable resources for teachers wishing to assess the standard of vocal repertoire, although they appear to be accessed mainly by singing teachers, not school music teachers and they list relatively few recent Australian compositions. There is a teaching resource available that contains the 27 Australian songs included in the Trinity syllabus (Miller, Dixon, Aggett & Foulsham, 2005). It is a comprehensive book that contains singing techniques, performing suggestions for singer and pianist, and textual analysis of the poetry. It also analyses each song using the framework of the six concepts adhered to by the New South Wales Board of Studies Music Syllabus. Nevertheless, this includes only 18 songs composed within the last 25 years. The lack of any more resources of this type means that many teachers are unaware of the large range of songs that have been composed within this time frame in Australia.
Contemporary “popular music” has created an environment wherein the aspiring performer listens to recordings in order to learn them, rather than reading notated music as associated with the learning of contemporary “art music”. However, the often different melodic, harmonic and rhythmic devices that define much contemporary “art” composition would possibly reach a wider audience of voice teachers and mid-adolescent singers if recordings of these works were as readily available as those of the “popular” idiom. Recordings of contemporary “art” songs allow teachers and singers to hear the material, not only in order to facilitate their repertoire selection but to assist with learning music that is not in the singer’s natural aural environment.

Following this line of reasoning, it would appear optimal to have access to recordings of Australian vocal music, whether these are of live performances or are commercial releases. The paucity of sound files of Australian vocal music accompanied by the difficulty many teachers encounter when they attempt to locate notated versions of contemporary vocal art repertoire, could contribute to the limited amount of Australian vocal repertoire being presented for the HSC examination.

**Rationale for the study**

I am a private studio singing teacher currently also teaching at four Sydney high schools. When I first became aware of the requirements of the HSC examination as opposed to the examinations organised by the Australian Music Examinations Board and Trinity College, London, I did not understand the differing criteria. As more of my students enrolled in Music 1 and Music 2, I gained a greater understanding of the needs of this performance based examination. However, it remained difficult to find repertoire that fulfilled the requirements of the Mandatory topic for Music 2, Year 12: Music of the last 25 years (Australian focus).

I have noticed that there are differing perspectives towards this performance examination, not only between singing teachers and school teachers, but also between school teachers specializing in Music 1 or Music 2. I have also become aware of the changing attitudes of students towards their vocal repertoire as they pass from junior high school to senior high school, accompanied by an increasing desire to make choices of their own that do not always necessarily reflect their technical expertise.
This study interested me for several reasons. Firstly, there often appears to be a divergence of criteria employed by school music teachers and by vocal teachers in the selection of relevant repertoire (Boardman & Alt, 1992). Considerations of technical levels and vocal pedagogy pertaining to mid-adolescent singers vary among teachers and students and the differing perceptions of the vocal physiology of mid-adolescents often create inappropriate song choices (Gackle, 2000). Students make their choices of repertoire from suggestions made by both their singing teachers and school music teachers, or bring with them music they have heard on recordings or videos.

Secondly, while many voice teachers have a sound pedagogical knowledge in the area of mid-adolescent voices, and it is hoped that this percentage of teachers is increasing, there appears to be a lack of pedagogical understanding in the school teachers and students. It is perhaps not relevant for students to know exactly what is occurring to their voices in their teenage years, but as continuing vocal health is ensured by good practices, it becomes essential for high school music teachers to have a greater awareness of pedagogical issues.

In addition, with so little Australian repertoire presented in a manner that assists ease of selection the relevant material needs to be explored along with methods of presentation that enhance its accessibility. I also wanted to find out with which Australian composers the various participants were conversant, if there were any compositions that they regarded as appropriate for mid-adolescent performers and whether it was possible to make recommendations for Australian composers in order to enlarge the amount of contemporary vocal repertoire available for singers and mid-adolescents singers in particular.

Consequently the research questions addressed in this study are:

- What criteria influence the selection of HSC vocal performance repertoire by school music teachers, singing teachers and singing students in Years 11 and 12?
- What are the similarities and differences in the criteria employed in these selections by school music teachers, singing teachers and students?
- In what way does Australian repertoire fulfil these criteria?

The following chapter examines the literature pertaining to mid-adolescent vocal physiology and the emotional needs of mid-adolescents to create guidelines by which to measure the
knowledge of the participants in these areas. It also investigates literature that explores the learning and performing of twentieth century “art” music. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology employed in this study, giving reasons for the manner in which the investigation took place and explaining the selection of the participants. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 detail the results of the study and Chapter 7 summarizes and draws conclusions on the results.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The starting point for any investigation into repertoire choice is an examination of the special needs of the individual singer. For this reason the literature review first explores the special physiology of mid-adolescents as this dictates the parameters of this study. The technical constraints placed on mid-adolescents by their changing physiology are investigated in relation to vocal range, tessitura and their progressing vocal skill levels. Various pedagogical texts are then reviewed with conflicting opinions presented regarding the training of young voices.

Secondly, the emotional and social needs of mid-adolescents are explored along with the tools they require in order to perform successfully in public. Recommendations regarding appropriate texts for mid-adolescents are investigated with reference to their emotional maturity and their ability to interpret and communicate the meaning of various lyrics. Factors that enhance the ability of mid-adolescents to set and achieve vocal technique and performance goals are also examined.

Finally, a short survey is made of material that addresses skill levels in twentieth century art song repertoire for beginning and experienced singers. Methods of determining the difficulty of the ungraded repertoire are discussed, mainly in relation to the technical difficulties of melodic line, phrase length and language content.

Determining the vocal needs of mid-adolescent singers

Much research has taken place in recent years concerning the special needs of the developing female and male voice and useful groupings have been made documenting the stages through which both sexes progress pre- and post-puberty (Cooksey, 2000; Gackle, 2000). This study focuses on the mid-adolescent age group, 15 to 18 years, as categorized by Thurman and Welch in 2000, as most students enrolled in the HSC range in age from 16 to 18 years. The

2 Although there are some over-18 year old students enrolled in the HSC, their vocal needs are not considered as the prime concern is the song repertoire choice and selection methods up to and relating to Years 11 and 12.
voice training for this examination usually occurs over a period of two years leading up to the examination itself, although many mid-adolescent singers will have already commenced voice lessons prior to Year 11.

Mid-adolescent singers are usually past the period of maximum physical growth but motor control is still not settled and, consequently, their voices are often unstable. The throat muscles directly affecting the vocal folds are still accommodating the growth spurts of puberty and adolescence. Many singers will experience unevenness of range, usually in areas where the thyroarytenoids (shorteners), cricothyroids (lengtheners), abductory (openers) and adductory muscles (closers) are making abrupt adjustments (Thurman & Klitzke, 2000) This can periodically manifest as sudden breathiness, lack of volume, lack of dynamic control, inaccurate pitch and “breaks” or “cracks”. The voice tract also continues to grow until the age of 21, affecting the formant frequencies, typically referred to by singing teachers as “resonance”\(^3\), inherent in each individual voice (Spiegel et al., 1997).

Although in most instances there is a widening range, a decrease in breathiness, increasing depth of sound and the beginnings of vibrato, the tonal quality of the mid-adolescent singer lacks the vibrancy and resonance of the adult voice (Thurman & Klitzke, 2000). Additionally, the young adult male is not only contending with major motor development changes, along with his female counterpart, but with the need to reprogram his neuromuscular responses to adjust to the changing vocal fold length (Cooksey, 2000). All these factors contribute to the emotional and mental well-being of both male and female students, especially when role-modelling and comparison with adult counterparts and peers is also endemic.

Labelling voices at this age can hinder students from accepting their vocal changes with ease (Gackle, 2000; Willis, 1994). Many pedagogues stress the negative elements of naming mid-adolescent voices by their adult counterparts, citing research asserting that at this age there are no true sopranos or altos, nor tenors, baritones or basses (Collins, 2001; Miller, 2004; Willis, 1994). Cooksey (2000) introduces the category “emerging adult voice” to describe males from ages 15 through to 21 to differentiate between their vocal range and capabilities

\(^3\) This resonance is caused by adjustments to the pharynx and requires a desirable defined vowel in addition to the ringing quality achieved by formant balancing. This can also be referred to as “good singing tone”, “ping” or “ring”. Achieving this sound is the objective of good vocal technique. Teachers may label this process “vowel tracking”. Italian vocal schools often refer to this as “re-articulating the vowel”.

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and those of mature adults. Gackle (2000) suggests that “the most accurate voice classification for all female voices is ‘light midvoice’ or ‘rich midvoice’”, (p. 816) “as the young adolescent female voice is basically ‘soprano’ (not to be confused with the adult soprano quality)” (p. 819). While these terms are of use to the specialist teacher and researcher, the general public is still largely influenced by a wealth of literature using the ‘adult’ terminology: soprano, mezzo, alto, tenor, baritone and bass.

Because a large number of mid-adolescent singers undertaking private tuition also belong to choral groups, Gackle (2000) and Cooksey (2000) both recommend that the singers are allowed to move to differing parts in a choir as their ranges change and develop. They believe that this could remove the need to categorize voices prematurely and would assist in the development of a healthy attitude in mid-adolescent singers towards their ongoing vocal maturation. In fact, Miller (2004) notes that more often than not the needs of the vocal ensemble or choir will be met rather than the needs of the individual and that consequently labels continue to be used to the detriment of the vocal self-concept of mid-adolescent singers.

**Range and tessitura, melodic line, phrase length and rhythm**

Mid-adolescent singers typically have a range of an octave (males) and an octave and a fifth (females) while the tessitura\(^4\) can be as small as a sixth in the males and an octave in the females (Boardman & Alt, 1992; Cooksey, 2000; Gackle, 2000). In her presentation regarding repertoire for the younger singer, Willis (2003) recommends beginning with songs that have melodies of a limited range (a sixth to an octave) before progressing to songs with more extended range. Cooksey (2000), Gackle (2000) and Boardman and Alt (1992) also emphasize the need to keep the vocal material of mid-adolescent singers in a middle range. McKenzie (1958) advocates choosing repertoire compiled to fit boys’ voices, rather than fitting voices to the repertoire as this approach allows singers to gradually build confidence. He specifically suggests simple songs and tunes with a small tonal range.

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\(^4\) The middle section of the singer’s range. The area of the voice within which a singer can vocalise with ease.
Limited beginning melodic ranges that increase with skill, accompanied by vowel and consonant work, are also advocated in historical pedagogical methodologies concerning the initial training of singers (Coffin, 1989). The early Italian arias and Lied of the early Romantic era that feature in the beginner singer repertoire lists of the major examination boards, maintain a limited range and tessitura, and would appear to fall within these criteria. Indeed, range and tessitura appear to be major considerations of music examination boards when they grade music by difficulty. Trinity College, London, list the range of each song in their syllabus. The Australian Music Examinations Board omits this aid but investigation of their graded song lists shows evidence of range and tessitura considerations. However, tessitura and range are only two components of suitable repertoire. The musical elements of melodic line, phrase length and rhythm must also be considered when making repertoire selection.

Melodic vocal lines vary from simple diatonic lines with a limited range to highly chromatic melodies with wide leaps and an extended range. The difficulty of a melodic line is also dictated by phrase lengths and the space between phrases, as this determines the time available in which to take a full and relaxed breath. Vocal pedagogical texts regard chromaticism as vocally tiring and difficult for the young singer, the musculature necessary to create these fine adjustments with the vocal folds being considered an advanced skill (Thurman, Welch, Theimer, Grefshem & Feit, 2000). Similarly, wide intervallic leaps require advanced skills for these large adjustments, particularly when the intervals occur over passaggio5 points in the voice (Thurman et al, 2000, p. 374). The vocalises and studies written by Garcia, Marchesi, Vaccai, and Concone are representative of the large number of vocal methods created over the past two centuries. In these methods, skills are gradually acquired and the laryngeal muscles given time to develop and become well conditioned, a necessary state for good singing (Thurman et al, 2000). In this tradition Miller encourages the use of “the simpler, range-limited melodies” (1992, p. 132). Early Italian repertoire of the 16th and 17th centuries, folk music of every nationality and the popular music of the 20th and 21st centuries exhibit many of these melodic requirements and are often recommended as

5 The points in a voice where there are sudden readjustments between the shortener and lengthener muscles. Moving at ease through these areas with no loss of tonal quality is considered desirable and requires technical awareness and skill.
suitable for mid-adolescent singers (Boardman, 1992; Boytim, 2000; Gardner, 2003; Willis, 2003).

Conversely, Boardman and Alt (1992) recommend brisk melodic lines with ample time for relaxed breaths between phrases, rather than the slow sustained lines initially promulgated by the historical texts. They further suggest songs that encourage energy with robust, lilting coloratura, or vigorous piano accompaniments, presumably in the belief that this will encourage singers to keep their voices energized and avoid rigidity in the sound and muscular mechanism. It is possible that energetic repertoire of this type could also develop rhythmically confident mid-adolescent singers.

While there are many examples of art music in German, French and English with simple melodic lines, their texts do not necessarily reflect the emotional maturation levels of the mid-adolescent. Willis (2003) and Boardman & Alt (1992) comment that overly simple, child-like texts often found in this repertoire will alienate mid-adolescent singers and greatly reduce any benefit that may arise from the purely musical and technical aspects of the song. The converse also applies in that many of the art music texts represent emotional and maturation states that may only be expressed coherently with the acquisition of years of life experience (Miller, 1992).

Text and emotional connection

From a technical viewpoint, early Italian repertoire is regarded as ideal for the beginning singer; the range, tessitura, simple diatonic melodic lines and the use of pure Italian vowels being conducive to good vocalising and articulation. However, Italian texts that are not thoroughly understood are rarely the best choice for English speaking mid-adolescents. Folk songs and texts that deal with young love, humour, work, sadness through loss, are suggested as appropriate material by Boardman and Alt (1992). They propose that these texts are readily accessible to mid-adolescent singers, being well within their emotional maturity levels. Willis (2003) and Collins (2001) make similar recommendations and additionally address the issue of the multicultural society in Australia, stressing the importance of acknowledging the ethnicity of the student as part of selecting repertoire. Furthermore they advocate that the emotional range and experience of the student must always be taken into consideration when making repertoire choice. Willis recommends that students should begin
with songs in the vernacular before attempting songs in different languages. She suggests that Italian should be the first foreign language attempted, followed by German and French (2003). Miller (1992) concurs with this when he states, “Young tenors . . . [should be] restricted to songs in English, [the] less-demanding songs and arie of Purcell and Handel, arie antiche, non-dramatic lieder . . . if [they have] sufficient language skills” (1992, p. 132). Whilst the development of language skills through the introduction of foreign languages is regarded as an important aspect of vocal training, it would appear that the ease of understanding gained through singing in the vernacular is considered preferable for mid-adolescent singers.

Nevertheless, singing in the performer’s own language does not ensure comprehension of the text, a point that Pleasants (1973) makes when he stresses the importance of diction with a scrupulous realization of the text. He recommends that all young singers listen to the great jazz artists, Sinatra and Fitzgerald, to appreciate the power of language used with understanding. Zbikowski (1998) in his presentations on the analysis of art songs, also strongly advises that a thorough understanding of the text is essential for any singer to be able to perform a song with any degree of integrity, although he is discussing non-English art song repertoire.

Welch (cited in Collins, 2005) also believes that “something that moves us emotionally . . . has to be the main criterion if someone is being assessed on performance. Does the performance work?” (p. 61). However, he notes that when assessing repertoire for mid-adolescent singers the first criterion should be “[d]oes this voice sound comfortable? Or, is it having to work too hard? . . . Has this singer been given an inappropriate piece of music to sing?” (Welch, cited in Collins, 2005, p. 60). While Miller claims that “[i]t matters not whether the singer is a novice or an established artist, technique and expression must be the supporting pillars of vocal art” (1996, p. 197), the fact remains that the mid-adolescent voice is an unstable instrument.

Both Richard Miller and Shirley Emmons (cited in Blades-Zeller, 2002) warn against placing too much emphasis upon artistic expression prior to the acquisition of technical command.
Usually people who start talking about the emotion, the style and the communicative aspects are putting the cart before the horse. Even if you have the world's greatest imagination, nobody's going to know it if the instrument is in bad shape. (Miller cited in Blades-Zeller, 2002, p. 138)

I feel my first function is to get technical things in order . . . then and only then do I attack issues of musical and emotional interpretation. . . . No powerful performance can go on, regardless of how well prepared it is technically, if the brain is preoccupied with skills as yet not reliable. (Emmons cited in Blades-Zeller, 2002, p. 138)

This would appear to hold special relevance for mid-adolescent singers attempting to exercise control over their rapidly changing vocal physiology and yet required to perform repertoire for an examination in an emotionally engaging manner. Technical command at this age is still at the mercy of a physiologically unstable instrument. Such instability must have an impact upon the psychological state of mid-adolescent singers, as Miller notes, “the singer has a right to fear public encounter with unresolved technical problems” (1996, p. 204).

**Fostering self-efficacy in mid-adolescent singers**

Self-efficacy has been described by Bandura (1994) as the personal assessment of individuals regarding their perceived ability to perform a given task. Bandura hypothesizes four main sources of influence through which people develop beliefs about their efficacy. He cites mastery experiences as being the most effective method of developing a strong sense of self-efficacy in individuals. When individuals are able to successfully complete a given task in a manner that develops their skills and increases their ability to complete more complex tasks in the future, they are said to have accomplished a mastery experience. Bandura draws attention to the negative influence of early failures, asserting that until a strong sense of efficacy is established, failures undermine its development. He also notes that a strong sense of efficacy is not enhanced by easy successes as consequent later failures tend to engender a sense of discouragement in individuals. Therefore, he states, “A resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort” (1994, p. 2).

Woolfolk Hoy (2004) asserts that authentic efficacy is only achieved when success has been accomplished after “struggling with a task” and adds this qualification: “To deny students the struggle may be to deny them an authentic mastery experience” (p. 6).

Bandura names social modelling experiences as the second way of fostering self-beliefs of efficacy. Through observing similar individuals persevere and succeed, people become more
confident in their own abilities to achieve through sustained effort. Conversely, observing similar models fail encourages a belief in failure. Bandura also notes the positive influence of mentoring, stating that “competent models transmit knowledge and teach observers effective skills and strategies” (Bandura, 1994, p. 2). It would appear from his observations that social modelling can operate successfully on three levels for each individual: a peer level; an older, more experienced student level; and a teacher/mentor level.

The third source Bandura cites is that of social persuasion, particularly verbal persuasion. Whilst this source can be a positive element for individuals, Bandura notes that “[i]t is more difficult to instil high beliefs of personal efficacy by social persuasion alone than to undermine it. . . . But people who have been persuaded that they lack capabilities tend to avoid challenging activities that cultivate potentialities” (1994, p. 2). When individuals have their sense of self-efficacy undermined the resultant disbelief in their capabilities “creates its own behavioural validation” (1994, p. 2). He notes that “there are many people with a world of talent who do little with it. . . . They may be chronic underachievers if they do not handle pressure and failure well” (Bandura, 1997, p. 104). He stresses that when individuals establish realistic self-appraisal capabilities they eventually are less likely to be swayed by the judgements of other people.

The final source he discusses involves the somatic and emotional states of individuals. Fatigue and despondency contribute to a weakened sense of self-efficacy; vigour and optimism contribute to a strong sense of self-efficacy (Bandura 1994, Bandura, 1996, Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). He observes that the intensity of any individuals’ emotional and physical reaction to a given stressful situation is not as important as the manner in which individuals perceive and interpret their reactions. Generally high achievers will react well to stressful situations whereas low achievers will react poorly (Bandura, 1997, p. 108).

There is a dearth of research applying concepts of self-efficacy to vocal pedagogy, but the following inferences may be drawn. The vocal pedagogues of the past two centuries insisted upon a gradual development of technical skills, allowing time for the laryngeal muscles to become well conditioned while the mastery experiences associated with this continual vocal

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6 Somatic: relating to the body (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2004)
growth developed a strong sense of self-efficacy in their students (Coffin, 1989). They also encouraged students to listen to each other’s lessons on a regular basis, while some teachers took on a mentoring role towards many aspects of their students’ lives (Coffin, 1989). However, whilst the pedagogues address the major issue of the development of technical skills in a practical manner, at no time do they discuss the emotional needs of students of any age. These treatises were written in an era in which teachers maintained absolute control and students either blossomed in such regimes or left the teachers’ studios. Contemporary living necessitates that optimal teaching incorporates an understanding of the emotional and social environment of students, and this is a particular concern for teachers of mid-adolescent singers.

**Determining the emotional and social needs of mid-adolescent singers**

The fragile psyche of mid-adolescents can be severely challenged by the continual changes of their voice and vocal quality. Young adulthood is not only notable for rapid physical changes but for psycho-social instability. The anxiety and depression experienced by many adolescents at various times throughout the teenage years frequently interferes with optimum vocal functioning (Speigel et al., 1997). Singers do not have an instrument to stand between them and their audience; they are the instrument. As indicated by Kemp, “the singer’s instrument is personal, invisible and very complex” (1996, p. 713). The nature of this invisible instrument necessitates that the mid-adolescent has to own everything that occurs, including the defects. This ownership, coupled with the fact that the singer’s personality is presented during every performance, creates an environment in which the judgments that parents, family and teachers pronounce with respect to their musical abilities and performing skills impact strongly upon the singer’s sense of self-esteem.

Rhodewalt and Tragaskis (2003) note that “regardless of the bases of people's self-esteem, their moment-to-moment feelings of self-worth are determined, in part, by how successfully they believe they are meeting their standards and expectations” (p. 69). When singers have a healthy sense of self-esteem they are unlikely to interpret a poor performance as “indicative of their incompetence or worthlessness . . . to feel devastated” (Kernis, 2003, p. 9). However, it is more likely that mid-adolescent singers will have a fragile sense of self-esteem that is dependant upon the approbation of significant others, exacerbating the risk of them becoming easily depressed and engaging in self-handicapping behaviour. Crocker and Nuer (2003)
discuss this behaviour in relation to college students but analogies may be drawn between these students and mid-adolescent singers. They believe that “when self-esteem is the superordinate goal, we prefer . . . feeling worthy to learning how we can better accomplish goals that emanate from our core self” (Crocker & Nuer, 2003, p. 32).

Kemp further notes that “the degree of identification in which personal worth and musical achievement are inextricably linked [often] leads to 'prima donna' behaviour and feelings of incompetence [and] to lowering of self-esteem” (1996, p. 101). While not discussing singers in particular, Kernis states that self-esteem is “a central component of individuals' daily experience” (2003, p. 1) and points out that “fragile self-esteem occurs when a person bases positive feelings of self-worth on specific attainments or evaluations” (2003, p. 23). Mid-adolescent singers appear to be laden not only with the need to achieve in an examination but also with the need to achieve whilst using an unstable instrument inextricably tied to their sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

Singers are unable to hear themselves as other people hear them, the hearing of one’s own voice being a combination of hearing through bone induction and through sound pressure in the mouth (Miller, 1996). The attempt to imitate internally the vocal sounds made by other singers will inevitably result in an inappropriate external vocal quality and may even cause vocal fold damage over a period of time.\(^7\) Singers must therefore learn to detect their own body sensations that equate with desirable sounds; however this also induces a great dependence upon the singing teacher as the prime source and often sole distiller of information (Kemp, 1996).

The relationship between singers and their teachers becomes of prime importance, as stated by Jones: “the young always come with a need for establishing a satisfactory emotional relationship with the teacher” (1989, p. 28). Such a relationship must be established before students can trust their teachers to identify valued vocal sounds and assist students to equate this with the appropriate body sensations (Kemp, 1996). The teacher must also assist the

\[7\] Vocal damage is most prevalent among mid-adolescents imitating pop and rock singers of the last forty years with the so-called “belting” technique. Jo Estill advocates a method of teaching “safe belting”, based upon a scientific understanding of the physiological requirements of the entire vocal mechanism (Thurman, 2000). Miller states “pop singers . . . by improving breath management, laryngeal response, and resonance balance . . . can approach safer vocal production” (2000)
student to explore the poetry and music of each song in order to be able to communicate the text, feelings and emotions to an audience, or in the case of this study, the HSC examiner.

Communication about intimate feelings and sensations is often confrontational for mid-adolescents who, according to Vygotsky (1934) need to live in a very private world, wherein internal fantasy becomes the method of understanding the outside world. Vygotsky asserts that “the inner drive for creative expression and the inner tendency for productivity is a distinguishing feature of the adolescent age” (1934, p. 280). The expression of this rich inner emotional life finds its outlet in fantasies which are then concealed from other people. Creative imagery often becomes an outward expression of the inner life, allowing a safe method for taking charge of the increasingly complex emotional life of adolescents (Vygotsky, 1934). Therefore, mid-adolescent singers face a conflict when attempting to reconcile their need for inner emotional privacy with the need to express this inner life in performance seeking public approval.

The typical teenage musician is perceived to lead an isolated life, often dictated by the constraints of practice routines, particularly when the predominant musical style is within the western classical tradition. Participation in orchestras, bands and choirs helps students achieve a level of group dependency and satisfies the need to belong. However, they often will hide their musical interests in an attempt to remain accepted within their peer groups (Davidson, 2002). Participation in small rock bands however, acquires a status within the peer group, particularly as male rock musicians tend to be perceived by females to be more interesting and “sexier”, according to Zillmann (2000, p. 174). Student singers, regardless of musical preference, must still spend hours in isolation battling with an instrument that frequently mutates and shows extreme instability. Frequently the musical material is derived from non-mainstream sources, affecting their acceptance into the established peer groups. The ability of mid-adolescent singers to withstand this overt peer pressure indicates personalities diverging from the norm, yet still possessing the introverted, inner fantasy world of their peers. This can create conflict for adolescent singers wishing to balance the need for conformity to a group and the need for self-expression (Kemp, 1996).
Appropriate repertoire with mid-adolescent singers

As previously discussed, mid-adolescents can be regarded as beginner singers with special needs primarily dictated by their changing physiology. Repertoire selection for singers of every type from beginner to professional involves awareness of vocal range, tessitura, melodic line, rhythm, text, stamina and current vocal technique. Mid-adolescent singers present with a large range of abilities and individual differences but their general stage of development places basic restrictions upon repertoire selection (Boardman & Alt, 1992). This section reviews repertoire lists that are considered to be of assistance to singing teachers and students when searching for new material.

The National Association of Teachers of Singing (Boytim, 1982) has published several resources that specifically address repertoire selection for beginner singers and mid-adolescents in particular. These compilations are drawn from the lists of experienced singing American teachers and represent years of “in the field” research. Boytim (1982) has not only compiled an annotated bibliography of repertoire for young singers but has enlarged her output to include a series of music books with specially graded material suitable for young singers. Of interest to this study are the inclusions of 20th century music, offering practical examples for teachers to base future choices from music only recently composed and therefore not listed in published sources. Another publication of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Art song in the United States, 1759-1999: an annotated bibliography, (Carman, 2001) addresses melodic line, phrase length and rhythm. This work assesses repertoire from early colonial days to the present day and consequently has many useful comments to make about the suitability of contemporary repertoire for singers with differing skill levels.

Recently in Australia, material has been presented in private teacher courses and workshops expressly designed to assist with the selection of appropriate repertoire for mid-adolescent singers although only the “popular” music and not the “classical” music publications contain suggestions of music of the last 25 years (Willis, 2003). A teaching compendium of Australian vocal repertoire, including 18 songs composed after 1985, offers practical guidelines for learning and performing the selections (Miller et al., 2005) In an attempt to make the music more readily accessible to mid-adolescent HSC performers and singers
enrolled in examinations including a viva voce element, it provides musical and textual analysis of each song as well as complete scores.

Jane Manning (1986, 1998) also contributes to “contemporary” 20th century repertoire selection with two books investigating vocal repertoire, mainly song cycles and song sets with several Australian composers represented. She states that “unfamiliar works are regularly accused of taxing the voice when the real problems are pitch and rhythm” (1998, p. 4). Manning makes a distinction between technical difficulty and the level of musicianship required for each song, adamant that musical difficulties are the greatest barrier to be overcome by most singers in addressing music of the 20th and 21st centuries. She recommends a number of songs for young singers, giving musical and textual reasons for her choices.

The two major compilations of Coffin (1960) and Espina (1977) relate to most of the singing repertoire of the 13th to 19th centuries composed in the Western tonal tradition. Coffin discusses the musical style and sentiment of each song without suggesting difficulty levels while Espina provides indicators of musical requirements, range and tessitura and recommendations for the appropriate voice type for each song. The subject and stylistic categories they offer can be very useful to teachers and students alike in the planning of a balanced recital program. Unfortunately 20th century repertoire is not listed and the preface treats the reader to a discourse condemning “avant garde” music as unvocal and potentially damaging for voices.

There is a paucity of categorised vocal music of the last 25 years, requiring singing teachers to decide the difficulty levels of previously unencountered repertoire. There are three research studies that use specific indicators of technical and musical difficulties within songs. These indicators can be used by teachers when they are attempting to achieve a match between music and the technical capabilities of mid-adolescent singers. Ralston (1996, 1999) notes that there are no defined, consistent grading scales for teachers to assist them in this decision making process. In an attempt to successfully address the problem of singing teachers in choosing appropriately graded material for their students Ralston created the “Ralston Repertoire Difficulty Index” (RRDI) which provides a set of seven characteristics with varying degrees of difficulty (Appendix B). This is a very practical system, though rather time-consuming to apply. Hu (1991) studied the vocal works of Ernst Krenek and
applied three levels of difficulty by which to grade the songs. An effort was made to assess music for its own merits, rather than through comparison with 18th and 19th century compositions (Appendix C). Jones (1988) endeavoured to define the relationship between text and music, range, rhythm, harmonic foundation, diatonic and step-wise melody as utilized in the 65 published art songs of Ottorino Respighi (Appendix D). He contends that the comprehension of twentieth century music is facilitated by the use of these categories, thereby helping many of the compositions to become more accessible for student and professional performers.

**Availability of contemporary Australian vocal repertoire**

There are currently very few publications that are written specifically about song repertoire in the last twenty-five years and this deficiency means that many teachers are unaware of the large range of songs that have been composed in this country. Two sites offer repertoire lists detailing music composed within the last 25 years: Australian Music Centre and Australian Composers. As previously stated, the Australian Music Centre, the major source through which compositions and recordings can be obtained in Australia, has created lists that “include repertoire suitable for performance in the NSW HSC mandatory topic of “Music of the Last 25 Years (Australian Focus)” (www.amcoz.com.au, 2006). However, few of the songs have been usefully categorized in a manner that can assist and encourage teachers and students to explore the material at hand. Some grade levels are suggested by individual composers, though there is no standard applied to this. An independent grading system would remove the personal bias of composers. Australian Composers addresses this bias on its “Schools Music” section by giving grades for the songs that have been supplied by qualified singing teachers and not the composers themselves (www.australiancomposers.com.au, 2006).

The Australian Music Examinations Board includes Australian songs in all its grades and offers the option of own choice of a similar grade (Australian Music Examinations Board, 2005), giving students the opportunity to program songs that relate to their HSC subjects when sitting an AMEB examination. Trinity College, London, now has 27 Australian songs in its current vocal syllabus (Trinity College, 2004) of which 18 have been composed within the last 25 years, a recent development that can assist teachers to find appropriate repertoire.
A compilation of the RRDI and the extra criteria analysed by Jones and Hu could assist singing teachers to assess the musical and technical components of vocal repertoire not included in any of the above sites. This could enable the teachers to make informed decisions regarding appropriate material for mid-adolescent singers. Making a compilation available to composers could assist them to comprehend the special needs of mid-adolescent and beginner singers, possibly resulting in more repertoire that is accessible for this age group.

Summary

In conclusion, there are many factors contributing to the selection of repertoire for mid-adolescent singers. A comprehension of the physiology of mid-adolescent voices should be taken into account when selecting repertoire for this age group. Generally, the pedagogues are in consensus that mid-adolescent singers should be restricted to a vocal range of a tenth at the outset and that at no time should vocal categories be nominated and adhered to by teachers and students. Songs that are written in predominately middle range are considered the most pedagogically sound material for mid-adolescent voices as they are still stabilizing. However, when repertoire selectors fit songs to voices rather than attempt to fit voices to songs, then a match should be found that allows range extension and increasing melodic and rhythmic complexity in song material.

While the historical pedagogical texts recommend that beginner singers commence with easy Italian repertoire, many present day pedagogues and researchers suggest folk songs and songs in the vernacular. They also suggest that song texts should, as much as possible, reflect the emotional needs of singing students and their level of textual comprehension.

Creating mastery experiences for individuals is cited as the most effective method of increasing confidence and building skills. When applying this concept to singing teaching it is notable that many of the historical pedagogues built vocal technique in this manner. It is noted that the use of peer modelling and teacher approval based on acquisition of skills are implicit in the writings of contemporary vocal pedagogues.

Mid-adolescent singers appear to be largely dependant upon the approval of significant others in their life, including family and friends, but in particular the emotional dependence upon
their singing teachers is marked. Because vocal production is an internal muscular activity and the instrument is unseen, the success or failure of students in their singing lessons and performances reflects upon their emotional well-being. Students must “own” their instrument and this has ramifications for their subsequent sense of self-worth and self-esteem. It is also of note that many mid-adolescent singers are isolated from their peer groups by their need to practise and care for their voices, creating a need for a protective self-esteem that may often appear defensive and arrogant.

Boytim (1982) and Manning (1986, 1998) are responsible for the two major resources detailing vocal repertoire of the last 25 years, although Boytim’s annotated bibliography of American vocal repertoire is rapidly leaving the period of the last 25 years that is the time criterion for this study. Manning’s admonition that musical difficulties are the greatest barrier to be overcome by most singers in addressing music of the 20th and 21st centuries is worth restating as we increasingly hear music that takes its inspiration from multiple divergent world sources. This is of note in Australia where there appears to be no overriding Australian musical “voice”, and where all styles of musical language may be considered valid and Australian.

In the following chapter, I will delineate the methods I used to explore the knowledge and understanding of the selected participants relating to vocal pedagogy and repertoire choice, and explain my reasons for their selection. The three results chapters share their observations concerning their understanding of vocal pedagogy and their selection criteria for mid-adolescent singers enrolled in the HSC examination.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this investigation is to explore the various criteria that singing teachers, school teachers and mid-adolescent singing students employ in the selection of appropriate material particularly related to the requirements of the HSC. Interviews were conducted with school teachers, private singing teachers, students and composers.

Because the criteria used by the various groups of participants in the selection of vocal repertoire appeared to be divergent in nature, it was desirable that a method of data collection was employed that could then enable hypotheses to be created from the data (Bresler, 1992). Therefore, to allow the participants the flexibility to discuss issues that they considered relevant, a qualitative paradigm was employed for data collection and its subsequent analysis. This chapter describes the research paradigm, the development of the data collection methods, a discussion of selection procedures for participants, the process of data analysis and the role of the researcher in the study.

The research paradigm employed

The paradigm employed in this research is qualitative, affording the best method of constructing a reality based on the exploration and sharing of information that each participant contributes (Bresler, 1992). Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to explore the reality of the participants’ world and thereby encourages a greater understanding by the researcher of the participants’ appreciation and comprehension of the subject being studied (Burns, 2000). This encourages the discovery of insights peculiar to each individual’s situation and highlights the “multiple realities” present in the environment being investigated (Burns, 2000). Furthermore, this approach enables the researcher to explore the criteria with which the participants “modify and interpret the world in which they find themselves” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 8).

Tuckman (1999) states that interviews can give us access to what a person knows, believes and thinks about various subjects. Whilst he also notes that inherent to the process of “self-
report” is the problem that participants may say what they think the researcher wishes to hear, the interview provides information that could not be obtained through any other method of data collection (Tuckman, 1999). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) also emphasise this characteristic of the interview process, stating that interviews tend to encourage highly individual and explicit responses arising from the original set of questions, information difficult to obtain through any other method of data collection. Interviews also afford the opportunity for the researcher to conduct the research in environments that permit the interviewee to be at ease, whilst allowing the researcher the further insights gained through observation of non-verbal responses by the interviewees to the line of questioning (Bresler, 1992).

For the purposes of this study, semi-structured interviews were used to elicit the criteria employed in repertoire selection, to elucidate the musical, technical and pedagogical knowledge of each participant and to ascertain the Australian vocal repertoire with which they were conversant. This method of data collection was intended to “allow latitude for probing and following the interviewee’s sense of what is important” (Bresler, 1992, p. 74). The semi-structured interview allows great flexibility and freedom, for while the questions remain essentially the same, their exact order and wording are directed and chosen by the researcher (Cohen & Manion, 1994). This makes it possible to maintain content within questions while using language that is appropriate for the differing ages and knowledge bases of the participants in the study. Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed the formulating of theory as the study progressed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As a result of the data gathered from the earlier interviews, three more participants were added to the original target population and differing emphases were placed upon teacher training and the emotional states of mid-adolescent singers.

Throughout the interview process the data were coded and analysed, in order to build theories and creatively identify and develop concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, it is noted that the bias of the researcher is a concern in this methodology, although Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) note that there is no such thing as pure data that is free from potential bias. Burns (2000) points out that the lengthy amount of time spent by the researcher coding, analysing and interpreting the gathered data has the potential to confront any opinions and prejudices previously held. He also states that by acknowledging their own bias, researchers are more able to deal with them in an objective manner. I have attempted to acknowledge my
bias throughout the study and thereby not to draw inferences and conclusions where they are unwarranted by the data. Delamont (1992) recommends that the researcher understand the effects of her knowledge of the social world that is being investigated, rather than attempt to eliminate the effects of her knowledge. She also believes that when the researcher operates reflexively with explicit processes then “issues of reliability and validity are served” (1992, p. 9).

Triangulation is an aspect of achieving measurable validity in qualitative methodology and was addressed in the following manner. “Within method triangulation” (Cohen & Manion, 1994) was accomplished by interviewing a selection of significant people involved in the selection of repertoire for mid-adolescent singers. These included singing teachers, school teachers, singing students, experts in vocal pedagogy relating to mid-adolescent singers, composers and a retired HSC examiner. Their differing perspectives and stated criteria for the selection of appropriate repertoire for mid-adolescent singers enrolled in the HSC examination resulted in a broad accumulation of raw data, as recommended by Delamont (1992). The data gathered gave fresh perspectives to the topic being investigated, allowing richer analysis and the opportunity for “reflexive elaboration” (Emerson, 1981, cited in Bloor, 1997, p. 49). This made it possible to gain a greater comprehension of various criteria employed by each participant when selecting vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent singers and highlighted areas where the criteria were complementary or contradictory.

The role of the researcher

I act as singing teacher at three of the High Schools represented in this study and have an ongoing relationship with the three school music teachers and two of the singing students. This prior relationship between the school music teachers, the singing students and myself has brought this research area into focus and whilst it is assumed that there will be a high degree of honesty in their responses it is acknowledged that some information will not be freely shared (Cohen, 2000). All interviewees are either personally known to myself or were recommended to me by colleagues. During my employment teaching singing at the high schools, I have often had conversations with the three school teachers about the appropriateness of repertoire for specific mid-adolescent singers in the context of the HSC music performance component. These conversations made it possible for me to approach them about participating in this study as we had already developed a degree of open
communication. Bias is acknowledged, though every attempt was made to remain impartial to the information shared through the interviews and to resist the urge to impose my perspective (Burns, 2000).

Two of the singing students were having voice lessons with me at the time of their interviews and the third singing student, who was not a student of mine, had attended master classes that I had conducted at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music Access Centre. I was aware that the students might try to impress me with their understanding of vocal issues and might only express positive opinions about repertoire choices that had involved me, so I attempted to refrain from leading questions and displaying partiality to their responses (Delamont, 1992). Nevertheless, it is possible that the information proffered by the students may have been mediated by the teacher-student relationship.

As a professional singer, I frequently premiere Australian vocal repertoire written for me and I actively encourage composers to write for a wide range of vocal abilities. I also spend many hours exploring and searching for repertoire for myself and for my singing students. I am conversant with a large number of contemporary Australian art songs and I note the lack of awareness many composers have of vocal capacity. Also of concern is the presentation of many scores, often facsimile or poorly reproduced in a manner that discourages exploration by potential performers. In my interviews with the composers I attempted to explore their understanding of vocal capacity and to ascertain their willingness to extend this knowledge. Bias is acknowledged in that I regard an understanding of vocal capacity to be an important aspect of composition, but I endeavoured to supersede this with a comprehension of their personal opinions as composers.

**Selection of participants**

The original target population consisted of one expert in the field of mid-adolescent vocal pedagogy, four private singing teachers, four school music teachers and four singing students. Choosing a sample of this size was intended to give sufficient variety in responses, allowing multiple perspectives but also to remain manageable for subsequent analysis. By maintaining this population it was intended that validity would be achieved through the use of “within method triangulation” (Burns, 2000). The interview conducted with Cynthia, the specialist in the field of mid-adolescent vocal pedagogy was intended to give an overview of the optimum
factors and criteria that should be employed in repertoire choices for this age group. One of the private singing teachers interviewed, Winston, proved to have an equal knowledge of the vocal pedagogy of mid-adolescent singers and was re-designated during the data analysis as an expert in this field.

In order to inform the study of the pedagogical issues considered relevant by the vocal specialists, the private singing teachers were the first to be interviewed. Byron, Brian and Alison were approached by telephone and each was sent a subject information statement (Appendix E) and a private singing teacher participant consent form (Appendix G). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) recommend that consideration be placed upon the manner in which the interview impinges upon the interviewee’s life and that conducting interviews in the interviewee’s territory is usually conducive to a relaxed and productive interview. I was aware that the interviews were an imposition on their time and endeavoured to travel to their homes to lessen their time commitment.

The private singing teachers were chosen from three areas: Sydney metropolitan, a city north of Sydney and a city to the west of Sydney. It was hoped that this would highlight differing issues raised by the relative isolation of regional areas and further broaden the range of data available for analysis. As a result of initial coding from these first five interviews it was clear that the study would benefit from an appreciation of the criteria that the examiners apply when conducting the HSC examinations. I decided that it was appropriate to also interview Dianne, a retired senior examiner for the HSC. Another major issue appeared to be the quantity and quality of Australian vocal music of the last 25 years, so I also chose to interview two composers about their criteria regarding vocal composition. Consequently the number of school teachers and singing students to be interviewed was reduced to three in each category to enable sufficient time for data analysis of the individual interviews.

The students were chosen because they intended to continue with their vocal studies after finishing high school and were represented by one male and two female students. The male student, Daniel, had attended a private Catholic school in south Sydney and had enrolled in Music 1, performing a variety of music theatre and contemporary popular music. One female student, Jane, had attended a public co-educational school in an area further south in Sydney that had a small music department. She had enrolled in Music 1, performing a variety of music theatre for her HSC examination. The second female student, Rhonda, had attended a
private girls’ high school in eastern Sydney where Music 1 and Music 2 were both offered. She was also enrolled in Music 1 and performed oratorio, art song and jazz for her HSC examination. This student was approached because I was under the impression that she had enrolled in Music 2 for her HSC, as the repertoire she had performed in the master classes I had conducted with her was representative of opera and art music. At the time of the interview I found this was not so, but as her repertoire was characteristic of music often performed by Music 2 students she still gave a different perspective on her choice of repertoire than that of the other two Music 1 students. The students had all finished high school within the last 2 years. When I approached them in person I gave them a subject information statement, the student participant consent form (Appendix I) and answered their questions regarding the study, assuring them of their anonymity in any publication. Time constraints and the lowering of the student interview numbers from four to three meant that it was not possible to interview a Music Extension student within the parameters of the study.

The three school music teachers were selected from a range of private, public and Catholic co-educational and single sex schools teaching Music 1 and/or Music 2. All school music teachers were female. Clare taught at a public selective girls’ high school in Sydney that only offered Music 2 to its respective students. Tracy taught at a private Catholic boys’ school in south Sydney that primarily offered Music 1, although when students wished to enrol in Music 2 this was accommodated. The third teacher, Sophia, taught at a public co-educational high school that offered both Music 1 and Music 2 and operated an extensive music program. The principals of the three schools were initially approached and they were each given a letter requesting permission to interview the respective teachers for the study (Appendix F). The school teachers were then given the subject information statement and the school music teacher participant consent form (Appendix H).

The retired senior HSC examiner was approached because she represented a breadth of experience and knowledge, was very articulate and in demand as a speaker about the criteria for HSC performance examination. Her interview was held in her teaching studio after receiving the subject information statement and the participant consent form (Appendix J).

The composers were approached by telephone and after answering their questions regarding the nature and usefulness of the study, the subject information statement and the participant consent form were sent to each of them. One composer, Tristan, has an international
reputation. Although he has written much choral music, he has only produced two song cycles. He was chosen because his compositions demonstrate an advanced understanding of voices. The second composer, Dylan, is well known within Australia and has written a range of vocal music. He was approached because the singing teachers frequently referred to some of his compositions as being ideal for their singing students.

All the participants were assured that their anonymity would be preserved in any subject matter drawn from the study, whether written or oral. They are all represented in this thesis by pseudonyms. They were aware that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time with no adverse effects upon our long term relationship.

Individual details of the participants are shown in Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

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Table 2  Backgrounds of the teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Speciality instrument</th>
<th>Active performer</th>
<th>Teacher training</th>
<th>Vocal pedagogical training</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Brian</td>
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<td>Clare</td>
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<td>Sophia</td>
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<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Piano</td>
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Data collection

There was a similar focus in each interview and a line of questioning was adhered to with modifications for each participant (Appendix G). A combination of direct and indirect, specific and non-specific questions were asked, and an openness to the opinions of the participants maintained (Tuckman, 1999). In this manner the course of each interview was shaped during the interview itself (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). While there is some language associated with vocal pedagogy that can be considered “jargon”, Burns (2000) recommends that researchers use language that is familiar to the participants. In particular, the language I used with the students was not as technical as it was for the private singing teachers and the school teachers, but consistent with language natural to their age group and their understanding of vocal pedagogy (Burns, 2000). The semi-structured interviews explored the factors and criteria used by the participants in their choice of repertoire. We discussed the specific vocal needs of mid-adolescent singers in Years 11 and 12 and explored the ways in which each person considered these needs when making choices regarding appropriate repertoire. I questioned the participants about their knowledge of vocal pedagogy, in particular in relation to the changing physiology of male and female mid-adolescent singers.
One component of the semi-structured interview was the identification by each participant of a song that they believed to be suitable for the purposes of an HSC performance examination. This proved to be difficult to obtain, and instead types of repertoire considered suitable for mid-adolescent singers were recommended. Based upon the data compiled in the private singing teacher and vocal pedagogy expert interviews there was a slight revision made of the interviews for the school teachers, the students and the retired senior examiner. A similar revision was made following the interviews conducted with the two students in April, 2005. New issues presented in these interviews that could be addressed in the interviews with the school teachers. The interviews conducted with the composers also followed a different focus, primarily discussing musical issues and the relevance of “art music” to mid-adolescent singers.

The interviews were recorded using mini-disc and conducted in the field, with the researcher acting as interviewer. After each interview notes were made about the location and the general demeanour of the participant. Each interview was transcribed, with attention paid to the way in which the interviewee spoke and the non-verbal language they exhibited (Burns, 2000).

Data analysis

Delamont (1992) notes that research evolves as it progresses and that in all qualitative research the process of gathering data, coding and revision co-exist. Coding of the raw data commenced after I had conducted the two interviews with the vocal pedagogical experts. As these interviews were broadly coded, new areas of interest to the study presented themselves. When the interviews with the vocal pedagogical experts and the private singing teachers were completed they were extensively coded in order to sort and order the data into themes and concepts and to discover if any new directions need to be followed before commencing the remaining interviews (Delamont, 1992, Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The emergent themes were integrated into the remaining interviews and the process was repeated until all the interviews were conducted.

The definitions of the codes and the categories in which I placed the codes changed throughout the interview process. This was primarily determined by the relevance the school teachers, students, retired senior examiner and the composers gave to different aspects of the
interview. Delamont (1992) recommends extensive use of classification in the coding process, in order to ascertain if there are patterns emerging and then cross-checking the data for reliability and validity. The codes I developed began with the criteria employed in the repertoire selection procedures, the musical language employed, musical styles used, pedagogical knowledge and material accessibility.

The data were then organised into categories and subcategories, a process that was repeated throughout the eight months of conducting interviews. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe the act of developing and reorganizing data as axial coding, suggesting that over a period of time the researcher discovers new ways in which the categories relate to each other. As I began to analyze the data in more depth the categories were revised as some gained greater relevance and others appeared of less consequence to the findings. Bresler (1992) asserts that the researcher makes choices as to which reality to pursue and develop. This allows the researcher to pay attention to social, physical and aesthetic contexts and, furthermore, makes it possible to create in-depth studies that are not bound by the need to constantly refine themes. As the analysis of the data progressed, three major themes became apparent, which enabled me to concentrate upon the divergent viewpoints of the participants and investigate the conflicts of interest between these.

Bresler (1992) notes that pedagogical treatises are traditionally inherently qualitative observations that attempt to remedy problems and encourage learning in individual students rather than offer rules that must apply to all regardless of personal characteristics and needs. In a similar manner this study offers no rules for selecting vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent singers, but does offer as its first theme suggestions and guidelines for good pedagogical material. The second theme relates to the various emotional needs of mid-adolescent singers and their expectations of their own performances. Denscombe (2002) discusses the use of generalisations in reporting findings, positing that if enough information is related in the writing then readers can transfer the findings to their own experiences. It is anticipated that the interview transcripts will elicit a sense of familiarity in the readers and that some of the conclusions drawn may be of assistance. The final theme that was explored involved the criteria required for a successful performance by mid-adolescent singers in the HSC examination. This theme disclosed the most divergent attitudes among the participants.
Delamont (1992) notes that one of the strengths of qualitative research is to point out the contradictory and paradoxical stances that exist in any given social situation. This study highlights the different criteria applied by private singing teachers, school music teachers and students when choosing repertoire for the HSC music performance examination. The following three chapters report the findings of the interviews, coded and categorized into the three themes of the physiological needs of mid-adolescent singers, the emotional needs of mid-adolescent singers and the performance requirements of the HSC music examination.
CHAPTER FOUR

VOCAL SUITABILITY OF REPERTOIRE

The major issues governing the selection of Australian repertoire for HSC performances are the suitability and the accessibility of musical material. The primary concerns of all the participants when discussing the suitability of musical material were in the following areas: vocal suitability, emotional suitability and performance suitability. These concerns are outlined in the following three chapters.

This chapter explores the participants’ understanding regarding the vocal suitability of repertoire for mid-adolescent singers. The divergent beliefs and attitudes of teachers and students towards what is vocally suitable are weighed against the opinions of the pedagogical experts and the various texts discussed in the literature review. The following chapter, *Emotional and social factors influencing suitability of repertoire*, continues this investigation, highlighting the emotional and psychological needs of mid-adolescent singers. The chapter entitled *Performance criteria and the selection of Australian repertoire* charts participants’ perceptions of what constitutes appropriate material for the HSC performance examination. Recommendations regarding appropriate Australian repertoire are noted and compared with the considerations of suitability.

Participants’ awareness of physiological issues

[It] depends on what the student can do, where they are emotionally and what they can accommodate [and] the student's range. [This is] the whole purpose of individual teaching, to tailor repertoire to the student. (Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005)

Whilst every participant stressed that repertoire should be vocally suitable for mid-adolescent singers, they varied dramatically in their concepts of what they considered to be vocally suitable. The singing teachers and school teachers showed a range of understanding of technical and physiological issues; this determined their initial choice of vocal repertoire. In general, the more experienced teachers had a broader range of available vocal material from which to select appropriate repertoire, while the remaining participants showed a willingness to explore new material when it was presented to them.
The students were often not aware of their current technical and physiological capabilities, expressing opinions that they were not constrained by the usual mid-adolescent vocal instability. For example, when questioned as to whether she had the normal breathy sound of mid-adolescents evidenced by her performance in Year 11, Rhonda asserted “no, ‘cause I didn't have that problem. Well I did in the early days. A lot of people had it and I didn't at all” (Interview: Rhonda, 31st July, 2005). This statement could reflect the phenomenon that all singers are unable to hear themselves as others hear them (Miller, 1996) or could simply indicate the student’s ignorance of the matter.

Just as the students seemed unaware of their own vocal capabilities, among the singing teachers there were discrepancies of opinion regarding the vocal capabilities of mid-adolescent singers and consequent repertoire selection. Only Cynthia and Winston (the pedagogical experts) were aware of the specific physiological constraints of these maturing voices. Alison and Brian (singing teachers) admitted no theoretical knowledge while they cited “in the field” experience and exhibited a broad understanding of the manifestations of the changing physiology of mid-adolescents. Alison stated “[I’m] not read in that area, my level of understanding is based on experience” (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005). The other singing teacher, Byron, showed awareness without technical expertise whilst professing this to be an optimum state, asserting that “[v]ocal pedagogy has been basically corrupted by people who feel that they must criticise and analyse. [The] early stages of teaching should be organic” (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005).

**School teachers and their understanding of vocal pedagogy**

The school teachers demonstrated little awareness of the vocal demands of repertoire although they were receptive to new factual information regarding the vocal physiology of mid-adolescent singers. However, the retired senior HSC examiner, Dianne, was adamant that all school teachers were well versed in pedagogical matters, stating that “teachers know, [they] have done university or conservatorium training; [they have been] given some singing experience, [they have done] choral studies [and] taught a lot of repertoire that is appropriate” (Interview: Dianne, 7th May, 2005). This assertion was not confirmed by the statements of the school teachers interviewed:
No, no training on that. I've had to go and buy books that taught me something about pedagogy. I do it because I want to train them better and to help them get good voices. I feel that I never learnt anything at college, there's not much around even. Most of what I've seen is from America. [There is] nothing around from here. (Interview: Tracy, 11th June, 2005)

None in my training from way back, all I have is from in-service courses that I've done over the several hundred years I've been teaching. I've gleaned a lot of stuff through developing a collection of choral repertoire. (Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005)

Clare also confirmed that she had received no training in vocal pedagogy in her teacher training years. She had however, had singing lessons during her high school and tertiary years and when questioned about her knowledge regarding vocal pedagogy stated, “I'm not up with the latest. I teach according to the way I was taught [singing]” (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005).

These statements demonstrate a willingness on the part of the school teachers to extend their knowledge and indicate a need for vocal pedagogy courses as a part of school teacher training. This need is highlighted by Winston’s observation on this topic:

“I’m not certain the schools are taking advantage of developing their own knowledge. This shows up in the pre-service degrees where there is not a component of pedagogy. If there is practical course work, they should have vocal pedagogy for school teachers. (Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)

Voice being the most “personal [and] invisible” (Kemp, 1996, p. 173) of all instruments it would follow that even a basic knowledge of the limitations of maturing voices and vocally suitable material, should be a pre-requisite of any school teacher training. Either the pedagogical courses referred to by the examiner are no longer in existence (although the teachers were contemporaries of the examiner) or there appears to be a discrepancy in the perception of what constitutes adequate training in vocal pedagogy.

It has been ascertained that the school teachers have not been trained in vocal pedagogy, yet they are constantly required to assess vocal students and to approve or veto repertoire selections for the HSC performance. Clare stated: “My role has been as a facilitator to get them into HSC, so I look at working with what is there”. It can be assumed that “what is there” in mid-adolescent singers includes range, tessitura, tonal quality, technical capabilities,
emotional maturity and ability to perform. The participants’ understanding of range and tessitura as they apply to mid-adolescent singers will be discussed first, followed by their attitudes regarding the tonal qualities and technical capabilities of this age group. The emotional maturity of mid-adolescent singers will be explored in Chapter 5 and considerations of performance will be discussed in Chapter 6.

**Participants’ understanding of range and tessitura**

Practicality determines that range and tessitura of mid-adolescent singers are the first criteria to be considered in the repertoire selection process. As one of the singing teachers noted, “If the kid can't sing a note, what hope has he got of singing it [the song]? Everything else is open to growth” (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005).

Cynthia pointed out that most voices have a range that is in the middle but added that “range is very personal . . . it is based on the child’s perception of themselves. There is no optimum range and I won’t define what they will become” (Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005). Winston concurred with this approach and stated:

I find what is comfortable and extend them up and down. I don't push adolescents and I don't give a register to an adolescent . . . I don't go beyond a comfortable range and tessitura and I will not classify a voice too early. (Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)

Both Brian and Alison felt it was crucial to begin with a “conservative range, to give them confidence” (Interview Brian, 6th March, 2005), and to remain within a “range of an octave” (Interview: Alison, 20th March). They also believed it was vital not to “guess the range or voice type” (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005) of adolescent singers. However Byron disputed this viewpoint and asserted that once he had heard them speak and discovered their range “I tell them what I think they are” (Byron, 17th February, 2005).

This attitude contrasts markedly with recommendations in the pedagogical literature where labelling voices during adolescent years is discouraged, as the owning by students of such labels is considered to be counter-productive to their long-term vocal maturation (Cooksey, 2000; Gackle, 2000). Byron did not articulate whether or not he considered there was an optimum range for mid-adolescent singers; instead he stated “I gamble. I say to myself ‘I’m a
teacher that can achieve this amount, if the student works, which mostly works” (Interview Byron, 17th February, 2005).

The three school teachers agreed that mid-adolescent singers have small ranges due to the physiological constraints. Sophia and Clare maintained conservative ranges in the music they used for their choral groups, concentrating on “where they are going to make the best sound, ‘cause I’m not going to take the voices and coach them to get a better sound” (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005). Sophia remarked that when she was determining the difficulty of a song, tessitura was her first consideration coupled with “if it looks uncomfortable” (Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005). She did not expand upon the word “uncomfortable” but as our interview at that moment had been considering contemporary music and different styles an assumption can be made that she was referring to musical criteria of rhythm and intervals.

Tracy however appeared to blur the distinction between range and tessitura, asserting that it was desirable to encourage boys into singing their full range rather than their tessitura in HSC performance.

[Their range is] an octave probably. In Years 11 & 12 they usually get a bit more than an octave, even up to an eleventh, but those top notes and bottom notes aren't as good. But you can get away with it. (Interview: Tracy, 11th June, 2005)

There was an expectation that a small range was a technical problem able to be fixed by singing lessons. While there is a basis for this argument in that the acquisition of breath control and “support” gives singers access to a wider range than was available in their untrained state, the physiological matter of length of vocal folds dictates extremes of range (Thurman et al., 2000).

The students regarded range as their main concern when discussing physiological issues. Their response to their own vocal range varied from total disregard of the facts with an accompanying insistence upon singing repertoire out of range, to an almost debilitating timidity with an accompanying refusal to stretch range limits. Rhonda was adamant that her
range was small even though it spanned from G³ to G⁵, “I just always couldn’t sing high, I was never a high singer” (Interview: Rhonda, 31st July, 2005). Winston and Brian considered this a common mid-adolescent fear of the head voice sound, Winston noting that “they don’t like the head voice . . . . They don’t hear the resonance that we hear” (Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005). Conversely Jane was aware that singing high was a challenge, she was comfortable in her middle range but was prepared to “push myself for the higher notes” (Interview: Jane, 26th April, 2005). Daniel imitated repertoire from recordings of high pop singers, even though he acknowledged that he was unable to sustain high notes in full voice, stating “I didn’t want to accept the fact that I couldn’t sing that high . . . . if I can’t do it, [sing high notes] then I shouldn’t be doing it” (Interview: Daniel, 1st April). These statements also indicate that the technical improvement of these students may be enhanced or hampered by self-concept, an area which is explored in the following chapter.

The singing teachers and the school teachers were generally in acceptance of small vocal ranges in mid-adolescent singers and employed strategies designed to increase the confidence levels of the singers. This would appear to validate the seemingly cautious response of the singing teachers who kept students within a conservative range and also refused to categorise mid-adolescent voices.

**Participants’ understanding of the causes of breathiness in mid-adolescents**

The vocal physiology of mid-adolescent singers also determines factors such as breathiness, volume control and agility. When questioned about the prevalent breathiness heard among singers of this age group, Cynthia stated that there are “two causes. One is insufficient sub-glottal pressure [and] two is lack of resonance . . . spread tone can also cause breathiness” (Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005). Winston felt it was imperative to address breathiness in mid-adolescent singers with discretion, and maintained:

> I expect this is because the vocal folds haven't yet approximated. [It is] dangerous to focus on that quality in the developing voice. The folds cannot approximate, there has to be escaping air. If that is a problem later on it must be eliminated, but for changing voices don't make a ‘hoo-ha’ about it. [It] causes more problems. . . . [It is] dangerous to highlight this. (Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)

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8 Numbers used to determine to which octave the pitch refers. Numeration begins with C₁ as the lowest C on the piano. Middle C is C⁵
Alison, Brian and Byron concurred and suggested exercises to combat breathiness as part of the technical regime of each singer. The attitude of the singing teachers was that breathiness is normal in the mid-adolescent singer and that maturation and developing technique gradually produced a cleaner tone.

Breathiness in female voices and lack of dynamic control in male voices were not attributes the school teachers prized. However they did accept these traits as typical of vocal maturation in the mid-adolescent period. Whilst they did not understand the physiological changes in technical terms they did appreciate the time frame involved. Clare commented that “that's the way it is. I notice as the girls get older that they deepen and mature. I wouldn't go and force it” (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005). A similarly patient attitude was shown by Sophia who remarked “I don't talk about breathy tone, just get them to sing and be comfortable” (Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005). Tracy did express frustration with the truncated ranges and persistent loud singing among the boys, particularly as Tracy noted that some of the criteria for the HSC examination are to show “a bit of a mixture of registers, louds, softs [and] dynamic contrast” (Interview: Tracy, 11th June, 2005).

It is of interest that Tracy and Clare, who had the least competency in vocal pedagogy, acknowledged their lack of success in addressing physiological matters. In contrast Sophia dealt with breathiness in the girls’ performance and loudness in the boys’ performance by encouraging listening habits to achieve a good “blend” and felt that she achieved satisfactory results (Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005). There appeared to be a direct relationship between an understanding of the special physiology of mid-adolescent singers and the confidence levels of the school teachers when addressing these issues.

Participants’ attitudes towards vibrato in mid-adolescent singers

The ability of a singer to produce a vibrato has long been considered a sign of vocal maturity among people educated in the western tonal tradition (Miller, 2000). Music from more diverse cultures often does not require the same vocal tonal qualities; however most students undertaking HSC music in NSW choose music that is derived from the western tonal tradition. I include in this definition music from the baroque, classical and romantic periods and music of the 20th and 21st centuries, jazz, blues, popular music and music theatre.
Because of the proliferation of the western tonal tradition and the “normal” expectation of vibrato in a singer’s voice, the participants were questioned about the usual lack of vibrato in mid-adolescent singers.

Vibrato is traditionally considered by singing teachers trained in the western classical manner to be a sign of a healthy voice, developing with physical maturation. Cynthia noted the following:

In the younger primary years we listen for it [vibrato] as a sign of talent and as a warning for being overdone. The theory is that as they get a lower breath support, the higher muscles become more relaxed [and] then the vibrato will develop. That is not always what I have experienced at all. . . . [The] lower voices [find] a vibrato easier, [they have a more] more relaxed sound. [In the] higher range girls find it harder to get vibrato. The higher ranges have the most trouble with vibrato.  

(Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005)

The responses of the singing teacher participants verified this viewpoint. Winston valued a well controlled beautiful vibrato, and asserted that “a good vibrato must be encouraged; there is a need of it, it is bad to hold it back” (Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2000). There was a more cautious response from Alison who added the proviso that if “the tone is not overly breathy and falsetto, and [it is] a clean tone, I don’t mind [vibrato]. If [the vibrato is] caused by tension I will work on relaxation around the jaw’ (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2000). Brian noted that “vibrato happens when it is ready. [It is a] sign of free singing [and it] comes with age” (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2000).

The school teachers appeared nonchalant about the normal lack of vibrato in mid-adolescent singers, although Clare expressed concern at the possible use of vibrato among female mid-adolescent singers and asserted “if you change it, [the lack of vibrato], then they start to sound like one of those 58 to 68 year old sopranos” (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005). She appeared to be describing a slow vibratory pattern that is usually referred to as a wobble. Conversely the imposed vibrato so often applied in music theatre, popular music and some forms of jazz, is also undesirable, requiring jaw and tongue tension. However, this

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9 The physiological facts of higher rates of vocal fold shearing with higher pitch and the need for female voices to access formants on these higher pitches are considered the main causes of this lack of vibrato in the higher female voices (Miller, 2000).

10 A wobble, caused by a “malfunction in the vocal process”, vibrates at less than 5.5 pulses per second, whereas a vibrato vibrates between 5.5 and 7.5 pulses per second (Ware, 1998).
manipulation of sound was deemed advantageous by the male student, Daniel, who desired a vibrato to the extent that he “imposed one” (Interview: Daniel, 1st April). Two of the school teachers made adverse comments on this phenomenon. During a discussion in the staffroom, Sophia stated that in her experience “the teenage boys often come with their jaws shuddering, [making a] really inappropriate sound” (Personal communication: Sophia, 10th February, 2006).

At the other end of this tonal spectrum is the straight–tone singing so often considered desirable for blend by choral directors, roles many school teachers, including the participants in this study, fulfil. Vocal pedagogues warn against this style of vocal production and encourage solo singers to avoid choirs where straight-tone singing is encouraged, contending that “excessive straight-tone singing can retard the vocal development of young singers” (Ware, 1998, p. 180). However, none of the participants expressed a preference for straight-tone singing. Rudimentary vibrato in mid-adolescent singers was accepted as being part of the maturation process although it was clear that a vibrato was regarded as desirable for a successful HSC performance.

Participants’ attitudes towards agility in mid-adolescent singers

How many singers at that age can get all those little notes? The scale passages. The pop music is all based around tones and semitones and difficult intervals, the melismas. They can't get the focus because they haven't got the soft palate; they haven't got all the technical stuff. They just open their mouths and sing, that's all they want to do. (Interview: Dianne, 7th May, 2005)

While this is a commonly held opinion, it is pedagogically unsound, agility being traditionally regarded as a natural acquisition of good singing. The singing teachers all regarded agility as a skill gained as the student develops confidence. Brian observed that agility in mid-adolescent singers was “underdeveloped because they try too hard, and tighten . . . increased mobility is learnt slowly” (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005). Cynthia concurred, pointing out that the ability to be agile, to do “runs, is just practice” (Cynthia, 25th February, 2005).

The school teachers expressed the opinion that agility was an advanced technique and an ability not gained by all singers. Clare observed that mid-adolescents generally have
rudimentary agility and stated “[t]hat doesn't bother me at all. I think that some people never get that, it comes with technique and maturity” (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005). The students showed resistance towards the development of agility and validated this attitude with statements such as: “I can only sing slow songs” (Interview: Rhonda, 31st July, 2005). This statement was echoed by Daniel when he asserted:

Most of my songs were slow. It was hard to find fast stuff for me ‘cause it didn't suit me as well as the slow ones. I had such a deep voice and the slower ones [songs] suited the lower register. (Interview: Daniel, 1st April, 2005)

Jane was the only student who articulated the technical problem directly, and discussed agility as a skill to be acquired rather than a skill to be ignored. She observed, “Agility and speed are a bit of a challenge right now” (Interview: Jane, 26th April, 2005).

The singing teachers appeared to be the only participants who appreciated that agility is a natural part of the healthy singing voice. The technique required for sustained singing often induces the hardness and rigidity that Brian alluded to. Ware notes that to counterbalance these effects the elasticity and suppleness required to negotiate fast singing is necessary (Ware, 1998).

Participants’ perceptions of physiologically appropriate repertoire for mid-adolescent singers

Among the participants there appeared to be a blurring of distinctions between what constitutes physiologically and hence, technically difficult repertoire and what constitutes musically difficult repertoire. Even the two pedagogical experts differed in their expectations regarding the capabilities of the mid-adolescent singers. Winston was adamant in asserting

“[that] a singer at ages 16 and 17 is 3rd or 4th Grade\textsuperscript{11}; so the songs [I give them] are at that level, interesting songs. I don't teach extravagantly difficult songs at HSC, which ever unit”

\textsuperscript{11} This refers to grade levels set by the Australian Music Examinations Board. AMEB Grades 3 & 4 offer music that correlates with the physiological and technical needs of the beginner singer. Grades 5 & 6 have expectations of greater control of breath, phrasing, wider range and broader musical difficulties. Grades 7 & 8 require a maturity of sound that is often lacking in the mid-adolescent singer, although many young singers, particularly the musically precocious, do have success in these exams.
(Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005). On the other hand, Cynthia felt it was important to technically “stretch” the students to help them gain “a sense of achievement” and stated:

[I will] try to get them to grade 5/6 before doing HSC for the wealth of repertoire to be able to pull on. By the end of Year 11 they will have done at least Grade 5 with Grade 6 extras. They will have had the experience of an independent outside examiner and heaps of repertoire visited as a result of the choice mechanism. (Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005)

The singing teachers varied in their assessment of the technical capabilities of the mid-adolescent singers, often encouraging them in levels of musical difficulty that usually require a more developed vocal quality. Alison talked about a wide range of technical abilities in the students she had prepared for HSC over the years, stating, “Some [were] as low as 4th Grade, several 8th Grade and possibly beyond, but it is a maturity thing not to go beyond” (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005).

The two male singing teachers preferred not to think in terms of grade levels when discussing physiologically appropriate repertoire for mid-adolescent singers. Brian had a somewhat ambivalent stance and stated:

Sometimes I disagree with the grading, but at least [the grading] makes me think about it . . . What’s difficult for one is not difficult for another . . . I defy anybody to define the difficulty of a song. (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005)

His statement did exhibit an appreciation of the physiological and individual needs of the students whereas Byron showed little understanding of these issues and asserted:

I would gamble on something much harder than they can do now because I am assuming that they are totally motivated and passionate and will practise. (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005)

This attitude is in conflict with his perceptive comment:

The boy is [vocally] 2 years old; it is completely unfair for a boy to be doing his HSC at [age] 17 compared to a girl at [age] 17. (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005)

In direct contrast to the physiological facts regarding male vocal maturation Dianne felt that girls were more disadvantaged in the HSC examination, and stated:
Mostly boys tend to be at an advantage because their voices tend to mature earlier . . . in my experience of many, many years . . . Often it is easier for a boy to succeed because of that maturation and establishment of the vocal range, whereas the girls are later, from my experience. The girls are not really ready until their mid or late 20s. The vocal cords of girls are smaller, much more precious; they develop earlier in some and later in some voices. (Interview: Dianne, 7th May, 2005)

The school teachers who were hearing and assessing student voices from Year 7 onwards felt it was best for the students to present less demanding repertoire than was often the case. “I find a lot of the students are doing things that are out of their skill level, most of them. [There are] even students with really exceptional voices [who are] trying to sing Schubert . . . . Generally the repertoire is too difficult” (Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005). Clare was insistent that repertoire should be “anything light that they like, that isn’t going to harm the voice . . . a light song that doesn’t have a huge range” (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005).

Clare also felt that the songs should be “lyrical”, an opinion echoed by Dianne who repeatedly advocated folk songs or folk song-like melodies as the only appropriate repertoire for mid-adolescent singers. Whilst one could take issue with folk songs only, the strophic nature of these songs with their short phrase lengths, memorable tunes and the uncomplicated if irregular rhythms does make them ideal repertoire for beginner singers to sing well without too many technical demands placed on their developing voices.

The singers themselves were less concerned with the technical demands of their chosen repertoire than their relating to the material and choosing songs that had not already been heard by the examiners. Their responses to repertoire selection are investigated more fully in the following chapters.

Conflict between singing teachers and school teachers regarding appropriate repertoire for mid-adolescent singers

With such a diverse range of knowledge and experience among the participants it could be expected that there would be an equally diverse range of concepts regarding what constitutes vocally suitable repertoire for mid-adolescent singers. The physiological constraints of the mid-adolescent changing voices can be difficult to understand, leading to frustration on the part of students, parents and school teachers looking for good results in examination conditions. Winston stated clearly the stance of the singing teacher as he pointed out the inability of parents and school teachers to understand this maturation process:
My job as a private teacher is to develop their technique . . . There is often a problem between the teacher and other people with the developing voice . . . with the developing voice, we accept it [the physiological constraints of the developing voice], they [parents and teachers] often don’t understand. (Interview: Winston, 25th February, 2005)

All the singing teachers confirmed the conflict between themselves and school teachers regarding suitable repertoire; the singing teachers’ goals were the long term vocal growth of the student whereas school teachers required performance examination results. Often this conflict is directly related to lack of communication between the singing teacher and the school teacher, as expressed by Alison:

I encourage it [communication with the school teachers]; a lot give the responsibility to you. It can become a tug of war with you and the school teachers over suitable repertoire. (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005)

Even where there is communication between the singing teacher and the school teacher there can be conflict, as Byron observed:

You often get a lot of flack from music teachers who want results straight away. They don’t know your long term plans for this child. (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005)

Brian also attested to irresolvable differences of opinion in the repertoire selection process and commented:

Where there is a battle with the school teachers, I have left those schools. My [current] Heads of Music are both singers. (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005)

The school teachers are aware of this conflict, but consider that their perspective as assessors of performance overrides the appropriate choice of vocal repertoire as represented by the singing teachers. They are required to conduct the ongoing evaluations of mid-adolescent performances and their marks for these assessments become a part of the total mark for the HSC. For the school teachers, the criterion of suitable material for vocal performance far outweighs the criterion of pedagogical development. Sophia remarked upon the role of the school music teachers:

If they front up to assessment it’s getting too late then, if they're getting poor marks for inappropriate choice. We do a lot of performance workshops to make sure that we
are hearing what they are going to be producing so it doesn't disadvantage their assessment mark. . . [For] the kids’ repertoire we do rely on the tutors’ selections and [we are] hoping to hear what they are doing, whether [or not] the item is right for the voice. We are generalists, I guess, we can't pretend to be . . . vocal specialist[s].

(Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005)

The retired senior examiner succinctly noted the ensuing issues:

Then we have an issue because the teacher says this, the student says this and the singing teacher is in-between and doesn't know what is going on and is worried about the voice. Often there isn't a conflict with the classroom teacher, it’s just they're both very busy and they can't get together. It becomes a big problem about what is really expected for the HSC. (Interview: Dianne, 7th May, 2005)

The major area of conflict between singing teachers and school teachers appears to be over what is considered “right” for the voice. “Right” for the school teachers would seem to be repertoire that makes a student sound good and allows them to perform well. The singing teachers were more concerned with the physiological growth of mid-adolescent singers and resisted the fast-tracking of their vocal development in the name of the HSC. Where there was communication between the two parties conflict was reduced but it seems clear that this scenario, whilst desirable, was often not played out.

**Summary**

The participants’ responses clearly showed that knowledge and understanding of pedagogical issues equates with enhanced teaching strategies. Lesser knowledge of the physiology of mid-adolescent singers resulted in unreal expectations and frustrations. This created a disturbing element of misunderstanding which manifested as impatience with the maturation process and was noticeable in all categories of participants. The major areas of misunderstanding involved vocal range and the tonal qualities belonging to the maturing mid-adolescent voice.

Amongst the singing teachers there was a variance in attitudes towards extending their current knowledge base. Generally the singing teachers who had done the most reading and research on mid-adolescent voices showed receptivity towards further learning, whereas the teacher with the least amount of pedagogical knowledge regarded lack of awareness as a
strength. This is not a situation that can easily be improved as this type of teacher is unlikely to read vocal pedagogy books or articles.

The singing teachers also exhibited a variance in the application of their knowledge of the physiology of mid-adolescent singers, often citing high grade level repertoire for the still stabilizing voices as necessary to challenge, extend and retain the interest of the students. The school teachers were aware of their limited knowledge of pedagogical issues, expressing the need for in-service courses and indicating that they were receptive towards increasing their awareness of the special needs of mid-adolescent voices. While the retired examiner was adamant that the school teachers were well trained in vocal pedagogy their responses clearly disagreed with this assertion. Perhaps this is an example of the education system offering assistance in such a way that the already over committed school teachers are unable to avail themselves of the training. It could also indicate that the training that exists is inadequate to the situation and requires re-evaluation.

In the midst of this divergence of criteria and opinion amongst the various teachers the students themselves exhibited varying responses. The students expressed the need to be extended and challenged, although they presented arguments that were not particularly pedagogically correct. Vocally, they were concerned with the quality of the sound they made and how their range impacted upon their subsequent repertoire selection. The majority of their responses, however, involved subjective language when discussing the ‘right’ song, indicating that they required repertoire that was different and that they could relate to. Whilst they were prepared to listen to and explore previously unheard music, their major criterion was to perform repertoire with which they had a strong emotional connection. Therefore, the emotional responses of mid-adolescent singers to repertoire choice will be explored in the coming chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING
SUITABILITY OF REPERTOIRE

Mid-adolescent singing students and their singing teachers do not work in a social vacuum, and many of the attitudes and behaviours that students bring with them to their lessons have little or nothing to do with the act of learning to sing. Peer pressure, the music that is part of their auditory environment and the approval or disapproval of their families all contribute to the ability of students to listen to, absorb and internalise the vocal techniques that they are attempting to acquire. Singing teachers and school teachers are not trained psychologists or sociologists yet a large part of their teaching requires techniques based upon knowledge of these areas. Over and above the physiological criteria for repertoire choice come the psychological criteria; the need of mid-adolescent singers to relate to the music, their emotional response to the music and their need to be challenged by the music. The role of the teachers in fostering a strong sense of efficacy in mid-adolescent singers can be pivotal for their continuing maturation as musicians and performers (Woolfolk Hoy, 2004). However, the self-concept of individual mid-adolescent singers can interfere with the development of strong self-efficacy and have a positive or negative impact upon their self-esteem (Woolfolk Hoy, 2004).

Singing teachers’ views on emotionally appropriate repertoire

It was acknowledged by the singing teachers that mid-adolescent singing students need to have an emotional connection with the repertoire to maintain the required practice and for their personal enjoyment. Winston and Cynthia state the case very clearly:

I look for something they can relate to, from their own musical standard, not too taxing musically, [that has] musical appeal [and] textual appeal. [Repertoire must be about] things that they understand, things I like but that is irrelevant. [They need to] relate to it. Carefully introducing repertoire, I sing it, let them hear recordings, see if they want to do it, then see if they can sing it. [I] choose repertoire that has educational value, musical value and an appeal to the student. (Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)
I will usually ask students to find a song that speaks to them early on and wait until they have made that choice before choosing contrasting repertoire. [It is] their input first, [I've] got to have a song that speaks to the student first and [then I] work from there. Ideally [the repertoire should] stretch them technically and show them off. If [students are] not pushed technically they don't have a sense of achievement. It is a fine balance, easy to get wrong. (Interview: Cynthis, 25th February, 2005)

The singing teachers spoke passionately about this issue, feeling that this connection with the music was often the most important initial step in the process of repertoire selection for mid-adolescent singers. Alison appeared to speak from the viewpoint of a professional singer as well as a teacher when she described the musical experience, stating:

HSC kids have a lot of pressure for the school to do well; [it is] in their interest to sing something they have a desire to sing. They must be allowed to contribute, to own the music. When they discover music it is wonderful; they take ownership and [gain] confidence. (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005)

Both Brian and Byron appeared to give their students less choice in the initial selection of repertoire, instead preferring to begin with technical work and only to introduce songs when they felt they “knew” the student better. In particular, Brian expressed reluctance to choose repertoire too early on, remaining with technical work for two to three weeks before introducing the first song, observing, “[I] hate giving someone their first song; I don't know them well enough” (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005).

This stance was confirmed by Byron when he asserted that he would “do the technique in Year 11 and go from there” although his tendency to categorize voice types early on made for some unusual choices of beginner repertoire as evidenced by his statement: “I often over-estimate what they can do” (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005).

Appropriateness of text for mid-adolescent singers

In addition to their perception that students needed to relate emotionally to their chosen repertoire, the singing teachers considered it important that mid-adolescent singers relate to the text of their repertoire, though for differing reasons ranging from the immediate relevance of the sentiments expressed to the need to understand another language. These reasons chiefly described the emotional needs of the singers and their ability to identify with and perform the repertoire in an engaging manner. All the singing teachers were adamant that the quality of the text was a major criterion in the repertoire selection process. Winston
expanded on this issue, stating that his criteria included the “quality of the meaning of the text, relating that to the person” (Interview: Winston, 26\(^{th}\) February, 2005).

Whilst Cynthia noted that “there is not the depth of understanding of text at this age” she believed that it was essential to find “appropriate text[s]” for mid-adolescent singers even though “it is hard to find stuff that kids relate to” (Interview: Cynthia, 25\(^{th}\) February, 2005). She also pointed out that in a song “the text is integral, the mental images are supported by the harmony” while recognising that some songs used weak text, citing an English art-song of Vaughan-Williams: “Silent Noon words [are] not that strong but the music tips it and gives the emotional response” (Interview: Cynthia, 25\(^{th}\) February, 2005).

Alison, Brian and Byron expanded these comments when discussing the emotional content of songs. Alison stated that “text is very important to me” but also queried how far it is possible to take the students when interpreting the dramatic elements of songs “[there are] so many levels, how far do you take them?” (Interview: Alison, 20\(^{th}\) March, 2005). She did not encourage her students to sing in foreign languages for the HSC examination because she felt that “they [the students] can produce the sound, but they won't touch anybody. I don't encourage it for HSC” (Interview: Alison, 20\(^{th}\) March, 2005). Brian confirmed this viewpoint when he discussed texts in foreign languages, maintaining that:

Text is really important, [the] emotion needs to be not too confronting. I had a boy singing Lydia\(^{12}\) [but he] couldn't really communicate it as it was in French. He was doing something he chose, in a language he wanted to sing in. He liked the tune, but he was not able to really sing it with honesty. (Interview: Brian, 6\(^{th}\) March, 2005)

The concept of interpretation, first of all understanding the poem and then delving beyond the poetry into the subtext was explored by Byron when he asserted:

Poetry is really important. What is this song really about? You can't sing this beautiful Lied if you don't know what it is about. Every song has a secret. What is the secret in this song? . . . Every bar has depth, [they] have to learn how to sing the notes, and then do [the song] bar by bar. What is the image? What is he [the composer] saying? (Interview: Byron, 17\(^{th}\) February, 2005)

However, even singing in English can necessitate translating of idioms and coded language. Enlarging upon the query posed earlier by Alison regarding the depth to which one can encourage a student to delve in the exploration of text, Brian commented “It is hard to try to

\(^{12}\) The setting by Gabriel Faure.
get a student to understand what they are singing about, for example, dying is the moment of sexual climax”¹³ (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005). It is possible that this comment is related more to the inappropriateness of teachers discussing such topics with their students than the inability of the students to sing about them. A large percentage of the lyrics in popular music are blatantly sexual in content, yet pre-adolescents and adolescents appear well aware of exactly what they are singing. Nevertheless, these topics are rarely considered suitable by singing teachers and school teachers alike.

School music teachers’ views on emotionally appropriate repertoire

The ease with which the students communicated their chosen repertoire was the main concern of the school teachers. Their comments were not directly related to psychological issues; instead they noted the effects upon the students of emotionally inappropriate repertoire choice. Whilst they felt it was imperative that the students should be technically, emotionally and textually in command of their repertoire they also expressed the need to be moved by the student performers. It is worth recollecting that HSC examiners are senior high school music teachers with often rudimentary vocal pedagogical knowledge making assessments of musical performances that may appear to be based upon emotional responses.

All three school teachers had specific insights regarding the emotional content of performance repertoire and the immaturity of mid-adolescents. Sophia felt that we make huge demands of mid-adolescent performers in the HSC examination, stating:

[There is] no point in getting up there behind a music stand playing a technical piece without any emotion or meaning. They are such babies emotionally. They are children's reactions and we have to remember that as well. There is a high expectation. (Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005)

Clare noted that it is often difficult for female mid-adolescent singers to detach themselves from the emotion in a song, observing that:

Sometimes a kid might get so emotionally attached to their words that the music lacks, [it’s] really important to make sure they are focusing on the music. (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005)

¹³ He was discussing the 16th century song Come again, sweet love by Dowland.
It is possible that the music to which mid-adolescent singers relate is too close to the circumstances in their own lives for them to be able to detach themselves from the rich emotions expressed in the songs. Conversely, Tracy found that an emotional attachment with the repertoire often assisted a good performance, noting that whenever *This is the moment* was sung by the male students at her school for the HSC examination it attracted good marks.

The boys can sing it for some reason; [they] really get emotionally attached to it; I don't understand why. (Interview: Tracy, 11th June, 2005)

Although the school teachers observed that mid-adolescent singers need to relate emotionally to their songs in order to create engaging performances they were ambivalent about the quality of the texts presented in assessments. Sophia commented on the suitability of texts:

In terms of angst ridden lyrics, a lot of the kids do choose well. We don't get a lot of crappy poppy stuff presented. Boys in particular, well that's their style; we are going to have to get on top of that. (Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005)

The “angst ridden lyrics” were also of concern to Tracy. She did not seem worried about the text of love songs, although anything overtly sexual was not allowed. She stated:

I don't worry too much about the text; I have to worry about content a little bit ‘cause we are a Catholic school. A song with "I'm so bad, I hate myself, I want to kill myself" I didn't allow. I don't worry about it if it’s a love song. I do worry if they are singing about inappropriate things, hate, death etc. (Interview: Tracy, 11th June, 2005)

The school teachers all agreed that the use of text was an advantage that mid-adolescent singers had over their instrumental counterparts, although they stressed that the students needed to comprehend the meaning of the song texts. Clare shared part of a lesson she gave her female students on the art of performance and communication:

Text is very important. I talk to the kids about performance. They've got to go beyond singing; performing means that you have to communicate, and communication is a two way street. You don't think that just because you are singing they're actually hearing what you are going to hear. There's a relationship between the singing, the medium (their voice), the audience (who they are trying to reach) and the message (the song) and they have to have a relationship with each one of them. The singer has to develop first of all a relationship with the medium, which is her voice. [That means] technical development etc. Then they have to have a relationship with that song, they have to learn and like their text, if they don't believe it, it won't be convincing. (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005)

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14 Solo from *Jekyll & Hyde*, a musical written by Leslie Bricusse and Frank Wildhorn (1997). Jekyll is determined to prepare his experiment and inject himself with the solution. He is convinced that victory awaits him.
The school teachers all appeared to be expecting performances from mid-adolescent singers that engaged their audience and demonstrated the singers’ ability to project emotion. The two pianists, Sophia and Tracy, seemed less concerned that the students expressed an understanding of their texts than the singer, Clare, who was adamant that her students should thoroughly comprehend the texts they sang.

**Mid-adolescent singers’ views on emotionally appropriate repertoire**

When questioned as to whether their initial response to new repertoire was to the music or the text the students made contradictory statements regarding their criteria for repertoire selection. While they indicated that the text was important to them, their initial response to repertoire appeared to be an emotional reaction to the music. “It is the music,” stated Daniel, “I wasn't into analysing it so much then, it was the melody first. Then [it was] the text. Only if it was nice and it suited me then that was it,” and then added:

The lyrics, the first thing I like to listen to is the lyrics. And the melody and how the accompaniment and the vocals go together. If the song tune isn't all that, . . . it has to be something that is catchy to you. Although some [songs] do grow on you.

(Interview: Daniel, 1st April, 2005)

Jane expressed similar sentiments when she was asked if she felt that text dictated her initial choice of repertoire.

Wendy: What about the text, was it important what you were actually saying?
Jane: Not very [important]. I needed something that I could relate to emotionally because if you can't relate to it emotionally you're not going to do a very good performance. A bit 'cos of my acting training and I find it easier if I know what a song is talking about.

Wendy: Prefer it in English?
Jane: If I know what the song is about in a different language its okay, I find it hard to sing in a different language.

Wendy: If you like the music does it matter what the text is about?
Jane: Yes and no, it doesn't really matter if you like the music, but if it's something that is thoroughly inappropriate for your age you shouldn't do it.

(Interview: Jane, 26th April, 2005)

Rhonda had not chosen her repertoire but she did note that her initial response to repertoire was also a musical reaction. She sang in English and Latin for her HSC exam.

It is the music. When you're that age I don't think you're going to go in and know the words. We're meant to, but before HSC I don't think I knew exactly what I was singing about in a different language. Whereas for HSC you made sure that you knew.

(Interview: Rhonda, 31st July, 2005)
Relating to repertoire for these students appeared to begin with an emotional response to the music itself, only then followed by considerations of appropriate text. It is difficult to know if these mid-adolescent singers were deeply aware of the words they sang and of their overall context within the song. Their responses appear to indicate an inability or a reluctance to comprehensively explore the meanings of the texts they sang.

**Factors influencing the vocal self-efficacy of mid-adolescent singers**

As established in the previous chapter the students were often not aware of their current technical and physiological capabilities. Rather than being informed by physiological facts, the criteria they applied when making repertoire selections were influenced by both their emotional reactions to their own singing and the music to which they continually listened. Additionally, although many teachers desist from using labels and categorising voices, all three students persisted in using labels to describe their voices and to inform their subsequent behavioural and learning patterns.

The students made many of their repertoire choices beginning with their concepts of what constitutes an appropriate vocal range. They perceived themselves as good or bad singers based upon their physiology, over which they had no control, and then proceeded to apply this perception not only to their sense of self-esteem but to their belief in their own efficacy. Rhonda evinced self-promulgating behaviour in a manner described by Bandura in his discussion of the reaction of individuals whose sense of self-efficacy had been undermined. Bandura (1994) found that when individuals disbelieved their capabilities then subsequent behaviour would validate such a perception. Rhonda sounded apologetic when she discussed her range as it was during 2003, the year she was enrolled in HSC Music. She seemed unaware that many female mid-adolescents have small ranges, although her stated two octave range of G₃-G⁵ is not insubstantial. Her diffident attitude towards her vocal range was demonstrated by the statement:

I still can't really sing above an F. An E for me was a comfortable high note. [When I was young] I always sang [in] chest voice, [I] used to be alto. [My range was] from middle C up to the E . . . I just always couldn't sing high, I was never a high singer. (Interview: Rhonda, 31st July, 2005)
From this extract it would appear that the perception Rhonda acquired of her vocal range during Years 11 and 12 had lowered her sense of efficacy to the extent that she chose to accept a vocal range that would be limiting for a professional singer. She also perceived herself as a shy singer, one who only showed her voice at its best in the studio rather than in performance, stating:

My teacher and [my vocal coach at school] said it was only in the studio that they really heard my voice, not in performance. Yeah, they [the examiners] liked it but it still wasn't what I could do. (Interview: Rhonda, 31st July, 2005)

This self perceived shyness also manifested in her reluctance to choose repertoire for herself. Instead she preferred her singing teacher and vocal coach to assume this responsibility:

[There is] a lot of encouragement from [my] teachers telling me what will suit me . . . . Often the ones I like are not suitable for me right now. I rely a lot on my teachers. (Interview: Rhonda, 31st July, 2005)

This compliant attitude did have the effect of exposing Rhonda to a wider range of repertoire than she would have found by herself, although in this process she abrogated her responsibility for choice.

Daniel appeared to rely upon his emotional state, one of the fourth sources of self-efficacy as described by Bandura (1994), in judging his vocal capabilities. He persisted in choosing repertoire that included notes beyond his upper range, behaviour that resulted in constant battles with feelings of inadequacy. Subsequent to setting himself physiologically impossible standards to achieve, Daniel appeared to be overwhelmed with despondency and a diminishing sense of self-efficacy. He indicated that during Year 11 and Year 12 he did not take into consideration his true vocal range.

Wendy: What mattered to you then?
Daniel: I wanted to sing as high as I could.
Wendy: Why was that?
Daniel: I didn’t want to accept the fact that I couldn’t sing that high. I think I was trying to sing my vocal range, not my tessitura.
Wendy: Why did you think like that?
Daniel: [It was] a mental perception. I thought that if I didn’t have a good vocal range then I wasn’t a good singer. [I’ve] always looked up to singers that have a very big vocal range. If I can’t do it, then I shouldn’t be doing it. I kept pushing myself. (Interview: Daniel, 1st April, 2005)

When key shifting was suggested to bring a song within his vocal range he would not consider this an option and stated: “It was the end of the world for me” (Interview: Daniel, 1st
April, 2005). During a subsequent conversation he reiterated his memory of his feelings during the HSC year, and asserted:

I was devastated, suicidal, when I couldn’t get the top notes. All the great singers are high; I had to get good enough to get up there.

(Personal communication: Daniel, 7th June, 2005)

Daniel’s reliance upon his somatic and emotional states to inform his opinion of himself as a singer appeared to affect negatively his sense of self-worth. His lack of understanding of the vocal pedagogy of mid-adolescent singers exacerbated the situation; however his insistence upon extending himself vocally indicates that his sense of self-esteem was secure enough to allow him to continue to sing.

The third student, Jane, revealed an ambivalent use of mastery experiences in developing her sense of self-efficacy. Her reluctance towards accepting the challenges of learning new repertoire was redressed slightly by her openness towards developing her vocal technique. Whilst she conceded the difficulty mid-adolescent females have with accepting the sound of their upper register she accepted that her perception of her sound in that register was not valid:

If there's something that's not quite in my range I practise it an awful lot and I get comfortable with it, and then once I'm comfortable with it I'm able to do it. (It’s a time factor). Sometimes I will key shift, it depends on the whole piece. I'm not very comfortable with my top range even though people say that it’s there and it’s good. I don't like staying [up] there; its okay to go up to it [some of the time].

(Interview: Jane, 26th April, 2005)

Within her limited range of repertoire Jane was willing to display persistent effort but her resistance towards the acquisition of new repertoire and its consequent series of mastery experiences denied her the creation of a strong sense of self-efficacy. It would appear that she had a fragile sense of self-esteem that she chose to maintain by manifesting defensive behaviour towards expanding her repertoire.

There appears to be a link between the students’ perceptions of their range and their emotional reactions to music and the development of a strong sense of self-efficacy in relation to their ability to sing and perform skilfully. The male student, who openly discussed his feelings of inadequacy and demonstrated low self-esteem, also displayed a strong sense of self-efficacy in his determination to achieve a pedagogically unsound goal. The two female students, on the other hand, appeared less able to overcome what they regarded as technical
difficulties or characteristics of their singing and exhibited a weak sense of self-efficacy. All these perspectives were influenced by their vocal self-concept, an issue that was at the forefront of the interviews with the private singing teachers.

Factors influencing the vocal self-concept of mid-adolescent singers

Vocal self-concept issues were raised by the singing teachers. Frequently they commented on the need for students to change their concept of their own vocal sound, considering this to be integral to the gaining of a good technique. Winston made the following comment about one student:

The modal [range] of [the] speaking voice is more comfortable . . . her concept of her voice needs to be changed. (Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)

Cynthia also commented upon this phenomenon, noting:

Before learning singing the kids have worked around their speaking fundamental frequency range [which is the] strongest part of voice. (Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005)

Mainstream popular music of the present day was cited as being a major influence upon the self-concept of mid-adolescent singers. Alison observed:

[It is] often psychological and aural as well. [Their] listening experience, cultural mode of belting. [They] gain confidence [by] using [their] voice[s] better; jaw flexibility and body awareness. (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005)

Brian concurred and added that it was important to “listen to them speak; listen to their parents, for appreciating their perception of their own sound” (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005). This was noticeable in Jane when she acknowledged that her decisions about what she considered to be vocally suitable repertoire for herself were based upon “where I think it sounds best . . . relying on internal hearing” (Interview: Jane, 26th April, 2005).

The singing teachers welcomed the use of vocal models particularly for young males. The current trend towards Australian Idol programs has made it more culturally acceptable for male mid-adolescents to let it be known that they choose to have singing lessons. The runner up in one recent competition, Anthony Callea, was singled out by Alison as “a great role model” (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005), although the vocal straining that Daniel imposed upon himself in attempting high notes beyond his natural range mitigates somewhat against this commendation. Nevertheless, emulation of one’s social and vocal peers is a valid

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source of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994) and appears to be a method encouraged by these singing teachers.

Byron was enthusiastic about the use of live performances for offering mid-adolescent singers opportunities to listen to and emulate other singers. He stated, “Go into musicals; get on stage as much as possible. Choirs are good for hearing lots of music” (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005).

In the school environment, mid-adolescent singers are often isolated, particularly if they are performing “classical” repertoire. The recent development in NSW of holiday courses for mid-adolescent “opera” singers has made it possible for these young singers to be in a situation where the emulation of their social peers offers mastery experiences and a strong sense of self-efficacy. They are also able to hear examples of mid-adolescent singers performing “classical” repertoire rather than only “popular” repertoire.

We sing what we hear, very often. The opera course in the holidays has really opened the kids’ eyes to their changing sound, where they can go. Sometimes something practical like a course is the best lesson. (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005)

These courses also offer mid-adolescent singers the approval of peers, a situation that is often not found in the high school environment where admitting an interest in music and singing can isolate children from the mainstream. Davidson et al. (1997) recorded that the practice routines and musical choices of mid-adolescent musicians often lead to their being isolated from their social peers. Dianne also commented upon this isolation and its effect upon mid-adolescents:

It is very hard because they are teenagers. There is the very big problem of the pop culture. You don't want to alienate them, have them seen as weird and all that. . . . [It is] a rare child that doesn’t succumb to peer pressure. They often become isolated, [with a] very small group of friends rather than the push for the party. (Interview: Dianne, 7th May, 2005)

Tracy found this to be a major issue at the boy’s high school at which she taught. She felt the students were concerned not only about their peers but also about their parents and family:

The boys sometimes won't sing at a concert. They wouldn't invite their parents along, wouldn't tell them it was going on, even at the HSC level. We have an HSC night. Sometimes those boys don't want their parents or friends to come along and see them. (Interview: Tracy, 11th June, 2005)
It would appear that the vocal self-concept of mid-adolescent singers is often based upon an inaccurate internal perception of their sounds. The teachers stress the need to change this perception and to this end frequently make use of the vicarious experience of peer modelling.

**Summary**

Essentially the singing teachers were searching for the emotional connection they believed mid-adolescent singers should have with their repertoire. In particular, they were adamant that mid-adolescent singers choose repertoire to which they could relate, believing this to be the first step towards a successful practice routine. They also stressed the need to find the balance between repertoire that challenged the students musically and technically and repertoire that appealed to the student. By applying these criteria to their selection of repertoire the singing teachers would appear to also be fostering a growing sense of self-efficacy in their students. At the same time, they were aware of the inherent instability in mid-adolescent voices. They placed an emphasis upon the need to find texts that the students could understand and interpret at a level which was appropriate to their psychological age. The singing teachers also encouraged vocal models for their students, citing recordings, role models and courses for mid-adolescent singers as being of value in the development of strong self-efficacy and good vocal self-concept.

The school teachers were primarily concerned with the ease with which mid-adolescent singers communicated and performed their repertoire. Whilst they acknowledged the need to find appropriate texts for this age group, they were more interested in the manner with which the students engaged their audience on an emotional level. They also commented upon the result of inappropriate emulation of artists in the commercial media. Even though they were less interested in texts than the emotive qualities of the student performers, one teacher was adamant that the text should be thoroughly understood before communication was possible.

The students themselves indicated that they reacted to the music itself rather than the text, though if they felt the text was inappropriate then they would reconsider their choice. They seemed unaware of the emphasis that their singing teachers and school teachers placed upon the need for them to sing age appropriate texts. The self-efficacy and self-concept of the students were subject to the major influences of the media, of vocal emulation and long term physiological growth. Overly identifying with popular music artists often encouraged
unrealistic vocal expectations in the students, particularly the male. All three students showed rudimentary understanding of the physiological process, still listening internally to their vocal sounds and not yet trusting the sensations of good vocal production. This often appeared to have a negative influence upon their sense of self-efficacy, lowering it to the extent that learning new music was too much of a challenge. The students also appeared reluctant to leave behind their existing vocal self-concepts.

Even with the best intentions from the singing teachers and the school teachers towards mid-adolescent singers there still remains a dichotomy of purpose. The private singing teachers are concerned with the emotional state of students as it affects their ability to learn a technique that will ensure vocal longevity and allow them to perform with confidence whilst engaging an audience. The school teachers are more concerned with the emotional state of students as it relates to their ability to perform and engage an audience. The long term view of the private singing teachers versus the short term view of the school music teachers would appear to give mixed messages to the students themselves who want to perform to the best of their abilities, usually with rudimentary understanding of their vocal technique and the learning process.
CHAPTER SIX

HSC EXAMINATION CRITERIA AND THE SELECTION OF
AUSTRALIAN REPERTOIRE

A focus of this study is the performance component of the HCS music examinations for vocal
students. In Music 1, mid-adolescent singers are required to demonstrate in performance an
understanding of the stylistic features of their chosen repertoire (Music I Stage 6 Syllabus
p.39). In addition students enrolled in Music 2 must reflect the technical demands of their
repertoire (Music 2 Stage 6 Syllabus, p.13). Music Extension requires performances with
highly developed technical skill and stylistic refinements (Music Extension Stage 6 Syllabus,
p. 53). Furthermore the mandatory topic for Music 2 is “Music of the last 25 years
(Australian focus)” (Music 2 Stage 6 Syllabus, p. 27). The major issues to be addressed in
the selection of Australian vocal music for the HSC examination are those that relate to the
technical, physiological and emotional ranges of mid-adolescents singers as well as the
musical style of the repertoire.

**Australian vocal repertoire that is representative of the last 25 years**

The participants had varying responses to the classification of what constitutes Australian
repertoire in the context of the HSC examination. One school teacher had addressed this
issue within the classroom when several of the Year 12 students began questioning the style
of a piece of music by a contemporary Australian composer that they felt belonged to an
earlier era of music than the late 20th century.

We were doing a Colin Brumby piece. They got to Movement 5 and it was very tonal
and repetitive. One of the girls asked, “How does this represent Australia”? The kids
are being told their stuff has to be representative of the last 25 years, yet what defines
music of the last 25 years? They have to remember that they are trying to represent
their topic. A song of the last 25 years needs to sound like it has been composed in
that time period, not derivative of another time. (Interview: Clare, 7th July, 2005)

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15 Whilst the Australian focus is recommended by the Board of Studies, NSW, students may choose repertoire
of the last 25 years that is not of Australian origin.
Contemporary art\textsuperscript{16} music was an issue also raised by the retired senior examiner who felt that, with the exception of \textit{Love me Sweet}\textsuperscript{17}, music of the last 25 years was too difficult for mid-adolescents singers. She stated:

If it’s contemporary and its not pop stuff it is so difficult. Messiaen type approaches, kids just grab at notes and it’s abysmal. They get only 4 out of 10. Really hard stuff that is way beyond them technically because they have to do something of the last 25 years. (Interview: Dianne, 7\textsuperscript{th} July, 2005)

Perhaps this was the only style of contemporary Australian vocal art music that Dianne had heard, and while the statement includes what appears to be an uninformed criticism of Messiaen’s vocal music (which was written well before the final decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century), it raises the issue of what constitutes Australian vocal music of the last 25 years. The two composers interviewed wrote in different styles from each other, yet both were of the opinion that Australian vocal music of the last 25 years consisted of anything written by any Australian composer in this time period. “If someone says write something that is indicative of the last 25 years you could write anything you like” (Interview: Dylan, 31\textsuperscript{st} July, 2005).

Tristan commented upon the changing culture of contemporary music, and noted the confusion many people have in the present day towards defining what is valid in recently composed music.

When I was young, contemporary music was the thing that people sort of felt obliged to go to, sat through dutifully and went off and had a drink. Then it became easy listening, so there is a certain amount of confusion. Then it had a sort of a beat so I don't know. I hate the term new music, because that suggests we have to go to that concert 'cause so and so-on is performing. . . I just like the idea of music, not a description. (Interview: Tristan, 26\textsuperscript{th} September, 2005)

Dianne and Clare would appear to display some of this confusion, possibly strengthened by a lack of attendance at “new music” concerts or concerts that include contemporary Australian vocal music. Tristan also commented upon the global economy which he felt was reflected in the many different aspects and styles of contemporary music. The prevalence of so many valid differing styles would appear to be contributing towards an element of confusion.

\textsuperscript{16} Adherents of art music usually see the classics as the pinnacle of a musical pyramid, below which are the other kinds of music, “folk, musical comedy, ordinary popular, rock and country music” in an ordered hierarchy (Nettl, \textit{Grove Music Online} www.grovmusic.com). For European countries, the dictionary distinguishes between "art" music (i.e. European classical and sacred musics), "folk" or "traditional" music and "popular" music (Pegg, \textit{Grove Music Online} www.grovmusic.com).

\textsuperscript{17} Song by Carl Vine composed 1993. This is a folk-like song with a range of a ninth, and was also recommended by Sophia.
regarding the categorising of music of the last 25 years. When they made their comments concerning music of the last 25 years, Clare and Dianne seem to be referring to the music that was contemporary when they were young.

Clare expressed some frustration at not being able to find a definitive category for Australian music of the last 25 years when reporting the findings of the students attempting to define Australian music:

What constitutes an Australian song? Written in Australia, that's it. They all were trying to define Australian music and all came back with the same conclusion; there wasn't any definition of Australian music. Music of the last 25 years needs to have 20th century techniques in it somewhere. Like changing key signature, unusual modulations, tempo changes, time signature changes, unusual harmonies, chords, somehow they have to show that it represents the era, otherwise they could be singing a piece from the Romantic period. (Interview: Clare, 7th July, 2005)

This reiteration of the need for 20th century techniques that were not only current in the 1950s through to the 1980s, but emanated from Europe and America, is somewhat at odds with the plethora of contemporary “world music” and melodic “new music” broadcast daily over the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s FM channel. It would appear that many contemporary composers are seeking a musical language that is readily accessible to contemporary listeners. Tristan and Dylan both felt that music was more relevant to listeners if it expressed experiences to which they could relate.

It makes sense if it emanates from where you're living, from people who experience the same thing as you. (Interview: Tristan, 26th September, 2005)

Maybe singers need to develop a repertoire that is more contemporary and relevant to people and experience. Songs of the past can be beautiful, exquisite, but if you are dealing with words and expression you need to define beautiful music and music that is funnier maybe that can deal with experience of growing up in a multicultural country like Australia. These texts would have more appeal. (Interview: Dylan, 31st July, 2005)

Whilst Clare and Dianne appeared to be describing types of Australian vocal music that pre-date much current music, it must be noted that many composers do write using mid 20th century musical language, and the extended vocal techniques, wide tessitura and complex rhythms associated with this musical style are often inappropriate for the technical capabilities of the mid-adolescent voice. However, the composers were concerned with finding a musical language that was relevant to today’s society, whatever style it
encompassed. Dylan in particular was most concerned with the need to set texts that reflected life in present day Australia.

**Singing teachers’ recommendations of Australian vocal repertoire of the last 25 years**

The private singing teachers had ambivalent attitudes ranging from enthusiasm to antagonism towards the need to locate and teach Australian repertoire. Winston was in a position where he received music to review or assess and regularly accessed the listings of recently composed music that the AMC supplies. When questioned as to how he accessed vocal music by contemporary Australian composers he stated:

Mainly songs sent to me for review that I know about. I get reviews; go on line to AMC to see what is new. I expect school teachers to do some leg work. I keep informed through reviews in the various journals, ANATS, ASME.

(Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)

He felt that there was a limited range of contemporary Australian art music available for mid-adolescent singers and remarked:

There’s not a lot for younger voices, except Tim's. It’s encouraging but it’s not good quality or has a wide enough selection. Betty Beath. The Allans’ book is mostly out of date. The Gordon Kerry's too hard. Peter Maddox. Some Keys Publishing stuff.

(Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)

Cynthia also observed that there is a paucity of repertoire for mid-adolescent singers:

In the last 25 years I don't find there is much good repertoire. The Hollands', Martin Wesley-Smith, *My Knight in Shining Armour*, has technical difficulties at the ending. I change words where I think I need to. *I’m a caterpillar of society* for Music 1, because kids enjoy it. That’s the one I’d use most, it doesn't make great emotional demands, fun for a dancer also: Caterpillar.

(Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005)

She concluded this section of her interview with the following assertion:

This is where the HSC Board is at odds with what's happening in the real world; it’s very hard for composers to write stuff that doesn't end up sounding twee. If they write

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18 *33 Songs by Young Australians*. Compiled by Tim Collins (2003).
19 *Selected Songs by Australian Composers*. Published by Allans 1985. The only songs that are composed within the last 25 years are those contained in a song cycle by Gordon Kerry.
20 Perth based publisher of Australian composers.
22 Composed 1985, from *Boojum*.
23 Composed by Martin Wesley-Smith, 1978. From *Who Killed Cock Robin* and then used in *Boojum*. Not belonging in the last 25 years category.
for the younger age group they've forgotten what it was like being an adolescent and it ends up really twee stuff. There is a dearth of repertoire in the last 25 years for this age group. (Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005)

Alison was conversant with a wide range of Australian composers, possibly an indication of her continuing career as a recitalist. She was careful to choose material that she felt was individually suited to each student:

I use Sculthorpe, Gordon Hamilton, Bauld, Humble, Koehne, Tregaskis, AMC for more music. There is no regular Australian music. I use Australian with virtually every student, pick and choose. Alison Bauld’s Banquo’s Buried I’ve used most. Kids will jump into it for the dramatic content. (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005)

The two male singing teachers were antagonistic towards the need for Australian repertoire to the extent that Brian described the need to choose Australian repertoire for the HSC as “almost Stalin like, making the mandatory subject music of last 25 years, Australian focus and dictating what students should do” (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005). However, Brian indicated that he did use a wide range of Australian vocal music and was conversant with many composers:

Vine, Butterley, Leek. Wesley-Smith I really like for kids, very accessible. There’s a new book on Oz songs, I’ve already used it to perform from. . . Solo voice, I wish Graeme Koehne would write some, he’s good. Andrew Schultz’s Ditties. For HSC last year we did three of the Ditties; highly entertaining, challenging, left field texts. . . AMC has a good website but I can't pick a song from title. I will steer towards composers I know. Betty Beath is pretty accessible for high school girls. There’s a song by an Aboriginal mother singing to her baby, a fabulous piece for a girl with a good top range and empathy with the subject. (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005)

Byron expressed the opinion that searching for recent Australian vocal repertoire was unproductive, stating:

It is totally annoying, parochialism, saying you have to do something from the last 25 years. If the quality is there in Australian repertoire, we will be doing it anyway. Why should I go out of my way and spend hours and hours of my time down at The Rocks to find one good song? Esther Rofe is one composer I really like. I hold her most highly. Phyllis Batchelor . . . I have a few friends who are composers. Lyndall Tafe in Russia has written a great musical; several of my students do songs from it.

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24 Peter Sculthorpe, Alison Bauld, Keith Humble, Graeme Koehne, Alan Tregaskis.
25 Carl Vine, Nigel Butterley, Stephen Leek, Martin Wesley-Smith.
26 Composed, 1983. For baritone and guitar.
28 The AMC is situated at Level 4, 10 Hickson Road, The Rocks, Sydney, NSW, Australia.
29 Three songs by Phyllis Batchelor and a song by Esther Rofe are included in Selected songs by Australian Composers, published by Allans, 1987. It is out of print. The four songs were composed more than 25 years ago.
I've got a choice of four songs. I don't see why I should have to go and find it when I already have found four great songs. (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005)

The antagonism of these two singing teachers towards the Australian content of the HSC examination is unfounded, as the precise terminology is: “Music of the Last 25 years (Australian focus)”. However, it could possibly be indicative of the response of many singing teachers in NSW when the criteria for this subject are not fully understood. Cynthia, Winston and Alison appeared more at ease with the process of exploring new Australian repertoire, but their positions as song repertoire reviewers and selectors and as a recitalist respectively would indicate a greater predisposition towards such investigation than would be found in teachers in the positions of Byron and Brian.

Alison was the only singing teacher who directly mentioned students singing popular Australian vocal music of the last 25 years for the HSC examination. She noted that her approach to repertoire selection for students had changed in response to the HSC criteria: “I’m much more inclined to include popular repertoire. For all the students” (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005).

It is unclear from the responses of the three male singing teachers whether they do or do not include popular repertoire in the programs their students perform for HSC. Byron did indicate that he would allow students to sing contemporary popular repertoire, although he regarded it as a springboard towards guiding them into musicals and 19th century repertoire.

They often bring something in the first lesson. . . . I let them run with a style and keep opening doors. . . . If they can do classical, jazz, music theatre for HSC then they are a superior performer. (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005)

However, Cynthia was disparaging of popular music, clearly suggesting that the genre was unworthy of inclusion in the HSC examination.

When I say to a student, go away and find a piece, but it has to have internal contrast; as soon as you put internal contrast within a song then it is a problem for pop music because it is not there. (Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005)

In a similar manner to the attitudes of the two school teachers towards contemporary vocal art music it would appear that Cynthia exhibits an equal level of uninformed opinion and sweeping generalisation. It is unclear where the need for internal contrast within a song is dictated by the Board of Studies in its syllabi for Music 1 and Music 2. However, this does
highlight the subjective nature of musical appreciation and calls into question any rejection of Australian vocal repertoire of the last 25 years whatever the genre to which it adheres.

**The selection process for HSC performance repertoire**

The singing teachers felt that the ease with which mid-adolescent singers could communicate their repertoire to an audience was the most important criterion to be considered when choosing repertoire. Winston commented upon the criteria for a successful HSC performance:

> What is benefiting the student; teaching repertoire they can cope with, and that will have an appeal to an audience. The song must have an appeal to the student, giving of themselves without having to force anything. Drama students are often able to do more complex songs because they can perform them so well. I keep in mind the student's ability to project the character of the song with vocal ease and security. My problem with that is that teachers/examiners don't often relate to the objectives, they use more general terms and are not assessing musical elements. They are only really looking at communication. (Interview: Winston, 26\(^{th}\) February)

This was also a point made by the school music teacher who had also been employed as an examiner.

> The criteria is [sic] very open though, you're judging a performance, not judging technique, although you can hear when the technique is fluent. I don't know if it's foolproof. There's always going to be subjective examining. There's [sic] usually different instruments [represented] on the panel. I also find there are huge discrepancies between marks at odd times. It's a personal choice, what interpretation do you like best? It's part of music. (Interview: Tracy, 11\(^{th}\) June, 2005)

The subjective, emotive nature of music would appear to be a major criterion by which examiners can assess HSC performances adequately. This is the opinion of the singing teachers, as stated by Brian, “HSC has to be performance; it’s no use demonstrating vocal grasp if it doesn't grab the audience” (Interview: Brian, 6\(^{th}\) March, 2005).

Byron also attested to the emotional maturity required by mid-adolescent singers in order to be able to readily communicate their chosen repertoire.

> They can be intellectually intelligent, but not emotionally. If they can't communicate a feeling in a word, you can't own your performance. (Interview: Byron, 17\(^{th}\) February, 2005)

The singing teachers were very concerned with the need to find repertoire that assisted each mid-adolescent singer to readily communicate with an audience and used a variety of approaches to achieve this performance criterion. Cynthia discussed the need to find
contrasting repertoire in order to create an interesting program for each mid-adolescent
singer:

Their input first . . . got to have a song that speaks to the student first and work from
there. . . . Often have to choose repertoire to compensate for what the kids don't have.
(Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005)

Brian also preferred the students to take an active part in the selection procedure but was
aware that sometimes more guidance was required:

I hope at HSC level they are able to make some decent choices. When the song is
really unsuitable I interfere, but I put onus on them to begin with. Otherwise, I say
‘do this piece, do that’ etc. I give a medium list that they can shortlist. In the early
stages I ram music down their neck. In the HSC year I keep them very much in the
picture and take their opinions on board. (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005)

Alison expanded the issue of individualisation in programs, in particular as a way of assisting
students who are not well equipped technically or are not naturally at ease with the process of
communication with the audience. She felt that it leads to comparative listening by the
examiners if too many students perform the same songs, though she did not make it clear
whether she considers this to be a problem just within the school where she taught or
throughout the state.

I individualise each kid’s performance, not repeating things. I try to find a unique
piece to help weak students. Stevie Wonder's Sir Duke is fantastic, open kids up to
how to improvise, there is written improvisation in it. For classically inclined girls,
Non so piu30 and Batti, batti31. I use these a lot, comparative listening is not so much
of a problem with these songs. (Interview: Alison, 20th March, 2005)

The school teachers felt the key to a good performance in the HSC was finding a piece that
suited each student. Clare felt that choice of repertoire was important for the quality of the
piece, not just whether it was an appropriate choice for the student.

For the HSC part of the battle is finding the right piece. Not just for the kid but the
right piece to perform. Sometimes you just crack it. (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005)

They also stressed the importance of repertoire reflecting the HSC criteria.

I always tell my students “Your marks come from your choice of repertoire not from
your actual performance sometimes”. They always question me, “That was a good
performance, why didn't I get the mark”? And well, they didn't show the criteria.
(Interview: Tracy, 11th June, 2005)

30 Cherubino’s first act aria from Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro.
31 Zerlina’s first act aria from Mozart’s Don Giovanni.
The criteria to which this teacher referred include singing repertoire that represents the style of the chosen topic and demonstrating the technical command necessary to perform the given style. Interestingly, Clare commented upon the desirability of demonstrating differing styles between the genre and topics chosen by students.

There should be variety within a program. Speed, agility, slow, fast, lots of different things. I encourage kids not to be locked into a style. (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005)

Dianne felt the broadness of the scope of the HSC criteria created a fair exam, even though she later asserted that it is very difficult for mid-adolescent singers, but that they chose to do the exam and had to deal with the consequences.

Really the HSC is examining a recital approach to music-making. That is really high order. As a 17/18 year old that's very demanding on them intellectually, emotionally and technically. It is accepted that you have to have the technique to do this program. Then you have to build on all that. That is a really huge ask. Then for someone, a singer to do that, that is an amazing ask. . . . It is important that the repertoire they pick is comparable in difficulty and intellectual understanding and musical outcomes; all the things that are in our concepts and our guidelines so that they equate with somebody who is playing French Horn. . . . We're not saying they have to do it, they choose to do it. It's not fair if the voice get special treatment. Being sympathetic like that towards singers loses credibility as an examiner. . . . It is very fair across the board, the way the pedagogy has been addressed, fair straight across the whole of the state. (Interview: Dianne, 7th July, 2005)

These are quite contradictory statements, on the one hand acknowledging the gap between the technical control of mid-adolescent singers and the technical control of their instrumental peers, and yet asserting that the pedagogical issues have been addressed fairly in the HSC examination. The rapidly changing physiology of mid-adolescent singers is clearly not addressed fairly “across the board”. It is also of concern that whilst the school teachers felt the choice of repertoire to be essential in the attainment of a high mark in HSC, Dianne clearly asserted that it was important for examiners not to be influenced by the music itself, and stated, “You have to be very careful not to get carried away with the music and not the performance” (Interview: Dianne, 7th May, 2005).

It is unclear how this behaviour can be manifested by examiners in the HSC. Not only the school teachers, but the singing teachers and the mid-adolescent students talked consistently about finding the “right” piece that demonstrated good singing and communication skills and was also a special song that evoked an immediate response from the listener. When asked
about which criteria determined her positive response to repertoire, Sophia replied: “It’s the whole thing, just how it gets me” (Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005).

The singing students were looking in varying degrees for repertoire that they felt effectively displayed their singing and communications skills to the best advantage. Jane was particularly concerned with finding song repertoire that she believed had not often been performed for the HSC examination.

I wanted to do something different but everything's been done. . . . I wanted something that I enjoyed singing, something that was a bit different from other people, have different kinds of music, melodies and stuff, different but still suit my voice.
(Interview: Jane, 26th April, 2005)

She appeared to believe that it was easier to achieve a better mark if the examiners had not heard the song before, echoing Alison’s concern about comparative listening. Jane, on the other hand, echoed the attitude of Cynthia that there should be contrast between the songs performed in the HSC program.

They said it has to be a bit different ‘cause we had four pieces. Te Deum was really low. Yeah, I thought it was good ‘cause I could show high and low.
(Interview: Rhonda, 31st July, 2005)

As reported in an earlier chapter, this student relied upon the singing teacher to choose repertoire, and possibly reflected singing teacher concerns more than was evidenced by the other two students interviewed. Daniel was at a school where the opinion of the school music teacher dictated repertoire selection. The teacher was confident that she was able to choose repertoire that achieved high marks for students. The following comments refer to this school music teacher.

Wendy: Did you ever think about songs that pushed you technically, when you were thinking about songs for HSC?
Daniel: My teacher pointed out that I needed to think like that ‘cause I chose such easy pop songs. Choose ones that give me better technique and range and then you can show off your voice and then you can get better marks in the end.
(Interview: Daniel, 1st April, 2005)

The students exhibited a range of beliefs regarding repertoire selection for the HSC, that appeared to be dependant upon their level of reliance upon singing teachers and school music teachers as musical authorities. Possibly this reflects upon the standard of singing teaching occurring within the school environment. Rhonda attended a school where several singing teachers taught at the school during school hours. The school Jane attended had no resident
singing teacher and Daniel attended a school where there had been an unsatisfactory and irregular record of singing teachers.

Ways in which the HSC performance component dictates repertoire selection

The singing teachers felt that the performance component of HSC forced them to make repertoire choices that were not directly suited to the long term development of mid-adolescent students. While not all of the teachers adhered to the system of grade levels recommended by the major examination boards recognized in Australia, the AMEB and Trinity College, they did feel that the needs of the HSC performance comprised any system of gradually introduced repertoire that addressed technical development. Brian succinctly expressed this view with the following statement:

HSC does affect my choices; it is so competitive against their instrumental peers. The HSC gives them repertoire that is not often relevant for them, or best technically. Not valid long term choices for the students. Rules make choices. They then have to go back to basics when starting tertiary level music. The HSC builds on not a full foundation. (Interview: Brian, 6th March, 2005)

Winston also noted the disparity between vocal and instrumental performers, and stated categorically, “There should be no correlation between instrumental and vocal HSC” (Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005). He had just been discussing the relationship between the grade levels of instrumentalists and singers sitting HSC music and had asserted:

I don't teach extravagantly difficult songs at HSC, which ever unit, a 17 year girl is about 3rd grade. I still think in terms of grades. I had to push the grades through to get 6th grade equal to HSC, even then still 6th grade is too high for a 17 year old. (Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)

Cynthia indicated that she also thought in terms of grades, although she felt that it was advisable for mid-adolescent singers to have passed higher than third grade as a preparation for the HSC for reasons that appeared to encourage student confidence as well as a divergent range of repertoire. She stated:

I try to get them to grade 5/6 before doing HSC for the wealth of repertoire to pull on. By the end of Year 11 they have done at least grade 5 with grade 6 extras. They will have had the experience of an independent outside examiner and heaps of repertoire visited as a result of the choice mechanism. (Interview: Cynthia, 25th February, 2005)

Whilst she did allow her students to sing repertoire of Grade 8 AMEB level if they were of sufficient standard, Alison reported that since becoming involved with the HSC examination she was “much more inclined to include popular repertoire for all my students” (Interview:
Alison: 20\textsuperscript{th} March, 2005). When questioned as to whether her approach to repertoire selection had changed in respect to the HSC, Cynthia felt that she made different choices for this examination than she would usually consider optimum for her students.

Yes, HSC sometimes makes you choose repertoire that is beyond what your natural instincts would tell you is right for this kid. A student came from another teacher with *Trouble in Tahiti*\textsuperscript{32}. Too hard! But she got a good mark. Risk is rewarded if you do a hard song well. (Interview: Cynthia, 25\textsuperscript{th} February, 2005)

The singing teachers spoke about choosing repertoire for the HSC that was exclusive to the needs of individual mid-adolescent singers. They all indicated that there were no sets of songs that could be considered appropriate for all mid-adolescent singers, instead stressing the need to search for student-specific repertoire. Alison commented upon the need to individualise material for each student, particularly students with rudimentary technique, noticeably unstable voices and/or limited volume.

I individualise each kid’s performance, not repeating things. I fear for the examiners that that leads to comparative listening, not an advantage to the students especially a weak student. I try to find a unique piece to help weak students. (Interview: Alison, 20\textsuperscript{th} March, 2005)

While Winston did not comment directly about “weak” students, he noted that the job of the singing teacher was often made difficult by the attitude of school teachers towards singing as an “if all else fails” backup.

We often get the student only in the last year or two. So often there is the attitude, they can't do anything else, so let them do singing. (Interview: Winston, 26\textsuperscript{th} February, 2005)

The tendency for students not to commence singing lessons until Year 11 or Year 12 was commented upon by all the singing teachers. They all felt this was less than optimum and often led to teaching that was referred to by Brian as “a microwave job” (Interview: Brian, 6\textsuperscript{th} March, 2005). For many of these mid-adolescent singers in Year 11 and Year 12, the singing activities in which they will have been involved prior to beginning vocal tuition will have been school choirs, and possibly non-school choral groups and amateur musical societies. However the major influence in terms of choice of repertoire will have been the approval or disapproval of the school music teacher.

\textsuperscript{32} *What a Movie* is the title of this aria by Leonard Bernstein from his one act opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*. Composed in 1953.
General perceptions of school teachers regarding repertoire suitability

Dianne referred to choral studies as being a constituent of teacher training (Dianne, 7th May, 2005) and the three school teachers direct choral groups in their respective schools. It could be concluded that repertoire selection criteria for these school teachers are based primarily upon their knowledge of appropriate choral repertoire for mid-adolescents rather than repertoire that is specifically relevant to the young solo singer. However, it must also be noted that these school teachers have considerable “in the field” experience, as they are regularly exposed to a wide range of music performed in the practical assessments and are to some extent equipped to gauge what is vocally suitable for mid-adolescent singers. Regardless of how well informed they are, their opinions appear to carry weight with the students. Clare advised on the side of caution in repertoire selection.

Keep away from anything heavy. Certainly not opera. A light song that doesn't have a huge range. I think they have to like it. It has to be something that isn't really demanding, and is going to put stress on the voice and force it in any way. Light pop stuff is okay. Maybe some light musical stuff. Or the really light stuff like ‘Caro Mio Ben’ where they can work on their range, smoothing through the registers.
(Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005)

This raises the issue of how the school teachers define and assess the skill levels of mid-adolescent singers when determining vocally suitable material. Stylistically the school teachers were favouring vocal repertoire with small ranges, “light stuff” (Interview: Clare, 7th May, 2005), “folk repertoire” (Interview: Sophia, 27th May, 2005) and “simple musicals” (Interview: Tracy, 11th June, 2005). Although Tracy cited simple musicals as appropriate material, she gave specific examples of two songs that have extended ranges and difficult passages remaining in the upper register of the male voice.

*Jekyll & Hyde* for the boys, I use it constantly. *This is the Moment* always has good results. *Empty Chairs and Empty Tables*. They've got a bit of a climactic point at the top. *This is the Moment* uses low register and builds gradually, got a bit of variety in it. The boys can sing it for some reason, really get emotionally attached to it, I don't understand why. They don't see it as a musical piece...*Empty chairs* doesn't have a high register, it’s a low song [with one high note at the end], but you can bring it down to their register [and] they can usually hit that note. (Interview: Tracy, 11th June, 2005)

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33 Early Italian aria composed by Tommaso Giordani. This song was also nominated by all the singing teachers as an appropriate choice for mid-adolescent singers.
34 Marius’s solo from Les Miserables, recalling the massacre at the Bastille where his student friends all died. (1980)
There was an expectation by the school music teachers that the private singing teachers would find appropriate repertoire for each student because this was the domain of the “specialists” (Sophia, 27th May, 2005). The school teachers noted that they themselves were “generalists” (Sophia, 27th May, 2005) and considered that their contribution to the selection process was to evaluate the material in terms of its suitability for the HSC examination. The students felt that their singing teachers “knew what was best for them” (Rhonda, 31st July, 2005) and had access to a range of material from which the students would be able to select. The singing teachers accepted their role in finding music to which the students could “relate”, although Winston did not believe that this was an ideal situation. He felt that there was an imbalance in responsibility when repertoire selection was made for singing students and noted:

The school teachers are relying a lot on the private teacher to do the leg work. I’m not certain the schools are taking advantage of developing their own knowledge.
(Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)

As discussed in Chapter 4, Byron and Brian also expressed concern at both the frequent conflicts they had with the school teachers regarding repertoire choice and the fact that the school teachers questioned their choices yet still expected them to continue to be the only source of appropriate repertoire. Byron summed up the pressures leading up to the HSC examination when he conveyed his frustration about the vetting by the school music teachers of repertoire mid-adolescent students performed at the first assessments of the school year. “I have to be aware in Year 12 of the “bombs” in Term 1; no they can't do that etc”35 (Interview: Byron, 17th February, 2005).

Cynthia did not express any discomfit with the level of communication between herself and the school teachers. Winston appeared to feel that it was the responsibility of the school teachers to assist with finalising the selection for HSC, noting that was not why he was employed:

My job as a private teacher is to develop their technique, to develop their musical aspects within a song. The school is responsible for okaying the program. I'm not paid by the school. I'm paid by the students to teach them singing. We have a problem with what goes where.
(Interview: Winston, 26th February, 2005)

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35 Byron was referring to the negative reactions of the school teachers when they vetoed the repertoire he had selected for his students and refused to let the songs be performed for the HSC trials later in the year.
Winston and Cynthia seemed the most comfortable with this division of responsibilities between themselves and the school teachers, followed in varying degrees by Alison, Brian and Byron. There would appear to be a connection between conflict levels with school teachers and the breadth of repertoire with which the participants were conversant. While not performing any more, Winston and Cynthia had been active in selecting repertoire for examination syllabi; Alison was still an active recitalist exploring previously un-encountered repertoire whereas Brian and Byron were currently only active in the oratorio and opera repertoire.

Summary

The mandatory topic for HSC Music 2 appeared to create some confusion amongst the participants of the study. Firstly the “Australian focus” was often interpreted as meaning that repertoire had to be Australian, yet this is clearly not as designated by the topic. However, this confusion has been of assistance to Australian composers and the time factor of 25 years necessitates that singing teachers keep up to date with the latest compositions. Secondly, there appeared to be a lack of understanding regarding musical styles currently employed by composers and difficulty in defining the quintessential “Australian song”. The composers were fortunately unaffected by these concerns, pointing out that anything composed by an Australian, or by someone living in Australia was, by definition, an Australian song, regardless of the musical language or style employed by the composer.

The singing teachers displayed some reluctance towards exploring recently composed repertoire. This ranged from frank antagonism to the observation that there were very few contemporary art songs being composed that were of relevance to mid-adolescent singers. Nevertheless, there appeared to be a broad representation of Australian compositions regularly used by the singing teachers. Martin Wesley-Smith was consistently recommended, Andrew Schultz, Betty Beath, Alison Bauld, Carl Vine, Graeme Koehne, Nigel Butterley, Keith Humble, Peter Maddox, Gordon Hamilton, Lyndall Tafe and Stephen Leek were all mentioned among the composers who have written vocal repertoire in the last 25 years. Peter Sculthorpe, Alan Tregaskis, Phyllis Batchelor, Esther Rofe and Horace Keats were named, although their cited compositions all date from earlier than 25 years ago.
The participants had a broad range of classifications of what they regarded as repertoire suitable for performance. Many of these classifications were highly personal, “musically valid” and “different” being terms that show more about an individual’s listening habits than the value of the music itself. The one area they were in agreement upon was that of the emotional and mental suitability of vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent singers. Typically they used “relate to” and “understand” when describing repertoire that they considered to be appropriate for HSC performers. The teachers who continually explored new repertoire had the broadest range of material from which to make selections.

The singing teachers searched for repertoire that extended the technique of the students while allowing them the freedom to easily communicate with their audience. Whilst the retired examiner stressed the ability of examiners to understand technique, the comments of the school teachers endorsed the conclusion that the HSC performance component is primarily only about communication and therefore, will reflect subjectivity on the part of the examiners.

This draws attention to the fact that the examiners are school music teachers, with varying degrees of expertise and highlights the reservations that the singing teachers have towards the HSC examination process. Even though the school teachers are not concerned with vocal development they do represent the experience and listening history of the HSC examiners and make their suggestions accordingly. They indicated that finding the right piece for each student was the key to high marks in the HSC. The students showed varying degrees of reliance upon their singing teachers and school teachers in the selection of repertoire. This behaviour had negative and positive outcomes, largely dependant upon the expertise of the teacher giving advice.

In general, the singing teachers felt that the HSC adversely affected their repertoire selection for mid-adolescent singers, often interfering with the teacher’s projected plan of vocal development for the student. The male teachers all felt that it was inappropriate to examine singers on equal terms with their instrumental peers, citing vocal immaturity as the main factor in this recommendation. The singing teachers were also uncomfortable with what they perceived to be interference from the school teachers regarding their choice of repertoire for the students. They felt that the school teachers did not uphold equal effort when it came to repertoire selection, yet were too ready to veto material the singing teachers considered
optimum for the long term vocal needs of the students. However, the school teachers felt that much of the repertoire mid-adolescent singers presented for assessment was too difficult and did not allow the students to easily communicate the feeling and text of the material. Generally, the students just wanted to perform repertoire that had not been heard often by the examiners, to find songs that were capable of being performed dramatically and to sing well.
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In NSW, Australia, all music elective voice students must perform at least one song as part of their HSC performance component. In this study I have ascertained various criteria that were used by the three major groups of people making decisions about repertoire selection for this examination. I particularly wished to investigate the application of these criteria to the selection of Australian music because the mandatory topic for the HSC Music 2 course is Music of the last 25 years (Australian focus).

The research questions were:

- What criteria influence the selection of HSC vocal performance repertoire by school music teachers, singing teachers and singing students in Years 11 and 12?
- What are the similarities and differences in the criteria employed in these selections by school music teachers, singing teachers and students?
- In what ways does Australian repertoire fulfil these criteria?

There is a wide range of recent research relating to the vocal physiology of mid-adolescent singers and its application to vocal pedagogy. This is readily available yet many teachers appear not to avail themselves of this information. The salient point regarding the vocal physiology of mid-adolescents pertinent to this study is that these voices are still changing and developing and do not stabilize until approximately 21 years of age. Long term vocal health is considered dependent upon the quality of usage in these mid-adolescent years. Shortened range, breathiness, erratic pitch and sudden physiological changes are normal for mid-adolescent singers. It is recommended by vocal pedagogues that mid-adolescent voices are treated with care, and that range is restricted at first and only increased when voices are able to extend their ranges with ease of production. The use of extreme dynamics is also discouraged until these voices begin to stabilize.

Although there has been specific research about the vocal physiology of mid-adolescent singers, few studies have been produced about the psychological and emotional needs of mid-adolescent singers. Much can be drawn by inference from the studies about musical personalities (Kemp, 1996), musical identities (Davidson, 2002; Hargreaves et al., 2002) and
musical preferences of adolescents (Zillmann, 2000). In particular, emotional stress is often created by the need for mid-adolescents to be accepted within their peer groups conflicting with their need to practise in isolation music towards which their peer groups respond negatively. The intimate identification of singers with their instruments and the resulting inability to separate their feelings of self-worth from their vocal performance, can also impact negatively upon mid-adolescents already struggling with their developing sense of self-esteem. However, to relate to the practical daily issues involved when teaching singing to mid-adolescents, research by Bandura (1993, 1994, 1996, 1997) on the subject of self-efficacy is also of value. Woolfolk Hoy (2004) offers some aids for teachers towards the applications of these concepts in classroom situations, and these can also be of assistance for singing teachers working with individual students.

While there is one major source of Australian vocal music, the Australian Music Centre, there are only two publications36 that analyse Australian vocal repertoire of the last 25 years in a manner that is useful for singers and singing teachers. Some additional information may be derived from internet sources including individual composer websites and those of the smaller publishers. I particularly wished to ascertain if these sources were known to the participants, if they considered them to be adequate and if they employed any alternate methods to explore Australian vocal music of the last 25 years.

To establish an understanding of the knowledge of the participants in the areas of mid-adolescent vocal physiology, mid-adolescent emotional and social needs and Australian vocal repertoire, I determined that using semi-structured interviews to collect data would offer the most information whilst allowing for new avenues of investigation. Therefore I used a qualitative methodological construct and interviewed 14 participants representing pedagogical experts, private singing teachers, school music teachers, students, a retired senior HSC examiner and Australian composers. The interviews offered the opportunity to explore areas important to each participant while asking a set of questions common to all interviews.

I expected to find a divergence of criteria, particularly in the areas of vocal pedagogy and the vocal physiology of mid-adolescent singers. This divergence was in evidence; however it

36 At the time of completing this thesis in August 2006.
was not the case that the private singing teachers had all the knowledge of vocal pedagogy and that the school music teachers did not. All of the teachers demonstrated practical awareness of voices but only the two pedagogical experts fully understood the vocal physiology of mid-adolescent singers. The private singing teachers cited years of practice as the source of their pedagogical understanding, and they had all been teaching for a number of years at various state and private schools. However, at least one participant used “years of experience” to validate inappropriate pedagogical methods. Generally the school music teachers were reluctant to comment to individuals about physiological issues and would defer to the private singing teacher if possible. Nevertheless, they expressed a degree of confidence in their ability to assist from a vocal pedagogical focus when working with choirs. They also indicated interest towards attending practical courses involving the vocal physiology of mid-adolescent singers. The students appeared unaware of matters relating to vocal physiology, whether by default or by design of their respective singing teachers.

All the teachers used methods of teaching that appeared to encourage the growth of a strong sense of self-efficacy in their students, even though their criteria for repertoire selection were often contradictory. The private singing teachers talked about the physiological constraints of mid-adolescent singers, yet often recommended repertoire that appeared beyond the technical and emotional grasp of this age group. However, they all professed to encourage a gradual acquisition of sound vocal technique accompanied by a steady increase in musical difficulty levels within repertoire. Whether intentionally or otherwise, by using this method of teaching, the private singing teachers appeared to be applying the first source of self-efficacy as stated by Bandura, (mastery experiences) by raising the confidence and technical skill levels of mid-adolescent singers.

The assessment component of the NSW Board of Studies Senior Music Syllabi is a teaching method that encourages peer interactions accompanied by small recital-type performance opportunities. The assessments would appear to offer valuable modelling experiences for mid-adolescent music students along the lines of the second source of self-efficacy postulated by Bandura, that of social modelling. Not only should these assessments encourage mid-adolescent singers to identify with the success of their peers but they could also present circumstances in which positive and realistic feedback would be received regarding their developing skills. The establishment of mentoring relationships between mid-adolescent singers and their singing teachers would appear to fulfil another criterion of this source of
self-efficacy especially when the teacher is also a professional singer. It must be noted that the prevalence of mid-adolescent singers learning vocal material from recordings of popular music is not always a positive modelling experience, particularly when the students neglect to comprehend that the sounds they are attempting to emulate acoustically are made by professional singers with microphones in recording studios where there is frequently further electronic manipulation of the recorded repertoire.

Verbal persuasion, the third source of self-efficacy, when combined with the mastery experiences associated with the gaining of good vocal technique, is consistently used by singing teachers to encourage their students to accept the challenge of learning and performing unfamiliar music. Assisting mid-adolescents to honestly evaluate their singing during lessons, rehearsals and performances also promotes a sense of self-appraisal that is independent of the opinions of friends, family and critics. Finally, persuading mid-adolescents to interpret their emotional, somatic and physiological reactions to the stress of performance as an indicator of a normal anticipatory response rather than an indicator of personal deficiency could contribute to a strong sense of self-efficacy. It must be noted that although the private singing teachers and the school music teachers appeared to apply many of these techniques when working with mid-adolescent singers, the students often appeared determined to manifest negative attitudes and behaviours towards their own singing.

Amongst the participants in the study there was also divergence in what was considered to be appropriate repertoire for mid-adolescent singers in the HSC performance examination. The private singing teachers felt that repertoire should be dictated by the technical ability of mid-adolescent students and that their role in electing repertoire was related to the long term vocal growth of each individual. They attempted to find repertoire that was tailored to the strengths of each student, that would encourage an extension of each students’ current vocal technique and that would allow them to sing with ease in the performance examination. The school music teachers felt that in the majority of cases, students presented repertoire that was too technically demanding, although conversely, they also felt that students frequently chose material that either did not show off their abilities or was musically inferior. The students were usually looking for repertoire that would showcase their vocal and performance abilities, and that had not often been presented for the HSC performance examination. They were concerned about being compared to other students singing the same repertoire, a
concern that was reflected by the private singing teachers but not by the school music teachers.

Reference was made to the course outline of the Board of Studies by the retired senior examiner, who stressed the fact that students must demonstrate in their performance that they understand all the required musical concepts that they have studied in the topic which their song represents. This was a major concern of the school music teachers, although the private singing teachers did not mention this criterion, probably because they were unaware of its relevance. The students also did not refer to this aspect of their examination, possibly because it is so implicit in their ongoing school music lessons that they are oblivious to their singing teachers’ lack of awareness of this aspect of the music course and its application to repertoire selection. However, this syllabus criterion of the Board of Studies appeared to cause the most conflict between private singing teachers and school music teachers, as it became obvious that both parties were looking for quite different criteria. The private singing teachers frequently complained that the school music teachers vetted their repertoire choices with no useful explanation of their reasoning, while the school music teachers felt that students frequently presented repertoire that was too difficult or that was not readily communicated with the audience. Conversely, the school music teachers also noted that some students chose material that was too easy, although this discrepancy probably reflects the range of personalities of mid-adolescent singers enrolled in this performance examination.

Nearly all the participants were of the opinion that in order for mid-adolescent singers to perform at their best the students needed to have an emotional connection with their repertoire. One of the female students stressed this as the most important criterion for her in repertoire selection. The male student also felt this was a major consideration, although he allowed himself to take the time to learn and grow to like new repertoire to which he had previously not been exposed. The other female student, who exhibited compliant behaviour towards repertoire selection, was the only participant seemingly unconcerned about the need to “relate” to her repertoire. This student possibly represented the attitude of many students when she allowed her teachers to select repertoire for her. Singing students who have studied classical singing for a number of years will have frequently sat singing examinations with the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB) or Trinity College, London and are accustomed to selecting repertoire from prescribed examination lists.
The two pedagogical experts noted the use of structured examinations in providing a broad base of repertoire from which to select material for the HSC. They indicated that they would present repertoire to the students in order for the students to select songs to which they had an emotional connection. The private singing teachers spoke at length on this subject, stressing that if mid-adolescent singers did not have an emotional connection with their repertoire they were unlikely to do the required practice. They also felt that the texts of the songs needed to reflect the emotional maturity of the students, a subject to which the school music teachers also alluded. The school music teachers’ reasons for the desirability of students emotionally connecting with their repertoire were related to the ease with which students communicated the material and the emotional immaturity of this age group.

There appeared to be major discrepancies between the criteria to which the school music teachers and the retired senior examiner adhered. The retired senior examiner recommended folk songs as the most appropriate material for mid-adolescent singers, yet conversely indicated that to be able to achieve high marks in the HSC performance examination, mid-adolescent singers should be performing at the level of their instrumental peers. Two of the school music teachers advocated simple repertoire that would engage them as listeners and extend the students, while the third teacher extolled repertoire that was loud, high and showy. The students wanted to sing within their capabilities and sound impressive, yet often appeared to choose repertoire that was beyond their vocal range, perhaps in an attempt to impress. This attitude was most notable in the male student, who had attended the school at which the third school music teacher taught.

The private singing teachers commented that often students were encouraged to choose singing as their instrument in the HSC music performance examination if they were not competent in another instrument, and furthermore, that music was chosen as a subject for HSC only if students were perceived as being unable to achieve good marks in other subjects. This often resulted in students only commencing singing lessons in Year 12, a situation that the singing teachers regarded as less than ideal. To develop the confidence of mid-adolescent singers in their own technical and musical interpretative skills requires a larger time frame than one or even two years of private singing lessons. One private singing teacher referred to this short term teaching for HSC as a “micro-wave job”, allowing time for only a rudimentary technique to be gained by students. Because music performance assessments begin in term one, usually within about six weeks from the commencement of the school year, there is
really only time to assist the students to sing repertoire that they have selected themselves. When students commence singing lessons in Year 11 there is more time in which to develop technique and the teacher/student trust relationship, both of which are necessary to help mid-adolescents reassess their vocal self-concept. The teachers are then able to present students with new repertoire that the teachers consider appropriate for their level of technique and emotional understanding. Ideally, students will have commenced lessons prior to Year 11, had time to develop their technique and will have been introduced to a wider range of music than that dictated by their own listening history, thereby broadening the scope of their repertoire selection.

The procedure of selecting Australian music met with the most misconceptions and resistance from the participants. The school music teachers and the students appeared to rely upon the private singing teachers to recommend Australian music of the last 25 years. Conversely the private singing teachers did not feel that the school music teachers contributed enough to this selection. Two private singing teachers mentioned a wide range of Australian composers and repertoire that they frequently used in the HSC performance examination. The remaining teacher was insistent that he would continue to use the “four good songs” he already had and would not go to the Australian Music Centre and waste his time finding new material. While the two pedagogical experts both often received recent Australian material, usually to review for various publications, one was concerned at the “dearth” of good quality Australian vocal repertoire being written in the last 25 years and hoped that this study could be used to encourage respected composers to write more vocal repertoire, particularly for mid-adolescent voices. She also felt that the texts of many contemporary songs were often inappropriate for mid-adolescents singers, either too juvenile or too adult in theme and that this contributed to the paucity of useful repertoire.

Two of the three school music teachers and the retired senior examiner appeared to want to hear Australian vocal music that belonged to a period of composition prior to 1980 as they felt that this complied with the criterion that required students to demonstrate their understanding of their topic in the performance core. So much of the music they believed was representative of contemporary Australian art music was instead belonging to music written in Europe in the 1950s, which leads to the assumption that school music teachers are not hearing enough recently composed repertoire in performance or recordings. It is perhaps relevant to conclude that many private singing teachers and school music teachers are not yet
aware of the very broad range of contemporary Australian music and its divergent characteristics.

This point was stressed by the composers when they noted that anything written in Australia within the last 25 years is by definition Australian music, although they both talked about ways in which the musical culture in Australia changes slightly every five to ten years. They felt that very little of our contemporary art music acknowledges our indigenous musical heritage. However they were adamant that, in a multicultural society, Australian music reflects every nationality that has embraced Australia as home and therefore contemporary Australian art music is derived from all these sources and is all equally valid. They also felt that it was vital that the texts which mid-adolescent singers sang were relevant to their age, to their experiences and to Australian society. While one composer generally used texts that commented upon the attitudes of members of Australian society, the other composer tended to use text as onomatopoeia, partly to allow for exploration of words in a manner that did not restrict the compositions to any particular age group.

Nevertheless, regardless of whether the participants were insufficiently aware of contemporary Australian vocal music or whether they had accessed this repertoire from the various available sources, there is a paucity of Australian vocal repertoire that is appropriate for mid-adolescent singers. While there are few contemporary Australian songs that meet all the divergent criteria of the participants, there definitely appears to be a lack of awareness among Australian composers of the vocal and emotional needs of mid-adolescent singers.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

There are demonstrable gaps of knowledge among both types of teachers. To be able to intelligently select repertoire for the HSC, the private singing teachers need to be able to understand the performance criteria of the Board of Studies syllabi, particularly in relation to the need for mid-adolescent singers to demonstrate through their chosen repertoire their awareness of the musical concepts they have studied. This is not made clear for the educated layman by the *Stage 6 Music Syllabi* which are necessarily couched in language appropriate for school teachers. A brochure that clearly states the core performance and elective performance requirements is indicated, and should include clear descriptions of the manner in which the musical concepts should be demonstrated in performance. It should be noted,
though, that singing teachers and music performers in all disciplines do not break down music atomistically into the musical concepts as prescribed by the Board of Studies music syllabi. The constraints of dividing the elements of song repertoire into separate compartments of rhythm, melody, harmony, tonality and dynamics and then attempting to demonstrate all these elements has little correlation with compositional approaches and performing in a manner that engages an audience.

Because the school teachers are making regular assessments of mid-adolescent singers, further seminars and in-service courses about the special physiological and emotional needs of mid-adolescent singers appear to be indicated. The Australian National Association of Teachers of Singing (ANATS) already runs courses for private singing teachers that address these issues but clearly the attendance by school music teachers would be beneficial. The Australian Society of Music Educators (ASME) also has the facility for addressing these issues. It is acknowledged that often the very teachers who would benefit most from such courses are the most unlikely to attend, whether from displaced confidence in their abilities or financial constraints. I suggest that incorporating elements of vocal pedagogy and mid-adolescent vocal physiology in university pre-service school teacher training courses is essential. Such training would lessen the disparity of knowledge regarding mid-adolescent vocal physiology and be a step towards alleviating the conflict between the singing teachers and the school teachers. Furthermore, school music teachers would be able to assist mid-adolescent singing students to understand the impact upon their voices of their rapidly changing physiology.

Students are extremely reliant upon the knowledge of their respective singing and school music teachers, but it could assist them immeasurably to comprehend that their voices are unstable until the age of 21 and that they can expect there to be continual vocal adjustments and changes during their Preliminary and HSC years. A course that explained to mid-adolescent singers the physiology of the voice, along with practical vocal health care, is recommended. This course could either be a component of the school music course, or be organised as a once yearly, weekend course. It would be most practical to be run as a joint venture by ANATS and the Department of Education and Training (DET), as the course content incorporates material of relevance to both organisations. When mid-adolescents begin to comprehend that their vocal peers share similar perceptions of their own voices and
of their specific emotional reactions towards their ability to perform vocal repertoire, it is likely that their sense of isolation may be diminished.

The production of resource materials providing additional peer models to those typically found in the media is recommended. Such resources could include DVDs of mid-adolescent singers successfully performing a variety of repertoire that is vocally and emotionally appropriate for their age group. Perhaps the performers could discuss the ways in which they try to interpret what is in the music and convey this to an audience, with singing teachers discussing pedagogically sound methods of doing this vocally. Optimally, this resource would be produced jointly by ANATS and DET, and would be accessible by members of both institutions. A combination of this resource and a series of courses suggested in the previous paragraph, could give opportunities for school music teachers and private singing teachers to have a dialogue about physiological and emotional issues relating to mid-adolescent singers, as well as provide valuable encouragement and understanding of their special needs to students.

While it is possible to access a large amount of contemporary Australian vocal repertoire through the Australian Music Centre, few of the songs have been usefully categorized in a manner that can assist and encourage teachers and students to explore the material at hand. Also, many compositions are in facsimile\(^\text{37}\) versions which can often be difficult to decipher and may discourage teachers and students from attempting to sing them. Some difficulty levels are suggested by individual composers, though there is no standard applied to this. An independent grading system would remove the personal bias of composers, although it is admitted that it would not remove the personal bias of the people grading the songs however well informed they are in the subject of vocal physiology. Australian Composers does list grades for their published repertoire that have been supplied by specialist teachers, as well as the first page of each composition and sound files where they are available. Comprehensive categorized resources like this make contemporary Australian music readily accessible for teachers and students, and it is recommended that wherever possible such aids be included in all websites that promote Australian vocal repertoire.

\(^{37}\) Handwritten.
However, the shortage of appropriate Australian repertoire for mid-adolescent singers needs to be addressed. While it is probably outside of the jurisdiction of the New South Wales Board of Studies, it would appear that a series of workshops along the lines of the biennial ModArt workshops run by the Australian Music Centre and the Song Company for composers of small scale vocal ensembles be organised for composers of art song. This should raise the awareness of young composers for the need for more repertoire for mid-adolescent singers while also educating composers about appropriate writing techniques for singers. Hopefully it would also alert more established composers to this need for repertoire, and re-educate private singing teachers and school music teachers alike to the emerging Australian musical language of this century. These courses should also be open to school music teachers and private singing teachers, and hopefully culminate in performances and recordings of material that would be available to the general public, further informing them of the increasing wealth of contemporary Australian art song. All composers contemplating writing vocal music would benefit from a booklet about the vocal physiology of mid-adolescents and of singers in general.

The availability of contemporary Australian vocal music could also be enhanced by the publication of more recordings of Australian art song. I suggest that the more versions of songs that are available in recordings, the easier it becomes for students and teachers to appreciate diversity in interpretations of vocal repertoire and to encourage uniquely individual performances by mid-adolescent singers. The eclectic range of contemporary Australian music often necessitates that potential performers allow time to adjust to the differing musical languages of each composer. Hearing recordings and live performances of both vocal repertoire and other repertoire of composers assists this process. Perhaps it would be possible for organisations such as Musica Viva38, which already creates many programs and performances for schools, to include programs that incorporate elements of contemporary Australian art song performed by professional singers but vocally appropriate for mid-adolescent singers.

Whilst this study addressed selection criteria for mid-adolescent performers for the HSC

38 The major entrepreneurial arts organisation in Australia that tours ensemble music and also is responsible for an extensive music education program presenting performances in schools throughout Australia. (www.musicaviva.com.au)
examination with a special focus on Australian repertoire of the last 25 years, there were no
interviews conducted with students who had been enrolled in Music 2, the course with the
mandatory topic of “Music of the last 25 years (Australian focus)”. The data relating to
Australian repertoire was derived from the private singing teachers, the school music teachers
and the composers. Further research that conducts interviews with students either currently
or previously enrolled in HSC Music 2 (and Music Extension) could supply data that not only
explores Australian repertoire choices as they are occurring, but allows retrospective
reflections upon the choices and the criteria that were applied in these choices.

Another area of research could investigate whether sitting performance examinations in the
years prior to HSC and its consequent broadening of the musical language of mid-adolescents
thereby makes them more adventurous in their HSC repertoire choice. A practical
exploration of the guidelines of self-efficacy as used deliberately in private studios is also
indicated. The study could investigate ways in which the four sources of self-efficacy
outlined by Bandura are addressed by private singing teachers and how their awareness of
these issues can be enhanced.

While studying the selection criteria for HSC vocal repertoire of private singing teachers,
school music teachers and voice students many issues were presented. The participants
evined varying levels of comprehension of the vocal physiology of mid-adolescent singers
and their emotional and social needs. These areas of knowledge can be improved with well
organised education programs for the three groups of people represented by the participants.
Some programs are being offered by education authorities, but I believe that programs jointly
run by a number of these organisations would reach a wider audience and also allow for more
communication between singing teachers and school music teachers, a situation that should
benefit mid-adolescent singers.

In order to increase the amount of Australian vocal repertoire appropriate for mid-adolescent
singers performing in the HSC examination, it would appear necessary to present
opportunities for composers to workshop vocal compositions for this age group. One could
also argue that composers whose works are sung by students in their adolescence are likely to
be revisited as the singers become older, and that composing for mid-adolescent singers not
only results in the performance of compositions in the short term but creates an audience for
future compositions.
Finally, the primary impetus for this study came from the need for mid-adolescent singers to be judged in performance. All participants agreed that the ability to communicate with an audience was the goal of the performer, regardless of the level of the students’ vocal technique. Selecting repertoire that encouraged this level of communication whilst giving mid-adolescent singers musical vehicles that allowed them to excel within their vocal technical standard was the aim of all the people I interviewed. Their criteria for these choices were often divergent, often uninformed, but valid from their personal bias. Ultimately, any performance examination will also be adjudicated through personal bias, no matter how rigorously the examiners try to avoid this. For music to have validity it must appeal to different people at different levels. There can be no ideal song, no ideal style, and no perfect repertoire; there is only the performance itself and the emotional integrity of the performer.
Bibliography


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Appendix A

GLOSSARY

Year 11: Fifth year of secondary school.

Year 12: Sixth and final year of secondary school.

Selective school: Secondary school intended to meet the needs of students with particular gifts or talents and which require students to meet certain selection criteria in order to attend.

Catholic school: Fee paying school with religious instruction that pertains to the Catholic faith.

Public school: State school open to all residents within a local geographical area.

Co-educational school: School attended by male and female students.

Students: The sample of Year 12 students who were selected to participate in this study.

Studio teachers: The sample of private singing teachers who were selected to participate in this study.

School music teachers: The sample of classroom music teachers selected to participate in this study.

Higher School Certificate: (HSC) The final assessment examination in New South Wales secondary schools undertaken by students in Year 12.

Senior High School: Years 11 and 12.

Elective Music: Any of the New South Wales secondary classroom music courses which students choose to study. Additional Study Course, Music I course, Music 2 course and Music extension.

Music 1: One of the three elective classroom music courses that can be chosen by students in senior secondary school in New South Wales (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999a). The course caters for students who have diverse musical
backgrounds and musical interests, and assumes no formal musical training on the part of the student.

Music 2: One of the three elective classroom music courses that can be chosen by students in senior secondary school in New South Wales (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999b). This course assumes students have a formal background in music, have developed music literacy skills and have some knowledge and understanding of musical styles.

Music Extension: One of the three elective classroom music courses that can be chosen by students in senior secondary school in New South Wales (New South Wales Board of Studies, 1999b). This course can only be taken in conjunction with Music 2 and assumes a high level of music literacy, advanced performance skills, composition skills or musicology skills.

Mandatory topic: The topic which must be done to complete the HSC in Music 2: “Music of the last 25 years (Australian Focus)”.

Mid-adolescent voice: Voice of teenager aged 16-18. Major body growth has ceased but neuromotor pathways are still being made. The voice is still unstable.

Abduction: Opening of the vocal folds.

Adduction: Closing of the vocal folds.

Cricothyroid muscles: Muscles that lengthen and thin the vocal folds.

Thyroarytenoid muscles: Muscles that thicken and shorten the vocal folds.
# Appendix B

## Ralston Repertoire Difficulty Index (RRDI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>Limited to major 10th.</td>
<td>Up to 1 octave plus 5th. Moderate register changes.</td>
<td>Up to 2 octaves and more. Difficult register changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tessitura</strong></td>
<td>Well within comfortable range.</td>
<td>Moderately high or low, reasonable for voice.</td>
<td>High or low, difficult to sustain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrases</strong></td>
<td>Short, 2-3 bars.</td>
<td>Up to 3-5 bars.</td>
<td>Long, require strong breath control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Melody</strong></td>
<td>Simple, diatonic with conjunct intervals and syllabic.</td>
<td>May include disjunct &amp; difficult intervals, melismas of moderate length.</td>
<td>May include chromaticism, with leaps of more than an octave &amp; extended melismas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmonic Foundations</strong></td>
<td>May include triadic accompaniment with few dissonances.</td>
<td>May include consonant to moderately dissonant accompaniment that may or may not be related to the voice part.</td>
<td>May include dissonance and clear delineation between melody and accompaniment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pronunciation</strong></td>
<td>Pronunciation of consonants and vowels, individually or in combination, is relatively simple with regard to tempo, vowel placement and repetition.</td>
<td>Pronunciation of consonants and vowels, individually or in combination, is moderately complex with regard to tempo, vocal placement and repetition.</td>
<td>Pronunciation of consonants and vowels, individually or in combination, is difficult with regard to tempo, vocal placement and repetition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix C

### Hu difficulty levels (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary Stylistic</th>
<th>Elementary Vocal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhythm</strong></td>
<td>The tempo does not change very often and the rhythm is uncomplicated.</td>
<td>The rhythm may be of moderate complexity with alternating meters, and tempo may range from very fast to very slow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tonality</strong></td>
<td>The tonality is either major or minor with limited use of chromatic alterations.</td>
<td>The tonality may major, minor, or moderately chromatic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Melodic</strong></td>
<td>The melodic style consists of simple and chiefly conjunct intervals.</td>
<td>Melodic intervals may be disjunct and moderately difficult, but skips may not exceed one octave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmonic Foundation</strong></td>
<td>Harmonically, the accompaniment has a triadic structure with few dissonances.</td>
<td>Harmony may be consonant to moderately dissonant and related or not related to the voice part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Texture</strong></td>
<td>The texture is primarily homophonic and is supported by doubling.</td>
<td>Texture may range from very thin to very thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
<td>The text style is syllabic.</td>
<td>The text setting may be syllabic or melismatic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intermediate Stylistic</th>
<th>Intermediate Vocal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrases</strong></td>
<td>Phrases are short and may be two or three measures of 4/4 in length at a moderate tempo.</td>
<td>Phrases may be three to five measures of 4/4 at a moderate tempo and may end on middle or low pitches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocal Range</strong></td>
<td>The range covers no more than a major tenth with register changes that are easy to negotiate.</td>
<td>The range may extend up to two octaves with moderately difficult register changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tessitura</strong></td>
<td>The tessitura lies well within the comfortable range for the voice type.</td>
<td>The tessitura should be reasonable for the voice type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pronunciation</strong></td>
<td>The diction involves a comfortable range for the phoneme and syllable that appear and a tempo that permits easy articulation.</td>
<td>The diction may be moderately difficult. The syllables may appear within a range that requires vowel modification and at a tempo that makes consonants moderately difficult to articulate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Difficulty levels proposed by Jones (1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Melody</strong></td>
<td>Vocal melody is primarily diatonic step-wise motion.</td>
<td>Vocal melody is basically diatonic but includes non-diatonic tones and leaps to an octave. The use of melismas.</td>
<td>Chromatic vocal melody with leaps in excess of an octave. Difficult melodic intervals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhythm</strong></td>
<td>Symmetrical rhythms.</td>
<td>Symmetrical and asymmetrical rhythms.</td>
<td>Complex problems of rhythm and text articulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>The vocal range is restricted to an octave.</td>
<td>The vocal range is limited to a tenth.</td>
<td>Vocal range is extended beyond a tenth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmonic</strong></td>
<td>Accompaniment and resulting harmonies largely support the vocal line.</td>
<td>Accompaniment is less directly supportive of the vocal melody; thus functions as an interpretative element in the setting.</td>
<td>The accompaniment and vocal melody are syncretic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text and</strong></td>
<td>Straight-forward relationship between text and music.</td>
<td>Subtle relationship between text and music.</td>
<td>Complex relationship between text and music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

The University of Sydney

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM
OF MUSIC

An investigation of the selection procedures relating to Australian vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent and HSC performers.

SUBJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT
Research project

This study seeks to identify the criteria school music teachers, private singing teachers and secondary school music students in Year 11 and Year 12 use when selecting Australian songs for performance in HSC. The study is a component of the degree of Master of Music (Music Education) which I am currently undertaking under the supervision of Dr. Kathryn Marsh.

Students and teachers will be asked to participate in an interview which will be recorded with both mini-disc and computer. During each interview each participant will be asked to nominate a song they believe to be appropriate for the HSC examination. The interviews will take place during Term 1, Term 2 and early Term 3, 2005.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent. If you do consent to participate you may withdraw at any time. Any decision not to participate will in no way prejudice your educational relationship to the school or to the researcher. All information obtained in this study will be confidential and any identifying data relating to either the participants or the school they are involved with will be deleted from the records as soon as possible. On completion of the study you will receive a summary of the results. The input of students and teachers will be valuable in identifying procedures and criteria used in selecting Australian vocal repertoire. It is envisioned that the results of this study will be used to inform teaching practice.

If you wish to gain more information about this study, or have any concerns, please contact me on (02) 9280 1780. If you have any further concerns please contact Dr. Kathryn Marsh, the supervisor of this study, on (02) 9351 1333.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811

Yours sincerely

Wendy Dixon

Ms Wendy Dixon,
PO Box K268,
Haymarket, NSW 1240
Phone (02) 9280 1780
Appendix F

The University of Sydney

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM
OF MUSIC

Dear Principal,

I am writing to request your permission to undertake a study entitled “An investigation of the selection procedures relating to Australian vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent and HSC performers” with students and/or teachers from your school. This study seeks to identify the criteria school music teachers, private singing teachers and secondary school music students in Year 11 and Year 12 use when selecting Australian songs for performance in HSC. The study is a component of the degree of Master of Music (Music Education) which I am currently undertaking under the supervision of Dr. Kathryn Marsh.

I am a singing teacher with a large private studio, also teaching at two high schools in the Sydney area. In my work with students undertaking HSC in both Music 1 and Music 2 (and Music Extension) it has become noticeable that it is not only difficult to access well-published and graded Australian songs in order to comply with the mandatory subject “Music of the last 25 years (Australian focus)” but that there is a divergence in criteria applied by school teachers, singing teachers and students in selecting repertoire. Data collected from this study will provide information to assist in understanding the differing criteria employed when choosing songs for students and will explore the methods the participants employ to avail themselves of source material (scores and recordings). It is envisioned that the results of this study will be used to inform teaching practice.

Data collection will involve the participation of a teacher and/or a student in a one-to-one interview that will be recorded on either mini-disc or directly into computer. Information and consent forms will be sent by mail to each participant requesting their participation in the study. The interview will be arranged for a time that is convenient to the participant and not during school hours. The interview will follow the outlines attached. At the place of the interview participants will also be asked to nominate a song they consider to be relevant for HSC music students.

All information collected will be used exclusively for the purposes of this research study. All participants will remain anonymous and the information collected will be confidential. Participants will retain copyright over any recorded material and the recordings will only be used for the purposes of this study. Participation is voluntary and the participants may withdraw at any time with no reflection on our ongoing educational relationship. The participants will also be given pseudonyms in any published material. On completion of the study participants and the principal will receive a summary of the results.

If you wish for more information regarding this study, please contact me on (02) 9280 1780. The supervisor for this study, Dr. Kathryn Marsh, may be contacted at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music on (02) 9351 1333. I will contact you within two weeks to discuss whether you would agree to my undertaking this research with students and/or teachers from your school.

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811

Yours sincerely

Wendy Dixon

Ms Wendy Dixon
PO Box K268,
Haymarket, NSW 1240
Phone: (02)9280 1780
Appendix G
The University of Sydney

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM
OF MUSIC

An investigation of the selection procedures relating to Australian vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent and HSC performers.

PRIVATE SINGING TEACHER CONSENT FORM
(interview)

I consent to the audio-recording with Mini-Disc and/or computer and interview of

_________________________________________________________ by Wendy Dixon from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music for the purposes of her research into the selection and grading of vocal repertoire.

I understand that the audio recordings will only be used for the purpose of this research study, participants will retain copyright over the recorded material and that names of participants will remain confidential. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. If you have any further concerns please contact Dr. Kathryn Marsh, the supervisor of this study, on (02) 9351 1333.

Signed_________________________________________(Teacher)

Signed_________________________________________(Witness)

Name of Witness_________________________________________

Date_________________________________________

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811

Please return this form to:

Ms Wendy Dixon
PO Box K268,
Haymarket, NSW 1240
Phone: (02)9280 1780
Appendix H

The University of Sydney

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM
OF MUSIC

An investigation of the selection procedures relating to Australian vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent and HSC performers.

CLASSROOM MUSIC TEACHER CONSENT FORM
(interview)

I consent to the audio-recording with Mini-Disc and/or computer and interview of ________________________________ by Wendy Dixon from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music for the purposes of her research into the selection and grading of vocal repertoire.

I understand that the audio recordings will only be used for the purpose of this research study, participants will retain copyright over the recorded material and that names of participants will remain confidential. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. If you have any further concerns please contact Dr. Kathryn Marsh, the supervisor of this study, on (02) 9351 1333.

Signed ____________________________________________ (Teacher)

Signed ____________________________________________ (Witness)

Name of Witness ____________________________________________

Date ____________________________________________

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811

Please return this form to:

Ms Wendy Dixon
PO Box K268,
Haymarket, NSW 1240
Appendix I

The University of Sydney

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

An investigation of the selection procedures relating to Australian vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent and HSC performers.

STUDENT PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

(Interview)

I consent to the audio-recording with Mini-Disc and/or computer and interview

_________________________________________ by Wendy Dixon from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music for the purposes of her research into the selection and grading of vocal repertoire.

I understand that the audio recordings will only be used for the purpose of this research study, participants will retain copyright over the recorded material and that names of participants will remain confidential. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. If you have any further concerns please contact Dr. Kathryn Marsh, the supervisor of this study, on (02) 9351 1333.

Signed_________________________________________(Student Participant)

Date____________________________________________

Signed_________________________________________(Witness)

Name of Witness________________________________

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811.

Please return this form to:

Ms Wendy Dixon
PO Box K268,
Haymarket, NSW 1240
Phone: (02) 9280 1780
Appendix J

The University of Sydney

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM
OF MUSIC

An investigation of the selection procedures relating to Australian vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent and HSC performers.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
(interview)

I consent to the audio-recording with Mini-Disc and/or computer and interviewing of
________________________________________________________ by Wendy Dixon from the Sydney
Conservatorium of Music for the purposes of her research into the selection and grading of vocal repertoire.
I understand that the audio recordings will only be used for the purpose of this research study, participants will retain copyright over the recorded material and that names of participants will remain confidential. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. If you have any further concerns please contact Dr. Kathryn Marsh, the supervisor of this study, on (02) 9351 1333.

Signed______________________________ (Participant)

Signed______________________________ (Witness)

Name of Witness______________________________

Date______________________________

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager of Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811

Please return this form to:

Ms Wendy Dixon
PO Box K268,
Haymarket, NSW 1240
Phone: (02) 9280 1780
Appendix K

“An investigation of the selection procedures relating to Australian vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent HSC performers.”

The semi-structured interview schedule

- What are your methods for ascertaining the vocal range and tessitura of each student?
  Where is it comfortable for them to sing?
  What do you consider the optimum ranges for young female and young male voices?
  Why can’t the males sing the high and low notes in the song?
  When the girls have such a large range why are they not comfortable singing all of it?

- What is your current level of understanding regarding vocal pedagogy, particularly relating to mid-adolescents?
  What causes breathiness and that light tone?
  Any idea why there is often minimal vibrato and rudimentary agility in young singers?
  Why do adolescents suddenly complain that it hurts to sing?
  Is there some physiological reason for this?
  Why do the girls often sound like they have two different voices?
  Why does it often seen that boys can only sing loudly?

- What do you regard as appropriate material for mid-adolescent singers?
  Is balance of program, key structure and text considered in these choices?
  Will it show them/you off to an audience or examiner?
  Do you consider that the student should be able to sing the song in any key?
  What have you read of the latest research on voice types and appropriate material for mid-adolescents?
  Do you choose songs to suit the technical capabilities of a student?
  Do you choose songs to encourage an aspect of vocal technique in your student?

- What contemporary composers are you conversant with?

- How do you access songs by composers you like?
  Is it important to hear a recording or performance of the song?

- What criteria do you use to determine the difficulty of a song?
  What are the characteristics of a song that make it a good choice?
  Melody, harmonic structure, rhythm, range, tessitura, style?
  Has your approach to choosing repertoire choice changed in response to the work you are doing for the HSC?

- Can you name a song you consider particularly appropriate for HSC students?
  What do you like about this?
  Why is it a good performance piece?
How do you choose a song?
Is it a purely musical reaction?
Have you heard a recording or a performance of the song?
If you like the music does it matter to you what the text is?
Do you like the poem?
Is the difficulty of the accompaniment an important factor in your choice?
Do you sight read well enough to pick out the tune with a bit of help from the accompaniment?
Can you play the accompaniment on piano or guitar?
Did a student bring the song to a lesson and introduce you to it this way?
Is it a song that you already know and can therefore teach/coach/learn it easily?
Do you consider the vocal range and tessitura of the song with a particular student in mind?
Is ease of performance by the student a consideration in your choice of song?
Do you choose songs that belong to the student's grade level in accordance with AMEB or Trinity criteria?

Wendy Dixon
15 December 2004

Dr K Marsh  
Sydney Conservatorium of Music  
Building C41  
The University of Sydney

Dear Dr Marsh

I am pleased to inform you that the Human Research Ethics Committee at its meeting on 13 December 2004 approved your protocol entitled "An investigation of the selection procedures relating to Australian vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent and HSC performers."

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref No.: 12-2004/2/7932  
Approval Period: December 2004 – December 2005  
Completion Date of Project: 31 March 2006  
No. of Participants: 13  
Authorised Personnel: Dr K Marsh  
Ms W Dixon

To comply with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans, and in line with the Human Research Ethics Committee requirements this approval is for a 12-month period. At the end of the approval period, the HREC will approve extensions for a further 12-month, subject to a satisfactory annual report. The HREC will forward to you an Annual Progress Report form, at the end of each 12-month period. Your first report will be due on 31 December 2005.

Conditions of Approval Applicable to all Projects

(1) Modifications to the protocol cannot proceed until such approval is obtained in writing. (Refer to the website www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human under 'Forms and Guides' for a Modification Form).
(2) The confidentiality and anonymity of all research subjects is maintained at all
times, except as required by law.

(3) All research subjects are provided with a Participant Information Sheet and
Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.

(4) The Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form are to be on University
of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and
telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the
Committee.

(5) The following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant
Information Sheet. Any person with concerns or complaints about the
conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Ethics
Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811.

(6) The standard University policy concerning storage of data and tapes should
be followed. While temporary storage of data or tapes at the researcher’s
home or an off-campus site is acceptable during the active transcription
phase of the project, permanent storage should be at a secure, University
controlled site for a minimum of seven years.

(7) A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the
completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely

John Watson

Associate Professor J D Watson
Chairman
Human Research Ethics Committee

Encl. Dear ‘Principal’ Letter
Dear ‘School Music Teacher’ Letter
Classroom Music Teacher Consent Form – Interview
Dear ‘HSC Student’ Letter
Dear ‘Parent’ Letter
Parental and Participant Consent Form
Dear ‘Private Singing Teacher’ Letter
Dear ‘Elizabeth’ Letter
Private Music Teacher Consent Form – Interview
Subject Information Statement
Semi structured interview schedule

Cc: Ms Wendy Dixon, Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Building C41, The University of Sydney
Dear Ms Dixon

SERAP Number: 04.234

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled An investigation of the selection procedures relating to Australian vocal repertoire for mid-adolescent and HSC performers. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation.

This approval will remain valid until 31/12/05.

This approval covers the following researchers and research assistants to enter schools for the purposes of this research; Wendy Dixon only.

You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school’s convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to General Manager, Planning and Innovation, Department of Education and Training, GPO Box 33, Sydney, NSW 2001.

Yours sincerely

Dr Christine Ewan
General Manager, Planning and Innovation
6 April 05
26 April 2005

Wendy Nixon
Sydney Conservatorium of Music
University of Sydney
PO Box K268
HAYMARKET NSW 1240

Dear Ms Nixon,

Thank you for your application dated 13 April 2005 to conduct research in Catholic systemic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Permission is given for you to approach the Principal of the secondary school nominated, listed below, requesting participants for your study:

"An Investigation of the selection Procedures Relating to Australian Vocal Repertoire for Mid-Adolescents and HSC Performers"

Martin Brookes, Kogarah
Mr P.J. O'Connor

It is the prerogative of any Principal whom you might approach to decline your invitation to be involved in this study or to withdraw from involvement at any time.

The privacy of the school and that of any school personnel or students involved in your study must, of course, be preserved at all times and comply with requirements under the Commonwealth Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 1999. It is noted in your application that your study does not involve direct unsupervised contact with the students. Accordingly, a Working with Children Check, per Child Protection Legislation, is not required.

When you have established your participating schools, please complete the attached form and return it to this office. It is a condition of approval that when your research has been completed you will forward a summary report of the findings and/or recommendations to this office as soon as practicable after results are to hand.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Miss Evette Ashton at this office if there is any further information you require. I wish you well in this undertaking and look forward to learning about your findings.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Barrett
Education Officer, Human Resources
on behalf of
Br Kelvin Canavan FMS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS

OUR MISSION CELEBRATING BEING CATHOLIC IN AUSTRALIA • ENSURING QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING • MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR WORLD