

Participating in a Project with Practical Stage Experience: Effect of Project-Based Learning on Opera Singing Students' Well-Being

Natalija Stanković¹ and Blanka Bogunović^{1,2}

¹ Faculty of Music, University of Arts, Belgrade, Serbia;

² Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

¹stankovicsnatalija@gmail.com, ²blankabogunovic@fmu.bg.ac.rs

Abstract

This study explores how project-based learning with practical stage experience influences the well-being of young opera singing students. Drawing on Martin Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of well-being and situated learning theory, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants six months after their involvement in the project "Opera: Past, Present, Perfect!". All participants had limited or no prior stage experience. The thematic analysis revealed four interconnected themes: Stage Experience and Acting, Interpersonal Relationships, Working Attitude, and Achievement and Personal Change. Participants described how experiential learning within a collaborative and professionally mentored environment supported both their artistic development and personal well-being. The findings suggest that situated learning activated all five PERMA components, with particularly strong effects from interpersonal relationships, which often facilitated positive emotions, meaning, and a sense of achievement. Participants also reported that gaining stage experience, working under fair and engaged mentors, and feeling respected contributed to lasting improvements in self-confidence, social skills, and motivation. The study highlights the importance of integrating performance-based experiences into formal vocal training, not only for developing professional competencies but also for supporting students' psychological resilience and well-being during the critical transitional period between education and professional life.

Keywords: well-being, opera singers, situated learning, participative learning

Introduction

The most common approach in psychological research on what contributes to a "good life" focuses on reducing symptoms of poor mental health and managing existing problems (Ascenso et al., 2017). In contrast, positive psychology argues that feeling good is not simply the absence of disorder or illness

(Seligman, 2008). Within this framework, the idea of merely "surviving"—or as some authors put it, getting by in life—is replaced with the goal of living life to its full potential (Ascenso et al., 2017).

Research on the well-being of professional musicians shows that being professionally involved in music can lead to various psychological and emotional difficulties. This contrasts with engagement in music in a non-professional context, which is often beneficial (Ascenso et al., 2017). As a result, studies on professionals tend to address specific problems, their causes, and possible solutions. The most frequently discussed topic in this context is anxiety (e.g., Fehm & Schmidt, 2006; Fernholz et al., 2019; Mirović & Bogunović, 2013; Mor et al., 1995; van Kemenade et al., 1995). A similar trend is seen in research on professional opera singers, where the focus usually lies on the difficulties associated with singing (e.g., Barefield, 2012; Cupido, 2018; Kokotsaki & Davidson, 2003; Spahn et al., 2010). While well-being has been explored among opera singers, these studies typically involve already established professionals (Allison, 2021; Cupido, 2016). Studies on young opera singers cover a range of topics, from differences in experience, knowledge, and anxiety at leading conservatories in the U.S. (Kwak et al., 2014), to the influence of vocal classification (Fach selection) on young singers (Nguyen, 2015; O'Bryan, 2015), and the impact of health, personality traits, and sociocultural context on their development (Sandgren, 2005). However, what is noticeably missing is a perspective grounded in positive psychology, particularly when it comes to students in the educational phase of their professional journey.

This gap is significant, as the formative years of higher opera education are critical not only for the development of technical skills but also for shaping students' psychological and emotional resilience. Opera students face intense pressure to perform at a high level while simultaneously developing

their artistic identity. Sandgren's (2005) research emphasizes that this developmental phase involves complex interactions among health, personality, and educational demands, during which self-concept and artistic autonomy gradually emerge. At the same time, Kirby (2021) notes that many undergraduate vocal performance programs do not provide adequate support for holistic well-being, often neglecting dimensions such as emotional balance, physical health, and the ability to manage the occupational realities of the opera profession. Integrating applied stage practice with structured wellness education could offer a more supportive framework for students navigating this high-stakes environment.

This shift in focus—from pathology and professional burnout toward proactive well-being in the educational context—aligns with the core tenets of positive psychology. It recognizes that supporting students' flourishing during their studies can build a healthier foundation for their professional lives. Therefore, this paper aims to explore how project-based learning with practical stage experience may influence the well-being of young opera singers still in training, offering a rare intersection between applied pedagogy and positive psychology in music education.

Project-based experience as a framework for situational learning

This study specifically examined the impact of situational, practice-oriented learning on the well-being of young opera singers. Although one case study explored the effects of situational learning on young opera singers within a professional opera production (Dullea, 2017), its focus was on the process of acquiring professional skills, that is, the skills developed during such an experience. By contrast, the present research emphasizes how situational learning within a project involving practical stage experience influences the well-being of young singers.

Drawing on Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning, which frames learning as a social process embedded in participation within communities of practice, Dullea's (2017) study explored how young opera singers gained access to real-world artistic practices through involvement in a professional production. The findings revealed that experiential learning in this context—working alongside professional directors, coaches, and singers—allowed young artists to develop not only technical and interpretive competencies but

also a sense of belonging and identity as emerging professionals (Dullea, 2017). The rehearsal and production processes were understood as sites of legitimate peripheral participation, through which singers moved toward fuller participation in the professional opera community.

Similarly, Hamilton (2015) emphasized the importance of learning in authentic performance settings in her study of acting training for opera singers. Interviews with performers and directors confirmed that technical and creative stage skills are most effectively developed through participation in staged projects, rather than through isolated classroom instruction. Her findings support the value of incorporating performance-based experiences into conservatoire training, highlighting that professional expectations today demand not only vocal excellence but also collaborative adaptability, physical expressivity, and interpretive initiative—all of which are developed in the context of practical rehearsal work.

Kirby (2021) also argues for a curriculum that integrates applied stage practices through real or simulated production environments. His research highlights significant gaps in undergraduate vocal training, particularly in areas such as movement, character development, and wellness, which are crucial for preparing for professional stage performance. He advocates for embedding project-based experiences that mirror professional practice to effectively address these gaps.

Taken together, these studies support a situated learning framework in which project-based operatic experiences serve as critical learning environments. They point to the potential of such environments, not only for the acquisition of skills and the formation of professional identity, but also, as is yet to be examined, for supporting the well-being of young singers. The present study builds on this hypothesis by examining how situational learning within a practical project context affects well-being outcomes.

Martin Seligman's theory of well-being: The PERMA model

The framework used in this study is Seligman's theory of well-being (2011), in which well-being is defined as a five-dimensional construct, known as the PERMA model, that consists of positive emotions, engagement or the state of being absorbed while doing something, relationships (especially feeling loved and valued), meaning (feeling that we are doing something significant), and achievement

(sense of accomplishment). Each of these five components meets the following: (1) they enhance well-being, (2) they are pursued for their own sake, and (3) they are individually defined and measured separately from each other (Seligman, 2011).

Positive psychology assumes that the components of the well-being construct—positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement—if present in a former experience may “predict future positive outcomes, besides relating to higher psychological and physical levels of functioning in the present” (Ascenso et al., 2017, p. 2). Applied to the context of young opera singers, this implies that good feelings are more likely to persist into the next phase, the beginning of professional engagement, if they exist during formal education.

“Opera: Past, Present, Perfect!” project

The situational learning context for this study was the project “Opera: Past, Present, Perfect!” organized by the Belgrade-based NGO Musical Opera Theatre Organization (MOTO), funded by Creative Europe, and carried out from February 2021 to February 2023. The program was intended for young opera artists, including all professional profiles participating in staging an opera (singers, instrumentalists, composers, conductors, directors, etc.). The project was conceived as a series of workshops, lectures, masterclasses, panel discussions, concerts, exhibitions, and, most importantly, several opera productions. Its primary aim was to connect and educate young professionals, fostering a cross-sectoral, cross-national, and intergenerational dialogue between emerging talents and their mentors. A specific goal was to establish a strong network of young professionals involved in the opera production process. Participants worked under the mentorship of distinguished artists from the field of opera and theatre.

The design of the “Opera: Past, Present, Perfect!” project as a multi-phase, collaborative, and participatory program aligns with pedagogical frameworks that emphasize situated learning and learner-centred environments. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning occurs most effectively within communities of practice, where individuals develop competence and identity through active engagement in authentic, socially embedded contexts. This is particularly relevant in artistic domains, such as opera, where knowledge is not transmitted solely didactically but co-

constructed through performance, rehearsal, and mentorship. From a psychological perspective, research shows that music-related activities—especially those involving active participation such as performing, rehearsing, and collaborating—can lead to improvements in emotional well-being, self-efficacy, and social connectedness (Viola et al., 2023). Schmid (2024) further suggests that well-being should not be viewed as a by-product but as an intentional teaching objective in music education, arguing that learning environments that support autonomy, creativity, and emotional expression have a profound impact on learner flourishing. The MOTO project fulfils several of these pedagogical and psychological conditions by offering participants the opportunity to rehearse and perform operas under professional guidance. It provides a socially supportive learning setting, enables meaningful artistic engagement, and encourages the formation of professional identity. While this research investigates these effects from the perspective of well-being, existing literature supports the hypothesis that such project-based experiences have the potential to promote psychological and social resilience in young opera professionals.

Aims

We intended to find out the answers to the following questions:

- 1) Did participation in a project with practical stage experience help singers increase their well-being, and how?
- 2) What affects the well-being of young opera professionals in a negative way?
- 3) How can the positive effects be incorporated into formal education more effectively, to influence the sensitive transition from student to professional life and their future careers?

Method

Sample

The project “Opera: Past, Present, Perfect!” involved more than 250 young artists and professionals from several European countries and the Western Balkans region, including singers, instrumentalists, répétiteurs, composers, conductors, stage directors, and students of visual arts. The research sample consisted of eight singers (five female, three male, aged 20 to 28) who had participated in multiple activities within the project, including at least one full opera production.

Participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in an interview conducted six months after the project's completion. All of them had little or no prior experience performing in staged opera productions before their involvement in the project. The main selection criteria were: (1) participation in more than one component of the project (e.g., productions, workshops, or masterclasses), and (2) having performed a leading role in at least one opera production. These criteria ensured that participants had substantial, practice-based engagement and could offer in-depth reflections on the learning and performance process.

Instruments

The research technique was a semi-structured interview, based on the PERMA model, consisting of eleven questions designed around each of the five components. The questions were specifically designed for this research by the first author (see Appendix). However, the methodology is based on the aforementioned study on the well-being of professional musicians (Ascenso et al., 2017).

Procedure

This study was designed as an *ex post facto* investigation. Participants were interviewed six months after completing their involvement in the project. No data had been collected before or during the project itself; therefore, the study is based entirely on participants' retrospective reflections. The interviews were conducted individually and recorded with participants' consent. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, and the recordings were fully transcribed manually by the researcher without the aid of transcription software.

Data analysis

The interview data were analysed using a qualitative thematic analysis approach, following the method described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process was conducted in four steps. First, the recordings were manually transcribed in full by the first author without the use of transcription software. Second, the transcripts were segmented, and initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful units of text. Third, related codes were grouped into sub-themes based on conceptual similarity. Finally, these sub-themes were clustered into overarching themes that captured key patterns across the data. All coding and theme development were conducted by the first author.

Results

Analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in four main themes: Stage Experience and Acting, Interpersonal Relationships, Working Attitude, and Achievement and Personal Change. Each theme reflects a distinct aspect of the participants' professional and educational experiences, particularly in relation to their perceived well-being. The theme of Interpersonal Relationships was especially prominent and included several recurring sub-themes.

Theme 1: Stage experience and acting

The first theme concerns stage experience and acting. When asked about their professional activities and feelings regarding their careers before participating in the project, the singers emphasized the unfortunate reality that gaining stage experience in high school is generally not possible (except for concert performances). The opportunity to take part in a staged performance was described as an exception, typically made possible by the enthusiasm of certain singing teachers or through personal initiative.

“Before college, I was lucky to have a professor who actually worked with us. We basically did not have any courses [concerning staged performance]. That was terrible for me, no acting, no stage movement, nothing. You do not even have stage movement at the university, and in high school, you have nothing.” (P1)

The lack of stage experience led to negative feelings, such as self-doubt and an awareness of being unprepared for one of the essential aspects of a professional singing career.

“I did not have any doubts about my voice, as much as I doubted my acting ability because no one had ever done that with me. I thought I was completely incapable.” (P1)

“I did not know how skilled I would be at it, and I did not know what would be asked of me exactly. I was just worried about that uncertainty, what it would look like.” (P2)

When asked which activities during the project evoked positive feelings, the majority of respondents—besides mentioning the masterclasses with conductor S.D.—highlighted the acting workshops, stating that these had a very positive impact on their mood and even a therapeutic effect. One participant also mentioned the masterclass

with stage director J.M., enthusiastically stating that it changed him both personally and professionally.

Theme 2: Interpersonal relationships

The second theme concerns interpersonal relationships and is divided into three sub-themes: communication, support, and fairness. All participants clearly stated that the interpersonal relationships within the project evoked positive emotions, as well as a sense of meaning and engagement. They also emphasized the impact of a positive group atmosphere on their well-being, sense of purpose, and motivation to work.

Sub-theme 2.1, *Communication*, encompassed two contrasting experiences: mostly negative ones related to the past, and mostly positive ones connected to the project experience. The majority of the negative examples stemmed from formal higher music education settings, while others came from rare stage experiences outside of school. These included a complete lack of communication, disrespect from teachers or senior colleagues, digressions from singing to private matters during lessons, and a general disregard for others' opinions.

"Someone who is an authority decides not to listen to you, that is the most terrible thing that can be done to me. He will not communicate properly on a human level." (P3)

"Few soloists wanted to communicate with us [with younger colleagues, A/N]. I know that there are acrobatic things in this business, and when someone reaches that level, I understand—you want your peace, your environment, because it is stressful for you. But these performances were more like a play. And yet, everyone created an atmosphere that felt like 'high school drama'" (P4)

"It got to the point where she yelled at me, and I cried in class, many times." (P2)

"The older colleagues were nice to me [speaking about the experience in theatre, A/N]. But of course, I also had the opportunity to see how unpleasant it is when the choir addresses the soloists inappropriately. And the freedom that everyone can say anything to anyone is horrible to me. Mutual disrespect." (P5)

In contrast, when reflecting on their experience in the project, participants highlighted open communication as a key element of the positive group atmosphere. They felt accepted and respected

by both colleagues and superiors/professors, and they felt free to ask questions and express their opinions—even when those opinions differed from others'.

"I expected a little more gossiping, hypocrisy, and so on. I was surprised that everyone [colleagues, A/N] accepted me so easily and that they were sociable. There was no that 'Who is this person? What do they want, coming here from high school?' attitude." (P6)

"At MOTO, we had the opportunity to ask questions directly if something interested us, and there was a sense that each of us was being noticed and considered individually. Everyone even knew my name. It was remarkable because it's not usually like that in the theatre—nobody really seems to care." (P4)

Support emerged as sub-theme 2.2. The participants' statements indicated that the project leaders carefully monitored their needs and progress. They felt respected and accepted, which had a positive impact on them. This aligns with the third component of the PERMA model. One participant specifically highlighted the direct influence of support from their environment on their achievements.

"Everyone wanted to connect, get to know each other, sing together, and offer support. [...] What stood out to me was how everyone supported one another, from the lecturers to the last colleague. I am grateful that they (colleagues, ed.) accepted me immediately and that I succeeded (in completing the project tasks, ed.) because they are older, more experienced, and they were all at the university. I was the only one from high school, and it meant a lot for my progress." (P6)

This reflects the link between relationships and the achievement of goals, which corresponds to the fifth component of the PERMA model. In relation to the second component, engagement, some participants mentioned negative reactions from colleagues or professors toward their efforts and willingness to work. They contrasted this with the positive experience in the project, where their effort was recognized and appreciated.

One statement was particularly significant, as it illustrates the connection between several components of the model: positive emotions, relationships based on respect and support, the value

of engagement and effort, resulting in excellence and precision in work, and a clear sense of direction.

“Masterclass with S. D. – I was more than satisfied (*positive emotion*). You know when someone else tells you that you’re worth something. Someone who isn’t protecting you, who hasn’t listened to you for a long time, and who is not your professor (*relationship*). You come, you stand, and he says that ‘this’ and ‘that’ need to be improved (*achievement*), but you’re worth it. Also, he paid a lot of attention to who was present, who was punctual, and who knew their part (*engagement*). You know, all criteria had to be met to get a chance. At 10:00, he would be there, punctuality, precision.” (P1)

The third important sub-theme (2.3) that emerged within the theme of interpersonal relationships is *fairness*. In connection with the sub-themes of support and communication, most of the negative experiences described prior to the project were related to fairness—specifically, the lack of recognition for effort.

“I put so much of myself into my work, yet I’m not even sure if the opera director in *** knew who I am. Or anyone else there. Despite being right, I’ve even had situations where I was scolded during rehearsals. I’m meticulous and a perfectionist. I review videos before every rehearsal, analyse every step and choreography, and practice tirelessly behind the scenes. Meanwhile, someone else, perhaps a soloist, might be less prepared, yet I ended up being subjected to mobbing.” (P4)

When asked about interpersonal relationships during the project, six out of eight participants spontaneously mentioned the recognition of effort—that is, fairness in the role selection process.

“Those who worked hard were given more opportunities, while those who put in less effort received fewer. I recall instances where people were even removed from the performance, either because they didn’t show up, had other commitments, or failed to learn their lines. Moments like those happened, and I believe that both we and those who made mistakes learned something valuable from the experience.” (P6)

Whether through communication, support, or fairness, most participants noted that positive relationships fostered a constructive working atmosphere. This, in turn, led to effective teamwork

and professional collaboration, which often developed into friendships. Participants reported that they worked voluntarily outside of rehearsals to improve performances, nurtured mutual respect, and supported one another during rehearsals. In the long run, this constructive atmosphere contributed to better singing outcomes and the successful achievement of goals.

Theme 3: Working attitude

The third theme concerned the participants’ working attitude—that is, their own and their colleagues’ approach to work. The discussion took two different directions. On the one hand, participants reflected on how (a lack of) engagement in the working environment could negatively affect their sense of meaning.

“And I found it terrifying when someone said: I don’t need rehearsals. It still horrifies me to this day. ‘I’ve sung it 70 times, I don’t need rehearsals.’ Wait, what’s the point of this profession then?” (P5) (previous experience in opera theatre, A/N)

“They have no idea who’s at fault (during the performance, ed.). All that matters to them is that the show goes on. They’ve never blamed anyone for such mistakes; they just let it slide. In their mind, the only thing that counts is that it happened. It’s like when someone insists on having someone perform ‘Queen of the Night’ at a concert – even if it’s a complete disaster – so that they can later say it was part of the program. It’s utterly pointless.” (P4) (previous experience in opera theatre)

On the other hand, participants described what dedicated, in-depth work looked like, how deeply they were involved in the staging process during the project, and how this positively influenced their emotions and sense of meaning.

“It all makes sense when there’s a clear process—when you think things through and strive to make everything better. When you’re on stage, fully aware of every word, knowing what you’re singing, what it means, and the purpose behind every movement—why you raised your hand at that moment. It’s about dedicating yourself completely, right to the very end, so that when it’s over, you’re satisfied with having considered everything, understood it all, and ultimately made it work.” (P7) (commenting on the staging process during the project, A/N)

Theme 4: Achievement and personal change

The fourth theme, Achievement and Personal Change, relates to the period following the project and its impact on the participants' professional lives. Participants recognized numerous benefits to their professional development as a result of the project. They mentioned several achievements, including becoming accustomed to working in a group, gaining experience with an orchestra, learning how to adapt programs to their vocal abilities, developing a sense of professional responsibility, understanding the process of preparing a staged performance, communicating with superiors, expanding their repertoire, gaining a clearer sense of direction in their future work, and accessing new opportunities that arose through their participation in the project.

"Everything that happened on stage meant so much to me. Of course, the master classes and music rehearsals were important as well, but I was especially eager for the stage experience because that's something we really lack at university. Many things I use in my work today are things I wouldn't have learned without my experience at MOTO. During rehearsals, I didn't just focus on my own role—I paid attention to what everyone was doing and observed the entire process of creating a production, which I found incredibly fascinating." (P8)

"That moment (participating in the project, A/N.) marked the beginning for me. People started reaching out, introducing themselves, and I was amazed to realise how many already knew about me or had met me during that time. I gained valuable experience that has helped me move forward, and I would love the opportunity to participate in similar projects or situations again. I feel more confident now, though I know there's always room for improvement." (P6)

In addition, participants reported changes in their personal lives, including the achievement of specific internal goals such as increased self-respect, calmness, relaxation, reduced fear of failure and stage fright, as well as greater confidence.

"The main difference I notice between that period and now, after the project, is a significant reduction in fear and hesitation." (P8)

"It helped me not only with singing but also in everyday life. It also had a significant impact on my acting. It helped me relax, and that's the greatest success. In general, once you get

past those challenges, everyday things become easier. I was quite reserved before, but after all the rehearsals, the premiere, and everything else, I became more open, and that change had a lasting effect on me." (P7)

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between situated, project-based learning involving practical stage experience and the well-being of opera singing students. The selected participants were at a pivotal stage in their development, either at the beginning of their higher education or in transition to professional life. This period is particularly sensitive, as these transitions represent some of the most demanding phases for young musicians and can significantly challenge their well-being (Ascenso et al., 2017).

To frame the discussion and clarify the study's contribution, it is important to return to the three main aims.

PERMA Model and project participation. The study's results indicate that all five components of the PERMA model were mentioned in the participants' reflections, but their interrelation was especially striking. Although the questions were designed around individual components, the responses often overlapped: positive emotions were frequently tied to interpersonal relationships, meaning was associated with collective creative effort, and a sense of achievement emerged from shared success. This finding aligns with Ascenso et al. (2017), who emphasize the relational nature of musicians' well-being and suggest that these components are deeply interconnected rather than isolated.

However, this study does not prove such interconnections; rather, their presence is suggested by the data, and further research with more rigorous methods would be required to establish causality. The qualitative approach made it possible to disclose how young singers interpret their experiences, revealing clear patterns of connection between different domains of well-being.

Key Aspects of situated learning affecting well-being. The most prominent theme to emerge was the importance of interpersonal relationships in the learning environment. Participants highlighted the contrast between isolated, individual singing lessons (typical for their formal education) and the collaborative nature of the project. Working within a team under fair and engaged mentors fostered not

only motivation but also emotional safety, which helped activate other components of well-being.

This aligns with situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which emphasizes participation in a community of practice as central to learning. In this sense, well-being and learning were not parallel outcomes, but rather mutually reinforcing: being included and valued in a shared professional process contributed to both personal confidence and professional growth.

Another important finding relates to engagement and competence. Several participants reported feeling more competent after the project, despite the relatively small number of performances. The simulated professional environment provided realistic challenges, but within a supportive context. According to Ascenso et al. (2017), perceived competence is a critical component of musicians' well-being, often deriving not only from technical mastery but also from successful real-world applications.

Interestingly, performance anxiety was not a dominant topic in the interviews. When mentioned, it was usually attributed to a lack of experience or preparation, rather than to the performance situation itself. This supports Ascenso et al.'s (2017) finding that anxiety tends to decrease when musicians feel supported and sufficiently prepared.

Psychological framing and situated learning.

From a psychological perspective, the results support key principles from positive psychology, particularly that well-being is influenced not only by internal traits but also by context and relational dynamics. Group work, mentoring, and visible effort-based progress created a sense of purpose and belonging. These are all aspects that Seligman's (2011) PERMA framework highlights as central to well-being.

The project created a setting in which young musicians could feel that their contributions mattered. This concept is closely related to the concept of meaning within the PERMA model, as well as to the psychological idea of self-determination—specifically, the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The situated learning model employed in the project enabled the fulfilment of all three of these needs.

While most participants reported overwhelmingly positive outcomes, the interviews also included reflections on individual experiences and expectations, some of which pointed to challenges related to stage preparedness or self-

confidence. These perspectives remind us that even well-designed learning environments are experienced differently by each participant.

This study does not claim to generalize all opera singing students or young emerging artists, nor to isolate specific causes of well-being. However, it does offer insights into how carefully structured, collaborative, and mentored experiences—embedded in practice—can support psychological well-being in a crucial phase of artistic development.

Future studies might combine this qualitative perspective with pre- and post-project measures or explore similar models in other musical disciplines.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the research was conducted on a small, non-random sample of participants who completed the "Opera: Past, Present, Perfect!" project and were actively involved in all phases. This means that the study did not include those who dropped out early or participated to a lesser extent—individuals who might have offered different, potentially more critical perspectives.

Second, the selection criterion favoured participants who had been given more significant learning opportunities through leading roles in the opera productions. This introduces a potential bias toward individuals with more positive and affirming experiences.

Third, the interviews focused exclusively on well-being as it related to the project experience. Personal characteristics, such as personality traits, mental health history, or life circumstances outside of music, were not considered. Moreover, previous research (Ascenso et al., 2017) suggests that musicians with broader life interests tend to report higher well-being.

Fourth, the coding and thematic analysis of the interviews were conducted by a single researcher. While every effort was made to ensure rigor and consistency, having only one coder increases the risk of subjective interpretation and limits inter-rater reliability.

Future studies could address these limitations by including a broader participant group, comparing well-being outcomes between those more and less involved in the project, and applying a mixed-method approach to triangulate results.

Conclusion

The results of this paper suggest that the well-being of young singers significantly benefits from participating in a project that provides practical stage experience simulating their future professional lives. From their answers, it is also clear that formal education programs should strive to provide them with stage experience alongside vocal training as early as possible. Meaningful relationships have a significant impact on musicians' well-being, emphasising the need for social skills training (Ascenso et al., 2017). The participants confirmed this, highlighting greater dedication to work in their working environment, more open communication, and relationships based on respect and appreciation as the most beneficial aspects of the project.

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5. Which activities within the project triggered positive emotions for you? (Why do you think that was?)
 6. How did you feel after going through the rehearsal and performance process? Describe the preparation process in terms of how immersed you felt in it.
 7. Let's talk about your relationships with colleagues. What were your beliefs about peer relationships before the program? How did you feel about interpersonal relationships during the project? In what way did the project activities influence your understanding of relationships with colleagues?
 8. Let's talk about meaning: why do you do what you do? What does it mean to you? How does your everyday work influence your sense of purpose? How did the project affect this, and why?
 9. I'd like to talk about your sense of achievement. What is your goal in pursuing singing, and how have you worked toward it? How realistic did that goal seem before the program, and how did you feel about it? Did any project activities influence this, and in what way?
 10. In what ways do you feel different after the program? Which activities or aspects of the project contributed most to that change, and how?
 11. How has this experience influenced your overall sense of well-being—both in your personal life and in the professional activities that followed?

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Appendix: Interview questions

1. Let's begin by talking about your life before this project. How would you describe your professional life and sense of well-being at that time?
2. Which specific professional activities make you feel satisfied, and why?
3. Is there anything in your professional life that has negatively affected your well-being? (Follow-up: How would you describe your relationships with colleagues, the sense of meaning in your work, or your engagement with tasks? What kinds of things might worry you, discourage you, or make you question your desire to pursue this profession?)
4. I'd like to talk a bit about the challenges of your profession. What kinds of problems do you face? (Follow-up: Did participating in the project help you resolve any of these issues or change the way you approach solving them?)